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Medieval Society in East-Central Europe in the 11th to 13th Centuries: An Introduction from the Example of the Kingdom of Hungary

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Abstract

HUDÁČEK, Pavol. Medieval Society in East-Central Europe in the 11th to 13th Centuries: An Introduction from the Example of the Kingdom of Hungary.

Within social and economic history, research on medieval society has long enjoyed the attention of medievalist scholarship. The choice of topics and the quality of their treatment has often been dependant on the development of historical sciences and individual theoretical concepts. The emphasis has typically been centred on describing the internal organisation, social stratification and social transformations, which are closely linked to the formation of new social classes in royal, ecclesiastical or secular estates. Power, political and above all, economic factors were often taken into account, which had a significant impact on social transformations. In researching higher and lower social classes, historians have addressed a wide range of topics, including the question of freedom and unfreedom, the formation of the nobility, privileged communities and the burghers, slavery and its demise, the social status of economic dependents, as well as the relations of landlords with their subjects. The above-mentioned statements are also valid for research into the formation and internal organisation of medieval Hungarian society, which was also undergoing professed transformations in the 11th to the 13th centuries.

The formation and transformations of medieval societies are among the key topics historians have long been interested in. Issues related to these complicated processes are the subject of research in social and economic history, but also form part of a broader framework of interest in medieval culture. When reconstructing the internal organization and transformations of medieval societies, historical discourses investigate the relations between the ruler and the ruled, the forms in which power was exercised, the legal status of the different classes of people, social hierarchy and stratification, social mobility, etc.

Medieval society

In the Early and the High Middle Ages, many social transformations were a result of changing political and economic conditions, which varied across regions and time periods. Other dynamic elements include population growth, the large-scale settlement of

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peripheral parts of the country and the acquisition of new arable land at the expense of forests, which led to social transformations, after the arrival of new settlers for example, or to changes in the economic status of the original inhabitants. The factors that influenced these social transformations in the period ranging from the 9th to the 13th centuries are still the subject of debate and polemics.¹

Historians are tackling many important questions including inadequate methodologies, persisting older historiographical concepts,² confusion over the interpretation of some Latin terms denoting particular social categories,³ the demarcation of developmental periods (e.g. the transition from slavery to “feudalism” and from “feudalism” to capitalism),⁴ and overgeneralization when trying to classify social classes accurately when describing medieval societies.⁵ Having become aware of these shortcomings, a new generation of medievalists of the last decades of the 20th century began to question earlier interpretations of social transformation which they thought could not be substantiated in medieval sources.⁶

- 1 BOSL, Karl. Structural Problems of Medieval Social History of Europe: Ideal types and the Specific Meaning of the Words in Latin Sources. In MAIER, B. Joseph – WAXMAN, I. Chaim (eds.) *Ethnicity, Identity, and History: Essays in Memory of Werner J. Cahnman*. New Brunswick; London : Transaction Books, 1983, pp. 27–39; KITSIKOPOULOS, Harry. Social History and Medieval Studies. In CLASSEN, Albrecht (ed.) *Handbook of Medieval Studies 1: Terms–Methods–Trends*. Berlin; New York : Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co, KG, 2010, pp. 1292–1304. See also: THOMPSON, W. James. *An Economic and Social History of the Middle Ages (300–1300)*. New York; London : The Century Co., 1928, pp. 699–764; THRUPP, L. Sylvia (ed.) *Change in Medieval Society: Europe North of the Alps, 1050–1500*. New York : Appleton-Century-Croft, 1964; THRUPP, L. Sylvia (ed.) *Early Medieval Society*. New York : Appleton-Century-Croft, 1967; THRUPP, L. Sylvia. The Dynamics of Medieval Society. In XIII. *International Congress of Historical Sciences, Moscow, August 16–23, 1970*. Moscow : “Nauka” Publishing House, Central Department of Oriental Literature, 1970, pp. 2–3; LEYSER, Conrad. Introduction: making early medieval societies. In COOPER, Cate – LEYSER, Conrad (eds.) *Making Early Medieval Societies: Conflict and Belonging in the Latin West, 300–1200*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2016, pp. 5–6. Key works on the development of medieval society, some conclusions of which are already under re-evaluation today, still include BLOCH, Marc. *Feudal Society 1: The Growth of Ties of Dependence*. Translated by L. A. Manyon. London; New York : Routledge, 2004; BLOCH, Marc. *Feudal Society 2: Social Classes and Political Organization*. Translated by L. A. Manyon. London : New York : Routledge, 2005.
- 2 For example, on the historiography of research on the English peasantry in the Middle Ages, see: SCHOFIELD, R. Phillip. *Peasants and Historians: Debating the Medieval English Peasantry*. Manchester : Manchester University Press, 2016, pp. 1–23. See: e.g. FREED, B. John. Medieval German Social History: Generalizations and Particularism. In *Central European History*, 1992, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 1–26.
- 3 PARISSE, Michel. Histoire et sémantique: de *servus* à *homo*. In FREEDMAN, Paul – BOURIN, Monique (eds.) *Forms of Servitude in Northern and Central Europe: Decline, Resistance, and Expansion*. Turnhout : Brepols, 2005, pp. 19–46.
- 4 Although Western European medievalists also dealt with determining the developmental stages of the socio-economic organization of medieval societies, these concepts manifested themselves most prominently in Marxist views on historical processes and change. See: GORDON, Sarah. Marxist Approaches to Medieval Studies. In CLASSEN 2010, pp. 822–828; HILTON, Rodney. Feudalism and the Origins of Capitalism. In HILTON, Rodney. *Class Conflict and the Crisis of Feudalism: Essays in Medieval Social History*. London : The Hambledon Press, 1985, pp. 278–294.
- 5 BOSL, Karl. Kasten, Stände, Klassen im mittelalterlichen Deutschland. Zur Problematik soziologischer Begriffe und ihrer Anwendung auf die mittelalterliche Gesellschaft. In BOSL, Karl. *Die Gesellschaft in der Geschichte des Mittelalters*. Göttingen : Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987, pp. 80–83; STAAB, Franz. A Reconsideration of the Ancestry of Modern Political Liberty: The Problem of the So-Called “King’s Freeman” (Königsfreie). In *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 1980, vol. 11, pp. 51–69.
- 6 See: e.g. GELTING, H. Michael. Legal Reform and the Development of Peasant Dependence in Thirteenth-Century Denmark. In FREEDMAN – BOURIN 2005, pp. 343–347.

In an attempt to avoid overgeneralization, some historians sought to address these deficiencies by focusing on smaller regions, where the development of local society was investigated as it was transformed by the political and economic changes of the 11th and 12th centuries, (the liberation of slaves, settlement, economic development, demography, etc.). These new approaches made a significant contribution to our knowledge of medieval societies and offered detailed probes into the structure, development and transformations of these predominantly agrarian communities.⁷ However, when trying to describe the broader social, economic and political contexts that ultimately led to the collapse of previous social orders and their replacement by new social relations (e.g. the disappearance of slavery, the free peasantry and its relationship to the emerging medieval nobility, etc.), some authors could not avoid simplification.⁸

When analyzing earlier societies, historians reasoned about the changing forms of supremacy, mostly in terms of “ruling classes versus ruled,” i.e. those who wielded influence and exercised dominion (*potentes*) versus those who had no share in power (*pauperes*).⁹ In their interpretations, modern concepts and sociological and anthropological approaches were often employed, even in research on the Middle Ages. However, they did not always manage to sufficiently describe or explain the functional processes of the communities of that time and understand the significance of important political and economic turns that had a major impact on social order.¹⁰ Contrary to modern society,

- 7 DUBY, Georges. *La société aux XI^e et XII^e siècles dans la région mâconnaise*. Paris : Armand Colin, 1953; BEECH, T. George. *A rural society in medieval France: The Gâtine of Poitou in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*. Baltimore : The Johns Hopkins Press, 1964; BOIS, Guy. *The Transformation of the Year One Thousand: The Village of Lournand from Antiquity to Feudalism*. Translated by Jean Birrell. Manchester; New York : Manchester University Press, 1992. On the specific forms of the medieval society and the development and transformations of the economy, the nobility, peasants etc. in France, see: DUBY, Georges. *Hommes et structures du moyen âge: Recueil d'articles*. Paris; La Haye : Mouton, 1973. On these processes within Western Europe, see: DUBY, Georges. *Guerriers et paysans, VIII^e–XII^e siècles. Premier essor de l'économie européenne*. Paris : Gallimard, 1973. See also: SCHOFIELD 2016, pp. 33–50.
- 8 E.g. POLY, Jean-Pierre – BOURNAZEL, Eric. *The Feudal Transformation: 900–1200*. Translated by Caroline Higgitt. New York; London : Holmes & Meier, 1991, pp. 119–140; RÖSENER, Werner. *Peasants in the Middle Ages*. Translated by Alexander Stützer. Urbana; Chicago : University of Illinois Press, 1992, pp. 7–8. See also: EVERGATES, Theodore. The Feudal Imaginary of Georges Duby. In *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 1997, vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 641–660; FREEDMAN, Paul. George Duby and the Medieval Peasantry. In *The Medieval History Journal*, 2001, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 259–271; CHEYETTE, L. Fredric. Georges Duby's *Mâconnais* after fifty years: reading it then and now. In *Journal of Medieval History*, 2002, vol. 28, pp. 291–317.
- 9 BOSL, Karl. *Herrscher und Beherrschte im deutschen Reich des 10.–12. Jahrhunderts*. München : Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1963, pp. 3–7, 27–29; THRUPP 1970, pp. 6–7; BOSL 1987, pp. 76–79; POLY – BOURNAZEL 1991, pp. 9–45. A special emphasis on research on the “ideal” division of society, the so-called three-orders theory, mostly associated with the learned ideas of medieval scholars. OEXLE, Otto Gerhard. *Tria genera hominum*. Zur Geschichte eines Deutungsschemas der sozialen Wirklichkeit im Antike und Mittelalter. In FENSKE, Lutz – RÖSENER, Werner – ZOTZ, Thomas (eds.) *Institutionen, Kultur und Gesellschaft im Mittelalter: Festschrift für Josef Fleckenstein zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*. Sigmaringen : Verlag Jan Thorbecke 1984, pp. 483–500; RÖSENER 1992, pp. 11–14.
- 10 THRUPP, L. Sylvia. Economy and Society in Medieval England. In *Journal of British Studies*, 1962, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 1–2; BOSL 1987, pp. 61–66; RÖSENER 1992, pp. 9–10; GILLINGHAM, John. Some Observations on Social Mobility in England between the Norman Conquest and the Early Thirteenth Century. In HAVERKAMP, Alfred – VOLLRATH, Hanna (eds.) *England and Germany in the High Middle Ages*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 332–337. On agrarian history and the structure of agrarian societies in the Middle Ages, see: RÖSENER, Werner. *Agrarwirtschaft Agrarverfassung und ländliche Gesellschaft im Mittelalter*. München : R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1992, pp. 14–16, 27–31, 68–72, 88–94; MÜLLER, Miriam. Introduction. In MÜLLER, Miriam (ed.)

some earlier researchers viewed medieval society as static, one in which no major transformations took place.¹¹ However, in contrast to the prior emphasis on the “continuity” of social order, historians gradually pointed out an important factor: change and development. Some researchers hold the opinion that in certain pivotal periods (Marc Bloch spoke of the period from 1050 to 1250 as the so-called “second feudal age,” for example), these processes took the form of “revolutionary” transformations and were also connected to significant changes in social order.¹²

Today, historians clearly point out that in individual medieval societies, significant and very important transformations of social structures were taking place and depending on the exercise of power, these often led to a different type of development and unique forms, like regional differences and cultural variations. Such changes also affected wider social relations, which manifested themselves in the coexistence of social categories, or even in long-lasting conflicts and problems between them.¹³ When investigating smaller regions, several historians have considered not only the earlier development of the varied social classes and influences from their vicinity, but have also examined the significant changes in the lives of people with different statuses and degrees of freedom that stemmed from their provision of services and subordination to the upper class.¹⁴ These social transformations appear in the written sources mostly only when disputes and conflicts arose between older and newly forming social classes, between “serfs” and landlords or when new social ties were being born.¹⁵

Medieval societies were characterized by dynamic processes that were related to general developmental trends, manifested in the transformation of social structures and especially, in the birth of new socio-economic categories.¹⁶ These processes were influenced by a wide range of political, economic,¹⁷

The Routledge Handbook of Medieval Rural Life. London; New York : Routledge, 2022, pp. 1–10.

- 11 BOSL, Karl. Über soziale Mobilität in der mittelalterlichen „Gesellschaft“. *Dienst, Freiheit, Freizügigkeit als Motive sozialen Aufstiegs*. In *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 1960, vol. 47, no. 3, p. 306. The text was also published in English BOSL, Karl. On Social Mobility in Medieval Society: Service, Freedom, and Freedom of Movement as Means of Social Ascent. In THRUPP 1967, pp. 87–102; BOSL 1963, pp. 3–7.
- 12 THRUPP 1962, pp. 1–13; BOSL 1983, pp. 27–29. On the origins, form, causes, and consequences of the so-called “feudal revolution,” see the earlier discussions of leading medievalists (Timothy Reuter, Chris Wickham, Thomas N. Bisson, and others) briefly summed up in WEST, Charles. *Reframing the Feudal Revolution: Political and Social Transformation between Marne and Moselle, c. 800–c. 1100*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2013, pp. 1–16. See also: FIORE, Alessio. *The Seigneurial Transformation: Power Structures and Political Communication in the Countryside of Central and Northern Italy, 1080–1130*. Translated by Sergio Knipe. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2020, pp. XV–XXIII.
- 13 THRUPP 1970, pp. 9–10. On the exercise of power and the disintegration of older structures, which also had a significant impact on social change, see: FIORE 2020, pp. 3–137.
- 14 BOSL 1960, pp. 308–313; BOSL 1987, pp. 61–66; BOSL 1963, pp. 3–7, 24–27; POLY – BOURNAZEL 1991, pp. 119–140.
- 15 THRUPP 1970, pp. 4–6; HILTON, Rodney. Reasons for Inequality Among Medieval Peasants. In HILTON 1985, pp. 139–151; LEYSER 2016, pp. 6–7. On conflicts, revolts against the upper class, and social discontent, see: FOURACRE, Paul. The incidence of rebellion in the early medieval West. In COOPER – LEYSER 2016, pp. 104–124.
- 16 THRUPP 1970, pp. 1–16; BOSL 1963, pp. 3–7; BOSL 1983, p. 31.
- 17 According to several historians, the technological and economic innovations in the Middle Ages (development of markets and the money economy) which took place mainly in agriculture and crafts, also largely influenced the changes and status of the people of agrarian communities, on

military, social and cultural factors, which were often related to the decisions and needs of the rulers or holders of secular and ecclesiastical power. Such dynamic developments were accompanied by changes in the legal or economic status of the lower strata, which can be first observed in ecclesiastical and royal estates, where former slaves were liberated and new, “transitional” social classes with different degrees of freedom gradual emerged.¹⁸ Moreover, political and economic factors were also closely linked to the increase of—or exemption from—renders in kind, manual labour and taxes for free or subordinate people. These either led to dissatisfaction and disputes with the upper class or escalated into the emergence of serfdom and into new forms of economic dependency, which arose from land tenure with well-defined obligations towards the landlord and were often accompanied by a restricted right to free movement.¹⁹ These transformations were related to the gradual disappearance of the original free peasants and the improved social status of former slaves, who were granted land by their masters under well-defined conditions. This ultimately led to the complete disappearance of slavery, depending on the country and time period.²⁰

It should also be borne in mind that the landlords had an eminent interest in the “formation” of new social classes, especially of economically dependent people as they significantly benefited from the monetary payments these people made to them in the form of land rents and taxes on agricultural products. In the 13th century, free peasants and the new, economically dependent “serf” strata—most of whom became tenants of lands owned by landlords—were still internally differentiated, mostly on the basis of economic criteria.²¹

According to Werner Rösener, in the Early Middle Ages, there was no concept that would have corresponded to what we now call peasants because, when

which see: WHITE, Lynn. *Medieval Technology and Social Change*. Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1962; DUBY, Georges. *Rural Economy and Country Life in the Medieval West*. Translated by Cynthia Postan. London : Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd., 1968; DUBY, Georges. *The Early Growth of European Economy: Warriors and Peasants from the Seventh to the Twelfth Century*. Translated by Howard B. Clarke. Ithaca; New York : Cornell University Press, 1978; RÖSENER 1992, pp. 5–6, 11–15, 20–24; SCHOFIELD 2016, pp. 59–141.

- 18 BOSL, Karl. Freiheit und Unfreiheit. Zur Entwicklung der Unterschichten in Deutschland und Frankreich während des Mittelalter. In *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 1957, vol. 44, no. 3, pp. 202–206; BOSL 1987, pp. 61–66; POLY – BOURNAZEL 1991, pp. 119–140. A very important social change was the liberation of slaves (*manumissio*), who became considerably better off compared to their previous unfree status. These people, who now had personal liberties, represented a new source of labour for the landlords, and their economic dependence arose from their use of foreign land. GILLINGHAM 1996, pp. 340–344; PRACY, Stuart. Social Mobility and Manumissions in Early Medieval England. In *The Haskins Society Journal*, 2019, vol. 31, pp. 3–9, 16–19.
- 19 HILTON, Rodney. Medieval Peasants: Any Lessons? In HILTON 1985, pp. 114–121; RÖSENER 1992, pp. 16–17; SCOTT, Tom. South-West German Serfdom Reconsidered. In FREEDMAN – BOURIN 2005, pp. 115–117, 119–120; FIORE 2020, pp. 187–198, 226–264.
- 20 BLOCH, Marc. *Slavery and Serfdom in the Middle Ages: Selected Essays*. Translated by William E. Beer. Berkeley; Los Angeles; London : University of California Press, 1975, pp. 33–91, 151–161; BONNASSIE, Pierre. *From Slavery to Feudalism in South-Western Europe*. Translated by Jean Birrell. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 1–59, 288–313, 314–340; SUTHERLAND, S. Samuel. The study of slavery in the early and central middle ages: Old problems and new approaches. In *History Compass*, 2020, vol. 18, no. 11, pp. 3–4.
- 21 BOSL 1957, pp. 210–219; BOSL 1987, pp. 66–69; RÖSENER 1992, pp. 16–20, 27–28; GILLINGHAM 1996, pp. 340–344; DYER, Christopher. Villeins, Bondmen, Neifs, and Serfs: New Serfdom in England, c. 1200–1600. In FREEDMAN – BOURIN 2005, pp. 419–425; GELTING 2005, pp. 343–347; SCHOFIELD 2016, pp. 84–108.

describing the rural population, the sources of this period used only the terms *liberi*, *liti*, and *servi* (free people, semi-free people and serfs). He notes that we can speak of medieval “peasants” as a social class only from the eleventh or the twelfth centuries onwards. The word “peasant” did not appear until people engaged in agriculture began to be legally differentiated from “professional warriors” and from the privileged inhabitants of the emerging cities. Consequently, a new social division into *milites*, *cives*, and *rustici* began to appear increasingly in the sources.²²

To a large extent, tracing the transformations of social structures in the Middle Ages depends on the state of written sources. Several sources suggest that over the 11th to 13th centuries, minor or even major changes were occurring in the social status of free and semi-free people in different countries. In research on the development, disappearance and emergence of new social categories, it is therefore essential to take into account sources from a longer time frame so that we can better understand the transformations of different social strata and the emergence of new social distinctions.

In contrast to the formation and transformations of elites, privileged classes and the “lesser nobility,” which constitute a separate chapter within social trends with their own particular research matters,²³ information on the lower social strata is considerably more difficult to locate. Across the regions, these strata took different forms, were often more differentiated and underwent a certain development which cannot always be sufficiently traced in the sources.²⁴ Moreover, these classes had different legal and economic statuses. Although they appear in the written sources under several names, these names sometimes acquired different meanings over the centuries and the differences between them may be difficult to determine, as it is not always entirely clear what their social stratification stemmed from.²⁵

To understand the processes of transformations, it is therefore extremely important to “correctly” interpret the meanings of the various Latin or local terms that were used to designate and distinguish social classes in the sources. At the same time, the period in which they were used and the types of sources in which they appeared (e.g. chronicles, charters, etc.) should also be taken in account.²⁶ Historians must also consider the political and economic situation of the time, the social conditions on royal or ecclesiastical estates and the practices

22 RÖSENER 1992, pp. 11–14, 20–21.

23 DUGGAN, J. Anne. Introduction: Concepts, Origins, Transformations. In DUGGAN, J. Anne (ed.) *Nobles and Nobility in Medieval Europe: Concepts, Origins, Transformations*. Woodbridge : The Boydell Press, 2000, pp. 1–14. See also: POLY – BOURNAZEL 1991, pp. 87–118; BOURGARD, François – BÜHRER-THIERRY, Geneviève – LE JAN, Régine. Elites in the Early Middle Ages. Identities, Strategies, Mobility. In *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 2013, vol. 68, no. 4, pp. 735–768.

24 On social changes, differences, and identities within a region or smaller territory, see: e.g. WISZEWSKI, Przemysław. Region as a Fluid Social Construct in Medieval Central Europe (11th–15th C.). In PLESZCZYNSKI, Andrzej et al. (eds.) *Imagined Communities: Constructing Collective Identities in Medieval Europe*. Leiden : Brill, 2018, pp. 279–292.

25 BOSL 1957, pp. 194–197, 206–214; BOSL 1963, pp. 7–12; BOSL 1987, pp. 80–83; DYER 2005, pp. 419–425; GELTING 2005, pp. 343–347.

26 DREW, Katharine Fischer. Legal Materials as a Source for Early Medieval Social History. In DREW, Katharine Fischer. *Law and Society in Early Medieval Europe: Studies in Legal History*. London : Variorum Reprints, 1988, pp. 33–39.

of medieval institutions when recording legal and social relations, i.e. the historical context in which these terms were used. Where there are sufficient written sources, the development of the same term can sometimes be documented even with reference to a new class of dependent people, and this reflects the social changes that were taking place at the time.²⁷

The issue of freedom (*libertas*) and unfreedom, on which the social status, rights and obligations of the different classes of people depended, is a crucial point in research in early and high medieval societies. In these periods, society was most often divided into the free and the unfree (expressed in the contrast between *liber* and *servus*).²⁸ Because of social changes, there were also classes of so-called semi-free people within this division, but we have so far only a scant knowledge about their legal and economic status. According to Karl Bosl, the marked contrast between the free and the unfree within the lower strata began to disappear much earlier in the Kingdom of France, from the 10th century onwards, than in the Holy Roman Empire where the social differentiation of the Carolingian period persisted among its main characteristics until as late as the 12th century. It should also be borne in mind that “aristocratic” *libertas* were probably distinct from the liberty of the lower strata because, in the Early Middle Ages, they still required royal protection ensured by the payment of a special tax for liberty (*census de capite*).²⁹

The social status and liberty of subordinate people underwent various legal changes across countries—such as the transformation of free peasants into serfs for example—which were primarily related to land tenure, fixed land rents and the right to move, i.e. the freedom of movement. Nevertheless, some “transitional” social classes of people with personal liberties were still sometimes required to perform services for the landlord, and these services even determined their degree of economic dependence and specific social status.³⁰

Medieval people lived in clearly defined social classes and individuality did not play as strong a role as it does today. Therefore, historians often view pre-modern societies as a more or less closed world of communities (*communitas*),³¹ characterized by clearly defined social stratification but interlinked by

27 BOSL 1957, pp. 193–194, 202–206; BOSL 1987, pp. 61–66; PARISSE 2005, pp. 19–46; DYER 2005, pp. 423–425.

28 A very good annotated overview of the state of research on this topic is SUTHERLAND 2020, pp. 1–12.

29 BOSL 1957, pp. 205–206.

30 BOSL 1957, pp. 194–197, 202–214, 216–219; BOSL 1960, pp. 308–313, 320–327; BOSL 1987, pp. 45–49, 76–79; IRSIGLER, Franz. Freiheit und Unfreiheit im Mittelalter. Formen und Wege sozialer Mobilität. In *Westfälische Forschungen*, 1976/1977, vol. 28, pp. 1–15; STAAB 1980, pp. 51–69; DREW 1988, pp. 37–38; RÖSENER 1992, pp. 20–21; GILLINGHAM 1996, pp. 340–344; DYER 2005, pp. 423–424; SCOTT 2005, pp. 115–118. See also: PATTERSON, Orlando. *The Ancient and Medieval Origins of Modern Freedom*. In MINTZ, Steven – STAUFFER, Jond (eds.) *The Problem of Evil. Slavery, Freedom, and the Ambiguities of American Reform*. Amherst; Boston : University of Massachusetts Press, 2007, pp. 36–39, 42–44.

31 BONNASSIE 1991, pp. 243–287; RÖSENER 1992, pp. 147–168, 224–236; SCHOFIELD 2016, pp. 196–216. On the functioning of medieval communities and their identity as social classes, see: SNIJDERS, Tjamke. Communal Learning and Communal Identities in Medieval Studies. Consensus, Conflict, and the Community of Practice. In LONG, Micol – SNIJDERS, Tjamke – VANDERPUTTEN, Steven (eds.) *Horizontal Learning in the High Middle Ages: Peer-to-Peer Knowledge Transfer in Religious Communities*. Amsterdam : Amsterdam University Press, 2019, pp. 17–46; PLESZCZYNSKI, Andrzej. The Identity of Self-Governing Groups (Guilds and Com-

similar political and power interests, ways of life (occupation or work) and in many cases, even by certain types of privileges or privileged statuses. It was these social structures that severely restricted individuality in the Early and High Middle Ages. Although the modes of government and the exercise and enforcement of power determined the strict hierarchization of social order, the barriers between legal and socio-economic categories were not impenetrable. In fact, several sources document how the services and duties expected of the subordinate strata were changing or improving side by side with the ongoing social transformations and crises. In some cases, the structure of society also changed significantly during these processes, as some categories disappeared or transformed into other classes, and the earlier privileged and unfree strata acquired new forms and more favourable legal or economic positions.

The fundamental factor determining these changes was social mobility, i.e. the possibility of gaining a better position depending on political and economic circumstances. This may have resulted from longer developmental processes or it may have been an immediate response to previous social crises. It mostly concerned individuals or their families, but sometimes would even apply to smaller classes from the lower social strata who lived on royal or ecclesiastical estates. The materialization of this mobility within closed social classes could arise from the decisions of rulers, the improvement of the management of royal, ecclesiastical or noble estates, the need to increase the number of warriors—which often manifested itself in the emergence of a “lesser nobility” formed from a dependent servant strata³²—changes in agriculture, population growth and settlement of the country, the efforts of the landlords to prevent the uncontrolled departure of their serfs to other estates and the formation of new privileged classes (e.g. the burghers).

An equally important reason for the social rise of the lower free or dependent classes was service to the ruler or to a secular or ecclesiastical landlord, which entailed social prestige, proven merit, personal qualities and special skills or knowledge. Social mobility between individual classes and statuses most often happened upward. However, there were also cases where the opposite occurred, such as when freedom was lost or previous military obligations were cancelled, for example. These cases gave rise to “social interdegrees” of legal designation, which also underwent transformations over time. Shifts from one class to another or within one class could be initiated by rulers or landlords by decisions from above, or such social movements could be extorted by the subordinate strata by exerting pressure on the upper classes during periods of crisis or unrest or in response to ongoing socio-economic changes in the country, for example.³³

munes) in the Middle Ages and Their Collective Identity. In PLESZCZYNSKI et al. 2018, pp. 204–221.

32 E.g. FREED, B. John. The Origins of the European Nobility: The Problem of the Ministerials. In *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 1976, vol. 7, pp. 211–241; FREED, B. John. The Formation of the Salzburg Ministerialage in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries: An Example of Upward Social Mobility in the Early Middle Ages. In *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 1978, vol. 9, pp. 67–102; BONNASSIE 1991, pp. 195–242.

33 BOSL 1957, pp. 202–210; BOSL 1960, pp. 306–311, 330–331; IRSIGLER 1976/1977, pp. 1–15; BOSL 1987, pp. 61–66; HARLIHY, David. Three Patterns of Social Mobility in Medieval History.

Some earlier researchers presumed that in the Early Middle Ages, the “communities of free warriors” were closed classes in which no major changes took place. Although their members had the same legal status, they were not always cohesive social communities as there were significant differences in wealth between their members. The increase in wealth among the free warriors and the other lower strata of freemen was often related to their aspirations for higher social status and a share of power, which may have raised fears of increased competition among the higher-ranking people. It was during periods of favourable political and economic circumstances that the upward social mobility of some individuals with sufficient wealth and prestige from these classes increased.³⁴

New forms of dominion and control tied to the power-related or territorial aspirations of secular or ecclesiastical lords who together formed the backbone of medieval society in the 11th to 13th centuries could be discerned in the diversity and complexity of the processes of the fading and the formation of social classes, as well as in matters of service, freedom, freedom of movement and social mobility.

Medieval society in the Kingdom of Hungary—A brief outline

Research on the formation, internal organization and transformations of medieval Hungarian society in the 11th to the 13th centuries was an important subject, especially in 20th century Hungarian historiography. Today, topics falling into the sphere of social history—this does not apply to economic history³⁵—tend to be a marginal area in medieval research. Some still topical issues such as the status of freemen, the emergence of the “lesser nobility” and of new social categories on royal and ecclesiastical estates, or the formation of the serf (peasant) strata³⁶ can only be addressed through detailed research and

In *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 1973, vol. 3, no. 4, pp. 623–627, 633–641; RÖSENER 1992, pp. 11–14, 20–24; GILLINGHAM 1996, pp. 337–339, 348–351; PARISSÉ 2005, pp. 19–46; CAROCCI, Sandro. Social mobility and the Middle Ages. In *Continuity and Change*, 2011, vol. 26, no. 3, pp. 375–387; BOUGARD – BÜHRER-THIERRY – LE JAN 2013, pp. 760–767.

34 HARLIHY 1973, pp. 623–625, 636; RÖSENER 1992, pp. 17–20; DYER 2005, pp. 419–425; PRACTY 2019, pp. 3–9, 16–19.

35 For an overview of works on Hungarian economic and social history to the first half of the 20th century, see: BERLÁSZ, Eugen. Der Werdegang der ungarischen Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte. In *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 1944, vol. 36, no. 3/4, pp. 155–184. See also: LASZLOVSZKY, József – NAGY, Balázs – SZABÓ, Péter – VADAS, András. Hungarian Medieval Economic History: Sources, Research and Methodology. In LASZLOVSZKY, József et al. (eds.) *The Economy of Medieval Hungary*. Leiden; Boston : Brill, 2018, pp. 1–35; WEISZ, Boglárka. A magyar gazdaság moztatórugói a középkorban. Az MTA BTK Lendület Középkori Magyar Gazdaságtörténet Kutatócsoport programja. In *Történelmi szemle*, 2015, vol. 57, no. 3, pp. 487–506; WEISZ, Boglárka. A MAGYAR GAZDASÁG MOZGATÓRUGÓI A KÖZÉPKORBAN Az MTA BTK „Lendület” Középkori Magyar Gazdaságtörténet Kutatócsoport hároméves (2015–2018). In *Történelmi szemle*, 2019, vol. 61, no. 3, pp. 539–569. For example, separate works on the history of mining and agriculture in the Kingdom of Hungary were written in the second half of the 19th century WENZEL, Gusztáv. *Magyarország bányászatának kritikai története*. Budapest : A M. Tud. Akadémia Könyvkiadó-Hivatala, 1880; WENZEL, Gusztáv. *Magyarország mezőgazdaságának története*. Budapest : AM. Tud. Akadémia Bizottsága, 1887.

36 Probably the first work on the shape of medieval Hungarian society (especially towards castle warriors, nobles, royal servitors, servants and slaves) dates back to 1783, see: KOLLARIUS, Franciscus Adam. *Historiae ivrisque pvblici regni Vngariae amoenitates 2*. Vindobonae : Typis a Bavmeisterianis, 1783, pp. 73–154. One of the first works dealing specifically with the medieval Hungarian peasantry was written at the beginning of the 20th century ACSÁDY, Ignác. *A mag-*

numerous analytical studies. At the same time, new research questions have to be formulated and some earlier historiographical concepts on social transformations in the 11th to 13th centuries re-evaluated through new perspectives.³⁷

Several conflicting opinions have arisen within the debates on the transformation of medieval societies in Western European countries, partly related to terminological problems and unresolved questions on the meaning of freedom in the Early and the High Middle Ages, the disappearance of slavery (the transformation of slaves–*servi* to freemen–*libertini*), social mobility or the genesis of social classes. This also applied to earlier, predominantly Hungarian, historiography in the late 19th century, the first third of the 20th century³⁸ and after the Second World War—in line with the Marxist interpretation of history—which dealt in detail with the development and transformations of social structures, the theoretical concepts of the emergence of “feudalism” in the domestic conditions, the origins of private property and class struggles in the Kingdom of Hungary.³⁹

In the latter half of the 19th century and over the 20th century, the methodological approaches of the varied schools of historiography significantly influenced views on the form of medieval Hungarian society. The different ways of exploring social stratification in the 11th to 13th centuries are still largely related to the development of historical sciences.⁴⁰

yar jobbágység története. Budapest : Magyar Közgazdasági Könyvtár, 1906 (the period up to the end of the 13th century is treated on pp. 13–110). On this topic for the early modern period by the same author, see: ACSÁDY, Ignác. *A magyar jobbágy-népesség száma a mohácsi vész után*. Budapest : Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1889.

- 37 MAKKAI, László. Les caractères originaux de l'histoire économique et sociale de l'Europe orientale pendant le Moyen Age. In *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 1970, vol. 16, no. 3/4, pp. 261–287. See also: KALHOUS, David. Úvahy nad možnostmi poznání sociální struktury raně středověkého přemyslovského knížectví. In *Praehistorica*, 2018, vol. 34, no. 2, pp. 29–82; GUZOWSKI, Piotr. Przyziemne potrzeby w badaniach społeczno-gospodarczych dawnej Polski. In *Historyka. Studia Metodologiczne*, 2019, vol. 49, pp. 329–359; NODL, Martin. Potřebujeme sociální a hospodářské dějiny středověku? In *Český časopis historický*, 2022, vol. 120, no. 2, pp. 409–425.
- 38 These debates between historians sometimes became “sharp” exchanges of opinion, as was the case with the famous dispute between Károly Tagányi and László Erdélyi. See: e.g. VARDY, Bela Steven. The Hungarian Economic History School: its Birth and Development. In *Journal of European Economic History*, 1975, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 129–130.
- 39 For an example of economic history research, see: LASZLOVSZKY et al. 2018, pp. 24–31. Specifically, on Marxist historiography, see: PÓK, Attila. Hungarian Medievalists under the Spell of Marxism. In NODL, Martin – WĘCOWSKI, Piotr – ZUPKA, Dušan (eds.) *Marxism and Medieval Studies: Marxist Historiography in East Central Europe*. Leiden; Boston : Brill, 2024, pp. 50–67 and THOROCZKAY, Gábor. Marxist Historical Theory in the Research of the Árpadian Period in Hungary (1000–1301). In NODL – WĘCOWSKI – ZUPKA 2024, pp. 353–359.
- 40 For an example of economic history research, see: LASZLOVSZKY et al. 2018, pp. 17–35. See also: SUTT, Cameron. Lords, peasants and slaves. In CURTA, Florin (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 500–1300*. London; New York : Routledge, 2022, pp. 265–266; BAK, M. János. Serfs and Serfdom: Words and Things. In BAK, M. János. *Studying Medieval Rulers and Their Subjects*. London; New York : Routledge, 2010, pp. 8–10. On the perspectives of East-Central European, mainly Marxist, historians on “feudalism,” the medieval society, the emergence of private property and the formation of serfdom, see: LEDERER, Emma. *Feudalism as a Structure and Form of Society*. Budapest : Akadémiai Kiadó, 1970, pp. 183–202; LEDERER, Emma. Štruktúra uhorskej spoločnosti v ranom stredoveku. In *Historický časopis*, 1960, vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 515–516; ČIERNY, Ján – HEJL, František – VERBÍK, Antonín (eds.) *Struktura feudální společnosti na území Československa a Polska*. Praha : Ústav československých a světových dějin ČSAV, 1984. For an overview of older research on medieval society, using Bohemia as an example, see: PETRÁČEK, Tomáš. *Power and Exploitation in the Czech Lands in the 10th–12th Centuries. A Central European Perspective*. Leiden; Boston : Brill, 2017, pp. 8–51.

Due to the existence of the earliest Hungarian law codes, most historians have focused mainly on the period of the 11th and the 12th centuries,⁴¹ but because of the situation with written sources, the transformations of the medieval Hungarian society can be traced much better from the early 13th century onwards. At that time, the number of issued charters increased significantly and these contain a lot of information on the different social classes, not only revealing earlier developments, but also reflecting the socio-economic transformations that were under way at the time.⁴²

When describing medieval Hungarian society, many researchers have mostly treated the following research areas: the terminology for naming the various categories of people, the portrayal of society in the works of medieval chroniclers,⁴³ probes into social organization, legal regulations and the status of the various social categories of people, the forms of the transformation processes, the formation of the elite (the Hungarian nobility),⁴⁴ the establishment of privileged population classes when towns came into being, theories about the transformations of “feudalism” and power relations,⁴⁵ issues of personal freedom, the emergence of a class of serfs, or free peasants, etc.

Contrary to Western Europe, domestic historiography lacks works that deal with social transformation in smaller territories or analyze the developments of individual manors or monastic estates. One exception is Ferenc Maksay’s study

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- 41 On medieval Hungarian society at the time of Stephen I, see some earlier works ERDÉLYI, László. *Magyarország társadalma XI. századi törvényeiben*. Budapest : Stephaneum Nyomda R. T., 1907; HÓMAN, Bálin. A társadalmi osztályok Szent István allámában. In PINTER, Jenő (ed.) *Békefi emlékkönyv: Dolgozatok Békefi Remig egyetemi tanáro működésének emlékére*. Budapest : Stephaneum Nyomda R. T., 1912, pp. 61–80; ERDÉLYI, László. *Árpád-kori társadalom-történetünk legkritikusabb kérdései*. Budapest : Franklin-Társulat Nyomdája, 1915; and more recent ones GYÖRFFY, György. *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft der Ungarn um die Jahrtausendwende*. Budapest : Akadémiai Kiadó, 1983, pp. 102–116; ZSOLDOS, Attila. Hungarian Society in the ages of the First Millennium. In ZSOLDOS, Attila (ed.) *Saint Stephen and His Country. A Newborn Kingdom in Central Europe: Hungary (Essays on Saint Stephen and his Age)*. Budapest : Lucidus Kiadó, 2001, pp. 81–93; as well as several “identical” works by SOLYMOSI, László. Szent István király társadalma. In FODOR, Zsuzsa (ed.) *Gizella és kora: Felolvasóülések az Árpád-korból 1*. Veszprém : Veszprém Megyei Jogú Város Önk., 1993, pp. 7–15; SOLYMOSI, László. Liberty and Servitude in the Age of Saint Stephen. In ZSOLDOS 2001, pp. 69–79; SOLYMOSI, László. Die Gesellschaft um die erste Jahrtausendwende in Ungarn. In PAPP, Klára – BARTA, János (eds.) *The first Millennium of Hungary in Europe*. Debrecen : DUP, 2002, pp. 38–48; SOLYMOSI, László. Szabadság és szolgaság Szent István korában. In MAYER, László – TILCSIK, György (eds.) *Egy emberöltő Közégek szabad királyi város levéltárában: Tanulmányok Bariska István 60 születésnapjára*. Szombathely : Vas Megyei Levéltár, 2003, pp. 27–35.
- 42 DOMANOVSKY, Sándor. Az Árpád-kori társadalom differenciálódása. In DOMANOVSKY, Sándor. *Gazdaság és társadalom a középkorban*. Gondolat : Budapest, 1979, pp. 222–223.
- 43 See: e.g. ERDÉLYI, László. *Anonymus* korának társadalmi viszonyai. In *Történeti Szemle*, 1914, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 192–211; SZÜCS, Jenő. Társadalomelmélet, politikai teória es történelemszemlélet Kézai Simon *Gesta Hungarorum*ában, 1/2. rész. In *Századok*, 1973, vol. 107, no. 3/4, pp. 569–643 and 823–873.
- 44 This study will not specifically deal with the formation and transformations of the medieval Hungarian nobility. For that, see specific works on “castle warriors” (*iobagiones castri*) and “royal servitors” (*servientes regis*), for example ZSOLDOS, Attila. *A szent király szabadjai. Fejezetek a várjobbágyosság történetéből*. Budapest : MTA Történettudományi Intézete, 1999; VARGA, János. A királyi serviens. In *Levéltári közlemények*, 2006, vol. 77, pp. 1–32.
- 45 On the theoretical concepts of the forms of “feudalism” in the Kingdom of Hungary, see: THOROCZKAY, Gábor. The Appearance of “Feudalism” and “Feudal” Forms of Property in Medieval Hungary. In *Historical Studies Central Europe*, 2021, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 28–43; DYGÓ, Marian. Czy istniał feudalizm w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej w średniowieczu? In *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 2013, vol. 120, no. 4, pp. 667–717.

on social transformations on the estate of the Tihany Abbey in the 13th and 14th centuries. According to him, the situation in agriculture, social mobility and the status of monastic “peasants” began to change in the first half of the 13th century, and these changes lasted for about a hundred years. At that time, social stratification on monastic estates was changing (e.g. former *servi* were being liberated and given land for use) and clearly defined duties of monastic serfs were introduced (e.g. former services and renders in kind were being replaced by monetary payments). The acquisition of new land for the “serfs” of the monasteries during the settlement process of outlying areas went hand in hand with the extensive deforestation of the surrounding countryside.⁴⁶

Research on medieval Hungarian society in the 10th to 13th centuries should also be approached in the broader context of the specific political and power development of the “Carpathian Basin,” in which the Kingdom of Hungary was gradually formed under the rule of the Árpád dynasty. After the adoption of Christianity and the integration of this territory into the community of the Latin West, a “European-style” Hungarian monarchy emerged, and this disrupted the previous political and power structure of this nomadic society.⁴⁷ After the arrival of the Hungarian tribes, there was not only population transfer, which came with conflicts, but also coexistence with the local ethnic classes. In the 10th century, the old Hungarian society was undergoing major changes as a consequence of military incursions into neighbouring countries, slave trade and the formation of local power centres. The transition of the Hungarian tribes from their original nomadic way of life to a settled one also caused certain property differences among free warriors.⁴⁸

46 MAKSAY, Ferenc. Benedekrendi gazdálkodás Tihanyban a XIII–XIV századi struktúraváltozás idején. In KANYAR, József (ed.) *Somogy megye múltjából: Levéltári évkönyv 3*. Kaposvár : Somogy megyei Levéltár, 1972, pp. 3–11. Although the social conditions on the individual monastic estates were already treated well earlier (e.g. ERDÉLYI, László (ed.) *A pannonhalmi főapátság története I: A pannonhalmi Szent-Benedekrendt története I*. Budapest : Stephaneum, A Szent-István-Társulat Nyomdája, 1902, pp. 570–578; ERDÉLYI, László (ed.) *A tihanyi apátság története. A pannonhalmi Szent-Benedek-rendt története 10*. Budapest : Stephaneum Nyomda R. T., 1908, pp. 446–454. See also: ERDÉLYI 1915, pp. 4–5, 69–71), these sets of sources deserve further systematic research and specific analytical studies when describing social transformations on ecclesiastical demesnes. See also: LASZLOVSZKY et al. 2018, pp. 18–21. On the people living on the estates of Benedictine abbeys in the Kingdom of Hungary, see: DRUGA, Marek. *Benediktínske kláštory a ich donátori v arpádovskom Uhorsku*. Bratislava : VEDA; HÚ SAV, 2022, pp. 272–293. On peasants on ecclesiastical estates in medieval Poland, see for comparison GÓRECKI, Piotr. *Economy, Society, and Lordship in Medieval Poland, 1100–1250*. New York; London : Holmes & Meier, pp. 67–192.

47 GYÖRFFY, György. Dem Gedächtnis Stephans, des ersten Königs von Ungarn. In *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 1971, vol. 17, no. 1/2, pp. 1–6; SZÜCS, Jenő. König Stephan in der Sicht der modernen ungarischen Geschichtsforschung. In *Südost Forschungen*, 1972, vol. 31, pp. 17–19, 30–31. On this see: PAROŇ, Aleksander. Medieval Nomadism. In *CURTA* 2022, pp. 62–73.

48 HÓMAN 1912, pp. 61–65; MAKKAI, László. Östliches Erbe und westliche Leihe in der ungarischen Landwirtschaft der frühfeudalen Zeit (10.–13. Jahrhundert). In *Agrártörténeti Szemle (Supplementum)*, 1974, vol. 16, pp. 1–31; GYÖRFFY 1983, pp. 20–59; RÓNA-TAS, András. *Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle Ages. An Introduction to Early Hungarian History*. Budapest : CEU Press, 1999, pp. 354–360; ZIEMANN, Daniel. From Avars and Slavs to the First Medieval Kingdoms in Central Europe: Population and Settlement, 700–1100. In ZEČEVIĆ, Nada – ZIEMANN, Daniel (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Central Europe*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2022, pp. 39–58. See also an earlier work that draws on a Marxist perspective: BARTHA, Antal. Hungarian Society in the Tenth Century and the Social Division of Labour. In *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 1963, vol. 9, no. 3/4, pp. 333–360; or also BARTHA, Antal. *Hungarian Society in the 9th and 10th Centuries*. Budapest : Akadémiai

In the early 11th century, the Kingdom of Hungary was known for its ethnic, religious (Christians, Jews, Muslims, pagans) and linguistic diversity. This was a result of its intensive contacts with foreign countries, the arrival of foreigners at the court of the ruler and their settlement in important power and trade centres.⁴⁹ Foreigners (*hospites*) with different economic and technological experience and different social statuses and legal customs arrived in the Kingdom of Hungary from the neighbouring countries. This manifested itself most prominently in the mass arrival of Walloon and German guests in the 12th and 13th centuries, who played a major role in the birth of medieval towns as they had been traders, craftsmen, miners or peasants in their homelands. The Árpáds granted privileges to these communities of guests to improve their economic status—the formation of the Hungarian burghers⁵⁰—and promoted domestic and foreign trade and a better use of the land in the settlement of higher and mostly woodland areas. These circumstances also contributed to the transformations of medieval Hungarian society, which was socially, legally, religiously and ethnically diverse throughout the reign of the Árpád dynasty.⁵¹

From the mid-12th century onwards, the question of the influence of agriculture and of the social organization of the Slavs⁵² on the Hungarian and other nomadic communities that settled in the “Carpathian Basin” in the late 9th century and over the 10th century has also been a part of the debate on the form and transformations of the medieval Hungarian society. The questions of what

Kiadó, 1975, pp. 83–122. On the military elite and the formation of the medieval nobility, see: POPA-GORJANU, Cosmin. The Rise of the Early Medieval Aristocracy. In CURTA 2022, pp. 158–161; POPA-GORJANU, Cosmin. Changing Elites in Medieval Central Europe. In ZEČEVIĆ – ZIEMANN 2022, pp. 175–186.

- 49 HÓMAN 1912, pp. 76–77; GYÖRFFY 1983, pp. 171–189; BAK, M. János. ‘Linguistic Pluralism’ in Medieval Hungary. In MEYER, A. Marc (ed.) *The Culture of Christendom: Essays in Medieval History in Commemoration of Denis L. T. Bethell*. London : Hambledon Press, 1993, pp. 269–279; BEREND, Nora. *At the Gate of Christendom: Jews, Muslims and ‘Pagans’ in Medieval Hungary, c. 1000–c. 1300*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 42–73, 224–267; BEREND, Nora. Immigrants and Locals in Medieval Hungary: 11th–13th centuries. In BEREND, Nora (ed.) *The Expansion of Central Europe in the Middle Ages*. London; New York : Routledge, 2012, pp. 307–318; FÜGEDI, Erik – BAK, M. János. Foreign Knights and Clerks in Early Medieval Hungary. In BEREND 2012, pp. 319–331. See also: BAGI, Dániel. Cohesion and Conflict between Ethnic Groups in Medieval Hungary. The Thirteenth Century *Gestas* of Master P. and Simon of Kéza. In WISZEWSKI, Przemysław (ed.) *Memories in Multi-Ethnic Societies: Cohesion in Multi-Ethnic Societies in Europe from c. 1000 to the Present 1*. Turnhout : Brepols, 2020, pp. 55–71.
- 50 SZENDE, Katalin. Power and Identity. Royal Privileges to the Towns of Medieval Hungary in the Thirteenth Century. In PAULY, Michel – LEE, Alexander (eds.) *Urban liberties and citizenship from the Middle Ages up to now*. Tier : Porta Alba Verlag, 2015, pp. 27–67; SZENDE, Katalin. *Iure Theutonico?* German settlers and legal frameworks for immigration to Hungary in an East-Central European perspective. In *Journal of Medieval History*, 2019, vol. 45, no. 3, pp. 360–379; BEREND 2012, pp. 309–312; DONECKER, Stefan. Locals and Immigrants in Medieval Central Europe. In ZEČEVIĆ – ZIEMANN 2022, pp. 191–198.
- 51 FÜGEDI, Erik. Das mittelalterliche Königreich Ungarn als Gastland. In SCHLESINGER, Walter (ed.) *Die deutsche Ostsiedlung des Mittelalters als Problem der europäischen Geschichte*. Sigmaringen : Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1975, pp. 471–507; SZÜCS, Jenő. *Az utolsó Árpádok*. Budapest : História-MTA Történettudományi Intézete, 1993, pp. 39–45; KÖRMENDY, Adrienne. *Melioratio terrae: Vergleichende Untersuchungen über die Siedlungsbewegung im östlichen Mitteleuropa im 13.–14. Jahrhundert*. Poznań : Wydawnictwo Poznańskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk, 1995, pp. 19–24. Generally see: PISKORSKI, M. Jan. The Medieval Colonization of Central Europe as a Problem of World History and Historiography. In BEREND 2012, pp. 324–343.
- 52 See: e.g. KUČERA, Matúš. Die Struktur der Bevölkerung in der Slowakei im 10.–12. Jahrhundert. In *Studia historica Slovaca*, 1966, vol. 4, pp. 7–82.

lived on from the Great Moravian period and how the local Slavs⁵³ might have influenced the medieval Hungarian society that was forming in the 10th and 11th centuries—in terms of the coexistence of agrarian and nomadic communities and the emergence of new military and power elites—have still not been sufficiently answered.⁵⁴ Two theories can be mentioned with respect to the birth of the Kingdom of Hungary, and these are largely marked by the traditions and concepts of individual national historiographies. Adherents to the first theory are mostly Slovak historians and some Polish researchers, who claim that the Árpáds drew on the political and power structures of Great Moravia. Their claims are based on the concept of a so-called medieval servant organization and model of the Central European type of state, according to which medieval Bohemia, Poland⁵⁵ and the Kingdom of Hungary embodied certain specific characteristics in the 10th and the 11th centuries that were different from the earlier organization of Western European political formations. However, convincing arguments to support these earlier historiographical concepts are still absent.⁵⁶ Some medievalists believe that it was on the territory of former Great Moravia—which they consider to have been a “proto-feudal” or “feudal state”—that the remnants of the economic and administrative structure of the West Slavic ethnicity survived, especially in the form of the so-called castle system and the economic organization of the prince manors (*curia*, *curtis*, *villa*), and this framework was utilized when power in the Kingdom of Hungary was emerging and consolidating.⁵⁷ Some Hungarian researchers, including János

53 E.g. KUČERA, Matúš. *Slovensko po páde Veľkej Moravy: Štúdie o hospodárskom a sociálnom vývine v 9.–13. storočí*. Bratislava : VEDA, 1974, pp. 34–42, 63–255, 259–334, 368–381. On the Great Moravian society see: KALHOUS, David. Some observations on the social structure of Great Moravia. In KOUŘIL, Pavel (ed.) *The Cyril and Methodius Mission and Europe: 1150 Years Since the Arrival of the Thessaloniki Brothers in Great Moravia*. Brno : The Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, 2015, pp. 40–46.

54 LEDERER, Emma. *Feudalizmus kialakulása Magyarországon*. Budapest : Akadémiai Kiadó, 1959, pp. 18–23. See also: DĄBROWSKA, Elżbieta. Elementy słowiańskie w organizacji służebnej wczesnofeudalnych Węgier. In KUCZYŃSKI, K. Stefan (ed.) *Cultus et cognitio: Studia z dziejów średniowiecznej kultury*. Warszawa : Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1976, pp. 107–114. On the military organization of the Kingdom of Hungary, see: ZSOLDOS, Attila. The First Centuries of Hungarian Military Organization. In VESZPRÉMY, László – KIRÁLY, K. Béla (eds.) *A Millennium of Hungarian Military History*. New York : Social Science Monographs, 2002, pp. 3–25.

55 See e.g. MODZELEWSKI, Karol. La division autarchique du travail à l'échelle d'un État: l'organisation «ministériale» en Pologne médiévale. In *Annales. Economies, sociétés, civilisations*, 1964, vol. 19, no. 6, pp. 1125–1138.

56 On the example of Bohemia, see in detail: RYCHTEROVÁ, Paulína. Aufstieg und Fall des Přemyslidenreiches. Erforschung des böhmischen Früh- und Hochmittelalters in der gegenwärtigen tschechischen Mediävistik. In *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung*, 2007, vol. 34, no. 4, pp. 629–647; ANTONÍN, Robert. Model středoevropského typu středověkého státu jako interpretační problém české a polské mediévistiky. In *Historia Slavorum Occidentis*, 2011, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 65–76; KALHOUS, David. Model státu středoevropského typu. Koncepcie na pomezí tradice a inovace (Ke kontinuitě a diskontinuitě v české historiografii po r. 1948). In *Forum Historiae*, 2014, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 159–173; PETRÁČEK 2017, pp. 34–41; KALHOUS 2018, pp. 32–40, 60–72; SÁROSI, Edit. Rural Land Management in Medieval Central Europe. In ZEČEVIĆ – ZIEMANN 2022, pp. 245–246.

57 RATKOŠ, Peter. Počiatky feudalizmu na Slovensku. K problematike raného feudalizmu v našich krajinách. In *Historický časopis*, 1954, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 253–261, 273–276; KRAJČOVIČ, Rudolf. Počiatky feudalizmu u nás vo svete jazykových faktov. In *Historický časopis*, 1956, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 232–234; KUČERA 1966, pp. 7–82; KUČERA, Matúš. Anmerkungen zur Dienstorganisation in frühmittelalterlichen Ungarn. In *Zborník Filozofickej Fakulty Univerzity Komenského: Historica*, 1970, vol. 21, pp. 113–127; KUČERA 1974, pp. 368–381 (especially, pp. 373–379). Critically on this subject most recently, see: HUDEK, Adam. Great Moravia in Slovak Marxist Historiography.

Karácsonyi and later primarily Marxist historians like Erik Molnár, Emma Lederer and Lajos Elekes, admit to a certain Slavic role in the formation of the Kingdom of Hungary.⁵⁸ Some of them reject the theory of a servant organization, a characteristic economic model of the Slavic principalities in the 9th and 10th centuries, as this theory is based only on local names from the 13th century and for this reason, it has serious methodological flaws.⁵⁹ With respect to the formation of the reign of the Árpáds in the 10th and the 11th centuries, they tend to speak of a specific economic development without the use of any Great Moravian or Slavic models (e.g. Gusztáv Heckenast, György Györffy and others).⁶⁰

A much more important factor influencing the form of medieval Hungarian society in that period was the adoption of Christianity, which significantly disrupted the earlier organization, hierarchy and stratification of free-men.⁶¹ With the spread of Christianity and the formation of new ecclesiastical structures, foreign clergy, scholars, magnates and warriors arrived in the Kingdom of Hungary, especially in the court of the Árpáds, and their presence in the country not only influenced the local elite, but also played a role in the transformation of society.⁶² However, with respect to the consolidation of power of the Árpád dynasty and the transformation processes that were taking place in the 10th and 11th centuries, we should also bear in mind local specificities, as these may have been different from the political and power situation in the West or in neighbouring countries. The presumed “cultural influences” appear to have been adapted to the local conditions and needs.⁶³

In NODL – WĘCOWSKI – ZUPKA 2024, pp. 261–279.

- 58 MOLNÁR, Erik. *A magyar társadalom története az őskortól az Árpádkorig*. Budapest : Szikra Kiadás, 1949, pp. 96–107, 120–124; LEDERER 1959, pp. 95–100; LEDERER 1960, pp. 515–516; ELEKES, Lajos. *A középkori magyar állam története megalapításától mohácsi bukásáig*. Budapest : Kossuth, 1964, pp. 9–63; MAKKAI 1970, pp. 280–281; MAKKAI 1974, pp. 1–31. See also: MOÓR, Elemér. Az Árpád-monarchia kialakulásának kérdéséhez. In *Századok*, 1970, vol. 104, no. 1, pp. 350–382.
- 59 Critically on this, see: KRISTÓ, Gyula. Szempontok korai helyneveink történeti tipológiájához. In *Acta Historica*, 1976, vol. 55, pp. 65–84.
- 60 HECKENAST, Gusztáv. *Fejedelmi (királyi) szolgálonépek a korai Árpádkorban*. Budapest : Akadémiai Kiadó, 1970, pp. 52–60; GYÖRFFY, György. Die Entstehung der ungarischen Burghorganisation. In *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 1976, vol. 28, no. 3/4, pp. 323–324, 347; GYÖRFFY, György. Zur Frage der Herkunft der ungarländischen Dienstleute 1, 2. In *Studia Slavica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 1976, vol. 22, no. 3/4, pp. 39–83 and 311–337; GYÖRFFY, György. *István király és műve*. Budapest : Gondolat, 1977, pp. 437–438; GYÖRFFY 1983, pp. 60–92. See also: KIS, Péter. *A királyi szolgálonépi szervezet a 13. – 14. században*. Szeged : Szegedi Középkorász Műhely, 2010, pp. 10–15. On this subject in detail, see: HUDÁČEK, Pavol. Teoretické východiská pri výskume „štátu“ v ranom stredoveku. In HURBANIČ, Martin – IVANČÍK, Matej – ZUPKA, Dušan (eds.) *Stredná Európa v premenách času: Štúdie k sociálnym dejinám 1*. Bratislava : VEDA, 2023, pp. 191–199.
- 61 VESZPRÉMY, László. Hungary's Conversion to Christianity. The Establishment of Hungarian Statehood and its Consequences to the Thirteenth Century. In *Hungarian Studies Review*, 2001, vol. 28, no. 1/2, pp. 73–87; BEREND, Nora – LASZLOVSZKY, József – SZAKÁCS, Béla Zsolt. The kingdom of Hungary. In BEREND, Nora (ed.) *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy: Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus', c. 900–1200*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 319–368.
- 62 HÓMAN 1912, pp. 76–77; BEREND, Nora – URBAŇCZYK, Przemysław – WISZEWSKI, Przemysław. *Central Europe in the High Middle Ages. Bohemia, Hungary and Poland, c. 900–c. 1300*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2013, pp. 110–101, 147–148, 153, 210. For comparison see: MÜHLE, Eduard. The real and perceived influence of minority groups in Poland in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In *Journal of Medieval History*, 2019, vol. 45, no. 3, pp. 389–404.
- 63 HÓMAN, Bálint. *King Stephen the Saint*. Budapest : Sárkány ltd., 1938, pp. 20–21, 31–32; MAK-

When investigating Hungarian society in the Early and the High Middle Ages, the state of the extant written sources should also be pointed out, as there are far fewer than in Western or Southern Europe. In some cases, this makes it impossible to adequately trace the social transformations and the emergence of new social classes over a longer period of time, e.g. from the 11th to 13th centuries. Nevertheless, compared to medieval Bohemia or Poland, royal law codes and synodal decrees did survive from the Kingdom of Hungary⁶⁴ and these enable us to reconstruct the form of medieval Hungarian society and the matter of the freedom or unfreedom of the various social classes in the 11th and 12th centuries. Very few royal or private charters are extant from this period and many historians have mainly analyzed the earliest legal monuments. In describing the form and the transformations of medieval Hungarian society, they drew on the law code of Stephen I, Ladislaus I and Coloman.⁶⁵

Research into the social and economic history of the Kingdom of Hungary in the Early and the High Middle Ages has certain specificities, as historians work with only a limited number of sources yet have to deal with a large number of interpretations. Therefore, it becomes necessary to verify earlier concepts and try to better explain the terminological ambiguities when labelling the various classes of people. This complex of issues investigated earlier will have to be re-evaluated and new solutions proposed if necessary. The very lack of sources from the 11th and 12th centuries, the inconsistent and often ambiguous terminology that refers to both the upper and the lower social strata and the social transformations still pose considerable complications today. This is partly because foreign scholars active in the court of the Árpáds used Latin based on the written practice of their own cultural milieus. Consequently, the terms they chose may not have always captured the actual form of medieval

KAI 1970, pp. 261–262; GYÖRFFY 1977, pp. 211–229, 246–248; KRISTÓ, Gyula. Die ungarische Staatsgründung. In GLATZ, Ferenc et al. (eds.) *Die ungarische Staatsbildung und Ostmitteleuropa*. Budapest : Europa Institut Budapest, 2002, pp. 39–47. See also: KLANICZAY, Gábor. The Birth of a New Europe About 1000 CE. Conversion, Transfer of Institutional Models, New Dynamics. In ARNASON, P. Johann – WITTRÖCK, Björn (eds.) *Eurasian Transformations, Tenth to Thirteenth Centuries. Crystallizations, Divergences, Renaissances*. Leiden; London : Brill, 2004, pp. 99–129.

64 *Decreta regni mediaevalis Hungariae 1, 1000–1301: The Laws of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary 1, 1000–1301*. Edited by János M. Bak, György Bónis and James Ross Sweeney. Idyllwild : Charles Schlacks, Jr. Publisher, 1999, pp. 1–75.

65 See in detail: JÁNOSI, Monika. *Törvényalkotás a korai Árpád-korban*. Szeged : Szegedi Középkorász Műhely, 1996. The lower number of extant sources from the 11th and 12th centuries can be supplemented with similar types of data from sources of Western European and, especially Bohemian or Polish provenance. On the East-Central European context in general, see: BEREND – URBAŇCZYK – WISZEWSKI 2013, pp. 252–257, 263–278. For example, specifically to the earliest periods to the form of medieval society in Bohemia: TŘEŠTÍK, Dušan. K sociální struktuře přemyslovských Čech. Kosmas o knížecím vlastnictví půdy a lidí. In *Československý časopis historický*, 1971, vol. 19, no. 4, pp. 537–564; CHARVÁT, Petr. Notes on the Social Structure of Bohemia in the 11th–12th Century. In *Památky archeologické*, 1992, vol. 83, pp. 372–384. On this see, the study in this issue of *Forum Historiae* by JANIŠ, Dalibor. The Cultural Position and Stratification of the Bohemo-Moravian Nobility from 12th and 13th Century Provincial Law Sources. See also the earlier detailed overview of Czech medieval social history: VACEK, František. *Sociální dějiny české doby starší*. Praha : Cyrillo-Methodějská knihtiskárna a nakladatelství V. Kotrba, 1905.

Hungarian society in the 11th and 12th centuries.⁶⁶ It should be noted, however, that although the choice of terms to label the various classes was not always uniform in scribal practice, the “scribes” of those times most probably knew what social category they were referring to.

In their research on social classes on royal (e.g. *udvornici*, *condicionarii*, *populi*, etc.), castle (e.g. *civiles*, *cives*, *castelanni*, *castrenses*, etc.) and ecclesiastical estates, historians have encountered a varied mix of dependent servants.⁶⁷ They wondered, for example, what the term *servus* denoted in the 11th to 13th centuries and whether it also referred to otherwise legally or economically dependent servants aside from slaves during that period,⁶⁸ how to interpret *liber* and *libertinus*, who the *ministri* were, what duties they had, etc. The social development and the transformations, which were also reflected in the different labelling of the social classes, should always be taken into account here.⁶⁹ In this context, it is interesting to trace what type of social class was meant by the generic Latin term *rusticus*, which already figured in the law code of Ladislaus I, appeared in charters of the first third of the 12th century⁷⁰ and can even be encountered in the first half of the 13th century.⁷¹ When Béla IV confirmed the

66 HÓMAN 1912, pp. 71–72, 75–76; DOMANOVSKY 1979, pp. 223–225; MAKKAI 1970, pp. 282–283.

67 HECKENAST 1970, pp. 30–32, 73–88; SZÉKELY, György. A világi uralkodó osztály szerkezetének és kultúrájának fejlődése az Árpád-kori Magyarországon. In *Vasi Szemle* 1970, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 103–104; RAPANT, Daniel. *Milites, cives, civiles*. In *Slovenská archivistika*, 1976, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 89–107; GYÖRFFY 1983, pp. 145–159; KIS 2010, pp. 12–18, 27–60. The higher social strata of medieval Hungarian society, who shared power, served at the royal court or held positions in castle county, fought for the king and possessed considerable property are mentioned earliest in the sources under the Latin terms *comites*, *maiores*, *optimates*, *proceres*, *magnates*, see: ERDÉLYI 1907, pp. 58–61; HÓMAN 1912, pp. 66–69; ERDÉLYI 1915, pp. 66–69, 92–96; DOMANOVSKY 1979, pp. 226–231, 248–252; GYÖRFFY 1983, pp. 117–128; HUNYADI, Zsolt. *Maiores, optimates, nobiles*: Semantic Questions in the Early History of the Hungarian Nobility. In SEBŐK, Marcell (ed.) *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU 1996–1997*. Budapest : CEU, 1998, pp. 204–211; RADY, Martyn. *Nobility, Land and Service in Medieval Hungary*. New York : Palgrave, 2000, pp. 28–35; BEREND – URBAŇCZYK – WISZEWSKI 2013, pp. 273–278. Specifically, on particular classes, such as *tavarnici* and *dusnici-exequiales, obsequiatores*, see: BÁCSATYAI, Dániel. Kik voltak a tárnokok? In KÁDAS, István – SKORKA, Renáta – WEISZ, Boglárka (eds.) *Márvány, tárház, Adomány. Gazdaságtörténeti tanulmányok a magyar középkorról*. Budapest : MTA, 2019, pp. 13–49; SOLYMOSI, László. *Szakrális rendeltetésű szolgálonépek az Árpád-kori Magyarországon*. Budapest : Martin Opitz Kiadó, 2022. For comparison see: GÓRECKI, Piotr. *Viator to Ascriptitius: Rural Economy, Lordship, and the Origins of Serfdom in Medieval Poland*. In *Slavic Review*, 1983, vol. 42, no. 1, pp. 14–35.

68 SUTT, M. Cameron. “The Empty Land” and the End of Slavery: Social Transformation in Thirteenth-Century Hungary. In KLEINGARTNER, Sunhild et al. (eds.) *Landscape and Societies in Medieval Europe East of the Elbe*. Toronto : Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2013, pp. 274–287. See also: GYÖRFFY 1983, pp. 160–170. For comparison, see: PETRÁČEK 2017, pp. 101–110.

69 TAGÁNYI, Károly. Vázlatok a régibb Árpád-kor társadalomtörténetéből. In *Társadalomtudomány*, 1922, vol. 2, no. 3/4, pp. 214–215; ERDÉLYI 1915, pp. 48–52, 96–105; LEDERER 1959, pp. 37–44; DOMANOVSKY 1979, pp. 240–244, 248–252; BOLLA, Ilona. A közszabadság a XI–XII században (A *liber* és *libertás* fogalom az Árpád-korban) 1. In *Történelmi Szemle*, 1973, vol. 16, no. 1/2, pp. 1–6, 14–15, 17–19; BOLLA, Ilona. Das Dienstvolk der königlichen und kirchlichen Güter zur Zeit des frühen Feudalismus. In *Annales Universitatis Scientiarum Budapestinensis de Rolando Eötvös nominatae: Sectio Historica*, 1976, vol. 17, pp. 21–25, 27–30; BOLLA, Ilona – HORVÁTH, Pál. Le rôle de la liberté commune dans le développement de la société hongroise médiévale. In *Annales Universitatis Scientiarum Budapestinensis de Rolando Eötvös nominatae, Sectio iuridica*, 1981, vol. 26, pp. 9–12.

70 *Codex diplomaticus ac epistolaris Slovaciae I* (CDSI). Edited by Richard Marsina. Bratislava : VEDA, 1971, p. 67, no. 69.

71 CDSI 1, p. 146, no. 190, p. 268, no. 375; HÓMAN 1912, pp. 74–75; TAGÁNYI 1922, pp. 218–220.

privileges of the Archdiocese of Esztergom in 1256, his charter mentioned the various socio-legal classes of the inhabitants living on the archdiocesan estates at that time. These were *cives*, *nobiles excercituantes*, *condicionarii*, *hospites*, *rustici*, *villani*, and *inquilini*.⁷² It is questionable, however, whether the order of these ecclesiastical “people” also reflected the hierarchy, legal or economic status or the degree of freedom of these various inhabitants of the archdiocese at that time. The last three terms may have referred to peasants in general cultivating ecclesiastical land and most likely paying rent, with no major differences—or none whatsoever—between them.

Slaves occupy a special place in research on Hungarian medieval society and several historians have dealt with them in the past.⁷³ In its interpretation of the terms *servi* and *ancillae*,⁷⁴ which appear in sources from the 11th to 13th centuries, domestic historiography did not question the existence of slavery in the classical, “ancient” sense of the word denoting people considered to be *res* or “movable property,” who could be purchased, sold and inherited and had to perform whatever work or services were demanded from them. The debate was mostly about the extent and scope to which slave labour was used on royal, ecclesiastical and magnate estates, and why these “slaves” suddenly ceased to appear in the sources by the early 14th century. A second, unanswered question is how to explain the fact that the sources even contain references to *servi* who had their own house and family, cultivated land under fixed conditions and were more similar to economically dependent peasants than to “real slaves.” Their status, or rather the extent of their agricultural and service burden, also depended on whether they lived directly in an economic centre, in an important manor or on an outlying estate of a landlord. Today, historians tend to presume that depending on the period and the type of property, the above term did not always refer to real “slaves.” In fact, from the 11th to the late 13th centuries, in the context of the economic and demographic changes and improvements in the living conditions of unfree people—the sources record frequent flights or unauthorized departures of *servi* to other estates—slaves (*manumissio*) were being liberated and subsequently becoming freemen with personal liberties (*libertini*).⁷⁵ The use of slave labour gradually disappeared over this period, and this took place first on royal and ecclesiastical estates and later on the estates of the magnates. Therefore, the term *servi* sometimes also referred to so-called semi-free people (i.e. people with personal liberties but without the right to move) who were already cultivating rented land and had clearly defined duties but retained their old name. This was how landlords tried to keep people on their estates and make the best use of economic production on their demesnes.⁷⁶

72 CDSI 2. Edited by Richard Marsina. Bratislava : Obzor, 1987, p. 389, no. 559.

73 For earlier literature and a detailed overview of the perspectives on this subject, see: SUTT, Cameron. *Slavery in Árpád-era Hungary in a Comparative Context*. Leiden; Boston : Brill, 2015, pp. 64–71; SUTT 2022, pp. 265–269.

74 On *servi* in the earliest Árpáadian law codes and charters, see: SUTT 2015, pp. 54–108.

75 HÓMAN 1912, pp. 78–80; HÓMAN, Bálint. *Geschichte des ungarischen Mittelalters I: Von dem ältesten Zeiten bis zum Ende des XII Jahrhunderts*. Berlin : Verlag Walter de Gruyter & Co, 1940, pp. 215–218.

76 SUTT 2015, pp. 210–213; SUTT 2013, pp. 275–276, 281–287; SUTT 2022, pp. 268–275.

When investigating medieval Hungarian society and its transformations, it is also very important to consider what estates the economically dependent lower strata lived on. That is, whether these were royal, castle, ecclesiastical or “private” estates of the magnates, because that is what the social designation, the legal or economic status and the degree of freedom of the various classes of the population often depended on. These types of estates differed not only in their organization, but also in their rules for land use and for the fulfilment of defined duties and services.⁷⁷ Consequently, the living conditions of subordinate or dependent people were also different, and socio-economic changes manifested themselves differently and often with a considerable time lag. It is generally accepted that royal and ecclesiastical estates were more “advanced” and therefore changes occurred on them much earlier and more frequently than on the private estates of the magnates, where older forms of economy—including the use of slave labour—persisted longer. This can be seen in the case of the aforementioned classes of people labelled *servi* who, depending on the type of estate (royal, ecclesiastical, magnate), lived and farmed in very different conditions and therefore cannot all be considered indiscriminately as “slaves” in the classic sense of the word.⁷⁸

In Western Europe, the 11th and 12th centuries saw major socio-economic changes, which “took place,” or rather manifested themselves, in the Kingdom of Hungary only in the 13th century. Hungarian medieval sources outline a relatively dynamic picture of social transformations from the turn of the 12th century onwards as a number of new categories of privileged and semi-free social strata emerged. The source material from this period provides historians with sufficient resources for qualitative research on social structure and documents the organization of society and its transformations much better. This period of prominent social changes—some historians even speak of a “social revolution” or high medieval transformation—has many characteristics that suggest developments from previous centuries. These earlier processes, accelerated by major economic transformations (technical innovations in agriculture, the arrival of foreign guests—*hospites*,⁷⁹ the settlement of the country, the formation of medieval towns, etc.) and population growth,⁸⁰ manifested themselves fully and culminated only in the 13th century. Prominent shifts took place in this period

77 MAKKAI 1970, pp. 275–277. For a comparison on the example of medieval Bohemia see: PETRÁČEK 2017, pp. 80–101, 138–172, 213–231.

78 HÓMAN 1912, pp. 79–80; LEDERER 1959, pp. 23–37, 44–65; BOLLA 1976, pp. 15–17; BOLLA, Ilona. *A jogilag egységes jobbágyosztály kialakulása Magyarországon*. Budapest : Akadémiai Kiadó, 1983, pp. 137–172; SUTT 2015, pp. 210–213; SUTT 2022, pp. 268–269, 273–275. Specific to this, see: SZÚCS, Jenő. Megosztott parasztság—egységesülő jobbágyság. A paraszti társadalom átalakulása a 13. században (Első rész). In *Századok*, 1981, vol. 115, no. 1, pp. 4–14. On peasant farmsteads and families, see: SZÚCS, Jenő. Háztartás és család a 13. századi Magyarország szolgai állapotú parasztnépességében. In *Történelmi Szemle*, 1983, vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 136–158. Specifically, on royal servants and *condicionarii*, see: BOROSY, András. Adatok az udvar- és erdőispánságok történetéhez az Árpád-korban. In *Agrártörténeti Szemle*, 1977, vol. 19, no. 3/4, pp. 325–336; KIS 2010, pp. 12–15, 21–24.

79 For comparison, see: PETRÁČEK 2017, pp. 126–131.

80 What is meant is mainly the period of the late 12th and the first half of the 13th centuries, see: FÜGEDI, Eric. Pour une analyse démographique de la Hongrie médiévale. In *Annales. Economies, société, civilisations*, 1969, vol. 24, no. 6, pp. 1299–1312.

in land ownership on royal and ecclesiastical estates as, contrary to the previous periods, the land was now worked mainly by free, semi-free or economically dependent people with clearly defined duties and a fixed land rent.⁸¹ In the case of Hungarian monasteries, for example, improvements in the status of *servi* were not based on theological assumptions about Christian doctrine, as some earlier researchers suggested,⁸² but were connected to the practical need of a better economic use of the land and the introduction of monetary payments instead of renders in kind and labour.⁸³

The reasons that led to these processes were mainly related to a change in the way of life of the subordinate strata—people with personal liberties and economically dependent classes—and this applied primarily to land ownership, land use and a modification of the duties and services due to the landlord. In this connection, new property differences within the same social classes also emerged.⁸⁴ At the same time, increased social mobility can also be observed as on the one hand, some freemen became economically dependent serfs (*jobbágy* in Hungarian), whereas some would fall back among the lower strata.⁸⁵ On the

81 LEDERER, Emma. A legrégebb magyar iparososztály kialakulása 1. In *Századok*, 1928, vol. 62, no. 1/3, pp. 505–506; LEDERER, Emma. Az Aranybulla-kori társadalmi mozgalmak a Váradi *Regestrum* megvilágításában. In *Annales Universitatis Scientiarum Budapestinensis de Rolando Eötvös nominatae, Sectio iuridica*, 1957, vol. 1, pp. 84–92, 95–97, 101–102; SOLYMOSI, László. *A földesúri járadékok új rendszere a 13. századi Magyarországon*. Budapest: Argumentum Kiadó, 1998; BAK, M. János, Servitude in the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary (A Sketchy Outline). In FFREEDMAN – BOURIN 2005, pp. 387–388; SUTT 2013, pp. 275–276. See also: BAK 2010, pp. 3–6, 8–10; KIS 2010, pp. 12–15.

82 HÓMAN 1912, p. 78.

83 SUTT 2013, p. 275; SUTT 2022, pp. 273–275.

84 ERDÉLYI 1915, pp. 76–80, 132–139; DOMANOVSKY 1979, pp. 219–222. An important source that documents social stratification and disputes over the status of castle and royal servants in the first third of the 13th century is the Oradea Register (*Regestrum Varadinense*), a collection of records of the so-called trial by ordeal (*judicium Dei*), which were held before the representatives of the Oradea Chapter. The local scribes were most probably well acquainted with the various social classes and clearly distinguished them using contemporary and up-to-date Latin names in their register. RAUSCHER, Rudolf. O regestu varadínském. K dějinám božích soudů v Uhrách. In *Bratislava. Časopis Učené společnosti Šafaříkovy*, 1929, vol. 3, pp. 307–326; LEDERER 1957, pp. 84–105. On this see, the study in this issue of *Forum Historiae* by LYSÝ, Miroslav. On the Social Structure of the Kingdom of Hungary According to the Records of the *Regestrum Varadinense*.

85 On the formation of the so-called serfdom from the non-noble elements of society (free economically dependent peasants) as a consequence of social changes from the latter half of the 13th century onwards, which culminated in their legal “unification” in the first half of the 14th century, see the earlier but still valuable texts of SZÉKELY, György. A parasztság és a feudális állam megszilárdítása Károly Róbert korában. In SZÉKELY, György (ed.) *Tanulmányok a parasztság történetéhez Magyarországon a 14. században*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1953, pp. 19–79; SZÉKELY, György. A jobbágyság földesuri terheinek növelése és az erőszakapparátus további kiépítése. In SZÉKELY 1953, pp. 276–319. For details, see: SZÚCS 1981, pp. 3–65; SZÚCS, Jenő. Megosztott parasztság–egységesülő jobbágyság. A paraszti társadalom átalakulása a 13. században (Másaodik–befejező–rész). In *Századok*, 1981, vol. 115, no. 2, pp. 263–319. For research on peasants in medieval Poland for comparison see: e.g. GÓRECKI, Piotr. Medieval Peasants and their World in Polish Historiography. In ALFONSO, Isabel (ed.) *The Rural History of Medieval of Medieval European Societies: Trends and Perspectives*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2007, pp. 253–291; GAWLAS, Sławomir. Peasants in Piast Poland prior to Settlement with German Law as a Historical Problem. In *Historical Annals*, 2012, vol. 78, pp. 1–45. See also: MODZELEWSKI, Karol. *Chłopi w monarchii wczesnopiastowskiej*. Wrocław; Warszawa; Kraków; Gdańsk; Łódź: Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich; Wydawnictwo PAN, 1987. On this topic, using medieval Bohemia as an example, see the earlier two-volume work: GRAUS, František. *Dějiny venkovského lidu v Čechách v době předhusitské 1, 2*. Praha: Státní nakladatelství politické literatury, 1953–1957 or an even older work: KROFTA, Kamil. *Přehled dějin selského stavu v Čechách a na Moravě*. Praha: Nákladem vlastním, 1919, pp. 3–86.

other hand, thanks to their military merits and service, some of the castle or royal servants were socially elevated to the so-called “lesser conditional nobility” or directly to “royal servitors” (*servientes regis*) and occasionally even “real or true” nobles of the kingdom (*puri/veri nobiles* or *nobiles regni*).⁸⁶

According to Gyula Kristó, the major economic and social changes of the 13th century bear witness to the fact that for the first time in its history, the Kingdom of Hungary approached Western Europe. Because of the so-called “new institutions” (*novae institutiones*) introduced at a “revolutionary” pace during the reign of Andrew II and the subsequent reforms of Béla IV, all these had a significant impact on the majority of the society and also manifested themselves in the transformations of social structures. Moreover, the important changes that took place in warfare and armaments, to which the more frequent grants of royal estates as rewards for loyalty and military services were also related, should also be borne in mind.⁸⁷

Several 13th century sources illustrate the multifaceted nature of social changes, which manifested themselves in the migration or flight of *servi*, semi-free, or economically dependent people to other estates (so-called internal migration),⁸⁸ as well as in the increased social mobility of predominantly free or dependent classes on the ruler’s initiative. Thirteenth-century charters bear witness to a number of disputes between social classes, and most of these arose because of confusion over their legal or economic designation. In the territory of castle county (*comitatus*), disputes over the resolution of the “unclear” status of local people trying to improve their position—mainly by gaining a more favourable freedom—were common in the first half of the 13th century. For some classes of “serfs,” these conflicts manifested themselves after the Mongol invasion (1241–1242) as a consequence of population decline and the destruction of several villages. Moreover, it is important to note that social transformations in this period were also strongly influenced by the large-scale settlement of the country and the arrival of predominantly German-speaking communities from abroad.⁸⁹

86 ERDÉLYI 1915, pp. 11–14, 105–110, 144–168; HÓMAN 1940, pp. 215–218; DOMANOVSKY 1979, pp. 262–266; SZÉKELY 1970, pp. 109–110; RADY 2000, pp. 28–38, 45–61, 79–95.

87 KRISTÓ, Gyula. Modellváltás a 13. században. In *Századok*, 2001, vol. 135, no. 2, pp. 473–487. See also: KRISTÓ, Gyula. II. András király „új intézkedései“. In *Századok*, 2001, vol. 135, no. 2, pp. 251–300; SZÉKELY 1970, pp. 109–111; DOMANOVSKY 1979, pp. 215–219, 244–248. For a comparison of socio-economic transformations, issues of noble property, medieval settlement, etc. on the example of medieval Bohemia, see: KLÁPŠTĚ, Jan. *The Czech Lands in Medieval Transformation*. Leiden; Boston : Brill, 2012, pp. 327–350, 459–470. On the example of medieval Poland see: e.g. GÓRECKI, Piotr. The Duke as Entrepreneur: The Piast Ruler and the Economy of Medieval Poland. In HUDSON, John – CRUMPLIN, Sally (eds.) *“The Making of Europe”: Essays in Honour of Robert Bartlett*. Leiden; Boston : Brill, 2016, pp. 96–122. See also: SÁROSI 2022, pp. 249–252.

88 On the right to free movement, see in detail: ERDÉLYI 1915, pp. 81–83; TAGÁNYI 1922, pp. 221–222; SOLYMOSI, László. A jobbágyköltözésről szóló határozat helye a költözés gyakorlatában. In *Agrártörténeti Szemle*, 1972, vol. 14, no. 1/2, pp. 1–40; DONECKER 2022, pp. 199–201.

89 LEDERER 1957, pp. 84–95; VÁCZY, Péter. A szimbolikus államszemlélet kora Magyarországon. In *Minerva*, 1932, vol. 11, pp. 123–126; BOLLA 1973, pp. 7–8, 12–17; BOLLA 1976, pp. 31–32; SOLYMOSI 1972, p. 20; SZÜCS 1993, pp. 16–32, 39–45; ZSOLDOS 1999, pp. 9–28; SUTT 2013, pp. 281–285.

We should bear in mind, however, that although the 13th century was characterized by prominent socio-economic changes, this image may be related to a certain extent to the increased use of writing and the survival of written sources. Thanks to the royal chancellery and the spread of written culture, record-keeping of the legal, property and family affairs of the various population classes increased significantly. As legal documents, charters gained much more importance in this period.⁹⁰ From this perspective, the 13th century does appear to have been revolutionary as a lot more prominent social transformations took place at that time than in the previous centuries. While the significance of this period cannot be denied, it should also be pointed out that changes had already been taking place in the 11th and 12th centuries, although there are considerably fewer written documents describing these presumed processes from the Hungarian environment.⁹¹ According to György Székely, the 12th century was a revolutionary period in agricultural innovations,⁹² changes in land ownership and military armaments, and these were related to the emergence of the upper and wealthy strata (the so-called *nobiles*) from among the broader class of freemen and to the improved status of royal and ecclesiastical servants.⁹³ The importance of social transformations in these periods is indicated by the fact that it was in the early 13th century that more diverse categories of people with different social statuses appeared more frequently in the sources, and this points to their earlier socio-legal development. This often led to considerably confusing terminology.⁹⁴ Social categories were becoming unified and more complex, involving several classes of freemen. The designations of magnates, the broader nobility (middle and lesser *nobiles*), privileged classes and royal serfs were changing, with some earlier terms acquiring different meanings. In the early 13th century, people who had previously had a subordinate status and a lower degree of freedom could enjoy a more favour-

90 FÜGEDI, Erik. “*Verba volant...*”: Oral Culture and Literacy among the Medieval Hungarian Nobility. In FÜGEDI, Erik. *Kings, Bishops, Nobles and Burghers in Medieval Hungary*. Edited by János M. Bak. London : Variorum Reprints, 1986, pp. 2–25; ADAMSKA, Anna. The Introduction of Writing in Central Europe (Poland, Hungary and Bohemia). In MOSTERT, Marca (ed.) *New Approaches to Medieval Communication*. Turnhout : Brepols, 1999, pp. 177–189. On medieval Hungarian sources, see: HUNYADI, Zsolt. “...scripta manent” Archival and Manuscript Resources in Hungary. In SZENDE, Katalin (ed.) *Annual of Medieval Studies at the CEU 1997–1998*. Budapest : CEU, 1999, pp. 230–242.

91 ERDÉLYI, 1915, pp. 48–50; DOMANOVSKY 1979, pp. 222–226. For example, urbanization and the spread of long-distance trade also influenced the transformations of the medieval society and the economy, see: TÓZSA-RIGÓ, Attila. A 11.–12. század fordulója, a kereskedelmi forradalom, mint korzokolási lehetőség kezdete. In BÁRÁNY, Attila – PÓSÁN, László (eds.) *Európa és Magyarország Szent László korában*. Debrecen : Magyarország a középkori Európában Kutatócsoport, 2017, pp. 238–247.

92 On the so-called agrarian revolution in the 12th and the 13th centuries, see: MAKKAI 1974, pp. 31–53. See also: GUZOWSKI, Piotr. Karolińska rewolucja gospodarcza na wschodzie Europy (do końca XII wieku). In DALEWSKI, Zbigniew (ed.) *Granica wschodnia cywilizacji zachodniej w średniowieczu*. Warszawa : Instytut Historii PAN, 2014, pp. 115–167; SÁROSI 2022, pp. 242–248. On technological innovations and the expansion of watermills on monastic estates in the Kingdom of Hungary, see: DRUGA, Marek. Benediktíni a počiatky vodných mlynov v Uhorsku (K otázke kláštorného hospodárenia v 11.–12. storočí). In *Historický časopis*, 2021, vol. 69, no. 3, pp. 387–416.

93 SZÉKELY 1970, pp. 109–110. See also: DOMANOVSKY 1979, pp. 230–231; SZÜCS 1981, pp. 18–25.

94 BOLLA 1973, pp. 5–6.

able social status.⁹⁵ It is mainly from this period that several charters issued by the king, ecclesiastical institutions or nobles have survived, in which they granted or regulated the rights and duties of their servants, “serfs” and guests. Depending on the conditions, the settlement situation and ownership rights on the individual estates, some privileges were extensive, whereas others were merely refinements and modifications of the original customs. Due to disputes with neighbours or the complaints of some “serfs” about being unjustifiably burdened with renders in kind, taxes or services, even their earlier rights and duties would often be laid down.⁹⁶

In Hungarian historiography, the question of freedom and unfreedom was of primary importance for the assessment of social stratification in the 11th to 13th centuries. Several medievalists who investigated society in the period of Stephen I drew on the general division to *liberi* and *servi*, i.e. the free and the unfree. This basic difference in terms of origin and status could also be expressed in opposites: the rich vs. the poor (*dives–pauper*), the wealthy vs. the commoners (*valens–vulgaris*) or simply descriptively as the major ones vs. the minor ones (*maiores–minores*).⁹⁷ In the context of the period, *liber* was a person who had personal liberties, was not owned by anyone and possessed the right to fight. Within this large class, certain differences could be seen in the first third of the 11th century, which were most probably related to the earlier, pre-1000 development and stemmed mostly from the wealth and the social status of the various classes of freemen (such as the *comites*, the *milites*, etc.).⁹⁸ It was these new property relations that gradually created the preconditions for later socio-legal differences within the initially uniform class of freemen.

Social mobility also existed in this period, since a *liber* could lose his freedom in certain cases and a *servus* could gain it. While a move between these two classes was possible, it is questionable to what extent and how often these social transfers actually took place.⁹⁹ According to Sándor Dománovszky, the earliest domestic laws of the first third of the 11th century in fact document the earlier transformations of medieval Hungarian society—new ways of life, differences in property, the adoption of Christianity by the social elite, etc.—which were apparently met with dissatisfaction by the free warriors with the implementation of these “innovations” from above. He also suggests that these prominent social transformations were very intense during

95 BOLLA 1973, pp. 1–3, 9–10, 15–18; SZŰCS 1981, pp. 25–41; HUNYADI 1998, pp. 204–211; HALÁSZ, B. Éva. *Iobagio castri–nobilis castri–nobilis regni*. Castle warriors–castle nobles–noblemen. The development of a social stratum in county of Križevci. In *Banatica*, 2016, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 119–134.

96 BOLLA 1976, pp. 25–26. On serfdom, see: BAK 2010, pp. 11–14.

97 See: e.g. GYÖRFFY 1983, pp. 117–144; SOLYMOSI 2001, pp. 74–75. For comparison see: GÓRECKI 1983, pp. 14–15, 19–22.

98 On the social group of *milites* in the oldest Hungarian law codes, see: LADÁNYI, Erzsébet. *A miles Magyarországon és Európában Szent István korában*. In ALMÁSI, Tibor et al. (eds.) *Studia professoris–professor studiorum: Tanulmányok Érszegi Géza hatvanadik születésnapjára*. Budapest : MOL, 2005, pp. 211–213. On this see, the study in this issue of *Forum Historiae* by ONDREJKA, Andrej. *Milites* in the Kingdom of Hungary Society from 11th and 12th Century Sources.

99 BOLLA – HORVÁTH 1981, pp. 11–12. For comparison, see: PETRÁČEK 2017, pp. 111–126 and 200–213.

the reign of Stephen I. Although these processes may have begun earlier, the disintegration of previous social structures was first recorded in writing only during Stephen's reign.¹⁰⁰

Some earlier researchers held the opinion that the *liberi* had initially been a uniform and indivisible class of freemen. According to some others (Károly Tagányi, Bálint Hóman, György Györffy), this social category also included various classes of so-called semi-free men as early as during the reign of Stephen I.¹⁰¹ According to most historians, however, the basic division of *liberi* and *servi* applied only in the first half of the 11th century. Towards the end of the 11th and in the early 12th centuries, individuals appear in the sources who cannot clearly be assigned to any of these two classes. Researchers believe that from that time onwards, medieval Hungarian society was internally divided into free warriors ("nobles"), semi-free people and slaves. From the early 12th century on, some freemen had to pay a special tax, the so-called "pennies of freemen" (*denarii liberorum*, later *liberi denarii*), which implies that the term *liber* no longer denoted only completely free people, but also the semi-free. According to Ilona Bolla, only freemen living and working on foreign—mostly royal or ecclesiastical—land paid this tax, while freemen cultivating their own land were exempt from it.¹⁰² The difference between these two classes, within the same legal status, thus lied in property. Although these new property relations and the extent of wealth had already been developing the conditions for an internal differentiation of freemen, these transformations were not immediately reflected in the use of different terminology in the sources of the time.¹⁰³

According to the legal code of King Ladislaus, medieval Hungarian society was no longer divided into the free and the unfree, but into *nobiles* and *ignobiles*. This new division reflected the fact that only the higher and wealthy social class of freemen with their own property and better armaments, who fought for the king and held positions in the ruler's court and castle county, were referred to as *nobiles*. This newly formed community of freemen no longer included other classes of *liberi* with personal liberties but no wealth, most of whom did not fight. Because of this new categorization of freemen, it became necessary to distinguish these "higher-ranking" and wealthy *liberi-nobiles* from the other common *liberi-ignobiles* in the sources.¹⁰⁴

100 DOMANOVSKY 1979, pp. 230–231, 236–240, 248–252.

101 HÓMAN 1912, pp. 61–80; TAGÁNYI 1922, pp. 216–218, 221–222; HÓMAN 1938, pp. 23–24; GYÖRFFY 1977, pp. 47–86; GYÖRFFY 1983, pp. 109–116.

102 BOLLA 1973, pp. 5, 7–8, 10–11, 17–21. See also: ERDÉLYI 1915, pp. 72–75. Freemen paid a special tax, *liberi denarii*, from the time of King Coloman onwards. Some historians claim that it was actually a tax for exemption from military service. HÓMAN 1912, pp. 74–75; ERDÉLYI 1915, pp. 7–14; HÓMAN 1940, pp. 217–218; DOMANOVSKY 1979, pp. 231–236, 244–252, 258–266; BOLLA 1973, p. 19; BOLLA – HORVÁTH 1981, pp. 15–16; RAPANT, Daniel. *Liberi denarii*. In *Slovenská archivistika*, 1976, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 109–123.

103 ERDÉLYI 1907, pp. 45–51, 58–61; HÓMAN 1912, pp. 74–76; ERDÉLYI 1915, pp. 7–10; TAGÁNYI 1922, pp. 216–218, 221–222; HÓMAN 1938, pp. 23–24; DOMANOVSKY 1979, pp. 230–231, 236–240; BOLLA 1973, pp. 5–8, 10–11, 17–21; BOLLA 1976, pp. 21–30; BOLLA – HORVÁTH 1981, pp. 9–14; SOLYMOSI 2001, pp. 69–75; LADÁNYI 2005, pp. 211–213.

104 ERDÉLYI 1907, pp. 58–61; ERDÉLYI 1915, pp. 91–96; SZÉKELY 1970, pp. 109–110; BOLLA 1973, pp. 12–13; BOLLA – HORVÁTH 1981, pp. 11–12, 17–18; LADÁNYI 2005, pp. 216–217;

The freedom of the royal *condicionarii*—the semi-free royal servants farming the dynastic estates of the Árpáds—illustrates the social transformations of the 13th century.¹⁰⁵ The social status of these royal people came with certain rights and duties, and the term *liberi homines* did not denote only completely free men (holders of the so-called *plena, perpetua, and aurea libertas*)¹⁰⁶ who could move without any restrictions, but also a wider circle of people with different degrees of freedom. The plurality of the meanings of *libertas*¹⁰⁷ is well-known as in that period, the term denoted not only the completely free but also people who enjoyed so-called limited, relative, incomplete or conditional freedom, or those who had a better social status within their community. The most important and most distinctive criterion that differentiated the completely free men from the other free people was their right to free movement, i.e. the possibility to move anywhere at any time. Royal *condicionarii* did not achieve the level of complete freedom and had only bound or conditional freedom, which was related to their use of dynastic or castle estates. Although they enjoyed personal liberties, they did not own land, as they only cultivated rented royal land hereditarily and had to render special services in return. Unlike unfree people (slaves, servants, and maids), they maintained a better social status because they used the land under clearly defined conditions. For this rented land, they paid land tax, made renders in kind and rendered various services according to their expertise or specialization. The king or his representatives (counts, *comites* etc.) were not allowed to demand anything from them beyond their agreed obligations. If the ruler exempted his *condicionarii* from rendering services, they remained on the same land but could leave at any time, depending on the stipulated rules. One of the most common ways to improve the socio-legal status of royal *condicionarii* was to grant them special privileges or exemptions, thus changing their servant status (*servilis condicio*) to completely free (*libera condicio*).¹⁰⁸

Conclusion

The present introductory text on the forms and transformations of medieval Hungarian society in the 11th to 13th centuries aims to briefly introduce the basic literature on the topic, outline research possibilities and limits, and point out the terminological pitfalls in the interpretation of medieval Hungarian sources. Even though several medievalists have already carried out research on medieval Hungarian society, the topic is still open to new possibilities of treatment. However, in addition to analyzing the sources, potential researchers will

SOLYMOSI 2001, p. 79; BEREND – URBAŃCZYK – WISZEWSKI 2013, pp. 277–278.

105 For comparison see: GÓRECKI 1983, pp. 25–31.

106 ERDÉLYI 1915, pp. 76–80; BOLLA – HORVÁTH 1981, pp. 17–18, 21–22.

107 On freedom in general, see: PATTERSON 2007, pp. 36–47.

108 VÁCZY 1932, pp. 110–114, 123–126, 133–139; BOLLA 1973, pp. 19–23, 26–27; BOLLA, Ilona. A közszabadság a XIII században (A liber és libertás fogalom az Árpád-korban) 2. In *Történelmi Szemle*, 1974, vol. 17, no. 1/2, pp. 1–3, 5–7, 9–10, 14–17, 22–23; BOLLA 1976, pp. 15–19, 29–34; SOLYMOSI 1972, pp. 3–4, 12–13, 16–17, 26–29, 34–35; ZSOLDOS 1999, pp. 9–28; SOLYMOSI 2002, pp. 40–48; VARGA 2006, pp. 38–40.

also have to deal with earlier historiographical concepts and re-evaluate some of the remaining influential hypotheses of some researchers. Due to the low number of extant sources from the 11th to 13th centuries, research on medieval Hungarian society offers a good opportunity to treat this topic comparatively within a broader East-Central European context too.