

INTRODUCTION

The current issue of *Annales Universitatis Apulensis. Series Historica* is the result of a call for papers inviting historians of the Middle Ages and the modern period to reflect upon the phenomenon of corruption and anticorruption during these historical intervals. The topic is not unconnected with the prominence of corruption in today's media and politics. Over the last decade or more, in Romania, news about corrupt officials being prosecuted or condemned for accepting bribes or other acts of corruption seems to have become almost commonplace. The ubiquity of the phenomenon of corruption in contemporary public life suggests there is value in asking questions about the behaviour of former power wielders and decision makers, a subject that has seldom been examined systematically from a historical perspective in Romania. The call for papers yielded several important contributions examining various aspects of corrupt practices in medieval and modern contexts, ranging geographically from the Italian peninsula to Transylvania.

An examination of the secondary literature in the field of medieval history opens this issue of the journal. Cosmin Popa-Gorjanu surveys the works of various academic medievalists examining behaviours and practices associated with corruption or anti-corruption measures. The works surveyed cover a wide variety of political actors and institutions from the Early to Late Middle Ages across Europe, exploring political and administrative practices and works of moral education touching on corruption. Many of the works deal with corruption by government officials, judicial authorities and local political actors. Some works, such as William Chester Jordan's, present evidence of anti-corruption campaigns; his study of the French monarchy during the second half of the thirteenth century describes measures taken to discipline government officials by forbidding the acceptance of gifts, conducting inquiries into questionable activities, auditing accounts, and rewarding good administrators. Moreover, he argues that the selection of members of the administrative apparatus seems to have relied on the reputation of individuals. Other works, particularly those dealing with the political and judicial situation in fourteenth and fifteenth century England, stress the tensions between royal power, the king's dignitaries, judicial officers and local landowners in the exercise of justice. Authors examining the functioning of elites in the system known as "bastard feudalism" highlight a number of weaknesses in governmental organization which allowed almost uncontrollable abuses – from petty corruption to outright abuse of power and extortion by officials and judges. While it seems that a slow process of professionalization to some extent limited the ability of corrupt judges to retain power, suspicion of corruption among judges continues to appear in the literature in fifteenth century. Other scholars examining the Italian and German contexts

also point to a complex dynamic between exigencies of good government, political struggle, and cultural and customary values which informed the behaviour of social and political actors.

The second study, by Oana Toda, surveys a rich tranche of primary source material connected with the functioning of the road system in medieval Transylvania. Through examining documented complaints, and extrapolating from royal decrees aimed at curbing corrupt practices, Toda identifies several types of corruption associated with roads, including disregard of privileges, rights and exemptions; abuses of power; illegal tolls; avoidance of customs and market tolls; and negligence of road maintenance duties. The article focuses on the analysis of four main aspects. The first is the proliferation of illegal tolls, outlining the main changes to royal administrative system in thirteenth century Hungary, whereby the supervision of roads and tolls was gradually privatized, that is, transferred to private landowners who appointed their own toll officials. This move contributed to a proliferation of illegal tolls, which subsequent royal decrees in 1248, 1290 and 1298 attempted to control. This section also addresses the issue of excessive toll fees, which led to complaints from the nobility and, later, from urban merchants, eventually triggering a royal order granting toll exemptions to the nobility and religious houses from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. Toda offers an interesting discussion of the ineffectiveness of royal decrees on illegal fees, which the landowners consistently blamed on lower officials, such as the toll collectors. The second problem the article explores is that of illegal roads, namely the use of routes which avoided toll points in order to transport merchandise, examining the regulations issued in order to combat such practices, which themselves became new sources of abuse by landlords' officials. The third aspect, on corrupt local collectors and accountable state officials, focuses on Saxon towns' administration of trade routes to Wallachia, detailing abuses generated by the unlimited authority granted by the royal administration to these cities citing various examples of inquiries into illegal taxation and corrupt behaviour by toll officials. The last area of discussion concerns road maintenance and the dysfunction caused by neglect of related duties, such as repairs to bridges. Toda offers the hypothesis that the risk of such neglect may be tied to the privatization of some portions of the road system. The article highlights the breadth of corrupt practices, with those accused in the sources ranging from servants (*familiares*) of the King of Hungary and Voivode of Transylvania to county officials, all sheltered from punishment by their positions in the political hierarchy.

The third article, written by Peter Labanc, focuses on the role of nepotism/favouritism in career progress of members of a middle-ranking noble family in northern Hungary (today Slovakia) from the thirteenth to fifteenth century. Through genealogical and prosopographical examination of the lords of Stefkovce over four generations, Labanc identifies a few examples of nepotism

when members of this family were promoted into various ecclesiastical posts in the early stages of their careers. He notes, however, that unlike the members of the magnate class, for whom family support could override requirements of competence and skill, the lords of Stefkovce's successful careers as clerics or notaries of the king and royal judges were warranted by their professional abilities and education.

The fourth article, by Nada Zecevic, discusses three cases of abuses of power committed by Venetian officials in the region of Albania Veneta during the first two decades of the fifteenth century. Zecevic argues that, apart from their own personal leanings, a complex of socio-political conditions contributed to corruption among officials. In one case, the Baiulus of Durazzo, Pietro Arimondo, was tried for torturing and killing four people, two of whom were accused of bribe taking and forging documents. The excessive harshness of his methods led a quick trial and his subsequent condemnation to two years in jail and a permanent ban on holding office. Arimondo was also involved in dealings with enemies of Venice, and some of his acts, such as confiscating the goods of a merchant from Ancona, threatened to endanger Venice's diplomatic relations with its neighbours. Another example deals with Benedetto Contareno, Rector of Scutari from July 1408 to November 1410, who stood accused of condemning an innocent man for rebellion, cruelty, triggering rebellions through excessive taxation of the rural population, failing to pay mercenaries' salaries on time, and privatizing the Republic's salt revenues (which he used to pay his own debts). After receiving complaints about these problems, the Republic conducted a two-year inquiry into his abuses. Although he resigned from his position, Contareno failed to hand in his account registers, and ordered his subordinates to abstain from assisting the authorities in the trial against him. Zečević then examines the contrasting case of Paolo Quirino, Count and Captain of Scutari in 1414 and 1415, who apparently did not commit any excesses but was nevertheless tried on thirteen charges of abusive conduct and violence in 1416. He was accused of predatory sexual acts and scandalous sexual behaviour, and also held accountable for violence committed by his escort and the tyrannical deeds of his illegitimate son, Antonello, to whom he had conceded power. Zečević analyses the networks of friends and relatives that the officials appointed by Venice in Albania Veneta brought with them, many of whom sought private gain at the expense of the reputation and revenues of the Republic. To contain such behaviour, the Republic frequently changed the officials and employed anti-corruption measures.

Fabrizio Conti deals with the reform project proposed by Venetian Camaldolese hermits Pietro Querini and Paolo Giustiniani, who authored a *Libellus* for Pope Leo X during the Fifth Lateran Council. The analysis focuses on the fifth part of the *Libellus*, particularly on its assertion that lust for power is one of the main obstacles to the reform of the Church. The hermits advised the

pope to restrain the “love of dominance of a few mighty and their uncontrolled fascination for committing robberies” in order to return peace to the Christian community. The Church’s internal drawbacks, such as lack of education, superstition and vices among the clergy, were also tackled, as was the need for reform among the higher ranks of the Church, namely the College of Cardinals. To support this last cause, the two authors pointed out that the sinful behaviour of the cardinals was providing bad role models for the laity. To counteract financial corruption and exploitation of the local population, the hermits proposed rationalising the revenues of cardinals, suggesting a structure controlled by the pope which guarantees their sustenance through an annual pension. The related problem of nepotism, with cardinals supporting family members’ access to ecclesiastical and secular posts, is also addressed. The two hermits also criticized the accumulation of benefices, a practice which enabled cardinals to amass revenues from archbishoprics, bishoprics, parish churches, monasteries and pensions. Querini and Giustiniani urged the pope to put an end to the pluralism of benefices. To conclude, Conti shows that the hermits’ reform plans were not actually applied, and even before the Council of Trento, renewed plans for Church reform, namely Gasparo Contarini’s *Consilium de emendanda ecclesia* (1537), had already been published, focusing on the same points, especially the management of Church property.

These studies are followed by three more articles on eighteenth-century corruption in Transylvanian circles: in the Saxon town of Sibiu, the Armenian town of Dumbrăveni and in the Romanian Greek Catholic Church.

The first of these studies, by Sever Cristian Oancea, examines nepotism, clientelism and the monopolization of office by a narrow elite in Sibiu, a Saxon Transylvanian city, from 1700 to 1750. The author examines the organization of Sibiu’s town council through the lens of social networks of relatives, friends, neighbourhoods, and legal and economic connections. The article focuses on specific members of the town council and examines their strategies for social mobility, identifying various patterns which reveal the importance of kinship and other ties which served to deliver a monopoly over council membership into the patriciate’s hands for much of the period under investigation.

Greta Monica Miron addresses the expectations and practices of levying revenues by the Uniate clergy in the diocese of Făgăraş in the eighteenth century. She focuses on the various taxes that priests expected from their parishioners for their services (such as baptism, burial, marriage, divorce and stole fees) and the relationship between these practices and the conduct recommendations of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The analysis employs a variety of sources, complaints, investigations and political debates regarding the fees charged by the Uniate clergy from their parishioners and their own ranks. As the author shows, multiple actors were involved and interested in the regulation of revenues of the Uniate clergy, including the church hierarchy, the Transylvanian estates and the

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imperial authorities. Many of the attempts at limiting the fees requested by Transylvanian and Viennese authorities were in fact resisted by the Uniate hierarchy on the grounds that there was inequality between the Roman Catholic and the Uniate clergy, and that the income of the latter would be diminished. Nevertheless, some of the examples chosen by Miron show attitudes among the Uniate clergy that verged on outright greed and a lack of charity towards their parishioners, which the political authorities attempted to mitigate. The article also analyses the dynamic relationship between the enforcement of Roman Catholic rules concerning marriage and resistance from the lower clergy and parishioners, who preferred the customary practices related to the administration of this sacrament by the church, a situation which created lasting conditions for bribe-taking in the Uniate Church.

Ela Cosma's investigation deals with two aspects of the social life of Transylvania during the eighteenth century, namely a land dispute between the privileged Armenian town of Dumbrăveni and the neighbouring village of Şaroş, and the practices of Bethlen nobles in acquiring landed estates (using their own political and administrative positions) and the harsh treatment of their tenant peasants. The examination of the first case reveals the strategies of various actors attempting to win their case through various manoeuvres, including promises of bribes. Cosma draws upon secondary and primary sources on the history of Dumbrăveni, the patrimonial situation of the town, and claims to landownership by noble Transylvanian families to some properties within its territory. The key issue which triggered the dispute was the regulation of the Târnava riverbed in an area contested by the town and the village of Şaroş. The inhabitants of Dumbrăveni took advantage of Emperor Joseph II's visit to their town in 1773 to convince him that they were threatened by flooding, and won his support for their plan to dig a new riverbed: a plan which would have brought them more land at the cost of Şaroş village. Cosma uses the memoirs of a Mediaş official, Michael Conrad von Heydendorff, to fill in details of the case, and also focuses on another aspect disclosed in Heydendorff's memories, namely abuses committed by officials of the Transylvanian nobility against their tenant peasants and the real estate affairs of the Bethlen family. The case analysed in this article is that of the tenant peasants of Boian, who complained to the emperor about the maltreatment they were suffering at the hands of an official of Miklos Bethlen.

In the *Miscellanea* section of this issue is published an article by Vladimir Agrigoroaei on the place and date of the French translation of *Barlaam* from Mount Athos. He disputes a recent interpretation which attempted to demonstrate that that translation was not made in thirteenth-century Mount Athos, but in eleventh-century Constantinople.

This issue of *Annales Universitatis Apulensis. Series Historica* ends with a review in Romanian of a recent collective volume edited by Patrick Gilli, and entitled *La pathologie du pouvoir: vices, crimes et délits des gouvernants*. The

volume was the result of two conferences organized in 2011 and 2013 at the Center of Medieval Studies of Paul-Valéry University of Montpellier. Although six articles in this volume deal with aspects of Roman history regarding the vices of power holders, the rest of fifteen studies focused on various aspects of power excesses during the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period. Another major project offering a historical perspective on anti-corruption unfolded from 2012 to 2016, under the supervision of Guy Geltner as principal investigator at the University of Amsterdam, within the ANTICORRP project of the Framework Programme 7. Its results are expected to be published soon.

I would like to thank the authors for accepting the invitation to reflect on the topics proposed in the call for papers and for sending their contributions to *Annales Universitatis Apulensis. Series Historica*. The peer reviewers deserve particular praise for their attentive and constructive efforts during the process of evaluation of the papers: Mária Pakucs, Șerban Marin, Géza Hegyi, William Bleiziffer. Special thanks are due to Ginevra House for her keen and diligent work on the improvement of English style and language of the articles.

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