



THE STATUS OF THE COUNTS OF CILLI AS PRINCES OF THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

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More than a hundred years after Franz Krones first published *Die Freien von Saneck und ihre Chronik als Grafen von Cilli*,¹ the story of this famous family still fascinates both historians and their audience.² What is it that draws our attention so intensely to a family whose presence on the stage of greatness lasted a little more than a century, a mere act in a play? Was it perhaps that the short moment that was given to them on the great wheel of time shone brighter than the stars? Indeed, the history of the House of Cilli³ is a success story rarely seen. Rising from the obscurity of lesser nobility in 1341,⁴ in less than a century the Cilli climbed the mountain of medieval hierarchy with meteoric speed, nearly reaching the pinnacle before exiting the stage in a Shakespearean manner.⁵ Yet in this short interlude they left a trace in history that still inspires historians today, so that the amount of literature written on them could fill whole bookshelves. But, as Heinz Dopsch said thirty years ago and Štih repeated in 1998, the Cilli were and are “ein Forschungsproblem.”⁶

One of the many questions still left unresolved in the history of this immensely successful family is the question of their princely rank. The Hungarian

¹ Franz Krones v. Marchland, *Die Freien von Saneck und ihre Chronik als Grafen von Cilli, Part 1: Die Freien von Saneck und der erste Graf von Cilli, Part 2: Die Cillier Chronik* (Graz: Leuschner & Lubensky, 1883) (henceforth: Krones, *Chronik*).

² This article is based on: Robert Kurelić, “The Uncrowned Lion. Rank, Status, and Identity of the Last Cilli,” MA thesis (Central European University, Budapest, 2005).

³ The family is called differently in different countries. I have decided to adopt the usual German and English form.

⁴ Heinz Dopsch, “Die Freien von Sannegg als steirische Landherren und ihr Aufstieg zu Grafen von Cilli,” (henceforth: Dopsch, *Freien*) in *Celjski grofje, stara tema—nova spoznanja* (The Counts of Cilli, old topic—new knowledge), ed. Rolanda Fugger Germadnik (Celje: Pokrajinski muzej, 1998), 23–36 (henceforth: Germadnik, ed., *Celjski grofje*).

⁵ See Johannes Grabmayer, “Das Opfer war der Täter,” *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 111 (2003): 286–316 (henceforth: Grabmayer, “Opfer”).

⁶ For a review of the literature see Heinz Dopsch, “Die Grafen von Cilli – ein Forschungsproblem,” *Südostdeutsches Archiv* 17/18 (1974/1975): 9–49 (henceforth: Dopsch, “Grafen”), and Peter Štih, “Celjski grofje – še vedno raziskovalni problem?” (The counts of Cilli – still a research problem?) (henceforth: Štih, “Celjski grofje”) in Germadnik, ed., *Celjski grofje*, 11–22.



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king and emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Sigismund of Luxemburg, elevated Frederick II and Ulrich II Cilli to the rank of imperial princes in 1436, granting them an independent principality in the process. Peter Štih has analyzed the legal position of the principality of Celje and concluded that it ceased to exist with the Cilli–Habsburg treaty in 1443. According to this treaty the Cilli were left only with their princely name (“fürstlichen namen”), which was an unprecedented event in the history of the empire. What effect did this have on their rank as princes? Were the Cilli accepted in their social and political environment as befitted their rank or were they seen as somewhat inferior due to the absence of an independent principality?

The world of medieval nobility was governed by two main ideas: rank and the preservation of dignity.⁷ Rank, expressed by prestige and social standing,⁸ was the basis of a hierarchical society in which the terrestrial kingdom mirrored its heavenly counterpart.⁹ Social standing is, however, a matter of perception, and it was often difficult to decide who outranked whom in any particular situation. A “measurement” unit for the nobility, a product of the age and the ideals of chivalry, was honor. It was the central determining factor for social interaction in medieval society and can be understood as the “ideal capital of public respect that a person enjoys based on his social standing and his political role.”¹⁰ As William Ian Miller says, “A person’s honor was fragile and easily violated; its state of health was closely monitored by his (and even her) sense of shame and a keen ability to discern whether others envied him more than he envied them.”¹¹ Taking all this into account it can be assumed that the loss of an

⁷ Gerd Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers. Political and Social Bonds in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: University Press, 2004), 62 (henceforth: Althoff, *Family*).

⁸ Raymond van Uytven, “Showing off One’s Rank in the Middle Ages,” (henceforth: Uytven, “Showing Rank”) in *Showing Status: Representations of Social Positions in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Wim Blockmans and Antheun Janse (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 19–34, here: 19 (henceforth: Blockmans, ed., *Showing Status*).

⁹ See Wim Blockmans and Esther Donckers, “Self-Representation of Court and City in Flanders and Brabant in the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries,” in Blockmans, ed., *Showing Status*, 81–113, here: 81.

¹⁰ Jean Marie Moeglin, “Fürstliche Ehre im Spätmittelalterlichen Deutschen Reich,” in *Verletzte Ehre, Ehrkonflikte in Gesellschaften des Mittelalter und der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Klaus Schreier and Gerd Schwerhoff (Cologne: Böhlau, 1995), 77–91, here: 77 (henceforth: Moeglin: “Fürstliche Ehre”). See also Kiril Petkov, *The Kiss of Peace, Ritual, Self, and Society in the High and Late Medieval West* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 213–218.

¹¹ William Ian Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 144.



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independent principality can be interpreted as an assault against the integrity and status of the Counts of Cilli.

The “Lehenspyramide” in the Holy Roman Empire

The high and late medieval Holy Roman Empire rested on the principle known as the “Heerschildordnung.”¹² The word “Heerschild” originally stood for an armed military unit (Langob. “arischild,” Nord. “herskjöldr”), but after the end of the twelfth century it came to be used in close association with the system of vassalage itself. It symbolized several things: the military contingent of a senior, his right to have vassals, and to command them in battle—in short, the ability to be a part of the noble hierarchy (Ger. “Lehenfähigkeit”). In the Saxon Mirror the “Heerschildordnung” represents a legal division of estates according to rank into a pyramid of seven levels. The first “Heerschild” was reserved for the emperor; the clerical princes occupied the second grade, and then came the secular princes, followed by the free lords (“Grafen” and “Edelfreien”). These four shields represented the aristocracy. The lower nobility, the vassals of the lords, occupied the fifth (“Ritter”) and the sixth (“Edelknechte”) shields.¹³ The seventh seems to have been considered only partially a Heerschild as its members only had a passive “Lehenfähigkeit,” meaning that they could only be vassals, but not have their own.

The practical consequence of the “Heerschildordnung” was the prohibition of the so-called lowering of one’s own shield. This meant that one could only possess fiefs from those who ranked higher in the pyramid without endangering one’s own position in it. This development was the result of a strategy to hinder the formation of alliances between the most powerful men of the realm against the emperor, keeping the crown vassals bound to the king

¹² See *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, vol. 4, no. 2 (Zurich: Artemis, 1989), 2007–2008, and Heinrich Mitteis, *Lebensrecht und Staatsgewalt* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachf., 1933), 437–441 (henceforth: Mitteis, *Lebensrecht*).

¹³ For example Emperor Frederick III ordered all “Fürsten, Herren, Rittern, Knechten” in 1440 not to disturb the archbishop of Salzburg in his patronage rights over the foundation of Reichersberg; Heinrich Koller and Paul-Joachim Heinig, ed., *Die Urkunden und Briefe des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs in Wien, Abt. Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv: Allgemeine Urkundenreihe, Familienurkunden und Abschriftensammlungen (1440–1446)*, Regesten Kaiser Friedrichs III. (1440–1493), vol. 12, (Vienna: Böhlau, 1999), 55 (henceforth: Koller, *Regesten*).



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alone.¹⁴ Originally the secular and clerical princes belonged to the same shield, but they were separated as a consequence of the concordat of Worms. Since the clerical princes were positioned higher in the pyramid, this was a legal loophole that enabled the secular princes to hold fiefs from them without diminishing their own rank.¹⁵

Another development was the formation of the so-called “Reichsfürstenstand,”¹⁶ the estate of princes of the empire composed of the second and the third “Heerschild.” In order to qualify for this rank one had to hold fiefs directly from the empire and command vassals of one’s own. This was the beginning of territorial lordship, as the princes received jurisdictional, mining, and coinage rights in their territories.¹⁷ At the same time it was decided that new princes could only be elevated with the permission of all of the other members of the “Reichsfürstenstand.” This left the fourth “Heerschild,” the free lords, somewhere in between. Though members of the aristocracy, they were subject to the jurisdictional authority of the territorial princes, which prevented them from forming direct relationships with the emperor. Only those that achieved the status of “Reichsfürst”¹⁸ or became “reichsunmittelbar”¹⁹ could escape the

¹⁴ This was done similarly in France under the term *ligesse*. This prohibition later evolved to include the forbidding of alliances against the emperor and the empire. See Mitteis, *Lebensrecht*, 434.

¹⁵ For example the counts of Görz, who had been members of the “Reichsfürstenstand” from the second half of the fourteenth century held a number of possessions from the patriarchate of Aquileia. See Peter Štih, “Goriški grofje” (The Counts of Görz), in Peter Štih, *Srednjeveške goriške študije* (Medieval Görzian Studies) (Nova Gorica: Goriški muzej, 2002), 61–88, here: 70. The counts of Cilli also held a number of holdings from the patriarchate which they received as a fief. See Božo Otorepec, *Centralna kartoteka srednjeveških listin* (Central database of medieval charters) (Ljubljana: Zgodovinski inštitut Milka Kosa Znanstvenoraziskovalni center Slovenske akademije znanosti in umetnosti), August 16, 1436, Celje (henceforth: CKSL), and Dopsch, “Grafen,” 19.

¹⁶ Mitteis, *Lebensrecht*, 432–444.

¹⁷ Mitteis, *Lebensrecht*, and Peter Štih, “Die Grafen von Cilli, die Frage ihrer landesfürstlichen Hoheit und des Landes Cilli,” *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 110 (2002): 67–98, here: 85 (henceforth: Štih, “Grafen”).

¹⁸ Although Mitteis states that both the counts and free lords were members of the fourth “shield,” to my knowledge only counts could be elevated to the rank of princes, which suggests that the count was a higher rank. The counts of Schauenberg thus progressed from “Edelfrei” to “Graf” in 1300 as did the Cilli in 1341. See Alois Niederstätter, *Österreichische Geschichte. 1400–1522: das Jahrhundert der Mitte: an der Wende vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit* (Vienna: Ueberreuter, 1996), 206 (henceforth: Niederstätter, *Geschichte*).



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pressure of the princes, but, as Heinrich Mitteis states, the fate of the count families was already sealed at the end of the twelfth century.²⁰ Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that to ascend to the status of prince was a probably the goal of every ambitious family of the fourth “Heerschild.”

Forms of Address

Each grade of the “Heerschild” had its appropriate form of address as a symbol of rank and standing. This was an attribute that a person would add before the title and name of a noble when addressing him or her. Originally, for the higher nobility down to the fourth degree of the “Heerschildordnung,” the terms “nobilis” or “edel” were used. However, after the end of the fourteenth century a greater diversification took place and new terms were introduced to better reflect changes in society. The lower nobility, which had previously used only the titles “ritter” or “edelnacht” without a special form of address started adding “nobilis” or “edel” to their titles. They did so in an attempt to try to erase the differences between themselves and the higher nobility. As a response the higher nobility developed new forms of address at the beginning of the fifteenth century in order to maintain the distinction: “hochgeboren” and “wohlgeboren.”²¹ “Hochgeboren” or “illustris” was reserved for the members of the “Reichsfürstenstand,” whereas “wohlgeboren” applied to the fourth “Heerschild” and then only to counts.²² In the case of princes the form of address was also combined with the word “prince” itself to produce “hochgeboren fürst”²³ or “illustris princeps,”²⁴ and for a count it was “wohlgeboren

¹⁹ A member of the fourth shield who receives his fief from the king, and is outside the jurisdictional authority of a prince, but is not a member of the “Reichsfürstenstand.” See *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, vol. 7 (Munich: Artemis, 1995), 645.

²⁰ Mitteis, *Lebensrecht*, 441.

²¹ Joseph Morsel, “Die Erfindung des Adels. Zur Soziogenese des Adels am Ende des Mittelalters – das Beispiel Frankens,” in *Nobilitas, Funktion und Repräsentation des Adels in Alteuropa*, ed. Otto Gerhard Oexle and Werner Paravicini (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 312–375, here: 320–321 (henceforth: Morsel, “Erfindung”).

²² I have found no example in which “wohlgeboren” would be used for someone of lesser rank than count.

²³ “hochgeboren fursten herczog Friedrichs, and hochgeboren mein genedigen heren graff Friedrich vnd graff Vlreich sein sun grauen ze Cilli vnd in dem Seger.” CKSL, May 25, 1436.

²⁴ “illustres principes et domini domini Fridericus et Vlricus eius natus dei gracia Cillie Orthenburge Zagorieque etc comites,” CKSL, July 29, 1439.



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graf.”²⁵ The previously used “nobilis” and “edel” became associated with the lower nobility and later evolved into a new form which stood for the nobility in general—“Adel.”²⁶ One example can be seen in the notaries, who adopted the new term for lower nobility.²⁷ The conservative papal chancellery, however, still used “nobilis vir,” even for princes.²⁸

Another important difference that distinguished the members of the “Reichsfürstenstand” from the other nobles was the *dei gracia* or “von Gottes Gnaden,” the part of their *intitulatio* that symbolized the divine origin of their rule. Originally it was reserved only for kings as it was understood that only sovereigns ruled “by the grace of God.” However, with the formation of territorial lordships in the empire, the actual power slowly passed from the hands of the emperor to the princes. This change was reflected in the fact that they started legitimizing their power by mimesis, adopting the royal “Herrschafts-propaganda,” and consequently also the *dei gracia* in their titles.²⁹

²⁵ “dem wolgeporn herren Graf Johannsen von Schaunberg,” József Teleki, ed., *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon* (The Age of the Hunyadis in Hungary), vol. 10 (Budapest: Emich Gusztáv Könyvnyomdája, 1853), 237 (henceforth: Teleki, *Hunyadiak*); “wolgeboren unsern besunder lieben graf Sigmunden von Crabaten,” Blažena Rynešová, ed., *1438–1444, Listár a listinář Oldřicha z Rožemberka 1418–1462* (Archive of Ulrich of Rosenberg 1418–1462), vol. 2 (Prague: Nákladem Ministerstva školství a národní osvěty, 1932) 93, March 4, 1441, and 94, April 4, 1441 (henceforth: Rynešová, *Rosenberg 2*); “der wolgeborn vnser lieber swager graf Friedrich graff zu Ortenburg,” CKSL, August 16, 1436, Celje. One exception I have found is Ulrich of Rosenberg, who is addressed by Ulrich Cilli as “wohlgeboren,” and “magnificus,” but without a title. See Blažena Rynešová and Josef Pelikán, ed., *1449–1462, Listár a listinář Oldřicha z Rožemberka 1418–1462* (Archive of Ulrich of Rosenberg 1418–1462), vol. 4 (Prague: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1954) 274, August 18, 1450 (henceforth: Rynešová, *Rosenberg 4*), and Blažena Rynešová, ed., *1445–1448, Listár a listinář Oldřicha z Rožemberka 1418–1462* (Archive of Ulrich of Rosenberg 1418–1462), vol. 3 (Prague: Nákladem Ministerstva školství a národní osvěty, 1937) 461, February 16, 1446 (henceforth: Rynešová, *Rosenberg 3*).

²⁶ Morsel, “Erfindung,” 321.

²⁷ Engelhart Auersperg, a lesser noble from Carniola, is addressed by the notary as “nobilis vir.” CKSL, February 13, 1450, Celje.

²⁸ “Nicolaus episcopus servus servorum dei. Dilecto filio nobili viro Udalrico comiti Cilie” CKSL, January 19, 1451, Rome.

²⁹ This mimesis was not absolute as some borders were still preserved between the emperor and the princes. The religious legitimization of their rule was done in a more humble manner, using a parable of the Staufens emperors which proclaimed the princes as the pillars of the empire. Thus they were not legitimized individually, but instead acquired their function in their totality, as the entire estate. See Heinrich Fichtenau, “Arenga, Spätantike und Mittelalter im Spiegel von Urkundenformeln,” *Mitteilungen des*



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“Fürstliche trewe” / “fürstliche würde”

Being recognized and addressed by others as a prince or “fürst” and adding *dei gracia* to the *intitulatio* was one step in the process of assertion as a prince. Another was using the word “fürst” in charters with the person addressed being the issuer himself. This usually came in compound form with the words “ere,” “trewe” or “würde” and was used in the *corroboratio* of a charter. After 1338 the members of the “Reichsfürstenstand” replaced the usual oath form “bei unsern treuwen” with “bey unsern fürstlichen Eren,” or “bei unsern fürstlichen trewen,” and by the fifteenth century it was used throughout the empire. Simultaneously, “fürstliche wirdigkeit” appears in the arenga of the charters.³⁰ Jean Marie Moeglin concludes that the addition of the word “fürst” articulated the increased self-awareness of the princes, whose rank in the empire was legally defined, contrary to the example of France.³¹ However, there still seems to have been some sort of barrier, perhaps psychological or social, that prevented newly elevated princes from using this word for themselves, as seen in the example of the Burgraves of Nürnberg, who only adopted the formula twenty-five years after their elevation to princely status.³²

The Counts of Cilli as “Reichsfürsten”

The Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and King of Hungary, Sigismund of Luxemburg, elevated the Counts of Cilli, Frederick II and Ulrich II, to the rank of princes of the empire on November 30, 1436, in Prague.³³ This was in accordance with the traditional policies of the Luxemburg dynasty, which hoped to weaken its greatest rival, the Habsburgs, by severing the link between them

Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 18 (1957): 172 (henceforth: Fichtenau, “Arenga”).

³⁰ *Fürstliche wirdigkeit* was used by Duke Rudolf IV in order to stress his equality with the prince-electors of the empire. See Moeglin, “Fürstliche Ehre,” 81.

³¹ Moeglin, “Fürstliche Ehre,” 85.

³² The burgraves of Nürnberg, the Zollern family, were elevated to the status of princes in 1363 by Charles IV, but they were long after addressed by the imperial chancellery as *spectabilis/edel wohlgeboren* and not *illustris/durchlechtig hochgeboren*. It was only after the other princes started addressing them appropriately to their rank that they adopted the formula *fürstliche trewe*, the first example of which is noted in 1388. Moeglin, “Fürstliche Ehre,” 82.

³³ For details see Štüh, “Grafen,” 84–85, and Dopsch, “Grafen,” 23.



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and their vassals.³⁴ Sigismund's chancellery was very precise with the proper forms of address, as can be seen from the charter:

...die durchleuchte furstyn frawn Barbaran romische vnd zu Vngern etc kunigyn des **wolgeborn Hermans grauen zu Cilli etc** seligen tochter, vnsers lieben swehers vnd getruen zu vnserer gemahl gerucht haben ze nemen ... nach abgang des wolgeborn Friedrichen grauen ze Ortenburg ... auch der egenant **graff Vlrich an statt des hochgeboren Friedrichs grauen zu Cilli zu Ortenburg vnd in dem Seger** vnsers lieben swagers vnd **fursten** sun mit zwein aufgerakten banyeren, ains der grafschafft zu Cilli, das ander der grafschafft zu Ortenburg vnd Sternberg...³⁵ (emphasis mine)

Whereas in a letter to the chapter of Čazma only five days earlier Sigismund had addressed the Cilli as *spectabilibus et magnificis Friderico et Vlrico Cilie et Zagorie comitibus*,³⁶ he changed to “hochgeboren” during the charter, symbolizing with this the very moment of their elevation. He also ordered that they should be called “fürsten” and addressed appropriately by all the princes of the empire, prescribing a fine of two hundred marks of gold for those who refused to do so. Furthermore, since Hermann had died in October 1435, Sigismund called him only “wohlgeboren,” unlike the patriarch of Aquileia, who in the summer of 1436 had already honored the entire family with “hochgeboren” (but not “fürst”).³⁷ Written evidence shows that Frederick and Ulrich added *dei gracia*/ “von Gottes Gnaden” to their title as a symbol of their new status.³⁸ But what was the response from their social and political environment?

In the Holy Roman Empire it seems that almost all those who had contacts with the Cilli accepted their new rank immediately upon proclamation and acted accordingly. One of the first was Count Henry of Görz, also a “Reichsfürst,” who concluded an inheritance treaty with the Cilli on March 14,

³⁴ See Štíh, “Grafen,” 73–74.

³⁵ CKSL, November 30, 1436, Prague.

³⁶ CKSL, November 25, 1436, Prague.

³⁷ CKSL, August 16, 1436, Celje. However it should be noted that the Cilli were the patrons of the patriarch since he was forced out of Aquileia by the Venetians, so that addressing them with a higher honorific could be considered as a form of flattery.

³⁸ “Wir Fridreich von gotes gnaden graf ze Cili ze Ortenburg und in dem Seger etc,” CKSL, April 2, 1437, Celje; “Fridericus dei gracia Cillie, Ortenburge, Zagorieque etc. comes,” CKSL, December 21, 1437, Krapina; Ivan K. Tkalčić, ed., *Izprave: 1400–1499*, Monumenta historica liberae regiae civitatis Zagrabiae, vol. 2 (Zagreb: Brzotisač K. Albrechta, 1895), 135 (henceforth: Tkalčić, *MCZ* 2).



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1437, calling them “die hochgeborn fürsten.”³⁹ Another such example mentioned in the charters of the Cilli archives is that of Michael, burgrave of Maidburg and count of Hardeck in 1449.⁴⁰ But not everyone joined the choir. Since the formation of a Cilli principality directly endangered the territorial interests of the Leopoldinian branch of the Habsburgs,⁴¹ in whose lands the newly formed principality was situated, Duke Frederick V of Habsburg (Emperor Frederick III from 1440) did not accept the elevation and, consequently, did not address the Cilli as princes. A draft of a letter by the duke to Frederick Cilli from August, 1437, shows that he avoided the title altogether by calling them “Edler und lieber getrewer von Cili.”⁴² In the armistice treaty from August, 1440, he refers to them simply as “die von Cilli.”⁴³ That the Cilli were insulted by this is clear from their chronicle:

und der fürst von Oesterreich wolt ihn ihr würdigkeit als fürsten an seinen briuen nicht schreiben und ihren titul nicht hocher setzen weder vor, das verdross die von Cilli also, das von desselben tituls wegen mancherley schreiben ihn geschach, und wardt ein grosser unwillen zwischen ihnen und kamen zuletzt darumb in krieg, der lang zwischen ihnen gewehrte.⁴⁴

A year later, in September, 1441, the Cilli issued a charter prolonging the armistice treaty and this time, for the first time since their elevation, they omitted the *dei gracia* from their title. Instead, for themselves they used simply “grauen zu Cili etc,” while according Frederick full respect.⁴⁵ This was a clear

³⁹ CKSL, March 14, 1437, Gornji Dravograd. Another example is from Henry, the prior of the convent of Gornji Grad (Ger. Oberburg), CKSL, April 5, 1443. I have named only the examples that I could find in the sources before August 16, 1443, when the feud between Frederick of Austria and the Cilli ended and he recognized them as princes.

⁴⁰ “Wir Michel von gots gnaden des heilign römischen reichs burgraf ze Maidburg vnd graf ze Hardegk etc... den hochgeboren fürsten vnsern lieben ohaim graf Fridreichen vnd graf Vlreichen seinen sun grauen ze Cily ze Ortenburg vnd in dem Seger etc ban in Windischen landen,” CKSL, January 6, 1449.

⁴¹ The Habsburgs divided into two branches in 1379. The Albertinian branch received Austria, and the Leopoldinian branch the remainder of the possessions. See Niederstätter, *Geschichte*, 140–141.

⁴² CKSL, August 23/24, 1437, Wiener Neustadt.

⁴³ Koller, *Regesten*. 58.

⁴⁴ Krones, *Chronik* 2, 84.

⁴⁵ CKSL, September 4, 1441. He is addressed as “alldurchleuchtigst furst und herr...unser gnedigster herr”



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sign that the Cilli were at the time a weaker party in the feud, the reason for which is probably to be found in the events that took place in Hungary.

Reconciliation with Wladislas III Jagiełło

Albert II (Albert V of Austria), who was Sigismund of Luxemburg's heir in Hungary, Bohemia, and the empire was also related to the Cilli through his marriage to Elizabeth of Hungary, daughter of Barbara Cilli. Although Frederick V requested that Albert II arbitrate in the matter of the Cilli's new rank,⁴⁶ the king seems to have followed in Sigismund's footsteps. As early as February 24, 1438, he referred to Ulrich as *fidelis noster illustris princeps Vtricus Cylie, Ortenburgensis et Zagorie comes*⁴⁷ and even appointed Ulrich governor of Bohemia with great powers.⁴⁸

In the civil war that tore Hungary apart after the death of King Albert in 1439, the Cilli took the side of the widowed queen Elizabeth, and her infant son Ladislaus V, against the Polish pretender, Wladislas III Jagiełło.⁴⁹ Wladislas was supported by the majority of the Hungarian nobility, whereas the richest magnates, including the Serbian despot and the Garai, were in the Habsburg camp. The forces were evenly matched until the battle of Báticasék, in which John Hunyadi and Nicholas Újlaki defeated the last army Elizabeth could muster from the central and southern parts of the kingdom. This seems to have been the turning point of the war, when most of Elizabeth's supporters surrendered and made peace with Wladislas. The Cilli submitted on April 19, 1441, near Szombathely which, according to Vjekoslav Klaić, "finally tipped the scales in Wladislas' favor."⁵⁰

In exchange for a pledge of loyalty and his acceptance as king, Wladislas recognized the Cilli as *vera atque legitima membra corone regni Hungarie*.⁵¹ This was an

⁴⁶ Štih, "Grafen," 89–90.

⁴⁷ Tkalčić, *MCZ* 2, 142.

⁴⁸ Dopsch, "Grafen," 24. Albert wrote to Rosenberg informing him that he would send "Oldřich hrabé Cilský, švagr náš věrný milý" Rynešová, *Rosenberg* 2, 19, 1438, October 27. Already the term "hrabé," great lord instead of "pán," lord, shows that Albert was honoring Ulrich's status as a prince.

⁴⁹ Pál Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, tr. Tamás Pálosfalvi, ed. Andrew Ayton (London, New York: I.B.Tauris, 2001), 280–283 (henceforth: Engel, *St. Stephen*), and Vjekoslav Klaić, "Povijest Hrvata" (History of the Croats), vol. 3 (Zagreb: Nakladni Zavod Matice Hrvatske, 1975), 209–221 (henceforth: Klaić, *Povijest*).

⁵⁰ Klaić, *Povijest*, 216.

⁵¹ CKSL, April 19, 1441, near Szombathely.



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important achievement for the Cilli. It not only legitimized their status as Hungarian nobles,⁵² but it also awarded them special status comparable to another great man, Despot George Branković, whom King Albert had called *principale regni huius membrum* in 1439.⁵³ This special status was evident at the assembly in Buda in the summer of 1442. In the list of witnesses of the decrees Frederick II Cilli is ranked immediately after the Serbian despot, before the other secular magnates of Hungary.⁵⁴ Moreover, Wladislas addresses them in the charter as *illustres principes Fridericus et Vlricus Cillie, Ortemburge et Zagorie comites*.

Seeing that one Hungarian king had elevated them and his successor had honored them with the title, there was little reason for Hungarian nobles to deny them the appropriate form of address, even if the acceptance of foreign titles need not have been automatic. During the conflict between the Cilli and the royal city of Gradec in 1437⁵⁵ and the court procedure that followed as a result, a number of charters clearly show that the chapter of Zagreb,⁵⁶ the citizens of Gradec,⁵⁷ and even Ban Matko Talovac⁵⁸ addressed them as *illustres principes*. Despite the acceptance of their rank in Hungary, the political position of the Cilli within the kingdom was weakened by their submission to King Wladislas.

⁵² On the problem of the acceptance of the Cilli as Hungarian nobles see Grabmayer, "Opfer," 296.

⁵³ Quoted from Klaić, *Povijest*, 188. Vjekoslav Klaić did not use footnotes, and I was unable to locate the original source.

⁵⁴ The list of the witnesses goes as follows: "Et nos Symon Agriensis, Johannes Waradiensis, Mathias Wesprimiensis Petrus Chanadiensis Joseph Boznensis Episcopi, Georgius despotus Rascie, Fridericus Cillie Ortenburge et Zagorie Comes, Laurentius de Hedrehwar Regni Hungarie palatinus, Nicolaus de Wjlak wayuoda Transiluanus et Banus Machoviensis, Mathko de Tallowcz Comes Cetine, necnon Regnorum Dalmacie et Croacie ac tocius Sclauonie Banus, Petrus Odrawasch, Leopoliensis, Hirczko Podolie palatini..." See Teleki, *Hunyadiak*, 120.

⁵⁵ See Nada Klaić, "Medvedgrad i njegovi gospodar?" (Medvedgrad and its masters) (Zagreb: Globus, 1987), 129–139 (henceforth: Klaić, *Medvedgrad*), and Nada Klaić, *Povijest Zagreba* (History of Zagreb) (Zagreb: Liber, 1982), 142–147 (henceforth: Klaić, *Zagreb*).

⁵⁶ Tkalčić, *MCZ* 2, 152.

⁵⁷ CKSL, July 29, 1439.

⁵⁸ Tkalčić, *MCZ* 2, 136.



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Spectabilis et magnificus

One interesting example stands out though, apparently unique in the sources, and therefore deserving special attention. Nicholas Újlaki, the voivode of Transylvania, sent a letter on April 8, 1443, to Frederick Cilli:

Spectabilis et magnifice vir, domine et frater noster honorande. Ecce accedet erga vos egregius Ladislaus Tyteus de Bathmonostra, per quem aliqua nostri ex parte magnificencie vestre verbotenus nunciavimus; quare rogamus eandem vestram magnificenciam, quatenus verbis et dictis ipsius Ladislai de Bathmonostra nostri ex parte pro hac vice credencie fidem velitis adhibere⁵⁹ (emphasis mine).

Újlaki was not only the voivode of Transylvania, an office which he shared with John Hunyadi,⁶⁰ but also one of the richest magnates in western Hungary, even possessing some holdings in eastern Slavonia.⁶¹ His interests and those of the Cilli seem to have been diametrically opposed. Furthermore, although at the beginning of the civil war he was an ally of the Cilli and one of the supporters of Queen Elizabeth against King Wladislas, it was his defection that proved instrumental in Wladislas' victory and the subsequent submission of the Cilli in 1441. By 1443 Újlaki's position in relation to the Cilli seems to have become even stronger. Not only was he firmly in the camp of a victorious king, but his ally John Hunyadi had inflicted two spectacular defeats upon the Ottoman Turks in the previous two years.⁶² Moreover, encouraged by these campaigns, the assembly in Buda was already collecting funds for a new expedition against the Ottomans.⁶³

On the other hand, the position of the Cilli was not very strong. Their feud with Emperor Frederick was not going well,⁶⁴ Queen Elizabeth had died in December 1442, and their strongest ally in Hungary, Ulrich's father-in-law, and

⁵⁹ Imre Nagy, ed., *A zichi és vásonkeői gróf Zichy-család idős ágának okmánytára* (Charters of the Zichy family), vol. 9 (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1899) (henceforth: Nagy, *Zichy 9*), 51.

⁶⁰ Engel, *St. Stephen*, 283.

⁶¹ András Kubinyi, "Residenz- und Herrschaftsbildung in Ungarn," in *Fürstliche Residenzen im spätmittelalterlichen Europa*, ed. Hans Patze and Werner Paravicini, 421–462, here: 439 (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1991).

⁶² Engel, *St. Stephen*, 285.

⁶³ Klaić, *Povijest*, 225.

⁶⁴ Štih, "Grafen," 90.



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Serbian despot George Branković also made peace with Wladislas in 1442.⁶⁵ In my opinion, addressing the Cilli as *magnificus* instead of *illustris* was the voivode's way of showing his own superiority and possibly exacting revenge in a symbolic manner for previous insults.⁶⁶

Furthermore, he did it directly, addressing Frederick Cilli personally, whereas, at approximately the same time, Ban Matko Talovac referred to them as *illustres* in a letter sent to a third party.⁶⁷ That it took someone of Újlaki's power to do so—at the time probably second only to the king, and perhaps Hunyadi—in my mind says much about the power of the Cilli.⁶⁸ Whether a foreign title was recognized in Hungary seems to have depended on the prestige and power of the noble in question. Apparently the Cilli had enough of both to force all but one of the strongest of magnates to acknowledge and pay respect to their princely status. After Wladislas' death at Varna, and the recognition of Ladislaus Posthumous as king, the balance of power was once again shifting to the side of the Cilli. As a result, on January 6, 1446, *Nicolaus de Wylak inter cetera wayuoda Transsiluanus banus Machouiensis Siculorum et Themesiensis comes* issued a charter which shows that he had forged an alliance *cum illustribus principibus Friderico et Vlrico filio eiusdem dei gracia Cilie Ortenburge Zagorieque comitis necnon regni Sclauonie banis*.⁶⁹ Until Ulrich's murder in 1456 no one denied the Cilli their princely title within the Kingdom of Hungary, not even the Hunyadis.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Momčilo Spremić, "Prvi pad despotovine" (The first fall of the despotate), in *Doba borbi za očuvanje i obnovu države (1371–1537)* (The age of struggles for the preservation and restoration of the state [1371–1537]), ed. Jovanka Kalić, *Istorija srpskog naroda*, vol. 2 (Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga, 1982), 241–253.

⁶⁶ Helene Kottaner, the lady-in-waiting of Queen Elizabeth, wrote "And every time my gracious lady needed to discuss something urgently in a secret meeting, her grace sent for Duke Albert and for Cillei, and this began to aggravate the Lord of Freistadt, Nicholas Újlaki, who became hostile because he was not included in secret talks too." Helene Kottaner, *The Memoirs of Helene Kottaner (1439–1440)*, tr. Maya Bijvoet Williamson (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1998), 49.

⁶⁷ Nagy, *Zichy* 9, 58. This was on June 4 in a letter to Ladislaus de Bathmonostrá, so not even directly to the Cilli.

⁶⁸ Újlaki did not defy only the Cilli. When he visited Vienna in order to negotiate with Emperor Frederick about the release of Ladislaus V on September 30 1445, he greeted the emperor at the gates of the city as an equal, without even dismounting. Klaić, *Povijest*, 246.

⁶⁹ CKSL, January 6, 1446, Castrum Palota.

⁷⁰ However, the available charters for the Hunyadis are from the 1450s. Both John and Ladislaus refer to Ulrich Cilli as "illustris princeps," or in the case of Ladislaus Hunyadi



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Reconciliation with Frederick III

The two feuding parties finally negotiated a peace treaty in August, 1443. Emperor Frederick III recognized their status as princes. In return, the Cilli were forced to give up the territorial lordship that violated the integrity of the Habsburg lands. The “Landschranne,” a symbol of independent jurisdiction which the Cilli had proudly stressed in 1437,⁷¹ was a necessary sacrifice on their part, but that was not all. They also had to sign a mutual inheritance treaty which put the Cilli in an inferior position.⁷² In exchange for all their possessions in the empire, the Habsburgs offered significantly less territory, a good part of which was already in pledged possession of the Cilli.⁷³ Frederick III then elevated the Cilli to the rank of princes, but he did not accord them the appropriate form of address. He still referred to them as “wohlgeboren,”⁷⁴ as did his brother Albert who, despite being an ally of the Cilli in the feud, called them “wolgeboren vnser besunderlieb graf Fridreich vnd graf Vreich grafen ze Cilli und in dem Seger.”⁷⁵ It seems that the emperor did not consider the Cilli and the Görz as fully belonging to the “Reichsfürstenstand.” For them he used the inappropriate “wohlgeboren,”⁷⁶ whereas he addressed the other “Fürsten” as “hochgeboren.”⁷⁷ Since this arrangement was detrimental to the honor and

even “Illustrissime princeps domine noster prestantissime.” See CKSL, August 1, 1455, Buda; Teleki, *Hunyadiak*, 384, and CKLS, March 31, 1456, Buda.

⁷¹ In 1437, when Frederick II Cilli was accused by his vassal Jost Auert of unjustifiably taking his fief, for which he should have appeared before the “Landschranne” in Graz, he replied to Frederick of Habsburg that his court had no jurisdiction over the Cilli and that this right belonged to the king alone, as the only person that could try a “Reichsfürst.” See Štüh, “Grafen,” 87.

⁷² CKSL, August 16, 1443, Wiener Neustadt, B.

⁷³ Štüh, “Grafen,” 91–92.

⁷⁴ CKSL, August 16, 1443, A, B, C, Vienna.

⁷⁵ CKSL, Mai 13, 1442, Forchtenstein.

⁷⁶ “des wolgeboren Heinrichs graven zu Görtz” Joseph Chmel, *Regesta chronologico diplomatica Friderici III. Romanorum Imperatoris (Regis IV.)* (Vienna, 1838–1840) on Andreas Kuczera, “Regesta Imperii,” <http://regesta-imperii.uni-giessen.de/regesten/index2.php?abteilung=13> (May 27 2005), 1767, October 1, 1444 Nürnberg. Also CKSL, January 26, 1451, Wiener Neustadt (henceforth: Chmel [no. of the regesta, date, place]).

⁷⁷ “dem hochgeborn Ludwigen lanndgraven zu Hessen,” Chmel, 612, June 18, 1442, Aachen; “der hochgeborn Ludwig pfalzgrave by Reine,” Chmel, 2502, Oktober 18, 1448 Vienna; “die hochgeborne furstynne frawe Margarethen herczogin zu Sassen,” Chmel, 2312, September 1, 1447, Vienna, and “hochgebornen Bernhart marggraf zu Baden,” Chmel, 2194, November 24, 1446, Vienna.



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prestige of the Counts of Cilli, the emperor had to find an alternate means to compensate them. This was done by offering Ulrich Cilli a position as royal counselor. In a letter from January 12, 1444, Aeneas Sylvius wrote: *Comes Cilie et dux Albertus ambo in consilium Regis sunt recepti et his diebus iurarunt.*⁷⁸ Medieval kings and lords were obliged to discuss important issues with their loyal followers, but there were no rules as to who should be included in this privileged group.⁷⁹ Consequently this means that those who were consulted on all important matters, the counselors who enjoyed “the ear of the lord,” were able to exert considerable influence on the politics at court and assert their claims or interests. At the court of Emperor Frederick III, at any given time, only a small number of people, half a dozen to a dozen at most, were consulted on any major decision.⁸⁰ It is important to keep in mind that “power could be of all kinds: political, judicial, military, fiscal or ecclesiastical, but it could also be mere influence. What really counted was the degree or scale of power.”⁸¹ Having the ear of the emperor carried with it a great deal of power and prestige.

This was immediately apparent during the meeting of the Reichstag in Nürnberg, in 1444, where Ulrich appeared as a member of Frederick’s entourage.⁸² The statement of expenditures of the city shows how much was spent on gifts to the king, the princes, and the king’s court.⁸³ The value of such gifts

⁷⁸ Quoted from Janez Mlinar, “Podoba Celjskih grofov v narativnih virih” (The image of the counts of Cilli in narrative sources), Ph.D. dissertation (Ljubljana: University of Ljubljana, 2001), 323, St. Veit January 12, 1444, (henceforth: Mlinar, “Podoba”).

⁷⁹ Gerd Althoff, “Royal Favor,” in *Ordering Medieval Society, Perspectives on Intellectual and Practical Modes of Shaping Social Relations*, ed. Bernhard Jussen, tr. Pamela Selwyn (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 243–269, here: 252. One often finds in charters the formula “nach vnser rett vnd diener rat.” For example CKSL, September 29, 1444, Ozalj.

⁸⁰ Peter Moraw, “The Court of the German Kings and of the Emperor at the end of the Middle Ages 1440–1519,” in *Princes, Patronage, and the Nobility, The Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age c. 1450–1650*, ed. Ronald G. Asch and Adolf M. Birke (London, German Historical Institute, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 103–137, here: 116 (henceforth: Asch, *Princes*).

⁸¹ Uytwen, *Showing Rank*, 21.

⁸² Aeneas Sylvius writes in a letter to Caspar Schlick on June 24 “...Illuc sequuntur regem Albertus et Sigismundus Austrie duces, Ulricus Sillacei comes, et dominus de Wallsee...” Quoted from Mlinar, “Podoba,” 324. June 24, 1444, Vienna.

⁸³ *Die Chroniken der fränkischen Städte: Nürnberg*, in *Die Chroniken der deutschen Städte vom 14. bis ins 16. Jahrhundert*, vol. 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), 398–401 (henceforth: *Chronik Nürnberg* 3).



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was in direct proportion to the recipient's importance⁸⁴ and it reflected the judgment of the citizens concerning social rank.⁸⁵ On this roster Ulrich Cilli is listed together with the bishops of Trier and Mainz, the duke of Saxony, and the margrave of Brandenburg, all of them prince electors of the empire. Though he ranks last, the mere fact that he is grouped together with the electors implies that he was accorded great respect.⁸⁶ This is even more significant as the list with the entourage of the lords suggests that several princes were present who were not given special gifts.⁸⁷

“Fürstliche Wirdigkeit”

After discussing the *intitulatio* and forms of address it remains to be seen how the Cilli used the word “fürst” or “princeps” themselves. Both Frederick and Ulrich made use of it when they mentioned each other,⁸⁸ but when looking for the word “fürst” in oaths I was unable to find it. In a charter regarding a ceasefire with the Habsburgs in 1441 the Cilli used the “von Gottes Gnaden” in their title, but swore “mit vnsern trewen.”⁸⁹ And on September 24, 1443, after receiving a charter from the Habsburgs in which Albert and Sigmund swore “bey vnsern fürstlichen trewen,”⁹⁰ they responded with “bey vnsern wiriden vnd lautteren trewn.”⁹¹ No less than five charters can be found in the archive of the

⁸⁴ Paul-Joachim Heinig, “How large was the Court of Emperor Frederick III?” in Asch, *Princes*, 139–156, here: 141.

⁸⁵ Uytwen, “Showing Rank,” 20.

⁸⁶ He received 6 new hellers (about 24 golden florins), Frederick of Brandenburg 7, the bishop of Mainz 8, the bishop of Trier 8, and the duke of Saxony 19. *Chronik Nürnberg* 3, 401.

⁸⁷ The list mentions the musicians of “Herzog Ludwig,” “kunigs von Denmark,” and the “bischoffs von Coln.” It should be noted that the bishop of Cologne was also one of the electors, but it is possible that these lords were not present, although the presence of their musicians suggests that they were. *Chronik Nürnberg* 3, 399–400.

⁸⁸ For example Frederick in 1437 “et egregium Vilhelmum nostrum, illustrisque principis comitis Vlrici etc. filii nostri carissimi, capitaneum de Medwe,” in 1450 “Nos Fridericus...presenciam exhibuit nobis quasdam litteras illustris principis domini Vlrici, dei gracia etc., nati nostri carissimi,” and Ulrich in 1456 “als der edel unser lieber freunde Ulrich von Rosenberg und sein erben weilend dem hochgebornen fursten unserm lieben herren und vater graf Fridrichen uns und unsern erben vier tausent gulten schuldig.” See Tkalčić, *MCZ* 2, 134, 210, and Rynešová, *Rosenberg* 4, January 21, 1456.

⁸⁹ Teleki, *Hunyadiak*, 96.

⁹⁰ Teleki, *Hunyadiak*, 134.

⁹¹ Teleki, *Hunyadiak*, 144.



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Cilli issued by Count Henry of Görz in which he uses “fürstlichen trewen vnd wiriden,”⁹² “fürstlichen trewen vnd eeren,”⁹³ or just “fürstlichen trewn.”⁹⁴ It is possible that the choice of words used might have depended on the scribes or chancellors. Robert Schwanke and Primož Simoniti suggest that the chancellery of the Cilli was inferior to that of the Görz and the Habsburgs,⁹⁵ and that Ulrich Cilli seems not to have been very interested in developing it.⁹⁶ In my opinion, the Cilli seem to have been unsure, or perhaps modest, about their status as “Reichsfürsten,” similarly to the burgraves of Nürnberg in the fourteenth century, and decided to swear with just their “wiriden.” A very speculative suggestion would be that Emperor Frederick, who considered the Haus Habsburg to be by far superior even to the Cilli as princes, would not allow them to use a formula that the Habsburgs were employing with such great care. Thus the Cilli made no use of the word “fürst” in any of the aforementioned combinations, save on one occasion.

Frederick Cilli elevated Celje to the status of city in 1451.⁹⁷ After his death, his son Ulrich issued another charter on October 6, 1455, confirming the privileges of Celje. It reads:

Wir Vlrich von gotts gnaden graue zu Cili ze Orttenburg vnd in dem
Sege etc ban zu Dalmatien zu Croatien vnd in windischen landen,
Bekennen für vns vnser erben vnd nachkhumen vnd tun khundt mit

⁹² CKSL, November 30, 1443, Lienz, and CKSL, 1443, Lienz.

⁹³ CKSL, December 11, 1443, Lienz.

⁹⁴ CKSL, February 10, 1452, Heunfels, and CKSL, February 12, 1452.

⁹⁵ Robert Schwanke, “Beiträge zum Urkundenwesen der Grafen von Cilli,” *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung, Ergänzungsband 14* (1939): 411–422, here: 414 (henceforth: Schwanke, “Beiträge”), and Primož Simoniti, *Humanizem na Slovenskem in slovenski humanisti do srede XVI. Stoletja* (Humanism in Slovenia and Slovenian Humanists until the middle of the sixteenth century) (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1979), 18 (henceforth: Simoniti, *Humanizem*).

⁹⁶ Schwanke, “Beiträge,” 421.

⁹⁷ Sergej Vilfan, “Glose k zgodovini srednjeveška Celja” (Glosses about the History of Medieval Celje), *Kronika Časopis za Slovensko krajevno zgodovino 22* (1984): 15–19. The original of the charter is not preserved. A copy can be found in *Archiducis Caroli Confirmationes privilegiorum für Innerösterreich 1, 1564-1568*, manuscript in the Landesarchiv Graz, fol 218–220 (henceforth: *Archiducis*). I have used a transcribed version by Božo Otorepec at the Institute for History Milka Kos at the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Slovenia in Ljubljana. According to Vilfan, the charter was merely a confirmation of the actual state of things; Celje had long since enjoyed the rights of other Styrian cities. Furthermore, in the charter with which the Cilli were elevated to the status of princes Celje is referred to as “stat,” CKSL, November 30, 1436, Prague.



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dem offen brieff allen vnd yeglichen gegenwürtigen vnd khunftigen die diesen brief hören, sehen oder lessen wie das **vnser fürstlichen wirdigkhait** zuegehoret vnd woll ansteet, das wir müeche arbeit vnd leiden vnser vnderthanen vnd getrewen mit embsigen vleiss bedenckhen vnd in vnserm gemüet bewegen auch zu statten khomen das nach gelegenhait der zeit vnd menschlicher wandlung gemainer nutz nicht geminnert sonder gemert vnd pesser werde...geben wir in diesem vnsern brief **mit vnsern fürstlichen anhangunden insigl** besigelt⁹⁸ (emphasis mine).

This arenga as a form of “Herrschaftspropaganda,” in itself a rarity in the charters of the Cilli,⁹⁹ represents a demonstration of power and articulates their princely self-awareness, as Jean Marie Moeglin has suggested. Why did Ulrich wait for so long before adopting this princely formula?

“Hochgeboren Fürst”

It was in the last two years of his life that Ulrich achieved a degree of power unrivaled in the region. In 1455 he became the informal guardian of Albert’s posthumously born son, Ladislaus V,¹⁰⁰ and as the young king wrote after his assassination: *pro decore Curie nostre ac directore rerum nostrarum*.¹⁰¹ One of the first displays of the king’s favor was the official bestowal of the banate of Dalmatia/Croatia.¹⁰² By September, 1456, Ulrich ruled all of Croatia except the castle

⁹⁸ *Archiducis*, fol 220–223.

⁹⁹ I have found only one other example in which the Cilli used an arenga, in a charter issued on September 7, 1437, in which Ulrich confirms a privilege to the city of Medvedgrad. However, he was probably imitating Sigismund, whose previous charter does include an elaborate arenga, when he includes in his own. Emilije Laslowski, *Povijesni spomenici plemenite općine Turopolja nekoć “Zagrebačko polje” zvane* (The historical monuments of the noble community of Turopolje formerly known as “Zagrebačko polje”), vol. 1 (Zagreb: Tisak Antuna Scholza, 1904), 250–251.

¹⁰⁰ Peter Štih, “Ulrik Celjski in Ladislav Posmrtni ali Celjski grofje v ringu velike politike” (Ulrich Cilli and Ladislaus Posthumous or the Counts of Cilli in the ring of big politics), in *Spomeni Helene Kottaner* (The memoirs of Helene Kottaner), ed. Igor Grdina and Peter Štih, 11–47, here: 39 (Ljubljana: Nova revija, 1999).

¹⁰¹ Teleki, *Hunyadiak*, 549.

¹⁰² In 1453 the nominal holder of the banate was Ladislaus Hunyadi, as can be read in a letter to the city of Bratislava from May 3 of that year (Teleki, *Hunyadiak*, 384). However, it seems that Ladislaus never actually ventured into Croatia and what is even more interesting is that in a letter to Ulrich bearing the same date as this charter he does



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of Klis, which had surrendered to Venice.¹⁰³ In Hungary proper, the power of the Cilli grew continuously. Although Hunyadi still retained the title of “captain general of the kingdom” (*capitaneus regni Hungariae generalis*) and held a great share of royal revenues in his possession, he was abandoned by his long-term ally Újlaki, who joined the baronial league which wanted to restore royal authority, led by the Cilli, Garai and the *index curiae* Ladislaus Pálóci.¹⁰⁴ Hunyadi’s power was gradually decreasing. He signed an alliance with Ulrich in August, 1455,¹⁰⁵ and at the beginning of 1456 he had to give up some of the royal revenues as well as some of the royal fortresses.¹⁰⁶ After he died of plague in August, the king appointed Ulrich “captain general of the realm,” by which token he seems to have fulfilled Ulrich’s ambition in Hungary. There was no man more powerful in the kingdom than he.

Another important success was achieved on the symbolic plane. In a charter issued on January 25, 1455, Sigismund of Tyrol addressed Ulrich as “dem hochgeborn fürsten vnserm lieben öheim graf Vreichen grauen zu Cili zu Ortemburg vnd im Seger etc, ban zu Dalmacien Croacien vnd in Winndischnlannden.”¹⁰⁷ Nineteen years after the elevation, this was, to my knowledge, the first time that a Habsburg addressed a Cilli as “hochgeboren,” according Ulrich, now the last male member of the dynasty, the appropriate form of address. How much this recognition could have meant to Ulrich is impossible to tell, but the content of the charter might be an indication. According to the charter Ulrich loaned Sigismund two hundred thousand florins. Taking into account that the yearly revenue of the Kingdom of Hungary in 1475 was from five to seven

not use the title of Ban of Dalmatia/Croatia (Teleki, *Hunyadiak*, 385). See also Klaić, *Povijest*, 323. In a letter to the Serenissima in May, 1455, Ulrich informed the Venetian government of his appointment by the king. See Šime Ljubić, *Listine o odnošajih između južnoga Slavenstva i Mletačke republike* (Documents regarding the relations between the southern Slavs and the Venetian Republic), vol. 10 (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1891), 95. The first charter I was able to find in which he called himself “regnum Dalmacie, Croacie et Sclauonie banus” is from January 27 1455. See Nagy, *Zichy* 9, 351, and Klaić, *Povijest*, 329.

¹⁰³ Venice became the guardian of the late Ban Pavao Talovac’s children and the city of Klis was taken under this pretext. See Klaić, *Povijest*, 330.

¹⁰⁴ Engel, *St. Stephen*, 294. Alliance treaty in Teleki, *Hunyadiak*, 437–438.

¹⁰⁵ CKSL, August 1, 1455, Buda, A. He also agreed to the previously arranged marriage between his son, Matthias, and Ulrich’s daughter Elizabeth, which he had cancelled when Ulrich was out of the king’s favor. Furthermore, he confirmed that the dowry was to be determined solely by Ulrich. See CKSL, August 1, 1455, Buda, B.

¹⁰⁶ Engel, *St. Stephen*. 295.

¹⁰⁷ CKSL, January 25, 1455, Lienz.



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hundred fifty thousand florins,¹⁰⁸ it seems that Ulrich paid dearly for this honor. Additionally, in February, 1456, Ulrich forged an alliance with William and Frederick, the dukes of Saxony and electors of the empire. Clearly, at this time, there was no question regarding his status as “Reichsfürst.”

The forms of address, the presents received, and the alliances forged clearly suggest that in the social and political environment the Cilli were perceived as princes and treated as such. In all likelihood the time period in which they lived was still one in which personal power, family ties and standing were more important for the assertion of identity of a noble than the legal status of his possessions. Regardless of the fact that the treaty with Emperor Frederick ended the brief existence of a Cilli principality, contemporaries accepted the Cilli as full members of the “Reichsfürstenstand.” In 1455 Ulrich II Cilli, count of Cilli, Ortenburg and Zagorje, and ban of Croatia, Dalmatia and Slavonia (and after Hunyadi’s death even captain general of Hungary) was powerful enough to be able to refer to himself as he was perceived by society: “Fürst.” However, he was only able to enjoy his newfound power for a short while. In November, 1456, when it seemed that nothing could stand in his way, he was struck down by Ladislaus Hunyadi in Belgrade and the lineage of the Cilli ended with him.

¹⁰⁸ András Kubinyi, “Stände und Staat in Ungarn in der zweiten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts,” *Bohemia* 31 (1990): 312–325, here: 323, and János M. Bak, “Monarchie im Wellental: Materielle Grundlagen des ungarischen Königtums im fünfzehnten Jahrhundert,” in *Das spätmittelalterliche Königtum im europäischen Vergleich*, ed. Reinhard Schneider (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1987), 347–384.