

**PHD DISSERTATION THESISES**

**THE TRADE BETWEEN HUNGARY AND THE OTTOMAN  
EMPIRE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 16<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY.  
THE TRAFFIC OF THE THIRTIETHS OF BARICS AND  
KÖLPÉNY (KUPINOVO)**

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## **1. Introduction. Historiography, sources, methodology**

Regarding to the medieval Hungarian-Ottoman relations, the Hungarian historians and the osmanists studied almost exclusively the military events and the diplomatic contacts, although some scholars showed the importance of the trade relations as well. This state of research is probably due to the rarity of quantitative sources related to the topic.

The present thesis is based on edited and unedited archival sources: firstly on the two remained South-Hungarian medieval external customs accounts: that of Barics and Kölpény. Besides these I used charter-editions, accounts, collections of laws, texts of truces, chronicles and two groups of archival sources: the Nádasy familial archive, which preserves the above mentioned customs accounts, and the charters issued by the treasurers, both preserved in the Hungarial National Archives.

In this thesis I basically made a historical-statistical, namely a quantitative time series analysis of the mentioned accounts, following the works of Ferenc Kováts and Győző Ember. On the data set of the accounts I made some of the basic statistical operations, used also in most of the works analyzing medieval customs: grouping, adding, counting arithmetic means (averages) and percentages. In some cases I also used the results of archaeology and numismatics.

## **2. The sketch of the medieval Hungarian-Balkanic commerce**

According to the archaeological findings, in the 10-11<sup>th</sup> century Hungary had the most intense commerce with the Byzantine Empire. On the importance of the Hungarian-Balkanic trade indirectly refers also the development of the settlements lying on the southern border of Hungary, on which I inferred on the basis of al-Idrisi's description (1154).

After the decline of the Byzantine Empire in the 13<sup>th</sup> century Hungary built up its commercial links with the new Balkanic states. This is proven by the few 13-15<sup>th</sup> century Serbian and Bosniac coins found in Hungary, and by the Hungarian coins found in Serbia and Bosnia. The sums of the tithe paid by the settlements of Sirmium in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century show that these towns belonged to the most important settlements of the country. As a result of the Ottoman attacks the settlements of Sirmium declined starting from the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

### **3. The thirtieth customs in the late-medieval Hungary**

According to the law of 1498 in South-Hungary, beside the thirtieth (*tricesima*, the external customs due) customs of Slavonia and Banate there was a chief thirtieth at Belgrade, to which belonged nine filial offices (at Apajóc, Árki, Barics, Kölpény, Poltos, Racsá, Szabács, Szávaszentdemeter and Újvár). In the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century there were such customs at Keve, Haram and Szörény, too, but these were abolished until the end of the century, probably as a result of the Ottoman's destructions. Near Belgrade functioned a thirtieth office at Szalánkemémen, but only until 1521 or 1525.

In the Jagellonian epoch the incomes of the treasure from the thirtieth were sums between 18000 and 30000 florins. Taking into account that the kings gave a lot of customs in pledge, it is probably that the incomes from all the thirtieths reached or even surpassed 50000 florins.

### **4. The southern external trade of Hungary in the late Middle Ages**

Data about the juridical frame of the commerce can be found in the texts of the truces between Hungarian-Ottoman (1444, 1483, 1488, 1503, 1519, 1449, 1451). According to these texts in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century the foreign subjects could trade only in some fixed places (1449, 1467) or at the country border (1483), and with the accordance of the bans or of the begs (1488). These restrictions disappeared at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The comparison with the medieval Ottoman-Polish truces shows that the Ottomans regulated basically similarly the commerce with the two Christian countries. Since from the 1291 on the trade of the Christians with the Muslims was prohibited, the Hungarians needed papal dispensations for the trade with the Ottomans.

### **5. The traffic of the customs of Kölpény, Barics and Szabács between 1503 and 1505**

#### **5. 1. The sources**

The sources of the traffic of the customs of Kölpény, Barics and Szabács are: 1. the diary of the Barics thirtieth referring to the period between 1503 March 25 and 1505 February 14 and 2. the undated account of the Barics thirtieth. Because in the latter account appear persons who in

1503. and 1504. were *familiares* of the person who signed the account of Barics, the second account probably refers to the same period as well.

## 5. 2. The quantity and the value of the transported wares

The imported articles were not detailed in the accounts, they were named only „things” or „small things” (*res, res parva*). These expressions probably refers to those articles, of which import from the Balkans is proved by other sources, namely to textiles, cloths, wares of hide, oriental fruits and spices.

At Kölpény there were imported wares worth of 7958,79 florins, at Barics 5268,25 florins. In Barics „small things” were imported for 153 florins (2,9% of the total import), „things” for 5115,25 florins (97,1%).

Barics	Salt	Oxen	Horses	Sheep
1503 March 25-1504 March 24	19080	120	144	450
1504 March 25-1505 March 24	10040	4	8	
1503 March 25-1505 March 24	29120	124	152	450
Yearly average	14560	62	76	225
Kölpény				
1503 March 25- 1505 March 24	6510	460	736	
Yearly average	3255	230	368	
Yearly average Barics and Kölpény	17975	292	444	225

Table 1. The quantities of the wares transported at the thirtieths of Barics and Kölpény, according to the office years, March 1503 - March 1505.

The circa 300 exported oxen represented only a small fragment of the number of the oxen exported from Hungary westwards (c. 1%) (see table 1.). From the point of view of the Ottoman import, at the customs of Giurgiu (lying at the Wallachian-Ottoman border) one transported more oxen, in 1507 c. 1500, in the first seven mounths of 1508 c. 600 animals.

The volume of the southern horse export of c. 450 was closer to the western export (in 1457-1458 at Bratislava 430, in 1542 at all the north-western customs 1407 horses). At the northern thirtieth of Bártfa and at Giurgiu fewer horses were exported, between 1504 and 1524 yearly 64-249, and 260-320 animals, respectively.

The transport of 225 sheep was much insignificant than the export at the north-western customs and at that of Pozsony in the above mentioned

years (16089 and 5850 animals, respectively). At Giurgiu c. one hundred more sheep were exported in the Ottoman Empire.

Knives were imported in Hungary at the number of millions, of which an important part was further transported into the Balkans. The knives exported at Barics represent only some thousand part of these quantities. This is the share of the exported cloth, too, which was imported at Pozsony in a value of c. 100000 florins, at the north-western customs of c. 56000 florins, and exported further at Brassó and Szeben in a value of c. 1400 and 12000 florins, respectively.

### **5. 3. The structure of the transport**

Concerning the customs-value, the salt (62%) and the animals (34%) had the biggest share of the total of the export (see table 2.). Among the animals the most important were the oxen (22%), followed by the horses (7%) and the sheep (5%). At Barics the major part of the export (77%) represented the salt, the animals had a much smaller importance (16%: oxen and sheep 7-7%, horses 2%). At Kölpény the percentage of the animals was the highest (68%: oxen 51%, horses 17%), and salt was not as important (33%). Approximately 80% of the commerce of salt of the two customs was realized at Barics, and c. 80% of the transport of oxen, horses and sheep at Kölpény.

Taking into account the whole transport, the share of the export items was much fewer, as the percentage of salt was only 11%, that of the animals only 6%. At Barics the salt was a little bit more important (20%), at Kölpény this one can say about the animals (8%: oxen 6%, horses 2%).

A similarity among the structure of the southern trade and the western one was the importance of the animals, but at the western customs their share and quantity was much more higher (in 1542 93%, in Bratislava in 1457/58 55%). An important difference was that in south the most important item was the salt (62%), which at west was negligible (in 1542 1% of the import).

Salt has no importance at Brassó and Szeben neither. The traffic of these Transylvanian customs differed from the southern one in other aspects, too: animals were imported, not exported, the majority of the export consisted of knives (48 and 34%, respectively), cloth (20 and 22%), small things and different wares were kept mixed, cloths, wares of everyday use, respectively (31, and 41% respectively).

The single common characteristic among the export of Bártfa in 11 years between 1504 and 1524 and that of Barics and Kupinovo was the export of animals, but their share at Bártfa was significantly smaller

(between 10 and 26%). In north wine played the most significant role (67-87%).

	Barics			Kölpény			Barics and Kölpény		
	fl.	%	Export %	fl.	%	Export %	fl.	%	Export %
Salt	728,00	20,3	76,8	162,75	3,6	32,5	890,75	11,0	61,5
Oxen	68,91	1,9	7,3	255,60	5,7	51,0	324,51	4,0	22,4
Horses	17,14	0,5	1,8	83,00	1,9	16,6	100,14	1,2	6,9
Sheep	67,50	1,9	7,1				67,50	0,8	4,7
Knives	27,50	0,8	2,9				27,50	0,3	1,9
Tallow	3,00	0,1	0,3				3,00	0,0	0,2
Knives and cloth	7,50	0,2	0,8				7,50	0,1	0,5
Salt and fish	20,00	0,6	2,1				20,00	0,2	1,4
Knives and sacks	8,00	0,2	0,8				8,00	0,1	0,6
"Things"	2634,13	73,5		3979,4	88,8		6613,53	82,0	
Total	3581,67	100,0		4480,75	100,0		8062,42	100,0	

Table 2. The structure of the traffic of the thirtieths of Barics and Kölpény, yearly averages, March 1503 - March 1505.

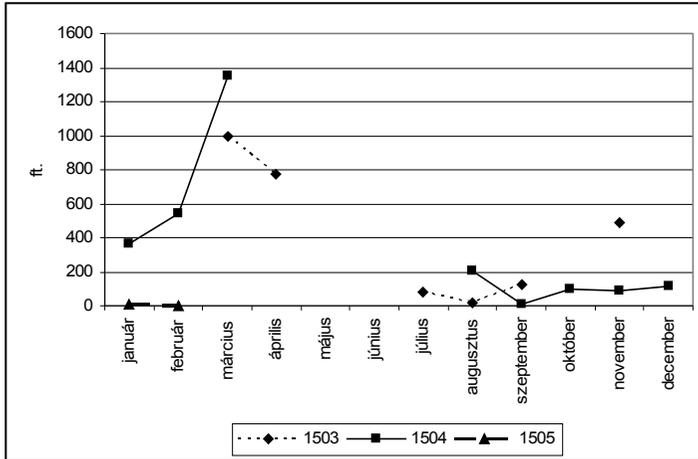
The trade balance of the two souther customs was strongly negative (see table 3.).

	Barics		Kölpény		Barics and Kölpény	
	Value	%	value	%	value	%
import	2634,13	73,5	3979,40	88,8	6613,53	82,0
export	947,55	26,5	501,35	11,2	1448,90	18,0
total	3581,68	100,0	4480,75	100,0	8062,43	100,0

Table 3. The structure of the traffic of the thirtieths of Barics and Kölpény, yearly averages, March 1503 - March 1505.

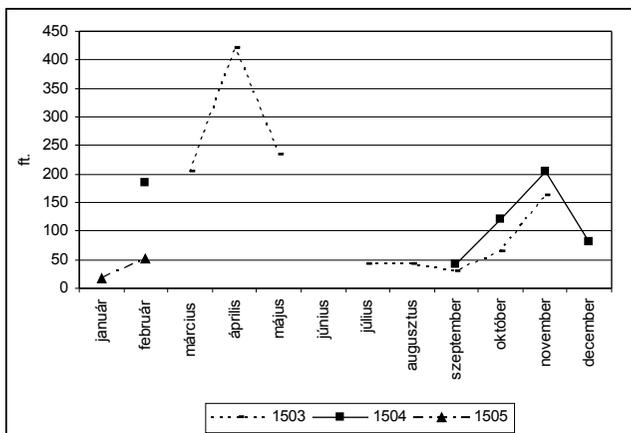
Among the three southern thirtieth offices that of Szabács had the far biggest traffic (94%), besides which the share of the customs of Barics and Kölpény (2,5% and 3%) seems to be insignificant. This can be explained by the big importance of the route passing near Szabács.

Although the seasonality of the two years fixed in the account of Barics in some cases differs considerably, I can say that the import was small or even paused in late-spring and in summer, that its volume began to grow in autumn and reached its peak in spring, around March (see graph 1.).

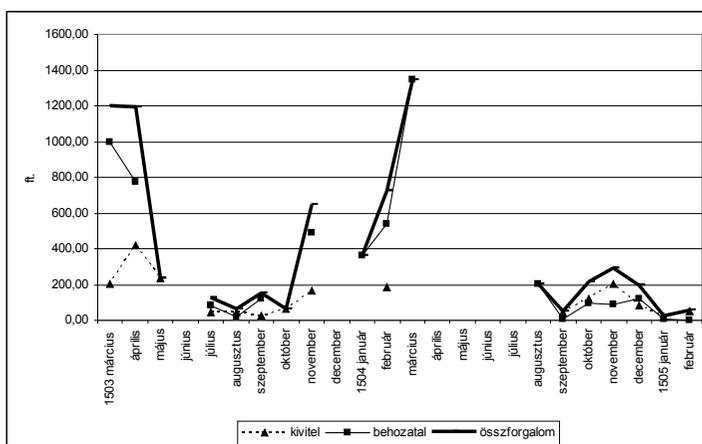


Graph 1. The value of the import at Barics, according to the months, March 1503 - March 1505.

In the case of the total of export, similarly to the export of the three most important export items, that is salt, oxen and horses, there was a sinusoidal seasonality: after a summer break followed an increase in autumn, a decrease or pause in winter and once again an increase in late-winter or spring, when the volume of export reached its peak (see graph 2.).



Graph 2. The value of the export at Barics, according to the months, March 1503 - March 1505.



Graph 3. The value of the export, import and of all traffic at Barics, according to the months, March 1503 - March 1505.

A characteristic of the traffic of Barics and Kölpény was that it concentrated on few days: commerciant passed through Barics on only 5% of the period, and through Kölpény on 6% of the period. Probably some of these days were fair-days (at Barics on 6<sup>th</sup> of January, 25<sup>th</sup> of May and 19<sup>th</sup> of November).

## 6. 4. The traders

At Kölpény 46 imports were realized by 20 persons, at Barics 152 transports by 20 persons and 81 time by groups designed with the expression *carvani* - very probably they were persons trading in karavans. Following the classification of Gyöző Ember, according to which big traders were persons with a value of trade bigger than 1000 florins, middle traders with a value of trade between 100 and 1000 florins, and small traders with a value smaller than 100 florins, at the customs of Barics passed only small and middle traders, in a percentage of 58% and 42%, respectively. The share of the value of their cargo was 15% and 85%, respectively. The value of the transport of 39% of all the traders was less than 50 florins, and the share of the value of these was only 6%. At Kölpény the share of the small traders was smaller (40%, the value of their transport was 9%). The value of a single cargo at Barics varied between 0,23 and 394,75 florins, at Kölpény between 8 and 640 florins, they average being 47 and 173 florins, respectively (see table 4.).

Transports	0-10	10-25	25-50	50-100	100-200	200-400	Total
Nr.	58	31	27	13	15	8	152
%	38,2	20,4	17,8	8,6	9,9	5,3	100,0
Total value	219,06	545,01	1068,70	943,00	2123,00	2264,55	7163,32
%	3,1	7,6	14,9	13,2	29,6	31,6	100,0

Table 4. The traffic of the import at Barics, according to the value in florins of the transports, March 1503 - March 1505.

The geographical origin of the traders was specified very rarely in the accounts, which refers to four geographical names - these refers to villages and regions lying close to the border. In some cases I could deduce that the traders were subjects of the Ottoman Empire. According to their names, the traders were almost exclusively Serbs (only two of them were probably Hungarians and one person was Turk or Muslim).

## 5. 5. The critique of the results

It is risky to generalize on the basis of the accounts' data, because two of the customs were of relatively smaller importance, and on the other hand the incomes of medieval Hungarian thirtieth in some cases oscillated very considerably. I assume that the traffic of Barics in 1503 was higher than the average because the ending of the Hungarian-Ottoman war in the

same year. On the other hand it is probably that the traffic of the next year was smaller than the average.

Thus for sure I can only say that in the mentioned period at the three customs one customed yearly wares of value of circa 145000 florins. On the basis that the traffic of Belgrade was very probably at least equal with that of Szabács, and taking into account that to the chief thirtieth of Belgrade belonged in total ten customs offices, I can only tentatively put that the traffic of all the customs belonging to the chief thirtieth of Belgrade was at least two and probably three more larger than that of the three analyzed customs. In this case the yearly volume of the southern traffic was of circa 290000 and 480000 florins, respectively. Counting with the smaller value shows that among the Hungarian thirtieths that of Belgrad had the biggest traffic, but one have to take into consideration that to the customs of Belgrad belonged the largest number of offices and these controlled the longest border.

Furthermore one have to take into account that the customs-value, calculated on the basis of the paid customs, could differ from the market value. On the other hand, one can not calculate exactly the customs-value of the traffic, because the wares transported by people having customs tax relief does not appear in the accounts, neither the articles bought for the rulers, nor the gifts transported to them, nor those transported on illegal routes. Moreover, the trade did not cover the whole exchange of wares between the two countries, since through the frequent incursions and payments of ransom there was a significant ware- and money-traffic in both directions. This was a characteristic of the Hungarian-Ottoman economic (and not only economic) links.

## **6. The administration of the thirtieth customs of Kölpény, Barics and Szabács**

The thirtieth customs were in the hend of György Kanizsai, the ban of Belgrade. Kanizsai received very probably these incomes to cover his salary, because due to the deficit of the treasury, the treasurer could not pay in cash the bans. I assume that from the same reason all the incomes of the thirtieth customs of Belgrade and of Temesvár were allocated to the South-Hungarian bans.

## **7. Summary**

As regards the commerce between Hungary and the Ottoman Empire only two Hungarian quantitative sources have come down to us

from the period before 1526. One of them is the accounts of the thirtieth of Barics for the period between 25 March 1503 and 14 February 1505, and the other the undated accounts of the thirtieth of Kölpény which, however, can be dated to the same period. Imported goods were concisely referred to as „things” (res) and „small things” (res parve) and should probably be interpreted as textiles, cloths, leatherware and spices.

The quantity and customs value of the most important goods was as follows (the two thirtieth offices added, annual averages): import: „things” 6614 florins; export: salt: 891 fl., 292 oxen (325 fl.), 444 horses (100 fl.), 225 sheep (68 fl.), knives 28 fl. In terms of percentage the relevant figures are as follows: things 82%, salt 11%, oxen 4%, horses and sheep 1-1%. Commerce was most intensive during the spring, followed by the autumn, was rather sparse in winter and practically came to a halt during the summer. At the three customs offices of Barics, Kölpény and Szabács the overall value of the goods levied was 145000 florins annually, on the basis of which the volume of the commerce at the offices belonging to Belgrade can tentatively put at some 290000 and 490000 florins respectively. The customs revenues accruing were therefore 14500 and 24000 florins respectively.

The merchants were almost exclusively Serbs who seem to have inhabited in villages in the vicinity of the customs offices on both sides of the border. The customs were in the hands of György Kanizsai, ban of Belgrade, surely as part of his salary.

## PUBLICATIONS

1. A baricsi és kölpényi harmincadok a 16. század elején. *Századok* 140 (2006): 815-882.
2. Mineritul de sare în evul mediu în Transilvania și în Maramureș. In: *Catalogul expoziției Muzeului Carpaților Orientali*, accepted for publication