

GENIUS LOCI

LASZLOVSZKY 60

edited by
Dóra Mérai
and

Ágnes Drosztmér, Kyra Lyublyanovics,
Judith Rasson, Zsuzsanna Papp Reed,
András Vadas, Csilla Zatykó



ARCHAEOLINGUA

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Ceremonial Space in Front of Medieval Buda: An Illuminated Fifteenth-Century French Vision

SABINA MADGEARU*

Recently published in English by Taschen, Sebastien Mamerot has rightfully earned a reputation as the chronicler of the crusades.¹ His manuscript Français 5594, kept in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, offers in its illuminations rare images of castles and cities of the east—both Central and Eastern Europe and the Middle East. It must be noted that medieval people perceived space differently: its perception was largely dependent on religion, and since Hungary was a Catholic country it was viewed as part of the West.² We owe to Jean Colombe and his collaborators, the illuminators, an image of medieval Buda (folio 260), based on which I will tackle the visual construction of space around the medieval castle of Buda at the end of the fifteenth century (Fig. 1).

Like most castles outside France pictured in this chronicle, Buda is modelled after French castles painted in other fifteenth-century chronicles, such as the *Grandes Chroniques de France* or the *Vigiles de Charles VII*, to give only a couple of examples. Such miniature paintings follow closely the state of facts at that time in France, or rather in the territories that would later make up France: castles with round towers and pointed roofs that could be seen at, for instance, Château de Vincennes, Carcassonne, Rouen or elsewhere in Europe.³ Colombe's Buda shows a somehow eclectic architecture with many towers, some round, one square, some simply crenellated, others covered with high pointed roofs. Buda is placed on the right side in the background, a place with symmetrical geometry painted in rather dark shades of grey (the curtain wall) and brown (what looks like a keep plus buildings with pointed roofs to render an impression of a complex concentric castle or castle-city in order to



► Fig. 1. Arrival of John the Fearless in Buda, Français 5594, fol. 260. Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Source: “Mandragore, base des manuscrits enluminés de la BnF,” Bibliothèque Nationale de France, <http://mandragore.bnf.fr/jsp/feuilleterNoticesImage.jsp?numero=3&id=44363&id-Pere=2>.

present its greatness). To poise the background and also emphasize the significance of Buda, the illuminator chooses a symmetrical arrangement and balances it by positioning a mountainous landscape on the left. Buda is as high as the mountains/hills, while the colors on both sides are of the same spectrum.

The choice of this setting was not random, for the foreground of the illumination is reserved to personalities whose social standing was as high as the castle of Buda and the neighboring hills: Sigismund of Luxembourg⁴ as host and John the

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Fearless, duke of Burgundy.⁵ John's entry into Buda in July, 1396, was part of a long tradition of both textual and visual representation of such ceremonies. They were at first reserved only for kings, but later also for princes and noblemen.⁶ But as seen in this image, this was not a regular entry; it was almost a diplomatic meeting in front of Buda, because John the Fearless had come to aid Sigismund of Luxembourg in an effort to fend off the approaching Ottomans who, however, put a disastrous end to the Nicopolis Crusade in the fall of the same year. Sigismund of Luxembourg's gesture is tell-tale; he is raising his crown to salute his guest, who would be taken prisoner in his endeavor to safeguard Christianity.

The setting (Buda) and the characters⁷ (John the Fearless and Sigismund of Luxembourg) comply with the medieval view of historiography/historical narrative—a narrative that should only capture what is memorable (*facta et dicta memorabilia*), emphasizing important events and people on the axis of chronology. Chronology was therefore of utmost importance in medieval history writing. Here, space also aligns with the medieval historiographical perspective and its precision (the names of places) adds to the technical details that make the historical narrative credible. With the sight of Buda and other castles or castle-cities in illuminations, a sense of space starts to emerge that contributes to a dramatization of events and people. Their presence in illuminations compensates for the lack of any description in the text of the chronicle.

Notes

- ¹ Sébastien Mamerot, *A Chronicle of the Crusades. The Expeditions to Outremer. An Unabridged, Annotated Edition with a Commentary*, ed. and tr. Thierry Delcourt, Danielle Quérueil, and Fabrice Masanès (Cologne: Taschen, 2016).
- ² On the West-East divide in the Middle Ages, see Bernard Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique dans l'Occident mé-*

dieval (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1980), 11. See also Philippe Contamine, "Entre Occident et Orient. Philippe de Mézières (vers 1327-1405): Itinéraires maritimes et spirituels," in *Philippe de Mézières and His Age. Piety and Politics in the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Kiril Petkov (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 20-21.

- ³ Examples of this architecture are Warsaw, and castles of the Teutonic order such as Ordensburg Marienburg (Germany), Alden Biesen (Belgium), Alsunga and Edole (Latvia), Bran (Romania), Kaunas and Panemune (Lithuania), Königsberg (Russia), Malbork (Poland), and Prejmer (Romania, fortified church).
- ⁴ In the fourteenth century, Hungary dominated the Balkans and the Ottomans were a threat to its control. Pál Engel, Gyula Kristó, and András Kubinyi, *Histoire de la Hongrie médiévale*, vol. 2 (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2008), 121.
- ⁵ Burgundy at the time and in the fifteenth century in particular was renowned for its riches, which can be calculated from its equally rich archives. "Comme tous les princes de leur temps, les ducs de Bourgogne de la maison de Valois ont eu le souci de la conservation et de la gestion de leurs archives. L'enjeu était important puisque les archives princières constituaient un trésor contenant des actes légitimant un pouvoir, justifiant des droits, étayant des prétentions politiques. Elles étaient aussi la « mémoire » de l'Etat, de son administration et de ses finances." Bertrand Schnerb, "Les archives des ducs de Bourgogne. Tradition, inventaires, publications," in *La cour de Bourgogne et l'Europe. Le rayonnement et les limites d'un modèle culturel*, ed. Werner Paravicini (Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2013), 27. Its financial profitability (yearly income per area) places Burgundy above other countries like France and England because the region was one of the most urbanized and populous. Bertrand Schnerb, "Richesse, historiographie, perception. Trois aspects d'une politique de prestige," in *La cour de Bourgogne*, 56.
- ⁶ This tradition reached its peak in the mid-fifteenth century. See: Vincent Challet, "Les entrées dans la ville: genèse et développement d'un rite urbain (Montpellier XIVe-XVe siècles)," *Revue historique* 317, fasc. 2, no. 670 (2014): 267-293. A few examples of illuminations showing entries into cities: Gaston IV de Foix entering Bayonne – Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Français 5054, fol. 222; Charles VII entering Caen - Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Français 5054, fol. 202; Charles V le Sage entering Paris – Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Français 6465, fol. 417; Charles VI entering Paris - Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Français 138, fol. 260v; Isabeau de Bavière entering Paris - Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Français 2646, fol. 6.
- ⁷ John the Fearless, a character in this illumination, was also a commissioner of illuminated manuscripts such as *Le livre de Jehan Boccace des cas des nobles hommes et femmes*.