

THE COUNTS OF VEGLIA AND MODRUS, KNOWN FROM 1430 AS THE FRANGEPÁN COUNTS

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translated from German by Inge Parker and Rosie Bevan

EDITORIAL NOTE

The late László Feketekúty, Hungarian genealogist, sent the original of this paper (in German) to FMG chairman Lindsay Brook in 1999 with a view to getting it published. At the time this did not prove possible. The manuscript has since been made available to the FMG, and with the permission of Dr Feketekúty's family we now offer it to our readers. The introductory article, as here translated, sets the historical context, and the accompanying charts provide a summary of the genealogy. The German text with the detailed table of descent from Demjén (1133-1163) is reproduced on the FMG website, together with the original of this article. We recognize that recent research may be able to enhance and extend the study, and would welcome contributions to that effect.

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The island of Veglia (known today as Krk) is situated in the gulf of Quarnerno, in the northeast Adriatic, and forms part of Croatia. It stretches along the Dalmatian coast, from which it is separated by only half a nautical mile at its closest point in the Podgorski channel. A glance at the map is enough to understand its military and economic importance. The great sea power, Venice, quickly recognised its advantages and brought Veglia into its sphere of influence. After a period of direct administration the Republic concluded that an island so far away could be better ruled by a local governor. It chose a respected family from the local nobility whose head was designated "*comes*". From then on he was known as the Count of Veglia. They had to swear allegiance to Venice and pay a moderate annual tax. They enjoyed wide freedom of activity and could depend on protection from Venice.

In the 11th century a branch of the comital Veglia family established itself on the Dalmatian mainland opposite the island. The first member of this branch, Bertalan, left no direct issue. His property was left to the head of the main branch of the family on the island. When Hungary took over as the new power from the Croatian ruling family, Count Bertalan adapted without hesitation to the new situation and carried out valuable services for the Hungarian kings. He was rewarded accordingly. In 1193 King Béla III gave Bertalan a hereditary gift of the county of Modrus, east of Istria and south of Krain. Soon more land followed – the Vinodol – the coastal region from Buccari to Segnia (Zengg). From that time the family name became Count of Veglia and Modrus. The name Frangepán (Frangipani, Frankopani) came into use later, after 1430. That year Count Miklos of Veglia (no.49, figure 2) was greeted as a relative by the Frangepán authorities after a journey to Rome when he received papal permission for the name change. There was also a family that called itself Frangipani in Istria. All three families acknowledged themselves to be related. The landed Italian Frangipani family considered themselves descended from the Roman patricians. However there is no documentation to support these claims, nor for the relationship between the three families. Some Croatian authors would like to give a Croatian descent for the Frangipani, but likewise no evidence exists. It is certain that the Frangipani do not have old Croatian descent but they do belong to Croatia because of their estates. I believe that they were of Dalmatian origin but there is no proof. The question remains

open. Since they did not know where they really belonged, the lack of affiliation made it easier for them to act outside of national politics.

The Frangepán regarded themselves simultaneously as Venetian vassals and Hungarian magnates. In order to hold the two loyalties in equilibrium, they necessarily developed a masterful sense of diplomacy, as the Hungarian and Venetian interests often clashed. Fortunately they were never forced to choose sides militarily. Weakened as Veglia was when abandoned to Hungary by the peace treaty at Jedra in 1358, the Frangepán felt relieved and were prudent enough to cultivate friendly connections with Venice, particularly economic ones. When they were returned to Venice in 1409, they were not therefore disadvantaged.

The Frangepán possessions were constantly extended, by repeated royal grants, by purchase, by inheritance, or by marriage contracts – but never through military force. Their wealth was not derived from the land, which comprised mostly poor soils, but from trade and business activity. Hungarian trade routes ran through nearby Dalmatia, as did traffic from the Croatian hinterland to the sea. In 1271 King Istvan V confirmed them in the inheritance of Segnia with its excellent protected harbour, the point of departure for the Hungarian maritime trade. Their wealth made it possible for them to finance the Angevin kings of Hungary, as well as lending large sums of money to the Emperor and King Sigismund of Luxemburg in return for land. Also the Frangepans were able to offer their diplomatic services in several missions, which were much appreciated, particularly by the Neapolitan court.

The inheritance of Count Miklos (no.49, figure 2) as the sole heir was considerable in every regard. His nine sons averted the threat of extinction of the family and there were sufficient estates to distribute to each one, but this division also raised unforeseen problems. These can be pursued by reference to the sources cited in the descendants table (on FMG web site).

The branching of the family extended the range of marriage connections. As well as Croatian, Hungarian and Italian marriage partners, many husbands and wives from Austrian provinces appeared also. Besides the tragically ending marriage between Elizabeth of Veglia and Friedrich Count of Cilli, there are many well known names such as Görz, Stubenberg, Walsee, Schaunburg, Pettau, Liechtenstein, Auersperg, etc. As a consequence of these connections the Frangepán acquired many estates, particularly in Krain. A further advance was that Istvan (no.53, figure 3) was proclaimed governor of Krain. As a consequence many Frangepans entered the service of Austria, mostly as mercenaries.

In the year 1480 the Frangepán lost Veglia; Venice transferred the island to its own administration. At that time Veglia was not so significant but because of its loss a whole epoch came to an end for the Frangepán. Instead of standing between Venice and Hungary they now stood between Hungary and Habsburg. Everything was suddenly altered. They could not claim sovereignty and their circumstances became constrained. No longer concerned with state interests, they were caught up in the rivalry between dynasties. One can follow the development of the situation in the cited reference sources.

From the 15th century another element came into play and overshadowed everything else: the Turkish threat. The Frangepans had recognised this threat from the beginning and they also saw that Hungary was too weak to deal with it. In vain they looked for help from Venice. The republic was always extremely nervous as the Frangepans had often negotiated compromises with the Turks, but help was not forthcoming. Count Istvan (no.53, figure 3), in a last act of masterful Frangepán diplomacy, had the idea to form a new alliance between Naples and Hungary against

the Turks. Naples would provide the financial backing and the Hungarian regent, János Hunyadi, would supply the military power. Unfortunately it did not come to anything. The alliance of 1447 between Naples and Hungary came too late and lacked substance.

At the beginning of the 1600s the estates of the Frangepán were increasingly exposed to Turkish attacks, which also destroyed trade with Croatia, the source of prosperity for the Frangepans. In the struggle over the Hungarian throne, the Frangepán stood, as did the south and west of Hungary, on the side of the Habsburgs. When the Habsburgs received the Hungarian crown after the battle of Mohács, they did not feel obliged to thank their supporters. Even less did the Viennese bureaucracy feel inclined to undertake special military campaigns in Croatia and south Hungary to relieve the estates of the ruling gentry there. In this situation the dissenters – among them Ferenc Kristóf Frangepán and his brother in law, Péter Zrinyi, both the last of their family lines, sought foreign assistance, particularly from France, to make changes. To their way of thinking this would get rid of the remaining foreign plague of the nation - the Habsburgs. The foreign help proved illusory, the conspiracy was without a plan and naïve. Vienna knew everything that was going on but did nothing because they did not consider the unrest dangerous. However, when a change in government came about in Vienna and Lobkowitz took over from Auersperg, he decided as a deterrent to set an example. The most prominent conspirators, among them Ferenc Kristóf Frangepán, were beheaded on 30 April 1671 in Vienna's new city. This was the tragic end of a long central European lineage.

The charts (figures 1-4) summarise the lineage of the Frangepán, which is presented in more detail with supporting documentary evidence in a descendants table (in German) on the FMG web site.

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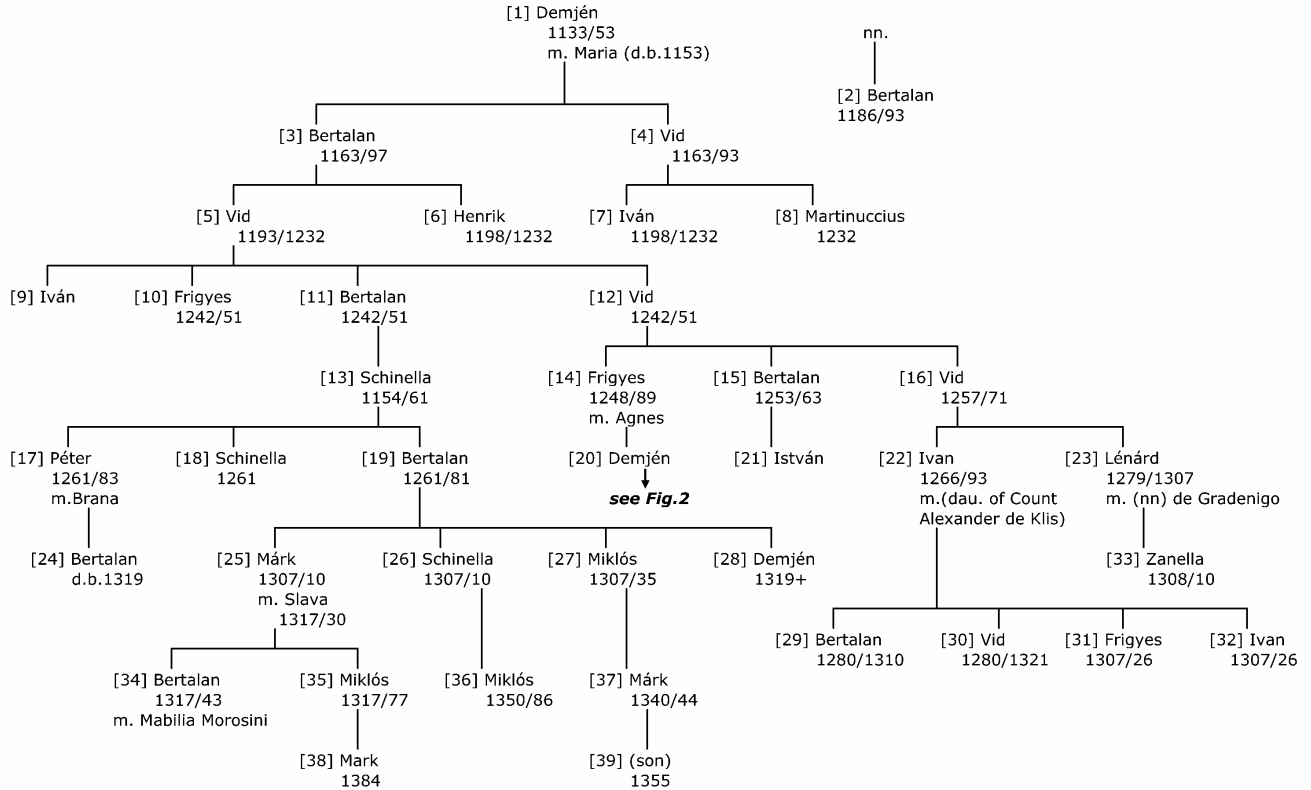


Fig 1. Descendants of Counts of Veglia and Modrus, later Frangepán Counts (part 1)

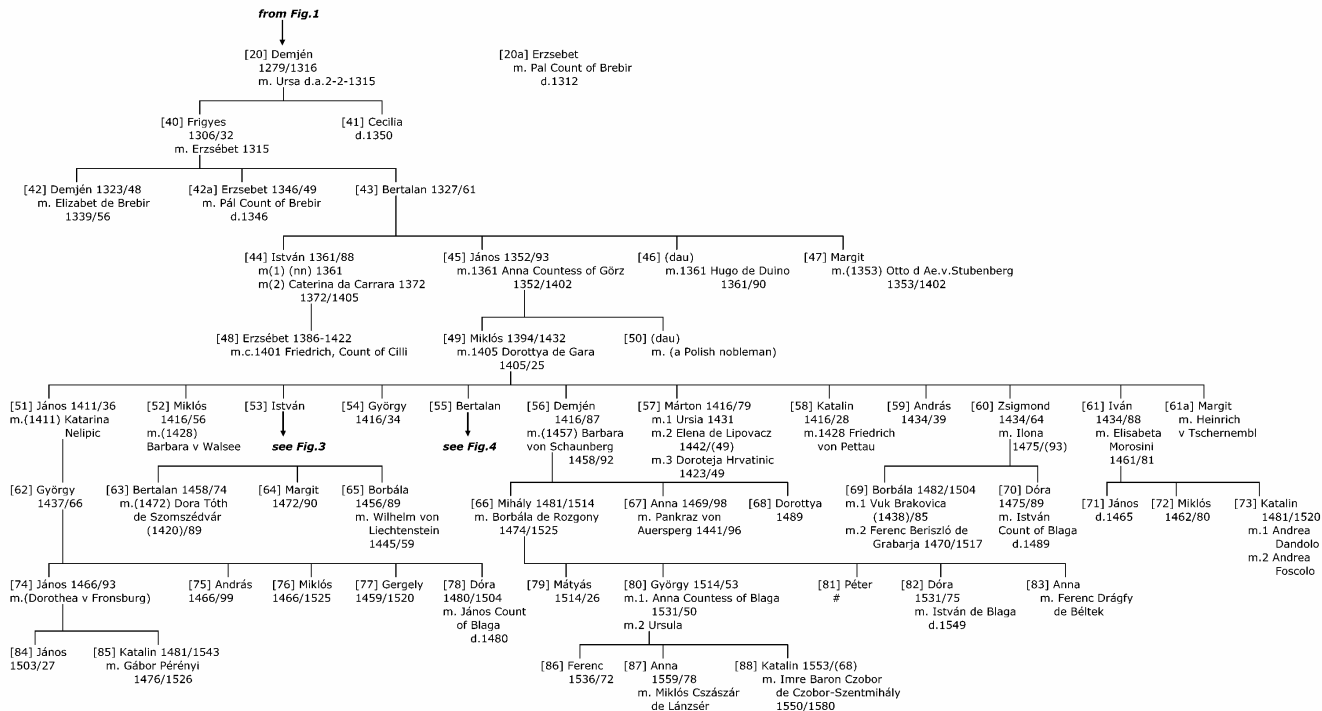


Fig 2. Descendants of Counts of Veglia and Modrus, later Frangepán Counts (part 2)

from Fig.2



[53] István 1416/81
m.1446 Isotta d'Este
1425/56

[90] Bernát 1453/1527
m.1476 Aloysia di Marzano
1464/1527

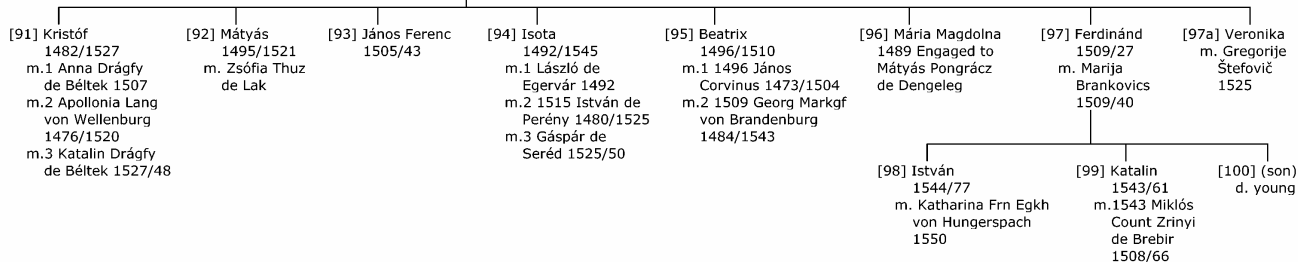


Fig 3. Descendants of Counts of Veglia and Modrus, later Frangepán Counts (part 3)

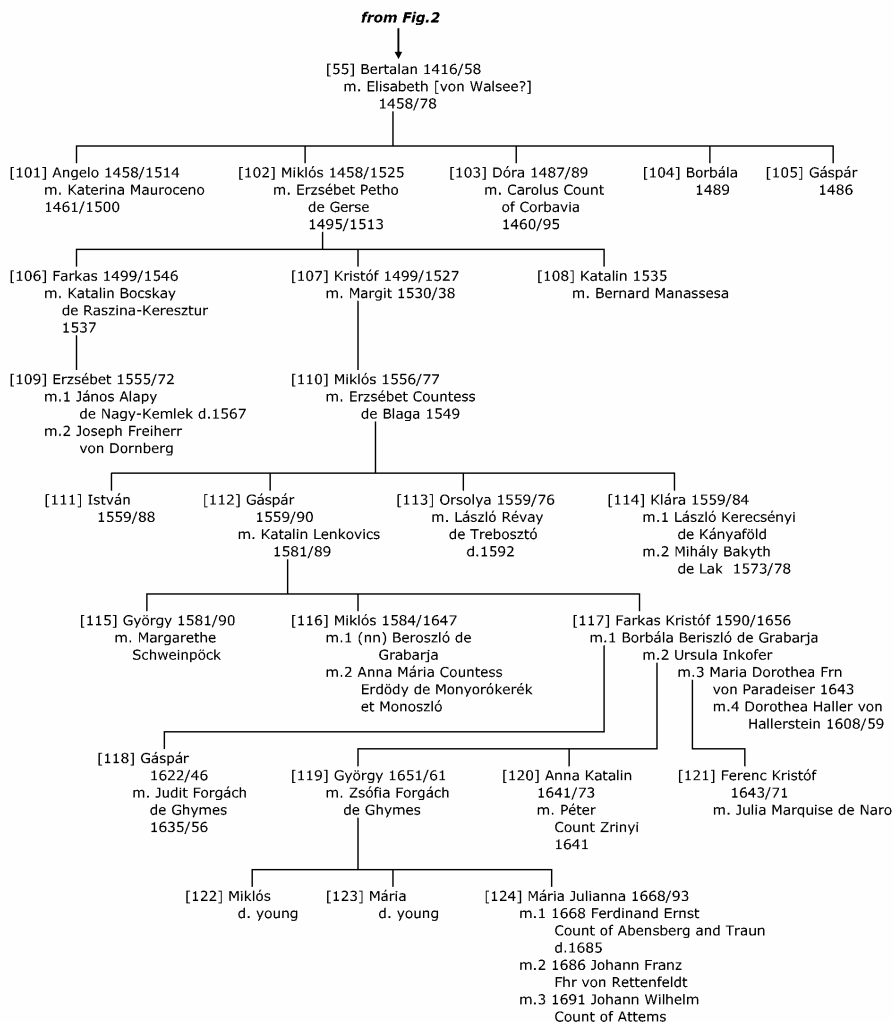


Fig 4. Descendants of Counts of Veglia and Modrus, later Frangepán Counts (part 4)