

# *A contribution to the history of the term sigillum mediocre in the Hungarian Kingdom under the Angevins*

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A letter of judgement issued in the name of Nicholas Garai, the count palatine of the Kingdom of Hungary on the fourteenth of November 1422<sup>1</sup> notifies us of a lawsuit over an estate called Baráti alias Szentiván,<sup>2</sup> in County Somogy, involving, on the one hand, the abbot of Somogyvár and, on the other hand, Cristopher and Nicholas of Baráti. In the course of this lawsuit, the latter produced a royal charter of privilege issued by King Charles I of Hungary in 1330, as a piece of evidence (among others) supporting their claim to the estate. In his letter of judgement the palatine added a comment to the clause confirming the validity of the document, cited below word for word, as follows:

*“... in nostram venientes presentiam quattor litteras omnino privilegiales nobis presentarant, quarum prima ..., secundo vero ipsarum domini Karoli regis, anno domini Millesimo trecentesimo tricesimo, tertio Nonas Augusti, regni autem sui anno similiter tricesimo, mediocri duplici suo sigillo vallata ...”*<sup>3</sup>

What is remarkable and worthy of notice in the above-cited text is the term *sigillum mediocre*, because of the different options available to the scholar trying to find the original meaning of the term.

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<sup>1</sup> Zsigmond-kori oklevéltár. [Charters of the Sigismund Era] Vol. 9. (1422) ed. I. Borsa, N. C. Tóth, Budapest 2004, no. 1127.

<sup>2</sup> Baráti lay near present-day Somogyfajsz and Köröspuszta.

<sup>3</sup> The text of this charter was published in I. Nagy, I. Páur, K. Ráth, D. Véghelyi, eds. *Hazai okmánytár*. [A collection of charters issued in Hungary] 8 vols. Győr–Budapest 1865–1891, 3: 325–338. (nr. 234), the text cited here can be found and consulted on pp. 327–328.

For present-day historians the expression *sigillum mediocre* means, basically, a “mediocre” seal in the sense of being an ordinary seal of medium size for everyday use, occupying a middle position between the king’s great seal and the lesser seals for affairs of minor importance or private matters. In addition to this, in Hungary, during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, this expression referred to a particular royal seal in use at the time, i. e. the seal in the custody of the *comes capellae* (a high-ranking official who confirmed the documents issued by the Royal Chapel). The important role played by the Royal Chapel in issuing royal charters continued for a long time, even after the twelfth century, when the Royal Chancery was established, practically right to the end of King Sigismund’s reign (to the mid-fifteenth century). We can observe and follow the occasional changes in the position of the Royal Chapel and its head, the *comes capellae*, as the person issuing the recorded (written) documents of the Royal Court by consulting a number of seminal studies by Albert Gárdonyi, Imre Szentpétery and most of all, Bernát L. Kumorovitz.<sup>4</sup> If we would like to understand the structure of the government under King Charles I, we find, based on reliable evidence, that during the first two decades of the Angevin period the *comes capellae* still used his old title, *secretarius notarius*, originating from the late Árpáadian age, and this was replaced by a new title, *secretarius cancellarius* around 1320, but the creation of this new title was not followed by the establishment of a privy chancellor’s office. At this time, at first, the *comes capellae* was the keeper of the royal signet. The signet had a more private and confidential character than the other royal seals, and the *comes capellae* was authorized to use the signet, which allowed him to actually counterseal i. e. countersign some royal documents with his seal, by making an impression in the wax surface of the great seal appended to important royal documents. We would suggest the 1310s as the beginning of the independent document issuing activity of the *comes capellae* in the royal court. From this time on, for about a half century, he could issue documents in his own name, but under the royal seal used at the time. The increasing importance of literacy and written records, the launching of the Royal Chapel’s own document issuing ac-

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<sup>4</sup> A. Gárdonyi, “A királyi kancellária eredete és kialakulása Magyarországon.” [The origins and development of the Royal Chancery in Hungary] *Századok* 48 (1914), 87–106; I. Szentpétery, “A királyi titkos kancellária történetéhez.” [A contribution to the history of the Privy Council] *Századok* 48 (1914), 440–445; B. L. Kumorovitz, “A magyar királyi egyszerű és titkospecsét használatának alakulása a középkorban.” [Changes in the use of the royal ordinary and privy seal during the Middle Ages] *A Bécsi Gr. Klebelsberg Kuno Magyar Történetkutató Intézet Évkönyve* 7 (1937), 69–112, B. L. Kumorovitz, “A királyi kápolnaispán oklevéladó működése. A királyi kancellária fejlődése a XIV. és XV. század fordulóján.” [The charter issuing activity of the royal *comes capellae*. (The development of the Royal Chancery at the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries)] *Regnum* 5 (1942/1943), 455–498; B. L. Kumorovitz, “Osztályok és címek, rangok és hatáskörök alakulása I. Lajos kancelláriájában.” [Development and changes in the terminology of classes, titles, ranks and functions in the Royal Chancery of King Louis I (the Great)] in Gy. Székely, ed. *Eszmetörténeti tanulmányok a magyar középkorról*. Budapest 1984, 293–330.

tivity, the appearance of the title *secretarius cancellarius*, stressing the importance of the *comes capellae* because of his new function and duties, and the replacement of the royal signet, which had been entrusted to the *comes capellae* from the 1260s on, by his own seal attached to the documents issued by the Royal Chapel on its own authority may have been closely connected phenomena, but we have no direct proof to support this assumption. What we can state with certainty is that it is a fact that Csanád, the provost of Várad, who had made his first appearance in 1319 as royal secretary and keeper of the privy seal and *comes capellae*,<sup>5</sup> was mentioned as privy councillor and *comes capellae* in a document issued by the papal Curia in the summer of 1320,<sup>6</sup> and in his new capacity as *comes capellae*, he was the first to issue a charter of his own, under his own name and authority, to enforce a writ, a summons.<sup>7</sup> The edicts issued by the Royal Chapel make the impression of a rather heterogeneous collection. Letters of record: recognizance (*fassio*) made in the presence of the *comes capellae* and recorded by him; reports (*relatio*) by the *comes capellae* on the execution of royal commands and of orders and instructions of varying contents received from judicial authorities. The role played by the Royal Chapel in keeping the records of the royal court before 1374, the date of the reforms introduced into the Royal Chancery under Louis I the Great reminds us, in spite of its peculiarities, in several respects to the functions and tasks performed by the places of authentication (*loca credibilia*) which could be found all over the territory of the kingdom of Hungary (usually attached to ecclesiastical institutions and functioning under Church supervision and administration).

The exact time of the change in the use of seals, i. e. when the signet kept by the *comes capellae* was replaced by the *sigillum mediocre* and the *comes capellae* became the keeper and sole user of this seal, is a question to which we cannot give an appropriate answer, as yet. As the changes manifest in the use of seals under the rule of the Angevins had a close connection with the important reorganizations taking place in the government and the administration of justice, we may surmise that the change in the use of the royal seals took place at the same time, i. e. at the end of the 1310s and the beginning of the 1320s. From the 1320s a number of charters issued by the *comes capellae* has survived in their original form, but these show us only the place of the seal fastening the document, which is to say that no seal originating from this period is extant.<sup>8</sup> We have a diploma issued by the *comes capellae* and containing a formula of confirmation (*corroboratio*) and au-

<sup>5</sup> *Anjou-kori oklevéltár. Documenta res Hungaricas tempore regum Andegavensium illustrantia 1301–1387*. Vol. 1–14, 17, 19–20, 23–24. Gen. ed. Gy. Kristó, Budapest–Szeged 1990–sqq (henceforth: Anjou-oklt.) 5: nr. 525.

<sup>6</sup> Anjou-oklt. 5: no. 829. It strikes one that while the terminology used in the charters issued by the Chapter of Várad or by Queen Elizabeth confirms the change in Csanád's position (cf. Anjou-oklt. 6: nr. 11, 372 and 491), the royal diplomas indicate no change in the titles of Csanád. (cf. Anjou-oklt. 6: nr. 212, 434)

<sup>7</sup> Anjou-oklt. 6: nr. 787.

<sup>8</sup> Anjou-oklt. 11: nr. 534, 544.

thentication, but this document is a defective copy and a part of the text is missing and, unfortunately, the name of the kind of seal used for fastening the charter was in the part lost from the text.<sup>9</sup> The first diploma to which a royal *sigillum mediocre* was appended and is not only known to us from sources, but the seal belonging and attached to the document has also survived was issued on 2 September 1338, by Peter, bishop of Szerém and *comes capellae* of the Royal Chapel.<sup>10</sup> From then on, a continuous series of the royal *sigillum mediocre* can be traced, in direct line up to King Sigismund's reign, and these seals were from time to time, occasionally renewed by ruling kings.<sup>11</sup>

Returning to the charter issued by the above-mentioned Palatine, Garai, we find that several questions need to be clarified. An answer should be given to the question of what was the exact, contemporary meaning of the term *sigillum mediocre*, the name of the seal attached to the charter of 1330, as the contemporaries called it. Could it refer to the royal *sigillum mediocre* used by the *comes capellae* to confirm charters? And if so, can we state that a royal *sigillum mediocre* was in use not only in 1338, but as early as 1330? And if this term does not refer to the *sigillum mediocre*, then what can its meaning be, in this particular instance. Last but not least, if the term *sigillum mediocre* had been open to more than one, perhaps even to a number of interpretations, then how could this word with its various meanings have functioned.

When the palatine, Nicholas Garai, examined the 1330 charter in 1422, and identified the seal by subjecting it to close scrutiny (which means that he inspected and examined it "with his own eyes" as the charter indicates) and, in his charter, he used the term *sigillum mediocre* to describe the seal on it, he could not have referred to the seal used by the *comes capellae*. We have two convincing reasons for affirming this. The first is that the charter clearly indicates that the person issuing the seal was the king and not the *comes capellae*, and we know that before 1374 the function of the so-called *sigillum mediocre* was to confirm documents dated and signed by the *comes capellae*. The second reason is that the seal attached to the charter by the palatine was a double-sided seal, and all the known occurrences of the royal *sigillum mediocre* were single-sided (*simplex*) seals. As the *comes capellae*, even as late as under King Sigismund, continued to play an active part in drawing up at least some of the documents issued by the royal court, and, in spite of the fact that by that time the documents were signed by the king ("dated under his signature"), it was the *comes capellae* who impressed these documents

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<sup>9</sup> Anjou-oklt. 11: nr. 402.

<sup>10</sup> National Archives of Hungary, Diplomatikai Levéltár [Diplomatics Archives] (henceforth: DL) 51087 (Fond Kállay [Ref. no.] 1300, 493). The photograph of the seal can be seen in Kumorovitz, *A magyar királyi egyszerű és titkospecsét*, inset plate nr. 1 – with the detailed description of the seal. – Kumorovitz, *A királyi kápolnaispán*, 496–497 (plate 1). Another description was given of the same seal, with slight differences – though in the author's opinion it was a privy seal, Gárdonyi, *A királyi kancellária*, 106.

<sup>11</sup> See the entire series collected and arranged, together with their photographs in Kumorovitz, *A királyi kápolnaispán*, 492–497.

(by way of confirmation) with the royal *sigillum mediocre*, which still continued to be under his care. The king (still lacking a large bureaucratic apparatus of trained officials at the time) did not interfere in his business of handling practical affairs, and his independence was still practically unhindered. Therefore the palatine, Garai must have known well, from personal experience, the seal under the care of its keeper, the *comes capellae*, i. e. the *sigillum mediocre*.<sup>12</sup> From the fact that it was thought convenient to add the word "*privialiter*", it follows, that it cannot be taken for granted that, even in its own age, the adjective "*mediocre*" was necessarily used in a particular sense and referred to a particular object, thus the exact meaning of the term may not have been obvious to all, even to contemporaries. The term "*mediocre*" came to acquire the meaning 'mid-' or 'middle' through the daily routine of comparing the different groups of royal seals, a procedure based on the differences in their roles and importance. It would be useful to turn to an example taken from the Registrum of Turóc: in this document the scribe who drafted the text and mentioned that it was confirmed and authenticated with a *sigillum mediocre* (*sigillo mediocri*) found it necessary to add the standard turn "*apud comitem capelle habito*", because the term '*sigillum mediocre*' seems not to have been obvious enough in itself for denoting that particular case of the use of the seal, or to give a clear and unambiguous idea of its nature.

On examining more closely the date of the first occurrence of the *sigillum maius* in the royal documents, we conclude that this type of seal appeared during the latter half of King Charles I's reign. It is in this context that we examine the following extract taken from Bernát Kumorovitz's book, which is both useful and instructive for us. According to Kumorovitz, facts concerning the *sigillum mediocre* can usually be found in the charters issued under King Sigismund's reign. We know such charters from 1406, 1407, 1428, 1429 and 1433. It was under King Sigismund, too, that the expression became established and developed into a set term. Even the fact that the *sigillum mediocre* was rarely mentioned in the official documents could be explained by the usage of this age, according to which only charters of privilege made, mention in their *corroboratio*, of the type of seal used to confirm the privilege. Still, this did not prevent the circulation of the term and, by the end of King Sigismund's reign, its meaning had become fixed and its general use and distribution was shown by the fact that not only royal charters but also people having no direct connections with the Royal Chancery used it, e. g. in 1343, Paul, the Lord Chief Justice used the expression "*mediocri sigillo*", in 1354 Prince Stephen issued a letter patent under "*sigilli nostri mediocris munimine*" and,

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<sup>12</sup> A number of facts concerning king Sigismund's reign, cited by Kumorovitz, made it quite clear that the name of the seal under the authority of the *comes capellae* was "*sigillum mediocre*". A telling particular, taken from the Registrum of Turóc, from the year 1391, dealt with a case when "*quasdam litteras domini Lodovici pridem piissimi regis Hungarie sub suo sigillo mediocri, apud comitem capellae seu regie habito ... privialiter emanatas*" were also subjected to close scrutiny. S. Horváth, *A liptói és turóczi registrum*. [The register of Liptó and Turóc] Budapest 1902, nr. 32. p. 77. Cited by Kumorovitz, *A királyi kápolnaispán*, 468.

in 1386, Cardinal Valentine Alsáni, the bishop of Pécs and administrator of the affairs of the Archbishopric of Esztergom, issued one of his charters "*appensione sigilli nostri mediocris, pontificali sigillo carentes*". Still, we cannot exclude the possibility that the seal of the *comes capellae* may have been called *sigillum mediocre*, under Charles I. The Lord Chief Justice, Paul, when making a transcription of the letter of privilege issued by Charles I in 1324, observed that this document had been issued "*sub mediocri sigillo suo*". However, as this comment concerns not the first, but the second great seal, to differentiate it from the earlier first seal and the later third seal, it seems probable that the Lord Chief Justice borrowed the term from the vocabulary of the Chancery, where it was used to indicate the lesser royal seal, kept and used by the *comes capellae*, under King Louis I the Great. Still, if the term was known in 1342, it may have been known even earlier. This technical term may probably have been coined to stress the difference between the uses of the various royal seals because, when the privy seal came into use, the number of the royal seals increased to three or even four, if the signet is also included. As far as we know from the records accessible to us, this happened between the end of the second decade of the fourteenth century, and at the beginning of the 1530s. From the above we can come to the conclusion that the *sigillum mediocre* has to be clearly distinguished from the king's great seal, and from the signet and the privy seal, too, and this term indicated a completely new kind of royal seal.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the fact that Kumorovitz's reasoning offers several useful suggestions, it is not convincing that during the reign of King Charles I the "*mediocre*" seal (a middle-sized seal used in the course of the ordinary, day-to-day business of the Royal Chancery for sealing documents of average importance by the *comes capellae*) was the first seal called *sigillum mediocre* in the Royal Chancery and later the name was borrowed to indicate other seals, too, and was used for naming one particular seal in each set of seals, the middle one. The above examples prove quite clearly that, from the 1340s on, not only the king but also the keepers of the royal seals were unable to make clear distinctions between their various seals. Because of this confusion, they began to use the adjective "*mediocre*" to distinguish a particular type of seal occupying the place between the first and the last seal of each set of three seals, i. e. the seal in the middle, as the "middle seal". Still, this reason is not powerful enough in itself to convince us that it was the *comes capellae* who began to borrow the name, *sigillum mediocre*, for his seals, and the name was gradually adopted by other keepers of seals to their particular kinds of seals, to distinguish them more clearly, and the term was found so convenient that its use spread to a wider circle. It seems more reasonable to surmise that if people dispose of three different sets of seals, the need to distinguish between them is natural, and there is no need for another person's example to name *sigillum mediocre*

<sup>13</sup> Kumorovitz, *A királyi kápolnaispán*, 468–469. In the original text footnotes were appended to the citations indicating the location of the charters used by the author when writing this work. It should be mentioned that the privy seal mentioned in the text had only a single occurrence under Charles I, in 1331. Cf. Kumorovitz, *A magyar királyi egyszerű és titkos pecsét*, 101 (Figure 2).

a seal which is half-way between a great seal and a signet, occupying a mid-position between them, in size, chronological order, or use. Of course, this is still pure speculation, but luckily we can do better than that, and can pursue our investigation further, on firmer ground, in another direction.

Kumorovitz cited a highly informative example, when he referred to a document issued in 1342 by the Lord Chief Justice, Paul, and he also mentioned that this document referred to another diploma issued by King Charles I in 1321 and confirmed by him later, "*sub mediocri sigillo suo*".<sup>14</sup> However, there is a flaw in Kumorovitz's argument. What could be the right interpretation of the above term? What Kumorovitz had in mind here must have been the royal great seal, the second one in chronological order and not the seal used in the Royal Chapel and, in our opinion, he was certainly right about this. From this perspective we can examine the problem from a new angle and this may lead to a new interpretation. That is to say that it enables us to use the term *sigillum mediocre* not only in the sense of a middle-sized seal, occupying the middle position between the king's great seal and the lesser seals (in order of magnitude as well as of importance), but it can also be used to refer to a member of another set of seals, arranged in chronological order, seals used one after the other in time, successively, and in this case the term "*mediocre*" denotes a seal occupying the middle position, as the second seal, in a chronological order. Moreover, in this particular case, the term *sigillum mediocre* did not mean the seal kept by the *comes capellae*, to which it was supposed to have referred originally, but was a part of another set, a set of royal seals, the royal great seals arranged in chronological order. (This time we can exclude the possibility that the term may have referred to the seal of the *comes capellae*, because in his charter the Lord Chief Justice named quite clearly the king and not the *comes capellae* as the issuer of the document and, before 1374, the seal of the Royal Chapel was used only for the documents issued in the name of the Royal Chapel.) Still, even so, the meaning of the term *sigillum mediocre* is not quite clear and raises problems, owing to the fact that as the first great seal had still been in use in the royal court in 1321, therefore in 1342 the Lord Chief Justice Paul could not have seen and confirmed a document issued in 1321 with the king's second great seal, which came to replace the first seal only later, in 1323. Kumorovitz did not call our attention to this problem, he did not even mention that such a problem existed. Thus we do not find plausible either of the two possible interpretations of the meaning of the *sigillum mediocre* given by him, because powerful reasons are against it.

Luckily the problem can be solved, because the contradiction is based on a misunderstanding. Kumorovitz's opinion that the Lord Chief Justice, Paul transcribed the text of Charles I's charter of privilege of 1321 in 1342 is not correct. In fact, Kumorovitz made a transcription of the contents of the charter, but he mentioned only the year of publication, 1321, without giving the full date. In spite of this inconvenience, it was possible to find the document he had referred to,

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<sup>14</sup> Kumorovitz, *A királyi kápolnaispán*, 469. Note 78.

a charter of privilege issued by Charles I on 9 February 1321<sup>15</sup> of which a transcription was issued by the king himself later, on 18 July 1323, confirmed with the royal double seal in force by that time.<sup>16</sup> The casual mention made by the Lord Chief Justice, Paul left not only the month and day of the date of the royal order of 1321 unmentioned, but he also failed to mention that the document seen by him was in fact a royal confirmation of an earlier charter of privilege, issued in 1321 and confirmed in the summer of 1323, and sealed – quite naturally, there is nothing to be surprised at – with the king's second, i. e. "mediocre" great seal. Therefore the term *sigillum mediocre* used in 1342 by the Lord Chief Justice Paul does by no means suggest that the notion expressed by this term may have become current, and its popularity contributed to its wider distribution, and it began to be used in Hungarian charters because the *sigillum mediocre* of the *comes capellae* was becoming so well known and popular that other administrative organs felt the need to adopt it, too. Quite the contrary, it confirms our opinion that the use of this expression indicates that there was another royal seal, the royal double (great) seal, and this particular charter referred to the royal double seal.

If we want to study the history of the royal great seals, we no longer need so much assistance from the research of the learned sigillographers of the past,<sup>17</sup> as we needed for our previous argument, because we have a source left to us by the Chancery of the Angevins which provides us with plenty of information about the relevant details. It is a well-known fact that during the military campaign conducted by King Louis the Great to Bosnia, in the year 1363, the royal great seal was stolen from the tent of the Archbishop of Esztergom, by his familiars. Because of the loss of the first seal, a new royal great seal had to be engraved. At the same time provisions had to be made against the legal uncertainty originating from the loss of the great seal of the kingdom. Thus the king adopted a decision whereby new proceedings had to be initiated to confirm the former documents issued by the Royal Chancery under the lost seal, because these documents lost their legal validity with the loss of the seal. Instead of validating the former documents by transcription, a procedure in current use at the time, the king ordered by decree that a clause should be added to particular groups of former documents, and the text of the clause should be confirmed by the imposition of the new royal great seal. The text of this clause written on the edges of the parchment with minute letters followed basically the pattern of the former clause, and its contents referred to the circumstances necessitating the addition of a clause, and explaining the reasons why a clause had to be added to the document, and why this addition was done by royal order. This text also tells us the history of the great seals of the Angevins. We learn from it that under the reign of Charles I forged examples of the first great seal, in use till 1322, began to appear, and once the forgery was discovered, it was replaced by a new great seal. The

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<sup>15</sup> Anjou oklt. 6: nr. 36.

<sup>16</sup> Anjou-oklt. 7: nr. 369.

<sup>17</sup> For the most complete survey of the great seals of Charles I cf. A. Gárdonyi, "I. Károly király nagypécsetei." [The great seals of King Charles I] *Turul* 25 (1907), 30–57.

second great seal was also lost, during the campaign to Wallachia ending in defeat in the autumn of 1330. The head of the Royal Chancery and keeper of the great seal, Andreas, provost of Székesfehérvár was killed in action in that battle. The loss of the second seal was followed issuing by Charles I's third great seal, and this continued in use to the end of his reign.<sup>18</sup>

The engraving of the great seal of King Charles I was completed by the spring of 1331,<sup>19</sup> therefore the formula of the *corroboratio* referring to the great seal in use since 1323 in the text of the royal privileges could no longer refer only to that one. As the royal great seal had to be replaced a second time, it could refer to the new great seal, the third one. Therefore, from the spring of 1331, the newly issued documents were confirmed and authenticated by a new clause: "*duplicis sigilli novi et authentici munimine.*" Besides, in each case when reference was made to the king's second seal, which had been in use between 1323 and 1330, it had to be conveyed somehow, that this seal was different from the new great seal in actual use. As the text was meant to refer to the second seal of the three great seals, the term *sigillum mediocre* could express clearly and unequivocally that it referred to the second great royal seal in chronological order. When, after 1331, the diplomas mentioned former documents to which the second great seal had been appended, the following – or a very similar – formula was used: "*exhibuerunt nobis quoddam privilegium nostrum priori sive mediocri sigillo nostro videlicet quod in partibus Transalpini in expeditione nostra casualiter extitit amissum, consignatum.*"<sup>20</sup> Concerning this subject King Charles I's transcriptions of former charters issued in 1335 to confirm the privileges obtained by Thomas, Voivode of Transylvania in 1323 are highly instructive. On 2 of November 1335 15 documents were confirmed, of which 13 documents fell to the category of charters issued before 1331, i. e. before the time when the third great seal came into use.<sup>21</sup> Of these 13 documents, in 5 cases no surviving copy of the documents have been left to us, we have only the

<sup>18</sup> On the confirming clause added by King Louis the Great cf. A. Grün [Gárdonyi], "I. Lajos király megerősítő záradéka." [The confirming clause added by King Louis I] *Turul* 19 (1904), 27–37. The best and easiest access to the text of this clause concerning the above seals is the *Tripartitum* of Werbőczy. *Werbőczy István Tripartituma. A dicsőséges magyar királyság szokásjogának hármaskönyve. Latin-magyar kétnyelvű kiadás.* [Tripartitum. The triple codebook containing the common law of the glorious Hungarian Kingdom. Latin-Hungarian bilingual edition] Budapest 1990, Part II. t. 14. § 22–25.

<sup>19</sup> The seal was made by Peter, son of Simon, who had come from Siena, and was the castellan of Szepesvár, and received an estate, Jamnik in County Szepes from the king as a recompense for his various services. In the letter of donation the King laid stress, among others, on the services rendered by Master Peter "*in sculptione, fabricatione seu paratione presentis sigilli nostri authentici.*" Cf. *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae ecclesiasticus ac civilis*. I–IX. Stud. et op. G. Fejér, Budae 1829–1844. VIII/3: 529–530. (nr. 231.)

<sup>20</sup> I. Nagy, et al., eds. *A zichy és vásonkeői gróf Zichy család idősb ágának okmánytára. Codex diplomaticus domus senioris comitum Zichy de Zich et Vásonkeő.* 12 vols. Pest–Budapest 1871–1931. nr. 424. (nr. 425; 3 July 1334).

<sup>21</sup> Anjou-oklt. 19: nr. 646–660, in this volume, the last three documents include clauses of confirmation from the years following 1331.

transcripts confirming and authenticating the documents in 1335.<sup>22</sup> However, even the survival of 13 seals is of great importance, because it allows us to inspect and examine the seals themselves, and see what the actual form and appearance of the seals were like, of the seals named in the 1335 transcription of the diplomas *sigillum mediocre*, because these seals had been the impressions of the second great royal seal lost in Wallachia. Of the eight documents, in six cases it can be established without any doubt that it was King Charles I's second seal that was attached to them, and the term *sigillum mediocre* referred to that particular seal (in the other two cases the seal attached to one diploma has been lost and only fragments of the other seal were left appended to the other). It follows from the above that after 1331 the term *sigillum mediocre* basically referred not to the seal of the *comes capellae*, but to one of the royal great seals, the second one in chronological order. The example cited in the introduction suggests that this term did not fall into oblivion even almost a hundred years later, because a seal on a diploma issued in 1330 – an impression of the second great seal of King Charles I – presented for confirmation and authentication in 1422, was given the name *sigillum mediocre* by the Palatine, Nicholas Garai.<sup>23</sup>

What follows from the above for the seal kept by the *comes capellae*? After 1342 the term *sigillum maius* could refer to different seals at the same time, and we have no reason to exclude the possibility that the term *sigillum mediocre* might also have had different meanings, and even the seal kept by the *comes capellae* might have been given this name. Because this term was used to refer to another royal seal, the one used from the 1330s on and, because the surviving evidence shows that the term was used fairly often to indicate that particular seal – it is difficult to imagine that the seal of the *comes capellae* which was not used very often, should have had the same name as the prestigious second great royal seal. We cannot cite even a single occurrence to prove this use of the term. The situation was exactly the reverse of Kumorovitz's hypothesis: it was not the seal kept by the *comes capellae* which served as an example to the later use of the expression, and the term was not borrowed from the vocabulary of the Royal Chancery, either. Actually, the *comes capellae* began to employ a term to his seal which had referred to another seal before, the second royal great seal, and this coincidence prevented the term *sigillum mediocre* to come into general use in this new sense, except for a limited circle of users. Right through the Angevin period additional explanations were needed to complete and define more clearly the meaning of *sigillum mediocre*,

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<sup>22</sup> Anjou-oklt. 7: nr. 286 and 289; Anjou-oklt. 8: nr. 377; Anjou-oklt. 11: nr. 429, 430–432, 434–435. Of the diplomas listed here, the seal appended to one of them has been lost by now, (Anjou-oklt. 7: nr. 286), and only fragments of the seal fastening another diploma has survived (nr. 289).

<sup>23</sup> As the volumes containing the material of the years 1331 and 1332 of the Anjou-kori oklevéltár (Angevin Charters Series) are still unpublished and cannot be examined as yet, we have not been able to find documentary evidence for the exact date when the second great seal in chronological order of King Charles I, in use till 1330, was first given the name "*sigillum mediocre*."

in order that this term should mean the *sigillum mediocre* kept by the *comes capellae*, and this alone, and should not allow any misunderstanding.

Of course, this fact has important implications for the interpretation of this term even today. When we hear the term *sigillum mediocre*, we are inclined to think, as a matter of fact, that it refers to the seal used by the *comes capellae*. However, during the period between 1331 and 1342, in particular, at the time when Charles I's third seal was in use, this term originally meant the king's former, in chronological order second seal. This should be taken into consideration and kept carefully in mind, particularly interpreting and translating the diplomas and charters of this period and making of calendars.

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