

The Prince of Liptov, John Corvinus in historic documents and in literature

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Abstract

The study outlines the links that broaden the possibilities of didactization in context, by conceptualizing the selected themes of Ján Kalinčiak's novel *The Prince of Liptov* with the help of the archival documents about John Corvinus. It focuses on the 19th-century literary text comparing it to the original preserved historical documents from 15th-century Italy from the point of view of literary history and history of intercultural relations. The practical development of the skills of analysis and synthesis for future teachers through an information-based activity aimed to deepen the students' knowledge of a prominent author by expanding the perspective of the contextualization of his work and narrative by proper research, beyond the limits of the state of art in the field.

History and literature in teacher training

This study is written in the frame of the research work of the VEGA project *Unknown documents for the history of Slovakia in Italian archives (14th–16th century)*.¹ Therefore, we will primarily deal with the documents within the *VESTIGIA* database² and focus on the contextualization of the historical personality of John Corvinus with the published research studies on these documents.

¹ *Unknown documents for the history of Slovakia in Italian archives (14th–16th century)* – VEGA 1/0563/19

² OTKA 81430 sz. project: *Vestigia XIV–XVI századi magyar történelmi és irodalmi források Olaszország levéltáiraiban és könyvtáiraiban* (<http://nyilvanos.otka-palyazat.hu/index.php?menuid=930&num=81430&lang=HU>); OTKA 128797 sz. project: *Vestigia II. XIV–XVI századi magyar történelmi és irodalmi források Olaszország levéltáiraiban és könyvtáiraiban* (https://www.otka-palyazat.hu/?menuid=223_I&pid=128797).

The aim of this article is to point out the possible use of the correlation of documents discovered within the *VESTIGIA* and *VEGA* projects and Kalinčiak's historical novel *The Prince of Liptov*.^{3,4} The novel's plot centres around the Duke of Liptov, prince John Corvinus.⁵ The main theme of the work is the portrayal of the historical situation in Hungary in the year 1499 partly through fictional characters, or by the fictionalization of historical figures and historical contextualization of the plot. Thus, the writer's approach inspired us to compare the literary narrative with the content of the historical documents themselves. Our aim is to focus on a possible didacticization of selected themes that represent a connection between the literary text of the novel and the extant historical documents, and the way they can be employed either in the teaching of the history of literature or in the teaching of the history of intercultural relations in university degree programmes designed for future teachers of Italian as a foreign language.

How could documents from the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries, discussed in relation to 19th-century literary works, serve to develop the knowledge and skills of future foreign language teachers in the 21st century? For a future foreign language teacher whose teacher training curriculum is based on three pillars: the study of linguistics of the foreign language, the study of the history of literature, and the study of didactics of the foreign language, linking the study of the history of intercultural relations and the history of literature is much more important for the development of the didactic aspect. The didacticization should not be based only on the possibility to use a factual connection of the contents of historical documents and their intercultural substance. Moreover, it should be focused on adding value to the teaching process by innovating and motivating the student, a future teacher of the foreign language. That is why we propose to connect the intercultural historical topics to the history of literature of the native language in the framework of foreign language teaching. In this study, we seek to show that such cross-curricular collaboration can be directed towards complementary content that broadens the teacher's horizon in his or her theoretical and practical training at university. To accomplish this goal with any plausible success, we must answer the questions that constitute our argumentative base. The latter is constructed on the contextualization of the author Ján Kalinčiak, his novel *The Prince of Liptov*, and on selected historical

³ J. Kalinčiak: *Dielo I. Knieža liptovský*, Bratislava: Slovenský Tatran, 2001: 165–392.

⁴ J. Kalinčiak: *Knieža liptovské*, Bratislava: Zlatý fond denníka SME, 2007.

⁵ John Corvinus (born 1473, died 1504) was illegitimate son of King Matthias of Hungary.

documents about John Corvinus whose content is relevant to the content of Kalinčiak's literary text.

Ján Kalinčiak and his novel

Ján Kalinčiak is an important Slovak writer of the 19th century. He was born in 1822 in the village of Horné Záturčie, and he died in 1871 in Turčiansky Svätý Martin. He started working on the novel *The Prince of Liptov* in 1845 as a young writer at the age of 22 and he finished it in 1852 when he was 30 years old. In relation to the novel, it is essential to point out some significant facts concerning his youth that could have had a major influence on his literary work related to the history of the Kingdom of Hungary. He grew up in a family of an Evangelical (Lutheran) parish priest. He studied at the Gymnasium in Gemer, then at the Evangelical Lyceum in Levoča, and finally in Bratislava. In the years 1843–1845, he studied history and philology at the University of Halle in Germany. In his biography he describes how in his youth he learned about the past.⁶ That was the very source of his affinity for the history of the landed gentry and the life of the nobility in Hungary. Then, in our opinion, the focus of his studies in Halle also had an impact on his work in terms of his methodology, influencing the new way in which Kalinčiak handled the historical themes in his novel *The Prince of Liptov*.

The text is an example of the period of transition in literary history between Romanticism and Realism. The author does not only draw on the romantic attraction of the antiquities, but he creates a fictional narrative based on his experiences with the oral tradition of the rendering of the events in the families of the landed gentry. At the same time, he realistically uses a sophisticated method in which he interweaves the lives of fictional characters, for instance the love of Červeň and Marienka, and contextualizing the plot in relation to historical figures and historical events that are not fictional but grounded in a contemporary knowledge of the history of Hungary at the end of the 15th century. Although the literary characters act as part of a historically contextualised plot, their primary role is to take a moral, human, and ethical stance despite the circumstances that surround them. Červeň is a representative of the Corvinus wing – the fictional half-brother of the prince John Corvinus, and

⁶ J. Kalinčiak: *Dielo I. Vlastný životopis*, Bratislava: Slovenský Tatran, 2001: 288–303.

Marienka is the fictional daughter of the historical palatine Stephen Zápoľa.⁷ Thus, as we can see already in the creation of fictional characters, Kalinčiak places considerable emphasis on the fact that the main characters represent, as it was a well-known historical fact to him, two hostile sides of the conflict. On the one hand, this very choice points out the absurdity of looking for references to historical figures in the novel, while on the other hand, he does make references to historical facts.

Focusing on the author's method we can understand why readers regard this novel as a literary fiction with historical motifs rather than as a source of information on the historical and social situation. Since the two main characters are fictional, the reader easily assumes that the fiction element goes further and does not quite know how much to trust the author in terms of historical accuracy, as is usually the case with historical fiction. Many interesting figures of history are represented in various second-rate literary or cinematic productions that obscure the factual record of their lives preserved in existing documents. Analysing 15th-century documents on the life and trial of Joan of Arc, famous French historian Régine Pernoud⁸ convincingly showed this approach in contemporary popular culture and proved with the help of the historical documents how the facts have been constantly ignored by authors of both literary and cinematic biographies. In our history, King Matthias is a popular figure of literary works that emerged in part from oral storytelling. Therefore, the story and life of King Matthias is relatively well-known to the public. Nevertheless, this does not apply to his son John Corvinus. The historical narrative about Corvinus predominates over fiction in popular culture. As the two main characters of Kalinčiak's novel, Červeň and Marienka, are fictional, the reader is not given a clear distinction between purely imagined characters and the historically based John Corvinus. Therefore, the underlying plan of the author to use the novel to popularize the historical facts does not even become apparent. Literary Realism, stemming from Romanticism in the mid-nineteenth century, did not earn such a reputation by readers. Contrary to this usual perception of the novel we propose to search for its links to the historical basis of the plot of *The Prince of Liptov* to contemporary historical sources. Historical sources do not know of any brother of John Corvinus, presumed son of King Matthias, called Červeň.

⁷ Palatine of Hungary Stephen Zápolya, Szapolyai or Zápoľský (died 1499). Kalinčiak used a contemporary Slovak transcription of the family name "Zápoľa", nowadays "Zápoľský" is of common use in Slovak historiography.

⁸ R. Pernoud: *Jeanne d'Arc*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1959: 24–26.

The palatine Stephen Zápoľa had several children, but none of his daughters was called Marienka. Ján Kalinčiak situates the plot after the death of King Matthias Corvinus, setting the narrative in the times of the conflict between his son John Corvinus and the Palatine of the Kingdom of Hungary, Stephen Zápoľa. The conflict that frames the novel's storyline was recently described, for example, by the historian Tibor Neumann in his excellent study *Private War between the Count and the Duke (The Struggle of Stephen Szapolyai and John Corvinus for the Duchy of Liptó)*.^{9,10} The historical atmosphere of this heated rivalry between two prominent noblemen, which is described in detail in the above-mentioned study by Tibor Neumann, is followed by Kalinčiak's novel. But, as a literary author, he does not give precise historical details on specific events.

Historical documents vs. literary fiction

Kalinčiak's authorial intent is to create a historical novel following a factual narrative. The rivalry between John Corvinus and Stephen Zápoľa is a historical fact. Our concern is not only whether Kalinčiak as a historicizing author presents actual facts, but for our intended use and application of the findings and comparisons, it is important to discover whether he portrays the person of John Corvinus in an accurate way based on the study of the historical facts, or in the way he shows the atmosphere of the period through the characters and their expressions of attitudes. Through the speech of the characters, the novel presents Palatine Zápoľa in a negative light, and deplores the fact that John Corvinus did not become King of Hungary. In the same way, the characters express their disillusionment with the reign of Wladislaus II. In his novel, Kalinčiak explicitly quotes a historical source only in one place, mentioning Antonio Bonfini,¹¹ a historian contemporary to the Corvinus period, as follows:

⁹ T. Neumann: 'A gróf és a herceg magánháborúja (Szapolyai István és Corvin János harca a liptói hercegségért)', *Századok* 148, 2014: 387–426.

¹⁰ Further reading on historical context in a study by T. Neumann: 'Two Palatines and a Voivode, or the Szapolyai Family's Journey to the Royal Throne', in: P. Fodor & Sz. Varga (eds.): *A Forgotten Hungarian Royal Dynasty: The Szapolyais (Mohács 1526–2026. Rekonstrukció és emlékezet)*, Budapest, Research Centre for the Humanities 2020: 21–55.

¹¹ Italian humanist Antonio Bonfini (born 1434, died 1503) was court historian for kings Matthias and Wladislaus II.

The Noble Prince was a young man, enthusiastic with a fiery mind; his fiery soul dreamed only of the glory of the Hungarian kingdom. King Matthias, his father, brought him up under his own tutelage, and showed him the path to follow, instilling into his heart purity of feeling; and old Bonfini, his tutor, poring over the history of Hungary, recalling the old heroic days of our kings, infused into his soul a blissful longing for the glory of the country. Matthias said: "Prosecute iniquity, uphold law and right with all your life, love your fatherland and seek to maintain its unity by any sacrifice." – Bonfini, in his turn, not troubling himself with scenes of the present time, spoke how beautiful it was before, how beautiful now, when our kings have lifted up their name and their countries to the sun in deeds of war. Corvinus combined both these elements in himself and thought: "Enlarge the glory of the country, and yet make unity, so do what thou ought to do, so follow both the teaching of Matthias and the great thoughts of Bonfini."¹²

In the middle of the 19th century Kalinčiak does not seem to consider the severe criticism of Bonfini commonly expressed by the prominent Hungarian critical historiography of the 18th century. For example, Hungarian critical historian Carolus Wagner in his famous *Analecta* wrote: "However, Bonfini is less respected by contemporaries who subject everything to stricter criticism. He is accused of putting many fables into the story, of saying many things as he wishes, in an effort to flatter, and of often doing more as a speaker than a historian."¹³ We can see this romanticisation of Kalinčiak directly in the quoted text. The other mention of Antonio Bonfini contextualizes the historian's name in the novel as follows: "And the noble lover said to me, 'Go, Katrena, out of the house, close the gate, take the rope from the bell, that not a sound may come in, for I must learn the language by which I am to receive the prince, and it is a Latin language, such as the prince has not heard even from Bonfini.'¹⁴ In the latter case, the novel mentions Bonfini only as a historical figure, again as one in relation to the Latin language. Kalinčiak was assuming that Antonio Bonfini, as a humanist scholar, wrote in Latin. But despite this idealization of Bonfini,

¹² J. Kalinčiak: *Dielo...*, *op.cit.*: 48–49.

¹³ C. Wagner: 'Analecta Scephusii sacri et profani II.' Viennae: 1774, in: M. Malovecká: *Karol Wagner 1732/1790 historik Spiša a Šariša*, Prešov: Vydavateľstvo Michala Vaška, 2009: 114.

¹⁴ J. Kalinčiak: *Dielo...*, *op.cit.*: 77.

Kalinčiak fails to mention that Bonfini was clearly on the Corvinus side under Matthias and then was a court historian under Wladislaus II, which Kalinčiak no longer reflects in his text either. The use of the language can be linked to the letters written in 1490 that are listed in the Vestigia database as addressed to John Corvinus from Italy, or from italophone authors, in Latin.¹⁵

At first sight, we might get the impression that the entire text of the novel is more of Kalinčiak's fiction in terms of the attitudes of the historical characters, reflecting the fading romanticism in literature. However, the lack of historical erudition can be attributed to Kalinčiak's young age, and today we no longer know which of his views were influenced by the strong oral tradition of presenting the life and history of landowning families which he had learned from his relatives in his childhood, as he writes about it in his autobiography.¹⁶ At the same time, Kalinčiak tries to portray the attitudes and actions of the main and minor characters in a colourful manner, on the basis of a general characterization of universal human traits. He tends toward psychological explanations, in a novel that was written half a century before G. Schönherr¹⁷ proposed his famous biography of John Corvinus. In the text of the novel, the word prince is mentioned 266 times and the name Corvinus 206 times, which proves what an important part it constitutes in the plot of the novel. It also shows that it is possible to assume various details related by the author to the character of John Corvinus. We compared Kalinčiak's characterization and contextualization of John Corvinus and the contents of selected documents in the Vestigia database. We searched the Vestigia database for 94 historical documents where John Corvinus is mentioned. Of these, 85 are in Italian and 9 in Latin, a selection of which have been clearly summarised by Gy. Domokos in his study 'Adalékok Corvin János személyével kapcsolatban a Vestigia-kutatás során számbavett dokumentumokból'.¹⁸ Therefore, we selected some examples which we correlate with the selection of documents according to the cited study

¹⁵ *Latin letters to John Corvinus*, (20th April 1490). Manuscript, Sf 642/4,29, Vestigia 294; (27th February 1490) Manuscript, Sf 642/2,19, Vestigia 297. State Archives in Milan.

¹⁶ J. Kalinčiak: *Dielo I. Vlastný ...*, *op.cit.*: 288–303.

¹⁷ G. Schönherr : *Hunyadi Corvin János 1473–1504*, Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat–Franklin Nyomda, 1894. Reprint: Budapest: História Antik Könyvesház, 2010.

¹⁸ Gy. Domokos: 'Adalékok Corvin János személyével kapcsolatban a Vestigia-kutatás során számbavett dokumentumokból'. In: *Hunyadiak és Corvinok*, a volume to be published in Budapest at the Institute of Hungarian Studies in 2022.

by Gy. Domokos, to exemplify how they could be employed in the context of teaching Italian as a foreign language.

One of the themes that reappear several times in the novel is related to the fiancée of John Corvinus, a young Italian noblewoman called Bianca of Milan (although Kalinčiak mentions explicitly her name and her Milanese origins, he does not mention her belonging to the Sforza family). Bianca Maria Sforza also appears in the letters listed by Domokos,¹⁹ as the Italian courts, especially Milan and Ferrara were very closely associated with the court of Hungary. A teacher could use this moment to compare the author's narrative in the novel to the preserved historical documents from that period. A letter from 8th December 1487 by Eleanor of Aragon²⁰ addressed to Beatrix of Aragon²¹ mentions the engagement of Bianca Maria Sforza and John Corvinus.²² The theme is also supported by later extant documents. For example, the document *Vestigia 687*²³ is a diplomatic letter on behalf of Pope Alexander VI in Latin about the dissolution of the engagement between Bianca Maria Sforza and John Corvinus. There is also an Italian document written in the autumn of 1493, from Lodovico Maria Sforza²⁴ addressed to Bartolomeo Calco,²⁵ on how to break off the engagement in a way that Bianca Maria could enter a dignified marriage.²⁶ In the novel we read the words of the palatine Stephen Zápoľa, when he explains to Verbőczy²⁷ the considerations of the marriage of John Corvinus, the only son of King Matthias:

As Matthias began to think of Corvinus's marriage, here he half consented to the union of his son with my Marienka; but Pankrác

¹⁹ *Idem.*

²⁰ Eleanor of Aragon (born 1450, died 1493), wife of Ercole I d'Este, Duke of Ferrara. Sister of Beatrix of Aragon, Queen consort of Hungary.

²¹ Beatrix of Aragon (born 1457, died 1508) Queen consort of Hungary. Spouse of King Matthias, after his death spouse of King Wladislaus II.

²² *Idem.*

²³ *Diplomatic letter on behalf of Pope Alexander VI.* Manuscript. MS 4936/IV,42, *Vestigia 687*, Copies of documents of State Archives in Milan related to Hungary. Gy. Domokos: 'Adalékok...', *op.cit.*

²⁴ Lodovico Maria Sforza (born 1452, died 1508), Duke of Milan.

²⁵ Bartolomeo Calco (born 1434, died 1508), first ducal secretary of Duchy of Milan.

²⁶ *Letter of Lodovico Maria Sforza to Bartolomeo Calco.* (11th september 1493). Manuscript, MTA MS 4936 / IV, 37, *Vestigia 682*. Copies of documents of State Archives in Milan related to Hungary.

²⁷ Stephen Verbőczy (born 1458, died 1541), Hungarian legal scholar and theologian.

spoke and begged the king: “Don’t do it, don’t do it, you will spoil everything; our country squires will never have confidence in your grace’s son if his wife is of equal origin to them.” So, the king declared him for Bianca of Milan. Then the palatine argued, “And would not my Marienka have been more to his crown than all these Italian and Frankopan women?”²⁸

The palatine Stephen Zápoľa takes part in a dialogue implying that if Corvinus had married a palatine’s daughter it would have helped him gain the throne more successfully than an engagement to the powerful Milanese ducal house of Sforza, or even a later marriage to Beatrix Frankopan. The engagement to Bianca Maria Sforza, niece of Lodovico Sforza, Duke of Milan was a very important point in international relations and could have been of a huge impact on the history on developing further intercultural relations by continuing the policy of tight connections between the court of Buda and important courts in Italy. Gy. Domokos²⁹ also reveals letters related to a certain Maffeo da Treviglio. These authentic sources disclose that in Milan the marriage of John Corvinus to Bianca Maria Sforza was planned with a view to the succession of John Corvinus. We can read a reassurance that, after the death of King Matthias, John Corvinus will ascend to the throne. In a Latin document from Hungary to Italy, he even assures Milan that John Corvinus, although in a tense situation, has a growing circle, already 30000, of supporters and their number is increasing, even those who supported other candidates are coming over to his side. “[...] unde optimam spem gerimus quod nemo alter nisi ipse Dominus noster Dominus Joannes Corvinus Dux Liptoviensis et Opaviensis in regem constituetur [...]”³⁰ In English: “[...] whence we bear the best hope, that none but our lord John Corvinus, duke of Liptov and Opava, shall be appointed as king [...]”³¹ In the novel the theme of the support for John Corvinus after Matthias’s death to become King of Hungary is also related to marriage plans. Domokos notes³² that extant documents show the diverse interests of Milan and Ferrara. There is evidence that what was favourable to the court in Ferrara was not

²⁸ J. Kalinčiak: *Dielo...*, *op.cit.*: 24.

²⁹ Gy. Domokos: ‘Adalékok...’, *op.cit.*

³⁰ *Diplomatic letter*. Manuscript, HU-MNL-OL-X 8330-DF 294065, Vestigia 184, in: Gy. Domokos: ‘Adalékok...’, *op.cit.*

³¹ English translation of the excerpts by Mojmir Malovecký.

³² Gy. Domokos: ‘Adalékok...’, *op.cit.*

favourable to the court in Milan. We see the rivalry between the families of Milan and Ferrara and their competition for influence over the internal affairs of the Hungarian Kingdom.

Kalinčiak, creating a novel about the local situation at Likava Castle in Liptov, did not cover every possible historical detail, but he illustrates that the Frankopans were in close social relations with the local noblemen when they were in Liptov on a visit to John Corvinus. Kalinčiak speaks positively of John Corvinus's spouse Beatrix Frankopan and of their infant son. Thus, the novel's premise is clear and points out that the world of the Frankopan family as high-ranking members of the Croatian nobility and allied to the Italian families (Aragon and Este) is different from the Liptov nobility, and the author presents this as a fact. Beatrix Frankopan was the daughter of Bernardin Frankopan, Prince of Krk and Modruš, her mother was Luisa Marzano of Aragon, her father was Prince Giovanni Francesco Marino Marzano, Prince of Squillace. Her grandmother was Eleonor of Aragon, who was the daughter of King Alfonso V of Aragon. Eleonor's brother Ferdinand I of Naples was the father of John Corvinus's stepmother, the Hungarian queen Beatrix of Aragon. The wife of John Corvinus, Beatrix Frankopan was not only genealogically tied to Italy through her mother's line, but also through her father's line because Prince Bernardin Frankopan was the son of Isotta d'Este, who was the daughter of Niccolò III d'Este Marquis of Modena and Ferrara.

In the novel, Kalinčiak portrays John Corvinus as decisive and not afraid of controversy. In the *Vestigia* database a letter from Beltrame Costabili to Prince Ercole d'Este, (Esztergom, June 27, 1490. State Archives of Modena) we read "[...] Ancora el duca Corvino già sono giorni diece ch'el se partete di qua insalutato hospite, da meza nocte, indigniato per havere avuto parole extranee col predicto vayvoda et col thesaurero regio, siché aremo pace col turcho et non mancarà bello intestine [...]".³³ In English: "[...] It has already been ten days since Duke Corvinus left without parting, in the middle of the night, indignant for having had extraneous words with the aforesaid vayvoda and with the royal treasurer, so that we will have peace with the Turk and will not miss a civil war [...]". There are many situations in the novel where John Corvinus is taking part in a conflict. In this context, Kalinčiak in his novel allows the historical figure of the prince to speak directly in relation to the Frankopan family as follows:

³³ *Letter from Beltrame Costabili to Prince Ercole d'Este, Esztergom, June 27th, 1490. Manuscript. Vestigia 2913. State Archives in Modena, Ambasciatori Ungheria, in: Gy. Domokos: 'Adalékok...', op.cit.*

What is here is not all over the country – but nevertheless it will spread, and higher courts will come. In Croatia my brother-in-law Frankopan and the whole family are already in an understanding with me, Jakub Székely is only waiting for me to stand up against Zápoľa; the Ujlakys³⁴ are also in an understanding with me – only now so that we can somehow come forward. We have only to begin something, but only after Wladislaus has judged what I will submit to him. The Frankopans have already gone to Buda and are working in the royal court against Zápoľa. The King, I know, is unfriendly to him, and would not suffer him if he had anyone in the country to count on to help him put down so troublesome a Zápoľa. And if my accusations, which you have heard to-day, are found to be true, well, Zápoľa must come down willingly or unwillingly. That, then, we must wait. On the other hand, we need Zápoľa to bite us even harder, because only then will we have the right to strike at him. – Now, therefore, we must send to Spiš, where we shall invite him in the name of the law and of the royal conclusion, not only to satisfy all those who have sued against him to-day, and to remit the estates, but also to restore to me my castle of Zombor, and, according to the second decree of Wladislaus, which has recently been issued to us, to restore to me the yearly benefits as well.³⁵

The author exemplifies the importance of the Frankopans in the internal conflicts within the kingdom but does not explain the complexity of their and John Corvinus's relations toward Italian courts that we consider of decisive importance for the period. The plot devised by the author is regionally focused on introducing characters from foreign backgrounds by referring to the historical facts of the 15th century. Still, the text of the novel fails to convey to the reader the richness of the relationships and the supra-regional aspect of the events and personalities to the extent that authentic documents prove. Indeed, they make it clear that the relations of central Europe and the centres of power in Italy in the 15th century were not marginal facts in our history, but functioned as a key factor in the power relations of the time.

³⁴ Lawrence III Ujlaky (born 1459, died 1523).

³⁵ J. Kalinčiak: *Dielo...*, *op.cit.*: 18.

Conclusion

We showed how Ján Kalinčiak episodically contextualized John Corvinus in the elements that we can link to 15th-century authentic historical documents. Their comparison to the 19th-century literary narrative reveals very interesting points that could help to develop both the overall knowledge and specific skills of the students, in this case future teachers of foreign language that represent our target group. Thanks to the systematic research work in critical historiography and the development of systematic editions of historical sources, we can provide students with a more detailed look directly at documents from which immediate inferences can be made about historical figures and their interrelationships. Thus, students can study the history of intercultural relations without depending solely on the information of historical syntheses.

Through focusing on specific aspects of a well-known major author and his work, the following goals could be achieved. Students will acquire general information about the literature and society of the period of the work's creation. They tend to relate their expectations of a 19th-century work to what they know from general handbooks on that literary period. It is likely that a student will not have the erudition to deeply analyse the text on their own, without help, and without learning about some aspects of the author's intent and the manner of its realization. We do not underestimate the student at this point; we assume that, for example, for such novels brimming with 19th-century historicism, we do not even now find enough specialized analyses to help the prospective student better understand how to contextualize the work. The available studies, relative to Kalinčiak, map mainly the literary dimensions of his work.³⁶ Its relation to extra-linguistic realities has not yet been the subject of sufficient scholarly interest. However, this can only be complemented by an interdisciplinary approach combining an analysis of the literary work with the examination of the historical context based on authentic documents. By comparing and correlating the seemingly incomparable and distant historical factuality of 15th-century literature and the reverberations of Romanticism-

³⁶ For example, studies by: A. Mráz: 'Postavenie Jána Kalinčiaka vo vývine slovenskej literatúry', in: *Púť lásky*, Bratislava: Slovenské vydavateľstvo krásnej literatúry, 1963: 7–26; J. Noge: 'Literárne dielo Jána Kalinčiaka' in: *Slovenská romantická próza*, Bratislava, 1969: 364–455; M. Pišút: 'Ján Kalinčiak a jeho literárne dielo', in: *Knieža liptovské*, Bratislava: Slovenské vydavateľstvo krásnej literatúry, 1960: 301–315; M. Šalingová-Ivanová: *Príspevok k štýlu štúrovskej prózy (Štýl prózy Jána Kalinčiaka)*, Bratislava: Slovenská akadémia vied, 1964.

influenced 19th-century literature, we bring together the seemingly unconnected and very distant.

The romantic, historicizing idealization of John Corvinus detracts from the exactitude of the portrayal of this historical figure. But Kalinčiak has captured the atmosphere and relations around his person very well. However, the author had no access to authentic documents relative to the Italian families of Milan and Ferrara that developed their influence at the Hungarian court significantly during the life of King Matthias. As we showed, the 21st-century awareness of these facts, based on *Vestigia* documents, can be further developed by a teacher to contextualize the 19th-century novel *The Prince of Liptov* to the history of intercultural relations between Italy and central Europe in the 15th century.

