

## Medieval Diversity: Contexts and Meanings

Nora Berend

*University of Cambridge*

*nb213@cam.ac.uk*

In these concluding remarks to the collection of articles, I tease out the meanings of the term “diversity,” considering the contexts in which it appeared and how the various meanings it acquired in shifting contexts are meaningful for historical analysis. If one considers the possible connotations of “diversity” when applied to the age of Sigismund, what comes to mind immediately is diversity associated with Sigismund himself. As king of Hungary and Croatia, prince-electoral of Brandenburg, king of Bohemia, king of the Romans, and later emperor, he ruled over diverse lands. This was depicted, for example, in the famous posthumous portrait in Nuremberg by Abrecht Dürer with the display of coats of arms.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, his royal title, in line with those of his predecessors, added a large number of territories, some of which were only part of the realm in wishful thinking: “Sigismund, by the grace of God king of the Romans forever August, and of Hungary, Bohemia, Dalmatia, Croatia, Rama, Serbia, Galicia, Lodomeria, Cumania, and Bulgaria; Margrave of Brandenburg and heir of Luxembourg.”<sup>2</sup> Sigismund was reputedly fluent in many languages and at home in different cultures. The Hungarian chronicler Johannes Thuróczy claimed that Sigismund’s long beard was a tribute to the Hungarians, whose ancestors allegedly had had long beards.<sup>3</sup> There are also many depictions and portrayals of Sigismund. They served as reminders of his sway in diverse locations through visual means.

Sigismund’s political role was similarly diverse. He organized the crusade to Nicopolis, gathering Hungarian, French, Burgundian, German, and Italian troops and thus uniting a very diverse set of armies, only to suffer a major defeat in 1396. Other crusades did not fare much better.<sup>4</sup> While Sigismund was a failure on the battlefield, he is seen as a major innovator in diplomacy who traveled all over Europe and spent substantial amounts of time in various cities, from

1 <https://www.albrecht-durer.org/Emperor-Charlemagne-And-Emperor-Sigismund.html>.

2 “Sigismundus, Dei gratia Romanorum Rex semper Augustus, ac Hungariae, Bohemiae, Dalmatiae, Croatiae, Ramae, Serviae, Galliciae, Lodomeriae, Cumaniae, Bulgariaeque Rex, Marchio Brandenburgensis, nec non Lucemburgensis haeres.” His titles changed over time. This example is from 1425, Fejér, *Codex diplomaticus*, t. X, vol. 6, 695, no. CCCXI.

3 Johannes de Thurocz, *Chronica Hungarorum*, Book 5, Chap. 24.

4 Housley, *The Later Crusades, 1274–1580*, 76–79.

Paris to Rome and Buda to Perpignan. He tried to mediate between England and France in the Hundred Years' War. He was instrumental in ending the papal schism at the Council of Constance, yet he also failed to protect John Hus at the same council and ignited the Hussite wars.<sup>5</sup>

Contemporary authors were critical of the discrepancy between the king's persuasive speeches and the various promises he made on the one hand and his actual deeds on the other:

This king was a lord of good words, he could say what everyone wanted to hear; he bade, gave, counselled, and promised much to which he did not hold, and he was not ashamed of this... His words were sweet, lenient, and good, and his works were brief, meager, and small.<sup>6</sup>

Although this is from a hostile source (the *Klingenberger Chronik*, by a partisan of Duke Frederick IV of Austria-Tyrol whom Sigismund placed under imperial ban and dispossessed in 1415), it is not the only such writing by an author who was not impressed by Sigismund's acts compared to his promises. The clash between Sigismund's lofty rhetoric for Christendom and his personal debauchery and the clear mix of opposing personality traits that this implied led one author to make the following claim:

The contradictory qualities, lofty thinking and frivolous action, religiosity and cynicism, chivalric virtue and breaking his word, spiritual depth and cruelty, piety and lasciviousness merged in him in an almost fantastic way. [...] He was a dreamer and a calculator, a knight and a real-politician, uniting the ideas of Alexander the Great novels and Machiavelli.<sup>7</sup>

Portrayals of Sigismund in national historiographies were similarly varied.<sup>8</sup> Traditional evaluations of Sigismund tended to be negative, although for different reasons. In the Hungarian historiography, he was not taken seriously because he came to rule by right of his wife. He was seen as a weak king who had to give in to nobles and was responsible for the failed crusade of Nicopolis. According to a persistent popular legend, however, John Hunyadi, who was venerated as a national hero, was his illegitimate son. This may have been at

5 Fudge, *The Crusade Against Heretics in Bohemia, 1418–1437*.

6 Sargans, *Die Klingenberger Chronik*, 209.

7 Horváth, *Zsigmond király és kora*, 10.

8 For a discussion of the earlier secondary literature, Hoensch, "Az 1945 utáni Zsigmond-kutatás súlypontjai."

least partly based on the well-attested fondness Sigismund had for women. As Oswald von Wolkenstein (1376/7–1445) quipped, “if the Schism had involved women, we would have achieved unity sooner.”<sup>9</sup>

From the point of view of many German historians, Sigismund had utopian plans and no real successes, apart from collecting crowns. For Czech historians, he was an enemy of the Hussites, who represented the Czech national cause, and he was responsible for the Hussite wars. An author in 1937 explained the contradictions in Sigismund’s personality by the spine-chilling logic of the times as carried in his blood. According to this claim, due to his ancestry, which brought together west and east, Sigismund embodied the collision of “sophisticated Western education and irrepressible Slavic primeval power and wildness.”<sup>10</sup>

Eventually, reevaluations of Sigismund began to present him as having done the best under difficult circumstances with very limited resources. He was lauded for a cultural revival in Hungary as well as for the success of a marital alliance as a counterweight to hostile barons. His own bravery as well as his propensity to reward loyal service and find excellent military commanders and advisors were highlighted. His reform projects for Church and Empire were seen positively. Indeed, he was often hailed as a master of performative communication. Thus we can, as is so often the case, reflect on the diversity of historians’ points of view and, in particular, on the significant shifts of perception over time.

More recently, it has been suggested that to compensate for the difficulties he faced, despite his financial problems, Sigismund cultivated the ritual, emotional, and material aspects of rulership, such as symbolic displays and splendid clothing.<sup>11</sup> This line of research directed attention towards diversity in the use of spectacle in particular, or in other words, towards how public ceremonies performatively constructed rulership. Sigismund used imperial cities such as Constance for large assemblies, where burghers, merchants, ambassadors, and ecclesiastics would witness such ceremonies. One example is the Congress of Buda in 1412. The meeting’s principal aim was to broker a peace deal between Poland and the Teutonic Order. Those present included Sigismund himself, King Władysław II of Poland, and the king of Bosnia. It was attended by people from seventeen different countries, reportedly thirteen dukes, twenty one counts, 1,500

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9 “Wer zwaiung an den frowen gelaint,/ wir hetten uns leicht ee ueraint.” Klein and Wachinger, *Die Lieder Oswald von Wolkensteins*, 54; “If the disagreement [Schism] had played a role with the ladies, / we would have certainly reached a compromise much earlier.” Classen, *The Poems of Oswald von Wolkenstein*, 75.

10 Horváth, *Zsigmond király és kora*, 12.

11 Hardy, “The Emperorship of Sigismund of Luxemburg.”

knights, 4,000 servants, one cardinal, one legate, three archbishops, eleven other bishops, 86 players and trumpeters, seventeen messengers, and 40,000 horses.<sup>12</sup> According to Jan Długosz, even the envoys of Zeledin (Jalal al-Din), khan of the Golden Horde, traveled to Buda. The khan was an ally of Władysław II of Poland, and according to the chronicler, Sigismund used the “Tatar” presence “to threaten the Venetians.”<sup>13</sup>

Art was a vital tool in the performance of power, but if one considers the art of the period from the perspective of diversity, there are interesting paradoxes. One example is the depiction of the Pope and Emperor Rotulus in Berlin’s Staatsbibliothek from 1431, which offers an example of diversity in repetition. The pope and emperor figures are similar, but there are subtle differences in the forms of their crowns and in some details.<sup>14</sup> A reliquary cross from Nagydisznód/ Cisňadie /Heltau, c. 1440, is celebrated in the catalogue of an exhibition on Sigismund for its complexity: “[t]he diversity of precious materials and complex iconography makes this cross one of the most outstanding Central European goldsmith works of the period.”<sup>15</sup> While for the modern observer, the reliquary is valuable and alluring because it is made of a variety of precious metals, it reveals a more intriguing diversity. The cross was probably originally made as a reliquary for a Holy Blood relic, as suggested by the use of a ruby for the wound on Christ’s side. The cross was tied to the most universal Christian holy figure, yet it was at the same time very local, as it included the patron saints of the parish church, St. Walburga and St. Servatius.

Another example is the so-called Jankovich saddle, a bone saddle from c. 1420–40.<sup>16</sup> This saddle was made with plates of ivory fastened over a wooden frame and hide, with imagery including St. George, a wild man (thought to represent the inner beast), and representations of courtly love with a minstrel. The meaning of the imagery refers to chivalry, protection from enemies, and the defense of Christian borders, and it has links to the Order of the Dragon. At the same time, this type of saddle was likely inspired by saddles that figured in works of literature, since ivory saddles appeared in romance literature from the twelfth century on, referred to by writers such as Chrétien de Troyes and

12 Whelan, “Sigismund of Luxemburg and the Imperial Response to the Ottoman Turkish Threat,” 68.

13 Michael, *The Annals of Jan Długosz*, 411.

14 Staatsbibliothek Berlin, Hdschr. 143, [https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN747128251&PHYSID=PHYS\\_0001](https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN747128251&PHYSID=PHYS_0001)

15 Takács, *Sigismund of Luxemburg, Art and Culture 1387–1437*, 86.

16 Takács, 356, 4.65, see also 356–364 and Verő, “Megjegyzések a Zsigmond-kori csontnyergekhez.”

Chaucer. The fifteenth-century saddle was probably used for ceremonial events, as were the many other such saddles known from the period. Thus a type emerged, making earlier literary representation a reality linked to prestige and a way to differentiate the elites.

Diversity was linked to differentiation in society in other ways as well, notably through the Order (“society”) of the Dragon, which was founded in 1408 by Sigismund.<sup>17</sup> While it started out as a monarchical chivalric order of nobles in the entourage of the king, with Sigismund’s election as king of the Romans in 1410, it was very quickly transformed into an international order, with membership used as a reward and in diplomacy. There was a fundamental difference embedded in the order itself: only 24 members, barons of the realm, could wear both the dragon and the cross, while members of a second rank were not limited in number, but could only wear the dragon.

The fact of being admitted as a member, especially of the first rank, was an honor, but it also bound the person to Sigismund, as members had to swear loyalty to the king and promise to help him against the “pagans” (meaning the Ottomans). The Order was used by Sigismund to build alliances inside Hungary and to promote relations with the rulers of Serbia, Bosnia, and Wallachia. He also used it in international diplomacy to promote the anti-Ottoman crusade. In 1433, for his imperial coronation, Sigismund convinced Pope Eugene IV to grant the full remission of sins in a crusading indulgence to the members of the Order of the Dragon:

Item, because, by the power of its statutes and fulfilment of its oath, whoever is touched by the device or the society of the Dragon is obliged personally to set forth against the Turks, schismatics and heretics, and also infidels and to expose his own person and to attend to the extermination and confusion of the same [groups of people], the lord emperor himself therefore supplicates that our lord should mercifully consider conceding in perpetuity that the aforementioned lord emperor and his successors, the kings of Hungary and those of the aforesaid society and also all and everyone of the kingdom of Hungary and those of other foreign nations who personally set out for the defense of the Kingdom of Hungary and in support of the lord emperor and the successors of the kings and of the aforesaid society against those labeled infidels, schismatics, and heretics should have full remission of sins and penalties, in the same way that crusaders

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17 Boulton, *The Knights of the Crown*, 349; Takács, *Sigismundus Rex et imperator*, 337–56.

(*crucesignati*), confessed and penitent, in the passage for the acquisition of the Holy Land [have]. Permitted for all in the most blessed form.<sup>18</sup>

The Order of the Dragon was thus associated with war against the Ottomans, raising an interesting point about the sign of the dragon itself. The following explanation was given for this choice:

we and the faithful barons and magnates of our kingdom shall bear and have, and do choose and agree to wear and bear, in the manner of society, the sign or effigy of the Dragon incurved into the form of a circle, its tail winding around its neck, divided through the middle of its back along its length from the top of its head right to the tip of its tail, with blood [forming] a red cross flowing out into the interior of the cleft by a white crack, untouched by blood, just as and in the same way that those who fight under the banner of the glorious martyr St. George are accustomed to bear a red cross on a white field.<sup>19</sup>

The dragon was often used as a sign of evil, and so the defeated dragon was chosen as the sign of the Order: the members promised to crush the ancient enemy under the triumphant cross of Christ. The sign of the dragon itself had diverse meanings, since it usually implied negative connotations (as in depictions of the dragon defeated by St. George), yet at the same time, in its use as the sign of the Order, it allowed members to recognize one another and so became a sign of status and prestige.

Diversity also existed in politics, notably in the many ways of dealing with the Ottoman threat. At the time of Sigismund's accession to the Hungarian throne, various countries between Hungary and the Ottomans were engaged in defensive warfare against the latter. With the collapse of Serbia, the Ottomans became a more direct danger for the kingdom of Hungary. After the failure of the Nicopolis crusade, it was only Ottoman interest in Asia Minor that brought relief. Sigismund therefore employed a variety of means to counter the Ottoman threat. Diplomatic efforts to gain the loyalty of Serbian and Bosnian rulers failed in the end, as the Serbs and Bosnians became tribute-payers of the Ottomans. Sigismund was also interested in finding allies against the Ottomans in Asia. He tried to secure finances and build up defensive systems on the borders. He also ordered nobles to arm peasant archers, and he specified the obligations of the nobility during a general levy to fight.

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18 Fraknói, "Genealogiai és heraldikai közlemények a vatikáni levéltárból," 7–8.

19 Boulton, *The Knights of the Crown*, 350.

Sigismund also used courtly ceremony to call attention to the Ottoman threat. He made speeches at balls, promising war against “the Turks.”<sup>20</sup> During a visit to Perpignan in 1415 to discuss Church union with the Byzantines, Sigismund was accompanied by a supposedly Ottoman prisoner who had been captured by him in battle. The Buda congress already mentioned was also intended to promote a crusade against the Ottomans, and Sigismund also made use of German to promote crusades. Yet there are accounts of Sigismund getting completely drunk and even being reprimanded by clerics at the Council of Basel for jousting instead of fighting against the infidel.

Sigismund’s efforts to raise awareness of the need for a crusade also had some odd consequences. For example, a report to the Teutonic Order warned that Sigismund claimed he intended to set off for the Holy Sepulcher in the company of a pagan princess, but in reality he was perhaps pondering an attack on the Order.<sup>21</sup> So we should also consider the possible difference between the intention of a message and the recipient’s interpretation. There is yet another aspect of diversity in Sigismund’s relations with the Ottomans: trying to find common ground, for example when Sigismund negotiated with an Ottoman envoy. Western and Ottoman customs diverged, and the envoy behaved according to Ottoman norms. Sigismund, however, tried to honor him through behavior that corresponded to Western ideas. Sigismund sat on a throne surrounded by his court, and the Ottoman envoy knelt three times while approaching him. The king, however, bowed towards him each time and then had a chair set up facing him for the envoy to sit on.<sup>22</sup>

Hungary, one of the realms ruled by Sigismund, is often cited as an example of diversity, with the famous Admonitions attributed to King Stephen I (although written by a cleric) extolling immigrants:

For as guests arrive from different parts and provinces, so they bring with them different tongues and customs, different examples and weapons, and all this adorns the royal court while deterring foreigners from overweening contempt. For a country of one single language and one set of customs is weak and vulnerable. Therefore, I enjoin on you, my son, to nurture them [newcomers] benevolently and to hold

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20 Whelan, “Sigismund of Luxemburg and the Imperial Response to the Ottoman Turkish Threat.”

21 Ibid., 70.

22 Altmann, *Eberhart Windeckes Denkwürdigkeiten*, 175.

them in high esteem so that they should stay with you rather than dwell elsewhere.<sup>23</sup>

There was thus a long tradition of diversity in Hungary. If we compare Sigismund's reign to those of previous rulers, however, in some ways there was in fact less diversity. The earlier populations of Cumans and Muslims had disappeared by then, for example. Yet in other ways, there was more diversity, for instance through links to the Empire, linguistic variety (which included a growing use of the vernacular), and the appearance of new genres.

However, Sigismund was not only associated with diversity. An anonymous treatise in the name of Sigismund, the *Reformatio Sigismundi*, c. 1439, which was a manifesto for reform (which suggests that it was a vision of Sigismund), called for an end to regional autonomy and disorder and the creation of a centralized government under the Roman emperor.<sup>24</sup> Tendencies towards more uniformity also appeared in the arts. While many artists were invited to Sigismund's court at Buda from other parts of Europe, this was in order to produce what has been called international Gothic, a style that was more uniform across Europe than before and linked to royal courts. It replaced earlier, more isolated and diverse styles.<sup>25</sup> It has also been suggested that the stone funerary monuments of Hungarian aristocrats became increasingly uniform more or less during Sigismund's reign, as a Buda workshop produced and then influenced the manner in which these gravestones were made.<sup>26</sup>

Some trends therefore moved away from diversity towards more centralization and more uniformity. Yet the diversity of the world at the same time came to be the focus of more conscious attention. At the end of the fourteenth century and during the first decades of the fifteenth, Jewish responsa (she'elot u teshuvot) discussed the variations in Hungary and Austria of blowing the shofar and saying various prayers. Sources also indicate a difference of opinion between two rabbis concerning the use of a tablecloth for Passover. The tablecloth had been laid over a sack, and the issue was that yeast may have rubbed off on it.

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23 "Sicut enim ex diversis partibus et provinciis veniunt hospites, ita diversas linguas et consuetudines, diversaque documenta et arma secum ducunt, que omnia regna [variant: regiam] ornant et magnificent aulam et perterritant exterorum arrogantiam. Nam unius lingue uniusque moris regnum inbecille et fragile est. Propterea iubeo te fili mi, ut bona voluntate illos nutrias, et honeste teneas, ut tecum libentius degant, quam alicubi habitent." Balogh, "Libellus de institutione morum," 625.

24 Koller, *Reformation Kaiser Siegmunds*.

25 Takács, *Sigismund of Luxemburg Art and Culture*, 80.

26 Jékely, "A Zsigmond-kori magyar arisztokrácia művészeti reprezentációja," 306.

According to one view, this meant that the sack merely had to be shaken out, but according to another, it had to be washed before it could be used for Passover.<sup>27</sup>

The much-traveled Oswald von Wolkenstein even celebrated the diversity of the world. Originating from South Tyrol, he served various lords, including Sigismund, in whose service he went on diplomatic missions. He also authored numerous poems. In one, he celebrated the diversity of life itself:

Now, since all creatures that God has brought forth,  
whether in water, in the air, or on earth  
express their thankfulness to the Lord in His Majesty,  
simply for the grace that He granted them form,  
alas, stupid man, why then is your heart so wild [blind],  
since you well know that God has created you in His image  
and has granted you His grace so generously  
in so much infinite variety?  
He gave you a body and life, soul and reason;  
earth, fire, water and the wonderful air are your servants,  
and so all animals, wild and tame, the smell of fruit in the deep ground  
are at your disposal in wondrous manner.<sup>28</sup>

Oswald was a member of several chivalric orders. He was a Knight of the Holy Sepulcher and a member of the Order of the Elephant, the Order of the Falcon, and the Order of the Dragon.<sup>29</sup> He was proud of his travels to “France, León-Galicia, Aragon, Castile, England, Denmark, Sweden, Bohemia, Hungary, Apulia, Navarra, Cyprus, Sicilia, Portugal, Granada and Egypt,” and also to “Morocco, Arabia, from Armenia to Persia, through the Tartar lands to Syria, via Byzantium to Turkey, Georgia ... Russia, Prussia, Estonia, Lithuania, Livonia.”<sup>30</sup> In one of his poems, he noted, I have dwelled ... with Christians, Greek-Orthodox, and heathens.<sup>31</sup> In another, he boasted of his linguistic skills and his gifts as a musician:

French, Arabic, Catalan, Castilian,  
German, Latin, Slovenian, Italian, Russian and Greek:  
these ten languages I used whenever necessary.  
Moreover, I knew how to play the fiddle, the trumpet, drums, and the  
flute.<sup>32</sup>

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27 Komoróczy and Spitzer, *Héber kútforrások*, 188–91, 195–99, 183–84 respectively.

28 Classen, *The Poems of Oswald von Wolkenstein*, 56.

29 *Ibid.*, 12–13.

30 *Ibid.*, 64, 126.

31 *Ibid.*, 71.

32 *Ibid.*, 71.

He also reflected on the diversity of customs in the lands he visited. He recounted how the queen of Aragon fixed earrings in his ears and in his beard, a custom at the court there, but something which simply provoked laughter at home.<sup>33</sup>

A contemporary travel account by Johann Schiltberger (1380–c. 1440) provides even more detail, as it is a lengthy narrative rather than short poetry. Johann, who was born not far from Munich, wrote, “I left my home near the city of Munich at the time that King Sigismund of Hungary left for the land of the Infidels.”<sup>34</sup> Taken prisoner by the Ottomans, he later recorded his experiences, also adding material from hearsay. He paid particular attention to customs that diverged from European ones, be that the local alternation of winter and summer pastures for animals or the growing of pepper in India.<sup>35</sup>

Schiltberger also compared Christian and Muslim customs, highlighting various differences. He compared Muslim ritual ablution to Christian confession, saying that Muslims believe they were pure after washing themselves, just as Christians were purified by confession made with full penitence. He likened Muslim Friday to Christian Sunday as the holy day. He pointed out that Muslims did not bury their dead in or around temples but out in the fields. He also wrote about the kerchiefs worn on the head by men, Christians wearing blue and Jews yellow.<sup>36</sup> He demonstrated that many of these differences in the end signified the same referent: purification, a day set aside for prayer, the distinction between adherents of other faiths. Thus underneath diversity, he found commonalities.

Yet digging even deeper, ultimately a grave difference is manifest in Johann Schiltberger’s thinking between what he saw as the true faith and what he categorized as false belief. He recounts a particular legend concerning a sign that would mark a child who would someday bring great grief to the Christian world. According to the legend, a Christian priest in Egypt knew of a prophecy about a child named Mohammed. According to this prophecy, this child would introduce a doctrine against Christianity which would cause much suffering to Christians. He and his successors would acquire great power, which, however, would decrease after one thousand years had passed. There would be a sign which would identify the child: a black cloud which would always hover over him. The priest identified, Mohammed, who traveled with merchants, from this

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33 Ibid., 72, also 77–78.

34 Telfer, *The Bondage and Travels of Johann Schiltberger*, 1.

35 Ibid., 14, 61–62.

36 Ibid., 68–69, 74.

sign.<sup>37</sup> As distinguishing signs go, this one stands out: a divinely ordained cloud following one person. Ultimately, Johann claimed that Muslims themselves knew that the Christians would someday regain their lands, and the Muslims would be expelled. The Muslims had only managed to conquer these lands in the first place because Christians had abandoned justice, had been haughty, and had turned away from God.<sup>38</sup>

Faced with so many types of diversity, how are we to make sense of “diversity” itself in the age of Sigismund? The first important point is that some forms of diversity may hide a common purpose or meaning, such as in the case of some religious rites in Christianity and Islam. Yet it is also possible that a single sign comes to acquire a diverse array of meanings, denoting different things depending on the context. This is the case, for example, with beards. Johann Schiltberger stated that Mohammed forbade Muslims from shaving their beards:

he who would have a face different to that he received from God does it against God’s command. They also say that whoever cuts his beard does it from vanity and pride and to please the world and scorns the creation of God; it is particularly the Christians who do this to please their women... for the sake of vanity, they disfigure the image in which God created them.<sup>39</sup>

In this text, beards are signs of adherence to Islam. Yet Sigismund’s luxuriant beard was his trademark. It is depicted in multiple portraits, some of them even hidden as representations of Biblical figures, though Sigismund himself saw Muslim Ottomans as the enemy. As mentioned above, supposedly Sigismund’s beard was a way of honoring his ties to Hungary.

Another issue concerns how and why diversity emerged. Interconnections through travel, dynastic ties, and the interests of the ruler and the elites often fostered forms of diversity. Yet diversity also manifested in moments of crisis, for instance the multiple interests that pulled in different directions in the empire or during the Schism. Should we use the same label, “diversity,” for all these phenomena? Or should we distinguish between occurrences that were given a positive connotation and instances that were given a negative meaning? And how did context determine the real meanings behind forms of diversity? We need to remind ourselves of historical change as well: diversity in Sigismund’s age was not the same as it is now. There was no diversity for the sake of inclusion,

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37 Ibid., 65–66.

38 Ibid., 77.

39 Ibid., 71–72.

and there was no explicitly tolerant worldview. Quite the contrary, there were strict limits on what was considered acceptable, resulting in discrimination and persecution, for example of people who belonged to other religions or who espoused beliefs categorized as heresy. So we need to be careful, since diversity has taken on very different meanings in our age.

There were powerful limits to any positive assessments of diversity in Sigismund's times. This was due in part to a worldview strongly imbued by Biblical ideas: Oswald von Wolkenstein's poem celebrated life's diversity but saw it all as existing for the sake of Man. The limits of diversity were also due in part to the hold Catholicism had at the time. Even in the age of papal schism, divergence from Catholic tenets was not tolerated, as the Hussite wars demonstrated. We should keep in mind that the Latin word "diversitas" also meant contrariety, contradiction, and disagreement. Diversity was often seen as negative, something to be condemned or even persecuted, whether embodied in prostitutes, Jews, or heretics. At other times, too much diversity caused unease. There are seeming celebrations of diversity, such as the Admonitions attributed to Stephen I, but underneath, we see the pragmatic motives for encouraging settlers. Ultimately, medieval diversity was seen as positive when it was utilitarian: nature served man, knowledge of many languages was a useful tool, and immigrants served the interests of the ruler.

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