One of the important subjects of research on the Hungarian Middle Ages is economic history. The recently published volume by Boglárka Weisz, entitled *Vásárok és lerakatok a középkori Magyar Királyságban* (Markets and Staples in the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary), analyzes two important chapters in the history of trade as indicated by the title. The volume was published by the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy’s Research Center for the Humanities in Budapest in 2012, as part of the series *Magyar Történelmi Emlékek – Értekezések*. The series editor is Pál Fodor, and the volume was proofread by Katalin Szende. The series offers the Institute’s researchers an opportunity to publish their scholarship in larger-scale volumes. The book fits organically into the works that have appeared thus far, presenting biographies of historical figures (Judge royal István Báthori of Ecsed, King Charles I of Anjou) and cultural history (the Catholicization of the Transylvanian Armenians, the private life of aristocrats in the seventeenth century). The professional biography found on the back cover briefly presents the author’s work thus far. As her research interests as a historian have continually broadened, she has dealt with the legal history of the medieval Hungarian Jewish community, the system of royal toll collection (eleventh–thirteenth centuries), the operation of the royal chamber, royal revenues obtained from the mining of precious ores (thirteenth–fourteenth centuries) and market privileges bestowed upon settlements during the eleventh–fourteenth centuries.

The present volume has two major topics. The first part deals with the medieval markets, while the second part analyzes the most important privilege connected to long-distance trade, the staple right and its use. The word “market” (Hungarian: *vásár*) in fact has a number of meanings, and could signify a market

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held in settlements one day a week, a multi-day fair held annually with royal permission and at times the urban staple right itself. In Hungarian historical scholarship basic research on the formation of markets and fairs and their legal dimensions was completed some time ago, but until now few have dealt with the problem of the staple right that evolved in the wake of long-distance trade, and with the functioning of the so-called “daily market.” In the first part of the book the author clarifies the concept of market, the rights of the market’s “holder,” the relationship of the markets to one another and their internal workings. The second part of the book analyzes in detail the theory and practice of the staple right. The staple operated according to international trade and on the basis of royal favor; it was one of the main sustaining forces of Hungarian towns, which evolved between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries and enjoyed their golden age in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The latter is the book’s most important and at the same time most elaborated part, which dissects the subject in exacting detail. Its significance lies in the fact that no one in Hungary has yet dealt with this subject in such depth since the first half of the twentieth century. The author avowedly does not deal with either the merchants themselves, or the kinds of goods, nor does she provide an outline for a more complete history of trade.

Boglárka Weisz’s book consists of a detailed elucidation of two subjects (markets and staples) and an appendix section. In the medieval Kingdom of Hungary the right to hold markets was bestowed upon the settlement by the king himself. The bestowal could be retroactive as well, since in many cases an already existing market received approval. The markets evolved either in larger settlements (ecclesiastical or lay administrative centers), or at busy crossroads and ferry crossings (though in these cases, too, in the vicinity of a settlement). The royal authorizations mentioned the day on which the market was held (e.g., Saturday), its liberties (e.g., protection of those attending the market, prohibition on collecting tolls) and the name of its holder. The earliest to evolve, the weekly market (forum sollemne, forum generale, Markt), referred to local trading, which was held on a specified day of the week. The annual fair (forum annuale, feria, Jahrmarkt) was generally tied to a specified day of the year, in general a church feast day (of the church’s patron saint) and was held around the feast day for a period of four to fourteen days. The daily market (forum quotidianum) presumably meant not the market in the classic sense, but rather a staple, which would later become a “distinct concept.” In fact in the charters they are mentioned generally in connection with long-distance trade. The expression forum liberum, that is, free market, in part meant
that those hastening to the market were under royal protection, and in part meant that they were exempted from paying the market toll owed to the king. Apart from this, during the time of the market criminals could not be detained, though the market judge imposed punishments for crimes occurring while the market was in progress. In the earliest times (tenth–eleventh centuries) the markets were held on Sundays. The very meaning of the Hungarian word is the same (\textit{vasárnap}, literally 'the day of the market'). Because of the frequent failure to attend obligatory Sunday mass, however, over the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the markets were held—varying from settlement to settlement—from Monday to Saturday. This applied naturally to the weekly market days.

The annual fairs in most cases were held on the feast of the church’s patron saint, or else on the day of the church’s consecration (e.g., Pentecost, St. Nicholas’s Day, feasts of St. Mary). At such times during the week before and after the feast day the merchants and buyers heading to the fair were under royal protection. The “right of the mile,” \textit{Bannmeilrecht}, meant that no other market could be held within a one-mile radius of the given settlement. The market’s toll originally belonged to the king. If he made a grant of it, the person or institution so favored (landowner, church community, governing body of a town) was entitled to collect the toll. In early times the toll was a flat fee that was levied on the loaded wagon. It was later transformed into a tariff, which was collected on the transported units (barrel, quintal, bale), but often not in money but in pieces. By the late Middle Ages the ad valorem duty (poundage) had become general, when in every case a pre-determined sum of money now had to be paid on the volume of goods delivered to the market. At such times the quality and place of origin of the merchandise were also taken into account. The toll was collected at the gates in the towns, and at the sales stalls in settlements without walls. Weighing was allowed only with scales authenticated at the markets, or else the punishment was confiscation of goods or a monetary fine. The market’s secondary, though no less important, role was that it was the venue for community life as well. Certain legal judgments had to be announced by the so-called “three-market proclamation” (\textit{trineforesis proclamatio, háromvásáros kikiáltás}), meaning they had to be made public at three nearby marketplaces. At times the punishment itself was carried out on the pillory set up in the market.

An especially valuable part of the book is the presentation of the staple right (\textit{depositio mercium, Niederlage, Gret}) of Hungarian towns. It was likewise out of royal or princely favor that certain towns received the right to stop the wagons of long-distance merchants and purchase their goods. The staple right
was paired with additional regulations, such as the mandated use of legal roads and exemption from tolls. There were towns that obtained the staple right for the goods of foreign and/or domestic merchants that was valid for the entire territory of the country, but there were also those with a staple extending to only certain products (salt, wine). We find versions differing almost from town to town based on the charters. The rules could apply to both foreign and domestic merchants, or separately to each. Divergences can also be detected with regard to whether or not the merchant was allowed to move on with his leftover wares after the unloading and buying up of goods, as well as whether or not the number of days he was required to remain there was prescribed for him.

Within the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary the first town of this kind was Esztergom. Merchants already according to the laws of the first kings (Ladislaus I, Coloman I) were obligated to stop here and pay the toll on the shipment to the royal toll collectors. The right to collect tolls by the thirteenth century had gradually passed into ecclesiastical hands. The town of Buda, founded after the Mongol invasion (1241), in 1244 received the right to require the “ships and ferries navigating up and down as well as the carts” to stop in the town and hold a market. In addition, over the course of the Middle Ages Győr, Zagreb, Lőcse (Levoča, Slovakia), Bártfa (Bardejov, Slovakia), Pressburg, Sopron, Kassa (Košice, Slovakia), Brassó (Brașov, Romania), Nagyszeben (Sibiu, Romania) and Nagyszombat (Trnava, Slovakia) all obtained staple rights. Because of the ever increasing number of towns in the country possessing the staple right, and the conflicts arising therefrom, occasionally the rights had to be confirmed or amended by the kings. It was mostly the prohibition on merchants’ onward travel that was affected, since naturally they did not want to take their remaining goods directly out of the country but only to the next town with the staple right. At times “trade wars” would break out among the towns: because the towns availed themselves of their preemptive right, they bought up the better quality goods ahead of one another. Lőcse, Késmárk (Kežmarok, Slovakia) and Igló (Spišska Nova Ves, Slovakia), as well as Buda and Pest became embroiled in disputes with one another lasting centuries. At time merchants tried to travel through towns with the staple right without stopping, or perhaps even bypassing them, which brought with it the protest of the town concerned. In other cases merchants who had an exemption from the staple were compelled to unload their goods. In disputed questions the towns in several instances turned to the king for a solution to the problem.

The goods of the merchant arriving at the warehouse were unpacked by local workers, weighed and put on display for inspection by the local wholesalers.
In Buda the transaction between the wholesaler (who possessed citizen’s rights) and the long-distance merchant or hauler took place in the presence and with the assistance of the intermediaries working in the warehouse. The warehouse itself was generally a large-size hall building, into which wagons could also be driven. The work taking place in the warehouse was coordinated and recorded by a manager with the help of his clerks. In the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary (according to the extant written sources) such halls stood in Buda, Lőcse and Kassa, though their existence can probably be assumed in the other towns (Pozsony, Sopron, Bártfa and Nagyszombat) as well.

There were privileges that went hand in hand with the life of towns exercising the staple right, though they could be obtained independently of the staple as well. Mandated legal roads (recta via, insta via) obliged long-distance merchants to use certain designated “lawful roads.” Those using the road were “protected” by royal authority, that is, if they were attacked on the road, they were permitted to seek legal remedy. Those travelling on a “false road” (falsa via), on the other hand, could be punished by confiscation of goods. Naturally it was along the designated roads that the royal toll posts collecting the thirtieth tax also were set up. In the hope of less cost and avoiding payment of the toll it often happened that merchants took circuitous roads. The authorities “protected” against this by setting up branch thirtieth posts. The requirement to reload goods meant that some geographical hindrance forced the merchants to change the means of conveyance. The hindrance might be the meeting of a river and overland road, a royal free town or perhaps a country border. At such times generally it was the people of the settlement that received the transporting privilege who performed the hauling in the given territory. After arrival at the unloading site the weighing of the goods was permitted only with authenticated town scales. The scales (Stadtwag, Fronwag) were located either in a separate weighing house, or in one of the ground-floor rooms of the town hall, or at the warehouse.

The volume is supplemented by an Appendix, the first chapter of which is the Gazetteer. This lists the market places of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary—preserved in written sources—with a breakdown by county. After the name of the settlement can be found the type of market (weekly market, fair), the day it was held (e.g., Friday, or September 29) and the archival reference number for the first written mention of it, or the source of the published charter. This database will greatly facilitate the work of researchers dealing with the subject. However, the gazetteer is not complete—as the author herself emphasizes—as it does not contain the mentions in sources after 1526 (the defeat at Mohács), as well as
the data collections and analyses previously published by other authors (Jenő Major and Ferenc G. Szabó). The second chapter of the Appendix is a list of the sources and specialist literature consulted, from which researchers interested in the subject will be able to profit. The third chapter is an (unfortunately) very brief English summary of the book. In the fourth chapter she has collected the personal and geographical names cropping up in the study, indicating the page numbers (where they occur).

Both the overall series and the volume reviewed here are characterized by an uncluttered style. The structure of the table of contents allows one to follow the author’s train of thought. The book is supplemented by a map insert. The title of the large-size sheet map is: “Markets in the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary” \((Vásárok a középkori Magyar Királyságban)\). The place names of the weekly markets and annual fairs listed in the volume are marked on the map and inserted into the county borders of the late fifteenth century. The map was designed by Béla Nagy based on Boglárka Weisz’s scholarly research. The volume maintains the uniform appearance of the series, with only the small-size illustrations in the three cartouches changed. It is an easy-to-read, medium-sized handbook, with a matte-finished cover and glued boards. The cover design is the work of Gergely Böhm. The internal lack of ornamentation (Palatino font, size B/5 pages, 10- and 8-point font sizes) almost “delight” the eyes, allowing the reader to concentrate on the content.

It may be stated in summary that Boglárka Weisz’s study makes useful and at the same time enjoyable reading, both for experts dealing with medieval trade history and non-professional readers. Her narrative is clear and easy to follow, relating, for example, the history of the lawsuits the towns brought against one another, in a readable style. Having analyzed most available sources, she has striven to draw the scholarly conclusions and attempted to provide a contemporary answer to problems already raised in earlier times. It is a fitting addition to the specialist literature published both in Hungary and abroad.

*Translated by Matthew Caples*

Judit Benda