

The *Eastern European History Review* is an international and interdisciplinary annually online and open access peer-reviewed journal about studies on Central and Eastern Europe in the Modern Age (XV–XIX). The Journal is also the expression of the Study Center CESPoM (Centro Studi sull'età dei Sobieski e della Polonia Moderna – Center Study on the Age of Sobieski and Modern Poland) of the University of Tuscia, born in 1997.

It publishes articles with significant approaches and original interpretations in all research fields concerning Central and Eastern Europe, with specific attention to the History Sciences.

This special issue of *Eastern European History Review* addresses the complex and intense history of Christian-Ottoman relations in Central and Eastern Europe during the Early Modern Period. Tracing the salient moments and facts with battles, border issues, diplomacy and intelligence, the volume – with the participation of authors from different parts of Europe and Türkiye – constitutes an international opportunity to analyze topics that continually offer new study themes.

*Central and South-Eastern Europe between the Christian world and the Ottoman world: conflicts, encounters and compromises (XVI-XVIII centuries)*, edited by the Turkish historian Canan Parmaksızoğlu Aksoy, is the result of research and scientific collaboration between the CESPoM Study Center and Vilmos Fraknói Vatican Historical Research Group (ELKH-PPKE-PTE).

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Director of EEHR

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Edited by Canan Parmaksızoğlu Aksoy



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**CENTRAL AND SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE  
BETWEEN THE CHRISTIAN AND OTTOMAN WORLDS:  
CONFLICTS, ENCOUNTERS AND COMPROMISES  
(XVI-XVIII CENTURIES)**

*Edited by*  
*Canan Parmaksızoğlu Aksoy*

*Co-edited by*  
*Katalin Nagy*

*Special Participation of*  
*Vilmos Fraknói Vatican Historical Research Group (ELKH-PPKE-PTE)*



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# EASTERN EUROPEAN HISTORY REVIEW

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Special Partecipation of  
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## **EASTERN EUROPEAN HISTORY REVIEW: LA RIVISTA**

Il Comitato redazionale e scientifico è lieto di presentare al pubblico la rivista scientifica *Eastern European History Review*.

Con un carattere internazionale e interdisciplinare, una cadenza annuale e una fruibilità *open access* la rivista focalizza i propri interessi sulle dinamiche occorse nell'Europa Orientale durante tutta l'età moderna (XIV-XIX). *Eastern European History Review* è espressione del Centro Studi dell'Università della Tuscia CESPoM (Centro Studi sull'età dei Sobieski e della Polonia Moderna) nato nel 1997 per intuizione del Prof. Gaetano Platania, Direttore Emerito della Rivista.

L'iniziativa editoriale che presentiamo nasce dall'evidente mancanza in Italia di una rivista scientifica relativa alla storia dell'Europa centro-orientale in Età Moderna, nonostante la penisola abbia giocato un ruolo fondamentale per la Storia e la Cultura di una parte integrante del continente, a torto considerata come lontana e periferica.

Consapevoli di questo, il Comitato ha posto quale obiettivo primario della *Eastern European History Review* quello di offrire uno spazio di riflessione e di discussione su temi che appartengono alla storia dell'Europa centro-orientale, e insieme alle relazioni - politiche e culturali - che questa vasta area del Vecchio Continente ha avuto con l'occidente d'Europa, e l'Italia in particolare, incoraggiando il dialogo tra studiosi e esperti di settore, e tra differenti approcci della ricerca scientifica.

Il Comitato Redazionale e Scientifico

## **EASTERN EUROPEAN HISTORY REVIEW: THE JOURNAL**

The Editorial and Scientific Board are proud delighted to present the *Eastern European History Review* under the aegis of Sette Città Editore.

The *Eastern European History Review* is an international and interdisciplinary annually online and open access peer-reviewed journal about studies on Central and Eastern Europe in the Modern Age (XIV-XIX). The Journal is also the expression of the Study Center CESPoM (Centro Studi sull'età dei Sobieski e della Polonia Moderna – Center Study on the Age of Sobieski and Modern Poland) of the University of Tuscia, born in 1997, from an idea of Prof. Gaetano Platania, today Director Emeritus of this journal.

It publishes articles with significant approaches and original interpretations in all research fields concerning Central and Eastern Europe, with specific attention to the History sciences.

The editorial initiative we present comes from the obvious lack of a journal, in Italy, concerning the history of Central and Eastern Europe during the Modern Age, this despite its fundamental role in the history and culture of that part of the continent, wrongly considered distant and peripheral.

Quite the contrary is true, in fact. Main objective of the journal is to create a space for reflection and discussion on topics pertaining to Central and Eastern Europe, but also relations with Continental Europe, encouraging dialogue between scholars and experts in the field, and between different approaches of scientific research.

The Editorial and Scientific Board

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## INTRODUCTION

The advance of the Ottoman Empire in Europe in the Modern Age posed a threat to many European states. The conquest of Constantinople (later İstanbul) during the reign of Sultan Mehmed II (the Conqueror) in the XV century, followed by the Otranto expedition and siege, the Ottoman advance in Central Europe during the reign of Sultan Suleyman I in the XVI century, particularly the Siege of Vienna, as well as the successes of Chief Admiral Barbaros Hayreddin Pasha in the Mediterranean and many other similar events generated a sense of anxiety and fear in Europe for centuries. As a matter of fact, the phrase *Mamma li Turchi!*, used by Italians even today in response to negative events, dates back to this historical Turkish threat and the negative feeling it generated, which has its roots in the XV and XVI centuries.

It is rather challenging to cover such a broad subject as the relations between the Ottoman Empire and European states in the Modern Age, especially between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, in an introduction. However, in order to understand the dynamics between the Ottoman Empire and the Christian world, it would be useful to go back a little further and give a brief overview of how the parties viewed each other as an introduction to the subject. Starting from the Late Middle Ages until the middle of the Modern Age, the East and the West, in other words, the two worlds comprised mostly of Muslims and Christians, were in constant interaction with each other in a relationship that alternated between wars and trade. However, the fear became a dominant emotion in this intense and dynamic relationship from the XV century onwards. Although the world order changed due to geographical discoveries, the main region where the conflict of control and domination took place was the Mediterranean and Central-Eastern Europe. On the one hand, there was the Western Christian world, which had entered a new era with the Thirty Years' War and the Peace of Westphalia, and on the other was the Ottoman Empire, which had conquered Byzantium and its culture. From another perspective, it can be deduced that the conflict between these two sides evolved from a clash of "civilizations" to a clash of "powers" and gained a stronger political character at least since the XVI century<sup>1</sup>. At this point, it is necessary to underline the differences between Western historiography and Ottoman historiography. For a long time, contrary to what Western historiography suggests, the Ottoman Empire did not carry out its conquests with the aim of forcibly converting the peoples of the conquered regions to Islam, however mainly aimed to expand the borders of the Empire<sup>2</sup>. The distinguished Turkish historian Professor Halil İnalcık provided in his works important information on Ottoman conquest policy. For example, how the Ottomans conquered the Christian Balkans and managed to establish themselves there for so long remain a historical question even today. According to the old theory, Ottoman rule was manifested by force and persecution and lasted

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1 Franco Cardini, *Il Turco a Vienna. Storia del grande assedio del 1683* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2011), 4.

2 Marko Jacov, *L'Europa tra conquiste ottomane e leghe sante* (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana), 255.

as a regime of exploitation under the control of a military class of Sipahi<sup>3</sup>. However, according to the current historical analysis derived from research based on Ottoman archive documents, the Ottoman Empire was able to persuade the local Christian populations to peace and reconciliation thanks to the principles of *istimalet*<sup>4</sup> and *aman* which meant looking out for the people, especially non-Muslim subjects, and treating them with clemency. The Ottoman Empire always offered the opponent three chances to surrender, and if the offer was accepted, a sworn “ahdname”<sup>5</sup> guaranteed the opponent’s security of life and property. These guarantees were rigorously implemented, and many conquests were accomplished by this way. In fact, speaking about the Balkans again, it is known that Orthodox Greeks and Slavs often viewed the Ottoman regime as a protector of their Church. In addition, one of the main reasons for the long-lasting Ottoman rule in the conquered lands was the Ottoman tax-land system. Unlike the old feudal system, this system guaranteed the peasant’s land use through the *mîrî* land (State owned land that was transferred to those who use the right of disposition) regime<sup>6</sup>.

The Ottomans have been called “Turks” by the Western world for centuries. In the Modern Age, fear for the “Turk” has manifested as activities and efforts of “marginalization”, “vilification” and therefore “disparagement”. Turks have been the main representative of the “other” for Europeans for centuries, from the very beginning of Muslim-Christian contact<sup>7</sup>. However, the Ottoman Empire was not only a source of fear for the Western world, but also a source of great curiosity and fascination. In the West, most literary scientific works were written against the Ottomans, who were described as “*infidel*”. Thus, for centuries, the Ottomans were not only unlikeable and feared by Europeans, but also appealing and attractive. In addition to being “foreigners” for historical and geographical reasons, their traditions became the focus of interest for researchers and scholars as they were

3 The most distinguished group of the household cavalry troops in the Ottoman military system. Erhan Afyoncu, “Sipahi”, *DİA*, 37 (2009): 256-58.

4 The dictionary meaning of “*istimâlet*” is «to predispose, to appeal, to win the heart». In Ottoman chronicles it meant: «to look after the people, especially non-Muslim subjects, and be lenient towards them». Treating the people of conquered places well, protecting them, ensuring the security of life and property against external enemies, granting freedom in religious matters, facilitating taxation are the main elements of Ottoman *istimâlet*. See: Mücteba İlgürel, “İstimalet”, *DİA*, 27 (2001): 362.

5 A document issued by the order of the rulers to grant special rights to certain states, groups and individuals. See: Mübahat S. Kütükoğlu “Ahidname”, *DİA*, 1 (1988): 536-40.

6 Halil İnalcık, *Doğu Batı, Makaleler II* (Ankara: Doğu Batı Yayınları, 2008), 248, 96-110. On Ottoman provincial administration and the fief system, see also Halil İnalcık, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Klasik Çağ (1300-1600)*, trans. Ruşen Sezer (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1995), 108-23. The work was first published in English. See Halil İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire, Classical Age (1300-1600)* (London: Nicholson Publishing, 1973).

7 Mustafa Soykut, *Papalık ve Venedik Belgelerinde Avrupa’nın Birliği ve Osmanlı Devleti (1453-1683)* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2007), 17, 24.

close or neighbors. In short, many works depicting the Ottomans and providing information about them appeared in the XVI and XVII centuries<sup>8</sup>. In many of these works, when Western historiography tried to explain the success of Ottoman progress, the concepts such as “religious fanaticism”, “oppression”, “persecution” were used, contrary to the information given above<sup>9</sup>.

Today it is still evident that such images persist in Western historiography. However a significant effort in consulting Ottoman and Turkish sources by historians would lead to a more objective perspective on the complex relationships between the Ottoman and Christian worlds.

The issue of Eastern European History Review titled *Central and South-Eastern Europe between the Christian and Ottoman Worlds: conflicts, encounters and compromises (XVI-XVIII centuries)*, contains 14 articles on the topic. This issue presents articles by researchers from different countries such as Italy, Hungary, Romania, Poland and Türkiye and was prepared in collaboration with *Vilmos Fraknói Vatican Historical Research Group* (ELKH-PPKE-PTE).

I extend my sincere appreciation to the director of EEHR, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Alessandro Boccolini for offering me the special editorship of this issue of the journal.

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8 Giovanni Ricci, *Ossessione turca. In una retrovia cristiana dell'Europa moderna* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002), 41; Soykut, *Papalık ve Venedik Belgelerinde*, 19-24.

9 İnalçık, *Doğu Batı, Makaleler II*, 248.

## THE VILMOS FRANKÓI VATICAN HISTORICAL RESEARCH GROUP (ELKH-PPKE-PTE)

The *Vilmos Fraknói Vatican Historical Research Group* of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Péter Pázmány Catholic University was established in the June of 2012 as the 'Impetus' Church History Research Group in the frame of the Church History Research Institute of the University founded by Rector Péter Erdő in 1999. It carries on independently the latter's publications (*Bibliotheca Historiae Ecclesiasticae Universitatis Catholicae de Petro Pázmány Nuncupatae*) and researches in Rome and in Vienna, with the involvement of academic and other funding sources. From 1st July 2017 onwards it performs its activity within the framework of the Supported Research Places Program of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences visualizing its goals and professional identity also in its name. The official name from 2022: ELKH-PPKE-PTE *Vilmos Fraknói Vatican Historical Research Group*.

Its examinations concentrate decisively on political, diplomatic, cultural and institutional history. Its priority task is the systematic publication and processing of sources that has been heavily neglected since the age of positivism. The Vatican collections serve as the primary place of research, completed by the relating material – primarily in thematic context – of the Hungarian and Vienna archives and manuscript collections. Its publications provide space to the results of revealing of sources and historiographic works according to their scholarly profile (*Collectanea Textuum et Studiorum*), and separately to the Hungarian researches in the Vatican due to its particular importance (*Collectanea Vaticana Hungariae*). The long-term aim of the research institute is to serve as the professional framework of the establishment and efficient operation of an independent Hungarian institute of history in Rome of purely scientific nature. Owing to its academic background it pays special attention to the education of the future historian generation, to the engagement of students in certain phases of its work.

The main international cooperative partners are: Università della Tuscia (CESPoM-Centro Studi sull'Età dei Sobieski e della Polonia Moderna), Universität Wien (Institut für Historische Theologie), Deutsches Historisches Institut in Rom, Università Pontificia Gregoriana (Facoltà di Storia e Beni Culturali della Chiesa), Archivio Apostolico Vaticano. The relevant common publications are published by Edizioni Setta Città and Duncker & Humblot

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## **CONTESTED BORDERLANDS: WAR AND TERRITORIAL DISPUTES BETWEEN TRANSYLVANIA AND THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE (1594-1595)<sup>1</sup>**

### **ABSTRACT**

A few years after the Long Turkish War (1591-1606) began, Sigismund Báthory, ruler of Transylvania, decided to join the Habsburgs and the other members of the Holy League in their war against the Ottomans. Through this political decision Báthory interrupted several decades of good relations between his country and the Sublime Porte. Although Transylvania was a rather small state, with limited military and economic potential, Prince Sigismund had great ambitions. Joined by the rulers of Moldavia and Wallachia he attacked the Ottoman Empire on three fronts. In this article I will analyse the military operations on the frontier of Transylvania with the Ottoman province (*vilayet*) of Timișoara (Temesvár/Temeșvar) in the years 1594-1595. The various forms of regular and irregular warfare employed by the two opponents show the complexity of this confrontation. Major campaigns and sieges, which involved large numbers of combatants, were accompanied by frequent raids and skirmishes, typical for frontier warfare. These events also reveal the specific social and economic dynamic of frontiers in early modern Central and South-Eastern Europe.

**KEYWORDS:** Long Turkish War; Transylvania; Ottoman Empire; Borderlands; Frontiers.

### **INTRODUCTION**

By the end of the sixteenth century Transylvania was approaching the last stage of a long process of political and institutional reorganization as a distinct state, following the partition of the Hungarian Kingdom after the battle of Mohács (1526). Throughout these long and difficult decades Ottoman suzerainty was fundamental for the political survival of the new state. Following the tradition established by King John Szapolyai, the subsequent rulers of the Eastern Hungarian Kingdom, later identified as the Principality of Transylvania, nurtured good relations with the Sublime Porte. Sigismund Báthory, son of voivode Cristophor Báthory and nephew of Stephen Báthory, was the first elected Transylvanian ruler who broke with this tradition and engaged in open hostilities with the Ottoman Empire. In this article I will analyse the military confrontations along the frontier of Transylvania and the province (*vilayet*) of Timișoara (Temesvár/Temeșvar) during

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<sup>1</sup> This work was supported by a grant of the Romanian Ministry of Education and Research, UEFISCDI, project number PN-III-P1-1.1-TE-2019-0457, within PNCDI III; *From Medieval Frontiers to Early Modern Borders. The Military organization of the Western Parts of the Transylvanian Principality in the XVI-XVII centuries.*

the years 1594 and 1595. From a Transylvanian perspective this was the first phase of the war with the Ottomans, in which the troops of Sigismund Báthory made several attempts (some of them successful) to retake territories and fortifications in the region encompassed by the Carpathians and the Danube, Tisa and Mureş rivers, later known as Banat.

The Long Turkish War (1591-1606) was a vast and complex military conflict with many “theatres of war” across Central and South-East Europe. The evolution of the Ottoman-Transylvanian confrontation in the Banat, during the years 1594-1595, has been approached in general monographs or studies focused on particular events<sup>2</sup>, but the importance of local territorial disputes and the motivation of smaller states for joining this conflict still lacks a comprehensive analysis.

32 Although Báthory reached an official agreement with Rudolph II only in January 1595, his troops had already made several incursions into Ottoman territory during the previous year and sustained the revolt of the Christian population from the province of Timișoara. In the following years the Transylvanian army was on the offensive and managed to regain some of the disputed territories in the borderlands, but was unable to conquer the centre of the Ottoman *vilayet*. After the second failed siege of Timișoara in the winter of 1597, Sigismund Báthory lost faith in his chances to win the war and gave up on the throne, and thus ended the first phase of the Transylvanian involvement in the Long Turkish War. This “theatre of war” expended over a significant part of the Ottoman-Transylvanian borderland, including the Ottoman *vilayet* of Timișoara with its administrative subdivisions: Timișoara (Temeşvar), Cenad (Çanad), Lipova, Moldova Veche (Modava), Gyula (G’ula) and Ineu (Yanova)<sup>3</sup>; the Banat of Caransebeş and Lugoj (under Transylvanian authority) and also territories from the counties of Zarand, Bihor and Hunedoara.

## FRONTIER INCIDENTS AND THE RISING TENSION IN OTTOMAN-TRANSYLVANIAN RELATIONS

Plunder raids were common in early modern borderlands and often neglected official relations between states. However the last decade of the sixteenth century witnessed an unprecedented intensification of frontier disputes between Transylvania and

2 Among the most recent contributions on this subject see, Sándor László Tóth, *A mezőkeresztesi csata és a tizenöt éves háború* (Szeged: Belvedere, 2000), 129-255; Liviu Cîmpeanu, “Domnul fie lăudat [...] turcii au predat cetatea: Cucerirea Lipovei Otomane de către Transilvăneni în august 1595”, *Historia Urbana*, 26 (2018): 97-111; Tamás Kruppa, “Erdély és a Porta 1594–1597. évi békealkudozásainak történetéhez”, *Századok* 137/3 (2003): 603-51; Florin Nicolae Ardelean, “The Siege of Timișoara from 1596 in the Works of Bernardino Beccari da Sacile”, in *Politics and society in Central and South-East Europe: life under the shadow of the Ottoman Empire’s expansion (15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries)*, ed. Zsuzsanna Kopeczny (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2021), 117-25; Ioan Hațegan, *Cronologia Banatului*, vol. II/2 (Timișoara: Editura Banatul, Artpress, 2005), 101-29; Yusuf Heper, “Uzun Savaşlar Dönemi’nden Bir Kesi’t: Erdel’In Temeşvar’I Geri Alma Teşebbüsleri (1596-97)”, *Karadeniz İncelemeleri Dergisi*, 30 (2021): 429-50; Aurel Decei, “Încercările lui Sigismund Báthory de a elibera Banatul și Timișoara de turci”, *Tibiscus*, 3 (1974): 171-80.

3 On the administrative organization of the *vilayet* of Timișoara at the end of the sixteenth century see, Cristina Feneșan, *Vilayetul Timișoara (1552-1716)* (Timișoara: Editura Ariergarda, 2014), 128-42; Klára Hegyi, *The Ottoman Military Organization in Hungary: Fortresses, Fortress Garrisons and Finances* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2018), 492-532.

the Ottoman Empire. Officials on both sides of the frontier accused each other of territorial transgressions and other acts of hostility. In fact the limits of authority and jurisdiction had never been very clear in this area. Many settlements were in the peculiar situation of *condominium* as illustrated by the case of Dezna estate and fortress. Reoccupied by Ottoman forces in 1565, Dezna was gifted by the sultan to the ruler of Transylvania, John Sigismund Szapolyai. The Habsburgs were able to occupy the fortress for a short while in 1566 but it was soon lost to Ottoman troops. After this confusing succession of events it remained unclear who was the rightful owner. Decades later, in 1590, Sigismund Báthory was still arguing with the Paşa of Timișoara over the ownership of this fortress and the surrounding settlements<sup>4</sup>. Local commanders often initiated aggressive actions into neighbouring territories neglecting treaties and capitulations. A notable frontier incident occurred on 16 September 1590, when 1.000 Ottomans from the garrisons of Ineu, Békés and Gyula attacked a small group of Transylvanian soldiers (40 foot guards and 50 horsemen) who were escorting serfs to the village of Zsáka (Jaca) in Bihor County. The Transylvanian voivode was particularly angered by this attack because the above mentioned village was part of the fiscal estate and thus under his direct authority<sup>5</sup>. In 1591, the Transylvanian envoy to Istanbul, Pongrácz Sennyey, was instructed to deliver the annual tribute and to complain about the many incursions and raids of Ottoman troops into Transylvanian territories. As an eloquent example of the abuses committed by Ottoman marcher lords, Sigismund Báthory mentioned the case of a Transylvanian nobleman, Nicolae Fiat who was killed on his estate while his wife was abused (tortured) during an Ottoman raid<sup>6</sup>.

On the other side of the frontier, Ottoman commanders complained that the Transylvanians were collecting taxes in their territories. Although the situation was tense diplomatic contacts were maintained throughout this period and the sultan showed his willingness to make concessions when he removed Hassan Pasha, the beylerbeyi of Timișoara, from office<sup>7</sup>. Nevertheless, the situation in the borderlands did not change drastically over the following years. Several Transylvanian military officials were determined to settle matters through force and sustained the anti-ottoman policy of the young Transylvanian ruler. This attitude is reflected in a long discourse held by Ference Geszty, captain general of the Transylvanian army and commander of Deva fortress, during a diet session in early 1594. In opposition to the efforts of Chancellor Farkas Kovácsóczy and Sándor Kendi to maintain peace with the Ottomans, Geszty insisted that war was the only solution to securing the frontiers of the country<sup>8</sup>.

4 Imre Lukinich, *Erdély területi változásai a török hódítás korában 1541-1711* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1918), 139-53; Sándor Márki, *Aradvármegye és Arad szabad királyi város története*, vol. II (Arad, Monográfia-Bizottság, 1895), 14.

5 Márki, *Aradvármegye*, 15.

6 Andrei Veress, ed., *Documente privitoare la istoria Ardealului, Moldovei și Țării Românești*, vol. III (București: Cartea Românească, 1931), 233-40; Dragoș-Lucian Țigău, "Familia Fiat de Armeniș în secolele XV-XVII", *Banatica*, 14 (1996): 25.

7 Kruppa, "Erdély és a Porta", 604-05.

8 Wolffgangi de Bethlen, *Historia de rebus Transsylvanicis*, vol. III (Cibinii: Typis et

### THE HESITANT BEGINNINGS OF THE CONFLICT (1594)

In the beginning of 1594, Sigismund Báthory was not yet ready to declare war on his liege lord, the Ottoman sultan, because he did not have the full support of the political elite. On one hand, an influential group of nobles, led by chancellor Kovacsóczy, was determined to keep the peace with the Ottomans and to avoid the war at all costs. On the other hand, the “marcher lords” - military officials from the western borderland, Ferenc Geszty (captain of Deva fortress), István Bocskay (captain of Oradea fortress) and Gáspár Kornis (captain of Huszt fortress) – were eager to enter the conflict and expand the western frontier of the country.

A first opportunity to take action without major risks was to support a local rebellion in the province of Timișoara. The uprising began in late January 1594 and involved a large but heterogeneous group of Christians from the Ottoman borderlands, estimated at about 5.000 fighters. Although they lacked coordination and experienced leadership, the rebels were able to take some smaller fortresses and fortified settlements in the area<sup>9</sup>. The most important agents who acted on behalf of the Transylvanian ruler were György Palatics (ban of Caransebeș and Lugoj)<sup>10</sup>, Ferenc Geszty (commander of Deva fortress) and Moses Székely. Palatics and Geszty were the most important military office holders on the south-western frontier of Transylvania. According to narrative sources they both played an active role from the beginning of the rebellion and instigated the local population against the Ottomans<sup>11</sup>. Báthory had instructed Palatics to provide the rebels with artillery, gunpowder, ammunition, provisions and soldiers (*tormenta, pulverem, tela, globos, & quantamcunque militum manu, aliaque subsidia, que bello usui essent*)<sup>12</sup>. The Transylvanian involvement in the conflict was also noted by foreign reports who emphasized the hesitant attitude of Báthory and his intention to conquer Timișoara<sup>13</sup>. With the help of the insurgents, Palatics and his troops took control of Făget (Facsád), but the fortress was soon returned to the Ottomans as a gesture of

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sumptibus Martinii Hochmeister, 1785), 302-13.

- 9 Cristina Feneșan, “Din premisele luptei antiotomane a Țărilor Române în vremea lui Mihai Viteazul. Mișcările populare din 1594 în eialetul Timișoarei”, *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie Cluj-Napoca*, XXVII (1985-1986): 99-137; Sima M. Ćirković, *The Serbs* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 141-42; Nenad Lemajić, “The Serbian Population of the Banat and the Western Mureș Basin”, in *The cultural and historical heritage of Vojvodina in the context of classical and medieval studies*, ed. Đura Hardi (Novi Sad: Filozofski fakultet, 2015), 219-20.
- 10 Dragoș Lucian Țigău, “Banii de Caransebeș și Lugoj. Considerații asupra atribuțiilor și competențelor acestora (I)”, *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, 16 (1998): 236.
- 11 Bethlen, *Historia*, 183; Sándor Szilágyi, ed., *Monumenta Comititalia Regni Transylvaniae*, vol. III (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akad. Könyvkiadó Hivatala, 1877), 309.
- 12 Bethlen, *Historia*, 279.
- 13 Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki, ed., *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor*, vol. III/2 (București: Academia Română și Ministerul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii Publice, 1888), doc. LVII, 42; doc. LVIII, 42.

good will, during the diplomatic mission of Ladislau Szalanczy to Istanbul<sup>14</sup>.

Moses Székely, an experienced military commander who had served in the army of the Stephen Báthory in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, was sent in the Banat region in June 1594. In the camp of Vârșeț (Vršac/Versec) he received an oath of fealty from the Serbian leaders of the uprising who were ready to recognize the leadership of Sigismund Báthory<sup>15</sup>. However the rebellion was soon quelled by a brutal intervention of Ottoman troops under the command of Sinan Pasha and the Tartars sent by Gazi Gheray II, Khan of Crimea.

The arrival of the Tartars was of great concern for the Transylvanian estates. The Diet (estates assembly) insisted on a general levy and Pongrácz Sennyey was sent in the Székely seats to oversee their mobilization. While the army was gathering at Sebeș (Mühlbach/ Szászsebes) in the southern parts of the country, the Tartars advanced towards Hungary through Polish territory along the northern frontier of Transylvania<sup>16</sup>. While most of the Tartars crossed the Tisza River in Maramureș County, smaller detachments advanced into Transylvanian territory and plundered settlements along the north-western frontier, including the Șimleu estate of the Báthory family<sup>17</sup>.

While the Tartars advanced towards the Danube, the political situation in Transylvania was about to take a radical turn. During the Diet of Cluj (20-28 August 1594), Sigismund Báthory brutally eliminated those who opposed the idea of war against the Ottomans. With complete control over the country and its resources, the voivode was ready to resume hostilities against the Ottomans. Once again the Banat region represented the main focus of Transylvanian military actions. Smaller detachments of Transylvanian soldiers made incursions into Ottoman territories, often reaching the Danube area<sup>18</sup>. A notable raid was initiated by Moses Székely and his troops in the beginning of September (*circa Festum Nativitatis Mariae*) against a convoy of ships that was transporting provisions for the Ottoman army. The Transylvanians captured 12 ships and sunk eight of them<sup>19</sup>. Venetian reports from this period also mentioned attempts to disrupt the provisioning of the

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- 14 Bethlen, *Historia*, 416, 429; Szalanczy was one of the nobles who opposed the war against the Ottomans. After the Diet of Cluj (20-28 August) he was killed and his estates were confiscated. Some of his properties in Hunedoara county were given to György Palatics, a loyal supporter of Sigismund Báthory, SJAN Cluj, *Fond Familial Bánffy*, Seria 2, Subseria, 1b, Fascicula 83, nr. 1.
  - 15 Veress, *Documente privitoare la istoria Ardealului*, vol. IV, doc. 45, 78; Bethlen, *Historia*, 233.
  - 16 Tasin Gemil, *Tătarii: relații cu otomanii și românii* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Univ. Clujeană, 2021), 222-23.
  - 17 Bethlen, *Historia*, 300-60.
  - 18 Mustafa Naima mentions that one of the first hostile actions of the rebel vassals, Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldavia, was to attack the Ottoman territories along the Danube. Cf. Mustafa Naima, *Annals of the Turkish Empire from 1591 to 1659 of the Christian Era*, trans. Charles Fraser (London: John Murray, 1832), 36.
  - 19 Josephus Trausch, ed., *Chronicon Fuchsio-Lupino-Oltardinum sive annales Hungarici et Transsilvanici*, vol. I (Coronae: Impressum per Johannem Gött, 1847).

Ottoman army and attacks against the Danube fleet performed by Transylvanians in cooperation with Serbian rebels<sup>20</sup>.

In November 1594 an army of Turkish and Tartar troops approached the town of Lugoj and plundered the surrounding settlements. While orders were sent out for a general levy<sup>21</sup>, Báthory dispatched 2.000 soldiers, commanded by Ferenc Geszty<sup>22</sup>, to deal with this threat. A small detachment, led by Moses Székely, was left behind to besiege the fortress of Făget. While Geszty and his men were successful in chasing away the Ottoman besiegers, Székely suffered a wound from a culverin shot and his troops had to abandon the siege of Făget<sup>23</sup>.

While Sigismund Báthory was still negotiating an alliance with the Habsburgs his troops had already engaged the enemy in the borderlands. As the weather was getting colder, major military operations were halted and the year 1594 ended without any significant territorial changes on the Ottoman-Transylvanian frontier.

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### THE TRANSYLVANIAN OFFENSIVE IN THE BANAT AND THE CONQUEST OF LIPOVA AND INEU (1595)

The beginning of 1595 was dominated by diplomatic negotiations with both the Habsburgs and the Ottomans. On 28 January a Transylvanian-Habsburg military alliance was signed in Prague and later consolidated through a matrimonial alliance between the Báthory and Habsburg families. The issue of the western frontier of Transylvania was often approached during negotiations. The voivode of Transylvania clearly expressed his intention to occupy the fortresses of Gyula, Lipova and Timișoara and asked the help of the Habsburgs in strengthening the western defensive system<sup>24</sup>. In the meantime a new sultan ascended to the throne, Mehmet III. The change of central leadership prompted the appointment of new officials on the frontiers of the empire. Ahmet Pasha, the new beylerbeyi of Timișoara came with peaceful intentions and promised to respect the boundaries between his province and Transylvania<sup>25</sup>.

20 Hurmuzaki, *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor*, vol. III/2, doc. LXVIII, 50-51; doc. LXX, 52.

21 When a general levy was proclaimed, the parish priests of the Saxon communities of Transylvania were required to provide horses, carriages and manpower for the transport of the artillery. Báthory had dispatched such orders in November 1594, SJAN Sibiu, *Capitulul Evanghelic C.A. Bistrița*, nr. 241.

22 At this point Ferenc Geszty was the most influential politician and military commander at the Transylvanian court. He held many important offices like commander of Deva fortress, count (*comes*, *ispán*) of Hunedoara, member of the princely council and captain general of the Transylvanian army. At the end of the campaign in the Banat, Sigismund Báthory rewarded him with several new estates in Alba, Turda and Târnave counties, including the castle of Iernut (Radnot), SJAN Cluj, *Fond Familial Kornis*, Seria 1- Documente medievale, nr. 273.

23 Trausch, *Chronicon Fuchsio*, 117; Márki, *Aradvármegye*, 18-9; Bethlen, *Historia*, 507-09.

24 Veress, *Documente privitoare la istoria Ardealului*, vol. IV, doc. 85, 154-58.

25 Mihail Guboglu and Mustafa A. Mehmet, eds., *Cronici turcești privind Țările Române*, vol. I (București: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1966), 368; Mustafa A. Mehmet, ed., *Cronici turcești privind Țările Române*, vol. III (București: Editura

Although there were no significant clashes between the two neighbours during the first half of the year, a state of tension persisted in the Ottoman-Transylvanian borderlands. Ferenc Geszty, Captain General of the Transylvanian Army, died in May 1595. Sigismund Báthory avoided naming a new captain general but the command of troops on the south-western frontier was entrusted to the new ban of Caransebeş and Lugoj, György Borbély<sup>26</sup>. The Transylvanian ruler was preparing to wage war on three fronts and dispatched troops to his allies in Moldavia and Wallachia but also in the Banat region. Besides the regular (fortress garrisons and the banners of local nobles) and irregular troops (free hajdúks) usually concentrated in the frontier area, Sigismund also dispatched troops from the hinterland. For example, Saxon militias from the town of Sighișoara were sent to enforce the garrisons from the south-western frontier<sup>27</sup>. Foreign mercenaries were also mobilized in this area. Cossack envoys had arrived at the court of Alba Iulia and offered their services to Sigismund Báthory<sup>28</sup>. It remains unclear if the Transylvanian voivode hired Cossack mercenaries in this phase of the war but sources mention them in the following years among the troops who fought against the Turks in the Banat region<sup>29</sup>.

In the summer of 1595 hostilities between the Ottomans and the Transylvanians resumed<sup>30</sup>. György Borbély took the first initiative and occupied two smaller Ottoman fortresses: *Bokcsa* (Bocșa) and *Varsocs* (Vârșeț), before heading for Alba Iulia to attend the wedding of Sigismund Báthory and Maria Christierna of Austria. Taking advantage of this situation the Ottomans mounted a counteroffensive, retook the two fortresses and raided Transylvanian settlements along the Mureș valley up to the market town of Dobra (Jofö) in Hunedoara County<sup>31</sup>. When news of the raid reached the court of Alba Iulia a vanguard of 1,500 soldiers was sent to

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Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1980), 29; Kruppa, "Erdély és a Porta", 607.

- 26 Zsolt Trócsányi, *Erdély központi kormányzata, 1540-1690* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980), 337-38; *Documente privitoare la istoria Ardealului*, vol. IV, doc. 121, 226 and doc. 122, 228.
- 27 Hațegan, *Cronologia*, 107; *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor*, vol. XII, eds. Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki and Nicolae Iorga (București: Academia Română și Ministerul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii Publice, 1903), 27.
- 28 Veress, *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor*, vol. III/2, doc. CIV, 85; Bethlen, *Historia*, 531.
- 29 In a letter issued on 14 June 1597, Chancellor István Jósika mentions the Cossack mercenaries from the garrison of Lipova. Cf. Costin Feneșan, ed., *Diplomatarium Banaticum*, vol. II (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2016), 188-91.
- 30 During the months of June and July Sigismund Báthory issued orders for the Saxon parish priests to prepare the means of transportation for the artillery of the Transylvanian army, SJAN Sibiu, *Episcopia Bisericii Evanghelice C.A. din Transilvania*, Colecția de documente episcopale, nr. 299; SJAN Sibiu, *Capitulul Evanghelic C.A. Bistrița*, nr. 247.
- 31 Bethlen, *Historia*, vol. III, 580-82; Sándor Szilágyi, ed., *Monumenta Hungariae Historica, Scriptores*, vol. XXX: *Szamosközy István történeti maradványai 1542-1608*, IV: *Vegyes följegyzések* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Történelmi Bizottsága, 1880), 50; Cîmpeanu, "Domnul fie lăudat", 100-02.

deal with the threat. The Ottomans avoided a direct confrontation and returned to their fortresses. In the next months the Transylvanian campaign followed the usual pattern, focusing on taking control of fortified settlements and engaging in occasional skirmishes with enemy troops. Vărădia de Mureș (Tótvárad) was taken without significant casualties during a single night. Afterwards troops from the hinterland joined the borderland army of Borbély before heading for the fortress of Făget, their next objective. In this phase of the campaign, the Transylvanian army from the Banat was estimated at 4.000 soldiers including: noble cavalry, peasant militia, Saxon militias, borderland garrisons and free hajdúks<sup>32</sup>.

Făget<sup>33</sup> had been an important target for Transylvanian attacks during the previous year and had a significant strategic importance because it was located on the route connecting the Banat of Caransebeș and Lugoj with Hunedoara County. A strong Ottoman garrison in such a position was a constant threat to the Transylvanian troops operating on the south-western frontier. After a few days of siege the Ottomans surrendered unaware of the fact that a strong relieving force was coming to aid them. The Pasha of Timișoara and the commanders from Lipova and Ineu arrived in the vicinity of Făget with an army of about 8.000 soldiers when the fortress was already under Transylvanian control. What followed was the only significant pitched battle of this conflict, concluded with a decisive Transylvanian victory. According to narrative sources Borbély took advantage of his superior fire power causing many casualties among the Ottomans. The Pasha of Timișoara was wounded during this battle and barely escaped while many other Ottoman commanders were killed or captured<sup>34</sup>.

After this significant victory, Borbély moved on towards his next objective, Lipova. This fortress had a major strategic importance for the Ottomans as main defensive point on the north-eastern boundaries of the *vilayet*, situated on the main route connecting the Banat with Transylvania, along the Mureș valley. At the end of the sixteenth century Lipova was defended by 227 paid soldiers but the total number of defenders was probably increased to 350 men<sup>35</sup>. The Transylvanian army was able to take the outer wooden rampart during the first day and moved their artillery in a favourable position close to the walls of the citadel. The Ottoman garrison surrendered after five days of siege (21-25 august 1595)<sup>36</sup>.

The conquest of Ineu<sup>37</sup> fortress was a more difficult task. Sigismund Báthory had

32 Bethlen, *Historia*, vol. III, 584; Decei, "Încercările", 174; Márki, *Aradvármegye*, 19.

33 Situated on the banks of Bega River, the fortress of Făget consisted of a stone castle surrounded by a wooden rampart and a 20-30 m wide and 3 m deep ditch. At the time it was defended by a regular garrison of 140-150 soldiers, Zsuzsanna Kopeczny, "Medieval Noble Residences in the Danube-Tisza-Maros Region during the Ottoman Wars", *Annales Universitatis Apulensis. Series Historica* 21/2 (2017): 25-7.

34 Cîmpeanu, "Domnul fie lăudat", 103.

35 Hegyi, *The Ottoman Military*, 519-20.

36 Cîmpeanu, "Domnul fie lăudat", 105-08.

37 Ineu became an important borderland fortification in the context of the Ottoman expansion in the area, during the sixteenth century. All factions who exercised control over this fortress (Transylvanians, Habsburgs and Ottomans) consolidated and expanded

recalled many of his soldiers from the western frontier as he was preparing a major campaign in Wallachia. The siege of Ineu began on 16 September and was entrusted to soldiers from Lugoj (2.000) and Oradea (1.000) under the command of István Békés. With a garrison of about 700 men, the Ottomans were prepared to repel any direct assaults. The Transylvanians made arrangements for a long siege and tried to change the course of the river which was supplying the defensive ditch. Abundant rains foiled their plans and the attempt to dig mining galleries. Eventually the besiegers were able to overcome this obstacle by filling the ditch with debris and moved their artillery closer to the walls of the inner citadel. The Transylvanians organized a general assault on 15 October but were unable to defeat the Ottoman garrison. A few days later the ban of Caransebeş and Lugoj arrived with reinforcements. Under these circumstances the Ottomans decided to negotiate their surrender and Borbély, the new commander of the besieging force, agreed to their conditions. On 21 October the garrison left the fortress with 60 carriages of goods and various belongings. Although the Transylvanian commander had guaranteed their safety, the Ottomans were attacked by a large group of free haydúks<sup>38</sup>.

By the end of the year Transylvania was in control of a large part of Zarand and Arad counties, which had been lost to the Ottomans in 1552. Among the 13 fortresses and fortified settlements occupied during 1595 three (Făget, Lipova and Ineu) required sieges, while the others were abandoned, surrendered or taken by force through a single assault<sup>39</sup>. The Transylvanians achieved significant results without concentrating a large military force in the borderlands (3-4.000 soldiers). The Pasha of Timișoara, on the other hand, was compelled to send troops in Hungary (Esztergom, Hatvan and Szolnok)<sup>40</sup> and was thus unable to make a decisive move against Transylvania.

## CONCLUSION

Sigismund Báthory used the territorial disputes on the south-western frontier of his country as *casus belli* against his liege lord, the Ottoman sultan. During 1594 and 1595 the Ottoman-Transylvanian conflict in the Banat made a gradual transition from a local borderland confrontation to open war between the two states. After a successful campaign in 1595 the Transylvanian Prince was bitterly disappointed by two futile attempts to conquer Timișoara in 1596 and 1597. In 1596 Prince Sigismund was forced to retreat after 14 days of siege although he had mobilized an impressive

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the fortress; Florin Mărginean, Zsolt Csók, Keve László, Victor Sava, "Unveiling History. Archaeological Excavations in the Fortress of Ineu (Arad County)", *Ziridava. Studia Archeologica*, 31 (2017): 241-79.

38 Márki, *Aradvármegye*, 23; Ferencz Toldy, ed., *Monumenta Hungariae Historica, Scriptores*, vol. XVII: *Baronyai Decsi János Magyar historiája 1592-1598* (Pest: Eggenberger, 1866), 224-29.

39 These territorial losses were acknowledged with great concern by Ottoman authorities, realizing that Timișoara was now vulnerable to a direct attack from Transylvania, Naima, *Annals*, 112.

40 Tóth, *A mezőkeresztesi csata*, 173; Hațegan, *Cronologia*, 108.

military force under his personal command<sup>41</sup>. In the following year the command of the Transylvanian army was entrusted to Chancellor István Josika but the siege, although considerably longer, had the same outcome<sup>42</sup>.

An overview of the military operations from 1594 and 1595 seems to indicate that, at the time, the Transylvanian army was proficient in irregular warfare. With a small concentration of troops (no more than 4.000 soldiers), local Transylvanian commanders (Ferenc Geszty, György Palatics, Moses Székely and György Borbély) were able to organize successful forays into Ottoman territory and occupy smaller fortifications, which were often abandoned by their defenders or easily taken after a single assault. However, well supplied larger fortifications were very hard to take by force. Besiegers were usually successful only when they convinced the defenders to surrender willingly as in the case of Făget, Lipova and Ineu fortresses. It is also important to underline that, during these two years, the Ottomans were mostly on the defensive and the only military forces involved in the conflict were local garrisons and the Tartars arrived in August 1594. Their major offensive initiatives were limited to a siege attempt of Lugoj (November 1594) and a raid in Hunedoara County (August 1595). The occasional raids organized by local garrisons had limited impact on the balance of war but were often used as propaganda tools. Foreign reports but also borderland commanders in their official correspondence describe, sometimes in great detail, the results of successful attacks against the enemy. The capture of important officers<sup>43</sup>, military insignia but also the value of war spoils are among the most common elements in the narratives surrounding the conduct of irregular warfare in the borderlands.

Following a common pattern in that period, the Transylvanian elite was divided between two political options, the maintenance of Ottoman suzerainty or the alliance with the Habsburgs. It is worth mentioning that in this particular crisis, the most important military office holders from the western frontier (Ferenc Geszty - captain of Deva fortress, István Bocskay - captain of Oradea fortress and Gáspár Kornis - captain of Huszt fortress) were the main supporters of the war against the Ottomans. Their position can be explained by their official but also personal interest in the expansion of the borderlands. Sigismund Báthory relied on a network of powerful nobles who supported his anti-ottoman plans. They were richly rewarded by the ruler with proprieties confiscated from the disloyal nobles eliminated after the Diet of Cluj (20-28 August 1594) and with the newly acquired territories on the south-western frontier<sup>44</sup>.

41 Ardelean, "The Siege of Timișoara", 117-23.

42 The second siege of Timișoara began during the second half of October and the Transylvanian army retreated by the end of November 1597, Decei, "Încercările", 179; Hațegan, *Cronologia*, 125.

43 On 30 March 1595 for example, Gáspár Kornis wrote that his hajdúks (*Heyduggen*) captured the Pasha of Gyula during a raid. Nicolae Iorga, *Acte și fragmente cu privire la istoria românilor*, vol. I (București: Imprimeria Statului, 1895), 139.

44 Gáspár Kornis, for example, received the fortress and estate of Dezna in 1597. Chancellor István Jósika was rewarded in a similar manner, with proprieties in Hunedoara and Arad counties. Márki, *Aradvármegye*, 29.

By establishing close ties with the rulers of Wallachia and Moldavia Sigismund Báthory secured the southern and eastern frontiers of his country but he also took commitments of military support. Thus, he was faced with the difficult task of fighting on three fronts. This is the main reason why his 1595 campaign in the Banat, although successful, had limited strategic consequences.

## ABBREVIATIONS

SJAN: Serviciul Județean al Arhivelor Naționale (Romania)

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