

# MILITARY LEADERSHIP IN THE TRANSYLVANIAN PRINCIPALITY. THE CAPTAIN GENERAL IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 16<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

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*Keywords:* hierarchy, captain general, military organization, military office, military campaign

*Cuvinte cheie:* ierarhie, căpitan general, organizare militară, funcție militară, campanie militară

The military leadership in early modern European armies seems to be a subject of secondary importance in the historiography of the last few decades.<sup>1</sup> Technological innovation, recruitment and motivation, the social impact of warfare, warfare and the development of modern states, have been some of the favorite topics of researchers interested in early modern military history. Military leadership remains however an essential aspect of military organization. Research into this specific subject can provide interesting insights into the evolution of warfare in the so called period of „military revolution”. It has been argued that the size of European armies increased significantly during the late Middle Ages and the Early Modern period. A direct consequence of this evolution was the numerical increase in the staff responsible for leading the armies. Thus the hierarchy in late medieval and early modern armies was more complex and diversified compared to the previous centuries. Most officers in European armies were nobles, especially those who occupied the upper positions in the military hierarchy. An officer career in the royal army was considered a great honor and a way to gain political influence at court.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> There are of course notable exception like the work of Stannley D. M. Carpenter, *Military Leadership in the British Civil Wars, 1642–1651* (London And New York, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Storrs, Hamish M. Scott, “The Military Revolution and the European Nobility, c. 1600–1800,” in Jeremy Black ed., *Warfare in Europe 1650–1792* (Aldershot, 2005), 134; Zoltán Péter Bagi, “The Life of Soldiers during the Long Turkish War (1593–1606),” in *Hungarian Historical Review* 4/1 (2015): 388–389.

The title of captain general was given to military commanders in many European armies during the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The captain general was the direct representative of the monarch during a military campaign and his authority in military matters was second to only the monarch himself. In most cases it was not a permanent title (office). A captain general was named on exceptional occasions, for a limited time. In England, for example, a captain general (*captain generall*) was entrusted with the command of the army during external campaigns. For example Henry VIII named Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk, captain general in 1523 when the English army was on campaign in France.<sup>3</sup> When a large military force was mobilized, the title of captain general was given to an important member of the royal court, although the king personally led the army. Such a situation occurred in 1513, during a campaign in France. The vanguard of the English army, consisting of 11,728 soldiers, was commanded by a captain general, although Henry VIII assumed supreme command of the whole army.<sup>4</sup>

A similar situation is encountered in the Spanish military organization during the sixteenth century. Military operations in the different territories under Spanish rule, in or outside Europe, were entrusted to leading members of the Spanish nobility bearing the title of captain general. The duke of Alba received the office of captain general in 1567, when he took charge of the Spanish forces fighting in the Low Countries. Others who held this office in the Low Countries were: Don Luis de Requeséns, Don Juan of Austria, and the sons of Emperor Maximilian II, Ernst and Albert of Austria.<sup>5</sup> The viceroys of the Indies and New Spain were also captain generals, because they accumulated political, administrative and military royal prerogatives in the Spanish colonies.<sup>6</sup>

The armies of the Dutch republic during the Eighty Years war were also lead by a captain general, confirmed by the stadtholders of all the provinces of the Union. One of the most notable Dutch captain generals was Maurice of Nassau, the reputed military reformer, who was appointed captain general of the Union in 1590.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> James Raymond, *Henry VIII's Military Revolution* (London and New York, 2007), 20.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>5</sup> Jeremy Black, *European Warfare, 1494–1660* (London and New York, 2002), 8; Geoffrey Parker, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road 1567–1659* (Cambridge, 1972), 106–110; Fernando González de León, “Soldados, Platicos and Caballeros: The Social Dimension of Ethics in the Early Modern Spanish Army,” in D.J.B. Trim ed., *The Chivalric Ethos and the Development of Military Professionalism* (Leiden, Boston, 2003), 246–253.

<sup>6</sup> Parker, *The Army of Flanders*, 114–117.

<sup>7</sup> Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic. Its Rise, Greatness and Fall 1477–1806* (Oxford, 1995),

The Venetian Senate elected a captain general whenever a considerable military force was assembled to protect the interests of the republic. Often this title was given to foreign military commanders (*condottieri*), but the Venetian authorities were always careful to limit their authority.<sup>8</sup> The command of the captain general was extended over all land forces employed by the Venetian republic at a certain time. He was formally invited to councils responsible for the military policy of the republic and was informed about the foreign policy decisions taken in the Senate. The Venetian captain general took measures to ensure the maintenance of standards (regarding weapons, equipment and number of soldiers) in mercenary companies, although he shared authority in this matter with representatives of the Senate.<sup>9</sup> In the Sixteenth century the captain general was in charge with infantry troops (which significantly outnumbered cavalry in Venetian armies) while the cavalry was placed under the leadership of a governor general. The captain general was superior to the governor in the military hierarchy.<sup>10</sup> For his service to the republic the captain general received an annual salary that included the payment for his personal banner of soldiers. For example in 1510 Lucio Malvezzi was paid with 23.000 ducats, 6.000 of which for his personal income while the rest of the money was used to pay the wages for 150 lancers and 50 crossbowmen.<sup>11</sup>

Captain generals were common in the military hierarchy of other Italian states as well. The popes appointed a captain general of the Church, who led the military forces of the Papal State. The office was usually conferred on Italian rulers with professional military reputation.<sup>12</sup>

Another important example, that requires a careful analysis, is the office of captain general/supreme captain in the kingdom of Hungary, before and after the fall of Buda in 1541. The Hungarian captain general was probably the origin, the model, for the captain general office in the Transylvanian principality.<sup>13</sup> In the military hierarchy of the Hungarian kingdom the office of captain general was given to an important member of the court who at the same time held other important permanent offices. It was stated that this temporary military office

237, 304–305; Frank Tallett, *War and Society in Early Modern Europe 1495–1715* (London and New York, 1992), 24.

<sup>8</sup> M.E Mallett, J.R Hale, *The Military Organization of a Renaissance State. Venice c. 1400 to 1617* (Cambridge, 1984), 20–22.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 155–156.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 284, 303.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

<sup>12</sup> D. S. Chambers, *Popes, Cardinals and War. The Military Church in Renaissance and Early Modern Europe* (London, 2006), 28.

<sup>13</sup> I am grateful to dr. János B. Szabo for pointing out this possible origin of the Transylvanian captain general.

was normally given to the palatine (*nádor*)<sup>14</sup>, but there are several cases when captain generals held other important offices such as: count of Timiș, supreme captain of the lower parts of Hungary, or Transylvanian *voievod*. After the fall of Buda the office of captain general/ supreme captain underwent an interesting evolution that led to the separation of this office. After 1547 the title of supreme captain was given to Hungarian commanders in charge with the defense of the frontier while the title of captain general was held by foreign commander, employed by the Habsburgs, who led foreign troops in Hungary.<sup>15</sup>

There were several supreme captains, appointed from the Hungarian nobility, who commanded specific sections of the frontier.<sup>16</sup> In 1542 for example two nobles were appointed as captain generals during an Estate Assembly. After 1550 this office was held by Thomas Nádasdy (Transdanubian captain general) and Andrew Báthory (Cisdanubian captain general). In the following period efforts were made to reorganize a frontier section in Lower Hungary, led by a new supreme captain, following the model set by Mathias Corvinus in 1470. Until 1554 this office was held by the bishop of Oradea, and from 1557 to 1566 by the captain of Gyula fortress. Another important section of the frontier encompassed the region of the „mining towns”. This section was led by a so called supreme captain of the mountain towns (*supremus capitaneus civitatus montanarum*).<sup>17</sup> An important role in the political and military relations with the Transylvanian principality was held by the supreme captain of Upper Hungary. He commanded the garrisons of the fortifications and the military contingents of the towns and the counties. Some of those appointed as captain generals of Upper Hungary were: Emeric Thelekessy (1559–1560), Francisc Zay

<sup>14</sup> Norbert C. Tóth, “A nádori cikkek keletkezése,” in Tamás Dobszay et alii eds. *Rendiség és parlamentarizmus Magyarországon a kezdetektől 1918-ig* (Országgyűlés Hivatala, 2013–2014), 40; G. Bónis, Franciscus Döry, eds., *Decreta Regni Hungariae, 1458–1490*, vol. II (Budapest, 1989), 315.

<sup>15</sup> Géza Pálffy, “A török elleni védelmi rendszer néhány alapkérdése a XVI. század első felében,” in Tivadar Petercsák, ed., *Hagyomány és korszerűség a XVI–XVII. században* (Eger, 1997), 64; Norbert C. Tóth, “A nádori,” 41.

<sup>16</sup> There was a distinction between the captain generals of the borders (*supremus capitaneus confiniorum*) who controlled the main fortifications of a section of the frontier, and the district captain-generals (*supremus capitaneus partium regni Hungariae*) in charge of smaller fortresses and local military units like noble levy and town militias, see Gábor Agoston, “Habsburgs and Ottomans: Defense, Military Change and Shifts in Power,” in *The Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* 22/1 (Spring, 1998): 134.

<sup>17</sup> Géza Pálffy, “The Origins and Development of the Border Defence System against the Ottoman Empire in Hungary (Up to the Early Eighteenth Century),” in G. Dávid, P. Fodor, eds. *Ottomans, Hungarians and Habsburgs in Central Europe. The Military Confines in the Era of Ottoman Conquest* (Leiden-Boston-Köln, 2000), 20–31.

(1560–1565) and Lazar Schwendi 1565–1568.<sup>18</sup> Unlike the other cases analyzed earlier the supreme captains from Royal Hungary were permanent military positions strongly connected to the borders defense system and the realities of the near constant state of conflict in the frontier area. The Hungarian supreme captains enjoyed greater authority than captain generals in other European countries, including the Transylvanian principality. On certain occasions they were provided with an extended authority by the king, which included the right to donate land and to grant pardons for disloyalty.<sup>19</sup>

To a certain degree a similar evolution occurred in the Transylvanian principality, a young state that appeared on the political map of Europe in the middle of the Sixteenth century. The whole Transylvanian nobility had direct military obligations through the maintenance of traditional military structures, such as the noble insurrection (the obligation of all nobles to attend the royal/princely army when summoned by the ruler). Access to the leading positions in the Transylvanian army were not restricted to the higher nobility, as some nobles of lesser origin were able to gain important offices including the office of captain general.

Two types of military offices can be distinguished in the military organization of Transylvania: permanent military offices (held during war but also during peace periods) and temporary military offices (usually held during military campaigns). The most important permanent military positions were: fortress captain (*praefectus, capitaneus*), supreme captain of the court guard (*capitaneus aulae militiae, udvari főkapitány*), vice-captain of the court guard (*udvari alkapitány*), and captain of the court infantry (*udvari gyalogok kapitány*).<sup>20</sup> Other officials with permanent military duties were the lord-lieutenants of the counties (*comes, főispán*)<sup>21</sup>, the captains of the *Székely* seats and the judges of Saxon towns.<sup>22</sup>

Temporary military positions were given to members of the political elite

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 47–48.

<sup>19</sup> Tibor Neuman, Géza Pálffy, “Főkapitányi és főparancsnoki adományok a 15–16. századi Magyarországon,” *Levéltári közlemények* 80 (2009), passim.

<sup>20</sup> Zsolt Trócsányi, *Erdély központi kormányzata. 1540–1690* (Budapest, 1980), 337–341;

<sup>21</sup> During campaigns and military inspections the nobles and other soldiers from the counties were under the authority of the lord-lieutenant (*comes, főispán*). In 1634, for example, the banner of Cluj county was led by the lord-lieutenant Michael Bánffy, see Miklós Lázár, “Kolos-vármegye 1634-iki lustrája,” *Történelmi tár* (1878): 198; Lázár, “Erdély főispánjai 1540–1711,” II, *Történelmi tár* (1887): 617–618.

<sup>22</sup> The soldiers recruited from the Saxon seats, districts and towns were commanded by one of their judges. For example during the 1566 military campaign Saxon soldiers were commanded by Simon Goldschmit from Braşov, see *Quellen zur geschichte der stadt Kronstadt* (henceforth *Quellen*), vol. IV (Braşov, 1903), 140.

on the eve of a new military campaign. The most important of these positions was that of captain general (*capitaneus generalis*, *főkapitányi*), the direct representative of the prince as supreme commander of the army. Other temporary positions were: general of the counties, supreme captain of the Székely, supreme captain of infantry, captain of the watch, quartermaster (*tábórmester*), and captain of the artillery (*ágyúmaster*).<sup>23</sup> All these military officials were named directly by the prince or, on some occasions, their election was discussed in the Diet or in the princely council. In time some of these military positions became permanent.

The title of captain general<sup>24</sup> was usually given to a single person who was second in command to the prince. During the second half of the sixteenth century there were some occasions when this position was held by two persons. In 1540–1541 Transylvania was ruled by two captain generals who exercised the same authority as the *voievode* and his deputy, the *vice-voievode*, in the previous years. Steven Mailat and Emeric Balassa presided over the Diet of Sighișoara (August 1540) as captains (*dominis capitaneos*).<sup>25</sup> It is worth noting that both of them previously held the offices of *voievod* and *vice-voievod*. Other documents dating from this period refer to Mailat and Balassa as: *Stephanus Maylad et Emericus Balassa Capitanei generales Regni Transsylvanensis* (27 sept. 1540)<sup>26</sup> or *Capitanei exercitiales Regni Transilvanensis*.<sup>27</sup> During the first months of 1541 Mailat was the only one who kept using this title (*Capitaneus Transylvanensis*<sup>28</sup>, *Capitaneis Regni Transylvanie Generalis*)<sup>29</sup>, but apparently he was sharing authority with Baltazar Bornemisza. In the Diet of Turda (12 February 1541) the two captains and a few other castellans divided the royal incomes from Transylvania. Mailat kept for himself the income generated by the salt mine of Turda while Bornemisza administered the income from Sic and Ocna Sibiului.<sup>30</sup> Steven Mailat was a member of the Romanian elite (boyar) of Făgăraș district.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>23</sup> János B. Szabó, Győző Somogyi, *Az Erdélyi fejedelemség hadserege* (Budapest, 1996), 76.

<sup>24</sup> The evolution of this office in princely Transylvania was previously analysed by Zsolt Trócsányi who made a list with the most important personalities who held this office, see Trócsányi, *Erdély*, 337–338.

<sup>25</sup> Sándor Szilágyi, ed., *Monumenta Comititalia Regni Transylvaniae*, (henceforth MCRT), vol. I (Budapest, 1876), 40–41.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>27</sup> Áron Szilády, Sándor Szilágyi, eds., *Török-Magyarkori történelmi emlékek*, vol. III (Pest, 1868–1870), 1.

<sup>28</sup> MCRT, vol. I, doc. XVI, 64.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. XVII, 67.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. XVI, 64–66.

<sup>31</sup> On the origins of Steven Mailat see Ioan Cavaler de Pușcariu, *Fragmente istorice despre boierii din Țara Făgărașului* (Sibiu, 1907), 77–81.



During the first decades of the sixteenth century he expanded his wealth and political influence by getting involved in the internal strife that affected the Hungarian kingdom after the battle of Mohács. In 1528 he acquired Făgăraș fortress and the leadership of the district.<sup>32</sup> His power and influence significantly increased because of his marriage to Anne Nádasdy, sister of Thomas Nádasdy.<sup>33</sup> In the following years Mailat proved himself as an able military leader and a shrewd politician, changing his allegiance from Ferdinand of Habsburg to John Szapolyái and vice-versa, as other Hungarian and Transylvanian lords did during this conflict. In 1534 Mailat was appointed *voievod* of Transylvania with Emeric Balassa as deputy. A few years later Mailat became the leader of a noble faction who desired the separation of Transylvania from the rest of the Hungarian kingdom.<sup>34</sup> For a short time he was also able to secure the support of the sultan, but in the end he was captured and imprisoned by the Turks, with the help of the Moldavian ruler Petru Rareș.<sup>35</sup>

In January 1542, during the diet of Târgu Mureș, Martinuzzi was entrusted with the supreme command of the Transylvanian army as captain general.<sup>36</sup> Of Croatian origin, George Utiessenović Martinuzzi, began his career as a member of John Szapolyai's retinue.<sup>37</sup> During the events that followed the fall of Buda, Martinuzzi, bishop of Oradea, became one of the most influential political figures in Transylvania. Gaining the office of captain general was an important step in the consolidation of his authority over the Transylvania estates. In fact it was not unusual for a major bishop, such as the one from Oradea, to exercise real military power. According to a decree of king Vladislav II, from 1498, the bishops of Oradea were expected to muster from their domains a *banderia*, a military contingent, consisting of at least 400 heavy and light cavalry.<sup>38</sup> Martinuzzi was

<sup>32</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *Histoire des roumains de Transylvanie et de Hongrie*, vol. I (Bucarest, 1915), 174.

<sup>33</sup> Béla Majláth, *Maylád István 1502–1550* (Budapest, 1889), 15–16; Rodica Ciocan, *Politica Habsburgilor față de Transilvania în timpul lui Carol Quintul* (București, 1945), 79.

<sup>34</sup> László Makkai, Zoltán Szász, eds., *History of Transylvania*, vol. I (New York, 2001), 609; Ileana Căzan, Eugen Denize, *Marile puteri și spațiul românesc în secolele XV–XVI* (București, 2001), 185.

<sup>35</sup> Makkai, Szász, *History of Transylvania*, 613; Căzan, Denize, *Marile puteri*, 197; Victor Motogna, *Relațiunile dintre Moldova și Ardeal în veacul al XVI-lea* (Dej, 1928), 51–52.

<sup>36</sup> MCRT, vol. I, 78; Teréz Oborni, "Tratatul de la Gilău," *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie XX* (2002): 193.

<sup>37</sup> On the early career of Martinuzzi see "Antonius Wrancius de Georgii Utissenii, Fratriss appellati, vita et rebus commentaries," in László Szalay, ed., *Monumenta Hungariae Historica, Scriptores*, vol. II (Pest, 1857), 16–34.

<sup>38</sup> *Corpus Juris Hungarici*, Tom I, (Budae, 1882), *Decretum Tertium (sive Minus Decretum)*, 1498, art. 20, 284.

no exception; in fact it is safe to assume that he had a larger military force under his direct control. A document from 1552 states that Martinuzzi had a personal guard consisting of 1.000 horsemen and 500 infantry.<sup>39</sup>

Another important noble who exercised supreme military authority in Transylvania was Peter Petrović, although it is not clear if he actually assumed the official title of captain general. Petrović began his political career as a member of John Szapolyai's retinue (*familiaris*). He held important political and military positions such as: captain of Lipova (1531), count of Timiș (1534), ban of Lugoj and Caransebeș and captain of the lower parts of Hungary (*parci-umque Inferiorum Capitaneus generalis*).<sup>40</sup> In 1541 sultan Süleyman gave him a large territory in the Banat area, including the fortresses Timișoara, Lugoj and Caransebeș. At the same time he was entrusted with the protection of the son of King John (the baby John Sigismund) and with supreme military power over Transylvania.<sup>41</sup> Due to the political context he was unable to exercise his military authority but he remained a loyal supporter of House Szapolyai. In 1556 when Isabella Szapolyai and her son returned as rulers of Transylvania Petrović led the offensive that defeated the Habsburg garrisons remaining in Transylvania, such as Gherla, Oradea, Huszt and Bistrița.<sup>42</sup> In order to achieve his objectives Petrović organized a small permanent army, consisting of 6.000 soldiers provided by the estates.<sup>43</sup>

After the failure of Castaldo's administration in Transylvania, the Habsburgs restored the traditional institutions of the province, including the office of captain general. In 1555–1556 the captain general of Transylvania, loyal to the Habsburgs,

<sup>39</sup> Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Hungarica, Allgemeine Akten (henceforth ÖStA, HHStA, Hungarica AA), Fas. 61, Konv. A, f. 5; Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor* (henceforth Hurmuzaki), ed. Nicolae Densușianu, vol. II/4 (București, 1894), doc. CCCCXVIII, 653; These numbers are confirmed by Ascanio Centorio who states that the personal guard of the bishop consisted of 800 cavalry and 500 foot soldiers. 200 horsemen were dispatched to the fortresses of Deva and Gurghiu which were under his authority. He afforded to pay for such a large military retinue because of his annual provision as treasurer (4.000 florins), see Ascanio Centorio degli Ortensi, *Commentarii della guerra di Transilvania dalla rotta del re Lodovico XII fino all'anno MDLIII* (1566), 101.

<sup>40</sup> Adrian Magina, *De la excludere la coabitare. Biserici tradiționale, Reformă și Islam în Banat (1500–1700)* (Cluj-Napoca, 2011), 66.

<sup>41</sup> Octavian Tătar, "Anul 1541 în istoria Transilvaniei. Realități politico-diplomatice și militare," *Ziridava* XXIII (2002): 97.

<sup>42</sup> Cristina Feneșan, *Constituirea principatului autonom al Transilvaniei* (București, 1997), 158–160; Octavian Tătar, "Disputa transilvano-habsburgică pentru Partium (1556–1565)," *Ziridava* XXIII (2002): 117; Costin Feneșan, *Doi cronicari ardeleni din secolul al XVII-lea* (Timișoara, 2001), 34–43.

<sup>43</sup> MCRT, vol. I, 1876, doc. XXVIII, 575.



was Melchior Balassa de Gyarmath<sup>44</sup> (*capitaneus supremus*) who led a contingent of 3.000 soldiers with regular wages in the attempt to keep Transylvania under Habsburg control.<sup>45</sup> On 22 February 1556, Balassa (*Melchior Balassa de Gyarmath supremus Capitaneus regni Transsilvanie*) summoned Petrović to attend the diet in Turda, threatening that if he failed to do so he would be accused of treason (*nota perpetue infidelitatis*). Although it was a futile attempt to draw Petrović to the Habsburg camp, it is important to observe that the authority of the captain general, as representative of the ruler, extended beyond military matters. A few years later Balassa betrayed the Habsburg camp and became a loyal supporter of Queen Isabella. He played a major role in the defeat of a noble rebellion led by Francisc Bebek, Francisc Kendi and Anton Kendi and was rewarded in 1558 with the title of captain general. In the same year he led an offensive against the Habsburgs in Upper Hungary.<sup>46</sup> In the following year Balassa maintained his position of supreme commander of the Transylvanian army.<sup>47</sup> In 1561 John Sigismund called his faithful subjects to attend the diet (estates assembly) at Cluj. Nobles were expected to come prepared for war accompanied by armed peasants from their estates (1 soldier for each 16 serfs). The leader of this army, which was preparing for another confrontation with the Habsburgs, was the same Melchior Balassa (*...Melchiori Balassa supreme capitanei nostri...*).<sup>48</sup> In 1562 Balassa betrayed John Sigismund and sided again with the Habsburgs. His betrayal was considered a major event that eventually led to a shift in balance in the conflict.

During the so called „fortress war” against the Habsburgs, the Transylvanian army was led by several captain generals. From 1556 to 1570 when the treaty of Speyer was concluded, military campaigns were organized in *Partium* or in Upper Hungary. On each campaign one captain general, or sometimes two, were designated by the Transylvanian ruler. In 1557 Cristofor Hagymási and Baltazar Bornemisza led an offensive in Upper Hungary but were defeated by a Habsburg army led by the captain of Kassa.<sup>49</sup> Hagymási, who was also captain of Huszt fortress, rose to influence during the reign of John Sigismund. In 1566 he was appointed captain general (*generalis kapitány*) for the second time.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>44</sup> The Balassa family was a rich and powerful noble family who maintained large possessions in royal Hungary after the battle of Mohács. Their estates contained 742 fiscal units (*porta*), see Ignácz Acsády, *A Magyar nemesség és birtokviszonyai a Mohács vész után* (Budapest, 1890), 81.

<sup>45</sup> MCRT, vol. I, 1876, doc. XXI, 551–553.

<sup>46</sup> Albert Lefavre, *Les Magyars pendant la domination ottomane en Hongrie (1526–1722)*, vol. I (Paris, 1902), 132–133; Imre Lukinich, *Erdély területi változásai a török hódítás korában 1541–1711* (Budapest, 1918), 85–88.

<sup>47</sup> MCRT, vol. II, doc. XI, 116.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., vol. VIII, doc. I, 513; Lukinich, *Erdély területi*, 99–100.

<sup>49</sup> Lefavre, *Les Magyars*, 131; Lukinich, *Erdély területi*, 86.

<sup>50</sup> MCRT, vol. II doc. IX, 311; Giovan-Andrea Gromo in his description of Transylvania

One of the most famous persons in Transylvanian history to hold the title of captain general was Steven Báthory, the future king of Poland. He was the first elected prince of Transylvania who had previously held the title of captain general. Steven Báthory began his military career as captain of Satu-Mare fortress and later captain of Oradea fortress, in the first years of the conflicts between Transylvania and the House of Habsburg for the control of the *Partium* region.<sup>51</sup> In 1562 the future Polish king, together with Francisc Németh captain of Tokaj fortress, led a Transylvanian army of 8.000 soldiers in the battle of Hodod.<sup>52</sup> The Transylvanian army managed to occupy the fortress, but was defeated later (on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March) by an army from royal Hungary commanded by Melchior Balassa, the former Transylvanian captain general. Balssa obtained an important victory although he had inferior numbers and his adversaries held the higher ground.<sup>53</sup> Báthory was once again designated as captain general in 1564 at a time when he was also captain of Oradea fortress. On this occasion he was the only one holding the position of captain general.<sup>54</sup> Leading an army of 12.000 soldiers Báthory was able to conquer several important fortresses and towns such as: Satu Mare, Ardud and Baia Mare. Because the weather conditions were becoming unfavorable for a military campaign, the Transylvanian captain was forced to retreat without gaining other significant territories. Next year in spring a Habsburg army led by Lazarus Schwendi managed to regain all that was lost the previous year and occupied additional strongholds in Transylvania.<sup>55</sup>

The last two examples analyzed show that the captain general was considered a temporary military office usually limited to the duration of a single campaign, although a single person might hold the position several times over the years. This practice became law in 1588 when the diet gathered at Mediaș decided that the authority of a captain general was limited to periods of war.

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mentions Cristofor Hagymásy as supreme captain of the Transylvanian army, see Maria Holban, Maria Alexandrescu Dersca Bulgaru, Paul Cernovodeanu, eds., *Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol. II (București, 1973), 363–364.

<sup>51</sup> Emeric Lukinich, “La jeunesse d’Etienne Báthory. Etienne Báthory, prince de Transylvanie,” in *Etienne Báthory roi de Pologne prince de Transylvanie* (Cracovie, 1935), 23–24.

<sup>52</sup> Francisc Forgách de Ghymes, “Magyar Historiája 1540–1572,” in Ferencz Toldy, ed., *Monumenta Hungariae Historica, Scriptores*, vol. XVI, (Pest, 1866), 230–232.

<sup>53</sup> Lukinich, “La jeunesse d’Etienne Báthory,” 24–25.

<sup>54</sup> MCRT, vol. II, doc. XIV, p. 233; doc. XVII, 235–236.

<sup>55</sup> Adalbert Burai, “Despre cetatea de tip italian din Satu Mare”, *Studii și Comunicări. Satu Mare* (1969): 130; Feneșan, *Doi cronicari*, 35; Josephus Trausch, ed., *Chronicon Fuchsio-Lupino-Oltardinum*, (henceforth *CFLO*) editat de, vol. I, Brașov, 1847, 64–65; *Quellen*, 139–140; Lukinich, “La jeunesse d’Etienne Báthory,” 29–31.

It was also stated that the captain general (*generalis regni capitaneo*) had to be chosen from the members of the princely council.<sup>56</sup>

Another captain general was designated in 1594 when Transylvania, ruled by Sigismund Báthory, joined the anti-ottoman alliance in the the Long Turkish war. For this position Sigismund elected one of his most trusted military advisors, Francisc Geszty. Geszty was an experienced military commander who had previously held other important military offices such as captain of Deva and captain of the court guard. In 1586 Geszty served at the princely court with 100 horsemen, who received payment from the princely treasury (300 florins per month).<sup>57</sup> In 1594 the prince entrusted him with a part of his army to lead an offensive against the Turks in the Timiș area. This campaign had a limited success and Geszty (*generalis regni capitaneus*) died a year later.<sup>58</sup> For a while prince Sigismund refused to name another captain general as he intended to command his military forces in person.<sup>59</sup>

Indeed in 1595 prince Sigismund took command of an army headed for Wallachia, but his main military advisor was his uncle Steven Bocskay. Gaining the supreme command of the Transylvanian army was an important step in Bocskay's political career, a career that culminated with the princely throne. In 1592 he became supreme captain of Oradea, the most important fortress on the western border of Transylvania. In this quality he was the effective leader of a large military force, composed of experienced soldiers. In 1595 he joined the main camp of the Transylvanian army at Codlea with 800 horsemen and 1.200 infantry.<sup>60</sup> In 1596, while the prince was in Prague, Bocskay led a bloody retaliation campaign against the Szekely.<sup>61</sup>

In 1597 the Transylvanian prince attempted another siege of Timișoara. This time he avoided taking personal command and named his chancellor, Steven Jósika, as captain general.<sup>62</sup> Jósika was a member of the lower nobility, or according to some historians of common origin, who had an impressive

<sup>56</sup> MCRT, vol. III, doc. XXXIX, 237.

<sup>57</sup> Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Könyvtára, Kézirattár, Budapest, Ms. 439/11, Veress Endre, *Erdély és magyarországi kisebb történeti művek, Geszthy Ferenc várkapitány c. értekezéshez kiegészítések*, f. 316.

<sup>58</sup> Sándor Szilágyi, "Gyulaffi Lestár történeti maradványai," *Történelmi tár* (1893): 130.

<sup>59</sup> Andrei Veress, ed., *Documente privitoare la istoria Ardealului, Moldovei și Țării Românești, Acte și scrisori*, vol. IV (București, 1932), doc. 122, 228.

<sup>60</sup> Ioachim Crăciun, "Scrisoarea lui Petru Pellérdi privitoare la ajutorul dat de Sigismund Báthory lui Mihaiu Viteazul în campania din 1595," *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Națională VI* (1935): 7.

<sup>61</sup> Ștefania Gáll Mihăilescu, ed., *Memorialul lui Nagy Szabó Ferencz din Târgu Mureș (1580–1658)* (București, 1993), 80–81.

<sup>62</sup> Feneșan, *Doi cronicari*, 40; Tiberiu Ciobanu, "Lupta bănătenilor împotriva dominației

political career at the court of Prince Sigismund Báthory.<sup>63</sup> The Transylvanian army suffered a bitter defeat and thus Jósika's downfall began. It has been argued that this military action lacked any real chance of success and at the time Jósika was already losing the favour of his prince. Nevertheless it is relevant to note that the position of captain general involved great responsibility and in this particular case was a cause (or a pretext) for the end of a political career.

In 1598 a new captain general was appointed, Gaspar Kornis.<sup>64</sup> Like some of his predecessors, Kornis was an accomplished military leader, loyal to Sigismund Báthory from the beginning of the Turkish war. In previous years he held several important military positions such as: captain of Huszt, lord-lieutenant (*comes*) of Maramureş<sup>65</sup> and captain of Oradea.<sup>66</sup> In 1594 the prince rewarded him with the fortress and domain of Dezna, for his loyal service.<sup>67</sup> A year later he was entrusted with an important military and political mission. He was sent to Moldavia to organize a military force and keep this country in the anti-ottoman alliance.<sup>68</sup> Kornis continued to serve as captain general of the Transylvanian army under Prince Andrew Báthory. He was the leader of the army that opposed the Wallachian ruler Michael the Brave in the battle of Şelimber (28 October 1599). Michael obtained a clear victory and Kornis was captured by his enemy, or according to other sources switched sides before the end of the battle.<sup>69</sup>

For more than half a century the office of captain general went through an interesting process that reflects the consolidation of the Transylvanian state. The captain general in the Transylvanian principality seems to share more similarities with the ones in Western European states than with the frontier captaincies in royal Hungary. The origin of this office can be traced back to the military

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otomane în vremea lui Mihai Viteazul", in *Vilaietul Timișoarei (450 de ani de la întemeierea pașalâcului) 1552–2002* (Timișoara, 2002), 122–123.

<sup>63</sup> On the origins and political career of Steven Jósika see Marius Diaconescu, "Gândirea politică a lui Ștefan Jósika cancelarul principelui Sigismund Báthory (Paternitatea unei idei politice: unirea Transilvaniei cu Moldova și Țara Românească)," *Acta Transylvanica* I (2004): 17–29.

<sup>64</sup> MCRT, vol. IV, doc. XXXII, 205.

<sup>65</sup> Veress, *Documente*, vol. IV, 1932, doc. 39, 71–72.

<sup>66</sup> Tudor Sălăgean, "Ascensiunea politică a lui Ștefan Bocskai. Relații familiale și intrigi politice în Transilvania unei epoci de criză," in Tudor Sălăgean, Melinda Mitu, eds., *Principele Ștefan Bocskai și epoca sa*, (Cluj- Napoca, 2006), 21–25.

<sup>67</sup> Gheorghe Lanevski, "Repertoriul cetăților medievale din județul Arad (I)," *Ziridava* VIII (1977): 559.

<sup>68</sup> Veress, *Documente*, vol. IV (1932), doc. 126, 236–237.

<sup>69</sup> Leonardus Basilius, "Naratio De Rebus Transylvanicis (1599–1604)," in Radu Constantinescu, ed., *Lupta pentru unitate națională a Țărilor Române 1590–1630. Documente externe* (București, 1981), 314.

prerogatives of the Transylvanian *voievod*.<sup>70</sup> It is not mere coincidence that the first captain generals (Steven Mailat and Emeric Balassa) previously held the office of *voievod* in Transylvania. At the same time there are obvious similarities with the Hungarian captain general/ supreme captain office before 1547.

We have little evidence about the way in which captain generals were rewarded for their service. We can assume that the most important gain for those who held this office was the chance for further rise in the political hierarchy of the principality. However immediate compensations were also involved. There are many examples of land donations for military service (for example the case of Gaspar Kornis as mentioned above) but they are not explicitly connected to the office of captain general. In 1594 the estates assembly established regular wages for captain generals. The supreme commanders of the Transylvanian army received 300 florins each month for the duration of the entire military campaign. This was a considerable wage if compared to the wages of other officers and officials in the army. The second largest wage was 40 florins received by the paymaster.<sup>71</sup>

It was a custom to elect the captain general from the loyal supporters of the ruler. At the same time the designated person was usually a noble with military experience who was accustomed to military leadership. Most captain generals previously held the captaincy of at least a major fortress or in some cases other permanent military offices at court. Not all Transylvanian captain generals were members of important and wealthy noble families. Some achieved this office through personal merit or strong relations to the ruling prince. For some it was the climax of their political career (e.g. Mailat, Bornemisza, Hagymási, Geszty, Kornis) for others it was just an important phase on their ascension to higher political offices (e.g. Báthory and Bocskay). Throughout the second half of the Sixteenth century the office of captain general was a temporary military office. It was possible for the same person to hold the offices more than once over the years. And there were times when the office was vacant several years in a row because Transylvania was not involved in a major conflict or because the prince led the army personally.

<sup>70</sup> On the military prerogatives of the Transylvanian voievods see Kovács András, *Voievozii Transilvaniei și evoluția instituției voievodale până la începutul secolului al XV-lea*, Phd. Thesis (București, 2005), 116–117.

<sup>71</sup> MCRT, vol. III, doc. XXI, 440–442; Zsolt Bogdándi, “Gyerőfi János számadása az 1597–1598 évi Erdélyi Hadiadóról,” *Hajdú-Bihar Megyei Levéltár Évkönyve XXX* (2001): 27–28.

## IERARHIA MILITARĂ ÎN PRINCIPATUL TRANSILVANIEI. CĂPITANUL GENERAL ÎN A DOUA JUMĂTATE A SECOLULUI AL XVI-LEA

### *Rezumat*

Organizarea militară a Transilvaniei princiare a fost influențată atât de moștenirile medievale cât și de inovațiile epocii moderne timpurii. În a doua jumătate a secolului al XVI-lea ierarhia militară a rămas în esență aceeași ca și cea din secolele precedente. Cea mai importantă poziție în această ierarhie era cea de căpitan general. Această funcție era de obicei dată unor reprezentanți importanți ai nobilimii, bogați, influenți și cu experiență militară. Căpitanul general era de fapt locțiitorul principelui în calitatea sa de comandant suprem al armatei, însă autoritatea sa era de obicei limitată la durata unei singure campanii militare. Evoluția acestei funcții militare, în a doua jumătate a secolului XVI, a fost influențată de necesitățile tânărului stat transilvănean. Printre cei mai importanți deținători ai funcției de căpitan general sau numărat: Ștefan Mailat, Emeric Balassa, Baltazar Bornemisza, Petru Petrovici, Melchior Balassa de Gyarmath, Cristofor Hagymásy, Ștefan Báthory și Francisc Geszthy.