

THE MARGA FAMILY – A GENEALOGICAL PROFILE OF A NOBLE FAMILY IN THE COUNTY OF SEVERIN (15TH–17TH CENTURIES)

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The family of nobles Marga of Marga (*Margay de Marga*) is but another sample of the evolutive model of nobiliary structures in the mountainous and piedmontainous medieval Banat, a sample to show a contradictory state of things. Two of its members, on the one hand, got close to the most important local dignities: Jacob of Marga became the castellan of Severin and a vice-ban of Severin after, and George of Marga, a deputy of the ban of Severin. On the other hand, their power and influence as well as their welfare seem fragile and random if seen through what the papers let us know for 150 years about, from the first attestations around 1470 up to the middle of the 17th century.

I have tried to reconstitute to the degree that was possible this family's domain, in a first issue in 2007.¹ The approach found out the lability of that estate, its rather modest sides comparing to other nobiliary estates in the territory. I could identify the settlement the family came from on the basis of the idea that a familiar possession usually generated a noble name; the annexed list that historian Ioan Drăgan published in the volume he dedicated to Romanian nobles in Transylvania was illustrating in the field: Marga (in the district of Caransebeș) is present in with 11 individuals with a nobiliary status.² Starting from such a premise that is available in the main of the cases referring to the Romanian nobles in the medieval mountainous Banat and in other areas, the

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¹ Ligia Boldea, "Considerații asupra familiei unui viceban al Severinului: Mărganii," *Analele Banatului*, Serie Nouă, Arheologie-Istorie XV (2007): 167–173.

² Ioan Drăgan, *Nobilimea românească din Transilvania (1440–1514)* (București: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2000), 410.

settlement of Marga appeared as that family's core-possession; the family would bear that name for more than two centuries in the light of papers. I have identified 20 persons who belonged to that family, from the second half of the 15th century to the end of the 17th one.

An interesting reality can be found up at a good look on the settlement for the resolute way the owning family perpetuated the right of property there for more than two centuries. Marga of nowadays is a village located at 33 km northward of Caransebeș, on the northern frame of the Mountains of Țarcu that border here the Bistra Valley³, and at 10 km far from the Iron Gates of Transylvania (*Vaskapu* in the medieval age), the area of contact between the Banat and Transylvania. Two villages make the commune: Vama Marga, on the Bistra Valley⁴, and Marga (the administrative center) at 6 km about to the southward, probably superposing the medieval homonymous settlement presented in the second half of the 15th century as a possession of a nobiliary family it gave the patronymic, the nobles of Marga. On no account a negligible location at that time, as it was close to an important passage that connected the Principality of Transylvania to the Danubian and south-Danubian territories. Noted down in 1390 as *magna via*, that line of communication was identified by historian Adrian Andrei Rusu as the imperial Roman way from Viminacium to Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa through Lederata. And what is more important is the existence of a bridge there, named *Pons Augusti* in *Tabula Imperii Romani*; centuries after, the medieval papers in the 14th–15th c. referred to a bridge with custom within the same area; that one became the family of Cândeș of Râu of Mori's possession due to a royal donation (*pontem in via Vaskapu versus Karansebes; pontem in loco Waskapw vocato, in metis partium Transsiluanarum*).⁵ Annually the superintendent of the Salt-Chamber in Ocna Sibiului contributed with 5,000 blocks of salts to maintain that road for the salt transport from Transylvania to Hungary. The family of Cândești also contributed to, while the bridge was an important source of the family's revenue.⁶ The bridge probable location was set at Vama Marga, on the Bistra River; it is supposed to have been a stone bridge even if no vestiges were identified or doubtless documents.⁷

³ Dumitru Țeicu, *Banatul montanin evul mediu* (Timișoara: Banatica, 1998), 349.

⁴ A river that drains the tectonic passage with the same name, of 46 km length, a tributary of the Timiș River. V. Sencu, I. Băcănaru, *Județul Caraș-Severin* (București, 1976), 60.

⁵ Adrian Andrei Rusu, "Pons Augusti nel medioevo," in M. Porumb, ed., *Omaggio a Dinu Adameșteanu* (Cluj-Napoca: Clusium, 1996), 249–252.

⁶ Oana Toda, "Evidence on the engineering and upkeep of roads in late medieval Transylvania," *Annales Universitatis Apulensis, Serie Historica* 17/II (2013): 189.

⁷ Oana Toda, "Economic and material aspects of the late medieval bridges from Transylvania: the written sources," *Banatica* 27 (2017): 366, 373, 378.

In my opinion, just this location of Marga estate between the counties of Severin and Hunedoara (the banat of Caransebeş and Lugoj, and the Principality of Transylvania, respectively) was the reason the family who exerted their owning right tried to find other patrimonial outlets while keeping the named right up to 1658, even if they lived in Caransebeş. I might suppose that the benefits brought by the trade way I have spoken about (*via magna*), with a permanent traffic of goods and salt, influenced their option as Marga was set on a middle position by the beginning of the 17th century according to the imperial conscript of 1603. The owners of the domain of Marga had some powerful neighbors: the family of Cârdea/ Kendeffy of Râu of Mori on the east (that family had possessions on the both parts of the Iron Gates of Transylvania including Pala close to Marga), the lords setting on the Bistra Valley on the north and north-west (families of Bizere, Floca, and Pobora), and the nobles of Fiat of Armeniş and of Racoviţa of Caransebeş in the area of Caransebeş. So, there were too less opportunities there to increase their lands. As I'll present below, the solution seems to consist in matrimonial alliances in the neighboring county of Hunedoara – where part of the family would move to after and would juridically consolidate there their new possessions.

The present issue aims to resume my discussion on this family taking into account the familial relationship and the different generations' continuity. Inconsistent documentary data have unfortunately marked my approach to reconstitute the genealogy of the Mărgans. Comparatively to other noble families in the area whose familial branches could be reconstituted rather accurately, for the family in discussion data allowed me only to place different of the family's members on genealogical levels but without a certified remove. The family names consisting in some first names particularly given to different members of the family (a frequent anthroponomical model within the nobiliary milieu at that time) made me give numbers to the family's members carrying identical Christian names with their ancestors.

The history of this family starts at the middle of the 15th century with the first record of Jacob I of Marga (*Jacobus de Marga*), the nobleman who occupied so the first genealogical level of the family as we know it today. But what I must specify is that this piece of news in an indirect one, from a paper dated to June 12, 1470⁸ that refers to this noble as a castellan of Severin in the time of the two Romanian bans, Stephen and Michael of Mâtnic, so to say in 1467.⁹ My

⁸ Frigyes Pesty, *Krassó vármegye története*, vol. III (Budapest, 1882), 425.

⁹ ...*per eundem Jacobum extitit in hunc modum, quod ipse tempore Michaelis ac Stephani de Mothnok Banis Zewriniensibus, unacum Sandrino fratre in Castro Zewriniensi fuissent castellanni*. According to the list of the bans of Severin, published by Frigyes Pesty in *A Szörényi bánáság és Szörény vármegye története*, vol. I (Budapest, 1877), 284–285.

impression is that in a large measure, due to the different functions Jacob I was appointed to during King Matthias Corvinus' age, the family ascended within the local hierarchy; it seems that the family sit in Caransebeș at that time and was trying to enlarge the possessions; so the family's members came into conflict with the other noble families' interests as those ones had developed landed ensembles on the Bistra Valley or in Caransebeș depression, on the Timiș River.

Undoubtedly, Jacob of Marga was the most important member of the family if taking into account his dignities that implied both prestige and certain welfare. Documentary his existence is presented between 1467 and 1492¹⁰, so when he was a mature person, one of the magistrates in the banat of Severin. To my regret, no reference I have found on his matrimonial alliance or descendants, but I have serious reasons to assert that he had a son and a daughter at least, as I will show below. He was by his career one of the numerous fighting men in the area, probably enlisted as a young one in the banat of Severin military units; it is the alone explanation of his accessing the function of castellan of the great fortress of Severin and especially that one of vice-ban of Severin county. Following the tradition of the true fellowship that the Corvinuses had instituted at the middle of the 15th century¹¹, Jacob of Marga shared his function with Sandrin Șișman (*Sysman*), in 1467; it seems that such a relation passed through certain difficulties. A testimony in the field is the document issued in June 12, 1470 I have spoken about above, which is a report of castellans of Jdioara, Jacob of Măcicaș and John More, on the judgement seat with the nobles in the district of Lugoj where two former castellans of Severin surrendered to bail: Jacob of Marga as a plaintiff, and Sandrin Șișman as a defendant. A financial dispute during their functioning as castellans caused the presence of the two nobles before the district of Lugoj sedria. It seems that Sandrin had appropriated 32 golden forints from the fortress revenue, money that Jacob of Marga really deserved. Although of the defendant's denial, the proofs against him made the court decided that that one had to give back to the plaintiff 19 golden forints or, if not the specified money, to yield to Jacob of Marga his shares from some possessions: *Bozyas*, *Ohaba*, and *Felsew Borzas*. That last part of the sentence made Martin Thewrswk (*frater et consanguineus eiusdem Sandrini*) react as a co-owner of those possessions; that one offered himself to pay the specified amount with the condition that the lands remained to him; the conflict came so to an end. As for *Sandrino fratre* it is an interesting construction that suggests a possible relation between the two former castellans in law; it is difficult to clarify such a question as the

¹⁰ Costin Feneșan, *Documente medievale bănățene (1440–1653)* (Timișoara: Facla, 1981), 50.

¹¹ Adrian Magina, "The southern frontier of the medieval kingdom of Hungary between Belgrad and Severin (14th–16th centuries)," *Initial. A Review of Medieval Studies* 4 (2016): 149.

documents after show no other reference on it. The toponyms themselves, which gave the two families' name (Marga and *Bozyas*) show a rather large distance between the places of origin in the case of those two individuals: Marga is located in the north-eastern corner of the Banat, on the Bistra Valley (the exit passing toward Transylvania, through The Iron Gates), while *Bozyas* (a lost settlement today) was identified in the banat of Severin northern side, near Lugoj, close to Remetea Pogănici probably.¹² It could be, if not an irrefutable, then a satisfactory argument according to what we know today about the genealogical structures of different noble families in the Banat. I might propose two explanations: it could have been a relationship by alliance, a frequent one in the case of nobiliary elites in the area, or the document refers exclusively to the two ones as fellows in jobs, a kind of “fraternity” concerning their competences and responsibilities as magistrates.

Obviously, administrating of Severin fortress was an important step in Jacob of Marga's career that brought him to the dignity of a vice-ban beginning with 1478¹³, together with Rayn *waywoda*, during the age of bans John Erdö and Domokos Bethlen. Difficult to say if the two ones occupied such a function only in 1478 or they worked up the next years, as long as Pesty Frigyes recorded a new couple of vice-bans only for 1484, in the list of vice-bans of Severin he elaborated in 1877. A lack of data may be taken for on the one hand, but I might note, on the other hand, that one at least of the vice-bans after Jacob of Marga, namely Michael Lazăr of Almăj, occupied that function between 1484 and 1494; a remarkable continuity that proves that such an appointment was possible at that time. I will be satisfied, for default of a documentary backing, with the hypothesis that the two ones also could worked up between 1478 and 1484. As a vice-ban, Jacob of Marga assisted the bans in different questions concerning the area, or even substituted them when needed, his main competence being of a juridical nature.¹⁴ The unique preserved paper to note down his function, dating to 1478 is the proof for the assertion above.¹⁵ It is about a cause brought before the sedria of Caransebeş district: arson of a mill of 60 golden forints, on the Bistra Valley, noble George Găman of Bizere being the accused one. For denying the accusation, the court obliged the defendant to take an oath before 12 men on oath *juxtam antiquam et aprobatam legem districtuum volahicalium universorum*. The court decision was sanctioned with the seals of

¹² Costin Feneşan, *Diplomatarium Banaticum*, vol. I (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2016), 112, doc. 32, note 2.

¹³ Pesty, *A Szörényi bánság*, 316.

¹⁴ Adrian Magina, “At the border of Transylvania: the county of Severin/ the district of Caransebeş in the 16th–17th centuries,” *Transylvanian Review* XXII, suppl. 4 (2013): 296–297.

¹⁵ Frigyes Pesty, *A Szörényi vármegyei hajdani oláh kerületek* (Budapest, 1876), 82.

vice-ban Jacob of Marga, of the nobiliary judge, and of other two nobles from the families of Mâtnic and Măciçaș, for default of the seal of the district.

These last records on him meet the profile of an influent nobleman within the community of Caransebeș in the Middle Age, who was frequently called to back though his testimony and personality various royal or district decisions.¹⁶

The second level in the family genealogy was in my opinion given by the direct descendants of Jacob – George and Dorothea – even if I haven't found any conclusive proof for such a filiation. Indirect data instead let us come to this conclusion. Firstly, the toponym itself (Marga), once becoming a patronymic, individualizes the family among the other exponents of the social elite in the Banat. Secondly, the litigation between Ladislav of Racovița and George of Marga, in 1504¹⁷, compelled my attention; the litigation started more than 20 years before, the time that Ladislav was a captive in the Ottomans' hands. His mother appealed to Jacob of Marga to ransom his son, by pledging him three of the family's forefathers' estates, for 160 golden forints; returning of that amount was the cause of litigation. What is relevant in such a case is the cause passing from Jacob to George, a satisfactory sign to maintain a probable filiation. A relation father-son between Jacob and George is extremely plausible in my regard. Latter information dating to 1530¹⁸ shows that a noble lady called Dorothea was George of Marga's sister; corroborating these data we might conclude what I have noted down above: George and Dorothea were the direct descendants of Jacob of Marga.

Although that George I of Marga (*Georgius de Marga, Georgius Margay*) didn't rise at his father's level, the family's history was sufficiently marked by him; he made part of his family move in the county of Hunedoara in the beginning of the 16th century. So the office papers would note him down as George Marga of Caransebeș, in 1503¹⁹, and George Marga of Bretea (*Beretthe*), in 1507.²⁰ The

¹⁶ In 1485 he was among the noblemen called to investigate an abusive occupation of some estates, that involved the families of Bizere and Racovița of Caransebeș [Eudoxiu Hurmuzaki, *Documente privind istoria românilor*, vol. II/2 (București, 1891), 286]. Together with other neighborind noblemen and men of the county he took part in 1489 to seizing the two brothers Ladislav and Louis Fiat at Matthias Corvinus' order [Pesty, *A Szörényi bánság*, III (Budapest, 1878), 103]; in 1492 he was also among the noblemen from whom a men of the king was to be elected to certify in situ the family of Pâclișar of Caransebeș' seizing (Feneșan, *Documente medievale*, 50–52).

¹⁷ Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, 524.

¹⁸ Feneșan, *Diplomatarium*, 319.

¹⁹ Feneșan, *Diplomatarium*, 319.

²⁰ Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (MNL), *Diplomatikai levéltár* (DL), Arkanum Adatbázis Kft., 30973.

first document on him dates to June 28, 1496²¹; he was then a mature nobleman able to testify in a suit referring to a seisin, at the Royal Curia, under the country palatine ruling. He was referring as George of Marga, Dorothea' died brother, in a posthumous mention, from 1530, the last one on him. He seems to become closer to the neighboring area of Hațeg with his marriage with Ana Pogan, a descendant of the Poganeștis of Bretea Română²²; the first papers to note that marriage date to 1511²³, although it seems to date from the end of the 15th century. We know without fail that he had three sons, Stephen the Literate, John and Nicholas²⁴, from that marriage possibly, and another one, Luca – who would be the subject of my research for the third level of the family's genealogy.

His statute as *egregius*, in 1521²⁵, shows a similar profile of a well positioned nobleman, member of the local nobiliary corpus from which they elected vice-counts/ vice-bans, castellans, managers or familiars of the high dignitaries. I might reiterate that given his functions, Jacob, George's father was the one who had placed the family within the middle nobiliary class in the area. For George of Marga, his most important position was that of a deputy (*viceregenti*) of the ban of Severin in 1515²⁶; he was asked by the voievode of Transylvania to mediate together with the ban of Severin, the conflict between Nicholas Maciovan and Nicholas Gârleșteanu, two noblemen in Caransebeș. More preserved papers show clearly that he had his residence in the two neighboring administrative units (the banat of Severin and Hunedoara County). According to various dates on these papers, he particularly worked in the Banat area at the turn of the 15th–16th century, as a witness in suits in Severin sedria²⁷, or as a man on oath in various litigates the nobles of Caransebeș were involved in.²⁸ It seems that after 1503, the year of an important exchange of estates²⁹, he was more

²¹ Pesty, *Krassó*, 472.

²² Drăgan, *Nobilimea românească*, 285.

²³ DL 29939, 32581.

²⁴ Feneșan, *Diplomatarium*, 226.

²⁵ DL 63025.

²⁶ Pesty, *Krassó*, 501.

²⁷ In October 8, 1500, George of Marga together with his son Stephen the literate and other three noblemen contributed to the agreement in the suit between Christine of Bizere and George Găman of Bizere on some forefathers' estates of the family and her right of dowry. Pesty, *A Szörényi bánság*, III, 135.

²⁸ June 28, 1496: Pesty, *Krassó*, III, 472; 19 mai 1503: Pesty, *A Szörényi bánság*, III, 144.

²⁹ Boldea, "Considerații," 169–170. According to the paper, George Marga offered his share from the possessions of Copăcele (*Kopach*), Zlagna (*Zlathna*), *Zlospathaka* and Vălișoara (*Waliswara*), district of Caransebeș; he was given by the noble lady Ursula Horvath, the great governor Nicholas Horvath of Kolonyth's widow, her shares from the possessions of Strigh (*Ztrygh*), Mărtinești (*Marthondenk*), Dîncul Mare (*Naghdenk*), Dîncul Mic (*Kysdenk*), *Lonka*, Sintimbru (*Szent Imreh*) and Petreni (*Pethren*), Hunedoara, area of Orăștie, and shares of Oarda

active in the Court of Hunedoara County, under the name of Marga of Bretea Română (*Olahbretthe*), one of his new acquisitions in the area of Hunedoara. In 1507 the voievode of Transylvania named him to investigate, together with other noblemen from Hațeg, a voievode retract with a donation of some possessions which had belonged to certain landlords in *Lywad* accused of robbery (*latroniciorum sew furticiniorum*).³⁰ Another important moment was noted down in June 9, 1517³¹, when George of Marga was one of the witnesses to the royal donation of Geoagiu fortress (*Aldyod*) to no other but Neagoe Basarab, the ruler of Wallachia. An interesting think is that Luca and John of Marga, his sons almost surely, were also noted then, among other noblemen. Some years later, in 1521 he was one of the procurators of the noble lady Catherine, Stephen Nistor of Parosi's wife: together with his brother-in-law Stephen More of Săcele, he backed that lady in the court of the vice-voievode of Transylvania.³² It is the hypostasis that let us see to a certain extent his social statute at the time the wives were generally represented in law by their husbands. His administrative and juridical experience and a probable level of literacy, as well as the level of the court (the vice-voievode sedria) were the reasons of selecting him for confronting none other than the protonotary of Transylvania, magister Paul of Barcha, the advocate of the adverse part (Stephen Pogan of Bretea). On the other hand, they took probably into account the nature of those disputes, namely some mills at Gânțaș and Covragiu, and a bound plot at *Pokolwalcha*, three lands where George of Marga got some owning shares. In other cases he was but named for man on oath at the voievode court.³³ It is so evident that he was an active person in his social milieu, well experienced both as a noble in the banat of Severin and in Hunedoara County.

Unfortunately, Dorothea Marga is but an ephemeral presence in the pre-served documents. As the late George Marga's sister, she was noted down in June 2, 1530³⁴, when together with other members of the family and certain noblemen stood up to the royal decision that the noblemen of the Racovițaș be seized with the estates of Cicleni and Var (*Kyzyn*).

Stephen the Literate, John and Nicholas, George of Marga's descendants formed the *third generation of the family*, noted down in a paper dating to

de Jos (*Waraghya*), *Zeepmezew* and *Bewnye* in Alba County, as well as shares from Bretea Română (*Oláh Berethe*), Gânțaș (*Ganzzaga*), Covragiu (*Korogh*), Vilcelele Bune (*Jowalchal*), Vilcelele Rele (*Pokolwalchal*) and Bățâlar (*Bathalar*) in Hunedoara County.

³⁰ DL 30973.

³¹ DL 30545.

³² DL 63025.

³³ 7 martie 1507: DL 29924; 12 martie 1514: DL 29946.

³⁴ Feneșan, *Diplomatarium*, 319.

March, 29, 1503: *quod nobilis Stephanus literatus, filius Georgii Margay dicti de Karansebes... necnon Johannis et Nicolai, fratrum suorum carnalium*.³⁵ Stephen I is supposed to be the elder son as long as he objected in his name and the names of his brothers to his father's intention to sell two of their forefathers' estates (*possessiones aviticas*) in the district of (Caran)Sebeş.³⁶ But his intellectual preparedness was his real trump within the family. There are certain data on this new generation of the Mărgans that point out their father's concern in his sons' free access to education: Stephen became a literate (*literatus*), and John, a jury of Caransebeş. It was a generalized trend of the town milieu in the kingdom: any of the noble families of a certain dimension or welfare made a point of having a literate³⁷ in, as that one could be integrated in courts, offices of authentication or the administrative services of the counties. It is difficult to reconstitute a coherent profile of Stephen (*Stephanum literatum de Sebes*), as far as the few papers to mention him are dated to the first years of the 16th century, 1500 and 1503, respectively. Probably he became a literate by graduating an ecclesiastic or a town school and so achieving information on the autochthon law, the kingdom right and the Latin, the language the official papers were written and interpreted.³⁸ We find him, on these reasons, as a witness, together with his father, in suits concerning the female inheriting right in the case of the family Bizere-Găman³⁹, or the litigate between Nicholas of Măcicaş and certain noblemen in Caransebeş⁴⁰, in the banat of Severin sedria.

For his brother, John I (*Joannis Margai, Margay*) some more data between 1503 and 1535 were preserved. He was recorded as *egregius*⁴¹, like his father and I may say that he got a certain level of literacy to become a jurymen in 1517–1518⁴² in the court of Caransebeş, or to sign together with other 9 noblemen,

³⁵ Ibid., 226.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Apud Drăgan, *Nobilimea românească*, 318–319; Gulyás László Szabolcs, "Literátus szerepek – Literátus egzisztenciák. Középkor végi irástudók a rurális térben," in P. Haraszti Szabó, B. Kelényi, Zs. Simon, eds., *Mindenki vágyik a tudásra, de az árát senki sem akarja megadni* (Budapest: Martin Opitz Kiadó/ MTA-ELTE Egyetemtörténeti Kutatócsoport, 2019), 15–37.

³⁸ Pál Engel, *Regatul Sfântului Ștefan. Istoria Ungariei medievale 895–1526*, A. A. Rusu, I. Drăgan, eds., (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2006), 220.

³⁹ October 8, 1500: Pesty, *A Szörényi bánság*, III, 135.

⁴⁰ May 19, 1503: Ibid., 144.

⁴¹ Ibid., 187.

⁴² Pesty, *A Szörényi bánság*, vol. I (Budapest, 1878), 255; Bálint Lakatos, "Városi nemesek karánsebesen a 15–16. század fordulóján," in *URBS. Magyar várostörténeti évkönyv* III (Budapest, 2008), 66. He was assisted in such a quality to the lawsuit between the two noblemen, Ladislav of Racovița and Peter of Silvaş (Pesty, *A Szörényi bánság*, III, 160)

in October 12, 1535⁴³, a letter to the king after the arbitral through which Ana Fiat kept her right of owning her forefathers' possessions, a right that his cousin Francis Fiat had disputed in law. His presence together with his father and Luca of Marga, in 1517, to a donation of King Louis II to Neagoe Basarab, ruler of Wallachia, consisting in Geoagiu fortress (*Aldyod*) is also significant.

On Nicholas I (*Nicolai Margai*) we have a unique act, the one I have spoken about above, issued in March 29, 1503. It is possible he had been a minor one at that time and lived not too long.

Luca of Marga is a special case, rather difficult to be mentioned in the family's genealogy. He is mentioned between 1508 and 1525⁴⁴, at the very time with the three certified sons of George of Marga. As we have seen above, he was recorded in 1517, together with George and John of Marga (*Georgius, neve Lucas vel Johannis de Marga*) as a witness at the royal donation to Neagoe Basarab, and this is the unique sign of his relation with George of Marga. But it is a proof at least that the three ones belonged to the same family. Difficult to say if he was George's son or just a close relative. A hypothesis I dare put into circulation: Luca, in my opinion, might be George of Marga's son from his marriage to Ana Pogan from Hațeg, while the other three sons (brothers by the father's side) from a previous marriage with a lady in Severin County. A hypothesis based on some notices: Stephen, John and Nicholas activated especially in the area of the banat of Severin, being more attached to the family's possessions in the area of Caransebeș and trying to keep them in spite of their father's intention to renounce to them. Luca in turn is much more present in Hațeg area where he advantageously married to Clara, a descendant of the well-known Romanian noble families of Râu Bărbat and Râu de Mori.⁴⁵ Possibly he took a military career as Jacob of Marga had done, as long as in 1525 a named Luca of Marga, captain of Caransebeș (*Luce Margay, capitaneo de Karansebes*), is noted down in an account book of the Royal Court of Hungary; 175 forints he was paid for his good turns and 200 forints to keep the spies (*pro conservatione exploratorum*).⁴⁶ I do admit that such arguments are fragile, but I thought that interpreting the few data we have at the present might be a reason for future investigations on the basis of new documents. So I have chosen to present Luca of Marga as a possible son of George of Marga, with reservations.

⁴³ Pesty, *A Szörényi bánság*, III, 195.

⁴⁴ July 5, 1508: DL 29927; Avril 1, 1525: Feneșan, *Diplomatarium*, 308.

⁴⁵ DL 29946, 29975. These documents show that she was a descendant of Barb of Râu Bărbat, married with Clara from the family of Căndea (Kendeffy after). See Adrian Andrei Rusu, *Ctitori și biserici din Țara Hațegului până la 1700* (Satu Mare: Ed. Muzeului Sătmărean, 1997), 277.

⁴⁶ Feneșan, *Diplomatarium*, 302, 308.

On the same third level of the family's genealogy I believe that other three individuals might be placed even if I could never specify their relations with George of Marga's sons or their own relationship. With minimal information, I just remark those ones as such. They are recorded between 1530 and 1540, a fact that allows us to sit them in the third generation of the Mărgans. First of all, I name Jacob II and Gașpar I Marga (*Margay*) recorded in 1530⁴⁷, together with Dorothea, George Marga's sister, and other noblemen from the families of Fodor, Mătniceanu and Maciovan, as being in conflict with the noblemen of Racovița for two estates in the district of Caransebeș. Gașpar seems to die by the end of the 30s as his widow, represented by her familiar Radych, is recorded as a witness in a paper dated to June 15, 1540, concerning noble Stephen Pogan confirming in possession of certain estates in Hunedoara County (the same estate some members of the family of Marga got the right of owning).⁴⁸ Michael Marga of Marga (*Michael Margay de eadem Marga*) was registered as a witness in a large suit of owning between the families of Fodor and Vaida from Caransebeș, before the royal court; the witnesses' deposition took place at Domașnea, in October 10, 1539.⁴⁹

For the next genealogical levels in the second half of the 16th century and the first one of the 17th century certain facts look but evident: firstly, lack of any documentary data concerning certain filiation make me unable to set or suggest possible relations between them or to connect them with the previous generations. Secondly, delimitation between the family's line set in Hunedoara County and the one still living in the area of Severin territory becomes more evident. In other words, the degree of relativity in this genealogical reconstruction is much higher unfortunately. Penury of information was also a serious obstacle in framing certain identity portrait as I've succeeded to do in the case of other family's members.

The fourth genealogical level therefore, from the last decades of the 16th century and the first years of the next one presents 4 individuals on whom the data I have identified are unequal. Some significant documents point out two of these personages: Nicholas Marga and George Marga. For Nicholas II Marga (*Nicolaus Margay*) or Nicholas Marga of Bretea Română⁵⁰, recorded between 1567 and 1585 we know his quality of *egregius*, a literate nobleman undoubtedly,

⁴⁷ Ibid., 319, 321.

⁴⁸ Estates of Bretea Română, Gântag, Covragiu, Bățălar, Vâlcelele Bune and Vâlcelele Rele. See *Az erdélyi káptalan jegyzőkönyvei (1222–1599)*, Zs. Bogdándi, E. Gálfi, eds. (Kolozsvár: Az Erdély Múzeum-Egyesület Kiadása, 2006), 73, no. 174 (further on: *Erdélyi káptalan*).

⁴⁹ Adrian Magina, Livia Magina, "O ascultare de martori și realități bănățene într-un document din 1539," *Analele Banatului*, Serie Nouă, Arheologie-Istorie XXII (2014): 273 (267–274).

⁵⁰ November 5, 1572: Pesty, *A Szörényi bánság*, III, 394.

as some of his ancestors had been. He was in 1567–1569⁵¹ a representative procurator of noble Francis Morsinay and the little girl Ana Fiat, to defend their rights in the princely sedria on the occasion of the great law-suit concerning partition of the real of the family of Gârleşteanu of Rudăria and Caransebeş, in 1566–1569.⁵² To prepare the defense he asked in 1567 the transcript of the act of partition of Nicholas Gârleşteanu's real⁵³ from November 22, 1544; it was very a disputed heritage at the time, involving the female descendants of Gârleşteanu who had died without heirs. It was a much more complex suit at the end of the '70s, involving both Gârleşteanu's heiresses and the family's heirs and the forefathers' possessions and the new gotten ones. For representing the heirs (descendants of Nicholas Gârleşteanu's sisters), probably Nicholas Marga had not an easy position as far as he confronted George Ombozi, the unique male descendant of Nicholas Gârleşteanu. Teregova estate, a never negligible possession was the subject of that dispute. The ban of Caransebeş and Lugoj, with the castellan and nobiliary judges of Caransebeş investigated the case just at Marga and, finally gave the case for George Ombozi, starting from the reason that that estate had been part of his grand-mother's dowry (she had been Nicholas Gârleşteanu's wife); from that one the estate passed to Sara, Ombozi's mother. The descendants of Nicholas Gârleşteanu's sisters had therefore no right on that estate that belonged to another domanial line. Such a failure seems not to stumble Nicholas Marga in being a witness in other owning litigates of Francis Morsinay of Rekettie⁵⁴, Hunedoara County. It would seem that he was one of the family of Marga's members who activated in the two neighbor counties where he had possessions.⁵⁵ Unfortunately, I haven't found yet any other data on him or his family.

Certainly George II Marga (*Giorgius Margai de Marga*), documentary recorded in 1580⁵⁶ and 1603 was the continuer of the family who remained in the Banat; he was in fact the unique owner of the forefathers' estate of Marga in 1603⁵⁷, according the fiscal conscript. The few found documents seem to con-

⁵¹ Ibid., 381, 387.

⁵² Ligia Boldea, *Nobilimea românească din Banat în secolele XIV-XVI (origine, statut, studiu genealogic)* (Reşiţa: Banatica, 2002), 217–219; eadem, "High dignity and property in the 16th–17th centuries in the Banat – the nobles Gârleşteanu of Rudăria's wealth," *Banatica* 29/II (2019): 58–59.

⁵³ Notice on the back of paper issued in November 22, 1544. See Pesty, *A Szörényi bánság*, III, 239.

⁵⁴ 12 martie 1585: *Erdélyi káptalan*, 150, no. 394.

⁵⁵ In 1572 he had to pledge his shares from two estates in the district of Caransebeş for a pressing need of money. Pesty, *A Szörényi bánság*, III, 394.

⁵⁶ Costin Feneşan, *Diplomatarium Banaticum*, vol. II (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2017), 103.

⁵⁷ Adrian Magina, "Conscrierea porţilor districtului Caransebeş în anul 1603. Consideraţii

firm the same identitary pattern I have presented about the family: a nobleman involved in the town life; he was the one who realized the noble lady Ana Floca and Catherine, her daughter seizing, by signing the report to Sigismund Báthory, in 1585, on the basis of which the prince finalized a new donation of 5 estates on the Bistra Valley (near the settlement of Marga).⁵⁸

Two other personages were episodically presented in the territory of Hunedoara County: a named Stephen II Marga of Bretea Română, recorded in 1590⁵⁹ as a witness in a patrimonial litigation in the area, and John II Marga of Covragiu; one of the bound of that one was also a witness in a seizing process.⁶⁰ I presume that their names may be sufficient in showing them as members of the family's line living in Hunedoara.

The *fifth genealogical level* in the first half of the 17th century refers to the last of the Mărgans living in their native land before the banat of Caransebeș and Lugoj entering the Ottoman Empire. I have found but one note on them and I do present it as such. So, a named Jacob III of Marga is notes down in 1617 with the occasion of an agreement between two of his bounds.⁶¹ Gașpar II Marga's⁶² house at a boundary is mentioned in a document from 1630 referring to some houses in Caransebeș exchanging between George Buitul and Nicholas Crețu; a notice from 1633 let us know that that one had possessions in Marga, but was living in Caransebeș in fact, as another member of the family, Stephen did at that time.⁶³ Some personal data on the last one, namely Stephen III Marga recorded between 1633 and 1653⁶⁴, show that he was married to Margaret Gârleșteanu (a descendant of one of the most influent families in Severin County) and had a son, Stephen Marga *junior*. He was living in Caransebeș and had lands at Marga as Gașpar did. I do not exclude the possibility that the two ones were George II Marga's sons as long as that one had got alone at the beginning of the 17th century the whole estate of Marga. It is more than plausible that Gașpar and Stephen, his direct descendants, had been so inherited; otherwise, the estate had been confiscated by the princely fisc. Stephen was involved in the town life in

pe marginea unui document,” in I. A. Pop, S. Andea, eds., *Pe urmele trecutului. Profesorului Nicolae Edroiu la 70 de ani* (Cluj-Napoca: Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2009), 283–295.

⁵⁸ Feneșan, *Diplomatarium*, II, 103, 126; *Az erdélyi fejedelmek Királyi Könyvei 1569–1602*, vol. I, T. Fejér, E. Rácz, A. Szász, eds. (Kolozsvár: Az Erdély Múzeum-Egyesület Kiodása, 2005), 81, no. 147 (further on: *Királyi Könyvei*).

⁵⁹ *Királyi Könyvei*, 355, no. 1303.

⁶⁰ *Erdélyi káptalan*, 148, no. 391.

⁶¹ Livia Magina, “Price of human resources in Transylvania during the 16th-17th centuries,” *Banatica* 26/II (2016): 376.

⁶² MNL, F 234, XXII szekreny, fasc. 13, f 26.

⁶³ Pesty, *A Szörényi bánság*, II, 302.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 302–303.

1635, as a witness at one of noble Gregory Tivadar's bounds releasing (that one was married with a noble lady, a very rare situation at that time); the agreement was confirmed by Prince George Rákóczy I in 1637, on the basis of the letter of witnessing that more noblemen in Caransebeș, including Stephen Marga, had written and sanctioned with their usual green wax seals.⁶⁵ Sara Marga was also part of the same genealogical line: she was married to Nicholas Gârleşteanu, as a document issued in March 20, 1635 lets us know.⁶⁶ The two sons of her in turn, Stephen and Nicholas, possibly had resulted from previous marriages. For her I do say that she could have been a sister of Gașpar and Stephen, the marriage of the last one, as we have seen, taking part in the same family of Gârleşteanu – cross-marrying being a rather common practice at that time.

Stephen Marga's son, namely Stephen IV *junior*⁶⁷, and Sara Marga's sons, Stephen and Nicholas might be included in the last generation of the Mărgans living in the Banat. But there is no supplementary information on them.

The largest part of the nobles in Severin County runs in the neighboring countries in Transylvania in 1658, some of those families having got properties there yet in the previous century. The Mărgans are supposed to retire to their properties in Hunedoara County after the moment the banat of Caransebeș and Lugoj had been given up to the Ottomans. So, their original domain depopulated in the course of time. A document issued around 1670 is may be a proof: the pasha of Timișoara demands Prince Michael Apafi to interdict a village setting at Marga as the area was recorded in Ottomans defters as being part of Caransebeș territory and the incomes there were directed to the saint town of Medina.⁶⁸

The history of this family could be resumed in 1688 with a large part of the local nobles coming back in the Banat once the Habsburgs' army entered here, but only for a short time. It seems in fact that only George III Marga (*Georgius Margai*) did it, according to sources; as he demanded houses in Caransebeș, with pertains and a mill that had belonged to Stephen Marga *junior*, I have enough reasons to believe that he was that one's son; his demand came in the context of the census of houses and real in Caransebeș, ordered by Jacob Wenczel von Sternbach that year.⁶⁹ He also is recorded in 1698 in the list of land

⁶⁵ Feneșan, *Diplomatarium*, II, 422, 428.

⁶⁶ Pesty, *Krassó*, vol. IV (Budapest, 1883), 299.

⁶⁷ Mentioned in the documents between 1653–1655. Pesty, *A Szörényi bánság*, II, 303; Feneșan, *Diplomatarium*, II, 451.

⁶⁸ Feneșan, *Diplomatarium*, II, 473–474. See also Cristina Feneșan, "Problema instaurării dominației otomane asupra banatului Lugojului și Caransebeșului," *Banatica* 4 (1977): 229.

⁶⁹ Costin Feneșan, "Caransebeșul la începutul celei de-a doua stăpâniri habsburgice (1688)," *Revista istorică* VII, no. 1–2 (1996): 78.

owners in the county of Severin.⁷⁰ George Marga is noted down too between the noblemen in Caransebeș, who sent more solemn protests to the emperor on the way that the former rights and privileges of the community were violated: the first one was in July 22, 1695 (brought to Vienna by John Fiat of Armeniș)⁷¹, the other in November 20, 1698, composed by Peter Macskási, the vice-count of Severin.⁷² Failure of those approaches and the new integrative policy of the Habsburg Empire shattered the hopes of the social elites in the Banat, and so they took the path of the Principality, so to say where they had taken refuge after 1658, and never came back.

The Mărgans represent a family pattern that has to be analyzed as an integrant part of a well structured society during the 14th–17th centuries, even if they had not the proportions of other Romanian noble families in the Banat. The family did not rank among the great families in the area if taking into account the number of its members documentary attested, or their forefathers' patrimony and part they played within the administrative structures in the banat/county of Severin. Through Jacob of Marga (as a castellan and vice-count of Severin) the family seems to have touched the maximum of visibility in the second half of the 15th century. He had few descendants (as the annexed genealogical table can show) and there are few cases of certitudes for the various filiations. A poor register of Christian names is also to be noted (Stephen, George, Nicholas, Jacob, John) even if it is not really an exception, but might show a lack of imagination or a stronger relation between generations, put in light by an exclusive transmission of the ancestors' names to the new generations.

A rather ambiguous image has resulted on the Mărgans' real ensemble, on the basis of data I have had at my disposal, with too less certitudes. Their domination on Marga is documentary sure only from the beginning of the 17th century. Operating with analogies the great Romanian families in the Banat could offer it is evident the derivation of patronymics from toponyms. Why should differ the case of the family of Marga? Unfortunately, analogies end at this point as the Mărgans' real – as large as it was and in the measure the papers let us know – was an uncertain and fluctuant one, in contrast with the long life of other lands ensembles, documentary noted down for 250 to 300 years long.

⁷⁰ Costin Feneșan, "Comitatul Severinului la sfârșitul secolului al XVII-lea," *Tibiscum. Studii și comunicări de etnografie-istorie* VII (1988): 223, doc. XXIV.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 211, doc. IX.

⁷² Costin Feneșan, "Stăpâni și supuși în comitatul Severinului în timpul celei de-a doua ocupații habsburgice (1688–1699)," *Banatica* 14 (1996): 177–178.

The question is that the family of Marga preferred to abandon some of the possessions in the Banat for estates in the counties of Hunedoara and Alba, focused on them especially as the exchange from 1503 was sanctioned by a royal document of donation. We should assume that after the family moved to one of the counties above, but a part of it at least remained in Severin County, as far as George Marga is noted down the next century as having six plots in the village of Marga while Stephen and George Marga (George's sons possibly) lived in Caransebeș although they had possessions at Marga; it is a perfect explicable situation if thinking that their ancestors (Jacob of Marga and George of Marga) had got functions in Caransebeș. For a minimum of lands for generations, the family of Marga rather practiced possessions exchange, pledge or joint property to compensate a real property in the native area and avoid its downgrading. Getting lands (by exchange or buying) in the counties of Hunedoara and Alba must have been related to pecuniary and landed need irresolvable in the Banat. Unfortunately, in the absence of a solid patrimonial base, the family of Marga didn't get the social and economic status of the most important and influential Romanian families, but this is not a reason to exclude it from the Banat elites.

PROFILUL GENEALOGIC AL UNEI FAMILII DE NOBILI AI COMITATULUI SEVERIN: MĂRGANII (SECOLELE XV-XVII)

Rezumat

Spațiul Banatului medieval montan și piemontan a generat o elită nobiliară românească, integrată în formele sale specifice nobilimii țării grație interesului pe care puterea centrală l-a manifestat față de acești nobili ce au putut fi capacitați în frecvențele campanii militare în care acest ținut de graniță al regatului maghiar a fost angrenat de-a lungul secolelor XIV-XVII. S-a conturat astfel o serie de familii nobile, bine individualizate atât prin identitatea membrilor săi, cât și prin ansamblul stăpânirilor lor funciare, nuclee familiale ce impresionează în multe cazuri prin longevitatea dată de șirul neîntrerupt de generații ce s-au succedat de la primele atestări documentare, survenite în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIV-lea și până la finele secolului al XVII-lea. Desigur că se disting marile familii nobile românești bănațene, posesoare a zeci de sate și părți de sate, ai căror membri au purtat nu o dată titlul de *egregius*, dar și un număr de familii mai modeste, al căror domeniu a depășit arareori, prin dani și achiziții, satul de origine și care, prin funcții și atribuții publice la nivel districtual s-au evidențiat ca identități de sine stătătoare. Dacă membri ai primei categorii, ajunși în funcții de mare responsabilitate (comiți și vicecomiți, bani și vicebani de Severin sau Jaica, cavaleri, curteni sau funcționari ai Curții regale) au reprezentat în primul rând, în mod oficial, autoritatea centrală, ceilalți fruntași locali, aflați în funcții inferioare (juzi nobiliari, prim-juzi, crainici, jurați, arbitri, oameni ai regelui) au fost mai degrabă exponenți ai obștii nobiliare din această zonă.

Un caz oarecum aparte este cel al familiei Marga, exemplul ce prezintă o contradictorie realitate: pe de-o parte, doi dintre membri săi ajung aproape de cele mai importante demnități locale; unul – Iacob de Marga, viceban și castelan de Severin între 1467 și 1478, celălalt – Gheorghe Marga (fiul lui Iacob), locțiitor al banului de Severin, atestat ca atare în anul 1515. Pe de-altă parte, puterea și influența lor, bunăstarea lor ne apar fragile și conjuncturale, prin prisma a ceea ce documentele lasă să se întrevadă pe o perioadă de aproximativ 150 de ani, de la primele atestări documentare din jurul anului 1470 și până la mijlocul secolului al XVII-lea. Este un caz pe care am considerat necesar a-l expune atenției, ca un “alt” mod de raportare la ceea ce statutul de nobilitate a presupus în epocă. În consecință, ne-am focalizat atenția asupra structurii și a ramificațiilor genealogice ale familiei Mărganilor, cu toate inconsecvențele și problemele trădate de o informație documentară lacunară.

ANNEX: The genealogical table of Marga family

