

BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF HISTORY AND PHILOPHY

PHD THESIS

**Military Organization in Princely Transylvania. Counties and Fiscal
Estates**

Summary

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Contents:

Introduction

1. Sources and Historiography

1.1 Narrative and documentary sources

1.2 Historiography

2. Army Organization and Military Revolution in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Europe

2.1 Military revolution and the transformation of infantry

2.2 Military revolution and the transformation of cavalry

2.3 Fortifications, Artillery and Siege Techniques

2.4 Logistics

3. The Noble Army in Transylvania

3.1 The Military Role of the Nobility in the Hungarian Kingdom

3.2 Noble Insurrection in Princely Transylvania

3.3 The Warrior Identity of the Nobility in the Early Modern Period. The case of the Transylvanian Nobility

4. Military Conscriptions and the Militia Portalis

4.1 The Medieval Origins of Military Conscriptions

4.2 Military Conscriptions and the Militia Portalis in the Transylvanian Principality

5. Fortifications and Fiscal Estates in the Transylvanian Principality

6. The Evolution of the Defensive System in the Transylvanian Principality

6.1 The Western Frontier of the Principality

6.2 The Reorganization of the Western Frontier after the fall of Oradea in 1660

6.3 Life at the Western Frontier in Transylvania

6.4 Fiscal Fortresses inside the Principality

6.5 The Role and Function of Fortresses

7. Military categories with permanent and semi-permanent character

- 7.1 Resident Garrisons of the Fortresses
- 7.2 Foreign Mercenaries in the Transylvanian Armies
- 7.3 Mercenary units at the court of Mihail Apafi I
- 7.4 The Haiduks
- 7.5 The Personal guard of the Prince
- 7.6 The Boyars from Țara Făgărașului
- 7.7 Darbants
- 7.8 Riflemen
- 7.9 Military libertines
- 7.10 Cnezi, voievozi, juzi and crainici

8. Military campaigns

- 8.1 The Appearance of the Autonomous Principality, John Sigismund Zápolya and the War for *Partium* (1541-1571)
- 8.2 The Consolidation of Central Authority in the Time of Steven Báthory and the First Part of Sigismund Báthory's Reign (1571-1594)
- 8.3 Transylvania's participation in the Long War, Michael the Brave and the Imperial Government of General Basta (1594-1606)
- 8.4 The Hegemonic Tendencies of Prince Gabriel Báthory
- 8.5 Gabriel Bethlen and George Rákóczi I. Transylvania's participation in The Thirty Years' War
- 8.6 George Rákóczi II and the Campaign for the Polish Throne (1648-1658)
- 8.7 George Rákóczi II, Francis Rhédey, Acațiu Barcsay, and John Kemény. The Decline of Princely Authority in the Context of Internal Struggle and ottoman military interventions (1658-1662)
- 8.8 Michael Apafi I, Emeric Thököly and the Habsburg Conquest of Transylvania (1662-1691)

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Summary

Military organization represents an essential chapter in the institutional history of the autonomous Principality of Transylvania (1541-1691). Our research is limited to counties and fiscal estates, as each political nation of Transylvania had specific military obligations. In the counties, military organization was determined by the military obligations of the nobility and of the serfs living on noble estates. Fiscal estates were organized around some of the most important fortifications of the country, being under the direct control of the ruling prince. As a distinct administrative and judicial area, some permanent and semi-permanent military categories developed on these domains: such as the military libertines, riflemen, boyars of Țara Făgărașului etc.

The first major chapter of the thesis (**Sources and Historiography**) consists of a short analysis on the main types of sources utilized in our research and also on the Romanian and foreign historiography dedicated to military organization in the Sixteenth and the Seventeenth in Europe and Transylvania in particular. Regarding the military history of Europe in the early modern age we focused on the points of view expressed mainly by Anglo-Saxon historiography that offers new insights in this domain of research. Developed around the debate on the concept of “military revolution”, Anglo-Saxon military historians try to answer some questions regarding the technological and organizational innovations in European armies during the early modern period, the impact of war on society and civil communities, the soldier profession and the identity of those practicing this profession, the influence of the military factor in the process of modern states development etc.

We tried a similar approach in our thesis, analyzing a wide area of documentary sources (official documents, journals, military pay rolls, chronicles, memoirs, personal and official letters, travel descriptions) with a direct or indirect connection to the matter of military organization.

In the chapter (**Army Organization and Military Revolution in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Europe**) we tried to emphasize some of the fundamental features of military systems throughout Europe in the early modern period. One of the most important aspects of “military revolution” is the development of weapon technologies and especially fire weapons. In this context infantry troops imposed their supremacy on the battlefield. As a consequence cavalry,

especially heavy cavalry, entered a period of decline. Artillery and military architecture also had a spectacular development during this period. The increase of fire power in the case of artillery determined a constant perfection of fortress building. The main innovation in matters of military architecture during this period was the Italian type fortification.

The third chapter (**The Noble Army in Transylvania**) follows the evolution of the Transylvanian nobility in relation to their military duties. The first part of this chapter contains the main stages of this evolution during the Middle Ages in the kingdom of Hungary.

The nobility was one of the three privileged groups that composed the “estates and orders” of Transylvania. First and foremost the nobles had the obligation to defend the country from external and internal enemies. In the age of the autonomous principality, the Transylvanian nobility maintained their privileged status established in the first centuries of the Hungarian kingdom and the obligations deriving from this status. The personal participation in the army was requested within the general insurrection. Besides this traditional military obligation, the nobility had to provide recruits, representing the noble estate, which composed a sort of standing army together with contingents recruited among the other “political nations” of Transylvania (Saxons and Seklers). The mobilization of these troops represented an innovation specific for the Transylvania, in the context of the internal struggle that took place during the first decades of the autonomous principality and of the external menaces represented by the neighboring Ottoman provinces and the Habsburg garrisons situated near the borders.

The fourth chapter (**Military Conscriptio and the Militia Portalis**) has a similar structure with the previous one and is focused on the military obligations of the serfs living on noble domains, obligations materialized in the organization of local contingents known as the “militia portalis”. A medieval heritage of the Hungarian kingdom, the “militia portalis” was perpetuated in the laws of the new state. From the first years of the principality efforts were made to mobilize a proportion of serfs for the defense of the country. The Diet of Turda from 22nd of December 1542 issued the recruitment of the “militia portalis” as an alternative for the failure of the noble army. The matter of the conscription army was present in most of the diets, especially until the middle of the 17th century.

Chapters 5 and 6 (**Fortifications and Fiscal Estates in the Transylvanian Principality, The Evolution of the Defensive System in the Transylvanian Principality**) are focused on the composition of the fiscal estate in the Transylvanian principality and its role in the military system

of the country. The main fortifications were under the direct control of the prince, being a part of the fiscal estate. A major role in the political survival of the principality was played by the defensive system from the Western border, made of older fortifications but also modern ones, built during this period. The military frontier proved efficient when facing minor incursions organized by both Turks and Habsburgs, but stood no chance in front of a large scale invasion or prolonged sieges. A first stage of the disintegration of this defensive system took place during the years 1551-1552, when the Turks conquered Banat and organized the Vilayet of Timișoara, which will represent a constant danger for the neighboring territories of the principality. For more than a century the Transylvanian fortifications resisted without major losses. The fall of Oradea (1660), the most important and strong Transylvanian fortification of the Western parts, was without a doubt the most devastating strategic and political loss for the principality. After this unfortunate event the defensive system was reorganized on a second line consisting of older fortresses situated inside the country. The most important position on the new frontier was taken by the fortified city of Cluj. During the years 1685-1688 most of the fortresses and fortified cities of Transylvania were occupied by Austrian garrisons, the country losing thus its autonomy to the Habsburg rule.

Chapter 7 (**Military categories with permanent and semi-permanent character**) analyses the categories of professional soldiers. The Transylvanian princes never had a real standing army at their disposal, but there were some military groups such as: the Haiduks, riflemen, the boyars of Țara Făgărașului, members of the resident garrisons and of the princes' guard. These soldiers were performing permanent or almost permanent military duty in exchange for payment, privileges or tax exemption.

The resident garrisons of the fortresses constituted a core of professional soldiers, in many cases foreign mercenaries, skilled in the tactics of siege warfare and in the use of fire arms. The maintenance of these permanent garrisons was a heavy economic burden for the estate surrounding the fortress and also for the treasury. The number of soldiers employed in a resident garrisons varied from a few dozens to over a hundred soldiers (Gurghiu in 1660 -106 soldiers, Hunedoara in 1685 - 40 soldiers, Huszt in the second half of the 17th century -70 de soldiers, Ilia in 1657- 30 soldiers, the fortress of Făgăraș in 1684 - 91 soldiers). During sieges the number of defenders significantly increased by means of voluntary recruitment or with the detachments sent by neighbouring fortresses.

The soldiers from the princely court also represented a core of permanent army. The muster rolls, written during the reign of prince Michael Apafi I, offer abundant information regarding the

numbers and the composition of mercenary troops. Between 1663-1684 7 flags of infantry and starting with 1682 13 (later 10) flags of cavalry are mentioned in the service of the Transylvanian prince. The infantry consisted mainly of foreign mercenaries: 2 flags of German soldiers, 1 flag of Romanian soldiers (seimeni), 3 flags of Polish soldiers usually named “French” flags or companies and only one Hungarian flag. The cavalry flags had exclusively Hungarian soldiers.

The last chapter is dedicated to the military campaigns in which Transylvania was involved. Military campaigns are divided in offensive expeditions and defensive wars that took place on Transylvanian territory.

In the first group we have external aggressions such as: The Turkish campaign in Banat 1551-1552, the war for *Partium* - 1556-1571, the imperial government of General Giorgio Basta 1601-1604, the expedition of Radu Șerban against Moise Székely in 1603, the campaign of the same Wallachian ruler and of General Sigismund Forgács against Gabriel Báthory in 1610, the Ottoman campaigns from the years 1658-1660 directed against prince Gheorghe Rákóczi II and the penetration of Habsburg troops in 1685-1688 that brought the downfall of the autonomous principality. Also in this group we can mention the internal military conflicts, in which foreign countries were usually involved. Such civil wars were: the dispute between Steven Báthory and Gaspar Bekes (1573-1575), the conflicts between Acațiu Barcsay and Gheorghe Rákóczi II (1658-1660) and the fight between Ioan Kemény and Mihail Apafi I (1661). These wars proved to be the most devastating both for the country and civil population.

The second category of military actions is represented by offensive expeditions. These campaigns were organized by Transylvanian princes out of their own will or as a request from the Porte. Military support was one of the conditions of Ottoman sovereignty over Transylvania, a condition that was not often put to use. The only notable exception from this political orientation took place during the Long War (1593-1606) when Prince Sigismund Báthory, in collaboration with the Romanian rulers, joined sides with the Holy League. In the first half of the 17th century Gabriel Bethlen and Gheorghe Rákóczi I organized a series of expeditions against the Habsburgs in the Thirty Years War. Fighting alongside the protestant camp increased the European prestige of the principality and the military campaigns occasioned the introduction of some technical and organizational innovations. The Transylvanian princes exercised a constant political influence over the Romanian principalities, influence that was often ensured by military intervention. Such an intervention was that of Gabriel Báthory in Walachia during the winter of 1610, military action that

lacked the support of a successful diplomatic backing towards the sultan. The most ambitious Transylvanian prince was Gheorghe Rákóczi II. Although he had one of the best armies the Transylvanian principality ever had, Rákóczi had plans that surpassed the political and military potential of the country. After ensuring the support of the Romanian rulers, obtained after two military interventions (1653 Moldavia and 1655 Walachia), the Transylvanian prince initiated an unprecedented campaign for the Polish throne without the consent of the Porte. This campaign proved to be disastrous for the Transylvanian army, captured by Tartars, and for the country, which had to suffer a series of Turkish punitive expeditions.

The military organization of the Transylvanian principality was marked by the technological and structural innovations of the “military revolution” maintaining at the same time some specific features. The appearance and the development of autonomous principality took place during a time of conflict between the House of Austria and the Ottoman Empire for the domination of central and south-eastern Europe. In order to ensure its political survival the new state had to develop a military system capable of repelling foreign attempts of conquest and at the same time extend its political influence over neighboring regions.