

A Divided Hungary in Europe:
Exchanges, Networks and Representations,
1541-1699

Edited by

Gábor Almási, Szymon Brzeziński, Ildikó Horn,
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Volume 2

Diplomacy, Information Flow
and Cultural Exchange

Edited by

Szymon Brzeziński and Áron Zarnóczy

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CONTENTS

Preface ix

Zone of Conflict—Zone of Exchange: Introductory Remarks on Early Modern Hungary in Diplomatic and Information Networks 1
Szymon Brzeziński

I. Hungary and Transylvania in the Early Modern Diplomatic and Information Networks

Re-Orienting a Renaissance Diplomatic Cause Célèbre: The 1541 Rincón-Fregoso Affair 11
Megan K. Williams

Iter Persicum: In Alliance with the Safavid Dynasty against the Ottomans? 31
Pál Ács

Transimperial Mediators of Culture: Seventeenth-Century Habsburg Interpreters in Constantinople 51
Dóra Kerekes

The Diplomacy and Information Gathering of the Principality of Transylvania (1600–1650) 69
Gábor Kármán

An Italian Information Agent in the Hungarian Theatre of War: Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli between Vienna and Constantinople 85
Mónika F. Molnár

II. Aristocratic Politics and Networks of Information in the Kingdom of Hungary

The Chances for a Provincial Cultural Centre: The Case of György Thurzó, Palatine of Hungary (1567–1616) 109
Tünde Lengyel

<i>The Information System of the Seventeenth-Century Hungarian Aristocrat, Ferenc Nádasdy (1623–1671)</i>	127
Noémi Viskolcz	

III. Politics, Diplomacy and Confessional Networks

<i>Dynastic Politics, Diplomacy and the Catholic Church: Péter Pázmány's 1616 Appointment as Archbishop of Esztergom</i>	149
Péter Tusor	

<i>Shaping Protestant Networks in Habsburg Transylvania: The Beginnings (1686–1699)</i>	183
Bálint Keserű	

Contributors	203
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Index	207
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ZONE OF CONFLICT—ZONE OF EXCHANGE:
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS ON EARLY
MODERN HUNGARY IN DIPLOMATIC
AND INFORMATION NETWORKS

SZYMON BRZEZIŃSKI

The history of Hungary in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has been for a long time regarded as a series of catastrophes. The Kingdom of Hungary broke up under Ottoman expansion and for over one-hundred-and-fifty years became an area of Habsburg–Ottoman military and diplomatic rivalry. The whole Carpathian Basin was perceived therefore as a “battlefield” and the whole period was traditionally described as a “Turkish age.” There are of course some valid reasons behind this view: no doubt the geopolitical contest decisively shaped the country’s place in early modern Europe. The scope and consequences of this shaping were much discussed in historiography and involved such fundamental questions as the historical “backwardness” of the region or the long-term influence of this period on the region’s history. For a long time, from the perspective of Hungarian historiography, the main question raised involved the permanent struggles against the Ottomans and Habsburgs and attempts to overcome the partition of the country.

This volume wishes to make a contribution to this period in a different way. Its aim is to highlight the history of exchanges in early modern Hungary on the field of diplomacy and contemporary “international relations,” usually viewed through the perspective of conflicts. A closely related topic is the question of information flow in contemporary politics, which gained substantial scholarly attention in the last decades. Both of these perspectives give adequate insight into the more active role of actors who shaped the international standing of Hungary and Transylvania. Thus we hope to add some new aspects to the Western and Eastern dimension of Hungarian

diplomatic entanglement between the Habsburg and Ottoman empires.¹ A role of the “country-between” meant being not only an area of periodically renewed conflict, but also being a region of intensive mutual exchange, an area connected in diverse ways to current European and sometimes even extra-European affairs.

We find it useful to regard the topic in a multifaceted approach present in the cultural history of politics and diplomacy. This attitude has proved to be an effective tool in more recent scholarship. The “new diplomatic history” concentrates on aspects of political history only occasionally handled in a more traditional approach, like the information market and brokerage, the role of gifts, gestures and clothing in diplomacy, the cultural role of dynastic marriages, envoys and diplomatic missions.² On the other hand, much discussed in recent historiography on early modern Europe are the concepts of “cultural transfer” and “cultural exchange,” which result

¹ Several recent works on early modern Hungary and Transylvania in context of Habsburg–Ottoman conflicts and state-building processes: G. Pálffy, *The Kingdom of Hungary and the Habsburg Monarchy in the Sixteenth Century*, trans. by T. J. DeKornfeld and H. D. DeKornfeld (Boulder, CO. 2009); *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. by G. Kármán and L. Kunčević (Leiden 2013); *Europe and the “Ottoman World”: Exchanges and Conflicts*, ed. by G. Kármán and R. G. Păun (Istanbul 2013); *Frieden und Konfliktmanagement in interkulturellen Räumen. Osmanisches Reich und Habsburgermonarchie in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. by A. Strohmeyer and N. Spannberger (Stuttgart 2013); *Osmanischer Orient und Ostmitteleuropa*, ed. by R. Born and A. Puth (Stuttgart 2014); Á. R. Várkonyi, *Europica varietas, Hungarica varietas, 1526–1762. Selected Studies*, trans. by É. Pálmai et al. (Budapest 2000). On achievements of Hungarian Ottoman studies, see D. Géza and P. Fodor, “Hungarian Studies in Ottoman History,” in *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography*, ed. by F. Adanir and S. Faroqhi (Leiden 2002), 305–350.

² H. Schilling, *Konfessionalisierung und Staatsinteressen. Internationale Beziehungen 1559–1660* (Paderborn 2007) (Handbuch der Geschichte der Internationalen Beziehungen, 2); J. Watkins, “Toward a New Diplomatic History of Medieval and Early Modern Europe,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38, 1 (2008), 1–14; K. Urbach, “Diplomatic History since the Cultural Turn,” *The Historical Journal* 46, 4 (2003), 991–997; *Geschichte der Politik. Alte und neue Wege*, ed. by H.-Ch. Kraus and T. Nicklas (Munich 2007); *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture*, ed. by R. Adams and R. Cox (Basingstoke 2011); *Internationale Beziehungen in der Frühen Neuzeit. Ansätze und Perspektiven*, ed. by H. Kugeler et al. (Hamburg 2006); *Diplomatisches Zeremoniell in Europa und im Mittleren Osten in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. by R. Kauz et al. (Vienna 2009); *Wahrnehmungen des Fremden. Differenzerfahrungen von Diplomaten im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. by A. Strohmeyer and M. Rohrschneider (Münster 2007).

also in wide-ranging approaches.³ Still, these approaches are not yet characteristic for most of the historiography on Central and Eastern Europe, and just recently have started to be more widely applied in studies on early modern Hungary.⁴ Thus there has emerged a reasonable need to present such research to the international audience and so to better an understanding of the very complex historical matter.

The chronology present in the title requires perhaps little explanation. Both dates indicate the significant events connected to the Ottoman conquest and its end, and, therefore, to the beginning and conclusion of a specific political situation in the Carpathian Basin. The starting point is the capture of the Hungarian capital, Buda, by Süleyman I in 1541—a date commonly considered the beginning of the triple division of the country. The closing point was set in 1699, the year of the Treaty of Karlowitz (Sremski Karlovci), ending the wars between the Holy League and the Ottoman Empire which led to the retrieval of most of historical Hungary. The period under consideration is then that of Ottoman rule in Hungary and of its geopolitical consequences, including the creation and existence of the Principality of Transylvania.

“Hungary’s history in the early modern era can only be understood within a European historical context”—states Péter Tusor in his chapter in this volume. This opinion is shared by other authors as well. A feature of the research presented here is that it is based on archival materials from across Europe. Thanks to that wider perspective, the concrete phenomena

³ *Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by R. Muchembled and W. Monter, vols. 1–4 (New York 2007); *Kultureller Austausch. Bilanz und Perspektiven der Frühneuezeitforschung*, ed. by M. North (Cologne 2009); *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by P. Burke and R. Po-chia Hsia (Cambridge 2007); *Well-Connected Domains. Towards an Entangled Ottoman History*, ed. by P. F. Firges et al. (Leiden 2014); H. Droste, “Diplomacy as a Means of Cultural Transfer in Early Modern Times,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 31, 2 (2006), 144–150.

⁴ For some references, cf. I. Fazekas, “Die Frühneuezeitforschung in Ungarn. Ein Forschungsbericht,” in *Geteilt – Vereinigt. Beiträge zur Geschichte des Königreichs Ungarn in der Frühneuezeit (16.-18. Jahrhundert)*, ed. by K. Csaplár-Degovics and I. Fazekas (Berlin 2011), 15–64. Cf. also the volumes: *Türkenkriege und Adelskultur in Ostmitteleuropa vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. by R. Born and S. Jagodzinski (Ostfildern 2014); *Identitás és kultúra a török hódoltság korában* [Identity and culture in the age of the Turkish conquest], ed. by P. Ács and J. Székely (Budapest 2012); research by Péter Erdősi: P. Erdősi and J. B. Szabó, “Ceremonies Marking the Transfer of Power in the Principality of Transylvania in East European Context,” *Majestas* 11 (2003), 111–160; and Pálffy, *The Kingdom of Hungary*.

of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Hungarian history can gain a more general sense and serve as comparative material for international scholarship. This approach, although seemingly quite obvious, can be considered an achievement of more recent historiography on early modern Hungary and is particularly valid for the studies on information flow, communication and diplomacy. Several recent edited volumes on information flow contain substantial studies on espionage, military and diplomatic networks of the Habsburg and Ottoman empires.⁵ Closely related is research on early modern media, circulation of news on Hungary and its connection with political decision-making, as in the studies of Nóra G. Etényi.⁶ Our volume presents similar results in the chapters by Noémi Viskolcz, Mónika F. Molnár and Dóra Kerekes.⁷ Concentrating on mechanisms of information gathering, Gábor Kármán provides an overview of the development of the Transylvanian diplomacy in the first half of the seventeenth century and the country's growing entanglement in European affairs.

The concept of exchange had an impact on borderland studies, a field well established in the last decades and with significant results regarding the Habsburg–Ottoman frontier and borderland.⁸ That approach has proved

⁵ *Információáramlás a magyar és török végvári rendszerben* [Information flow in the Hungarian and Turkish border fortress systems], ed. by T. Petercsák and M. Berecz (Eger 1999); *Információáramlás a kora újkorban* [Information flow in the early modern age], ed. by L. Z. Karvalits and K. Kis (Budapest 2004). For international research, cf. *News in Early Modern Europe: Currents and Connections*, vols. 1–2, ed. by S. F. Davies and P. Fletcher (Leiden 2014); *News and Politics in Early Modern Europe (1500–1800)*, ed. by W. Koopmans (Leuven 2005); G. Ágoston, “Information, Ideology, and Limits of Imperial Policy: Ottoman Grand Strategy in the Context of Ottoman-Habsburg Rivalry,” in *The Early Modern Ottomans. Remapping the Empire*, ed. by V. H. Aksan and D. Goffman (New York 2007), 75–103.

⁶ N. G. Etényi, *Hadszintér és nyilvánosság. A magyarországi török háborúk hírei a 17. századi német újságokban* [Theatre of war and publicity. News of Turkish wars in Hungary in 17th-century German newspapers] (Budapest 2003); *Portré és imázs. Politikai propaganda és reprezentáció a kora újkorban* [Portrait and image. Political propaganda and representation in the early modern age], ed. by N. G. Etényi and I. Horn (Budapest 2008). See also the chapters in vol. 3: *The Making and Uses of the Image of Hungary and Transylvania*.

⁷ Cf. her monograph: D. Kerekes, *Diplomaták és kémek Konstantinápolyban* [Diplomats and spies in Constantinople] (Budapest 2010).

⁸ Cf. *Hungarian–Ottoman Military and Diplomatic Relations in the Age of Süleyman the Magnificent*, ed. by G. Dávid and P. Fodor (Budapest 1994); *The Ottomans, Hungarians and Habsburgs in Central Europe: The Military Confines in the Era of Ottoman Conquest*, ed. by G. Dávid and P. Fodor (Leiden 2000); *Ein Raum im Wandel. Die osmanisch-habsburgische Grenzregion vom 16. bis zum 18.*

also fruitful in the research on religious life, as for example missionary endeavours.⁹ Hungarian church history, an area of study significantly developed in the last two decades, has offered a variety of studies on relations between the Holy See and local ecclesiastic authorities—a specific kind of religious, but also diplomatic and information network.¹⁰ Protestant networks also have gained attention in recent scholarship.¹¹ Both of these topics are covered in this volume, in the chapters of the third section. Péter Tusor, in his chapter, offers a complex view of the connection between church and dynastic politics in the European background, as he formulates a new interpretation of the circumstances of Péter

Jahrhundert, ed. by N. Spannenberger and Sz. Varga (Stuttgart 2014); *Zones of Fracture in Modern Europe: The Baltic Countries, the Balkans, and Northern Italy. Zone di frattura in epoca moderna. Il Baltico, I Balcani e l'Italia settentrionale*, ed. by A. Bues (Wiesbaden 2005); G. Ágoston, “Where Environmental and Frontier Studies Meet: Rivers, Forests, Marshes and Forts along the Ottoman-Hapsburg Frontier in Hungary,” in *The Frontiers of the Ottoman World*, ed. by A. C. S. Peacock (Oxford 2009), 72–79; M. Koller, *Eine Gesellschaft im Wandel. Die osmanische Herrschaft in Ungarn im 17. Jahrhundert (1606–1683)* (Stuttgart 2010).

⁹ *Frontiers of Faith: Religious Exchange and the Constitution of Religious Identities 1400–1750*, ed. by E. Andor and I. Gy. Tóth (Budapest 2001); A. Molnár, *Le Saint-Siège, Raguse et les missions catholiques de la Hongrie Ottomane 1572–1647* (Rome and Budapest 2007), I. Gy. Tóth, *Politique et religion dans la Hongrie du XVII^e siècle. Lettres des missionnaires de la Propaganda Fide* (Paris 2004). Other works and editions by A. Molnár and I. Gy. Tóth: I. Fazekas, “Die Frühneuzeitforschung,” 60–62.

¹⁰ P. Tusor, *Purpura Pannonica : Az esztergomi “bíborosi szék” kialakulásának előzményei a 17. században* [Purpura Pannonica : the “Cardinalitial See” of Strigonium and its antecedens in the 17th century] (Budapest and Rome 2005); *Erdély és a Szentszék a Báthory korszakban. Kiadatlan iratok (1574–1599)* [Transylvania and the Holy See in the age of Báthorys. Unpublished documents, 1574–1599], ed. by T. Kruppa (Szeged 2004); *Erdély és a Szentszék a Báthoryak korában. Okmánytár II (1595–1613)* [Transylvania and the Holy See in the age of Báthorys. Documents II, 1595–1613], ed. by T. Kruppa (Budapest 2009); *Jesuitische Frömmigkeitskulturen. Konfessionelle Interaktion in Ostmitteleuropa 1570–1700*, ed. by A. Ohlídal and S. Samerski (Stuttgart 2006).

¹¹ G. Murdock, *Calvinism on the Frontier: International Calvinism and the Reformed Church in Hungary and Transylvania* (Oxford 2000); *Calvin und Reformiertentum in Ungarn und Siebenbürgen: Helvetisches Bekenntnis, Ethnie und Politik vom 16. Jahrhundert bis 1918*, ed. by M. Fata and A. Schindling (Münster 2010); I. Keul, *Early Modern Religious Communities in East-Central Europe: Ethnic Diversity, Denominational Plurality and Corporative Politics in the Principality of Transylvania (1526–1691)* (Leiden 2009); P. Shore, *Jesuits and the Politics of Religious Pluralism in Eighteenth-Century Transylvania: Culture, Politics and Religion, 1693–1773* (Aldershot and Rome 2007).

Pázmány's nomination as Archbishop of Esztergom in 1616. Bálint Keserű, in his chapter, revises the paradigm of confessionalisation regarding Transylvania at the beginning of Habsburg rule in the late seventeenth century and examines the careers of Transylvanian Protestants in Vienna.

Beyond an attempt to interpret early modern politics and diplomacy in terms of cultural transfer, the chapters gathered in this volume share also another common characteristic: the role of individuals in the creation, maintenance and development of diplomatic and information networks. It corresponds with an actor-centric diplomatic history as a part of the cultural history of politics.¹² This is the case of a once much-discussed assassination of the French diplomatic agents Rincón and Fregoso in 1541, analysed here by Megan K. Williams. The incident affected the early modern discourse on diplomacy and became a commonplace, but the Hungarian context of the mission was lost.¹³ The cultural role of a single diplomatic mission as well as its place in the grand strategies and alliances of the age is a matter of the chapter by Pál Ács. He comprehensively highlights the broad context of the mission of István Kakas to Persia (1603), a Transylvanian in imperial service. Dóra Kerekes focuses on the role of interpreters in seventeenth-century Habsburg–Ottoman relations, taking into account the linguistic and cultural interferences. Her chapter is then closely linked with current research on translation and interpreters as specific factors in early modern diplomacy and cultural exchange in relations with the Sublime Porte.¹⁴ Mónika F. Molnár presents the activity of Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli, an agent, expert and diplomat, who played an essential role in the Habsburg ordering of reconquered Hungary in the late seventeenth century. The persons taken into consideration mostly combined the roles of diplomats, spies, political or military advisors and career-seeking entre-

¹² Cf. D. Riches, "Introduction," in *Protestant Cosmopolitanism and Diplomatic Culture: Brandenburg–Swedish Relations in the Seventeenth Century* (Leiden 2013), 1–8.

¹³ Cf. E. Pujeau, "L'affaire Rincone-Fregoso (1541) révélatrice des tensions de l'époque. Ou attentat à la frontière," *Studies and Materials of Medieval History* 29 (2011), 39–57.

¹⁴ Cf. also T. Krstic, "Of Translation and Empire: Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Imperial Interpreters as Renaissance Go-Betweens," in *The Ottoman World*, ed. by C. Woodhead (New York 2012), 130–142; G. Kármán, "Translation at the Seventeenth-Century Transylvanian Embassy in Constantinople," in *Osmanischer Orient und Ostmitteleuropa*, 253–280; P. Ács, "Tarjumans Mahmud and Murad: Austrian and Hungarian Renegades as Sultan's Interpreters," in *Europa un die Türken in der Renaissance*, ed. by B. Guthmüller and W. Kühlmann (Tübingen 2000), 307–316.

preneurs. There is much reference to scholarship on political and cultural brokerage in the early modern period.¹⁵

The role of individuals in information networks is analysed from a different angle in the chapters by Tünde Lengyel and Noémi Viskolcz, gathered in the second section of the volume. Both show examples of seventeenth-century Hungarian aristocrats and principal statesmen of the country who developed their own system of providing news and distributing information: György Thurzó and Ferenc Nádasdy.¹⁶ While Lengyel sees the activity of Thurzó in the larger context of his artistic patronage and estate-building policy, Viskolcz provides details on information networks and associates it with the intellectual profile of the patron. Both networks, being useful tools for some time, finally failed as they proved to be limited to the person, and not to the family or party, and did not prevent a political collapse (as in the case of Nádasdy). However, both cases offer valuable material for the connection of the elites in the Kingdom of Hungary with the European news market and cultural trends.

Diverse in scope and source material, the chapters published in this volume are intended to give insight into current research and broaden the historiographical perspective on early modern Europe. The evidence they deliver in matters of diplomacy and information flow contradict the view of an isolated country. According to this results, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century divided Hungary appears not only as an area of conflict, but of multiple and fascinating exchanges. We hope that this approach proves to be inspiring for future research.

¹⁵ *Your Humble Servant: Agents in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by M. Keblusek et al. (Hilversum 2006); *Double Agents: Cultural and Political Brokerage in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by M. Keblusek and B. V. Noldus (Leiden 2011); *Emissaries in Early Modern Literature and Culture: Mediation, Transmission, Traffic, 1550–1700*, ed. by B. Charry and G. Shahani (Farnham 2009).

¹⁶ For another example, cf. I. Hiller, *Palatinus Nikolaus Esterházy. Die ungarische Rolle in der Habsburger-Diplomatie 1625 bis 1645* (Cologne 1992).