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

Edited by

Gábor Almási, Szymon Brzeziński, Ildikó Horn, Kees Teszelszky and Áron Zarnóczki
Volume 2

Diplomacy, Information Flow
and Cultural Exchange

Edited by

Szymon Brzeziński and Áron Zarnóczki
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
The Information System of the Seventeenth-Century Hungarian Aristocrat, Ferenc Nádasdy (1623–1671) .............................................. 127
Noémi Viskolcz

III. Politics, Diplomacy and Confessional Networks

Dynastic Politics, Diplomacy and the Catholic Church:
Péter Pázmány’s 1616 Appointment as Archbishop of Esztergom .......... 149
Péter Tusor

Shaping Protestant Networks in Habsburg Transylvania:
The Beginnings (1686–1699) ................................................................. 183
Bálint Keserű

Contributors ............................................................................................. 203

Index ........................................................................................................ 207
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 a 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{5} On the other hand, much discussed in recent historiography on early modern Europe are the concepts of “cultural transfer” and “cultural exchange,” which result


also in wide-ranging approaches. 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. 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 Karlovec), 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

---


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


\(^7\) 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.
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. 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. 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.

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-

---

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

\textsuperscript{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).