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CONTESTED BORDERLANDS: WAR AND TERRITORIAL DISPUTES BETWEEN TRANSYLVANIA AND THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE (1594-1595)[1]

ABSTRACT
A few years after the Long Turkish War (1591-1606) began, Sigismund Báthory, ruler of Transylvania, decided to join the Habsburgs and the other members of the Holy League in their war against the Ottomans. Through this political decision Báthory interrupted several decades of good relations between his country and the Sublime Porte. Although Transylvania was a rather small state, with limited military and economic potential, Prince Sigismund had great ambitions. Joined by the rulers of Moldavia and Wallachia he attacked the Ottoman Empire on three fronts. In this article I will analyse the military operations on the frontier of Transylvania with the Ottoman province (*vilayet*) of Timișoara (Temesvár/Temeșvar) in the years 1594-1595. The various forms of regular and irregular warfare employed by the two opponents show the complexity of this confrontation. Major campaigns and sieges, which involved large numbers of combatants, were accompanied by frequent raids and skirmishes, typical for frontier warfare. These events also reveal the specific social and economic dynamic of frontiers in early modern Central and South-Eastern Europe.

KEYWORDS: Long Turkish War; Transylvania; Ottoman Empire; Borderlands; Frontiers.

INTRODUCTION

By the end of the sixteenth century Transylvania was approaching the last stage of a long process of political and institutional reorganization as a distinct state, following the partition of the Hungarian Kingdom after the battle of Mohács (1526). Throughout these long and difficult decades Ottoman suzerainty was fundamental for the political survival of the new state. Following the tradition established by King John Szapolyai, the subsequent rulers of the Eastern Hungarian Kingdom, later identified as the Principality of Transylvania, nurtured good relations with the Sublime Porte. Sigismund Báthory, son of voivode Cristophor Báthory and nephew of Stephen Báthory, was the first elected Transylvanian ruler who broke with this tradition and engaged in open hostilities with the Ottoman Empire.
In this article I will analyse the military confrontations along the frontier of Transylvania and the province (*vilayet*) of Timișoara (Temesvár/Temeșvar) during

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the years 1594 and 1595. From a Transylvanian perspective this was the first phase of the war with the Ottomans, in which the troops of Sigismund Báthory made several attempts (some of them successful) to retake territories and fortifications in the region encompassed by the Carpathians and the Danube, Tisa and Mureș rivers, later known as Banat.

The Long Turkish War (1591-1606) was a vast and complex military conflict with many "theatres of war" across Central and South-East Europe. The evolution of the Ottoman-Transylvanian confrontation in the Banat, during the years 1594-1595, has been approached in general monographs or studies focused on particular events[2], but the importance of local territorial disputes and the motivation of smaller states for joining this conflict still lacks a comprehensive analysis.

Although Báthory reached an official agreement with Rudolph II only in January 1595, his troops had already made several incursions into Ottoman territory during the previous year and sustained the revolt of the Christian population from the province of Timișoara. In the following years the Transylvanian army was on the offensive and managed to regain some of the disputed territories in the borderlands, but was unable to conquer the centre of the Ottoman *vilayet*. After the second failed siege of Timișoara in the winter of 1597, Sigismund Báthory lost faith in his chances to win the war and gave up on the throne, and thus ended the first phase of the Transylvanian involvement in the Long Turkish War. This "theatre of war" expended over a significant part of the Ottoman-Transylvanian borderland, including the Ottoman *vilayet* of Timișoara with its administrative subdivisions: Timișoara (Temeșvar), Cenad (Çanad), Lipova, Moldova Veche (Modava), Gyula (G'ula) and Ineu (Yanova)[3]; the Banat of Caransebeș and Lugoj (under Transylvanian authority) and also territories from the counties of Zarand, Bihor and Hunedoara.

FRONTIER INCIDENTS AND THE RISING TENSION IN OTTOMAN-TRANSYLVANIAN RELATIONS

Plunder raids were common in early modern borderlands and often neglected official relations between sates. However the last decade of the sixteenth century witnessed an unprecedented intensification of frontier disputes between Transylvania and

2 Among the most recent contributions on this subject see, Sándor László Tóth, *A mezőkeresztesi csata és a tizenöt éves háború́* (Szeged: Belvedere, 2000), 129-255; Liviu Cîmpeanu, "Domnul fie lăudat [...] turcii au predat cetatea: Cucerirea Lipovei Otomane de către Transilvăneni în august 1595", *Historia Urbana*, 26 (2018): 97-111; Tamás Kruppa, "Erdély és a Porta 1594–1597. évi békealkudozásainak történetéhez", *Századok* 137/3 (2003): 603-51; Florin Nicolae Ardelean, "The Siege of Timișoara from 1596 in the Works of Bernardino Beccari da Sacile", in *Politics and society in Central and South-East Europe: life under the shadow of the Ottoman Empire's expansion (15th-16th centuries)*, ed. Zsuzsanna Kopeczny (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2021), 117-25; Ioan Hațegan, *Cronologia Banatului*, vol. II/2 (Timișoara: Editura Banatul, Artpress, 2005), 101-29; Yusuf Heper, "Uzun Savaşlar Dönemïnden Bïr Kesït: Erdel'În Temeşvar'I Geri̇ Alma Teşebbüsleri̇ (1596-97)", *Karadeniz İncelemeleri Dergisi*, 30 (2021): 429-50; Aurel Decei, "Încercările lui Sigismund Báthory de a elibera Banatul şi Timișoara de turci", *Tibiscus*, 3 (1974): 171-80.

3 On the administrative organization of the *vilayet* of Timișoara at the end of the sixteenth century see, Cristina Feneșan, *Vilayetul Timișoara (1552-1716)* (Timișoara: Editura Ariergarda, 2014), 128-42; Klára Hegyi, *The Ottoman Military Organization in Hungary: Fortresses, Fortress Garrisons and Finances* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2018), 492-532.

the Ottoman Empire. Officials on both sides of the frontier accused each other of territorial transgressions and other acts of hostility. In fact the limits of authority and jurisdiction had never been very clear in this area. Many settlements were in the peculiar situation of *condominium* as illustrated by the case of Dezna estate and fortress. Reoccupied by Ottoman forces in 1565, Dezna was gifted by the sultan to the ruler of Transylvania, John Sigismund Szapolyai. The Habsburgs were able to occupy the fortress for a short while in 1566 but it was soon lost to Ottoman troops. After this confusing succession of events it remained unclear who was the rightful owner. Decades later, in 1590, Sigismund Báthory was still arguing with the Paşa of Timişoara over the ownership of this fortress and the surrounding settlements[4]. Local commanders often initiated aggressive actions into neighbouring territories neglecting treaties and capitulations. A notable frontier incident occurred on 16 September 1590, when 1.000 Ottomans form the garrisons of Ineu, Békés and Gyula attacked a small group of Transylvanian soldiers (40 foot guards and 50 horsemen) who were escorting serfs to the village of Zsáka (Jaca) in Bihor County. The Transylvanian voivode was particularly angered by this attack because the above mentioned village was part of the fiscal estate and thus under his direct authority[5]. In 1591, the Transylvanian envoy to Istanbul, Pongrácz Sennyey, was instructed to deliver the annual tribute and to complain about the many incursions and raids of Ottoman troops into Transylvanian territories. As an eloquent example of the abuses committed by Ottoman marcher lords, Sigismund Báthory mentioned the case of a Transylvanian nobleman, Nicolae Fiat who was killed on his estate while his wife was abused (tortured) during an Ottoman raid[6].

On the other side of the frontier, Ottoman commanders complained that the Transylvanians were collecting taxes in their territories. Although the situation was tense diplomatic contacts were maintained throughout this period and the sultan showed his willingness to make concessions when he removed Hassan Pasha, the beylerbeyi of Timişoara, from office[7]. Nevertheless, the situation in the borderlands did not change drastically over the following years. Several Transylvanian military officials were determined to settle maters through force and sustained the anti-ottoman policy of the young Transylvanian ruler. This attitude is reflected in a long discourse held by Ference Geszty, captain general of the Transylvanian army and commander of Deva fortress, during a diet session in early 1594. In opposition to the efforts of Chancellor Farkas Kovacsóczy and Sándor Kendi to maintain peace with the Ottomans, Geszty insisted that war was the only solution to securing the frontiers of the country[8].

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4 Imre Lukinich, *Erdély területi változásai a török hódítás korában 1541-1711* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1918), 139-53; Sándor Márki, *Aradvármegye és Arad szabad királyi város története*, vol. II (Arad, Monográphia-Bizottság, 1895), 14.

5 Márki, *Aradvármegye*, 15.

6 Andrei Veress, ed., *Documente privitoare la istoria Ardealului, Moldovei şi Ţării Româneşti*, vol. III (Bucreşti: Cartea Românească, 1931), 233-40; Dragoş-Lucian Ţigău, "Familia Fiat de Armeniş în secolele XV-XVII", *Banatica*, 14 (1996): 25.

7 Kruppa, "Erdély és a Porta", 604-05.

8 Wolffgangi de Bethlen, *Historia de rebus Transsylvanicis*, vol. III (Cibinii: Typis et

THE HESITANT BEGINNINGS OF THE CONFLICT (1594)

In the beginning of 1594, Sigismund Báthory was not yet ready to declare war on his liege lord, the Ottoman sultan, because he did not have the full support of the political elite. On one hand, an influential group of nobles, led by chancellor Kovacsóczy, was determined to keep the peace with the Ottomans and to avoid the war at all costs. On the other hand, the "marcher lords" - military officials from the western borderland, Ferenc Geszty (captain of Deva fortress), István Bocskay (captain of Oradea fortress) and Gáspár Kornis (captain of Huszt fortress) – were eager to enter the conflict and expand the western frontier of the country.

A first opportunity to take action without major risks was to support a local rebellion in the province of Timișoara. The uprising began in late January 1594 and involved a large but heterogeneous group of Christians from the Ottoman borderlands, estimated at about 5.000 fighters. Although they lacked coordination and experienced leadership, the rebels were able to take some smaller fortresses and fortified settlements in the area[9]. The most important agents who acted on behalf of the Transylvanian ruler were György Palatics (ban of Caransebeș and Lugoj)[10], Ferenc Geszty (commander of Deva fortress) and Moses Székely. Palatics and Geszty were the most important military office holders on the south-western frontier of Transylvania. According to narrative sources they both played an active role from the beginning of the rebellion and instigated the local population against the Ottomans[11]. Báthory had instructed Palatics to provide the rebels with artillery, gunpowder, ammunition, provisions and soldiers (*tormenta, pulverem, tela, globos, & quantamcunque militum manu, aliaque subsidia, que bello usui essent*)[12]. The Transylvanian involvement in the conflict was also noted by foreign reports who emphasized the hesitant atttitude of Báthory and his intention to conquere Timișoara[13]. With the help of the insurgents, Palatics and his troops took control of Făget (Facsád), but the fortress was soon returned to the Ottomans as a gesture of

sumptibus Martinii Hochmeister, 1785), 302-13.

9 Cristina Feneșan, "Din premisele luptei antiotomane a Țărilor Române în vremea lui Mihai Viteazul. Mișcările populare din 1594 în ealetul Timișoarei", *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie Cluj-Napoca*, XXVII (1985-1986): 99-137; Sima M. Ćirković, *The Serbs* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 141-42; Nenad Lemajić, "The Serbian Population of the Banat and the Western Mureș Basin", in *The cultural and historical heritage of Vojvodina in the context of classical and medieval studies*, ed. Đura Hardi (Novi Sad: Filozofski fakultet, 2015), 219-20.

10 Dragoș Lucian Țigău, "Banii de Caransebeș și Lugoj. Considerații asupra atribuțiilor și competențelor acestora (I)", *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, 16 (1998): 236.

11 Bethlen, *Historia*, 183; Sándor Szilágyi, ed., *Monumenta Comitialia Regni Transylvaniae*, vol. III (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akad. Könyvkiadó Hivatala, 1877), 309.

12 Bethlen, *Historia*, 279.

13 Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki, ed., *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor*, vol. III/2 (București: Academia Română și Ministerul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii Publice, 1888), doc. LVII, 42; doc. LVIII, 42.

good will, during the diplomatic mission of Ladislau Szalanczy to Istanbul[14].
Moses Székely, an experienced military commander who had served in the army of the Stephen Báthory in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, was sent in the Banat region in June 1594. In the camp of Vârșeț (Vršac/Versec) he recived an oath of fealty from the Serbian leaders of the uprising who were ready to recognize the leadership of Sigismund Báthory[15]. However the rebellion was soon quelled by a brutal intervention of Ottoman troops under the commnad of Sinan Pasha and the Tartars sent by Gazi Gheray II, Khan of Crimeea.
The arrival of the Tartars was of great concern for the Transylvanian estates. The Diet (estates assembly) insisted on a general levy and Pongrác Sennyey was sent in the Székely seats to oversee their mobilization. While the army was gathering at Sebeș (Mühlbach/ Szászsebes) in the southern parts of the country, the Tartars advanced towards Hungary through Polish territory along the northern frontier of Tranylvania[16]. While most of the Tartars crossed the Tisza River in Maramureș County, smaller detachements advanced into Transylvanian territory and plundered settlements along the north-western frontier, inluding the Șimleu estate of the Báthory family[17].
While the Tartars advanced towards the Danube, the political situation in Transylvania was about to take a radical turn. During the Diet of Cluj (20-28 August 1594), Sigismund Báthory brutally eliminated those who opposed the idea of war against the Ottomans. With complete control over the country and its resources, the voivode was ready to resume hostilities against the Ottomans. Once again the Banat region represented the main focus of Transylvanian military actions. Smaller detachments of Transylvanian soldiers made incursions into Ottoman territories, often reaching the Danube area[18]. A notable raid was initiated by Moses Székely and his troops in the beginning of September (*circa Festum Nativitatis Mariae*) against a convoy of ships that was transporting provisions for the Ottoman army. The Transylvanians captured 12 ships and sunk eight of them[19]. Venetian reports from this period also mentioned attempts to disrupt the provisioning of the

14 Bethlen, *Historia*, 416, 429; Szalanczy was one of the nobles who opposed the war against the Ottomans. After the Diet of Cluj (20-28 August) he was killed and his estates were confiscated. Some of his proprieties in Hunedoara county were given to György Palatics, a loyal supporter of Sigismund Báthory, SJAN Cluj, *Fond Familial Bánffy*, Seria 2, Subseria, 1b, Fascicula 83, nr. 1.

15 Veress, *Documente privitoare la istoria Ardealului*, vol. IV, doc. 45, 78; Bethlen, *Historia*, 233.

16 Tasin Gemil, *Tătarii: relații cu otomanii* și *românii* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Univ. Clujeană, 2021), 222-23.

17 Bethlen, *Historia*, 300-60.

18 Mustafa Naima mentions that one of the first hostile actions of the rebel vassals, Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldavia, was to attack the Ottoman territories along the Danube. Cf. Mustafa Naima, *Annals of the Turkish Empire from 1591 to 1659 of the Christian Era*, trans. Charles Fraser (London: John Murray, 1832), 36.

19 Josephus Trausch, ed., *Chronicon Fuchsio-Lupino-Oltardinum sive annales Hungarici et Transsilvanici*, vol. I (Coronae: Impressum per Johannem Gött, 1847).

Ottoman army and attacks against the Danube fleet performed by Transylvanians in cooperation with Serbian rebels[20].
In November 1594 an army of Turkish and Tartar troops approached the town of Lugoj and plundered the surrounding settlements. While orders were sent out for a general levy[21], Báthory dispatched 2.000 soldiers, commanded by Ferenc Geszty[22], to deal with this threat. A small detachment, led by Moses Székely, was left behind to besiege the fortress of Făget. While Geszty and his men were successful in chasing away the Ottoman besiegers, Székely suffered a wound form a culverin shot and his troops had to abandon the siege of Făget[23].
While Sigismund Báthory was still negotiating an alliance with the Habsburgs his troops had already engaged the enemy in the borderlands. As the weather was getting colder, major military operations were halted and the year 1594 ended without any significant territorial changes on the Ottoman-Transylvanian frontier.

THE TRANSYLVANIAN OFFENSIVE IN THE BANAT AND THE CONQUEST OF LIPOVA AND INEU (1595)

The beginning of 1595 was dominated by diplomatic negotiations with both the Habsburgs and the Ottomans. On 28 January a Transylvanian-Habsburg military alliance was signed in Prague and later consolidated through a matrimonial alliance between the Báthory and Habsburg families. The issue of the western frontier of Transylvania was often approached during negotiations. The voivode of Transylvania clearly expressed his intention to occupy the fortresses of Gyula, Lipova and Timișoara and asked the help of the Habsburgs in strengthening the western defensive system[24]. In the meantime a new sultan ascended to the throne, Mehmet III. The change of central leadership prompted the appointment of new officials on the frontiers of the empire. Ahmet Pasha, the new beylerbeyi of Timișoara came with peaceful intentions and promised to respect the boundaries between his province and Transylvania[25].

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20 Hurmuzaki, *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor*, vol. III/2, doc. LXVIII, 50-51; doc. LXX, 52.

21 When a general levy was proclaimed, the parish priests of the Saxon communities of Transylvania were required to provide horses, carriages and manpower for the transport of the artillery. Báthory had dispached such orders in November 1594, SJAN Sibiu, *Capitlul Evanghelic C.A. Bistrița*, nr. 241.

22 At this point Ferenc Geszty was the most influential politician and military commander at the Transylvanian court. He held many important offices like commander of Deva fortress, count (*comes, ispán*) of Hunedoara, member of the princely council and captain general of the Transylvanian army. At the end of the campaign in the Banat, Sigismund Báthory rewarded him with several new estates in Alba, Turda and Târnave counties, including the castle of Iernut (Radnot), SJAN Cluj, *Fond Familial Kornis*, Seria 1- Documente medievale, nr. 273.

23 Trausch, *Chronicon Fuchsio*, 117; Márki, *Aradvármegye*, 18-9; Bethlen, *Historia*, 507-09.

24 Veress, *Documente privitoare la istoria Ardealului*, vol. IV, doc. 85, 154-58.

25 Mihail Guboglu and Mustafa A. Mehmet, eds., *Cronici turcești privind Țările Române*, vol. I (București: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1966), 368; Mustafa A. Mehmet, ed., *Cronici turcești privind Țările Române*, vol. III (București: Editura

Although there were no significant clashes between the two neighbours during the first half of the year, a state of tension persisted in the Ottoman-Transylvanian borderlands. Ferenc Geszty, Captain General of the Transylvanian Army, died in May 1595. Sigismund Báthory avoided naming a new captain general but the command of troops on the south-western frontier was entrusted to the new ban of Caransebeș and Lugoj, György Borbély[26]. The Transylvanian ruler was preparing to wage war on three fronts and dispatched troops to his allies in Moldavia and Wallachia but also in the Banat region. Besides the regular (fortress garrisons and the banners of local nobles) and irregular troops (free hajdúks) usually concentrated in the frontier area, Sigismund also dispatched troops from the hinterland. For example, Saxon militias from the town of Sighișoara were sent to enforce the garrisons from the south-western frontier[27]. Foreign mercenaries were also mobilized in this area. Cossack envoys had arrived at the court of Alba Iulia and offered their services to Sigismund Báthory[28]. It remains unclear if the Transylvanian voivode hired Cossack mercenaries in this phase of the war but sources mention them in the following years among the troops who fought against the Turks in the Banat region[29].

In the summer of 1595 hostilities between the Ottomans and the Transylvanians resumed[30]. György Borbély took the first initiative and occupied two smaller Ottoman fortresses: *Bokcsa* (Bocșa) and *Varsocs* (Vârșeț), before heading for Alba Iulia to attend the weeding of Sigismund Báthory and Maria Christierna of Austria. Taking advantage of this situation the Ottomans mounted a counteroffensive, retook the two fortresses and raided Transylvanian settlements along the Mureș valley up to the market town of Dobra (Jofö) in Hunedoara County[31]. When news of the raid reached the court of Alba Iulia a vanguard of 1.500 soldiers was sent to

Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1980), 29; Kruppa, "Erdély és a Porta", 607.

26 Zsolt Trócsányi, *Erdély központi kormányzata*, *1540-1690* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980), 337-38; *Documente privitoare la istoria Ardealului*, vol. IV, doc. 121, 226 and doc. 122, 228.

27 Hațegan, *Cronologia*, 107; *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor*, vol. XII, eds. Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki and Nicolae Iorga (București: Academia Română și Ministerul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii Publice, 1903), 27.

28 Veress, *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor*, vol. III/2, doc. CIV, 85; Bethlen, *Historia*, 531.

29 In a letter issued on 14 June 1597, Chancellor István Jósika mentions the Cossack mercenaries from the garrison of Lipova. Cf. Costin Feneșan, ed., *Diplomatarium Banaticum*, vol. II (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2016), 188-91.

30 During the months of June and July Sigismund Báthory issued orders for the Saxon parish priests to prepare the means of transportation for the artillery of the Transylvanian army, SJAN Sibiu, *Episcopia Bisericii Evanghelice C.A. din Transilvania*, Colecția de documente episcopale, nr. 299; SJAN Sibiu, *Capitlul Evanghelic C.A. Bistrița*, nr. 247.

31 Bethlen, *Historia*, vol. III, 580-82; Sándor Szilágyi, ed., *Monumenta Hungariae Historica, Scriptores*, vol. XXX: *Szamosközy István történeti maradványai 1542-1608*, IV: *Vegyes följegyzések* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Történelmi Bizottsága, 1880), 50; Cîmpeanu, "Domnul fie lăudat", 100-02.

deal with the threat. The Ottomans avoided a direct confrontation and returned to their fortresses. In the next months the Transylvanian campaign followed the usual pattern, focusing on taking control of fortified settlements and engaging in occasional skirmishes with enemy troops. Vărădia de Mureș (Tótvárad) was taken without significant casualties during a single night. Afterwards troops from the hinterland joined the borderland army of Borbély before heading for the fortress of Făget, their next objective. In this phase of the campaign, the Transylvanian army from the Banat was estimated at 4.000 soldiers including: noble cavalry, peasant militia, Saxon militias, borderland garrisons and free hajdúks[32].

Făget[33] had been and important target for Transylvanian attacks during the previous year and had a significant strategic importance because it was located on the route connecting the Banat of Caransebeș and Lugoj with Hunedoara County. A strong Ottoman garrison in such a position was a constant threat to the Transylvanian troops operating on the south-western frontier. After a few days of siege the Ottomans surrendered unaware of the fact that a strong relieving force was coming to aid them. The Pasha of Timișoara and the commanders from Lipova and Ineu arrived in the vicinity of Făget with an army of about 8.000 soldiers when the fortress was already under Transylvanian control. What followed was the only significant pitched battle of this conflict, concluded with a decisive Transylvanian victory. According to narrative sources Borbély took advantage of his superior fire power causing many casualties among the Ottomans. The Pasha of Timișoara was wounded during this battle and barely escaped while many other Ottoman commanders were killed or captured[34].

After this significant victory, Borbély moved on towards his next objective, Lipova. This fortress had a major strategic importance for the Ottomans as main defensive point on the north-eastern boundaries of the *vilayet*, situated on the main route connecting the Banat with Transylvania, along the Mureș valley. At the end of the sixteenth century Lipova was defended by 227 paid soldiers but the total number of defenders was probably increased to 350 men[35]. The Transylvanian army was able to take the outer wooden rampart during the first day and moved their artillery in a favourable position close to the walls of the citadel. The Ottoman garrison surrendered after five days of siege (21-25 august 1595)[36].

The conquest of Ineu[37] fortress was a more difficult task. Sigismund Báthory had

32 Bethlen, *Historia*, vol. III, 584; Decei, "Încercările", 174; Márki, *Aradvármegye*, 19.

33 Situated on the banks of Bega River, the fortress of Făget consisted of a stone castle surrounded by a wooden rampart and a 20-30 m wide and 3 m deep ditch. At the time it was defended by a regular garrison of 140-150 soldiers, Zsuzsanna Kopeczny, "Medieval Noble Residences in the Danube-Tisza-Maros Region during the Ottoman Wars", *Annales Universitatis Apulensis. Series Historica* 21/2 (2017): 25-7.

34 Cîmpeanu, "Domnul fie lăudat", 103.

35 Hegyi, *The Ottoman Military*, 519-20.

36 Cîmpeanu, "Domnul fie lăudat", 105-08.

37 Ineu became an important borderland fortification in the context of the Ottoman expansion in the area, during the sixteenth century. All factions who exercised control over this fortress (Transylvanians, Habsburgs and Ottomans) consolidated and expanded

recalled many of his soldiers from the western frontier as he was preparing a major campaign in Wallachia. The siege of Ineu began on 16 September and was entrusted to soldiers from Lugoj (2.000) and Oradea (1.000) under the command of István Békés. With a garrison of about 700 men, the Ottomans were prepared to repel any direct assaults. The Transylvanians made arrangements for a long siege and tried to change the course of the river which was supplying the defensive ditch. Abundant rains foiled their plans and the attempt to dig mining galleries. Eventually the besiegers were able to overcome this obstacle by filling the ditch with debris and moved their artillery closer to the walls of the inner citadel. The Transylvanians organized a general assault on 15 October but were unable to defeat the Ottoman garrison. A few days later the ban of Caransebeș and Lugoj arrived with reinforcements. Under these circumstances the Ottomans decided to negotiate their surrender and Borbély, the new commander of the besieging force, agreed to their conditions. On 21 October the garrison left the fortress with 60 carriages of goods and various belongings. Although the Transylvanian commander had guaranteed their safety, the Ottomans were attacked by a large group of free haydúks[38].

By the end of the year Transylvania was in control of a large part of Zarand and Arad counties, which had been lost to the Ottomans in 1552. Among the 13 fortresses and fortified settlements occupied during 1595 three (Făget, Lipova and Ineu) required sieges, while the others were abandoned, surrendered or taken by force through a single assault[39]. The Transylvanians achieved significant results without concentrating a large military force in the borderlands (3-4.000 soldiers). The Pasha of Timișoara, on the other hand, was compelled to send troops in Hungary (Esztergom, Hatvan and Szolnok)[40] and was thus unable to make a decisive move against Transylvania.

CONCLUSION

Sigismund Báthory used the territorial disputes on the south-western frontier of his country as *casus belli* against his liege lord, the Ottoman sultan. During 1594 and 1595 the Ottoman-Transylvanian conflict in the Banat made a gradual transition from a local borderland confrontation to open war between the two states. After a successful campaign in 1595 the Transylvanian Prince was bitterly disappointed by two futile attempts to conquer Timișoara in 1596 and 1597. In 1596 Prince Sigismund was forced to retreat after 14 days of siege although he had mobilized an impressive

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the fortress; Florin Mărginean, Zsolt Csók, Keve László, Victor Sava, "Unveiling History. Archaeological Excavations in the Fortress of Ineu (Arad County)", *Ziridava. Studia Archeologica*, 31 (2017): 241-79.

38 Márki, *Aradvármegye*, 23; Ferencz Toldy, ed., *Monumenta Hungariae Historica, Scriptores*, vol. XVII: *Baronyai Decsi János Magyar historiája 1592-1598* (Pest: Eggenberger, 1866), 224-29.

39 These territorial loses were acknowledged with great concern by Ottoman authorities, realizing that Timișoara was now vulnerable to a direct attack from Transylvania, Naima, *Annals*, 112.

40 Tóth, *A mezőkeresztesi csata*, 173; Hațegan, *Cronologia*, 108.

military force under his personal command[41]. In the following year the command of the Transylvanian army was entrusted to Chancellor István Josika but the siege, although considerably longer, had the same outcome[42].

An overview of the military operations from 1594 and 1595 seems to indicate that, at the time, the Transylvanian army was proficient in irregular warfare. With a small concentration of troops (no more than 4.000 soldiers), local Transylvanian commanders (Ferenc Geszty, György Palatics, Moses Székely and György Borbély) were able to organize successful forays into Ottoman territory and occupy smaller fortifications, which were often abandoned by their defenders or easily taken after a single assault. However, well supplied larger fortifications were very hard to take by force. Besiegers were usually successful only when they convinced the defenders to surrender willingly as in the case of Făget, Lipova and Ineu fortresses. It is also important to underline that, during these two years, the Ottomans were mostly on the defensive and the only military forces involved in the conflict were local garrisons and the Tartars arrived in August 1594. Their major offensive initiatives were limited to a siege attempt of Lugoj (November 1594) and a raid in Hunedoara County (August 1595).The occasional raids organized by local garrisons had limited impact on the balance of war but were often used as propaganda tools. Foreign reports but also borderland commanders in their official correspondence describe, sometimes in great detail, the results of successful attacks against the enemy. The capture of important officers[43], military insignia but also the value of war spoils are among the most common elements in the narratives surrounding the conduct of irregular warfare in the borderlands.

Following a common pattern in that period, the Transylvanian elite was divided between two political options, the maintenance of Ottoman suzerainty or the alliance with the Habsburgs. It is worth mentioning that in this particular crisis, the most important military office holders from the western frontier (Ferenc Geszty - captain of Deva fortress, István Bocskay - captain of Oradea fortress and Gáspár Kornis - captain of Huszt fortress) were the main supporters of the war against the Ottomans. Their position can be explained by their official but also personal interest in the expansion of the borderlands. Sigismund Báthory relied on a network of powerful nobles who supported his anti-ottoman plans. They were richly rewarded by the ruler with proprieties confiscated from the disloyal nobles eliminated after the Diet of Cluj (20-28 August 1594) and with the newly acquired territories on the south-western frontier[44].

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41 Ardelean, "The Siege of Timișoara", 117-23.

42 The second siege of Timișoara began during the second half of October and the Transylvanian army retreated by the end of November 1597, Decei, "Încercările", 179; Hațegan, *Cronologia*, 125.

43 On 30 March 1595 for example, Gáspár Kornis wrote that his hajdúks (*Heyduggen*) captured the Pasha of Gyula during a raid. Nicolae Iorga, *Acte și fragmente cu privire la istoria românilor*, vol. I (București: Imprimeria Statului, 1895), 139.

44 Gáspár Kornis, for example, received the fortress and estate of Dezna in 1597. Chancellor István Jósika was rewarded in a similar manner, with proprieties in Hunedoara and Arad counties. Márki, *Aradvármegye*, 29.

By establishing close ties with the rulers of Wallachia and Moldavia Sigismund Báthory secured the southern and eastern frontiers of his country but he also took commitments of military support. Thus, he was faced with the difficult task of fighting on three fronts. This is the main reason why his 1595 campaign in the Banat, although successful, had limited strategic consequences.

ABBREVIATIONS

SJAN: Serviciul Județean al Arhivelor Naționale (Romania)

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SJAN Cluj
Fond Familial Bánffy
Fond Familial Kornis
SJAN Sibiu
Capitlul Evanghelic C. A. Bistrița
Episcopia Bisericii Evanghelice C.A. din Transilvania

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