



Zsuzsanna Cziráki

Prince Gábor Bethlen's Visits to Brassó as Reflected in the Town Account Books¹

This study deals with one of the most remarkable periods in the history of the Principality of Transylvania, the reign of Gábor Bethlen. At the center of the study is an occurrence during Bethlen's reign that might be described as ordinary: the reception of the Transylvanian prince in Brassó, one of the most important towns of his land and of the territorially autonomous Saxon *Universitas* (Königsboden). As an organic part of the princely services encumbering the Saxon towns, hosting the prince was a basic component of the relationship between the Saxon communities and the prince. Accordingly, a more thorough understanding of these events also sheds light on the prevailing relationship between princely power and the Saxon communities. The basis for the analysis is provided by a distinctive group of sources, the account books of the chief economic official of Brassó, the *Stadthann* (also *villicus*, *quaestor*). The entries and comments contained in the account books help to familiarize us with the ceremonial framework for the distinguished guest's stay in Brassó, the organizational tasks performed by the town as well as the mechanisms of town administration behind them. At the same time, they also offer a glimpse into the eating habits of contemporary Brassó and the lifestyle of the locals, thereby bringing into proximity the everyday life of a seventeenth-century East Central European urban community.

Keywords: Brassó (Kronstadt, Braşov), Gábor Bethlen, Saxon Land, Court of the Princes of the Principality of Transylvania

Sources and Aims

Examining the rich documentary materials of the state and ecclesiastical archives in Brassó (Kronstadt, Braşov), we are assured time and again of the great treasures hidden in the town's collections (not to mention those of the other Saxon towns in Transylvania), which span almost eight centuries. Stepping beyond the bounds of local historiography, and touching upon numerous scholarly areas relating to the history of Transylvania and the entire region, we

1 The research was carried out with the support of the European Union and Hungary, with the co-financing of the European Social Fund (under the enhanced project "Nemzeti Kiválóság Program – Hazai hallgatói, illetve kutatói személyi támogatást biztosító rendszer kidolgozása és működtetése konvergencia program", project number TÁMOP 4.2.4.A/2-11-1-2012-0001).

can increase our knowledge here, whether dealing with diplomatic history or even the history of everyday life. The following study focuses attention on the era of the principality and on one of its clearly delimited, and in many aspects remarkable, slices: the reign of Gábor Bethlen. Exceptionally, however, at the center of the investigation are not questions of event, military or diplomatic history but merely an event from the era of the Transylvanian princes that could be labeled ordinary: the hosting of the prince, Gábor Bethlen, by one of his country's major towns, Brassó. As an organic part of the services owed by the Saxon towns,² the prince's reception was one of the fundamental components of his relationship with the Saxon communities; accordingly, a more thorough understanding of the event sheds light on the prevailing relationship between the princely regime and the Saxon communities as well. Moreover, on numerous points it complements our knowledge about the event-history of the era, its economic situation, the workings of Saxon autonomy, and even the structure of the town and the princely court.

A distinctive group of sources forms the basis of the research: the collection of the account books of Brassó,³ covering the period of Gábor Bethlen's reign between the years 1613–1617 and 1620–1629. Even despite the interrupted sequence of events, they are extremely well-suited for familiarizing us with conditions in Brassó, the Barcaság region⁴ and, from a number of aspects,

2 The Transylvanian Saxons arrived in Transylvania in the second half of the twelfth century at the invitation of the Hungarian king Géza II. Their hospes settlements, formed by decree of the ruler, enjoyed numerous privileges, receiving, among other things, tax concessions, rights of self-determination, and commercial privileges, and in return they owed the ruler specific services. For more details see Karl Kurt Klein, "Geysanum und Andreanum. Fragmentarische Betrachtungen zur Frühgeschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen," in *Zur Rechts- und Siedlungsgeschichte der Siebenbürger Sachsen*, Siebenbürgisches Archiv. Archiv des Vereins für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde. Dritte Folge 8 (Cologne: Böhlau, 1971), 54–62; Konrad Gündisch, *Siebenbürgen und die Siebenbürger Sachsen*, Studienbuchreihe der Stiftung Ostdeutscher Kulturrat, Band 8 (Munich: Langen Müller, 1998), 28–43; Georg Daniel Teutsch, *Die Geschichte der Siebenbürger Sachsen für das sächsische Volk*, vol. 1 (Hermannstadt: Druck und Verlag von W. Krafft, 1899), 1–40.

3 Arhivele Naționale ale României Filială Brașov [Romanian National Archives, Brașov Branch Archive] (ANR FB). Fondul Primăria Brașov. Seria socoteli alodiale – socoteli vilicale – *Stadtbannenrechnungen*, vols. 19–23. In Brassó the account book contains the itemized list of the annual expenses and revenues of the town official administering the town's financial matters (*Stadtbann* or *villicus*) in German, which, as taken down by the notary and in bound form, were read aloud at the town leadership's accounting meeting at the end of the administrative year—the day after Christmas. Characteristic of the book-keeping of the Brassó Saxons is the extreme thoroughness of the entries: every expense was recorded down to the last denar, while the items were as a rule provided with explanations.

4 Possessing substantial economic resources and through its influential merchants and patricians, Brassó was considered one of the key communities of the Saxon Universitas (*Universitas Saxonum*). Its prestige was increased by the fact that by the end of the sixteenth century it had expanded its leading role among the

Transylvania. The inherent possibilities were already discovered in the nineteenth century by Saxon archivists and historians, who even set about publishing the various town account reports as part of the series *Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Kronstadt*.⁵ However, this project only took the analysis of this immense quantity of materials up to the end of the sixteenth century, and thus the account books of the seventeenth century remained unmapped, occasionally cropping up only as supplementary sources in one study or another. They have yet to be systematically explored, nor have the possibilities inherent in the collection yet been completely exploited. In the course of my research I have supplemented the richly detailed information of the account books with additional data from extant chronicles and archival materials.

The Transylvanian Princes in the Saxon Towns

Receiving and hosting the prince, that is, the ruler's right to *descensus*, had been included among the obligations of the Saxon urban communities from the very beginning; at most only the extent of obligation changed.⁶ The princely visits of the early seventeenth century are interesting from a number of angles. On the one hand, in the Principality of Transylvania, too, we can observe the phenomenon, medieval in origin, of the "itinerant household," in other words, in spite of Gyulafehérvár turning gradually into a princely capital, the household frequently visited one or another of the country's major towns. Most of the time these occasions were prompted by some reason of national importance (a partial or full diet, diplomatic negotiations, the administration of justice), with the chosen urban community bearing the brunt of the financial burdens.⁷ On the other hand, it should not be overlooked either that the burden of hosting the guests and the associated expenses, which could amount to several thousand

settlements of the Barcaság region into almost unlimited influence. Based on these criteria Saxon historians have an inclination to compare the crown of the Barcaság, Brassó, to a Swiss canton of the era; cf. Maja Philippi, *Kronstadt* (Brașov-Kronstadt: Aldus Verlag, 2006).

5 *Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Kronstadt in Siebenbürgen. Rechnungen aus dem Archiv der Stadt Kronstadt*, vols. 1–3 (Kronstadt: Commission bei H. Zeidner, 1886–1896).

6 For the text of the medieval collection of regulations applying to the Transylvanian Saxons—commonly known as the Andreanum—see Franz Zimmermann and Carl Werner, eds., *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen*, vol. 1 (Hermannstadt: Krafft und Drotleff, 1892), 34–35.

7 Iván Bertényi, Gyula Benda, and János Póto, eds., *Magyar udvari rendtartás. Utasítások és rendeletek 1617–1708*, Millenniumi Magyar Történelem. Források (Budapest: Osiris, 2001), 9; Péter Szabó, "A kihelyezett udvarok az Erdélyi Fejedelemség hatalmi harcaiban," in *Idővel paloták... Magyar udvari kultúra a 16–17. században*, ed. Nóra G. Etényi and Ildikó Horn (Budapest: Balassi, 2005), 314–15.

forints, fell upon the wealthier towns that were amply protected by privileges: the tax-paying towns (those paying the annual tax to the princely treasury in one lump sum) and those of the Saxon Land. In Transylvania the urban communities equipped for receiving the sovereign—particularly the Saxons, who formed the country's third estate—possessed a wide-ranging autonomy. In many cases they construed the obligation to receive the court as a violation of their privileges and as a rude and unlawful intrusion into the life of the community—not always without reason. Thus, accommodating the ruler represented a constant topic of debate, in everyday life and in the diets. It was the Saxons in particular who led the way in disputing the ruler's right to *descensus*, since the overwhelming majority of the major towns were located in the autonomous Saxon Land.⁸

Hosting the prince, therefore, met with great resistance on the part of the selected party. Even according to modest estimates the expenses amounted to several hundred, and not infrequently several thousand, forints, which is by no means surprising if we take into account how many servitors belonged to the court of the prince and his wife. Based on the instructions sent by Gábor Bethlen to his seneschal (*hopmester*), Gáspár Csúti, the persons belonging to the prince's court consisted of the following groups: those engaged in the preparation and serving of food and drink (master cooks, stewards, dapifers, cup-bearers, wine-pourers, attending servants and other kitchen servants without specific descriptions); the guards of the rooms used by the prince; the retainers of the prince and his wife and other courtiers, who according to the custom of the aristocratic courts were chosen from among the young members of noble families; and the princely guardsmen overseeing the task of maintaining order.⁹ To them we must add further the councilors and “principal men of the court”¹⁰ participating in the prince's daily activity, who themselves were most often present with their families and personal households and who, depending on their affairs of state, stayed by the prince's side during his journey as well. The representatives of the court's religious life, scholarship and entertainment (preachers, doctors, scholars, students, musicians) as well as the armed members of the princely bodyguard

also belonged to the entourage. We have no certain data at our disposal about the number of “courtiers,” nor do we know how many of them the prince took with him during his journeys. Allowing for all of this, however, it may be taken for certain that the size of a given company could reach sizes as large as several hundred people. This is supported by a request made by the Saxons in 1613, in which they attempted to cap the size of the prince's party at 400 persons.¹¹

It is generally known that in 1613 the accession of Gábor Bethlen for the first time in many years brought to the throne of Transylvania a ruler who sought to remedy the tension between the princely authority and the Saxon nation through negotiation.¹² It is also evident that the Saxons had played no small role in Bethlen's election.¹³ Despite this, the Saxons were unable to impose their will on the new prince, and on numerous points (including with regard to hosting the prince) they were forced to compromise. During Bethlen's reign the customs regulating the reception of the ruler in the Saxon Land and all of Transylvania, medieval in origin but nonetheless evolving to completion over the course of the early modern era, became fixed. The question of accommodating the ruler also sheds light on Bethlen's ambition to break the Saxon estate resistance in the interests of strengthening the central authority. But how was all this realized in practice?

The Prince and His Retinue in Brassó

When preparing for a princely visit to Brassó,¹⁴ Gábor Bethlen used the ancient southern Transylvanian road connecting Gyulafehérvár with the Barcaság, the successor of which remains to the present day one of the busiest routes of the Transylvanian railway and road network. This is no wonder, since the road

11 “A szász universitas feltételei Bethlen Gábor szebeni telelése tárgyában. 1613. december 17,” in *Erdélyi országgyűlési emlékek*, vol. 6, 383.

12 For the antecedents and the significance of Szeben, the Saxon town occupied by Gábor Báthory in December 1610, cf. Harald Roth, *Hermannstadt. Kleine Geschichte einer Stadt in Siebenbürgen* (Cologne–Weimar–Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2006); on the occupation of the town, see Georg Kraus, *Erdélyi krónika 1608–1665*, trans. Sándor Vogel (Budapest: Ómagyar Baráti Társaság Kiadói Részlege, 1994), 70; Teutsch, *Die Geschichte der Siebenbürger Sachsen*, 327–62.

13 For more on the beginnings of relations between Brassó and Gábor Bethlen see Zsuzsanna Cziráki, “Brassó és az erdélyi szászok szerepe Bethlen Gábor fejedelem trónfoglalásában (1611–1613),” *Századok* 145, no. 4 (2011): 847–76.

14 Gábor Bethlen's visits to Brassó: April 3–7, 1614; March 5–8, 1616; June 29–July 3, 1619; August 4–11, 1622; September 12–19, 1624; April 11–16, 1626; February 27–March 7 (?), 1627; August 2(?)–13, 1627; February 6–13, 1628; February 6–11, 1629.

8 “A szász universitas feltételei Bethlen Gábor szebeni telelése tárgyában. 1613. december 17,” in *Erdélyi országgyűlési emlékek*, vol. 6, ed. Sándor Szilágyi (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia–Athenaeum Ny., 1880), 383; “Az 1613. októberi országgyűlés törvényei,” in *ibid.*, 361; “A gyulafehérvári országgyűlés határozatai. 1625. május 1–29. Propositiones,” in *ibid.*, vol. 8., 254–57; *Magyar Törvénytár. 1540–1848. évi erdélyi törvények. Approbata Constitutiones*, III. R. LXXXI/I. art. 153.

9 Transylvanian Prince Gábor Bethlen's Instructions to His Seneschal, Gáspár Csúti. Kolozsvár, 1622/23, in *Magyar udvari rendtartás*, 69–77.

10 *Ibid.*

arrives from the direction of the Hungarian Great Plain, passing by important economic centers and ensuring numerous points of contact to territories of both commercial and strategic importance, Wallachia, Moldavia and, via these, the Ottoman Empire and Poland. Located along the route is one of the most significant princely estates, Fogaras, which often served as Bethlen's place of residence and, as we shall see below, was of especial importance in connection with his journeys to Brassó as well.

In addition to the route, the direction of travel may also be called typical. Gábor Bethlen's visits to Brassó were regularly preceded by stays of varying length in Fogaras. He would enter the Barcaság region with his entourage from the Fogarasföld area, along the course of the river Olt, most often at Feketehalom.¹⁵ Following a brief stay in Brassó—leaving the Barcaság at Prázsmár¹⁶—he set out for the Szeklerland (Székelyföld). He deviated from this custom only a few times (1616, 1619, 1628 and 1629), when he approached the town from the direction of the Szeklerland and departed in the direction of Fogaras.¹⁷ The reason for the change is to be found in the handling of affairs, as a rule military ones, connected to the Szeklerland, as well as in the fact that the prince, suffering from serious complaints stemming from his advanced illness at the end of his reign, would have himself treated at the medicinal baths¹⁸ located at the border of the Szeklerland and the Barcaság prior to his stay in Brassó. Theoretically, the prince could request entry into any town of the land on an unlimited number of occasions. Because he went to war in person as well, Bethlen naturally was frequently on the road, though in peacetime, too, he often exited the walls of the princely seat of Gyulafehérvár. His visit to Brassó nevertheless did not mean more than once a year, with only the year 1627 forming an exception to this, when he with his court visited out the town twice, in April and August. The duration of his stay was not long if we take into consideration that elsewhere (Fogaras, the Szeklerland) he might spend even weeks: the number of days spent

in Brassó in general lasted four to five days,¹⁹ deviating from this in 1616 (six days), 1622 (eleven) and 1628 (eight).

In every case the princely visit took place according to the same timetable. Gábor Bethlen in a letter or through his quartermaster informed the magistrates of Brassó of his intended arrival as well as the expected date of entry. We have already mentioned that he and his household as a rule stayed in Fogaras before leaving for the Barcaság. Based on the chroniclers of Brassó and the *Stadthann's* account books it appears that a lively traffic between the prince and the town leadership already existed before Bethlen set foot in the Barcaság: the princely and town post flowed back and forth between Brassó and Fogaras, and the town's magistrates also often paid their respects at the court in Fogaras in wagons loaded with gifts. A high-ranking official of Brassó awaited the prince at Feketehalom and escorted him into the town with all solemnity.²⁰ It is perhaps not an exaggeration to interpret all this as the diplomatic maneuvering between the town and the princely regime having already begun outside the town walls: the ruler's personal and not infrequently oppressive presence (between 1613 and 1616, for example, the people of Brassó, secretly in league with the Habsburgs, strove to overthrow Gábor Bethlen's rule²¹) included the possibility of settling the town's affairs directly before the highest forum of power, the prince. In March 1614 councilor Michael Forgatsch hastened to Fogaras to present the prince the overdue Saxon tax.²² Two other councilors also spent ten days there: Johannes Benkner, who had previously acted as Bethlen's legate in Vienna, and the universally respected elderly Andreas Hegyes. The hasty delivery of the tax

19 "Bethlen Gábor Rhédey Ferencnek. Prázsmár, 1619. június 28," in *Bethlen Gábor fejedelem kiadatlan politikai levelei*, ed. Sándor Szilágyi (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1879), 117.

20 The notables of Brassó delegated to Fogaras or Feketehalom at the prince's invitation in the period under examination: in 1614 Michael Forgatsch, Johannes Benkner, and András Hegyes (ANR FB *Stadthannenrechnungen*, vol. 20, 355–56); in 1616 Christianus Hirscher, Stephen Filstich, the town notary, Christoph Greissing and András Hegyes (Ibid., 610, 612–13); from 1618 and 1619 there is no data; in 1622 the judge, Christianus Hirscher (Ibid., vol. 22, 99); in 1624 Michael Schmidt, and later Andreas Hegyes and Paul Bánfy (Ibid., 599, 603); in 1626 Georg Draudt (Ibid., vol. 23, 72); in February and July 1627 Georg Nadescher (Ibid., vol. 21, 309, 416); in 1628 Michael Draudt and Stadthann Andreas Gorgias traveled to meet the prince, who was arriving from the Szeklerland, and later Paul Bánfy and Michael Schmidt (Ibid., 529, 568); in 1629 town Stadthann Andreas Gorgias and Michael Schmidt, and later Georg Nadescher and Michael Goldschmidt (Ibid., vol. 19, 430, 460).

21 For more detail, see Teréz Oborni, "Bethlen Gábor és a nagyszombati szerződés (1615)," *Századok* 144, no. 4 (2011): 877–914; Zsuzsanna Cziráki, "Megjegyzések Erich Lassota zu Steblau 1614. évi titkos erdélyi megbízatásához," *Fons – Forráskutatás és Történeti Segédanyagok* 19, no. 3 (2012): 321–61.

22 It is also part of the story that Michael was attacked by robbers en route and was forced to turn back with the money; ANR FB *Stadthannenrechnungen*, vol. 20, 355.

15 Ger. Zeiden, Rom. Codlea.

16 Ger. Tartlau, Rom. Prejmer.

17 Ger. Fogrisch, Rom. Făgăraș.

18 Most likely these must have been the springs rising in the vicinity of the villages of Zajzon, Tatrang, Pürkerec, located on the border of the Szeklerland and the Barcaság, as well as Száldobos in the Erdővidék region. Their mineral-rich waters have been used since the Middle Ages for medicinal purposes. The prince's bath cure at Száldobos in 1629 is recounted in greater detail by Don Diego de Estrada in his memoirs: László Makkai, ed., *Bethlen Gábor emlékezete* (Budapest: Magyar Helikon, 1980), 252. See also ANR FB *Stadthannenrechnungen*, vol. 19, 547.

arrears was incidentally a recurring element of the princely visits: on February 13, 1616 councilors Christianus Hirscher and Stephan Filstich traveled to meet Bethlen for the same reason.²³

Also aiming to win the prince's goodwill were those gifts with which the people of Brassó paid their respects to the prince already prior to his arrival in the town. Especially eye-catching is the zeal with which the people of Brassó attempted to actively seek out their prince when the price limitations were decreed in Transylvania. Brassó in fact regularly exceeded the centrally imposed limitations on goods production and trade, and it tried to mitigate the consequences stemming from this with circumspect courting.²⁴ The gifts typically were food items considered delicacies: choice salted and fresh fish, eastern luxury items (lemons, lemon juice, oranges, figs, pomegranates, sherbet, raisins), as well as local fruits appropriate to the season (apples, pears, plums, cherries and walnuts). Because of the varying quantity and composition of the goods presented, although it is difficult to generalize, it still can be established that total value hovered somewhere around ten forints—a trifling item in the budget for the princely party that came to several hundred or several thousand forints.²⁵ In addition to the gifts of respect, providing room and board for several days and the per diem of the magistrates attending to town business and the personnel assigned to them (cook, doorward or manservant, and additionally one or more town messengers and carters) represented an additional expense. For not only was the prince entitled to first-rank hospitality, as the data of the account books reveal, but also the lords of Brassó assigned to him. Tenderloin, eye of round, fowl, bacon, vinegar, bread and rolls, parsley, spices, salted fish, fruit, wine and candles were included in the package provided as provisions for their onward journey, the value of which ranged from 1.11 to 4.5 forints depending on the number of travelers and days spent away—generally 3–5 days. To this was added the travelers' per diem, recorded under *trinkgeld* (literally “drinking money”),

which in the period under examination did not change, amounting to 25 denars a day in the case of magistrates, and 4 denars for their staff.²⁶

Gábor Bethlen's visit counted as a relatively rare event in the town of Brassó, albeit one demanding great efforts. In propitious cases it also offered the opportunity to further influence “His Excellency” in Brassó's favor, and thus it is no wonder that the reception of the prince's court was accompanied by feverish preparations in the town. The prince's arrival, which in addition often coincided with the stay of foreign envoys in Brassó and the sendoff of Transylvanian envoys, demanded the precise organization needed for housing, feeding and moving a large-sized group, and this could be carried out only through careful preparations. It appears the coordination of the work was concentrated in the hands of the *Stadthann*, the town official who was also responsible for handling the town's monetary resources. It was he who controlled and coordinated the work of those entrusted²⁷ with partial tasks, and paid the costs of the purchased products or service against receipts.

Needless to say, the most important question was the lodging and feeding of the guests. We know that the town had its own inn, which is mentioned in the sources by the name *Stadthoff*. The earliest mention of it dates from the early sixteenth century, at this time still referred to one of the buildings on Saint John's Street (*Szent János utca*).²⁸ The inn must soon have proven too cramped, for according to the testimony of the town account books in 1573 the Brassó council purchased two other buildings for a similar purpose, one on Kolostor utca²⁹ for 975 forints, and one on the Rose Market Square (*Rózsapiac*)³⁰ for 100 forints. An additional costly remodeling, amounting to 568.77 forints, was carried out in order to make the buildings better suited for the purpose. Lacking other data, we may assume that it was here that the town's official guests were housed in the period under examination.³¹ For Gábor Bethlen and those around him, however, these two buildings must not have offered satisfactory

23 Ibid., 610.

24 In 1628, in the two months prior to the prince's February visit, lively negotiations were already underway between Brassó and the prince, as part of which the prince was provided with gifts of respect, as was András Kapi, entrusted with handling matters concerning the price limitations of the townspeople of Brassó; ANR FB *Stadthannenrechnungen*, vol. 21, 529. This procedure was repeated almost to the letter in 1629; Ibid., vol. 19, 438.

25 The list of invitation gifts sent to the prince on the occasion of his 1629 visit may be labeled typical: sturgeon for five forints, 36 lemons for 3.60 forints and five lovely pomegranates for 1.25 forints, a total of 9.85 forints; Ibid., 430.

26 Ibid., vol. 20, 612.

27 We know barely a handful of them by name from the period examined here. In 1614 two Brassó agents, Andreß Graser and Merten Kloscher, saw to the fodder needed for the horses arriving with the princely household. In 1624 Magistrate Martin Heltner along with Johannes Klein and Andreas Altstetter were charged with obtaining the basic kitchen supplies. ANR FB *Stadthannenrechnungen*, vol. 22, 611.

28 Johannsgasse, Stradă Sfintul Ioan.

29 Klostergasse, Stradă Mureşenilor.

30 Rosenanger, Prundul Rozelor; more recently Piața George Enescu.

31 Erich Jekelius, ed., *Das Burzenland. I. Kronstadt* (Kronstadt: Verlag Burzenländer Sächs. Museum, 1928): 68.

accommodations, in terms of either the number of rooms or their quality.³² In examining the demands we may rely on the prince's very own words as well, since—in connection with his anticipated stay in Segesvár in early 1614—he himself articulated to his quartermaster³³ the kinds of rooms he needed: a dining hall, a stately reception room, a council chamber, along with numerous rooms for himself and his wife. He requested a large wooden structure for the kitchen, while he had his household placed in separate lodgings befitting their rank and office.³⁴

The Brassó sources make only scattered mention of the assignment of quarters. What can be concluded, however, is that the townspeople could satisfy the demands relating to the various functions of the princely household only if they divided the venues among themselves, i.e. the wealthier citizens who were capable of accommodating guests. It was the town patricians, most frequently the town judge himself, who assumed the responsibility for receiving the prince and his closest companions. The court dignitaries accompanying the prince and their retinue (chancellor, governor, members of the princely council) were accorded lodgings appropriate to their social standing likewise in the homes of the rich citizens, while the court figures of lower status were lodged with the town homeowners in groups. Because the town, ringed with massive walls and bastions, had a limited capacity to receive guests, the field outside the town walls and the outer farms of the wealthy citizens offered the possibility of accommodating larger groups—even in tents.³⁵

To ensure the princely court was served without incident, beyond the advance assignment of lodgings numerous other everyday demands had to be taken care of well in advance. The complicated process of replenishing stocks encompassed numerous products, and for this reason only items used in major quantities will be examined here. The firewood necessary for cooking and, in cold seasons, heating, was purchased from the locals or was brought from the forests under the Brassó town management; in the latter case a separate woodcutting team was employed to cut and process them.³⁶ The town also had to make certain that an adequate quantity of wood was available at every lodging place, since in the event of a shortage the lodgers used up the host's own supply. If abuse of this kind happened to occur, the town reimbursed them for the damage done by the guests.³⁷ Care of the horses arriving with the guest party also presented the townsfolk with a challenge, since a great quantity of hay, straw and oats needed to be obtained. The account books, which reveal the preparations for the princely visit in all their details, record dozens of those suppliers from whom the aforementioned articles were purchased in bulk.³⁸ Over and above this, a considerable quantity of hay was brought into town from the town's own hayfields and mowed by day laborers recruited from among the local commoner lads, girls, Romanians and Gypsies. Similar procedures were followed when it came to harvesting the town's oat supply.³⁹ If even this proved insufficient, those citizens possessing the more substantial supplies hastened to the town's aid. This is what happened during the prince's visit in 1627, when the town judge made up for the needed quantity out of his own inventory.⁴⁰ The prince and his retinue used lighting devices in likewise substantial quantities: lanterns, torches, and the most important article, candles, which were produced locally from tallow and wax.⁴¹ Preparations for the princely company extended to the prior acquisition and processing of kitchen spices as well. As a rule, spices arrived at the town warehouse from the tollhouses, and the missing quantity was obtained from

32 ANR FB *Stadthannenrechnungen*, vol. 20, 357; V/21, 311; V/22, 113.

33 This is what happened on August 4, 1622, when Mrs. Fiota was reimbursed for the twenty denars' worth of firewood wrongfully burned in her garden. Ibid., vol. 22, 110.

34 Ibid., vol. 20, 363.

35 Ibid., vol. 22, 603, 607; V/21, 427; V/21, 561, 567.

36 Ibid., vol. 21, 325.

37 The quantity of candles used is revealed by data noted during Gábor Bethlen's visit in August 1622, according to which three women poured candles for three days in a row. As a result of their work Brassó produced 2,300 tallow candles and eight pounds of wax candles for the princely court, with a value, including wages, of 17.36 forints. Ibid., vol. 22, 109.

32 Nevertheless, in the event of a visit by the prince the town could not leave a single bed, including the inn, unused. This is indicated by occasional data in the account books about the cleaning and maintenance performed at the guest house prior to the visit: on February 3, 1628 "Zahlt 6 Blochen, welche auffm Stadthoff fegetten." ANR FB *Stadthannenrechnungen*, vol. 21, 558.

33 The person employed to organize the housing of the princely court, the quartermaster, regularly visited the town well before his lord's arrival, and cooperating with the local officials appointed to this task, he set about assigning quarters and inspecting the infrastructure ensuring the visit took place without incident. However, there were also instances of him arriving in town merely a day or barely hours before the arrival of the prince. Ibid., vol. 20, 358.

34 *Bethlen Gábor – Levelek*. Selected, with an introduction and notes, by Mihály Sebestyén (Bucharest: Kriterion, 1980), 61; Áron Szilády and Sándor Szilágyi, *Török-magyarkori állam-okmánytár*, vol 1 (Budapest: Eggenberger, 1868): 119; similar demands were articulated in Gábor Bethlen's court protocol as well. Cf. Transylvanian Prince Gábor Bethlen's Instructions to His Seneschal, Gáspár Csúti. Kolozsvár, 1622/23, in *Magyar udvari rendtartás*, 71–72.

35 Concordant data can be found in the recollections of Magistrate Andreas Hegyes; cf. "Diarium des Andreas Hegyes," in *Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Kronstadt*, vol. 5, Chroniken und Tagebücher, vol. 2 (Brassó: Commission bei H. Zeidner, 1909): 465–67.

the citizens of Brassó with the more substantial stocks.⁴² In similar fashion to candle-dipping, town women were employed to process them, and the necessary means of storage, chests and spice sacks were also seen to.⁴³ Treated in the same category as spices were refined sugar (received either measured or in the form of a sugar-loaf) and rock salt, which was crushed by wage-workers prior to use.⁴⁴ To the extent that the storage possibilities of perishable foodstuffs made it possible,⁴⁵ attempts were made to secure meat in advance as well. Prior to the prince's arrival live poultry (hens, chickens, ducks and geese) was obtained by the hundreds, while red meat was purchased from the local butchers. Fish, either prepared fresh or preserved salted in barrels, was consumed in proportions equal to that of meat. The fish was obtained from the Barcaság (which had a substantially richer hydrography in the seventeenth century than today—Brassó itself was interwoven by streams, while extensive fish ponds were located outside the town walls) and Wallachia. The town was supplied with fish typically by Romanians, who fished in the town's own waters either on their own initiative or directly commissioned by the town. In the latter case Brassó paid them for their time even if they did not happen to catch anything.⁴⁶

Following the prince's arrival the most important tasks connected to food supplies were overseen by a central kitchen. In Brassó the equivalent of the wooden kitchen structure mentioned in the prince's letter quoted above was a building referred to in the sources as *Kochhaus*, or “cookhouse,”⁴⁷ which was erected in the middle of the town on the market square⁴⁸ for the duration of the prince's stay in Brassó. The meals were prepared in this kitchen, well equipped with a hearth and devices needed for cooking and preparing foods, and distributed

according to Herbergen, that is, the host lodgings. The production of bread and braided challah bread occurred independently of this in the bakehouses of Brassó. Although it is not the purpose of this article to discuss in detail the food consumption of the princely court in Brassó, by a simple enumeration I would nonetheless like to allude to the level of provisioning while at the same time allowing a glimpse into the eating habits of the age.

In accordance with seventeenth-century customs, bread, meat, possibly fish, and vegetables formed the basis of the lavish meals, and in Brassó, too, it was these that were consumed in the largest quantity. Among baked goods, white and brown bread, rolls and braided bread were consumed. Meats included great quantities of fowl, beef and veal, mutton, goat meat, and pork, as well as old and new bacon, and also wild duck, venison, deer and rabbit meat. For fish we find sturgeon, carp, pike, trout, and crayfish on the lists of victuals.⁴⁹ Among dairy products, in addition to raw milk, products such as the distinctive Transylvanian cheeses and butter, and occasionally cream, represented the major articles. Consumed in significant quantities were vinegar, lard and oil (linseed oil, more rarely olive oil), honey and eggs. Vegetables and fruits appearing on the tables included fresh or pickled cabbage, peas, onions, garlic, mushrooms, apples, pears, plums, gooseberries, cherries, walnuts and hazelnuts. Besides the locally grown parsley and dill, the spices in use were pepper, cloves, cinnamon, nutmeg and mace flower, ginger and saffron imported from the east. Being illustrious guests, they consumed ample amounts of the eastern luxury foods always available in Brassó: raisins, citrus fruits, figs, almonds and even rice, which based on its origin was included here. The list of delicacies was rounded out by the marzipan placed on the prince's Sunday table.⁵⁰

The varying accounting practices of each town and community leave plenty of questions open if we strive for a full depiction of events. Thus, for example, based on the rich, though often undifferentiated, system of enumeration of the Brassó account books, we cannot reconstruct to the letter precisely what the hosts served to the lords gathered for a shared meal in the town. At the same time, the entries made by Kolozsvár's citizen administrators, who preserved the precise details of the princely meals for posterity, may serve as a point of comparison. To single out just one example, let us cast a glance at what could

42 Among the spice suppliers the wealthiest (those with profitable commercial ties) families in Brassó were represented: Benkner, Draudt, Fronius, Bánfy, Forgács, etc. *Ibid.*, vol. 20, 624.

43 *Ibid.*, vol. 22, 104–05; V/21, 311, 432; V/22, 121, 605–06.

44 *Ibid.*, 604.

45 The town had its own cold-storage area, the *Eysgruben*, which with the approach of spring was filled with broken ice.

46 *Ibid.*, vol. 21, 311.

47 *Ibid.*, vol. 20, 359.

48 Marktplatz, Piața Sfântului. Similar to other commercial towns, Brassó in addition to the central market had various markets specializing in categories of goods, indicating the region's commercial relations. This was how the place names still in use today evolved, such as horse market, fish market, wheat row. The cookhouse incidentally was a typical attendant element of the princely visits in early modern Transylvania. Cf. Annamária Jeney-Tóth, “Báthory Gábor udvara 1612-ben Kolozsvárott,” in *A Báthoriak kora. (A Báthoriak és Európa)*, ed. László Dám. A Báthori István Múzeum füzetek, 3 (Nyírbátor: Báthori István Múzeum és Baráti Köre, 2008), 148.

49 The considerable consumption of fish may be assessed as a local characteristic, for when comparing the food lists for Brassó and Kolozsvár, it is striking that—perhaps as a result of the differing geographical and trade conditions—in Kolozsvár fish is hardly ever encountered on the prince's menu.

50 ANR FB *Stadtbannenrechnungen*, vol. 20, 625.

be called an average dinner that Gábor Bethlen spent in the company of the lords of Kolozsvár on November 26, 1613! The food was brought in for those gathered on several large platters, which contained the following: on the first platter pike in its own juices, with pepper, saffron, ginger, parsley and onions; on the second, “cow meat” with red cabbage; on the third, lemon hen with pepper, saffron and ginger; and on the fourth platter roasts of hen and of pork, sausage, with pickles and bread on the side. The meal was rounded out with fruit, cheese, walnuts and pretzels, and the delicious morsels were washed down with 28 Achfels⁵¹ of wine.⁵²

The data contained in the account books make it possible to reconstruct the process of how the goods were obtained, particularly interesting from the point of view of urban history. Brassó, where the grandiose display of hospitality was a constant phenomenon, maintained its own inventory of the basic articles used while entertaining guests. This supply, however, was always in need of supplementation if a large and distinguished embassy or the prince himself was expected in the town. The town leadership had several means of making up for the missing quantity at its disposal. First they could directly take it out of Brassó's customs revenues delivered in the form of goods; this applied first and foremost to commercial goods, especially spices. As far as local products were concerned, these could be obtained from the townsfolk, or possibly from the inhabitants of the surrounding villages and market towns, either through direct purchase or the so-called “receipt-slip method” widespread all across Transylvania. The essence of the latter was that the town official charged with procurement issued a numbered receipt—Zettel or slip—for the product delivered by the suppliers, who could ask for reimbursement in cash afterwards from the Stadthann. The significance of the collected receipt-slips may be discerned also in the fact that it was on the basis of these that the town notary compiled the annual accounts. The system was not perfect, since even Brassó, considered one of the country's wealthiest towns, frequently struggled with a shortage of money, which incidentally was generally typical in seventeenth-century Transylvania. The solution was to schedule payments,⁵³ though deducting the cost of the

product from the supplier's tax could also be considered.⁵⁴ It happened also that the necessary quantity of the given product could not be secured even through purchase. In such cases the town itself initiated the importation of the item or—as in the case of candle-making—its production. It was also a frequent phenomenon for the wealthy townsfolk to advance various products to the town out of their own stocks. This was not bad as an investment either, since the town afterwards reimbursed assistance arriving at just the right moment at steep prices.

The situation was similar in the case of drinks, which formed a separate category among the foodstuffs. In Brassó wine was consumed in the greatest quantity (typically local new and vintage wines, Wallachian wines, and for the most distinguished guests' table, Malvasia), though plenty of beer, and in smaller quantities mead⁵⁵ and spirits,⁵⁶ was also consumed. The details of the wine delivery for a princely visit in 1616 have been preserved in the town account books and clearly demonstrate Brassó's procurement system outlined above in practice. According to the entries for February, in preparation for the prince's expected visit and with the approval of the Hundred Elders (Hundred Men),⁵⁷ 1,793 Achfels (“eighths”)⁵⁸ of the town's own wine, in barrels authenticated by the *Weinherrs*⁵⁹ and valued at 107.58 forints were deposited in the town's cellar. Because this still proved too little, an additional 112 Achfels⁶⁰ of wine was subsequently brought in from the town's external cellars valued at 15 forints. However, this was still not enough, and therefore, in order to ensure the uninterrupted supply to the princely court, the Stadthann assisted the town on several occasions, having Wallachian wine from his own cellar delivered to the

54 The tax deduction functioned on the town and regional (Barcaság) levels also, since the value of the products and services requisitioned from the Barcaság settlements were often compensated by a proportionate reduction of the annual tax.

55 Based on the date of the account books, mead was the preferred beverage of the Turkish guests.

56 Characteristically, the heavy consumption of brandy took place during the reception of Tatar guests.

57 The forum of the guildsmen and commoner citizens in Brassó was the *Hundertmannschaft*, or the community of one hundred elders, to which each of the town's four precincts delegated twenty-five members. That body was dwarfed in importance by the council, chosen from the exclusive circle of the town's patricians, though in lesser matters of local significance – as the above example also shows – it could make its voice heard.

58 *Ejtél*, also *kupa* (*Achfel*), a volume measure of medieval origin, 1 *ejtel* = approx. 1.36 liters. Thus, this was approximately 2,438 liters. Cf. Bogdán, *Magyarországi úr-, térfogat-, súly- és darabmértékek*, 236–37.

59 The officials responsible for matters pertaining to wine.

60 Approx. 152 liters.

51 38 liter. Cf. István Bogdán, *Magyarországi úr-, térfogat-, súly- és darabmértékek 1874-ig* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1991): 236–37.

52 Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (National Archives of Hungary; MNL OL) Microfilm collection. Kolozsvár város levéltára. Roll: 28962. *Kolozsvár város számadáskönyvei* (Fond primăria municipiului Cluj-Napoca socotile orasului Cluj-Napoca). 1613. XIV. 191. Regarding the eating customs of the era see Borbála Benda, “Étkezési szokások a magyar főúri udvarokban,” in *Idővel paloták*, 491–507.

53 The Stadthann paid for products used at that time even months following the princely visit.

guests' lodgings, a total of 157 Achteles⁶¹ valued at 94.26 forints. The judge, the notary and one additional town councilor, Lucas Greissing, took similar action. All this was supplemented by the wine deliveries of those citizens⁶² who used this to pay off their remaining debt⁶³ from the previous year's wine tax.⁶⁴

Receiving the prince's court also presented the town with the enormous task of securing the necessary labor force. For the improvements and construction carried out during the preparations, and later the dismantling of the temporary buildings, beyond the costs of the basic materials, carpenters, stone masons and day laborers had to be paid. As far as meals were concerned, we know that, although the prince had the food prepared by his own cooks⁶⁵ and served by his own court stewards, serving a party of several hundred guests demanded the employment of numerous local helpers in the kitchen.⁶⁶ During a princely visit the duties of the town guardsmen, doorwards and toll house attendants in the town's regular employ also expanded. According to ancient custom, when a distinguished guest was hosted the town's leading officials stood guard in front of his house, though they were entrusted with less exalted tasks as well: essentially they could be deployed wherever physical strength was needed, from hauling away earth to processing poultry.⁶⁷ In addition to the bakers and butchers, the most impacted on account of the great quantity of goods they had to deliver, Brassó's other artisans were also allotted numerous tasks. The residency of the princely court in Brassó directly impacted the blacksmiths, harness-makers, rope-layers, and coopers, since it went without saying that the town would serve the needs related to shoeing the horses of the prince and his retinue and repairing their wagons, coach and sledges. In fact, in 1628 the prince even had one of his valuable horses kept in Brassó for weeks, with the town providing for its feeding and care.⁶⁸ The prince also had his personal effects that were damaged during the

visit repaired by the locals.⁶⁹ It was also necessary to fulfill occasional demands by the prince as well, the appropriate handling and packaging of which was also seen to locally.⁷⁰

Based on the available sources we can form a clear picture of the composition of the princely retinue arriving in Brassó as well; the number of guests, however, remains obscure. It has already been mentioned that the visiting party in Brassó was recorded according to place of lodging, which were distinguished from one another by the name of the principal figure housed there. This also included the persons belonging to the latter's own household, from immediate relatives to the simple maid. Accordingly, the number of those served at the various lodgings could range from the four- to six-member entourage of lower-ranking court figures, to the small households of higher dignitaries numbering several dozen people.⁷¹ Added to all this also were the courtiers referred to by the people of Brassó simply by the name *Gesindel*, whose number was not given in precise figures but rather characterized merely as "many" or "a great many."

Gábor Bethlen's stay in Brassó was often connected to a diplomatic event of countrywide importance. For this reason, beyond the prevailing size of the princely household we must reckon with a substantial contingent of guests. It happened often that Bethlen sent his prominent guests to Brassó in advance, who

69 Typical was having tin and glass vessels patched by the local guildsmen. Ibid., vol. 21, 567–68.

70 There is no way of presenting the prince's extremely varied demands in their entirety. The following examples, however, clearly demonstrate the variety that the princely commissions represented in the town. In 1622 silver vessels were packed (Ibid., vol. 22, 110), and laundresses were employed at the specific request of the prince (Ibid., 606). In February 1627 four cases were prepared for the prince's pistols (Ibid., vol. 21, 313), as well as—during almost every princely visit—chests and vessels (Ibid., 314). The town must have needed to supplement the personnel demanded as well, since the leadership was forced to borrow servant girls from the school master's wife (Ibid., 316). Gábor Bethlen particularly availed himself of the services of the tailors of Brassó, since they sewed several suits of clothing for the princely court (Ibid., 341, 443). In addition, Romanian, Saxon and Gypsy day laborers had to be temporarily employed for the most varied jobs, from sewing sacks to hauling earth (Ibid., 430, 438, 567, 584), carters to convey the court dignitaries (Ibid., 444–45, 572–74). In 1629 the prince requested gold and white saddles, gold leaf, tents and bathtubs, and had his chest covered with leather in Brassó.

71 The account books provide countless examples of this phenomenon. To single out take just one, we may cite Zsigmond Kornis, the prince's quartermaster, who during a memorable visit in 1616 visited Brassó together with his family. He himself had arrived on February 18 with an escort of seven to order accommodations for Gábor Bethlen, while on the next day he was joined by another 30 persons. It appears that his wife and other kin also resided at the Kornis lodgings, since the data from the account books reveal that although Kornis traveled to Prázsmár to meet the prince on February 21, his household waited for him in Brassó, until he returned on the 29th with another army of guests ("mit ein hauffen gesind!"). They remained in Brassó after the end of the princely visit, until March 2, as did Farkas Kamuthy, who also arrived with his wife. ANR FB *Stadthannenrechnungen*, vol. 20, 612–15, 618.

61 Approx. 207 liters.

62 Among the persons in question (Hans Hirscher, Daniel Schespurger, Paul Lang, Thomas Schlösser, Hans Valthütter) we see wealthy citizens. The question arises whether their "debt" could truly be attributed to their insolvency or rather to business speculation on town purchases.

63 ANR FB *Stadthannenrechnungen*, vol. 20, 623–24.

64 *Weinlösung*, *Weinlösung*: a type of town tax paid on wine conveyed into and out of the town, deriving from Brassó's wine-selling privilege (educillatio).

65 Based on the account books we know the prince's cooks from the period under examination, Tamás and János. ANR FB *Stadthannenrechnungen*, vol. 22, 372.

66 The most basic task was to ensure a constant supply of water in the kitchen building, for which Romanians were employed for a daily wage. Ibid., 110.

67 Ibid., vol. 21, 437; vol. 19, 476.

68 Ibid., 568.

were then forced to wait idly for a few days before the prince himself reached the town. This was how Mehmet Aga and his thirty-nine-member entourage arrived in the town on April 1, 1614—two days before the prince—in the company of Benedek Suky, István Szalánczy, and György Székely, who had been assigned to them; they left Brassó only days after the prince's departure (April 7). The situation was similar in August 1622, when a few days before Gábor Bethlen's entry on the fourth, the town began putting up the Turkish embassy coming from the prince: Mustafa Aga, Mehmet Chiaus and Yusuf Chiaus, escorted by the scribe János; a few servants of the pasha of Buda; and the members of the embassy to the Porte formed around Pál Keresztesi. Moreover, only rarely did the entertaining come to an end with Gábor Bethlen's departure. There are ample instances when, for one reason or another (most often because of illness or a personal matter), the departing prince left one or more of his courtiers behind in Brassó.

The account books also reveal that those arriving in Bethlen's retinue “wandered daily in and out”⁷² of the town. Under such circumstances it is understandable that, learning of the prince's prospective arrival, the Brassó town leadership's primary ambition was to keep the size and expenses of the guest party down. Fierce debates between the prince and the townspeople over the number of guests were typical particularly of the first years of Gábor Bethlen's rule. As has already been mentioned, the Saxons believed Bethlen's reign as prince hung in the balance between 1613 and 1616 and considered his time in power a brief transitional period; the memory of the town-occupier, Gábor Báthory, however, lived all the more vividly in every Saxon subject.⁷³ During the first princely visit in April 1614 Brassó allowed two hundred people into the town,⁷⁴ and on the next occasion, in 1616, three hundred.⁷⁵ These numbers are even stricter than the demands contained in the Saxon ultimatum of December 1613,⁷⁶ issued regarding the return of Szeben—four hundred people at most. If we add to all this the fact that in 1614 even the gun salute due the arriving prince was not even fired,⁷⁷ we can clearly picture the outward manifestations of the frosty

atmosphere between the prince and the people of Brassó. From the point of view of the prince's reception, too, the year 1616 counted as exceptional, when the people of Brassó once again tried to restrict the size of Gábor Bethlen's retinue. According to the reports of the contemporary chroniclers of Brassó, the prince took offense to this and in fact postponed his stay in Brassó, thereby causing no small amount of turmoil in the town.⁷⁸

Since the town's obligations as host included the presentation of gifts to the visiting officials befitting their rank, the *Stadthann* prepared a precise balance sheet of the gifts and the recipients in connection with the costs of the visit. The gift lists in fact record a concise image of the Transylvanian state dignitaries and the princely court, since in addition to the prince and his wife they feature numerous important and less important court personages, from the governor to the court attendant.⁷⁹ The importance of a given office or rank gained expression in the value of the gifts presented as well. Whereas the princely couple received silver Nuremberg chalices, and wash basins and kettles valued at 100–200 forints, the highest-ranking (the chancellor and prince's brother, István Bethlen, regardless of his current position, and Dávid Zólyomi, commensurate to the office he occupied in the given period) received one or two Persian rugs valued at 25–60 forints, and those on the lower rungs of the ladder (court captains, retainers) were presented gifts of Brassó broadcloth, furs or boots. Among the servitors

78 The incident is recounted in detail in the diaries of Petrus Bánfy and András Hegyes; see *ibid.*, 431, 542–43.

79 Based on the extant gift lists, besides the prince and his wife the list of those presented with gifts included: in 1614 István Bethlen; Chief Chamberlain Pál Rhédey; Chancellor Simon Péchy; the prince's secretary, Gáspár Bölöni; the prince's overseers, quartermaster, master cook and doorwards; and the Turkish and Hungarian lords departing for the Porte (ANR FB *Stadthannenrechnungen*, vol. 20, 664). In 1616: once again the chancellor; István Tököl; Voivode Marco; Farkas Bethlen; a certain Master Kelemen whose function is unknown; the prince's overseers, doorwards, master cook, quartermaster, footmen and infantry commanders; as well as Kozma Deli and a certain Anschina (?) (*Ibid.*, vol. 20, 626). In February 1627: the chancellor; Ferenc Mikó; János Balling, captain of Fogaras; István Béldi; Seneschal Mihály Dániel; Ferenc Macskássy; Ferenc Balássi; Cup-Bearer Várkonyi; the consort's seneschal and prefect; the “Kusch Graff” i.e., István Bethlen the younger; Mihály Bíró (in charge of the prince's courtiers); Court Captain Pál Nagy; and “retainers” Simon Bojár and János Kemény (*Ibid.*, vol. 21, 324–25). The visit of August 1627 formed an exception, and the list of payments to the Old Town residents transporting the court reveals the identity of the guests: István Bethlen the younger; Petneházy; Zsigmond Kornis; Bélaváry; the chancellor; Dávid Zólyomi; Mikes; and Mikó (*Ibid.*, 444–45). In 1628: the chancellor; Dávid Zólyomi; Ferenc Balássi; the “der Bethlenische Hundt,” Mihály Dániel; Macskássy; Chief Seneschal Zsigmond Kékedy; and Pál Nagy (*Ibid.*, 571). In 1629: Mikó; the chancellor; István Bethlen; Zsigmond Kornis; Dávid Zólyomi; Zsigmond Kékedy; Péter Bethlen; Ferenc Macskássy; Mihály Dániel; Ferenc Balássi; Pál Nagy; János Török; the prince's stewards, attendants and quartermaster; and Benedek Nagy (*Ibid.*, vol. 19, 477–79).

72 *Ibid.*, vol. 19, 616.

73 In December 1610 Gábor Báthory had occupied the Saxons' most important town, Szeben by ruse, and rescinded Transylvanian Saxon autonomy, which had existed since 1224.

74 “Diarium des Andreas Hegyes,” in *Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Kronstadt*, vol. 5, 494.

75 “Tagebuch des Petrus Banfy,” in *Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Kronstadt*, vol. 5, 431.

76 “A száz universitas gyűlésének feltételei Bethlen Gábor szebeni telelése tárgyában,” in Szilágyi, *Erdélyi országgyűlési emlékek*, vol. 6, 383–89.

77 “Diarium des Andreas Hegyes,” in *Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Kronstadt*, vol. 5, 493.

of minor importance in the princely retinue (in the source *lumpen gesindel*, that is, “good-for-nothing rabble”) cash was distributed, amounting to a total value of between 40–50 forints.⁸⁰ Thus, during each princely visit, depending on the number of those present, the costs of gifts alone represented an amount on the order of 1,000 forints.⁸¹ Despite this, there were also instances where the prince found the valuables he received to be wanting. This is what happened during the memorable visit of 1616, when, apart from the dispute over the size of the prince’s company, the paltry number of gifts also contributed to a further deterioration of the mood, which was in any case not uncloudy.⁸²

At Gábor Bethlen’s court the master representatives of the arts and sciences enjoyed particular attention. Along with the other narrative sources of the era, the Saxon chroniclers also report on this. Particularly interesting are the notes of Georg Kraus, the notary of Segesvár, concerning those musicians employed at the princely court who married into the Saxon elite and settled in Beszterce, Nagyszeben, and Brassó.⁸³ Apart from them we know of numerous other court musicians from the fields of instrumental music and singing; in addition to the German territories, they arrived in Transylvania from Poland, Bohemia, France and Italy.⁸⁴

Just how the abovementioned artists and scholars fit into the court hierarchy constitutes a question which research on court history had yet to resolve. The Brassó sources may help to decide the question, since we may conclude from

them that the persons in question made up a completely separate group among the courtiers. The account books make particular mention of the prince’s doctors, students and various musicians, and quite precisely about the exceptional treatment the locals afforded them by order of the prince. It is a revealing piece of data that the gift lists do not mention them, and nor do we witness that they were housed with a separate small household, like the leading dignitaries of the princely court. The account books nevertheless allow us to conclude that the prince took particular care of them, since by his orders they were treated in way that clearly distinguished from the other figures of the court. The considerate treatment accorded to them by the grace of the prince distinguishes them sharply from the mass of court servants—*Gesindel*. It is indisputable, however, that artists and scholars, even despite their honored position at court, stood apart from the men of the Transylvanian court. The reason for their striking outsider status, besides a social status differing from that of the “aristocratic entourage,” is perhaps also to be sought in their foreign origin—the linguistic and cultural obstacles in the majority of cases proved to be so unbridgeable that many of them did not even remain in Transylvania after their princely commission expired. Those native German-speaking masters who found a home among their Saxon “relations” happened to form an exception to this. Also indicative of the special status of artists and retainers is the fact that Gábor Bethlen also kept with him two young lute-players, Konrad and Dietrich, who presumably had arrived in the country with Catherine of Brandenburg and were, in addition to their musical profession, also retainers of the consort’s household.⁸⁵ Unfortunately the Brassó sources remain silent about the number of musicians belonging to Bethlen’s court. We know of similar information only from the reign of Gábor Báthory, whose entourage may have included approximately 17 persons in such a capacity,⁸⁶ and we can probably find a similar number of master musicians by his successor’s side as well.

Gábor Bethlen’s patronage of the sciences and the arts is a well-known fact. The educating and sponsoring of talented youth appear from the very beginning in the prince’s cultural policy. At the start of his rule Bethlen had two students educated at foreign academies each year; by the end of his reign this number had

80 It appears that the value of the presented gifts may be called extraordinary not only in Brassó but also in the major Saxon towns with similar aspirations. It speaks volumes that the prince’s capital in Hungary, Kassa, “honored” Gábor Bethlen to a much more modest extent: according to the testimony of Kassa’s town protocols, the prince alone received a valuable chalice during the visit, while those belonging to his entourage were bestowed with gifts of food representing a value befitting their position (calves, oxen and lambs for slaughter, wine, fodder for the horses, etc.). Cf. György Kerekes, *Bethlen Gábor fejedelem Kassán. 1619–1629* (Kassa: Wiko, 1943): 29–32.

81 The amount had increased spectacularly by the end of Bethlen’s reign: 360.87 forints in 1614; 159.1 forints in 1616 (though the value of the prince’s Nuremberg chalice, which must have doubled the sum, was not indicated); 927.02 forints in 1627; 643.32 forints in 1628; and 807.31 forints in 1629.

82 “Tagebuch des Petrus Banfy,” in *Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Kronstadt*, vol. 5, 431.

83 The organist Johannes Preussinger settled in Beszterce, the Viennese chorus-singer Johannes Thosselius in Szeben, and the organist Michael Hermann in Brassó. It was precisely after the princely visit of 1626 that the last came to the town, where he later rose to the position of town judge; Kraus, *Erdélyi krónika 1608–1665*, 104. One of Bethlen’s favored musicians, the German-born György Virginás, also settled in Nagyszeben. *Bethlen Gábor – Levelek*, 64; Sándor Szilágyi, *Bethlen Gábor fejedelem levelezése* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1887), 33.

84 Péter Király, “Külföldi zenészek a XVII. századi fejedelmi udvarban és hatásuk,” *Erdélyi Múzeum* 56, no. 1–2 (1994): 2–5, accessed Sept. 10, 2009, <http://erdelyimuzeumfolyoirat.adatbank.transindex.ro>.

85 Ibid.

86 Jeney-Tóth, “Báthory Gábor udvara,” 147.

multiplied.⁸⁷ Occasionally they, too, represented guests Brassó had to feed. In connection with Bethlen's reign, the town account books first record the "king's students" in Brassó in 1621, when they were provided a meagre amount of food on August 4. On September 7 they make mention of two additional foreign students rescued from the captivity of plundering soldiers. Unfortunately, the *Stadthann* only rarely considered it worthwhile to record their names, and his attention usually extended only to the services fulfilled on the ruler's orders and their costs.⁸⁸

Scholars, musicians and students were recurring guests at the prince's side. In July 1623 Brassó housed a part of the prince's court staying in Fogaras, including his court physician and musicians, Tamás Kobzos and the four persons under his direction.⁸⁹ A similar situation prevailed in March 1625, when, in addition to his physician, the prince also lodged his trumpeters in Brassó, while in September a recommendation letter from the prince assured provisions and transport in Brassó for a few students.⁹⁰ In April 1626 students traveling to meet the prince, then residing in the Szeklerland, were given provisions, as was his Jewish doctor traveling back in May.⁹¹ Beginning in 1627 we encounter throughout Hungarian and German musicians as well as physicians on the guest list during the prince's visits to Brassó;⁹² in June 1629 we even find an instance of the prince having his aged, ailing musician treated in Brassó.⁹³ The newly employed Italian physician who stayed in Brassó between March 12 and 15, 1629 on the prince's authority represents a historiographical curiosity. The doctor must have been held in high esteem, since he arrived on the prince's own coach, and concerning him the prince commanded that he be "treated respectfully in the town."⁹⁴ Perhaps this person corresponds to Doctor Jacobus Carlo, who spent time in Brassó on the

prince's authority in June. At this date the prince's bath attendant and musicians were also put up there, once again connected to Gábor Bethlen's stay in Fogaras.⁹⁵

Comparing the data, we arrive at the surprising conclusion that, similar to the per diem of the town officials, the provisioning of the students was also tied to a certain scale. In general 20–25, at most 26 denars of wine and bread were spent on each of them, which essentially corresponded to the allowance of a common servitor (footman or doorward). The musicians were treated on a similar scale; with respect to the physicians, however, the town was substantially more generous: a sum of around one and a half to two forints was spent on them daily, demonstrating thereby also the weight of that position in the princely court.

For the sake of completeness, it should be noted that the obligations connected to the prince's visit did not come to an end when Gábor Bethlen exited the walls of Brassó. There is no year in the period under examination when some subsequent assignment of the prince did not have to be fulfilled. Aside from entertaining the court figures left behind, the town had to attend mainly to the transportation and escorting of the prince and his retinue as needed.⁹⁶ Depending on the standards of the local supplies, the prince often ordered food, personal items or even master craftsmen (goldsmiths, blacksmiths and tailors) for himself.⁹⁷ A similar situation also arose when, though the prince did not stay overnight in Brassó, he resided in the vicinity (in the Szeklerland or Fogaras). This could take place up to several times a year, depending on what part of Transylvania his duties called him to. In such cases—even if at reduced expense—in addition to putting up the prince's innermost circle, the services expected of Brassó involved the same duties. Even at this time the prince was in constant contact with Brassó through the town leaders assigned to him, and his own men also made frequent appearances in the town, if only to communicate the prince's demands. During his stays in Fogaras or the Szeklerland Gábor Bethlen also ordered food and personal articles in large quantities and often availed himself of the work of the tradesmen of Brassó. In certain instances he even demanded that the town put up the lords and servants belonging to his retinue. The types of services and their quality did not differ substantially from

87 "For as long as we live, now we too want to send two youths per annum to Academies out there for the purpose of study. We hope thereby the number of learned youth will increase." Gábor Bethlen to Péter Alvinczi. Gyulafehérvár, August 14, 1615, in *Bethlen Gábor – Levelek*, 66; Sándor Szilágyi, *Bethlen Gábor és a kassai pap*, Magyar Protestáns Egyháztörténelmi Monográfiák XIII (Budapest: Magyarországi Protestánssegylet, 1880): 3–5.

88 ANR FB *Stadthannenrechnung*, vol. 22, 1051, 1066.

89 Ibid., 339.

90 Ibid., 752, 914.

91 Ibid., vol. 23, 77, 86.

92 Ibid., vol. 21, 415, 742.

93 Ibid., vol. 19, 562.

94 Ibid., 507.

95 Ibid., vol. 19, 564.

96 Ibid., vol. 20, 366; vol. 21, 572–74.

97 Ibid., vol. 21, 341, 517, 628; vol. 22, 609. Among the prince's orders at times we find quite surprising ones as well: in 1629, for instance, he ordered carpentry work from Brassó artisans in Fogaras, which included the framing of 18 paintings. Ibid., vol. 19, 590.

that of those the prince made use of during his visits to Brassó. Their costs appear in the town account books sporadically, and their value ranged along an extremely wide scale, from a few barrels of pears to silver collars prepared for the greyhounds of Catherine of Brandenburg to large quantities of food conveyed to the princely retinue on kitchen wagons. All these circumstances make a complete and systematic depiction of the services provided to the prince while he resided in the area of Brassó almost impossible. Thus, when it comes to the serving of Gábor Bethlen himself and his court, the data directly linked to the prince's personal presence in Brassó is of primary importance on account of its completeness.

All of the above raises the question of how much the town spent during each of Gábor Bethlen's visits. Because of the sporadic recording of the expenses, we can only estimate the magnitude of the total cost incurred: including the gifts of respect, Brassó spent approximately 1000–1600 forints on provisioning the prince and his court per occasion.⁹⁸ We may also observe that towards the end of the period examined here this sum showed a tendency to increase, the explanation for which may lie in the improving economic situation, the stabilization of Brassó's position, and the maximal exploitation of its resources; this last circumstance was due not least to the bargains struck with Gábor Bethlen.⁹⁹ At the same time, for lack of sources it remains an open question whether the prince reimbursed the town for the incurred expenses, and if so, to what extent. Based on the characteristics of Bethlen's reign the reimbursements must have been minimal, although it must be taken into account that the Saxons could avail themselves of the opportunity to have their incurred expenses deducted from their annual tax. Whether this happened, and which items, if any, the prince's agents accepted, we do not know. The likelihood of reimbursement is in any case lessened by the fact that, starting from the Middle Ages, hosting the ruler was interpreted as an obligation of high importance in the Saxon Land, since the Saxon communities,

Brassó included, enjoyed significant privileges that offset other similar burdens. It would be superfluous to emphasize just how significant this system, resting on this dual pillar, was in the life of the Saxon Land, which clung to its medieval autonomy tooth and nail.

Summary

During the reign of Gábor Bethlen significant changes can be observed in the relations between the ruler and the privileged Saxon community. The prince frequently stayed in the Saxon towns, generally at the time of diets, for the purposes of receiving envoys or rendering justice. Bethlen and his court retinue expected the town to provide lodging, supplies and gifts, which the local government attempted to keep within still feasible bounds. Each instance of hosting the prince in Brassó provides a particularly good illustration of how the central authority attempted to tear apart the obsolete framework of the Saxon feudal privileges, or at least fill it with new content while maintaining external appearances, in early modern Transylvania.

The prince's stays in Brassó also direct our attention to the fact that through rational compromises and measured decisions Gábor Bethlen successfully breached the feudal bastions of the Saxon nation, and although in this area he was perhaps less successful publicly (recall the failure of negotiations aimed at a union of the three feudal nations¹⁰⁰), behind the scenes he was able to impose his will against even the most determined Saxon communities. Finally, it should not be forgotten either that, beyond an understanding of the relationship between the princely regime and Brassó, a member of the Saxon *Universitas*, the chronicle of princely visits provides useful knowledge about the life of this distinctive Transylvanian community. The realities of the seventeenth-century characters, urban life, consumption, and weekdays and holidays, which come to life on the pages of the account books and can captivate people even today, all contribute to an ever fuller understanding of this unique era.

98 By comparison, it is worth noting that the data of the account books show the cost of military obligations burdening the town (providing soldiers, supply deliveries) to have ranged around 1300–1500 forints for a military campaign led by the prince.

99 To single out just two major examples: a significant portion of Brassó's revenues was affected by the recurring question of the lease of the toll of Törösvár, which the town, following lengthy negotiations with the prince (and the opening up of ample financial resources)—managed to retain. Also worthy of mention is the violation in the town of the limitations that affected equally Brassó's guildsmen and merchants, which was likewise successfully glossed over by winning the prince's goodwill. Each of these illustrates merely one slice of the relationship, built on rational deals and compromises, that linked the ruler and one of his country's wealthiest towns to each other.

100 Bethlen's ambition to draw the union of the three feudal nations of Transylvania (the Hungarian nobility of the counties, Saxons, Szeklers) closer and place it in the service of the central authority founded on the resistance of the estates, and particularly the Saxons, who feared the loss of their autonomy.

Archival Sources

- Arhivele Naționale ale României Filială Brașov [Romanian National Archives, Brassó Branch Archive] (ANR FB)
- Fondul Primăria Brașov. Seria socoteli alodiale—socoteli vilicale—*Stadthannenrechnungen*, V/19–23.
- Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára [National Archives of Hungary] (MNL OL) Microfilm Collection. Kolozsvár város levéltára. Roll No: 28962. Kolozsvár város számadáskönyvei (Fond primăria municipiului Cluj-Napoca socotelile orasului Cluj-Napoca).

Bibliography

Primary sources

- Koltai András, ed. *Magyar udvari rendtartás. Utasítások és rendeletek 1617–1708* [Hungarian Court Protocol. Instructions and Decrees, 1617–1708]. Millenniumi Magyar Történelem. Források. Budapest: Osiris, 2001.
- Márkus, Dezső, ed. *Magyar Törvénytár. 1540–1848. évi erdélyi törvények. Approbata Constitutiones* [Hungarian Legal Corpus. Transylvanian Laws from the Years 1540–1848]. Budapest: Franklin Társulat, 1900.
- N.e., *Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Kronstadt in Siebenbürgen. Rechnungen aus dem Archiv der Stadt Kronstadt*. Vols. 1–3. Kronstadt: Commission bei H. Zeidner, 1886–1896.
- N.e., *Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Kronstadt in Siebenbürgen*. Vol. 5. Chroniken und Tagebücher 2. Brassó: Commission bei H. Zeidner, 1909.
- Sebestyén, Mihály, ed., introduction, and notes. *Bethlen Gábor – Levelek* [Gábor Bethlen – Letters]. Bucharest: Kriterion, 1980.
- Szilády, Áron and Sándor Szilágyi. *Török–magyarkori állam-okmánytár* [State Papers from the Turkish Era in Hungary]. Vol. 1. Budapest: Eggenberger, 1875.
- Szilágyi, Sándor. *Bethlen Gábor és a kassai pap* [Gábor Bethlen and the Priest of Kassa]. Magyar Protestáns Egyháztörténelmi Monográfiák XIII. Budapest: Magyarországi Protestánsok, 1880.
- Szilágyi, Sándor. *Bethlen Gábor fejedelem kiadatlan politikai levelei* [Prince Gábor Bethlen's Unpublished Political Letters]. Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1879.
- Szilágyi, Sándor. *Bethlen Gábor fejedelem levelezése* [The Correspondence of Prince Gábor Bethlen]. Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1887.
- Szilágyi, Sándor, ed.: *Erdélyi országgyűlési emlékek* [Documents of Transylvanian Assemblies]. Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia–Athenaeum Ny., 1880.

Secondary Sources

- Benda, Borbála. “Étkezési szokások a magyar főúri udvarokban” [Eating Habits in Hungarian Aristocratic Courts]. In *Idővel paloták...* Magyar udvari kultúra a 16–17. században [Over Time, Palaces... Hungarian Courtly Culture in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries], edited by Nóra G. Etényi and Ildikó Horn, 491–507. Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2005.
- Bogdán, István. *Magyarországi űr-, térfogat-, súly- és darabmértékek 1874-ig* [Measures of Volume, Capacity, Weight and Count in Hungary up to 1874]. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1991.
- Cziráki, Zsuzsanna. “Brassó és az erdélyi szászok szerepe Bethlen Gábor fejedelem trónfoglalásában (1611–1613)” [The Role of Brassó and the Transylvanian Saxons in Prince Gábor Bethlen's Accession to the Throne]. *Századok* 145, no. 4 (2011): 847–76.
- Cziráki, Zsuzsanna. “Megjegyzések Erich Lassota zu Steblau 1614. évi titkos erdélyi megbízatásához” [Notes on the Secret Transylvanian Mission of Erich Lassota zu Steblau in 1614]. *Fons – Forráskutatás és Történeti Segédanyagok* 19, no. 3 (2012): 321–61.
- Gündisch, Konrad. *Siebenbürgen und die Siebenbürger Sachsen*. Studienbuchreihe der Stiftung Ostdeutscher Kulturrat, Band 8. Munich: Langen Müller, 1998.
- Jekelius, Erich, ed. *Das Burzenland. I. Kronstadt*. Kronstadt: Verlag Burzenländer Sächs. Museum, 1928.
- Jeney-Tóth, Annamária. “Báthory Gábor udvara 1612-ben Kolozsvárott” [Gábor Báthory's Court in Kolozsvár in 1612]. In *A Báthoriak kora. (A Báthoriak és Európa)* [The Age of the Báthoris (The Báthoris and Europe)], edited by László Dám, 137–57. A Báthori István Múzeum füzetek, Új sorozat, 3. Nyírbátor: Báthori István Múzeum és Baráti Köre, 2008.
- Kerekes, György. *Bethlen Gábor fejedelem Kassán. 1619–1629* [Prince Gábor Bethlen in Kassa, 1619–1629]. Kassa: Wiko, 1943.
- Király, Péter. “Külföldi zenészek a XVII. századi fejedelmi udvarban és hatásuk” [Foreign Musicians in the Princely Court of the Seventeenth Century and Their Impact]. *Erdélyi Múzeum* 56, no. 1–2 (1994): 1–16. Accessed September 10, 2009. <http://erdelyimuzeumfolyoirat.adatbank.transindex.ro>.
- Klein, Karl Kurt. “Geysanum und Andreanum. Fragmentarische Betrachtungen zur Frühgeschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen.” In *Zur Rechts- und Siedlungsgeschichte der Siebenbürger Sachsen*. Siebenbürgisches Archiv. Archiv des Vereins für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde. Dritte Folge 8, edited by Friedrich Müller, 54–62. Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1971.

- Kraus, Georg. *Erdélyi krónika 1608–1665* [Transylvanian Chronicle, 1608–1665]. Translated by Sándor Vogel. Budapest: Ómagyar Baráti Társaság Kiadói Részlege, 1994.
- Makkai, László, ed. *Bethlen Gábor emlékezete* [In Memoriam Gábor Bethlen]. Budapest: Magyar Helikon, 1980.
- Oborni, Teréz. “Bethlen Gábor és a nagyszombati szerződés (1615)” [Gábor Bethlen and the Treaty of Nagyszombat (1615)]. *Századok* 144, no. 4. (2011): 877–914.
- Philippi, Maja. *Kronstadt*. Braşov-Kronstadt: Aldus Verlag, 2006.
- Roth, Harald. *Hermannstadt. Kleine Geschichte einer Stadt in Siebenbürgen*. Cologne–Weimar–Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2006.
- Szabó, Péter. “A kihelyezett udvarok az Erdélyi Fejedelemség hatalmi harcaiban” [The Transient Courts in the Power Struggles of the Principality of Transylvania]. In *Idővel paloták... Magyar udvari kultúra a 16–17. században* [Over Time, Palaces... Hungarian Court Culture in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries], edited by Nóra G. Etényi and Ildikó Horn, 314–30. Budapest: Balassi, 2005.
- Teutsch, Georg Daniel. *Die Geschichte der Siebenbürger Sachsen für das sächsische Volk*. Vol. 1. Hermannstadt: Druck und Verlag von W. Krafft, 1899.
- Zimmermann, Franz and Carl Werner, eds. *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen*. Vol. 1. Hermannstadt: Krafft und Drotleff, 1892.

Translated by Matthew Caples.