

THE WEDDING FESTIVITIES OF GABRIEL BETHLEN AND CATHERINE OF BRANDENBURG*

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The theme of the present study is the wedding festivities of Catherine of Brandenburg and Gabriel Bethlen. First, the political and diplomatic circumstances of the marriage are summarized. After the proxy marriage in Berlin the Princess Bride's attendants participated in the greater nuptial ceremony in Kassa (now Košice). The proxy marriage in Berlin is briefly reviewed, followed by the festivities in Košice. After describing two major scenes from the wedding the study examines the celebrations themselves, paying particular interest to the protocol, spatial arrangement and appearance of the participants. The ceremonies are followed with an interest in the order of rank and precedence. The environment, the illustrious guests and their appearance added to the splendor of the festivities to a great extent. The entry into the city (March 1, 1626) and the solemn confirmation of the marriage oath (March 2) were key elements of the celebrations. These were followed by pageantry, banquets, fireworks, tournaments, a masked ball, a ballet and other spectacles.

Keywords: wedding, Principality of Transylvania, Gabriel Bethlen, Catherine of Brandenburg

The Principality of Transylvania at the First Half of the 17th Century

Transylvania was part of the Hungarian Kingdom during the Middle Ages. The Ottoman expansion in the region resulted in the division of the Hungarian Kingdom, whereby Transylvania became a vassal of the Ottoman Empire. The country was independent in its home affairs, however, it was subordinate to the Ottoman Empire in foreign affairs and had to pay an annual fee to Constantinople from the second half of the 16th century until the end of the 17th century. (For the history of Transylvania: Makkai, 1946; Sugar, 1994, 121–37; Köpeczi, 2001–02.)

The first half of the 17th century was one of the most prosperous times for the Principality of Transylvania in terms of economy and culture, as well as for its international political role. The reign of Gabriel Bethlen (1613–29) began the

* This work was partially supported by OTKA PD 101560.

‘Golden Age of the Principality’. (For the history of the country during his reign in English: Mezey, 1991, 1–20; Murdock, 2003, 213–44; Péter, 1982, 297–313; Péter, 2002, 1–230; R. Várkonyi, 1987, 151–62.)

Gabriel Bethlen was born into an influential noble family around 1580; his father, Farkas Bethlen was Princely Councilor. Gabriel lost both of his parents when he was a child (Péter, 1981, 744–9). He began his career in the court of Prince Sigismund Báthory (1588–1602) and became an experienced soldier and diplomat. He was one of the most influential politicians of Prince Stephen Bocskai (1602–06) and a pivotal figure during the reign of Gabriel Báthory (1608–13). Bethlen was elected Prince of Transylvania with Ottoman support in 1613. Although he was also elected King of Royal Hungary after his successful military campaign against the Habsburg power in 1620 at the beginning of the Thirty Years’ War, he refused the crown. The Peace of Nikolsburg (1621) acknowledged the increased political significance of the Transylvanian Principality and enlarged its territory.

The Principality reclaimed its international importance under Bethlen’s reign and he sought international recognition as a sovereign European ruler. For this purpose he asked for the hand of Archduchess Cecilia Renata of Habsburg after the death of his first wife, Zsuzsanna Károlyi, daughter of an important Hungarian noble family (1622). After he was refused, the Prince sent his deputies to the Hohenzollern family in 1625 and proposed marriage to Catherine of Brandenburg (1602–44), sister of the Elector of Brandenburg, George William (1595–1640); the marriage contract was signed the same year (Szabó, 1888, 656–63). As a result of this marriage, the Prince of Transylvania became related to the Western European Protestant rulers: King Christian IV of Denmark; Frederick V of the Palatinate; and the brother-in-law to the King of Sweden, Gustavus Adolphus. The Principality thus joined the alliance of the Protestant powers and the Prince led a further campaign against the Habsburg forces. (This array of interests was first investigated by Szekfű, 1929, 241–6.)

Catherine of Brandenburg was daughter of Anna of Prussia (1575–1625) and Elector John Sigismund (1572–1619) (Saring, 1941, 248–95). She grew up in the court of Brandenburg and was often guest in the court of her grandparents in Königsberg (Scheller, 1966, 171–3). She also lived in the royal court of Marie Eleonore and Gustavus Adolphus in Stockholm. She was elected successor of her husband as ruler by the Transylvanian Diet soon after their marriage, in 1626. Although she ruled only for a brief period after the death of her husband (1629–30) who left no offspring, she is a remarkable example of an elected female ruler in Early Modern Europe. (For her reign: Bánki, 1994, 311–26; Deák, 2009, 80–99; Kronos, 1884, 334–58; Ötvös, 1861, 153–244; Schuster, 1901, 121–36; Schultz, 1980, n.p.) After her abdication, she lived in Royal Hungary and moved

thereafter to Vienna where she married Francis Charles of Launenburg in 1639. Catherine died in the court of her widowed sister, Anna Sophie, in Schöningen (Braunschweig) in 1644.

Sources

Archival documents at the Secret Central Archives Prussian Cultural Heritage (*Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz*) were used for the study. Research material relating to the marriage of Catherine of Brandenburg and Gabriel Bethlen, as well as Catherine's reign and inheritance are among the documents of the Secret Council (*Geheimer Rat*) that deal with diplomatic relations between the Electorate of Brandenburg and the Principality of Transylvania. These include correspondences, contracts and reports on the marriage negotiations.

The Account Book of Gabriel Bethlen contains the Prince's shopping lists from the period between 1615 and 1627. It was published by Béla Radvánszky in 1888. The recorded entries are primarily luxury items and as such the recorded expenses are luxury expenses (Radvánszky, 1888, 1–157).

Moreover, the following four contemporaneous records give a detailed account of the festivities:

(1) A journal by an unknown member of the train of the Princess of Braunschweig entitled *Bericht aus einem vertrewlichen Schreiben auß Gölnitz, in Ober-Ungarn gelegen, wie des Bethlehem's Beylager seine Entschafft genommen, unndt was darbey zu sehen gewest* (Ingler, 1874, 517–34), referred to it henceforth as *Bericht*.

(2) A report from the legation of Maximilian I of Bavaria subsequently entitled *Des kurbaierischen Abgeordneten Maximilian Kurz Freyherrn von Senftenau Bericht über die im März 1626. vollzogene Hochzeit Bethlen Gabor's Fürsten von Siebenbürgen* (1817, 347–57). The scholar who published the work did not disclose the original title, only its German translation. The reference will be given henceforth as Bavarian report.

(3) A festival book printed in German after the event, also translated into French with a short introduction. The German edition, *Vmbständliche Relation deß Bethlehem Gabors mit der Chur-Brandenburgischen Princessin Catharina zu Caschaw gehaltenen Beylagers, Erstlich Gedruckt zu Wien bey Gregor Gelbhar und jetzt in Prag bey Paul Geste* (1626) was published in the same year the marriage took place, and in three different cities: Vienna, Prague and Augsburg (henceforth *Relation*). The French edition was published in Paris with the title *Le triomphe admirable observé en l'aliance de Bethleem Gabor Prince de Transilvanie, avec la Princesse Catherine de Brandebourg. Ensemble les*

magnifiques présens envoyez de la part de l'Empereur, du Roy d'Espagne, de l'Evesque de Cracovie et autres princes d'Allemagne et celui du grand Turc enuoyé par un Bacha, Paris: Chez Iean Martin, ruë de la vieille Bouclerie, à l'Escu de Bretagne (1626).

(4) The related parts of the Autobiography of János Kemény describing the festivities in retrospect, wherein he gives an account not only of the marriage festivities but also of the proposal in Berlin (Kemény, 1980, 51–65).

The first two writings were published in part. The *Bericht* consists of lengthy selected passages from the original text. The original of the Bavarian report was in Latin, from which selected passages were translated into German in the work used as reference for this study. Although the four contemporaneous accounts are partly or fully published, they have not yet been examined together. The Bavarian report seems to have been forgotten. The French edition of the *Bericht*, published under the title *Le triomphe admirable*, remained unnoticed.

The aim of the above-mentioned works was to record the events of the festivities. However, they represent four different genres and their characteristics in form influence the way of recording as well as the authors' recall and description of the events. The authors' possible bias towards the participants is a further question; the matter of whether the authors had actually seen the events they describe is also a subject of inquiry addressed in this study.

The *Bericht* is written in journal form. A journal is a chronicle of events recorded by frequent entries – in this case daily – based on fresh experiences (Bourcier, 1976, 1–21; Delany, 1969, 1–5; Fothergill, 1974, 3–21; Kagle, 1979, 15–24; Kuhn-Osius, 1981, 166–76; Spengemann, 1980, XI–XIII). Our source belongs to the group of journals written under special circumstances in a person's life (Culley, 1985, 19). In our case, it is the journey and the marriage festivities of Gabriel Bethlen and Catherine of Brandenburg; no entries were recorded in the journal afterwards. The author was a member of Princess of Braunschweig's retinue. According to the text his attitude towards Catherine was positive and it seems that he considered Hungary as a rather exotic place.

The report from the legation of Maximilian I of Bavaria was written for official purposes. It is unclear who among the official Bavarian delegation wrote the report, very likely someone of a lower rank. Maximilian I of Bavaria and Gabriel Bethlen were political opponents during the Thirty Years' War and this fact influenced the attitude of our witness as well. The Bavarian envoy was instructed to arrive late, only after the marriage ceremony, and he was advised to use the weather, the bad roads and sickness as an excuse. Because of the delay of the wedding ceremonies, however, he arrived in time.

The main purpose for publishing festival accounts was to inform the wider public about solemn events of the period. They were usually official propaganda to demonstrate the magnificence of the Prince (for the festival books see Berns,

1984, 295–311; Watanabe-O’Kelly, 1988, 181–201; Wade, 1992, 1–14). In accordance with the characteristics of the genre informing the public seems to have been the main purpose of the *Relation* as well; the number of cities where the German edition was published (Prague, Vienna, Augsburg) and the fact that it was translated into French suggest that the publication was meant for a wider European audience. The promotional purpose of the pamphlet seems fundamental, stressing repeatedly the magnificence of the festivities, although the account allows quite a few critical remarks as well.

It is worth noting that the authors of the Bavarian report and *Relation* describe the events quite similarly. Although written for entirely different audiences, both works exhibit particular interest in the number of the attending diplomats, their retinue and the value of the presents the wedding couple was given.

Autobiographies and memoirs are usually long organized narratives. They reconstruct events in retrospect, often written toward the end of the author’s life. In this respect, the accuracy of Kemény’s memory is a problematic question even though his descriptions are essentially consistent with other descriptions recorded shortly after the marriage. Kemény acknowledged in his work that he had only remembered the appointed date of the wedding celebrations but had already forgotten the actual date (Kemény, 1980, 65).

His dislike of Catherine also bears importance. Since the Autobiography recalls events long after their occurrences, their evaluation is affected by subsequent developments. Kemény wrote his memoirs more than thirty years after the wedding. Catherine had already become the elected ruler of the principality and Kemény had become a staunch and active member of her opposition (Bánki, 1994, 311–26). Consequently, it is not surprising that he failed to notice anything positive about the bride and tried to diminish the importance of her person while commemorating the great festivities and magnificence of Bethlen.

The question arises: did our witnesses actually see what they described? The author of the *Bericht* left us the most hints in this regard. He gives an account of the spatial arrangement of the most important participants at the diplomatic events, including his own, in minute detail suggesting that he could have been present. He is the only witness to give a description of the inside of the gala tent, the scene of the first welcome speeches. He stresses the occasions when he was particularly near Bethlen, for example, upon the first meeting of the Prince and the Princess: “I was not further than three steps from him and could take a good look at him”. He was able to describe the ring Bethlen wore during the ceremonial reception since this was an occasion when he held his hand out for a kiss (Ingler, 1874, 527). In his Autobiography Kemény also emphasized his own role in the course of events; for example he was intermediary in a dispute over the rank of the delegates from Brandenburg and Bavaria, and was sent “four or more times” to each of the interested parties (Kemény, 1980, 62). Other accounts about the events

bring further questions as to whether the authors really saw the proceedings or only heard of them. The author of the Bavarian Report was only a member of the delegation, not the head of it. The narrator consequently refers to the head of the delegation in third person as “the Lord envoy” (“*der Herr Gesandte*”). One knows neither the name of the author nor his role in the delegation. On the basis of the few instances where one has also researched additional data on the actual number of people or deputies in attendance, as for example about their size of the retinue and number of guests and their carriages from Brandenburg (Radvánszky, 1888, 223–6), the information in the *Relation* seems to be rough estimates. Some of the *Relation* data clearly contradicts other sources, for example, in the description of the livery of Catherine’s lackeys. These anomalies question the accuracy of the *Relation*’s information.

The Proxy Marriage in Berlin

After the Habsburg Emperor refused Bethlen’s proposal asking for the hand of Archduchess Cecilia Renata and offer of an alliance, the Prince proposed to Catherine of Brandenburg in the second half of 1625; she said yes in the middle of September and the marriage contract was soon signed (GStA PK, BPH, Rep. 33, W., Nr. 60). Bethlen was not the first candidate to approach the Hohenzollern family either: the negotiations of a projected marriage of Catherine to the Russian Grand Duke Nicholas failed in 1623 (GStA PK, BPH, Rep. 33, W., Nr. 68).

Bethlen’s marriage proposal was a political affirmation as well and the Palatinate relatives of the Hohenzollerns played an especially important role in the arrangement of the union. Through this marriage Bethlen became a relative of the most important European Protestant dynasties. Soon afterwards, he joined the Union of the Hague and led a further campaign against the Habsburg power.

Gabriel Bethlen did not go to Berlin personally to meet his fiancée. Proxy marriages, that is through a representative, were customary among royal families in Medieval and Early Modern Europe (Spieß, 1997, 17–36). Similarly, Medieval Hungarian kings and their wives usually only saw each other at the wedding celebrations in Hungary. Beatrix of Aragon and King Matthias Corvinus had a proxy marriage in Naples in 1476 (Estók, 2000, 86). During the first half of the 17th century for example, the wedding of Eleonora of Gonzaga and Emperor Ferdinand II in 1622, the wedding of Infanta Maria and Ferdinand III in 1631 (Seifert, 1988, 9–18) and the marriage of Christian, Prince-Elect of Denmark and Princess Magdalena Sybille, daughter of the Saxon Elector Johann Georg I in 1634 (detailed examination of the marriage: Wade, 1996) happened in this manner. Sigismund Báthory, Prince of Transylvania, also married Archduchess Maria Christierna *per procuram* in Graz in 1595 (Szádeczky, 1899, 4). However, there

are numerous examples when a ruler decided to visit his bride personally before the marriage, for example, Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden (Pehle, 1927, 33; Barudio, 1988, 151–3) and Frederick V of the Palatinate. (For the wedding ceremony in England and the Palatinate: Yates, 1993, 1–14; Mulryne, 1992, 173–96.) James VI of Scotland (later James I of England) did not go to meet Anne of Denmark at first, but after her journey was interrupted by a storm he anxiously joined his bride in Oslo in 1589 (Abrahamsen, 1967, 13).

Bethlen's representative at the *per procuram* marriage in Berlin was György Rákóczi, later Prince Georg Rákóczi I (1630–48). The following text was recorded in the matrimonial of the court about the event:

Um 12ten Januarii 1626 ist auf dem Churfürstlichen Hause getraut worden, des Durchlauchtigsten Fürsten Herrn Herrn Gabriel, des heil. Röm. Reiches und in Siebenbürgen, Herr etzlichen Antheill in Königreich Hungarn, Graf der Székler und Herzog zu Oppeln und Ratibor, Herr Abgesandter mit der Durchlauchtigsten, Hochgebo-
renen Fürstin Fräulein Katharina, Markgräfin von Brandenburg
(quoted by Bardeleben, 1916, 155–9).

After the church wedding, Catherine and Rákóczi sat on a bed together for a while publicly as a symbol of the consummation of the marriage (Kemény, 1980, 58).

There was only a minor festivity after the wedding in Berlin; the bridal procession, about sixty carriages, departed to Hungary with great pomp in four days (Faden, 1927, 156–7). The bride and her train together with guests and family members traveled to Kassa (Košice) for the greater celebration.

The Marriage Festivities in Kassa

Symbolic forms of action, power and ceremonial have been widely examined, mostly in the preceding decades (Giesey, 1987; Hanley, 1983; Wilentz, 1985; Cannadine – Price, 1987; Schnitzer, 1999). Norbert Elias was first to stress the significance of ceremonies as an instrument for the distribution of prestige in Early Modern courts in his book *The Court Society* (Elias, 1983, further literature on the topic: Ehalt, 1981, 411–20; Straub, 1992, 75–87; Berns – Rahn, 1995).

Magnificent festivities celebrating diverse occasions – as in the Renaissance – were an integral part of European court culture during the period of our study. These celebrations included state and private occasions such as coronations, baptisms, birthdays, funerals and diplomatic events. Attractions such as ballets, tournaments, fireworks, courtly banquets and balls entertained the guests and spectators (Wisch, 1990, XV–XX; Mulryne, 2002, 1–12; Strong, 1973, 11). All these spectacles were present at the wedding festivities of Catherine of Brandenburg

and Gabriel Bethlen during the first week of March 1626. Our study, however, will concentrate on the first two days, when the most important events, the solemn entry into Kassa and the confirmation of the marriage oath took place.

The Setting

Since princely weddings were social and diplomatic events of primary importance, an appropriately festive environment was created. Kassa (Košice), a city of Upper Hungary hosted the marriage festivities. The preparations required considerable effort from the city as well. The walls and gates had to be repaired “in a princely way”; the streets and especially the location where the festivities took place were cleaned (Kerekes, 1908, 85-118; Kerekes, 1943, 43). The Prince supervised most of the preparatory measures personally; that was the reason he arrived there about three weeks before the event.

The first stage of the wedding celebrations was in a field arranged for the meeting of the bride and the groom about a quarter of mile from the city. Several decorative tents were set up. The princely couple together with high-ranking guests and diplomats entered the most sumptuous one – probably that is why only one of our sources describes its interior – where several speeches were delivered. (The written version of the speeches: GStA PK, BPH, Rep. 33. Kurfürst Johann Sigismund, W., Nr. 67. fol. 62–63, 66–69.) According to the one written account the insides of the tents were so nicely decorated with colorful embroidery made in Constantinople, that one would need two days to inspect them completely. The best Persian carpets were laid on the ground to walk on.

Die Gezelt waren so schön inwendig von allerley Farben gestücket, zu Constantinopel gemacht, das Einer 2 Tage zu thune hatte, sie nach Genügen zu besehen. Auf der Erden lagen die schönsten Persiatische Deppiche, darauf man ginge (Ingler, 1874, 527).

The so-called Lőcsei ház (house of Levoča) was the scene for the indoor celebrations: banquets, balls and masquerades. The house and main hall were decorated with expensive Oriental tapestries. For the day of the confirmation of the marriage oath (March 2) the ceiling of the main hall was decorated with green pine branches and paper ornaments. On one side of the hall was a platform for the musicians and a smaller passage for the Turkish musicians as well. On the day of the wedding only Bethlen's treasury was put on display. According to a description in the *Bericht* gold vessels made in Augsburg, as big as a human head, ‘*Schnecken*’ (probably turban snail), vessels of ostrich eggs, pure jasper and ivory, as well as crystal glasses were exhibited – treasures which have practically disappeared by now. Forty big chandeliers hung above the carpets, and ten oil lamps were placed

at every wall (Ingler, 1874, 531). The number and existence of the chandeliers seem to contradict the inside information of the Venetian ambassador to Vienna; he was informed that the place was illumined by oil lamps, which stank unbearably (Gindely-Acsády, 1890, 112). Since the Venetian ambassador used secondary information, whereas the author of the *Bericht* participated at the events in person, we can assume that the chandeliers were present but they could not illumine the whole room. We can also rely on the information of the ambassador that there were malodorous oil lamps and that the smell disturbed the illustrious guests.

Order of Precedence

The order of precedence played a crucial role at state and diplomatic events and disputes over it were also common incidents; competitions for priority at the sessions of the Imperial Diets are typical examples (Stollberg-Rilinger, 1997, 91–132). This example is interesting for the purpose of our study as well because the order of the imperial session emerged as an argument in a dispute between the Bavarian and Brandenburgian delegations at the wedding festivities in March 1626 as well.

The *Rangstreitigkeit* between the delegations of Bavaria and Brandenburg was one of the major incidents concerning precedence that had to be solved during the festivities and which was described in most of our sources. The problem occurred right before the meeting of the Prince and the Princess. The Bavarian envoy was already in the company of Bethlen. The two processions had to wait several hours close to each other on the two sides of the river Hernád (Hornad), one at the foot of the mountains, the other outside the city because both the Bavarian and the Brandenburgian delegation required precedence over the other. The main argument of the Bavarians was that their elector is above the Elector of Brandenburg in the Imperial session, while Count Schwarzenberg, leader of the Brandenburg delegation argued that he represented not only the Electorate of Brandenburg but also the bride's father. One of our witnesses, Kemény, was the messenger between the two parties, sent back and forth through the river many times. The dispute was settled in favor of Brandenburg, with the consent of the ambassadors present (Kemény, 1980, 62).

Sitting at the table was another typical occasion when disagreements concerning order and rank could occur. The traditional rivalry between the envoys of the Palatine of Hungary and the archbishop of Esztergom also surfaced at the dinner table. (*Des kurbaierischen Abgeordneten*, 1817, 347. To their permanent debate over precedence see Pálffy, 2004, 1063.)

Both the Holy Roman Emperor and the Ottoman Emperor were invited and sent their envoys to the festivities. The possible meeting of their representatives was a delicate affair. To avoid possible encounter, Bethlen had to use his legendary diplomatic skills. He arranged it such that the two ambassadors arriving for the same event did not meet. February 22 was the appointed date of the ceremonies but the bride became sick towards the end of the journey. Although Bethlen inquired about her health, he only informed the envoy of the Holy Roman Emperor regularly about her well-being and the possible new date for the ceremony. He welcomed Pasha Jahia with singular respect and exceptionally valuable presents but did not detain him. It is characteristic of Bethlen's reputation that the author of the *Relation* suggested: the illness of the bride was only Bethlen's idea to solve this particular problem. However, there are other sources that confirm Catherine's illness.

The Solemn Entry into the City

The entry of Catherine and Gabriel into Kassa was the most important spectacle on the first day of celebrations, March 1. The form of the solemn entry was passed down from the Middle Ages and by the end of the 15th century had been transformed into an antique triumph. The word 'triumph' was widely applied to royal entries throughout Europe from the 16th century on (McGowan, 2002, 26–47; Strong, 1973, 21–37; Vocolka, 1977, 135–50). One of the best-documented examples is the "paper-triumph" of Emperor Maximilian I from 1512, a triumphal series planned only for the record (Vocolka, 1977, 143; McGowan, 2002, 27).

Péter Szabó, in his study of the presentation of queens and princely consorts in the Early Modern period pointed out the existence of triumphal elements in the bridal procession of Gabriel and Catherine entering the town (Szabó, 1980, 111–21). He made this claim on the basis of the preparatory ceremonial order for the wedding, the original version of the *Relation* and Kemény's Autobiography. Additional sources used in our study contribute to his arguments substantially. The French translation of the *Relation* already interprets the events by its title *Le triomphe admirable observé en l'aliance de Bethleem Gabor Prince de Transilvanie, avec la Princesse Catherine de Brandebourg*. The *Bericht* also supports this view, mentioning further elements in the entry of Gabriel and Catherine that are generally associated with triumphs, most importantly, that a triumphal arch was built (Ingler, 1874, 529). Arches are considered to be an integral part of these ceremonies.

Foot-soldiers, horsemen and the carriages constituted the main body of the procession, the Princess being at its center. The Elector of Brandenburg took the necessary measures to arrange the carriages according to the latest fashion: noblemen who were ordered to provide a carriage with six horses were also asked to pay at-

tention to the latest innovation, widespread at the ‘Netherlands and other places’, namely, that the coachman was to sit on a coach-box and not on one of the horses, as was previously the custom. It was another invention, that the coachmen wore a special coat. The sixty carriages were made of red leather; the Princess was sitting in a carriage covered with red velvet and richly decorated with silver. (The instructions of George William quoted by Schuster, 1901, 123.)

The bridal carriage, however, in which she entered Kassa, was a present of the groom, according to the customs of the Principality of Transylvania (Szabó, 1980, 116; Szádeczky, 1899, 7). It was prepared in Constantinople. The pillars and the main components were made of pure silver and gold, the fabric of red velvet embroidered with gold. The caparison and the coachman’s coat were similarly made of red velvet embroidered with gold. The six horses drawing the carriage were painted to golden yellow. Bethlen rode beside the bridal carriage.

The Confirmation of the Marriage Oath and the Following Banquet

On the second day of the celebrations, March 2, the first important event was in the main hall: the confirmation of the marriage oath. The ceremony was planned in advance (Radvánszky, 1888, 220–1) and recounted in the Bavarian report and the *Bericht* as well (*Des kurbaierischen Abgeordneten*, 1817, 353; Ingler, 1874, 532). The Prince and the Princess sat in velvet armchairs during the sermon, orations and most of the ceremony, the illustrious guests at their sides, their retinue of lower rank – including the author of the *Bericht* – behind them. For the oath Catherine and Bethlen knelt down on red velvet cushions, raised two fingers high.

After the religious ceremony, tables were installed in the same room for the banquet. The main table was covered with a Turkish style silk tablecloth richly embroidered with gold. The table stood on a dais about 10–15 cm above the ground, enhancing the visibility of the proceedings and the participants sitting there. At the same time, the table and the central figures sitting around it on the platform elevated and separated them from the rest of the room and spectators. The sitting order at the table mirrored the social, political and diplomatic status of the guests. Gender and nationality were taken more into consideration at the ground-level tables than the main one: German and Hungarian ladies and lords of similar rank sat together in smaller groups.

The quality of the tableware, the number and the excellence of the dishes and drinks depended upon the importance of the table. Specialties such as fresh raisins and melons, at the very beginning of March, were presented only at the first one. Rituals at the table, such as access to a wash-basin, cutting of the meals, the possibility for official foretasters to sample foods beforehand as well as the presenta-

tion of the dishes reinforced differentiation at one table (Ottomeyer, 2002, 4–9; for the table ceremony in 17th century Transylvania see: Apor, 1978, 31–54).

Numerous spectacular culinary creations (referred to as *Schau-Essen* in the German sources) were served. Their list as well as the name of their creators – Franz, the German and László, the Hungarian chefs – also survived. (First published by D. G. [Döbrentei Gábor], 1817, 189–91, newly published by Szabó, 1990, 443–9.) However, it is interesting to compare the concise descriptions of the specialties on the list with the experience of one of the guests. An edible elephant is described as follows:

Enormous elephant, [carrying] a tower on it with the coats of arms of our Lord and Lady, decorated on the top, a castle made of cane-sugar under it, decorated with lovely animals (Szabó, 1990, 448).

The author of the *Bericht* gave full particulars of the spectacle. He described it as a huge elephant with a castle on its back; a young boy was hiding in it playing the lute. He also sang in French, recited some Latin and German verses, then sang again. After a while some birds flew out of the castle, small bells on their legs, flying all over the room, then they were taken away. Another work of art described by its creator was a lake in which real fishes were swimming, a savage was in the middle with water spouting from his hands; the whole construction was decorated with flowers (Ingler, 1874, 534–5). The chefs also prepared mythological figures, exotic animals and other strange creatures. Some were very likely burdened with symbolic meanings, others, like the one in which a firework was hidden, simply entertained the guests.

However, we also know about many critical comments on the part of the German guests concerning the food and drinks. The quality of the wine was frequently criticized (Ingler, 1874, 524). According to a sarcastic remark in the *Relation* the Hungarian dishes caused more inclination to leave the table rather than to eat (*Vmbständliche Relation*, 1926, A IV). The Bavarian delegation commented that although the wedding was held during Lent for Catholics, there were only eight or nine dishes of fish, and even those were not fresh but salted fish (*Des kurbaierischen Abgeordneten*, 1817, 347).

Participants and their Appearance

The presence of illustrious guests greatly contributed to the magnificence of the ceremonies. Family members, the domestic nobility, diplomats representing the major European courts participated at these events.

We have information about the foreign diplomats who participated in the events and in some cases also about the size of their retinue. The Holy Roman and the Ottoman Emperors sent representatives; according to the Bavarian report the size of the latter's delegation was about 500 (*Des kurbaierischen abgeordneten*, 1817, 351). The envoy of the Bavarian Elector, the delegation of Walachia, the envoys of different Polish dukes and the bishop of Krakow attended the event as well. Hungarian and Transylvanian cities also sent envoys and presents.

The delegation from Brandenburg was the most numerous (Radvánszky, 1888, 223–6). A letter written from Transylvania to the court of Brandenburg concerning the arrival of the Princess underlines the importance of the retinue, suggesting that the Princess should come with her entire household “in order to be esteemed and respected as she arrives” (quoted by Bardeleben, 1916, 156). The Elector of Brandenburg also paid great attention to the appearance of her entourage at the wedding in Kassa. He invited the guests months earlier, leaving enough time for preparations. In his letter of invitation he asked the recipients to appear in their most festive attire (“*dich ufs Stattlichste mit Kleidungen gefasst machen*”). He also asked them to provide two servants in matching clothing: red livery trimmed with silver or white silk mixed with silver. Since the same letter was sent to the participants, this request aimed at possibly uniform clothing for the servants (Schuster, 1901, 123). The noble pages and lackeys wore black and gold colored liveries.

Military units from both sides contributed to the solemnity of the occasion. Troops from the Guards of Brandenburg led and followed the bridal procession that departed from Berlin on January 26, 1626. This was the first known recorded time when the Guards wore their famous uniform, a blue coat trimmed with white lace (Schwebel, 1882, 307), which in addition is quite an early date in the history of uniform as well (Hingst, 2001, 133).

The Transylvanian troops enriched the colorful tableau in greater number. Accounts of the event are in agreement on the composition and appearance of the troops, although the numbers they give vary. The author of the *Bericht* estimated the number of troops the highest, altogether 10,000 soldiers, including two battalions of German infantry from the Principality, the Hungarian Heyducks, and about 7,000 horsemen with a pike (Ingler, 1874, 526). Diplomatic sources also support this estimation (Roe, 1740, 452–5). The few thousand Heyducks were dressed in blue, the several hundred German soldiers in red and white livery. The *Bericht* gave a detailed description of their appearance, noticing the yellow shoes and the muskets of the Heyducks and the exotic appearance of soldiers wearing skins of rare animals, typical of Hungarian noble soldiers; the *Bericht's* author found it remarkable that there were flags on all the pikes (Ingler, 1874, 526). The troops lined up on both sides and the guests advanced slowly between them, which made their observation easier. The literature also confirms that the German

troops wore red outfits and the court infantry of the Principality of Transylvania was dressed in blue (Szabó – Somogyi, 1996, 36–42).

The Magyar style dress was often strange for the Western European eye. The Hungarian delegation was already awed in Berlin because of the clothing of the noblemen (Faden, 1927, 156–7). At the banquet in Kassa the *Vorschneider* serving at the main table caught the attention of the guests because of his exotic appearance. He had a strange long beard and wore a yellow atlas gown decorated with a huge collar and lined with fox fur. Bethlen's valets were also dressed in yellow atlas. Another remarkable figure was Bethlen's jester, named Mihály, clothed in an eccentric way (“*wunderlich gekleidet*”) suitable to his profession. (For the appearance of jesters: Malke, 2001.) He played a prominent role throughout the festivities.

The center of attention, however, was the princely couple. They were at the center of the ceremonies and the descriptions also focused on them.

The groom was twice as old as his bride at the time of the marriage. According to contemporary descriptions and portraits Bethlen's appearance was rather disadvantageous. He had a large head (Szilágyi, 1879, 355), big eyes and a wide mouth. According to Hungarian fashion he wore a tuft of hair (Angyal, 1898, 421, see also Cennerné Wilhelmb, 1980, 33–51). His beard was already grizzled (Szekfü, 1929, 160). However, Bethlen loved luxury and luxurious clothes (Péter, 2002, 93) and this contributed very likely to the fact that his appearance was described as “respectable” and “majestic” (Inglér, 1874, 528).

The bride was twenty-four years old and a real beauty. Although she was short, she had a shapely figure and a pleasing face (*Vmbständliche Relation*, 1626, A III). Don Diego de Estrada, master of ceremonies at the princely court of Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia), described her as follows. “Her skin was snow-white, her eyes and forehead really beautiful; her lips were somewhat thick and limp, betraying the lineage with the House of Austria” (Don Diego de Estrada, 1980, 245).

Bethlen wore Magyar style attire throughout the festivities. According to Kemény's description when he first met his bride he wore a white and silver garment ornamented with flowers, a *mente* lined with marten fur and a *süveg* on his head trimmed with egret feathers (Kemény, 1980, 61–2). This description is in agreement with a more detailed account in the *Bericht*, describing him as he sat on a gold colored steed with white spots, the horse was covered with a red velvet caparison embroidered with gold. He wore clothes embroidered with silver, yellow boots, a larger, Hungarian style coat, similar to the former, fully lined with sable, and a huge [sable] collar. In addition, he wore a brown velvet cap lined with sable. It was decorated with a large black plume and many white egret feathers in a huge diamond jewel.

Er saß auf einen Türckischen weißgeschwemten goldtfarben Roß, mit einer sammeten rothen Decken mit Golde gesticket, hat einen silberstückenen Rock, gelbe Stieffeln, einen großen Ungrischen dergleichen Rock, durch unndt durch mit köstlichen Zobeln durchfuttert, auswendig einen großen Koller, eine braunsammeten Mützen mit Zobeln, darauf einen großen schwarzen Regepusch auswendig, unten mit einen großen Diamanten Kleinot inwendig mit vielen weißen Kranchspfedern (Ingler, 1874, 527).

On the second day he wore a silver velvet garment with ruby jewels, the buttons decorated with diamonds; there was a huge diamond jewel on his Magyar style headwear, trimmed with egret feathers. His blue hose was embroidered with silk, his footwear was made of red cordovan leather decorated with gold.

As Patricia Allerston pointed out in connection with 16th century Venetian wedding finery, the bride – wearing exquisite fabrics and dazzling jewels – was a central figure of the wedding display (Allerston, 1998, 30).

In the case of the elites guests not only did the process of dressing require assistance but on certain occasions the wearing of clothes as well. This explains why the ceremonial order of the marriage took the necessary measures to ensure that required help was at hand, noting that “according to the custom princely brides are dressed in a long gown, the tail held by four virgins of noble birth”. The German court suggested that four Hungarian countesses, all dressed in white, could be entrusted with this task. In the absence of these the bride’s own ladies-in-waiting could fill this role (Radvánszky, 1888, 221–2). The train required special assistance during the dance as well. The maidens had to follow the bride while she was dancing with illustrious guests. Besides it being necessary for practical purposes – enabling the movement of the bride –, the identically dressed ladies attending to the task enhanced the beauty of the spectacle.

The preliminary preparations resulted in a festive appearance on the day of the confirmation of the marriage oath. Catherine wore a gown of cloth of gold decorated with flowers in various colors; her train was carried by four of her court ladies, dressed in white atlas, according to the English style, their hair tied simply and adorned with a small feather. The Princess’ gown had a low neckline and she wore dazzling jewels. Not only the Princess and her ladies-in-waiting were dressed according to the English fashion of the time, but also her sister, the Duchess of Braunschweig and all the German ladies. The major elements of this style – a single feather on the head, low neckline and standing lace collar (for further details, see Arnold, 1985; Baclawski, 1995; Cunnington – Cunnington, 1967; Ribeiro – Cumming, 1989) – are observable also on different depictions of Catherine.

The English fashion was not followed in Transylvania or Royal Hungary at the time. The appearance of the Princess and her entourage could have been extrava-

gant for the Hungarian guests. The low neckline worn by the English ladies surprised a Hungarian student and traveler, Márton Szepsi Csombor even at the first half of the 17th century (Szepsi Csombor, 1979, 183).

Jewels and Gifts

Writing about the jewels of the Princess, the *Bericht* described two pieces in particular. One of them was a round, crown-like diadem, 1/4 ells high, encrusted with diamonds that sparkled in the room. The author estimated its value at 100,000 thalers. Her necklace and huge pendant were also decorated with diamonds.

Jewels and other works by goldsmiths played the central role in the morning following the wedding night. According to the German tradition of the morning gift (*Morgengabe*), Gabriel Bethlen presented his wife with a great number of jewels, in the form of diamond necklaces, bracelets and rings. She also received a gown made of an especially valuable cloth of gold made in Constantinople. The *Relation* valued the jewels at 200,000 thalers, the *Bericht* at 190,000 and the Bavarian Report at 125,000 thalers (*Des kurbaierischen Abgeordneten*, 1817, 354; Ingler, 1874, 535; *Vmbständliche Relation*, 1626, A III).

According to the Account Book of Gabriel Bethlen, a great amount of money was spent on jewels in 1625 and the first two months of 1626. There are 130 entries that list jewels, gems or valuable goldsmith's works. The total cost of these items was around 87,100 thalers and 12,800 forints. This intensive purchase of jewelry was most probably connected to the wedding. The most expensive items were a gold chain (17,000 thalers), a short necklace (7,000 thalers) and a diamond (6,000 thalers). Another 14 items cost at least 1,000 thalers. Most of these expensive jewels were purchased in Fogaras (Făgăraș, Fogarasch) between March 18 and 20, 1625. Altogether almost 70,000 thalers were spent there for that purpose. Other places, when specified, where these jewels were bought were Vienna and Krakow and in one occasion Constantinople (Radvánszky, 1888, 1–157).

After the presentation of the morning gift, the foreign delegations and those from the Hungarian and Transylvanian cities also gave gifts to the couple. Most of the presents were goldsmith's works.

Unfortunately, we only know of two pieces today out of the great number of jewels relating to the festivity. A pair of silver belt buckles, most probably made in connection with the wedding, survived from the year 1626 (Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest, cat. nr. 73.149.I–II). Most probably it was made in connection with the wedding. The initials of the couple, the date as well as two hearts aflame are engraved into the inside surface. The outside is decorated with leaf patterns and putti (Héjjné Détári, 1976, 43).

A silver pendant is another decorative item that survived from the wedding memorabilia (Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest, cat. nr. 54.4738). According to tradition, it is one in a series that at the time of the wedding of Catherine and Gabriel consisted of six similar pieces. At the end of the 19th century there were still five very similar pendants – one of them of gold, four of silver – in the property of different Hungarian magnate families (Szilárdfy, 1980, 35–9).

The pendant is made of silver, richly decorated, showing a red enameled heart at the center, held by a pair of hands, each wearing a ring. The frame around the heart is decorated with emeralds and diamonds. Under the heart is a skull, a key in its jaws, symbolizing faithfulness. A crown tops the pendant encircled by two white, enameled doves around it. Further symbols are a green snake and an anchor, the latter also forms a cross (Héjjné Détári, 1976, 51–2).

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