

FORMULARY AND CHANCERY PRACTICE IN TRANSYLVANIA DURING MICHAEL THE BRAVE'S REIGN (1599-1600)*

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Abstract: *The author aims to reconstruct in the present study the role played by the chancery and its writing practices during the reign of Michael the Brave in Transylvania. In the first part the chancery is defined within the whole institutional ensemble of the principality and its development stages are underlined, together with its two individual compartments: cancelaria minor and cancelaria maior. Ioan Iacobinus' formulary is presented as well; he was the secretary of the Báthory family and of Michael the Brave. Within this formulae styli some Latin writ templates are presented in detail and further analyzed, as the Romanian prince based his issued documents on them. Such are the templates of some letters, like convocatoriae literae, assecuratoria or nova donatio. Some other types of documents are missing from Iacobinus' formulary, even though they were issued by Michael the Brave's chancery and were preserved in Hungarian and Slavic. This writing praxis is analyzed in the final part of the study. The author attempts to bring to light the consistency and novelty present in the activity of the Romanian chancery.*

Keywords: Transylvania, Michael the Brave, cancelaria minor, cancelaria maior, secretary Ioan Iacobinus

The achievements of Michael the Brave's reign in Transylvania are known today due to a wide diversity of written sources, from chronicles and diplomatic correspondence to the documents issued by his chancery from Alba Iulia. The organization and operation of this chancery was a constant concern of the new ruler, and he strived to transform it into an efficient instrument of his government. Thus, the princely chancery covered the writing needs of all institutional departments of the state: from administration to justice, taxation to army, public conduct to religious life, etc. The princely chancery issued in written form all decisions and commands formulated by Michael the Brave, the Princely Council of the Country Assembly, the establishments that held the entire state authority. In order to carry out accordingly its mission to publish documents certifying public and private rights and obligations, the chancery had to be well organized, to function rigorously and comprise trained personnel.

Despite the adversities of the time and the short reign of Michael the Brave in Transylvania (October 1599-September 1600), enough documents and information

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latter arranged the concerned itself with documents related to judicial cases of Transylvania².

Usually, those nominated to the rank of Chancellor were close and trusted collaborators of the country's ruler. Such was the case of Bishop Dimitrie Naprágy, whom Michael the Brave accepted as Chancellor as a gesture of goodwill and respect for this leader of the Catholic Church, which also had imperial protection. The nomination of a churchman as Chancellor, who had no cultural proficiency, would thus be justified. Naprágy's secretary however, John Iacobinus, was well known to his peers due to his writings of history and rhetoric³. Iacobinus was the true man in charge of the chancery's written output after its takeover by the new ruler. Apparently, he was that anonymous secretary to whom Michael the Brave had entrusted the princely archive after the victory of Șelimbăr (October 18th) and subsequent entrance in Alba Iulia (November 1st 1599), demanding, for political reasons, an account of the most important documents⁴. This directive aimed at an exact inventory of princely donation deeds in order to establish the abrogation of those issued by Sigismund Báthory.

John Iacobinus, the future princely secretary, was Unitarian, from Cluj, born on August 23rd 1574⁵ in a family belonging to the Saxon patriciate. His father, Bernard Iacobinus, was a reputed citizen, used by the Báthory family for diplomatic assignments, including in Poland (1587). The Unitarian school from Cluj, in need of well-trained professors from abroad, commissioned Bernard Iacobinus to bring John Erasmus of Antwerp to town, at the time a refugee in Poland due to religious persecutions. Erasmus was one of the teachers of young John Iacobinus, who displayed his academic training and qualities as a rhetorician in the circumstance of the wedding of Stephen Kakas⁶, princely secretary, – on that occasion Iacobinus delivered the *Chorus Musarum* oration, which made his name known throughout the city and led to his subsequent nomination as town's notary public. In 1595 he joined the military expedition led by Sigismund Báthory against the Turks in Wallachia and took part at

² The evolution of the princely chancery during the second half of the 16th century is described in Trócsányi Zolt, *Erdély központi kormányzata 1540-1690*, Budapest, 1980, p. 184-186; Susana Andea, *Instituțiile centrale și locale în Transilvania*, in *Istoria românilor, V. O epocă de înnoiri în spirit european (1601-1711/1716)*, Ediția a II-a, București, 2012, p. 701-707.

³ Bónis György, Valentiny Antal, *Jacobinus János erdélyi kancellár formuláskönyve (1602)*, Cluj, 1947, p. 7.

⁴ Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor*, III/1 (1576-1599), București, 1880, p. 367.

⁵ Costin Feneșan, Konrad G. Gündisch, *Informații privind istoria Transilvaniei (sec. XVI-XVII) în calendarele lui Paul Eber*, in "Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie Cluj-Napoca", XVII, 1974, p. 84.

⁶ Bónis György, Valentiny Antal, *op. cit.* Details about his life and diplomacy career are available in Veress Endre, *Zalánkeményi Kakas István*, Budapest, 1905. Regarding his activity as secretary in the princely chancery, from 1593 to 1599, see Trócsányi Zolt, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

Magyi¹⁰, or the book of John Bachy from 1569¹¹, during the Principality. Such an instrument, used as model, prototype or template for the practical learning of some juridical elements was part of all the chanceries from the Kingdom of Hungary and Principality of Transylvania, from the country's chancery to the level of authentication places¹².

The chancery formulary used by John Iacobinus is preserved in the form of a small book with 12 pages, included in a registry that later comprised the documents of the Cluj Locksmiths' Guild¹³, with the initials *S*S*T* and the year *1*5*9*9* imprinted on the cover. According to the watermark, the paper was produced between 1598 and 1606 in Germany. The mentioned date, 1599, probably marks the beginning of the registry and the start of the transcription of documents belonging to Sigismund Báthory, Maria Christierna and Michael the Brave. The formulary comprises a total number of 22 templates, all written in Latin, some specifically dated and placed, and others from approximately 1581-1602. 15 templates belong to Sigismund Báthory, one to Maria Christierna, 5 to Michael the Brave and another one which could be attributed to any of the princes from the Báthory family¹⁴.

The formulary comprises noticeably less record templates than the number known today to have been written and issued by the princely chancery during the period under review. This observation only proves the fragmentary character of the formulary book, including the fact that it is not complete – probably it was not finished – as there are missing the templates of the numerous documents issued in Hungarian, as well as those of some preserved documents in Romanian and

¹⁰ Bónis György, *Magyi János formuláskönyve és a gyakorlati jogtanítás*, in “Jubileumi tanulmányok a pécsi egyetem történetéből”, I, Szerk. Csizmadia Andor, Pécs, 1967, p. 225-260; Dreska Gábor, *Jegyzetkönyv, mintakönyv, tankönyv. A Magyi-formulárium*, in “Arcana tabularii”. Tanulmányok Solymosi László tiszteletére, I, Budapest-Debrecen, 2014, p. 43-51.

¹¹ Pécsi Anna, *Az erdélyi fejedelmi kancellária első formuláriumos kézírata*, in “Emlékkönyv Szentpétery Imre születése hatvanadik évfordulójának ünnepére”, Budapest, 1938, p. 385–395; Bogdándi Zsolt, *Fráter György birói működésének emlékei Bácsi János formuláskönyvében*, in “Történelmi Szemle”, LVI, 2014, sz. 4, p.621-638 (Ioan Bachy's manuscript book can be found at the Central University Library/Biblioteca Centrală Universitară “Lucian Blaga” Cluj-Napoca, Colectia de manuscrise, Ms. latin nr. 1271).

¹² Cf. Martinus Georgius Kovachich, *Formulae solennes styli in cancellaria, curiaque regum, foris minoribus, ac locis credibilibus, authenticisque Regni Hungariae olim usitati*, Pesthini, 1799. In the manuscript collection from Transylvanian Museum/Muzeul Ardelean about 25 formulary books were identified, and at the Hungarian National Archives, Holding B 24, there is, among others, a series entitled *Stylianarium*, used in the Chancery of the Transylvanian Gubernium during the period 1694-1797, etc.

¹³ National Archives/Arhivele Naționale – Serviciul județean Cluj (infra SJAN Cluj), Fond bresle, Breasla lăcătușilor, nr. 3.

¹⁴ All documents were published as Annex in Bónis György, Valentiny Antal, *op. cit.*, p. 25-56. We should mention that pages 5 and 6 of the manuscript, with more than one document template from Sigismund Báthory's chancery, have detached from the register and were lost.

John Gyulai of Iara de Sus²⁰, Wolfgang (Farkas) Alia²¹ and Stephen Toldai of Salonta²². All of their assets received from previous Princes in various counties were sanctioned again by granting of new donations (*novae donationis titulo*)²³.

As in the case of any change of ruler, the designation of Michael the Brave as Prince and his resolution from November 20th 1599 led to the increase of the written output from the princely chancery. Subsequently, there was a need to recruit new scribes who could read and write in Latin and Hungarian in order to ensure the continuous operation of the chancery. In 1599 a number of 23 scribes could be identified, a significant increase from the 6 scribes who used to cover the personnel demands between 1596 and 1598; in 1600 the documents reveal 17 names of scribes, while in 1602 only 11 clerks are known²⁴. Michael the Brave's acknowledgment for his scribes (*deákok*) is illustrated in a document issued on April 18th 1600, which nominates 8 people who were exempt of military duty in the service of George Pitar, the curator of the princely residence from Alba Iulia, out of whom 5 were scribes (Martin, Mathew, Peter, Gabriel, Józsa/Joseph of Bărbant)²⁵.

During Michael the Brave's reign in Transylvania, from 1599 to 1600, a much larger number of scribes worked in the princely chancery, as we will show further on – some secretaries or other clerks who wrote in Romanian and Slavonic with Cyrillic letters were nominated, others remained anonymous. The documents they issued, although small in number, add to the Latin and Hungarian written output of the chancery and princely court from Alba Iulia, revealing the complexity of Michael the Brave's literacy policy. Because he had come to Transylvania from a foreign country, as a ruler accompanied by Romanian troops, it was normal for the estates of the Principality to be worried and concerned. In order to appease the nobility and gain their support, Michael confirmed the privileges of the local loyal noblemen and kept their offices, including within the Princely Council, but also brought in representatives of his own aristocracy: the Bans Mihalcea and Calotă, the Grand Logothete Teodosie Rudeanu, the Grand Treasurer Bărcan, the Grand Chamberlain Stoica, the Grand Master of the Horse Leca, and others. The chancery was firstly run by Bishop Dimitrie Naprágy, later by the Grand Logothete Teodorsie Rudeanu, and additional scribes who could write in Romanian and Slavonic (Serbian) augmented the number of chancery

²⁰ Idem, f. 12 r. (Anexa 5). There are more than one differences between the prototype in Iacobinus' formulary and the final form of the document, as can be conferred in Annex 5 and 6.

²¹ Idem, f. 10 r. (Anexa 1).

²² Idem, f. 11 r. (Anexa 3).

²³ The last 2 document prototypes are published by Bónis György, Valentiny Antal, *op. cit.*, p. 46-47 and 50-51, not including the template for the Gyulai family document; the original record was published, with some discrepancies, by Andrei Veress, *op. cit.*, p. 291-292. This act has, on the bottom left side, the signature of the issuer in Cyrillic letters: *ѠВ МНХАНА ВСЕВСА*, and on the top right side the signature of the secretary: Johannes Iacobinus.

²⁴ Trócsányi Zsolt, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

²⁵ Andrei Veress, *op. cit.*, VI, p. 84-85.

