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## Two Letters of Two Apafis, Dukes of Transylvania, to László Gyulaffy during the Great Turkish War (1687 and 1691)

### ABSTRACT

The paper discusses two unpublished letters from two Transylvanian dukes of the name Apafi – Mihály I (the father) and Mihály II (his son) – written in 1687 and 1691, respectively, during the retreat of the Ottoman armies. The letters are now part of the *Sammlung Autographa* manuscript collection of the former Prussian State Library in Berlin and are held in the Jagiellonian Library in Kraków.<sup>1</sup>

**KEYWORDS:** Apafi, Transylvania, Turkish wars, Jagiellonian Library, Prussian State Library in Berlin

### STRESZCZENIE

Dwa listy siedmiogrodzkich książąt Apafi do László Gyulaffyego podczas wojny Turcji ze Świętą Ligą (1687 i 1691)

Artykuł przedstawia dwa niepublikowane listy dwóch siedmiogrodzkich książąt Apafi: Michała I (ojca) i Michała II (jego syna) z lat 1687 i 1691, czyli z okresu odwrotu armii osmańskiej. Listy należą do kolekcji autografów dawnej Pruskiej

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Biblioteki Państwowej w Berlinie i znajdują się obecnie w Bibliotece Jagiellońskiej w Krakowie.

**SŁOWA KLUCZE:** Apafi, Siedmiogród, wojny tureckie, Biblioteka Jagiellońska, Pruska Biblioteka Państwowa w Berlinie

The aim of this paper is to present two unpublished Hungarian letters written by the Transylvanian dukes, Apafi Mihály I (the father), who ruled from 1661<sup>2</sup> to 1690, and Apafi Mihály II (his son), who ruled from 1690 to 1701. Although the letters are unrelated, they share the same addressee: László Gyulaffy. In a way, they reflect the situation in the country at the end of the 17th century (the first letter dates from 1687 and the second from 1691) and thus serve as an interesting time capsule of a very turbulent period in Hungarian history – especially in Transylvania, which was a vassal principality of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman retreat began with the liberation of Vienna by John III Sobieski in September 1683 and the subsequent victorious military campaign of the Holy League.

The letters are preserved in the *Sammlung Autographa* collection of manuscript documents from the former Prussian State Library in Berlin, now held in the Jagiellonian Library in Kraków. At the end of World War II, this collection, along with other valuable holdings (mainly manuscripts and old books of various origins) from the Berlin Library, was evacuated by train by the Germans to Lower Silesia – territory that became part of Poland in 1945. The abandoned set of valuable documents was later transported to the Jagiellonian Library in Krakow, where it remains to this day and is colloquially known as the “Berlinka.” Hungarian documents are rare in this collection, which contains only two letters from two Transylvanian dukes sharing the name Apafi. As these letters have never been published, we have decided to present them in this paper.

### **Senders of both letters: the two Transylvanian dukes Apafi**

Mihály Apafi was born on 3 November 1632 in Ebesfalva<sup>3</sup> in Transylvania and spent his youth in the 1650s in Transylvanian military campaigns in Moldova, Wallachia and Poland, and in 1657, he was taken prisoner by the Ottomans.

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- 2 However, the young Mihály was elected Prince of Transylvania as early as 10 June 1681, at the age of five, while his father was still alive, on the condition that he would assume power at the age of twenty. This election was carried out in agreement with Sultan Mehmed IV.
  - 3 Later *Erzsébetváros*; today this town is located in central Romania (and in central Transylvania) and has Romanian name *Dumbrăveni*, in Sibiu County.

He returned home from the Tatar captivity in Crimea by 1660, and lived in retirement in his castle in Ebesfalva.<sup>4</sup>

At that time, Transylvania, formerly part of the partitioned lands of the Hungarian Crown, was a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire. Under this dependency, Transylvanians had to pay an annual tribute to the Ottomans and could not pursue an independent foreign policy without the sultan's consent. However, the principality also maintained a complex relationship and numerous ties with the Kingdom of Hungary under Habsburg rule and with Vienna itself (see Oborni, 2013; Kármán, 2013). At the beginning of 1661, when János Kemény, the new duke elected by the Transylvanian parliament, attempted to break away from Ottoman control and sought the protection of Emperor Leopold I, the Ottomans sent a large army against Transylvania, defeated Kemény, and summoned the Diet to proclaim Mihály Apafi as Duke of Transylvania (14 September 1661) “against his will” (Szádeczky-Kardoss, 1993, p. 200), as a loyal vassal duke of the Habsburg Empire's rival. However, Apafi secretly supported the anti-Turkish alliance (Barta, 1994, p. 361; see also Kármán, 2022).

Since 1653, his wife had been the Transylvanian noblewoman Anna Bornemisza (1630–1688), whom Apafi occasionally referred to as his “co-ruler” (Barta, 1994, p. 401). They had one son, who bore the same first name and would later become Mihály II.

Mihály Apafi had limited possibilities to rule his principality as an Ottoman vassal (see, e.g., Szalai, 2025). When, in 1683, the Turks suffered defeats near Vienna and later elsewhere, the duke decided to seek protection from the Habsburg court<sup>5</sup> – without openly joining the anti-Turkish alliance, for security reasons (Barta, 1994, p. 368). In the spring of 1687, the Imperial army began the reconquest of Ottoman-held territories in Hungary, and on 12 August, the Habsburg commander, Duke Charles of Lorraine, defeated the Ottomans in the decisive Battle of Nagyharsány (also known as the “Second Battle of Mohács”). The duke then entered Transylvania, where, on 27 October, he concluded with Apafi the “Agreement of Balázsfalva,”<sup>6</sup> which, however, was not accepted by Vienna. In 1688, Emperor Leopold I sent General Antonio Caraffa as imperial commissioner to Transylvania. Subsequently, another agreement, known as the “Declaration of Fogaras”<sup>7</sup> (Hung. *Fogarasi nyilatkozat*), was prepared and adopted on 9 May 1688. According to this document, Duke

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4 See the diaries of the two dukes (Tóth, 1900).

5 During negotiations, at least two attempts of treaties were made: firstly, secret negotiations of Mihály Teleki (Apafi's adviser) with Antide Dunod (Habsburg envoy) in 1685; secondly, Apafi's counsellor János Haller's treaty (Hung. *Haller-féle diploma*) in Vienna on 28 June 1686. Moreover, Teleki had his own ambitions to play (for an overview of his career, see Szalai, 2021).

6 Present-day Romanian city of *Blaj* in Transylvania, in Alba County.

7 Present-day city of Făgăraș in the central Romania, in Brașov County. The castle of Fogaras was the residence of the princes Apafi.

Mihály I Apafi, his princely council, and the Transylvanian parliament declared that Transylvania would place itself under the protection of Leopold I instead of remaining under Ottoman suzerainty (Várkonyi, 2001, pp. 367–371). Moreover, Transylvania was obliged to pay tribute to the emperor, who only promised to maintain religious freedom (Barta, 1994, p. 370).

In the meantime, Duke Mihály I Apafi died on 15 April 1690 in Fogaras, Transylvania. The emperor appointed a regency council for his successor, Mihály II Apafi, who was only fourteen years old.

However, on 8 June 1690, Sultan Suleiman II (r. 1687–1691) appointed Imre Thököly<sup>8</sup> as Duke of Transylvania in opposition to Apafi's minor son, due to the latter's pro-Habsburg orientation. Moreover, the sultan ordered a sufficient army to occupy the country and sent Thököly with his Kuruc–Romanian–Turkish–Tatar forces, who attacked the Transylvanian–Habsburg troops defending the principality on 21 August 1690, defeating them in the Battle of Zernest.<sup>9</sup> Thököly then sent a message to Leopold I, declaring that he was willing to join the anti-Turkish alliance if he were granted the title of imperial duke (Barta, 1994, p. 371). Meanwhile, on 22 September, the Transylvanian Diet elected Imre Thököly as duke. However, Margrave Louis of Baden, commanding imperial cavalry regiments, marched from Belgrade<sup>10</sup> to Transylvania, from where he drove Thököly into Wallachia.<sup>11</sup>

During this period, in October 1690, the status of the Transylvanian Principality within the Habsburg Empire was confirmed in the so-called *Diploma Leopoldinum*: Transylvania became dependent on the central Habsburg government in Vienna while, at the same time, remaining a separate province, independent of the rest of Hungary. This status had far-reaching consequences that continue to this day. The imperial document also guaranteed freedom of religion and specified the taxes to be paid by Transylvanians to the Austrian court.

In 1691, the Transylvanian parliament appointed a governing council (Lat. *Gubernium*) to rule until Duke Mihály II would come of age. On 30 June 1694, he married Katalin Bethlen (d. 1725) without the permission of the

8 Imre Thököly of Késmárk (1657–1705), leader of anti-Habsburg Uprising in 1682, former Prince of the Upper Hungary (1682–1685), a vassal principality of the Ottoman Empire, soon overthrown for political reasons (see Kármán 2019).

9 Present-day town of *Zărnești* in central Romania, in Transylvania, in Braşov County.

10 When he left, the Turkish Grand Vizier occupied Belgrade on 8th of October.

11 In February 1691, the voivode of Wallachia expelled Thököly and his Kuruc forces from his territory. Thököly then retreated to the Vidin area (present-day Bulgaria); in the summer, he participated in the Ottoman campaign and, on 19 August, was present at the Battle of Szalánkemén, which ended with an Ottoman defeat and the death of Grand Vizier Köprülü Mustafa. Later, after minor raids, Thököly served as commander of an Ottoman army corps in several battles. Following the definitive defeat of the Ottoman Empire (Treaty of Karlowitz, 1699), he settled in Turkey, where he died in 1705.

imperial court. On this pretext, Apafi was summoned to Vienna in 1696 – the year when, according to the original princely election, he would have reached the age to assume the throne. Transylvania was then placed under the rule of a Habsburg military governor. Duke Mihály II officially abdicated in 1701 and died in 1713 in Vienna, where he lived on an imperial pension.

Like his father, the second Duke Apafi was not only young and left under regency but also ruled under difficult circumstances, which deepened the period of clear decline of the Transylvanian Principality.

### The addressee of both letters: László Gyulaffy

In Hungarian history, there were several men bearing the same first name and surname. According to Iván Nagy (1858, vol. 4, p. 480), Gyulaffys, surnamed *Ráthóti* (an adjective meaning “from Ráthót”<sup>12</sup>), originally lived in Transdanubia. In the second half of the 16th century, one branch of the family settled in Szatmár County<sup>13</sup> and the other in Transylvania. The most famous László Gyulaffy (1520–1579) was captain of the Hungarian forces and one of the greatest heroes of the anti-Turkish wars of the 16th century (Takáts, 1928, pp. 261–292).

As for the 17th century, Iván Nagy notes that the seventh László Gyulaffy in the family was a chief officer of Marosszék<sup>14</sup> and played a major role during the time of the Apafis. In 1686, he served as a councilor of the Transylvanian Deputation,<sup>15</sup> later as a general in Count Heissler’s campaign against Imre Thököly,<sup>16</sup> and subsequently as a government councilor (1691). In 1693, this László Gyulaffy was granted the title of count. He died in 1699 on his estate in

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12 The present name of this village is *Gyulafirátót* (as the former settlement of the Gyulaffy family) and this a district of the city of Veszprém in central Hungary.

13 Today, this former Hungarian county coincides with Satu Mare County (in Rom. *Județul Satu Mare*) in northwestern Romania.

14 Former Hungarian settlement near the river Mureș (Hung. *Maros*) in the Szekler Land, nowadays in Romania (in Rom. *Scaunul Mureșului*), in Mureș County, in Transylvania.

15 Zsolt Trócsányi, in his book (1980, p. 149), also confirms Gyulaffy as one of the councillors of the Deputation in the period 1685–1690.

16 The Transylvanian army commanded by General Mihály Teleki, together with the supporting imperial forces under Donat Johann Count Heissler von Heitersheim, defended Transylvania after the death of the elder Apafi, when the sultan proclaimed Thököly the new Prince of Transylvania. Thököly, leading his Kuruc–Romanian–Turkish–Tatar army, attacked the Transylvanian–Habsburg forces on 21 August 1690, defeating them in the Battle of Zernest. Teleki was killed in the battle, while Heissler was captured by Thököly, who later exchanged him in January 1692 for his wife, Ilona Zrínyi, who had been under imperial house arrest since January 1688. The negotiations for the exchange lasted two years. In 1692, the deal was completed: Heissler was released, and Countess Ilona joined her husband in Turkey.

Egeres,<sup>17</sup> and his funeral was held in Kolozsvár<sup>18</sup> (Nagy, 1858, vol. IV, p. 484). Mór Petri, in turn, confirms that “a certain László (VII) distinguished himself in the war against Imre Thököly (1691–1699). In 1684 he became the chief captain of Apafi’s armies,” and adds:

the list of his annual salary is interesting: his cash salary was 400 frt per year, eight cubits of kersey for clothing, two white loaves for his own use, three quarts of table wine, thirty prebend loaves, four quarts of prebend wine, fifteen pounds of meat; and for his wine, wheat, oats, and hay – the tithe of all kinds from Nagyszőlős<sup>19</sup> (Petri, 1901, vol. 2, pp. 390–391).

It appears that the same László was also the dedicatee of the prayer book *Viaticum spirituale* (1694), on which the Jesuit Pál Baranyi wrote in Hungarian (here in English translation):

Dedication to Count László Gyulafi of Rátót, His Imperial Majesty’s Transylvanian Inner Councilor, Chief Captain of the Székelys of Marosszék, and also Colonel of the Field Armies and Court Captain of the late Duke Mihály Apafi of Transylvania, my highly esteemed lord and patron (Vass, 2019, p. 202).<sup>20</sup>

The above-mentioned dedicatee (with a slightly different spelling of the name: Gyulafi) is the same person as the addressee of Apafis’ letters, as the same information about László Gyulaffy appears in both sources.

Nevertheless, the dedication in Baranyi’s book prayer has even more lines and gives more details on Gyulaffy’s career, highlighting his courage and loyalty to the Transylvanian duke: in 1681 he risked his life as a colonel at the head of Duke Mihály Apafi’s field armies, and then became the captain-in-chief of the Marosszék forces in 1683; later, he fought “under the eagles of the glorious Emperor Leopold,” together among others with General Heissler in 1690. The dedication states that Mihály Apafi “received him alone in his tent around midnight during battles and entrusted his life to him alone” (Vass, 2019, p. 205). In the further part of the dedication we can find, among other things, information about Gyulaffy’s generosity towards churches, as well as an interpretation of his coat of arms with the

17 Present-day Romanian village *Aghireș* in Cluj County.

18 Present-day Romanian city *Cluj-Napoca* in northwestern part of Romania.

19 Hungarian original: “érdekes az évi fizetéséről való jegyzék: Készpénz fizetése esztendeig 400 frt, ruházatjára nyolcz sing angliai posztó, magának ő kegyelmének fehér cipője 2, bora asztali 3 itcze, praebenda cipője 30, praebenda bora 4 itcze, húsa 15 font, boráért, búzájáért, zabjáért, szénájáért a nagyszőlősi minden nemű dézma”. Nowadays, the village *Nagyszőlős* is the city *Vynohradiv*, in western Ukraine, in Zakarpattia Oblast, near the Hungarian and Romanian borders.

20 Hungarian original: “Dedikáció gr. Rátóti Gyulafi Lászlónak, ő szent császári felsége erdélyi belső tanácsosának, a marosszéki székelyek főkapitányának, nemkülönben néhai Apafi Mihály erdélyi fejedelem mezei hadai ezredesének és udvari kapitányának, igen nagyra becsült uramnak és patrónusomnak.”

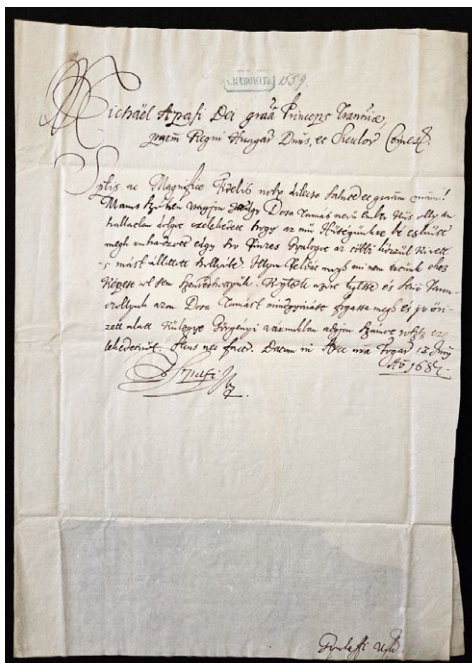
central element: the lion, with a drawn sword in his hand, and other elements (like double-headed imperial eagle) expressing Gyulaffy's military virtues and loyalty towards the emperor, or crowned oak-tree<sup>21</sup> (Vass, 2019, pp. 207–208). Thanks to other archival searches made by Vass (2019, p. 209), we also know that Gyulaffy was Catholic and supported other Catholics in Transylvania.

Below, we present the two letters from the the two Apafis to László Gyulaffy. Our transcription provides a reconstructed and modernized spelling, followed by an English translation. Photographs of the original letters are also included.

The two letters come from the former collection of the Prussian statesman and general Joseph von Radowitz (1797–1853). The catalog of this collection was published in three volumes in 1864. The letters of the dukes are listed under numbers 1559 and 1561, respectively (Radowitz, 1864, vol. I, p. 99).<sup>22</sup>

## The first letter

Photo 1. The letter from 1687



21 However, the initial coat of arms of the Gyulaffy family was a golden lime leaf (Vass, 2019, p. 208).

22 The number 1560 was assigned to a document by I. Thököly from 7 October 1690, which will be discussed in another paper.

The first letter from the Duke Mihály Apafi to László Gyulaffy starts with greetings in Latin, which was a common practice in Hungarian epistolary tradition of that time:

Michaël Apafi Dei gra[ti]a Princeps Tran[silva]niæ,  
Par[tu]m Regni Hungar[iæ] D[omi]nus et Siculor[um] Comes.

Sp[ec]t[abil]is ac Magnifice Fidelis nob[is] dilecte Salute[m] et gra[ti]am  
m[e]am!

Marus Széken vagjon edgy Dosa Tamás nevű ember kiis olyan hallatlan dolgot czelekedett hogy az mű Hűségűnkre bé eskütt megh ruhadzott edgy hu Pinzes Gyalogot az többi közzül ki vett -s mást állított helyébe. Illyen Peldát megh mi nem értünk ehez Képest el sem szenvedhettyűk. Keg[yelme]tek azért k[e]g[yel]l[me]sse[n] és Serio Paranczollyuk azon Dosa Tamást mindgyárast fogassa megh és jo őrizett alatt küldgye Görgényi várunkban adjon számot rossz czelekedetiről. Secus nec fact[u]r[i]. Datum in Arce n[ost]ra Fogar[as] 13 Juny A[nn]o 1687.  
Apafi M[ihály]

Modernized version:

Michaël Apafi Dei gratia Princeps Transilvaniae,  
Partium Regni Hungariae Dominus et Siculorum Comes

Spectabilis ac Magnifice Fidelis nobis dilecte Salutem et gratiam meam!

Marosszéken vagyon egy Dosa Tamás nevű ember, ki is olyan hallatlan dolgot cselekedett, hogy az mi hűségűnkre beesküdt, megruhádzott egy hű pénzes gyalogot, az többi közül kivett s mást állított helyébe. Ilyen példát még mi nem értünk, ehhez képest el sem szenvedhetjük. Kegyelmetek azért kegyelmesen és Serio parancsoljuk, azon Dosa Tamást mindjárast fogassa meg, és jó őrizet alatt küldje Görgényi várunkba(n), adjon számot rossz cselekedetiről. Secus nec facturi. Datum in Arce nostra Fogaras 13 Juni Anno 1687.  
Apafi Mihály

English translation:

Mihály Apafi, by the grace of God, Duke of Transylvania, Lord of parts of Hungary and Lord of the Székely people

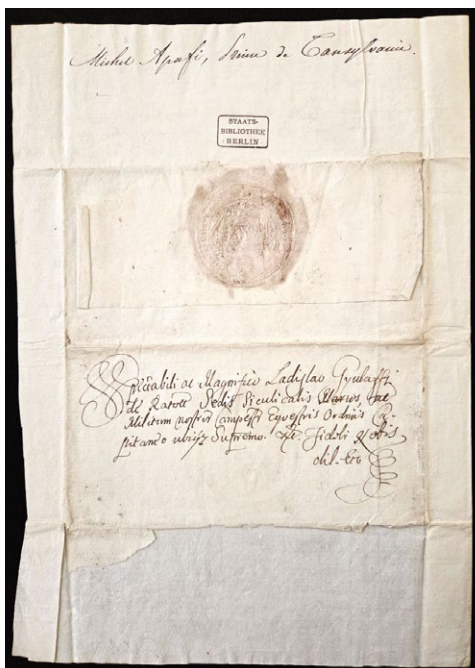
I greet you with dignity, glory, loyalty, and gratitude!



There is a man named Dosa Tamás in Marosszék, who hath done so unheard-of a thing that he hath taken a footman in our service, who had sworn allegiance unto us, received clothing from us, and had been loyal unto us, and hath put another in his place. We understand not such an example, neither can we in any wise tolerate it. Wherefore, Your Grace shall graciously and earnestly command that Dosa Tamás be seized at all costs and sent under good guard unto our castle of Görgény,<sup>23</sup> there to render account of his evil deeds. Let none do otherwise. Given in our castle of Fogaras, the 13th day of June, 1687.

The addressee's name is written in Hungarian in the lower right corner of this side of the letter: *Gyulaffi Ur[am]nak* – “To Sir Gyulaffy.”

Photo 2. The address of the letter from 1687



On the verso of the letter, at the top, the sender's name is written in French (probably by a librarian): *Michel Apafi, Prince de Transylvanie*. Below this, the German stamp of the State Library in Berlin is visible.

23 Later, the Hungarian name of the village was *Görgényszentimre*. Nowadays, this is a Romanian village *Gurghiu* in Mureș County, in Transylvania.

Below, the duke's seal is impressed on paper placed on a wax base.  
Under the seal, the address is written entirely in Latin:

Spectabili ac Magnifico Ladislao Gyulaffi de Ratott Sedis Siculicalis Marus,  
ac Militium nostror[um] Campestr[i] Equestris Ordinis Capitano ubique  
Supremo & Fideli Nobis dil[ectus] E[quitum] M[agister]

Modernized version:

Spectabili ac Magnifico Ladislao Gyulaffi de Ratott Sedis Siculicalis Marus, ac  
Militium nostrorum Campestri Equestris Ordinis Capitano ubique Supremo  
& Fideli Nobis dilectus Equitum Magister

Translation:

To the Notable and Magnificent Ladislaus Gyulaffy of Rátót, Supreme and  
Faithful Captain of the Szekler Seat of Maros and of the Field Army of the Equ-  
estrian Order, our beloved Equerry.

### The first letter's content

Not much is known about this Tamás Dósa (spelled *Dosa* in the text). The Dósa family is described by I. Nagy (1858, vol. IV, pp. 363–368) as originating from Szeklerland. The Tamás mentioned above could be the one born in 1636 or his son, born in 1670 (see Nagy, 1858, vol. IV, p. 366). According to Judit Balogh's book (2005) on the formation of the Szekler nobility, there were three individuals named Tamás Dósa, lords of Makfalva,<sup>24</sup> Kibéd,<sup>25</sup> and Szent-istván.<sup>26</sup> Apafi's letter probably refers to Tamás Dósa of Makfalva, as this settlement lies within Marosszék. In Balogh's work (2005, p. 131), Tamás Dósa of Makfalva is described as a *lófő*, that is, a 'horseman' (Lat. *primipilus*): a member of the upper privileged social class of the Szeklers, who possessed landholdings and serfs. The lower class, by contrast, was called *gyalog*, meaning 'footman' (Szádeczky-Kardoss, 1993, p. 56).<sup>27</sup>

24 Present-day Romanian village *Ghindari* in Mureș County, in Transylvania.

25 Present-day Romanian village *Chibed* in Mureș County, in Transylvania.

26 Later *Székelyszentistván*. Present-day Romanian village *Ștefănești* in Mureș County, in Transylvania.

27 The Szekler people were a free, military community, but over time they divided into three classes: the first-ranking class was called in Latin *primores* (chief men), the second *primipili* (horsemen), and the third, in Hungarian, *gyalogok* (infantrymen or footmen) (Szádeczky-Kardoss, 1993, p. 56).

More information about Tamás Dósa can be found in at least thirteen handwritten documents preserved in the Transylvanian Digital Database (*Erdélyi Digitális Adattár*).<sup>28</sup> The majority of these documents are orders or reports of testimonies written by Duke Mihály Apafi I between 2 February 1667 and 19 December 1689. They confirm that Tamás Dósa resided in the village of Makfalva in Transylvania and that his wife was Erzsébet Bors. Sometimes his serfs ran away; for example, one of Apafi's documents orders István Matkó of Vásárhely<sup>29</sup> to return Tamás Dósa's runaway serf, Balázs Kamuti (14 June 1680).<sup>30</sup> Another report notes that Kelemen Mikes of Zabola<sup>31</sup> was summoned for failing to hand over another of Tamás Dósa's escaped serfs, Mihály Kovács (21 February 1684).<sup>32</sup> There is also an order from Apafi directly addressed to Tamás Dósa, instructing him to search for his serfs who had fled from Magyarsáros<sup>33</sup> (2 June 1684).<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, in 1687, Duke Apafi I sent instructions to Tamás Dósa regarding an extraordinary tax to be paid (4 January 1687).<sup>35</sup>

We also know that among the resolutions of the Transylvanian parliament of 1 December 1691, Dósa Tamás is mentioned as *statióbéli commissarius*<sup>36</sup> in Újegyház<sup>37</sup> (Szilágyi, 1897, p. 478).

### The second letter

The second letter reflects the situation in Transylvania in October 1691 and was probably composed by someone other than the young Mihály II Apafi, who was only fifteen years old at the time (born in 1676). It is written entirely in Hungarian:

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28 The website: <https://eda.emc.ro/home> (access: 28.02.2025).

29 István Matkó (1625–1693) was a Reformed pastor, born in Kézdivásárhely (present-day *Târgu Secuiesc*, Covasna County, Transylvania), who at that time resided in *Torda* (present-day Turda, Cluj County, Transylvania). He is known for his debates and writings (Szinnyei, 1902, vol. 8).

30 See the letter: <https://eda.emc.ro/handle/10598/26219> (access: 28.02.2025).

31 Present-day *Zábala*, a village in Covasna County, Transylvania. This was probably the home of the grandfather of Kelemen Mikes (1690–1761), the Hungarian writer and politician, whose father, Pál Mikes, was a follower of Imre Thököly and was killed by the Austrians.

32 See the letter: <https://eda.emc.ro/handle/10598/26301> (access: 28.02.2025).

33 Present-day Romanian village *Deleni* (formerly *Șaraș*), in Mureș County, in Transylvania.

34 See the letter: <https://eda.emc.ro/handle/10598/26261> (access: 28.02.2025).

35 See the letter: <https://eda.emc.ro/handle/10598/26285> (access: 28.02.2025).

36 Or *staciobeli commissarius* – commissary or inspector of a military station or unit (Szabó & Vámszer, 2002, vol. 11, p. 923).

37 Present-day Romanian village *Nocrich*, in Sibiu county, in Transylvania.



Mi valóban váránk Kegyelmeteket. Kivált ha valami jóval jönne Kegyelme-  
tek szegény hazánk iránt. Ezek után Isten Kegyelmedet sokáig éltesse. Görgény-  
szentimre 19. november. 1691

Kegyelmednek Istentől sok jókat kíván  
Apafi Mihály

Translation:

May God bless your Grace with many good things

This time I wished to visit Your Grace by means of my letter. I hope it finds  
Your Grace in good health: I am well, thank God. Thank God, there is no such  
terrible news here; the truly [devastating] Tartar [invasion that we expected] has  
not yet taken place. Lord Thököly is still near Temesvár,<sup>38</sup> and Lord Veterani is  
likewise at the edge of Hunyad County, watching until Lord Thököly arrives.

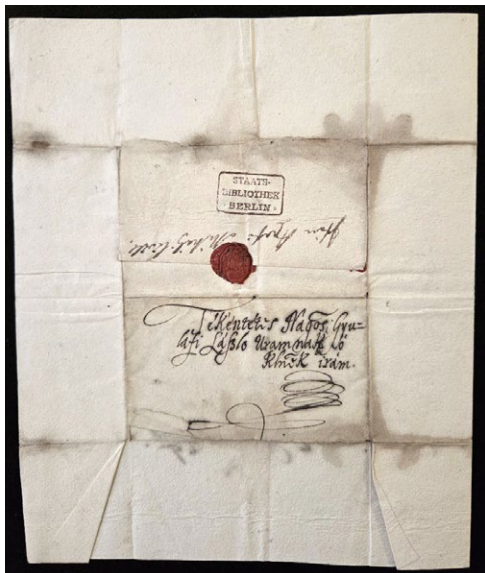
We await Your Grace most earnestly, especially if Your Grace might do  
something for our poor country. May God grant you long life.

Given at Görgényszentimre, 19 November 1691.

I wish Your Grace many good things from God,  
Mihály Apafi

On the verso side of the letter:

Photo 4. The address of the letter from 1691



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38 Present-day Romanian city *Timișoara*, in Timiș County.

First, we see the German stamp of the State Library in Berlin. Next, there is an inscription in Hungarian identifying the letter as from Mihály II Apafi: *Ifju Apafi Mihály levele* (in modern Hungarian: *Ifjú Apafi Mihály levele*) – “Letter of/from young Mihály Apafi.” Below this, a red wax seal displays the duke’s coat of arms.

Under the seal, the addressee is indicated by the sender in Hungarian:

*Tekéntetes Nag[yság]os Gyulafi László Uramnak ö K[egye]l[mé]nek írá[m].*

Modernized version: *Tekintetes Nagyságos Gyulaffy László Uram Ökegyelmének írtam.*

English translation: *I wrote it to His Excellency, Honorable Lord László Gyulaffy.*

### The second letter’s content

Friedrich von Veterani (1643–1695) was an Italian-born<sup>39</sup> military officer in the service of the Habsburg Empire. He participated in subsequent anti-Turkish campaigns in Hungary and in the battles against Thököly in Transylvania. On 5 September 1691, Veterani captured the castle of Lippa.<sup>40</sup> He then focused on the strategic defence of Transylvania, guarding the banks of the river Mureş (Hung. *Maros*) and attempting to prevent the Turkish advance along the Danube (Angyal, 1888, pp. 226–228). In October 1691, Thököly invaded the area near Temesvár (Thaly, 1896, p. 88), but Khalil Pasha eventually ordered the city of Pozsarevác<sup>41</sup> as winter quarters for Thököly’s troops (Angyal, 1888, p. 230), causing him to leave Transylvania.<sup>42</sup>

The fighting between the Holy League and the Ottoman forces continued from the spring of 1692 until the signing of the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699. Meanwhile, on 25 September 1695, General Veterani gave his life on the battlefield near the city of Lugos (present-day *Lugoj*, Romania), where the Austrian troops were defeated by the Ottoman army, led personally by Sultan Mustafa II.

### Conclusions

Both letters from the Transylvanian dukes sharing the name Apafi to László Gyulaffy are modest witnesses to the events of the Great Turkish War, which ended with the victory of the Holy League in 1699. Although they provide few

39 In Italian: *Federico Ambrosio Veterani di Urbino, conte di Monte Calvo*.

40 Present-day Romanian town of Lipova, in Arad County, in the Occidental part of Romania.

41 Present-day *Požarevac*, a city in eastern Serbia.

42 As we know (see footnote 16), at the time Thököly was also waited for the exchange of his wife kept in Vienna.

details, they reveal the lives of the Transylvanian dukes during the turbulent final decades of the 17th century, in the heart of Central and Eastern Europe, a region torn between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans.

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