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Relations between the Transylvanian Prince György II Rákóczi and the Political Elite of the Kingdom of Hungary (1657–1658)¹

Stosunki między księciem Siedmiogrodu
Jerzym II Rakoczym a elitą polityczną
Królestwa Węgier (1657–1658)

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- ¹ This article has been written within the framework of the HUN-REN–SZTE Research Group of the Ottoman Age (between 2017 and 2022 MTA–SZTE Research Group of the Ottoman Age and between 2022 and September 2023 ELKH–SZTE Research Group of the Ottoman Age). This project has received funding from the HUN-REN Hungarian Research Network. This paper focuses only on the affairs of the political elite of the Kingdom of Hungary. For an examination of the broader context, see: János Szabados “...egyiket megsértvén, mástul semmit sem reménlhetvén, egyebet az veszedelemlnél magára nem várhatna. II. Rákóczi György 1657–1658. évi politikája, avagy a fejedelmi cím és Jenő elvesztéséhez vezető út bemutatása a Habsburg Monarchia és a Magyar Királyság szemszögéből 1”, *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 135/2 (2022): 259–289; János Szabados “...egyiket megsértvén, mástul semmit sem reménlhetvén, egyebet az veszedelemlnél magára nem várhatna. II. Rákóczi György 1657–1658. évi politikája, avagy a fejedelmi cím és Jenő elvesztéséhez vezető út bemutatása a Habsburg Monarchia és a Magyar Királyság szemszögéből 2”, *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 135/3 (2022): 571–594; I am indebted to András Peter Szabó, who provided me with the itinerary of Ferenc Wesselényi for the clarification of the database presented in the study, especially regarding the place of dispatch of certain documents, and also with important letters, which were not available despite my extensive collection.

Abstract

In this paper, I examine the relations between Prince György II Rákóczi and the political elite of the Kingdom of Hungary in the period following the Transylvanian prince's campaign in Poland (1657). I briefly describe the operation of the court apparatus responsible for eastern affairs and the activities of the principal Hungarian officeholders – the palatine, the archbishop of Esztergom, the judge royal, and the chancellor – together with the dynamics of their correspondence with Rákóczi in light of these events. To support this investigation, I have developed a database containing information from published sources and archival documents. Combining qualitative aspects (the intentions and interests of the Hungarian dignitaries) with quantitative analysis, the study offers answers to questions such as why the palatine and the archbishop of Esztergom did not correspond for months and through which intermediaries the correspondence was conducted. The analysis also sheds light on the political motivations that led Hungarian dignitaries either to support the prince or, at times, to oppose his policies.

Keywords: Principality of Transylvania, Ottoman Empire, diplomacy, correspondence, political interests, quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Abstrakt

W niniejszym artykule analizuję relacje między księciem Jerzym II Rakoczym a elitą polityczną Królestwa Węgier w okresie po kampanii siedmiogrodzkiego księcia w Polsce (1657). Krótko przedstawiam funkcjonowanie aparatu dworskiego odpowiedzialnego za sprawy wschodnie oraz działalność najważniejszych węgierskich urzędników – palatyna, arcybiskupa Esztergomu, najwyższego sędziego oraz kanclerza – a także dynamikę ich korespondencji z Rakoczym w świetle tych wydarzeń. Na potrzeby badań opracowałem bazę danych zawierającą informacje z opublikowanych źródeł i dokumentów archiwalnych. Łącząc analizę jakościową (intencje i interesy węgierskich dostojników) z analizą ilościową, badanie dostarcza odpowiedzi na takie pytania jak: dlaczego palatyn i arcybiskup Esztergomu nie korespondowali ze sobą przez wiele miesięcy oraz za pośrednictwem jakich osób prowadzono korespondencję? Analiza rzuca również światło na motywacje polityczne, które skłaniały węgierskich dostojników do wspierania jego polityki, a niekiedy także do sprzeciwiania się jej.

Słowa kluczowe: Księstwo Siedmiogrodu, Imperium Osmańskie, dyplomacja, korespondencja, interesy polityczne, analiza ilościowa i jakościowa.

Introduction

In 1657, the Transylvanian prince György II Rákóczi (reigned 1648–1660) attacked the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in alliance with Sweden and the Cossacks, but without the permission of the Sublime Porte.² Despite initial successes, the campaign ended in failure in the summer of 1657, when his allies abandoned the prince, and the Poles forced him to sign a humiliating peace. The prince returned home with only a handful of troops, while the larger part of his army was captured by the Crimean Tatars.³ In this paper, I present the dynamics of the diplomatic relationship between György II Rákóczi and the political elite of the Kingdom of Hungary. First, I briefly survey the governmental structure of the Habsburg Monarchy and the Kingdom of Hungary, and then introduce the members of the Hungarian political elite. Secondly, I examine their views on the prince's policies, period by period (August – November 1657, November 1657 – January 1658, January – July 1658, July – September 1658).⁴ To analyse this correspondence, I draw on a database that I have compiled. In what follows, I will seek to answer the question – by combining quantitative and qualitative analysis – of when, and for what reasons, the political elite was motivated to correspond or refrain from communicating with the prince, and what the outcomes of the events and negotiations were up to the end of September 1658.

The Eastern diplomacy of the Habsburg Monarchy and the officials of the Kingdom of Hungary

In the seventeenth century, the Aulic War Council was responsible for diplomacy between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire. Since Leopold I, King of Hungary and Bohemia and later Holy Roman Emperor (1658–1705),⁵ was residing in Prague and subsequently in

2 For the diplomatic preparations for the campaign, see: Gábor Kármán, *Confession and Politics in the Principality of Transylvania 1644–1657* (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020), 199–250.

3 Gábor Kármán, “Die Krise des Fürstentums Siebenbürgen in den Jahren 1657 bis 1661. Eine Vorgeschichte des habsburgisch-osmanischen Krieges von 1663/1664,” in *Das “Dreieckverhältnis” zwischen Polen, Osmanen und Habsburgern* (Wien: Heeresgeschichtliches Museum, 2022), 87–90.

4 The periods represent major turning points in the historical events described later in this paper.

5 John P. Spielman, *Leopold I. zur Macht nicht geboren* (Verlag Styria: Graz – Köln – Wien, 1981), 27–193.

Frankfurt between the autumn of 1657 and the summer of 1658, the Aulic War Council was divided into a “present” and a “left behind” department, each keeping separate registers. In addition, in Vienna the so-called “left behind Privy and Deputy Councillors” (*hinterlassene geheime und deputierte Räte*) oversaw the various affairs.⁶

Besides the Aulic War Council, Habsburg–Ottoman diplomacy was obviously moulded by leading Hungarian dignitaries. The most important dignitaries in the Kingdom of Hungary in the seventeenth century were the palatine, the archbishop of Esztergom, the judge royal, and the chancellor.⁷

Ferenc Wesselényi was elected Palatine (1655–1667) in 1655, but his initial attitude towards the Rákóczi family was rather cold because they had estates in Upper Hungary and it gave rise to administrative conflicts. However, this attitude seems to have eased over time. The Palatine was also hostile to György II Rákóczi’s campaign in Poland.⁸ The archbishop of Esztergom at this time was György Lippay (in office 1642–1666), who had previous experience in Habsburg–Ottoman diplomacy, since in 1642 (while still chancellor) he was a key member of the committee that negotiated the so-called second peace talks in Szőny. The archbishop was also quite distant from György II Rákóczi in the first half of the 1650s because of the negotiations of the prince with Protestant rulers.⁹ Ferenc Nádasdy,

6 János Szabados, *Die Karriere des deutschen Renegaten (Hans Caspar) in Ofen (1627–1660) im politischen und kulturellen Kontext* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2023), 37–38; Gergely Brandl, Csaba Göncöl, Krisztina Juhász, Gellért Ernő Marton, and János Szabados, “Kommunikation und Nachrichtenaustausch – Verhandlungsstrategie der habsburgischen Seite bei der Friedensverhandlung von Szőny 1627,” *Chronica. Annual of the History University of Szeged* 19 (2020): 125; For the list of the probable councillors in that period, see: Szabados, “...egyiket megsértvén...,” 265, footnote 33.

7 The Ban of Croatia was also an important dignitary, but Miklós Zrínyi did not interfere much in the prince’s affairs, even though he had an excellent grasp of the broader political context. Cf. János B. Szabó, *Erdély tragédiája 1657–1662* (Budapest: Corvina, 2019), 104–114.

8 For Wesselényi, see: Gábor Várkonyi, “A nádor és a fejedelem. Gondolatok Wesselényi Ferenc és II. Rákóczi György kapcsolatáról,” in *Portré és Imázs. Politikai propaganda és reprezentáció a kora újkorban*, eds. Nóra G. Etényi, Ildikó Horn (Budapest: L’Harmattan, 2008), 147–162; Kármán, *Confession and Politics*, 184–197; Gábor Várkonyi, “Ütközőpályán: Wesselényi Ferenc nádor állásfoglalása II. Rákóczi György erdélyi fejedelem politikájáról, 1658,” in *Háborúk, alkotások, életutak. Tanulmányok a 17. század közepének európai történelméről*, eds. Gábor Nagy, Noémi Viskolcz (Miskolc: Miskolci Egyetemi Kiadó, 2019), 172–179.

9 For Lippay, see: István Fazekas, *Die Ungarische Hofkanzlei und ihre Beamten von 1527 bis 1690* (Vienna: Institut für Ungarische Geschichtsforschung in Wien, Collegium Hungaricum, 2024), 376–377. For his attitude towards the Rákóczi family, see: Kármán, *Confession and Politics*, 145–150, 179–197.

then a relatively young judge royal (in office until 1670),¹⁰ held his post from 1655, and like Wesselényi, seems to have established contact with the Transylvanian prince from this time.¹¹

Chancellor György Szelepcsényi (1644–1666), who was already archbishop of Kalocsa in the examined period, may have been the most influential in shaping the relations between Rákóczi and the elite. He had ample experience in the field of Habsburg–Ottoman diplomacy, as he had visited Constantinople at least two times (1641, 1643) before his appointment as chancellor. Moreover, in 1642 he also participated in the peace negotiations in Szőny. As chancellor, for example, Szelepcsényi reconciled the conflicts between Wesselényi and Rákóczi in 1654 and was sent after the prince in 1657 to dissuade him from pursuing his campaign, a mission that ultimately proved unsuccessful. His role is significant because, as chancellor, he was most of the time directly at the side of the monarch and thus had indirect influence on the Hungarian king.¹²

At this point, it is necessary to mention Jónás Mednyánszky – another key figure in the unofficial relations with the political elite of the Kingdom of Hungary. This servitor of Rákóczi had already played an important role under György I Rákóczi (1630–1648) and possessed an exceptionally extensive network of contacts.¹³ He maintained communication with almost all the above-mentioned Hungarian dignitaries (see Table 1),¹⁴ as well as with several highly influential court officials, and virtually all significant unofficial information passed through him. In addition, he received regular reports from Vienna, and thus served as a key source of information for the prince on Hungarian affairs and, indirectly on Ottoman matters as well.¹⁵

10 Although the term Lord Chief Justice also appears in the literature, *Jugde Royal* (*iudex curiae regis*, Hung. *országbíró*) better reflects the legal system of the Kingdom of Hungary than the aforementioned Anglo-Saxon term. Cf. Kármán, *Confession and Politics*, 139, 189, 194; János M. Bak, *Online Decreta Regni Mediaevalis Hungariae. The Laws of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary* (Budapest: Central European University, 2019), 1043 (footnote 155) and 1612.

11 For Nádasdy, see: Katalin Toma, “Egy dunántúli nagyúr erdélyi kapcsolatai. Nádasdy III. Ferenc és II. Rákóczi György,” *Századok* 146/5 (2012): 1161–1188.

12 For the role of the Chancellor and for Szelepcsényi, see: Fazekas, *Die Ungarische Hofkanzlei*, 49–50, 391–393.

13 For Mednyánszky's correspondence with the prince, see: *Monumenta Hungarica, az az Magyar Emlékezetes Írások*. I, ed. Károly György Rumy (Pest: Trattner János Tamás, 1817), 281–282; The National Archives of Hungary (MNL OL) Archives of the Family Mednyánszky (P 497), box 3. fasc. “1646, 1647” passim.

14 For the sources used in the database, see footnotes: 16–19.

15 For his importance, see: Gergely Sárközi, “Álhírek és valóság. II. Rákóczi György lengyelországi hadjárata és Mednyánszky Jónás tevékenysége Vitnyédy István leveleinek

Table 1. The Correspondence of György II Rákóczi with the political elite of the Kingdom of Hungary between August 1657 and October 1658

		Recipients					
Senders	Persons	Ferenc Wesselényi	György Lippay	Ferenc Nádasdy	György Szelepcsényi	Jónás Mednyánszky	György II Rákóczi
	Ferenc Wesselényi	X	32	0	2	2	7
	György Lippay	18	X	5	5	0	6
	Ferenc Nádasdy	1	6	X	3	21	14
	György Szelepcsényi	2	6	3	X	1	1
	Jónás Mednyánszky	1	1	12	3	X	13
	György II Rákóczi	11	9	15	4	9	X

About the sources and the database

The sources examined in the database consist, on the one hand, of previously published documents¹⁶ and, on the other hand, of materials retrieved from various fonds of the National Archives of Hungary,¹⁷

tükrében,” in *Szerencsének elegyes forgása. II. Rákóczi György és kora*, eds. Gábor Kármán, András Péter Szabó (L'Harmattan: Budapest, 2009), 325–340; László Fülöp, “Újabb kiegészítések Mednyánszky Jónás beckói lakodalmi feljegyzéséhez,” *Fórum Társadalomtudományi Szemle* 13/3 (2011): 131–137.

16 Only those source publications and archival sources are listed here that were used in this study. For other sources in the database, see: Szabados, “egyiket megsértvén...,” 262–263, footnotes 26–27. The source publications used here are: Sándor Szilágyi, “Mednyánszky Jónás jelentései II. Rákóczy Györgyhez és ennek anyjához,” *Történeti Lapok* 1 (1874–1875): 417–582, passim; Sándor Szilágyi, “Szelepcsényi György leveles tárczájából,” *Magyar Történelmi Tár* 3/15/2 (1892): 193–208; “*Irom kegyelmednek, mint igaz magyar igaz magyarnak.*” Lippay György veszprémi és egri püspök, esztergomi érsek levelei magyar arisztokratákhoz, nemesekhez (1635–1665), ed. Péter Tusor (Budapest: Gondolat, 2015), 297–312.

17 The National Archives of Hungary (MNL OL) *Insinuata Consilii Bellici* (A 14); MNL OL *Acta Transylvanica* (A 98); MNL OL *Acta Publica* (E 142); MNL OL *Archivum familiae Rákóczi* (E 190); MNL OL *Archivum Familiae Wesselényi* (E 199); MNL OL P 497.

the Esztergom Primate Archives,¹⁸ and the Austrian State Archives.¹⁹ The database contains 2,163 items for the period under consideration, of which 210 are pieces of correspondence between individuals relevant to the research (see Table 1).²⁰ If the correspondence between the Hungarian dignitaries and the court (letters sent and received) is also included, the total amounts 380 items.²¹ This indicates that the political elite of the Kingdom of Hungary was in close contact with the monarch and his entourage, and suggests that only a fraction of the letters sent or received by the dignitaries has survived to this day.

If one examines the correspondence between György II Rákóczi, the above-mentioned political elite of the Kingdom of Hungary, and Jónás Mednyánszky in purely quantitative terms for the period under study, several important observations emerge. It is striking that the palatine and the judge royal hardly corresponded at all (one letter in total, see Table 1), which was presumably due to their rivalry.²² Furthermore, it is apparent that Jónás Mednyánszky, who acted as mediator, did not correspond intensively with the palatine and the archbishop of Esztergom; although, this does not exclude other forms of personal contact, for which I found data, too.²³ The dignitaries of the Kingdom of Hungary were in continuous correspondence with the emperor and the Viennese councillors (see Table 2).²⁴

18 Esztergom Primate Archives (EPL), Archivum Saeculare (AS), Acta Radicalia (AR) Classis (Cl.) X. Nr. 196, *passim*.

19 Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (ÖStA), Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (HHStA), Türkei I. Kt. (Karton) 129–131; ÖStA HHStA Ungarische Akten Specialia (UA Spec.) Kt. 309/310/311; ÖStA Kriegsarchiv (KA), Protokolle des Wiener Hofkriegsrats (HKR Prot.) Band (Bd.) 315–319.

20 If Jónas Mednyánszky is included, there are altogether 210 letters, while without his correspondence, there are only 147 letters.

21 For the table about the whole correspondence in the discussed period, see: Szabados, “...egyiket megsértvén...1,” 264.

22 Nádasdy sometimes strongly criticised Wesselényi. Cf. Ferenc Nádasdy to Jónás Mednyánszky. Seibersdorf, 19 August 1657 and Sopronkeresztúr, 26 August 1657. ÖStA HHStA UA Spec. Kt. 309/310/311. Konv. A. f. 27, 30. Of course, it is possible that there was more correspondence between the two office holders, but the documents were either deliberately or accidentally destroyed.

23 Cf. György Lippay to György II Rákóczi. Trnava, 25 April, 1658. “...*Írom kegyelmednek...*,” 304.

24 This correspondence is best traced through the records of the Aulic War Council, in the family archives of the Palatine, in the Primate Archive of Esztergom, and in the National Archives of Hungary. Cf. ÖStA KA HKR Prot. Bd. 315–31, *passim*; MNL OL E 199 fasc. I/4, *passim*; MNL OL A 14 Nr. 266; MNL OL E 142 fasc. 31. Nr. 77, 79.

Table 2. The Correspondence of Ferenc Wesselényi and György Lippay with Leopold I and the Viennese councillors

Senders and Recipients	Lippay and Wesselényi to Leopold I	Lippay and Wesselényi to the Viennese councillors	Leopold I to Lippay and Wesselényi	Viennese Councillors to Lippay and Wesselényi
Months and years				
August 1657	0	0	0	0
September 1657	0	0	1	1
October 1657	0	0	0	1
November 1657	0	0	0	2
December 1657	0	0	0	1
January 1658	0	0	1	0
February 1658	0	0	0	0
March 1658	0	1	0	1
April 1658	0	1	0	4
May 1658	0	0	0	1
June 1658	0	0	1	2
July 1658	1	1	0	2
August 1658	0	0	1	0
September 1658	0	3	1	3
October 1658	0	0	0	0

Correspondence between György II Rákóczi and the Hungarian political elite between August 1657 and November 1657

Rákóczi intended to establish contact the leading officials of the Kingdom of Hungary after his return from his failure in Poland. Presumably, the prince appealed to the contemporary sense of common noble nationalism, which was already present at the time, when he addressed the political elite of the kingdom.²⁵ His first contact was with Ferenc Wesselényi, who was stationed at that time at Zólyom (present day: Zvolen).²⁶

25 András Péter Szabó, "True Hungarian Blood": Noble Nationalism in the Post-1657 Crisis in Transylvania, in *Identity and Culture in Ottoman Hungary*, Pál Fodor and Pál Ács, eds. (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2017), 141–161.

26 Szabados, „...egyiket megsértvén...I. „, 271.

It seems that the prince then preferred to keep in contact with the palatine as he had sent him five letters by the beginning of November. Three letters from the palatine can be registered in the database, but they all date from August. This was probably because the king had warned the palatine that he could correspond with the prince only with the monarch's knowledge and consent—to Wesselényi's resentment.²⁷ In the autumn, the prince also wrote a letter to Szelepcsényi, to which the chancellor presumably replied, according to the records (see Table 1).²⁸ During this period, there is no evidence of any meaningful communication between Archbishop Lippay, Judge Royal Nádasdy, and the prince, although the palatine and the archbishop corresponded with each other frequently (see Table 3).²⁹ At this time, however, general anxiety prevailed in the Kingdom of Hungary over the possible punishment of Rákóczi by the Sublime Porte, due to various reports.³⁰ On 30 October 1657, a meeting was held at which only Lippay and Szelepcsényi were present among the Hungarian dignitaries, and the latter was entrusted with the task of maintaining contact with the prince, as they had already met several times before.³¹ It was also decided by the councillors who accompanied

27 „[...] und nicht schreibung hinfüro ohne Ihr Mt. vorwissen dem Rakozy.” Ferenc Wesselényi to Leopold I. Zvolen, 25 August 1657. ÖStA KA HKR Prot. Bd. 316. 1657. Anw. Exp. f. 543r Nr. 46; “[...] Daß ihme [viz. to Wesselényi] die correspondenz mit Sybenbürgen verbotthen.” Ferenc Wesselényi to the left behind Privy and Deputy Councillors. Banská Bystrica, 23 September 1657 ÖStA KA HKR Prot. Bd. 316. 1657. Hint. Exp. ff. 76r–v Nr. 3. Further in-depth investigations are needed to clarify the issue, because Johann Christoph Puchheim was also given similar orders: “Wird auch den veldmarschalckh graff von Puchaimb verbschaidt, waß er dem Ragozi auf sein an ihme abgangene schreiben andwortten solle, wie auch wan hinfüro an könig in Pohlen oder Ragozy waß zuschreiben, vorfinde vorher solches zu berichten [...]” Leopold I to Ferenc Wesselényi, Prague, 29 September 1657. ÖStA KA HKR Prot. Bd. 317. 1657. Anw. Reg. f. 323r Nr. 104.

28 “Szelepheny legt bey, waß ihme der Rakozy und Mediansky geschrieben wegen schikung seines canzler zu ihr kgl. Mt. The left behind Privy and Deputy Councillors to Leopold I. Vienna, 11 September 1657. ÖStA KA HKR Prot. Bd. 316. 1657. Anw. Exp. f. 555v Nr. 134.

29 For the letters of Wesselényi to Lippay, see: EPL AS AR Cl. X. Nr. 196. fasc. 30, passim.

30 “Avisirt der Türckhen versamblung undt daß selbige etwan den fürsten in Sibenbürgen absetzen, und an dessen stet einen vezier [...] substituieren möchten.” Ferenc Wesselényi to the left behind Privy and Deputy Councillors. Zvolen, 18. September 1657. ÖStA KA HKR Prot. Bd. 316. 1657. Hint Exp. ff. 77r–v Nr. 7.

31 For their correspondence and meetings, see: Kármán, *Confession and Politics*, 179–183, 193–194.

the monarch to Prague that the Hungarian magnates should not correspond with the Transylvanian elite.³²

Table 3. The Correspondence between György Lippay and Ferenc Wesselényi

Senders and recipients	Wesselényi to Lippay	Lippay to Wesselényi
Months and years		
August 1657	4	2
September 1657	16	7
October 1657	7	5
November 1657	1	0
December 1657	3	0
January 1658	0	0
February 1658	0	0
March 1658	0	0
April 1658	0	0
May 1658	0	0
June 1658	0	0
July 1658	0	0
August 1658	0	0
September 1658	0	0
October 1658	0	4

Correspondence between Rákóczi and the Hungarian political elite between November 1657 and January 1658

In November 1657, Rákóczi renounced his title of prince in favour of Ferenc Rhédey (1657–1658), because he had been ordered to do so by the Sublime Porte.³³ This development necessitated a new strategy on the part of the political elite of the Kingdom of Hungary. The question of reclaiming the counties of Szabolcs and Szatmár – handed over to the Rákóczi family in 1647 during the period of their princely rule – now

32 “Die magnates Hungariae sollen nit mit Sübenbürgen correspondirn [...]” Leopold I to the left behind Privy and Deputy Councillors. Prague, 7 November 1657. ÖStA KA HKR Prot. Bd. 316. 1657. Hint. Exp. f. 108v Nr. 29. For the meeting, see: Toma, “Egy dunántúli nagyúr,” 1178.

33 Szabó, *Erdély tragédiája*, 91–101.

returned to the agenda.³⁴ The retrieval was advocated by György Lippay, as was the re-establishment of the Transylvanian bishopric and the reinvasion of the Jesuits to Transylvania, matters he wished to discuss with Rhédey, the new prince.³⁵ After Rákóczi had sent an envoy to Szelepcsényi with the help of Jónás Mednyánszky, the archbishop made it clear in his letter to the chancellor that it would be more advantageous for the Kingdom of Hungary if Rhédey remained the prince of Transylvania (Lippay continued to correspond with Rhédey thereafter).³⁶ The archbishop of Esztergom was, at this point, not particularly concerned about Ottoman threats to occupy Borosjenő (present-day Ineu) as winter was approaching.³⁷ In January 1658, Leopold I (1657/1658–1705) called for a conference with the Hungarian political elite, at which Szelepcsényi – or István Koháry, chief captain of Fülek (present day Filakovo) and Szécsény³⁸ – was once again to be entrusted with negotiations with Rhédey.³⁹ By then, however, it was too late, as Rákóczi had resumed power by force on 14 January 1658.⁴⁰ Thus, the plans for installing a new prince had already been thwarted almost as soon as they had been formulated.

34 For the two counties, see: Kármán, *Confession and Politics*, 129.

35 "...dem zum neuen fürsten in Sibenbürgen abschikhenden gesandten auch commission aufzutragen, sich zu bemühen, wie die Jesuiten und bischoff wider in Sibenbürgen restituirt werden, ingleichen wegen begehörung der 2 gespanschaften vom Rakoczy." György Lippay to Leopold I. Trnava, 25 November 1657. ÖStA KA HKR Prot. Bd. 316. 1657. Anw. Exp. f. 705v. Benedek Kisdý Bishop of Eger specifically called what happened to Rákóczi a punishment from God: "Ecce sic punit Deus arrogantis et elati spiritus homines, Catholicorumque persecutores Principes." [Behold! So punishes God the arrogant and lofty people, and particularly those princes who persecute Catholics!] Benedek Kisdý to György Lippay. Jászó, 14 November 1657. MNL OL A 98 box 12. fasc. 16. Nr. 67. f. 1210; On the question of the Jesuits in Transylvania, see: Kármán, *Confession and Politics*, 151–155.

36 György Lippay to György Szelepcsényi. s. l. s. d. (Autumn 1657). MNL OL E 190 box 47. item 11. Nr. 88. Cf. Szabó, *Erdély tragédiája*, 118; For further details on the correspondence of Lippay and Rhédey, see: Szabados, "...egyiket megsértvén...", 579, footnote 66.

37 György Lippay to István Csáky. Bratislava, Before 18 October 1657. Türos, "Írom kegyelmednek...", 301.

38 *A szécsényi seregszék jegyzőkönyve (1656–1661)*, ed. András Péter Szabó, Géza Pálffy bevezető tanulmányával (Nograd Megyei Levéltár: Salgotarjan, 2010), 335–337.

39 "Recuperierung der zwei gespanschaften und vestung Szatmar. Schikhung deßwegen den Stephanum Kohari oder hungarischen canzler zum neuen fürsten in Sübenbürgen." The left behind Privy and Deputy Councillors to Leopold I. Vienna, 27 November 1657. ÖStA KA HKR Prot. Bd. 316. 1657. Hint. Exp. f.150v Nr. 51.

40 Szabó, *Erdély tragédiája*, 100–101.

Correspondence between January and July 1658

After Rákóczi had regained his position as prince, he was forced to adopt a defensive posture. During this period, Leopold I travelled to Frankfurt for the imperial election (Reichstag), accompanied by Szelepcsényi, which made communication even more difficult.⁴¹ On 4 February 1658, a meeting took place in Pozsony (present-day Bratislava) with the participation of the palatine, the archbishop, the judge royal and several Viennese councillors, but the fall of Rhédey was not discussed there, only the defence of the Kingdom of Hungary.⁴² The king and the Sublime Porte were then interested in keeping the peace, while Rákóczi, some of the Hungarian magnates, and Venice (at war with the Porte at that time),⁴³ would have supported an escalation of the conflict.⁴⁴ What is more, Rákóczi also sent envoys (Dénes Bánffy and Gábor Kövér) to Leopold I,⁴⁵ but the king only ordered General Annibale Gonzaga to defend the borders of the Kingdom of Hungary.⁴⁶ In a letter written to Wesselényi in April 1658, the prince specifically asked for a diversionary action on the part of the Hungarian magnates.⁴⁷

To facilitate communication, the absent monarch then ordered the palatine and the archbishop of Esztergom to Pozsony (Bratislava).⁴⁸ This explains why no correspondence can be recorded in the database between

41 Furthermore, Szelepcsényi himself has indicated that he has little influence on decision-making. Cf. György Szelepcsényi to Ferenc Nádasdy. Frankfurt, 27 June, 1658. Szilágyi, "Szelepcsényi György," 204–205.

42 "...wie daß hungarische defensionsweesen gegen deß Türkhen mechtigen khriegs verfassung khönne beobachtet werden." Report on the Conference for the left behind Privy and Deputy Councillors. Bratislava, 4 February 1658. ÖStA KA HKR Prot. Bd. 318. 1658. Hint. Exp. ff. 35v–36r Nr. 26.

43 Kenneth M. Setton, *Venice, Austria and the Turks in the Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1991), 137–243.

44 Szabó, *Erdély tragédiája*, 105–106.

45 Sándor Gebei, "II. Rákóczi György szakítása a törökkel (1657–1660)," in *Az oszmán-magyar kényszerű együttélés hozadéka*, ed. Zsuzsanna J. Újváry (Piliscsaba: Pázmány Péter Katolikus Egyetem, 2013), 315–316.

46 István Czigány, "Amikor a török két háborúba kezd. Egy „lopakodó” háború anatómiája 1658–1661," in *Határok fölött. Tanulmányok a költő, katoná, államférfi Zrínyi Miklós-ról*, eds. Sándor Bene, Pál Fodor, Gábor Hausner and József Padányi (Budapest: MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont, 2017), 321–322.

47 György II Rákóczi to Ferenc Wesselényi. Lónya, 6 April, 1658. MNL OL E 199 fasc. II/88. Nr.8. f. 15.

48 "Dem erzbischofen und palatino zuschreiben, daß sie denen deputierten rätthen zu Wien nächender an der handt entweder zu Wien oder Preßburg sein wolten in abwesenheit Irer kgl. Mt." Leopold I to Ferenc Wesselényi and György Lippay. Prague, 10 January. ÖStA KA HKR Prot. Bd. 319. 1658 Anw. Reg. ff. 7v–8r Nr. 23.

the two officeholders during Leopold's absence (see Table 3). However, they corresponded continuously with Vienna and Frankfurt as well (see Table 2).⁴⁹

It was during this period that Ferenc Nádasdy emerged as an important intermediary, with whom the prince, as is known from previous research, maintained both direct and indirect contact (see Table 1).⁵⁰ In public matters, they corresponded openly, in private matters, however, they used ciphered correspondence. Indirect communication was maintained through Jónás Mednyánszky (see Table 1), and this cryptic correspondence may still hold important information for research. For example, it is known from these letters that Lippay was still corresponding with Rhédey after Rákóczi's return to power.⁵¹ The palatine and the archbishop communicated less frequently with Mednyánszky and preferred to receive him in personal meetings.⁵² The Hungarian political elite was presumably unaware that Rákóczi was also constantly trying to "soften up" Grand Vizier Mehmed Köprülü (mostly unsuccessfully).⁵³ The prince finally settled scores with Gürcü Kenan, the vizier of Buda, and defeated him in July,⁵⁴ almost simultaneously with the election of Leopold I as Holy Roman Emperor, thereby creating yet another new political situation.⁵⁵

Period of destiny: July 1658 – September 1658

The political elite of the Kingdom of Hungary had to adapt to the new situation again. In the summer of 1658, György Lippay was already in correspondence with Rákóczy, which was probably because, according

49 Cf. the reference of footnote 21.

50 Toma, "Egy dunántúli nagyúr," 1179–1182.

51 Jónás Mednyánszky to György II Rákóczi. Dohna, 12 February 1658. Szilágyi, "Mednyánszky Jónás," 482. Rákóczi also heard about the issue from Szelepcsényi. Cf. György II Rákóczi to Jónás Mednyánszky. Újugar, 27. February 1658. MNL OL P 497 Box 3. fasc.1658' f. 21.

52 György Lippay to György II Rákóczi. Trnava, 25 April 1658. "Írom kegyelmednek...", 304.

53 Simon Reniger to Leopold I. Adrianople, 28 May 1658. ÖStA HHStA Türkei I. Kt. 130. Konv. 1. ff. 164–165.

54 János Szabados, "Adalékok az 1658. július 6-i páülési csata körülményeihez," *Lymbus* 17 (2019): 287–319; Szabó, *Erdély tragédiája*, 139–146.

55 Gebei, "II. Rákóczi György," 316.

to some sources, the prince was willing to convert to Catholicism.⁵⁶ In any case, the Hungarian magnates were probably unaware that Rákóczi had also encouraged the grand vizier to attack Christian states,⁵⁷ but simultaneously he had also appealed to the emperor for military support, where his spokesman was Judge Royal Ferenc Nádasdy.⁵⁸ In August, it also became clear that the rebellion of Abaza Hasan would force Mehmed Köprülü to return to the Ottoman capital, so instead of a campaign against Venice, he went to Transylvania to settle affairs there.⁵⁹ Rákóczi was fully aware of the gravity of the situation and launched a “general attack” on the emperor and the Hungarian dignitaries to ask for help⁶⁰ who forwarded his letters to the monarch.⁶¹ However, Leopold I refused to make a decision until he returned home, whereas the Viennese councillors were aware of the prince’s double game.⁶² The grand vizier’s armies surrounded Borosjenő at the end of August 1658, and in early September the defenders surrendered, allowing the Ottomans to occupy the long-coveted castle

56 Tamás Kruppa, “II. Rákóczy György, a Szentszék és Velence 1658-ban,” in *Háborúk, alkotások, életutak. Tanulmányok a 17. század közepének európai történelméről*, eds. Gábor Nagy, Noémi Viskolcz (Miskolc: Miskolci Egyetemi Kiadó, 2019), 79–81.

57 Reniger had already reported on the conspiracy against the Habsburgs before this. Cf. Simon Reniger to Leopold I. Adrianople, 1 March 1658. ÖStA HHStA Türkei I. Kt. 129. f. 162.

58 Toma, “Egy dunántúli nagyúr,” 1181–1182; Ferenc Nádasdy to Leopold I Sopronkeresztúr, 3 August 1658. ÖStA HHStA Türkei I. Kt. 130. Konv. 2. f. 58.

59 Until that point, the real target of the campaign was in question. Cf. Szabolcs Hadnagy, “A Campaign Against Two Enemies Simultaneously? The 1658 Military Venture of the Ottomans,” in *New Approaches to the Habsburg–Ottoman Diplomatic Relations*, eds. Sándor Papp, Gellért Ernő Marton (Szeged: University of Szeged, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Medieval and Early Modern Hungarian History, 2021), 107–123.

60 György II Rákóczi to Ferenc Nádasdy. Székelyhid, 24 July 1658. ÖStA HHStA Türkei I. Kt. 130. Konv. 2. f. 17. Lippay also mentioned that he had received letters from the prince. Cf. György Lippay to György II Rákóczi. Bratislava, 29. August 1658. “*from kegyelmednek...*,” 307.

61 Ferenc Nádasdy to Leopold I. Sopronkeresztúr, 3 August 1658. ÖStA HHStA Türkei I. Kt. 130. Konv. 2. f. 58; “Communicirt, waß der Rakoczy an ihne geschriben...” György Lippay to left behind Privy and Deputy Councillors. s. l. 21 August 1658. ÖStA KA HKR Prot. Bd. 318. 1658. Hint. Exp. f. 196v Nr. 22.

62 Leopold I to Ferenc Wesselényi. Frankfurt, 5 August 1658. MNL OL E 142 Fasc. 31. Nr. 77. For Rákóczi’s double game, see: “...des Rakoczy protestation und kleinmuetigkeit, auch angebotene einnemmung in Jeneö und andere plaz besazung und begehre hilff. Deß groß vesir dem Ragoczy gethane versprechen demselben perdon zu erlangen. Die deputierte finden nicht für ratsamb dem Rakoczy zu assistiern, noch die beehrte 600 mann in Jeneö oder anderstwo zulassen.” The left behind Privy and Deputy Councillors to Leopold I. Vienna, 30 August 1658. ÖStA KA HKR Prot. Bd. 318. 1658. Anw. Exp. ff. 342v–343r Nr. 33.

without a siege. A few days later, Mehmed Köprülü appointed Ákos Barcsay as prince in his camp,⁶³ while the expected military assistance failed to materialise.⁶⁴

Conclusions

The quantitative processing of the data has revealed the dynamics of the correspondences, and if, in addition to the quantitative analysis, qualitative aspects (the changing attitude of the Hungarian dignitaries towards Rákóczi) are also considered, certain conclusions can be drawn. For example, Ferenc Wesselényi and György Lippay did not correspond from January to September 1658 because the monarch had ordered them to Bratislava during his absence. Furthermore, we have seen that the Archbishop of Esztergom endeavoured to assert the interests of his Church: as soon as the opportunity arose, he attempted to repair the damage done to the Catholic Church in Transylvania. However, when Transylvania (and the Kingdom of Hungary) was seriously threatened, and Rákóczi expressed his intention to convert to Catholicism, Archbishop Lippay began to correspond with Rákóczi and became one of the advocates of the his cause. It was only in the first half of 1658 (i.e. after Rhédey's deposition) that Ferenc Nádasdy became an important ally and intercessor of the prince in certain matters – for example, he mediated Rákóczi's aims for military support towards the monarch – acting through Jónás Mednyánszky. This can be clearly 'measured' through a quantitative examination of the correspondence. György Szelepcsényi, who remained at the king's side, was either unable or unwilling to intervene in the prince's affairs. Of course, the officials of the Kingdom of Hungary were not aware that Rákóczi was also constantly attempting to placate the grand vizier and even persuade him to participate in an attack against the Habsburgs. From the end of July 1658, the prince put all his eggs in one basket and relied on the intervention of the officials of the Kingdom of Hungary, who, unlike before, were now united in their efforts. However, circumstances turned out to be highly unfavourable

63 Sándor Papp, "II. Rákóczi György és a Porta," in *Szerencsének elegyes forgása. II. Rákóczi György és kora*, eds. Gábor Kármán, András Péter Szabó (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2009), 162–170; Sándor Papp, "Amikor a nagyvezír választott fejedelmet Erdélynek. Köprülü Mehmed pasa audienciája 1658-ban," in *Háborúk, alkotások, életutak. Tanulmányok a 17. század közepének európai történelméről*, eds. Gábor Nagy, Noémi Viskolcz (Miskolc: Miskolci Egyetemi Kiadó, 2019), 120–133.

64 Szabados „...egyiket megsértvén...,” 584–585.

for him, leading to a prolonged period of internal conflict in the history of the Principality of Transylvania, and in the long run, to the Ottoman campaign against the Kingdom of Hungary in 1663.

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