

From a Transylvanian principality to an Ottoman sanjak

The life of Pál Márkházi, a Hungarian renegade*

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From the end of the fourteenth century to the second half of the nineteenth century, the close relationship between the Hungarians and the Ottoman Empire remained unbroken. At first, the Ottoman Empire was a rival in the competition for the hegemony over the Balkans. Later, as the Ottomans had conquered one third of Hungary and reduced another third, namely Transylvania, to vassalage, their influence on Hungarian destinies became all-pervasive. In the eighteenth–nineteenth centuries, the Ottomans often granted asylum to Hungarian refugees, for example following the Rákóczi rebellion (1703–1711) and after the War of Independence (1848–1849).

In the course of Ottoman–Hungarian relations extending over several centuries wherever the border dividing them lay, it represented not only one between two neighboring countries but also a boundary between two different religions, cultures, and ways of thinking. Of course, Hungary was not the only European country to find itself in a similar situation in the course of its history. Such “borderland” situations existed also from Russia through Poland and Croatia to Venice, Moldavia, Wallachia, and, in the final stages of its history, in Byzantium. Serbia and Bulgaria were in a similar situation which obtained also in the Iberian Peninsula between Christians and Muslims.

It is well known that almost from the time of its foundation, the Ottoman Empire became a melting-pot of the defeated peoples and nations. Administrative

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and military positions were often offered to renegades converted to Islam. Beginning with the conquest of Constantinople, renegades often occupied important posts in public administration.¹ Thus, there were a great number of Serbs, Bosnians, and Greeks in the service of the Porte. Several Romanian voivodes abjured Orthodox Christianity for Islam and assumed the positions of sanjak or beylerbey. Thus we might expect to find Hungarians among Ottoman dignitaries,² yet, research shows otherwise. Apart from interpreters, divan-secretaries working at the Sultan's court, only Piyale pasha, admiral of the Ottoman fleet reached a high position. There can be no doubt about his Hungarian origin. In the list of payments to the Ottoman army garrisoning in Hungary few men of Hungarian origin appear; the soldiers were mostly of South Slavic origin.³

In view of what has just been said, the case of two members of the Hungarian gentry Márkházi family merits attention. In what follows I am going to focus on the life of Pál Márkházi, with some reference also to his son. Two generations in the service of the Ottomans.

The family originated in the northern of Hungary and, as the name indicates, they might have lived in Márkháza (Nógrád County) though they might have been only the landowners of the place. We have no more information about the origins of the family. It is not connected to the Márkházi family whose documents are now kept in the National Archives of Hungary (Budapest).

Several Hungarian historians active in the sixteenth–seventeenth centuries, writing in Latin, give some details on Márkházi's biography.⁴ Yet, though his name is often mentioned, no complete biography of his exists.⁵

¹ F. Szakály, and L. Tardy, "Auf der Suche nach einem aus Ungarn stammenden Dolmetscher des Sultans." in *Festgabe an Josef Matuz, Osmanistik-Turkologie-Diplomatik*, hrsg. Ch. Fragner und Kl. Schwarz, Berlin 1992, 289–301; P. Fodor, "Szultán, birodalmi tanács, nagyvezír." [Sultan, imperial council, grand vizier] *Történelmi Szemle* 34 (1992), 17–34.

² P. Fodor, "Török és oszmán: az oszmán rabszolga-elit azonosságtudatáról." [Turkish and Ottoman: on the consciousness of identity of the Ottoman slave-élite] *Történelmi Szemle* 37 (1995), 377; F. Szakály, *Magyar diplomaták, utazók, rabok és renegátok a 16. századi Isztambulban*. [Hungarian diplomats, travelers, captives and renegades in the sixteenth-century Istanbul] Budapest 1983, 45–47, in which he mentions Píala pasha.

³ K. Hegyi, *Török berendezkedés Magyarországon*. [Turkish settlement in Hungary] Budapest 1995, 109–110.

⁴ W. de Bethlen, *Historia de Rebus Transsylvanicis*. Tom. II, Sibinii 1782, 440–442; S. Kátona, *Historia Critica Regnum Hungariae*. Tom. XXVI, Budae 1794, 256–260; S. Szilágyi, ed. *Szamosközy István történelmi maradványai*. [Historical reminiscences of István Szamosközy] Tom. I, MHHS 27, Budapest 1876, 243–248. Tom. IV, MHHS 30, Budapest 1880, 15–16.

⁵ Two collections of documents can be found in the bequest of Endre Veress, a historian, deposited in the Manuscript Department of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTAK): "Márkházi Pál trónkövetelő" [Pál Márkházi, Pretender to the Throne] Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest. Manuscript Department, MTAK ms. 439/17 and ms. 466/13 [henceforth referred as Veress # = year]. I owe thanks to Géza Pálffy for drawing my attention to this information. The bequest contains of little

Pál Márkházi's name first appears in connection with some events that took place in the castle of Ajnácskő in Gömör County (present-day Hajnačka in Slovakia).⁶ The Turks occupied Ajnácskő on 24 April 1556, on St. George's Day.⁷ When the former commander of the fort was taken captive, the custody of the place was given to his wife, Orsolya Márkházi who, in her turn, put a relative of hers, (perhaps her brother) Pál Márkházi in charge of its protection. Histories of this event generally attribute the loss of the castle to Márkházi's treason,⁸ though other explanation have also been put forward.⁹

Fortunately, we know the views taken by Márkházi himself. When, in the Spring of 1575 he turned up at the Porte to buy horses and, at the same time conducting some business on behalf of István Báthori, Márkházi visited David Ungnad, a Habsburg delegate to the Porte. He asked Ungnad to intercede for him with the Emperor Maximilian II, so that he could return to Royal Hungary and get back his confiscated land. The delegate did not know the details of the case, but, since he found Márkházi's statement believable, he made a report on the case.¹⁰ Although the issue remains unclear, I strongly suspect that he was unjustly accused of treason.

information, but it refers to the fact that Endre Veress planned to write the biography.

⁶ The ex-commander was Mihály Sárközi, whose wife, Orsolya Márkházi asked the Hofkriegsrat of Vienna to get her husband released in April 1563. Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (ÖStA) Kriegsarchiv, Protokolle des Wiener Hofkriegsrates Exp. Tom. 142. fol. 161 (7 April 1563). "*Bitt Iren Herrn Zu erledigung Zuuerhelffen.*" I also owe thanks to Géza Pálffy for this information.

⁷ I am indebted to Markus Köhback for drawing my attention to this information. Cf. K. Benda, ed. *Magyarország Történeti Kronológiája*. [A Historical Chronology of Hungary] Vol. 2, Budapest 1983, 396, where the date was miscalculated: 25 April 1566. (I. Szentpétery, *A kronológia kézikönyve*. [Handbook of Chronology] Budapest 1985, 74.); F. Forgách, *Emlékirat Magyarország állapotáról*. [Memoir on the status of Hungary] tr. I. Borzsák, ed. P. Kulcsár, Humanista történetírók, Budapest 1977, 389.

⁸ E.g. *Baranyai Decsi János magyar históriája*. [A Hungarian History of János Baranyai Decsi] tr. P. Kulcsár, Budapest 1982, 63.

⁹ Remark of Simon Forgách. Forgách, *Emlékirat*, 389.

¹⁰ "*Es ist vor wenig wochen vom Weyda aus Sibenbürgen hieher geschickht worden Marchasy Paul gewester haubtmann in Aynatzkew, in seinen des Weyda handlungen, auch etliche herrn Roß aus Asia dem weyda hinauß zufüeren, derselb Markchasj hat sich bey mir, gleich wol mir durch meinen Diener angemelldet vnnd sich grosses laidts, rew vnnd betrüebnuß, der verlust des hauß Aynatzkew, darumben er noch auf dato Eur Kay: Mt: undnad auf sich hat, flüchtigen fueß setzen, sienes vatterlandts vnnd darynnen seiner verlassnen haab vnnd guetter sich enthallten mueß, vernemen lassen. Es sey im aber nichts höhers angelegen, allain Mitt vnnd Weeg zufinden, zu sicherer seiner purgation vnnd entschuldigung zugelassen, vnnd wann dieselbig von Euer Kay: Mt: für genuessam erkhent wurde, vollgennds derselben Kay: gnaden vnnd seiner guetter besitzung widerumben gewehrt zuwerden. Er zeucht am maisten das an, das Ine Magotzy dazumal geen Erla gefordert hab, In mitler weil die verlust ervollgt sey, vnnd er mit Gott vnnd guetem gewissen zuerhallten vermaine, khain ainige fallsche pracktickhen mit dem feindt nit geuebt zuhaben:...*" ÖStA Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv (HHStA) Türkei 1. (Turcica) 31. Konv. 2. fol. 11^{r-v}, 13^{r-v}, 13 March 1575.

Following the fall of Ajnácskő, Márkházi escaped to János Zsigmond's (John Sigismund) court in Transylvania where he established very good contacts. Márkházi then married Saphira (Zamfira), the widow of Stanislaus Niszovzky, a Polish courtier of János Zsigmond and Queen Isabel, and the daughter of a Wallachian voivode "Moczin."¹¹ This marriage was to be his ruin, since he was accused to treat his wife so badly that the Voivode of Transylvania, Kristóf Báthory personally saw their separation.¹² The voivode's brother, István Báthory was, by then, king of Poland and Márkházi left Transylvania to visit him seeking redress of his case. However, on his way to Poland he apparently changed his mind, turned south and escaped to Istanbul, the Ottoman capital.¹³

We know that Márkházi had been in Istanbul several times before¹⁴ and his divorce gave him there more notoriety.¹⁵ It is not known why he decided to undertake this dangerous venture. In a Hungarian report written about his life in Istanbul in December 1582, it is said that he was put in prison but that for four years no one could charge him with any wrongdoing. This piece of information allows us to conclude that it was around 1578 that he sought asylum in Constantinople.¹⁶ The same report reveals that Márkházi had been given a warm welcome there, and together with his escort, he was given *ziamet* land worth 40,000 *akçe* in Syrmia (Szerémség, in the South of Hungary, today in Serbia). A Turkish source dated shortly afterwards confirms this information.¹⁷

Historical works of the sixteenth–seventeenth and even the eighteenth centuries mention him with interest primarily because, after his escape, he tried to become voivode of Transylvania. His first attempt was prompted by the false news that reached the Porte in the second half of 1580, namely that Kristóf Báthory had died.¹⁸ On the basis of reports given by the beylerbey of Buda and by Şehsüvar,

¹¹ Most probably Mircea Ciobanul was the father, who ruled in Wallachia between 1545 and 1552, and later in 1553–1554. C. C. Giurescu, ed. *Chronological History of Romania*. Bucharest 1974, 450.

¹² M. Horváth, *Magyar regeszták a szepesi káptalan, jászai s leleszi conventek, Kassa és Sopron városok, s több magánosok levéltáraiból s gyűjteményeikből 1228–1643*. [Hungarian calendars of the charters from the archives of the Chapter of Szepes, the convents of Jászó and Lelesz, and the municipal archives of Kassa and Sopron] MTT, Tom. IX. Pest 1862. 125–196; *Baranyai Decsi János magyar históriája*, 63–64.

¹³ *Baranyai Decsi János magyar históriája*, 63–64.

¹⁴ E. de Hurmuzaki–N. Iorga, *Dokumente priviore la istoria Românilor (1517–1612)*. [Documents relating to the history of the Romanians] Vol. 11, Bucureşti 1900, 808, 812–813, 881; *Protocollum Bathorianum*, 485–486. National Library of Hungary, Fol. Hung. 37.

¹⁵ K. Bálintt, *Márkházi Pál emléke*. [Memory of Pál Márkházi] Árpádia. Honi történetek zsebkönyve. ed. M. Kovacsoczy, Tom. I, Kassa 1833, 312.

¹⁶ Horváth, *Magyar regeszták*, 140; 13 September 1579, MTAK ms. 439/17, fol. 460.

¹⁷ Başkanlı Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA) Mühimme defteri 45, 383. p. Nr. 4655.

¹⁸ V. Veliman, "O Carta Legămînt (Ahd-Nâme) din 1581 privitoare la Transilvania." [A letter of contract (Ahd-Nâme) of 1581 relating to Transylvania] *AIIAA.D. Xenopol* 25/1 (1988), 27–43; By mistake, Valeriu Veliman discusses the information about 1580 together with the events in 1581.

the bey of Szolnok,¹⁹ it was the beylerbey of Rumelia who misinformed the Porte about the death of the voivode of Transylvania. The false alarm put into motion the usual mechanism: the Ottoman military force was immediately called upon to protect Transylvania and to follow the events with a watchful eye. Mehmed, a Hungarian renegade and interpreter for the Porte²⁰ told the Transylvanian voivode that Márkházi had not demanded the voivodeship on his own initiative. It was the Grand Vizier Sinan pasha who had sent for him to ask how many presents he could expect to receive and how much Márkházi would increase the tribute paid to him where he, Sinan, would make him voivode of Transylvania.²¹ Mehmed advised Kristóf Báthori not to attempt to bribe dignitaries of the Porte. He also suggested that Báthori's delegates should altogether avoid mentioning Márkházi's name lest the reputation of the latter improves.²²

Sinan's intervention stirred up Transylvanian politics. When it became known that Márkházi eyed the voivodeship, in view of Báthori's poor health, the grandees wanted to settle the succession before the voivode's death. A Diet was convened in Kolozsvár (present-day Cluj, Romania), where in mid-May 1581, the voivode's under-age son, Zsigmond Báthori was elected to succeed his father. A few days after, following the death of his father, Zsigmond ascended to the throne.²³

On 1 July 1581, in Vienna, Joachim Sinczendorff and Friedrich Breuer, Habsburg delegates to Istanbul made the following announcement: "Yesterday came the news that the voivode of Transylvania was dead. In our view Márkházi will not let this opportunity pass, possibly creating a turmoil in Transylvania." The delegates who came to the Porte stated inaccurately that, the late voivode's son was more than twelve years old. Be that as it may, Habsburg diplomacy held that Márkházi's efforts to obtain the voivodeship would fail.²⁴ Copies of four documents kept in the *mühimme defteri* (no. 42) include orders of the sultan's divan. They show that initially the Porte did not wish to put obstacles in Zsigmond Báthori's way to become voivode. Chiaus Ahmed was sent to Transylvania to

¹⁹ Veliman, "Carta Legămînt," 35.

²⁰ F. Szakály, *Mezőváros és reformáció*. [Market town and Reformation] Budapest 1995, 319–320.

²¹ Bálintitt, *Márkházi Pál emléke*, 312.

²² Bálintitt, *Márkházi Pál emléke*, 314.

²³ Szilágyi, *Szamosközy István történelmi maradványai*, 1: 415–417; S. Szilágyi, *Monumenta Comitatus Regni Transylvaniae. Erdélyi országgyűlési emlékek*. Vol. 3, Budapest 1877, 37–43.

²⁴ "Gestern aber ist gewisse Zeitung kommen, dass der Weyda in Siebenbürgen todt. Marok Házi wirdet diese Gelegenheit meines Erachtens nicht versäumen; wölches wohl einen Tumult in Siebenbürgen erreghen mächte." A. Veress, *Documente privitoare la istoria Ardealului, Moldovei și Țării-Românești*. [Documents relating to the history of Transylvania, Moldva and Wallachia] II–III. București 1930–31. (henceforth: Veress, *Documente*) II., 204. Nr. 187; ÖStA HHStA Türkei 1. (Turcica) 44. Konv. 3 (April–August 1581) fol. 19^v–20^v; Sinczendorff and Breuner to Rudolf II.

assure the lords that the election had been approved of.²⁵ On behalf of the sultan Zsigmond Báthori was informed that the Transylvanian lords' collective petition had arrived and that his election was confirmed. "I have given you the voivodeship of Transylvania and have appointed you. The same way as your father was in our grace, we have given you our royal contract." This letter refers to the Transylvanian tributes but with no mention of the demand to increase them.²⁶ The symbol of power, an ornamented flag of the Sultan (*sancak-i hümayûn*) was sent to the young prince by Mahmud *baş kapuci başı*.²⁷

The change in the Turkish point-of-view is made clear by Friedrich Breuner's (Preyner in Hammer's work)²⁸ report written on 18 July, in which the demand to increase tribute was mentioned for the first time. The Transylvanian delegates were still staying at the Porte when Grand Vizier Sinan pasha returned from the Persian expedition. His arrival and Márkházi's weighty promises changed the usual course of the inauguration of Báthori. The following stunning actions were taken: Márkházi earmarked 100,000 gold coins, a single payment, the increase of the annual tribute of 15,000 to 100,000, and 60,000 gold coins as a gift to the Grand Vizier Sinan. Márkházi intended to borrow the money needed to meet his highly increased expenses from the Greeks in Istanbul.²⁹ The Breuner report was written six days after the decision in the divan had been taken to change the conditions of the voivode confirmation. On 12 July the *chief kapuci başı*, Mahmud aga received the order addressed to Zsigmond Báthori to the effect that he would not be appointed voivode unless he increased the tribute by a sum not yet stated.³⁰ After receiving the order, Mahmud set out to deliver the princely insignia to Báthori. While on his way two chiaus delivered him further orders. In these he was informed by order of the sultan that, though, following his father's death, Zsigmond Báthori had been accepted as voivode, Pál Márkházi requested to be given the voivodeship of Transylvania. He promised to pay 100,000 *forints* as a gift (*pişkeş*) and, subsequently to pay annually a tribute of 100,000 *forints*. The orders charged Mahmud with the responsibility to ask Báthori and the Transylvanian lords whether they would accept these conditions. In the affirmative, a sealed

²⁵ "Vorgestern ist ein ander Chiaus mit Namen Mehmed, so von des Sinan Bassa Herkunft mit der Zeitung, dass der Sulthanus des verstorbenen das Palatinat verliehen hat, hienein abgefertigt worden, widerkommen." Veress, Documente II., 208–209. Nr. 191; ÖStA HHStA Türkei 1. (Turcica) 45. Konv. 1. fol. 21^v–22^r; Delegate Friedrich Breuner's report to Rudolf II. In the reports the names Ahmed and Mehmed are usually confused.

²⁶ "... vilâyet-i Erdel voyvodalıđı sana tevcih u ta'yîn olunub mûmâ ileyh babana 'inâyet olunduđı üzre sana dahi 'ahd-nâme-i hümayûnum erzânî kulub ..." BOA Mühimme defteri 42. p. 51 Nr. 254; 1. Cemâziyü l-âhir 989. (3 August 1581).

²⁷ BOA Mühimme defteri 42. p. 53. Nr. 257.

²⁸ The Preiner (or Breuner, Breiner, Bräuner) family came from the Netherlands in 1402 and settled down in Styria. I thank Claudia Römer for this information.

²⁹ Veress Documente II., 205–207. Nr. 189; ÖStA HHStA Türkei 1. (Turcica) 44. Konv. 4 (1581 IX–XII) fol. 59^v–60. Delegate Friedrich Breuner's report to Rudolf II.

³⁰ BOA Mühimme defteri 42. p. 56. Nr. 269; 10. Cemâziyü l-âhir 989. (12 July 1581)

bond (*temessük*) and a report written in ink should record the agreement.³¹ The Transylvanian mission was still staying at the Porte when the Grand Vizier sent for the permanent delegate Péter Rácz to enquire whether the amount promised by Márkházi had been paid.³²

It seems that in spite of the definite order of the divan and of Sinan, Mahmud the chief *kapuci başı* handed the princely insignia to Zsigmond Báthori even though the Transylvanians refused to accept the substantial increase in the dues.³³ At this point it was decided in the divan to replace Zsigmond Báthori with Márkházi. The document of acceptance was made out in the form of a *nâme-i hümayûn* and was copied in the *mühimme defteri* on 20 August 1581:

“... Since the late Kristóf Báthori held the dignity of a voivode of Transylvania, now we have donated and allocated it to you. For this, I have presented my royal contract and my flag, signifying my support. We have sent these through Mahmud, a *kapuci başı* serving at my high court, who is the

³¹ BOA Mühimme defteri 42. p. 77. Nr.: 331; 29. Cemâziyi l-âhir 989. (31 July 1581); BOA Mühimme defteri 42 p. 84. Nr. 348; 1. Receb 989. (1 August 1581). We only know the date when they were recorded in the Mühimme defteri. However, it is possible that it is also the date when they were given to Mustafa and Hüseyin çavus, who delivered them. According to Veliman, these documents were issued by the chancellery on 11 and 12 August 1581; however, this is a mistake. I accept that Hüseyin çavus made the trip from Transylvania to the Porte on 20 August 1581; however, according to Friedrich Breuner's report, Mustafa only returned later together with Mahmud aga. („wie Ich verstehe der Capitschi Bassa, mit dem Mustapha Chiauß Zuuor angeschickht gehabt ...“) ÖStA HHStA Türkei 1. (Turcica) 45. Konv. 1. fol. 208r. (29 September 1581); Compare to Veliman, “Carta Legämînt” 37.

³² “Was massen der Sultanus des verstorbnen Weyda In Sybenbürben verlaßnen Sohn, das Palatinat, nach Seines Vatters ableiben verlassen, das auch deshalb des Sulthanj Copigi Aga mit namen Mahmuth, mit dem Stendardo denselben Ime in seines herrn Namen zuüberantworten, ist werkh fertigt worden, haben Ewr. Mt: aus Vorigen meinen schreiben gnedigist vernommen, yetzunder aber als Sinan Bassa ist herkomen, hat er diße sachen alle umbgekhärt vnnd hinderstellig gemacht, der Markazi zu Im komen, vnnd sich nachmals anpotten Im fall man Im Siebenbüregn verlassen vnnd alda Zu Weyda einsetzen wölle, so sey er erpiettig vnnd bereit dem Sultano alßbaldt zu antritt des Weywodat hundert Tausent Cronen zu schicken dem Sinan Bassa sechzig Tausent vnnd den Jährlich hundert tausent Cronnen Tribut, auf dißes hat Sinan Bassa Ratz Petern welcher Sibenbürgischer Agent für sich gefordert vnnd in seinem beysein den Markazi gefragt, was er sich aus Sibenbürgen zugeben erpitte, der hats nochmals obangezaigter weiße, erzählt, hieruber hat Sinan Bassa den Agenten gefragt, ob des verstorbnen Sohn auch souil geben werde, darauf Agent geantwortet, das Er solches nicht wisse, habe auch desselben durchaus khain bevelch, Eintlich ist die sach dahin nach vielen reden komen, vnd ist Bassa auf dem verbliben, wolle des verstorbnen sohn das geben, so sich dißer, Markazi anbeut, so werde Er Weyda verplieben wo nicht so hab Ers disem schon verlassen, Ist deswegen der Agent in Sibenbürgen sambt einem Chiaußen von der Porten solchs aigentlich zuerkhundigen auf der Post weckhfertigt worden, Was hernach in dieser sachen volgen wirdt bericht E. Mt. Ich hernach gehorsambist. Vnnd ist wol zubesorgen, dise sachen möchte allerlai tumult vnd aufruhr in Sybenbürgen erregen.” ÖStA HHStA Türkei 1. (Turcica) 44. Konv. 4. fol. 20r-20v. (5 August 1581) Delegate Friedrich Breuner's report to Rudolf II.

³³ *Monumenta Comititalia Regni Transylvaniae* 3: 37–43.

glory of the noble and great dignitaries, the sum of all the praiseworthy deeds and proprieties, and the person chosen by the grace of Allah we remember in our prayers – may his honor last long.”³⁴

The same documents contains also the sultan’s contract, the *’ahd-nâme-i hümmâyûn* that sanctioned the appointment.³⁵

The reports that the Habsburg delegate Friedrich Breuer sent home help us to clarify the details of the political tug-of-war at the Porte. On 31 August Ahmet chiaus was first to return from his mission even before the arrival to Istanbul of Grand Vizier Sinan. He had been sent to Transylvania to deliver the royal acceptance letter to Zsigmond Báthori. From his report the Porte could also learn that the Transylvanians knew of Márkházi’s ambitions and that they disapproved of them. According to Breuer, some people in Istanbul were fearful of the ensuing complications in foreign policy and thought that the Polish king, István Báthori, Zsigmond’s uncle, might also intervene. The matter assumed a disproportionate importance and led to an open conflict between groups vying for political leadership in the Ottoman Empire. According to the Habsburg delegate, Siavus pasha especially due to these Transylvanian events is very much opposed to Sinan. He appears to have said that Sinan had not yet put out the fire (meaning thereby Persia) and now he wanted to set another fire. Were Sinan to be relieved from his position this Siavus pasha would shortly become the grand vizier.³⁶

In the last days of September, Péter Rácz, permanent Transylvanian delegate and Mahmud *baş kapuci başı* arrived with the flag and it became obvious that the Transylvanians were extremely determined in their opposition. They said that “they would rather die together with wives and children”³⁷ than accept Márkházi

³⁴ “... vilâyet-i Erdel voyvodalıđı Bâtorî Kriřto voyvoda tasarruf eyledüđi üzre sana tevcîh u ‘inâyet olunub ol-bâbda ‘ahd-nâme-i hümmâyûnum ile sancag-i nusret-makrûnum erzânî kilub dergâh-i mu‘allâmda kapuci başı olan iftihârü l-emâcidi ve-l-ekârim müstecmi‘ü cemi‘i l-mahâmidi ve-l-mekârim el-muhtassu bi-mezîdi ‘inâyeti [l-melikî] l-ma‘bûd Mahmûd dâme mecduhu ile irsâl olunmuşdur” BOA Mühimme defteri 42 p. 98. Nr. 379; 20. Receb 989. (20 August 1581) line 9–12 and BOA Mühimme defteri 42. p. 103. Nr. 385. line 7–11.

³⁵ BOA Mühimme defteri 42. p. 101–102. Nr. 389. 20. Receb 989 (20 August 1581).

³⁶ “Siaus Bassa ist dem Sinan sonderlich in dieser Siebenbürgischen Sachen sehr zu wider soll gesagt haben, er Sinan, habe noch ein Feuer (damit Persien verstehend) nicht gelescht und wolle schon ein anders anzunden. Dieser Siaus Bascha (solle Sinan des Amts entzetz) würde immediate Obrist Vesier werden). Veress, Documente II., 208–209. Nr. 191; ÖStA HHStA Türkei 1. (Turcica) 45. Konv. 1. fol. 21v–22r. Delegate Friedrich Breuner’s report to Rudolf II.

³⁷ “ehe mit Weib und Kindern zu sterben, als solches zuzugeben und zu gedulden.” Veress, Documente II., 212–213. Nr. 196; ÖStA HHStA Türkei 1. (Turcica) 45. Konv. 1. fol. 203v–204r. Delegate Friedrich Breuner’s report to Rudolf II. Cf. J. Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*. Vol. 4, Pest 1829, 116–117. “Die Siebenbürger, sagte der Botschafter, wollten lieber sterben, als den Markhazy zum Fürsten annehmen. ‘Es steht ihnen frey’, donnerte Sinan, ‘zu sterben, und wir sind noch überdiess bereit, sie zu tödten; die Siebenbürger stützen sich auf den König von Polen, sie sollen aber zusehen, was er ihnen nütze.’”

as their voivode. Breuner's report of 14 October gave the impression that Márkházi's luck was running out.³⁸ At the beginning of November, two other delegates, István Apafi and János Sieger arrived in Istanbul and brought with them the regular tribute of Transylvania, the annual 15,000 *forints*. (The text has *thalers* but this may be a mistake.) On 4 November, the delegates handed over the gifts but, contrary to the old, accepted practice, they were not allowed to stand before the sultan and the gifts were returned to them. The delegates were told that the new voivode would not be acceptable unless he immediately pays 100,000 ducats and also raises the tribute to an equal amount. Were this not done, Márkházi would be given the voivodship. Apafi and Sieger firmly resisted. Though the grand vizier was very angry, the following day, on the fifth, even the gilded trays brought for the sultan were accepted in the seraglio. On the Ottoman side this was to be the last half-hearted effort to have the Transylvanian tributes increased. For tactical reasons, the Transylvanians made some concessions; they agreed to bring 1,000 *thalers* (more likely gold coins) to the Porte as an annual extra present.³⁹

Following this unsuccessful attempt, Márkházi kept in close touch with Sinan pasha who, for as long as he held office, protected him. With Sinan's disgrace and subsequent replacement the situation changed drastically. The chiaus attacked his house, imprisoned him in the *Yedi Kule* (Seven Towers) while his men were sold as galley-slaves. Sinan's fall from power occurred on 6 December 1582.⁴⁰ It seems that the new grand vizier was determined to remove the Transylvanian pretender as fast as possible from the scene. According to an anonymous report written in Hungarian on Márkházi's imprisonment, he wanted to save his life by converting to Islam.⁴¹

Márkházi's "Turkish" career got on to a slow start. Yet, his conversion soon found its practical justification. When István Báthori, King of Poland, asked for his extradition by the Porte, the sultan flatly rejected the demand.⁴² He wrote in his letter to Báthori that he would bid him to be composed. There can be no doubt that his action against Márkházi cost Báthori important sums of money.⁴³ Al-

³⁸ ÖStA HHStA Türkei 1. (Turcica) 45. Konv. 2 fol. 44v–54r. Bericht des Boten Friedrich Breuner an Rudolf II. Neben dem Bericht wurde eine seltsame Bemerkung geschrieben: "*Markaßi Paull wolte noch Immer gern waida werden in der walachaj (!)*".

³⁹ Veress Documente II., 213–215. Nr. 197; ÖStA HHStA Türkei 1. (Turcica) 45. Konv. 2. fol. 149–150. Delegate Friedrich Breuner's report to Rudolf II.

⁴⁰ M. Sertoğlu, *Osmanlı tarih lügati*. [Ottoman historical dictionary] İstanbul 1986, 290; İ. H. Danişmend, *İzahlı Osmanlı Tarihi Kronolojisi*. [Ottoman historical chronology with commentary] Vol. 3, İstanbul 1972, 61.

⁴¹ Horváth, *Magyar regeszták*, 141; Veress 1930, 237–238. Nr. 219. Delegate Friedrich Breuner's report to Rudolf II.

⁴² Veress 1944/II, 189. Nr. 655.

⁴³ Horváth, *Magyar regeszták*, 140–141.

though Márkházi's extradition or his execution was repeatedly requested,⁴⁴ he was released in August 1583.⁴⁵ Yet, in Báthori's perception not all was lost, since through his conversion to Islam Márkházi became a "Turk" to whom the sultan could no longer confer the voivodship of Transylvania.⁴⁶ Following his release from prison "İbrahim bey" – as Márkházi was now called – changed his stance. He no longer aimed at becoming the voivode of Transylvania but aimed at getting a sanjak at the Hungarian or Polish border. According to the delegate Paul von Eyzing, he first succeeded in 1585 when he was appointed sanjakbey of Simontornya.⁴⁷ His appointment was registered in the so-called *rü'üs defteri*. One of the volumes of this collection kept in Istanbul contains the official registration of the inauguration, which shows that a new sanjak had been established in Babócsa where Márkházi took the lead.⁴⁸ In this document, next to his name, there is the remark 'new Muslim' (new Muslim) which indicated that Márkházi's first public function as a "Turk" was that of a sanjakbey.⁴⁹ The Habsburg delegate is right also about Márkházi's appointment, because at the same time he also got the sanjak of Simontornya. According to Géza Dávid, on 11 May of the same year "İbrahim" who had worked in Babócsa when it was the center of a sanjak was appointed a bey in Simontornya, a post from which he was relieved on 22 July 1586.⁵⁰ According to some other information, Márkházi went to Zvornik on 27 January 1587.⁵¹

I was unable to clarify in full detail the positions Márkházi held later in his life. According to János Baranyai Decsi, Zsigmond Báthori's court historian, he administered several sanjaks in Hungary and Croatia⁵² and, in the Spring of 1589 he was sent to the Transylvanian border, to the castle of Borosjenő (present-day

⁴⁴ E. Veress, *Báthory István levélváltása az erdélyi kormányal (1581–1585)* [Correspondence of István Báthory with the Transylvanian government (1581–1585)] Budapest 1948, 38. Nr. 21; Veress Documente II., 266. Nr. 244.

⁴⁵ *Monumenta Comitalia Regni Transylvaniae* 3: 52, Note 2.

⁴⁶ Veress Báthory István levélváltása, 94. Nr. 43.

⁴⁷ Veress, Documente III., 32–33. "Markhazy Paul hat das Sangiakat Simontorna entlich bekommen, gestern dem Sultano den Rock geküsst und sich bei den fürnembsten, sonderlich bei dem Beglerbegen Graeciae stattlicher Verrichtung daselbst, auf di Meinung, davon Euer Kays. Mt. öfters gehorsamist zuvor geschrieben, erboten, und zuheissen für gewiss verobligiert." Delegate Paul von Eyzing's report to Rudolf II.

⁴⁸ BOA Kâmil Kepeci Rü'üs defteri 244. p. 183. Nr. 122. "*Liva-i Şimontorna: sabikan Bobofca nahiyesi sancak tarikiyle verilip mîr olmayan nev müslim İbrahim Bey'e verilme buyuruldu.*" II. C.a. 993. (10–20 May 1585) [Simontornya sanjak: Babócsa, which was *nahiye* earlier, was assigned to Márkházi as sanjak. It was donated to *İbrahim Bey*, who was a newly converted Muslim and not a sanjakbey.] I owe thanks to Feridun Emecen for providing the above information.

⁴⁹ Sertoğlu, *Osmanlı tarih lûgatı*, 237.

⁵⁰ G. Dávid, *A Simontornyai szandzsák*. [The sanjak of Simontornya] Budapest 1982, 30, Note 118. (BOA, Kâmil Kepeci Rü'üs defteri 262, p. 21.)

⁵¹ I. Karácson, *Török-magyar oklevéltár 1533–1789*. [Turkish–Hungarian charters, 1533–1789] Budapest 1914, 135. Nr. 172.

⁵² *Baranyai Decsi János magyar históriája*, 64–65.

Ineu, Romania) from where he made himself a nuisance to Zsigmond Báthori's domains.⁵³ If Baranyai Decsi is to be believed, for a while Márkházi was relieved from all his dignities and lived in great poverty until the time when Sinan, again a Grand Vizier, offered him help.⁵⁴

At this juncture, Márkházi's life is set against the background of the "Fifteen Years of Long Turkish War," Sinan, having decided to engage in a war against Hungary, through Mehmed chiaus, alias Gergely Veresmartly, a Hungarian renegade sent firmans to Transylvania to induce Zsigmond Báthori to join him in this undertaking. The chiaus was accompanied by İbrahim, also a member of the mission, who, by that time had been appointed by Sinan bey of Lippa.⁵⁵ This stage of Márkházi's adventurous life is related in all the historical works in which he is mentioned. His repeated appearance at the Transylvanian border gave a good reason to those who took Báthori's side to advocate secession from the Ottoman Porte. According to Baranyai Décsi, Sinan was upset by the Transylvanian situation. The Transylvanian delegate was said to have reported that the grand vizier had taken Márkházi before the sultan. He was also given the post of the sanjak-bey of Lippa to report on events in Transylvania.⁵⁶

I think that this statement, besides meeting political objectives such as entering the anti-Ottoman alliance, had no foundation in reality.

Márkházi held this office but for a year.⁵⁷ Although a "Turk", his good fortune let him finish his restless life in Hungary. He was already dead when on 18 August 1595 Transylvanian troops occupied the castle of Lippa.⁵⁸ It was reported that his widow encouraged the defenders not to surrender the castle. Understandably, she was worried for herself as well as for her son.⁵⁹ He could have married his last wife only following his exile in Turkey but, unfortunately, I was unable to find any information on her. As for Márkházi's son, he would appear on the pages of the history of Transylvania. Under the name Deák Mehmed he was serving the Porte. He consistently continued his father's anti-Báthori policies. Thus, in 1612, he accompanied András Ghyczy to Transylvania, a pretender to the voivodeship and as *kapuci başı* he took steps against Prince Gábor Báthori.⁶⁰

⁵³ *Monumenta Comitania Regni Transylvaniae*, 3: 264–265; Veress Documente III., 186–188. Nr. 122, 191–195. Nr. 125.

⁵⁴ *Baranyai Decsi János magyar históriája*, 64.

⁵⁵ *Monumenta Comitania Regni Transylvaniae*, 3: 293–294.

⁵⁶ *Baranyai Decsi János magyar históriája*, 96.

⁵⁷ Szilágyi, *Szamosközy István történelmi maradványai*, 29.

⁵⁸ *Magyarország Történelmi Kronológiája*, 415.

⁵⁹ *Baranyai Decsi János magyar históriája*, 238.

⁶⁰ Szilágyi, *Szamosközy István történelmi maradványai*, 2: 108; ÖStA, HHStA, Ungarische Akten (Hungarica), Allgemeine Akten Kart. 158. Konv. A. (March 1612) fol. 49, 60–62.