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PHD THESIS

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FĂGĂRAȘ COUNTY IN THE 16th CENTURY

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Făgăraș County in the 16th century

Key words: Făgăraș County, Ștefan Mailat, principality, fortress, status, privileges.

Abstract

In this study we are presenting the political, social and economic transformations of the Făgăraș County in the 16th century, after it's emerge from the political influence of Walachia. Being located in the center of Romania, the Făgăraș County is bounded in the north by the river Olt, Făgăraș Mountains in the south, Persani Mountains in the east and the south of Hartibaciu Plateau in the west.

Documented in the 13th century Făgăraș County, has been an important factor in forming the medieval state of Walachia especially through Negru Vodă who was an controversial figure in the Romanian and Hungarian historiography. He appears relatively late - in the 16th century documents of Walachia – when he is mentioned as establishing at Campulung in 1290 an important center of power around which Walachia will be formed. We relied our affirmation on the document from 1291 in which appears for the first time Făgăraș and where the noble Ugrinus is reinstated by Andrew the 3rd, king of Hungary. This reinstatement could lead either to an armed conflict between Negru Vodă and Ugrinus, or the fact that Negru was already gone and Ugrinus took advantage and occupied Făgăraș.

Beginning with the 14th century, Făgăraș County entered under the domination of the Wallachian leaders. We already showed that the periods of time in which Făgăraș County was effectively ruled by the Wallachian leaders are the same with the periods of time in which the relations with Hungarian Kingdom maintain a normality for that era. Based on the documents we studied we could set that the Wallachian leaders made donations like villages, parts of villages, mountains and also gipsy families to boyars from Făgăraș County which led in forming a new nobility there that was more attached to

Wallachia than Transylvania. This social development drawn also an economic growth of Făgăraș County, so that during the time of Mircea the Elder, the town was attested as fair.

The close link between the boyars from Făgăraș County and the Wallachian leaders made the first ones to try by force to lead the Făgăraș County to the Wallachian domination. Their rebellion detrmined Paul Tomori, the chatelaine of the Făgăraș fortress, to release the first status of Făgăraș County. The presentation of the contain of these status and also their comparison to the ones issued between 1560 – 1570 showed the evolution of the economic and social situation of the Făgăraș nobility and peasantry. We noticed that even though the Wallachian leaders didn`t effectively ruled the Făgăraș County in the 16th century, they continued to have in their entitling also the formula of leaders of Făgăraș County.

In the 16th century appears mentioned in Făgăraș County the Mailat family. The lack of documents and ambiguous presentation of the historiographies which refer to the origins of the family leaves room for interpretation, but we can see that Matei Mailat entered in the Hungarian nobility of Transylvania once he converted to Catholicism. This conversion made possible to the Mailat family to rule various areas of Transylvania, and that the most important of the family, Ștefan Mailat to be in the entourage of Vladislav the 2nd, the King of Hungary. Ștefan Mailat was very active in the fight for the Hungarian Crown and after the disaster from Mohacs choses to support Ferdinand of Habsburg. He succeeds to impose as a good military strategist, and as a reward he will receive the Făgăraș fortress. The inconstant situation of Transylvania made Ștefan Mailat to have an oscillating attitude between the two sides so that in 1528 the documents show him as part of John Zápolya`s partisans. This variation of sides made possible for Ștefan Mailat to actually enter in the possession of Făgăraș County, so that immediately after to become partisan of Ferdinand.

In 1529 Ștefan Mailat is defeated by the Petru Rareș`s army – the ruler of Moldavia, at Feldioara, this act leading to a conflict situation which will continue in the following years. The prominent character that Ștefan Mailat will have in Transylvania makes him to be entitled in 1534 as Voivode of Transylvania and in 1540 general commander of the region. It is obvious that all these actions of Ștefan Mailat had a precise goal – to be the Prince of Transylvania under the ottoman suzerainty. To accomplish his plans he was

looking for support mainly from the Făgăraș County and the fortress and also gave important positions as nobles or boyars to some families with Romanian origins, so he could count on them. The documents showed that his plans bothered the majority of the Transylvanian nobility who couldn't conceive to be led by a noble risen from a Romanian with orthodox origins. The nobility's resistance and the Sultan's refuse to give the lead of the Region of Transylvania to Mailat determined them to assault the Făgăraș fortress by the Wallachian, Moldavian and also the ottoman troops. After his defeating, Ștefan Mailat is imprisoned at Constantinople where he had a special detention regime and he could correspond through letters and he also was advising the Turks in problems regarding Transylvania.

We also presented his wife and brother-in-law's attempts, Ana Nádasdy and Toma Nádasdy to release Ștefan Mailat from captivity, efforts that required almost the whole Făgăraș County's income. At these attempts of releasing Ștefan Mailat also participated the leaders of Wallachia, Moldavia and the nobility of Transylvania which in various meetings offered their financial support. All these actions remained without any result and in 1550 Ștefan Mailat died. His descendants continued to rule Făgăraș County and even though they didn't have the same impact in Transylvania history, they kept their privileges. We noticed that his grandchildren: Baltazar Báthory and the cardinal Andrew Báthory also tried to become the leaders of Transylvania, but only Andrew Báthory succeeded for a short period of time.

After the death of Ștefan Mailat the most important decision taken by his son Gabriel Mailat was to sale his domain from Făgăraș County to John Sigismund Zápolya, the Prince of Transylvania. With this sale was also made an inventory of the weapons of Făgăraș fortress and the Făgăraș domain, this document being the oldest of this type kept until now. As well, during the year in which he lead the fortress, John Sigismund, reconfirmed the privileges of Făgăraș and comparing them with the ones given in 1534 by Ștefan Mailat, we could see that they remain the same.

For Ștefan Mailat, the Făgăraș County, and also the fortress, represented the most important support in his attempt to become the Prince of Transylvania because immediately after Gaspar Béchés enters in the possession of these two he will try to become Prince of Transylvania. This action will end up with an assault of the Făgăraș fortress which will lead

Făgăraș County in the possession of Ștefan Báthory, the Prince of Transylvania and the future king of Poland.

Baltazar Báthory, the grandson of Ștefan Mailat will be the one to bring back the Făgăraș County under the domination of Mailat`s family. From the documents through which he receives the domain from his cousin, Sigismund Báthory – the Prince of Transylvania, we find listed all the villages from the region of Făgăraș, therefore we can conclude that this was one of the biggest and the most important from Transylvania. Trying to dethrone his cousin, Baltazar Báthory ended up assassinated, and the Făgăraș fortress entered in the possession of Maria Christierna, the Prince`s wife.

We reserved a special place to the presentation of the Făgăraș fortress, the most important fortification from the south of Transylvania. Unfortunately the results of the various archeological diggings in the fortress were not entirely published, so we couldn`t rely on those to present the construction stages of the building. However, we could say that Ștefan Mailat transformed the old fortress in a castle by building the exterior wall which allowed the arranging of interior spaces in apartments as they appear in the 17th century inventory. Also, Gaspar Béchéș brings improvements to the fortress, the most important one being the lake. From the period of Báthory`s leading remained various coats of arms on the frame doors and also on keystone, so we can state that they brought an important contribution in the fortress`s transformation.

We presented the relations between the Wallachian leaders and the ones from Făgăraș County in the 16th century, especially because they weren`t always friendly. The conflict between Petru Rareș and Ștefan Mailat increased in the fourth decade of the 16th century, mostly after the Făgăraș Voivode will possess Unguras and Ciceu. This seizure of the Moldavian holdings will make the leader of Moldavia to enter many times in Transylvania so that he could recover his fortresses, but most often unsuccessfully. We didn`t neglect the role of Petru Rareș in the capture of Ștefan Mailat in 1541, and neither his subsequent tries to release the hostages remained there during that same year. We remarked the good relations with the Wallachian leaders , as proved by the various letters of correspondence between them and Ștefan Mailat, an important role in this had his brother Dumitru Mailat, who we find in many documents as ambassador in Wallachia.

The dominion of Michael the Brave over the fortress was certified through the old possessions of the Wallachian leaders in the north of Carpathians. He continued the tradition started by Sigismund Báthory and followed by the Princes of the next century, - to donate the Făgăraș County to the Princess of Transylvania – so we find lady Stanca, his wife, as the leader of the region. We emphasized the role that Făgăraș had in the policy of Michael the Brave, the one who tried to transform it in the capital of the new state and in this sense he brought his family and treasure here.

We have tried through this study to make a detailed presentation of the Făgăraș County in the 16th century, showing its role in the forming of the Principate. We believe the information presented of the Făgăraș County's status and privileges, contribute to a better understanding regarding the decay of boyar's institution within the Principate and also make us know much more about the economic evolution of the region in this century.