

UNIVERSITY "LUCIAN BLAGA" SIBIU  
FACULTY OF PATRIMONY AND HISTORY

# **DOCTORAL THESIS**

## **SUMMARY**

### ***= POLITICAL ORIENTATIONS IN TRANSYLVANIA IN THE XVIIITH CENTURY =***

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POLITICAL ORIENTATION  
IN TRANSYLVANIA IN THE 16<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY  
(SUMMARY)

This work represents the materialization of an older aim dating back in the university years referring to a study that had as a central theme the noble elite in the Transylvanian society. Because of my curiosity referring to the fights among the political groups we approached these elites considering the political factions whose activity in the 16<sup>th</sup> century seems very interesting to me; that's why I wanted to bring new archive information and a personal point of view.

The very little information we had from the period referring to certain partisans or actions of the political actions made me to apply to various archive funds from County Offices of the National Archives from Cluj and Sibiu and also valuable scientific works in Hungarian, Turkish, German or Romanian to fill in some existing gaps. We gave a great importance to the works that treated the history of the noble families, the life of some political elites because these ones offered important information about the factional fights and their partisans.

Because of the importance of the historical sources in remaking the events a first chapter of my thesis discourses **The History of the Research**, precisely the historiography of fights among the groups in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, where we referred to the sources used in this study. Thus we tried to offer the historians who will study this work precious information about the way how the themes we approached in this thesis are discussed in other works.

In chapter I entitled **Transylvania from Voivodate to Principality** we had as a central objective the presentation of the actions of the Transylvanian elites within the political events in the period of the voivodate and principality and that's why in the first subchapter we made a short incursion in the history of Transylvania where we presented the reader the way how this elite influenced the unfolding of the events by implication, opposition or collaboration with the Hungarian royalty. In the second part of the chapter we had as a main objective an analysis of the Transylvanian institutions along their existence during the voivodate until the principality in order to see how these

transformed, their resemblances and differences or, in some cases, superposition. We consider this approach of analyzing in parallel these institutions a successful step in the attempt to bring a new point of view in this domain.

***The analysis of the genesis and transformation of princely institutions by metamorphosis of the old royal institutions and by symbiosis with the local voivodal institutions represents the first novelty point of this study.***

The history of Transylvania is characterized by a great complexity of the realities, events and situations and that's why this space was perceived as an area with its own identity since the ancient times. A specific character resulted exactly from this multitude of elements. After the Hungarian kingdom conquered Transylvania the ethnic element became an important characteristic of this territory because many populations used to live there interacting with each other and creating their own identity in parallel with the maintaining of the ethnic one, so we have Romanians, Hungarians, Germans and Szekely, each of them with their customs, traditions and mentalities but united by an interdependence hard to understand by those who did not live here.<sup>1</sup>

At the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century besides the ethnic diversity, a confessional one appeared determined by the entrance in this space of the Reform currents which comparing to other areas in Europe managed to enforce peacefully because of an old tradition of cohabitation with "the other" who was accepted at least formally. In these conditions the confessional option represented also a delimitation of the ethnicity and at the same time had the power to influence the political options of the partisans who analyzed the possibilities of alliance through the doctrines of their cult.

The institutions and the functions of the state-political entity Transylvania suffered adaptation and transformation to the new situations for a better functioning. The voivodate institution transformed after 1541 into the institution of the principality. The voivods were those who had the initiative in the fight for the affirmation of the autonomy of the country contributing to the affirmation of the congregational regime which had

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<sup>1</sup> Ioan - Aurel Pop, *Preliminary word*, in Ioan Aurel Pop, Thomas Nagler (eds.), *History of Transylvania*, Publisher The Romanian Cultural Institute and the Centre for Transylvanian Studies, Cluj Napoca, 2003, Vol I, p 10; Octavian Tartar *The formation of the regional identity. The Transylvaniam birth* Publisher University Typography "1 Decembrie 1918" of Alba Iulia, Alba Iulia, 2009, 104 p, passim.

important results in concretization of the elements specific for the Transylvanian space. Among the voivods from Transylvania who opposed the authoritative tendencies of the kings of Hungary we can mention Duke Stefan, Roland Borsa, Ladislau Kan, Toma of Szekeny, Ioan Zapolya, Stefan Mailat.<sup>2</sup> During the Hungarian kingdom the voivod was a high royal official from Transylvania named by the king. After constituting the principality the title of the king devolved to the ruler of Transylvania, Ioan Sigismund, at least formally ; after Stefan Bathory was enthroned he gave up this title entitling himself voivod now. In these conditions when the title of king (rex) overlapse the one of prince (*princeps, fejedelem*), the rank of voivod declines in the conditions when the « king » was the ruler of Transylvania and the title of voivod could be used only by giving up the title of king and the voivod came again to rule the state.<sup>3</sup> There are also major differences between the voivod nad prince for example in the confesional area where the voivod did not have attributions in the conditions in which the church benefited of great privileges.<sup>4</sup> Afterwards the prince became not only the arbitrator but also the supreme leader of the church.<sup>5</sup>

Different transformations were observed also in the background positions because during the principality the position and the attribution of the vice-voivod devolved to the chancellor of Transylvania. The chancellors were the elite of the principality and had great honours and privileges within the Transylvanian state, but the more their power was increasing the bigger the envy on them was. This fact lead to the falling of these high officials mostly by losing their life as it happened to Mihai Csaky, of Romanian origin, who was not agreed by the royal locum tenens Gheorghe Martinuzzi.<sup>6</sup> More sad were

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<sup>2</sup> George Bichicean, *State assemblies in the Romanian countries. General congregations in the voivodal Transylvania*, Press and Publishing House Tribune, Sibiu, 1998, p 87.

<sup>3</sup> Calin Felezeu, *The Transylvanian principality status in relations with the Turks (1541 - 1688)*, Cluj University Press, Cluj Napoca, 1996, p 84.

<sup>4</sup> Gheorghe Bichicean, *op.cit.*, p. 89.

<sup>5</sup> Gheorghe Bichicean, *op.cit.*, p. 107, see also Susana Andea, *op.cit.*, vol. V, pp. 682 – 683.

<sup>6</sup> Cristina Fenesan, *The Constitution of the Principality of Transylvania*, Encyclopedic Publishing House, Bucharest, 1997, pp. 110 - 111.

cases of Wolfgang Kovacsoczi<sup>7</sup> or Stefan Josica who lost their lives because of the intrigues and the political enemies.<sup>8</sup>

The voivodal council as a consultative organism also suffered transformations in order to adapt to the situation emerged after the year 1541. A first step in transformation took place on 29th March during the Assembly from Targu Mures when Martinuzzi's supporters proposed the idea of naming some people in charge contribute to the solving of the state problems.<sup>9</sup> A second step of the evolution took place in the conditions of constituting of a *Consilium Intimum* whose members had the task to help Ioan Sigismund and queen Isabella to accomplish the necessary tasks to for a good functioning of the state.<sup>10</sup> The princely council developed in a more complex and more organised form than the voivodal one because of the necessities existing in that period. The voivodal chancellery evolved following the example of that from the episcopate of Alba Iulia.<sup>11</sup>

Although it was well organised during the years 1540-1541 it broke down and was re-organised by new men with vast knowledge. This process of transformation and adaptation of the chancellery closed in 1556. Despite the fact that the principality chancellery continued keeping the two subdivisions from the previous period *cancelaria maior* (the big chancellery) and *cancelaria minor* (the little chancellery) in the period of the principality it was better structured in more compartments which referred to the relationships among the prince, nations and statuses, the administrative area, accounting, military, external affairs and postal offices. The number of the clerks in the chancellery was variable and they were not taken from the ecclesiastical environment anymore but they were former notary of the cities or employees of some public authorities and in

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<sup>7</sup> Johan Siebmacher, *Adel von Siebenbürgen in Großen und Allgemeines*, Wappenbuch, IV. Band, Theil XII, Nürnberg, 1898, 283 p. + 106 pl., p.182, see also Taf. 120.

<sup>8</sup> Sorin Bulboacă, The nobility of Romanian origin from the Lugoj and Caransebes Banat in XVI - XVII. Case study families Békés Josic, Vaida and Macicași in \*\*\*, Yearbook of the Institute of History "George Barit" from Cluj Napoca, Series Historica, Romanian Academy Publishing House, Cluj Napoca Branch, Volume XLIII, 2004, pp. 62-63.

<sup>9</sup> Octavian Tatar, International aspects of the creation of the Principality of Transylvania, Publisher Corvin Museum, Hunedoara, 2001, p 196.

<sup>10</sup> Susana Andea, *Central and local institutions in Transylvania in the \*\*\*, history of the Romanians. A time of renewal in the European spirit, (1601 - 1711/1716)*, Encyclopedic Publishing House, Bucharest, 2003, vol V, pp. 690-691.

<sup>11</sup> \*\*\*, *Documents on the history of Romania, Age XIV, C. Transylvania*, Publisher RPR Academy, Bucharest, 1953, vol I, p 442, p 46.

some cases they completed their experience within the Big Chancellery. It is worth noticing the fact that they had a high cultural level and good knowledge of wording.<sup>12</sup>

The congregational assemblies had mostly a juridical character and represented a step preceding the Diet from the time of the principality. After 1541 the Diet had a larger activity area and was involved in all the fields of the new state. During the principality the relationships between the the Diet and the prince were clearly stated by Common Law Pact (*pacta conventa*) and had the task to establish the way of collaborating between the two parts with the respecting of the privileges by both the prince and the states.<sup>13</sup>

The Principality Table was a law organism, the institution which they appealed to when one of the parts was not satisfied. An interesting characteristic of this institution was the fact that the Germans as colonists on a royal land could „avoid” the Principality Table addressing directly to the prince who now had the title of king.<sup>14</sup>

This process of evolution and transformation of the state institutions has its origin in the necessity of adapting to the realities of the period when they unfold the activity. and that's why I consider that approaching this way of analysis „in parallel” revealed the reader resemblances and the differences between the mentioned institutions offering something new. Besides I also presented the activity of some elites who were important for these institutions.

In the second chapter entitled *Political orientations in Transylvania in the 16th century. Period 1500-1541*. I approached the fights among the political factions in the period of the end of the Hungarian Kingdom and the Transylvanian's options and then I passed to the event created by the Mohacs moment. The presentation of the political options according to the existing groups was a major objective that I followed in my attempt to see the motifs that determined different coalitions or passings from one faction to another. I divided this chapter into three chronological sections as it follows: 1490 – 1526, 1526 – 1534, 1535 – 1541.

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<sup>12</sup> Susana Andea, Central and local institutions in Transylvania in the \*\*\*, history of the Romanians. A time of renewal in the European spirit, (1601 - 1711/1716), Encyclopedic Publishing House, Bucharest, 2003, vol V, pp. 693, 698-699.

<sup>13</sup> Gheorghe Bichicean, *op.cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>14</sup> Susana Andea, *op.cit.*, pp. 736– 737.



*For this part of my study we tried to focus on the fights between factions which took place from 1490 to 1541, fights characterized by a fierce confrontation between the filogerman partisans and the filozapolien and filoturkish ones, which is why I consider this approach to be the second point of novelty of this study.*

In our attempt we wanted to present the reader this period between the death of the king Matyas Corvin and the constituting of the autonomous principality of Transylvania under Otoman sovereignty, a very important step in passing from the structures of the Hungarian kingdom to the state of Transylvania. Both parties wanted the best for the country and their supporters considered themselves patriots, some considered that the Otoman sovereignty was the best option and the others considered that House of Habsburg was the best protection.

The Romanian voivods from the extracarpatic space involved themselves in this conflict leaning the balance on one side or the other with important results for the factional fights. The Transylvanian possessions determined the Moldavian and Muntenian voivods to go to Transylvania with their armies, the most representative case being Petru Rares who became an active presence in the Eastern part of Transylvania supporting the political groups according to his interests and possibilities.

In the context of the dispute for the crown of Hungary at the beginning of the 16th century we can see the confrontation between the filohabsburg party and the nationalist one of House of Zapolya and after the battle from Mohacs between the progermans and filozapolyens who fought for the political power. The factions divide and their members hesitated which party to choose. After 1527 the Ottomans interfered supporting their vassal Ioan Zapolya and thus the filozapolyan party becomes filo-turkish.<sup>15</sup> The documents written at the European courts and at the Ottoman court and the researches made by well-known historians like Joseph von Hammer, Szilagyı Şandor, Roderich Goos, Makkai László si Mócsy András, Calin Felezeu, Cristina Fenesan, Octavian Tatar, Aslan Margareta captured these factional fights. I tried to get the reader extra information by analyzing the materials in German, Turkish, Latin, Hungarian and Romanian.

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<sup>15</sup> Makkai László, Mocsy Andras, *Erdélz Törtene*, Akademiai Kiado, Budapest, 1897, vol. I, pp. 409 – 414.

The factional fights are a reality in the life of every state and Transylvania made no exception. The difference from other states consisted in the fact that, on the political background, this territory had manifestations of distinct individuality from Hungary, which now spreaded very much. I tried to render the factional fights from Transylvania as realistic as possible by using the Latin and Hungarian documents from the archives which attest information about the political forces involved in the fight for the political power with great accuracy and that's why this chapter made an incursion in the events of this period. There were political factions that declared fidelity for both the filohabsburgs and zapolyens but they had their own aims and the best example is that of Transylvanian group led by the Romanian voivod Stefan Mailat, a predecessor of the Transylvanian Principality; the activity of this faction is well attested in the Hungarian and Latin documents of the age and also by the German ones which bring something new.

In this period the contribution made by his troupes to the zapolyen party contributed to the defeat of the filogerman partisans in the battle from Feldioara. The Transylvanian possessions of the princes from Moldova and Tara Romaneasca made them to take part in the political fight of the factions supporting the one which attested their possessions so I largely presented the effects of their actions.<sup>16</sup>

The factional fights were influenced by the specific of Transylvania characterized by an ethnic diversity which determined the implication of the three political states not separated but in the Transylvanian identity. Joining a party or is done without making a distinction or separation based on ethnicity, because both sides could find partisans of each ethnicity. Although the results of the occurrences can be generalized, there were a few exceptions every time.

Chapter III is a continuation of the previous ; so I called it : *Transylvania political orientation of the sixteenth century. Period (1541 - 1604)* referring to the events between the formation of the principality until the enthronement of Stephen Bocskai in Transylvania.

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<sup>16</sup> Nicolae Grigoraș, *Precursor of Michael the Brave* in \*\*\*, *Petru Rares*, Editor Leon Simanschi, Academy Publishing House, Bucharest, 1978, pp. 89-91.

This chapter was an absolutely necessary step to achieve a full picture of the factional battles during the sixteenth century. Due to the larger extent of this material for a better understanding, we have divided this chapter into several sections that include an analysis of temporal events in a well-defined chronologically plan as follows: 1541 – 1550, 1551 – 1556, 1556 – 1559, 1559 – 1570, 1571 – 1600 / 1604.

***The novelty brought within the analysis of the events taking place between 1541 and 1604, which are a continuation of those presented in the previous chapter, is the presentation of the fights between factions, which, in this period, are strongly influenced by local and religious identities.***

At the end of writing this chapter, I believe that I managed to meet most of its objectives, despite the fact that sometimes I had to adapt to the situation, given the large volume of information that led me to insist more on events that I considered significant. The central objective in my approach was to introduce the reader the practical action beyond the processed and created image of the political discourse.

After the setting of the principality the factional battles continued with some fluctuations in the intensity of the confrontations, so I tried to present the reader the reality of these battles with the help of the epoch writings. In this respect there were very helpful documents kept in the State Archives Branch Cluj and Sibiu and various recent studies published in various languages that have addressed this issue, leaving precious information.

The factional fights took place in parallel with the organization of the new state entity, giving the principality some vitality and flexibility relating to the complexity of the political events.<sup>17</sup> This complexity I was talking about in the previous lines determines some partisan to be not so careful to state that they were in but especially to the subtlety with which they had to approach to it. This explains the Petroviciens actions in relation to Queen Isabella, the steps taken by Martinuzzi's partisans to the Ottomans of the the pro-German Peter Haller in his mission as a representative of the interests of the House of Habsburg and the examples could go on. The direct confrontations did not miss, with impressive changes in the balance of power. A political group cohesion can be seen

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<sup>17</sup> Hammer Baron von Joseph, *op.cit.*, p. 718.

in these critical situations in which its partisans found resources to achieve victory ; in this case the events of the years 1560 - 1562 and 1575 were significant.

If at the beginning there is a unity of faith due to the influence of the Catholic Church, this unity in diversity changes with entrance of the reform trends in this space. The religious factor influences faction options, due to the acceptance of Protestantism. The philoturks considered that Transylvania was saved from destruction by the prudence of its inhabitants, protected by the Ottoman Sultan, who allowed them to keep their faith. Biblical fanaticism is prevalent;<sup>18</sup> Transylvanians, faced with hardships, seek salvation on a religious level.<sup>19</sup> They justify their options based on biblical parallels between the Kingdom of Israel and Transylvania, on one hand, and Nabucodonosor and Suleiman I, on the other, to combat the Habsburg proselytism tendencies. Religious belief can influence political decisions; for instance, the Siebenbürger Sachsen, supporters of the House of Habsburg, accept the re-enthronement of Queen Isabella and John Sigismund, instead of pointlessly resisting it. A reason why the Siebenbürger Sachsen preferred the philoturk group led by Stefan Bathory is the danger represented by the Habsburg's anti-Protestantism policy. Under these conditions, they preferred to support a Catholic prince who respected their faith and privileges instead of the House of Habsburg, who was preparing to advance in the case of Gaspar Bekes' eventual victories.

The political grouping was not only a possibility for the partisans to protect their interests but also a manifestation according to a certain program, depending on which the perception of the "other" was formed : the filo-turk, the pro-german, the mailatean, the petrovician, the filozapolyan, etc. The adhering to a partisan political faction gives them a sense of dignity obtained from the direct participation in actions for the good of the country, regardless of the camp to which they belonged. If in the previous chapters we made a political institutional approach, and in terms of political groups, in the fourth chapter, entitled *Genesis and evolution of the Transylvanian nobility. Case Study: Balassa family*, we wanted to introduce the Hungarian nobility as social-political entity - especially the Transylvanian politics in relation to the Hungarian one. According to the

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<sup>18</sup> Aslan Margareta, Civic attitude and the image of the Ottoman Empire in the Transylvanian society, during the principality (1541-1688). PhD thesis. Coordinator Prof. Univ. Dr. Nicholas Edroiu. Cluj Napoca, 2010, p. 128.

<sup>19</sup> Eabidem, p. 189.

legendary descendance the right of the Hungarian noblemen could come from the seven Hungarian chieftains that occupied the main Hungarian state governors at the beginning period of the Hungarian state. By extension the event from 1222 resulted in the signing of Hungarian nobility Golden Bull enshrined the rights of the nobility, subsequently founded by Werboczy's Tripartitum (1514). This political doctrine argued that the true Hungarian crown was not worn by the King but by the nobility through the positive qualities of character such as moral strength, courage and heroism,<sup>20</sup> proven on the battlefield where the noble attempted to distinguish to be rewarded for his bravery by getting possessions and titles and later, after the mid-sixteenth century and the seventeenth century to achieve the noble title and certain merchants that made financial loans, receiving in return such securities. The most significant example in this respect is that of the mayor of Sibiu Peter Haller.<sup>20</sup>

In time, the moral obligation to ensure the good of the homeland was preserved as a rule present in the mentality of the nobles on that basis forming the Unio Trium Nationum, following the revolt from Bobalna (1437). This act of agreement settled the right of the elites of the three privileged nations to involve in the leadership of the homeland. The Transylvanian nobility had a specific characteristic different from that in Hungary and the historians László Makkai and Mocsy Andras clearly presented that disclosing the sharing of the Transylvanian nobility in large and small and the middle class was made up of the German elites.<sup>21</sup>

In the Hungarian kingdom and later in the Principality of Transylvania the nobles were grouped into political parties who tried to impose their views in political and state leadership. Mainly there were two main groups: the filohabsburgs and the filoturks. In their view both sides wanted to save the country, but through separate strands some preferring to support the Christian ideals propagated by the Court of Vienna, and others the peace obtained in collaboration with the Ottoman power.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Octavian Tartar *The formation of the regional identity. The Transylvaniam birth* Publisher University Typography "1 Decembrie 1918" of Alba Iulia, Alba Iulia, 2009, 104 p, pp.60-64.

<sup>21</sup> Makkai László, Mocsy Andras, *Erdélz Története*, Akadémiai Kiado, Budapest, 1897, vol. I, (611 p.), p. 353 – 365.

<sup>22</sup> Aslan Margareta, *Civic attitude and the image of the Ottoman Empire in the Transylvanian society, during the principality (1541-1688)*. PhD thesis. Coordinator Prof. Univ. Dr. Nicholas Edroiu. Cluj Napoca, 2010, p 83.

The noble family Balassa is a significant example on the consciousness of the nobility to engage in the managing and protection of the homeland, consciousness formed over several centuries of existence. John Siebmacher in his study referring to the history of the noble families and their heraldry in Hungaria and Transylvania awarded Balassa family three important and defining characteristics: the ancient origin, the nobility and the importance that had in the political, social and cultural events in the medieval and pre-modern period.<sup>23</sup>

In researching the historical past of the noble families Balassa a great help for me were the archival documents, especially a small sketch of the tree provided by the genealogists Sarkantjos and Gyulay.<sup>24</sup>

In addition I used diplomatic disclaimers that certifies the involvement of the members of that family in the political and institutional life of the state and many editable documents which relieved my approach.

Because of the incomplete information provided in some cases by the documents of the time, I was unable to do a very complex family tree given that I could not track the number of the descendants, especially the girls who were not mentioned in documents only in certain lawsuits acts and sometimes in various wills.

In the absence of some conclusive documents we did not join the Balassa of Gyarmat branch with the Andrasfalva one but we believe we advanced greatly by achieving this family tree, I made a point of view logically based on a scientific argument supported by the documents used. We believe that this material is a welcome development given that much of the history of this family is revealed in unpublished sources of the family.archives. There has not been made a family tree to work on this approach so far therefore I believe that the objective has been achieved, and this material will be of great use to historians and those interested in this topic.

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<sup>23</sup> Johan Siebmacher, *Adel von Siebenbürgen in Groses und Allgemeines, (The grand and general escutcheons book in a new edition completely ordered and enriched with heraldic and historical explanations )* Wappenbuch, IV. Band, Theil XII, Nuremberg, 1898, 283 p + 106 pl., P.88, see and Taf. 37.

<sup>24</sup> DJAN, Cluj Napoca, *Sarkantyos Gyulay Fund*, Balassa share.

During the sixteenth century the Balassa family were traditional filohabsburgs in terms of political orientation but there were times when they chose working with the filoturkish group. The most illustrative case is that of Menyhart Balassa who in 1556 was involved in the restoration of the House of Zápolya, and later because of his qualities as a politician and military he quickly climbed state hierarchy. Politically the attitude of the members of Balassa noble house produced changes in mentality, caused losses to their political opponents forcing them to become more flexible in ideas and cautious in actions. Often the Balassa family members lost possessions or confrontations but always did so with dignity. The defeats did not discourage them but like their ancestors they fought bravely and nobly supporting their views with dignity.

Besides the family history and family tree we made a map of the possessions attested in examined documents but we consider that besides these there are also others that due to time management or incomplete documents we did not discover until making this material, but it will remain as an objective to be reached in the near future.

***In this chapter, due to the material I used, I brought two points of novelty:***

***1. An explanation for the genesis and metamorphosis of family names in the case of noble houses.***

***2. A highly complex family tree, comprised of over 100 names belonging to the House of Balassa, ranging from the 13<sup>th</sup> century to the 17<sup>th</sup> century***

In terms of methodology used in my approach we can mention : finding the sources [here the volumes from the Romanian History Bibliography played an important role] ; selecting and translating manuscripts; the breakdown of the information; the analytical method; the comparative method for recognizing the historical debate; the scientific processing etc.

At the end of this paper we wrote a few conclusions drawn from the experience gained by researching the archival and edit material. To better familiarize the reader with the reality of the age we put in the pages of this paper files, letters of privilege and coats of arms of the noble families involved in the factional fightings.

We hope this thesis to represent, through the discussed ideas and the presented materials, a useful material for the historians that approach this issue.

**KEY WORDS**

Political institutions; Fight of political factions; Pro – Germans; Filo – Turks; Noble House of Balassa; Genealogy.



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