Hungarian Military Organization Based on a 1605 Excerpt Regarding the Ban’s Army

In his 1995 article, Géza Pálffy mentioned that the 16-17th-century history of the Ban’s army defending the Kupa area had not yet been researched.¹ In this paper, I intend only to present, on the basis of the appended document, the military structure of the Hungarian Kingdom, and the funding of recruits.² Before that, however, it is worth looking into how the banate’s perimeter stronghold system along the Kupa River was formed.

*Formation of the banate’s perimeter along the Kupa*

Prior to the battle of Mohács, the Croatian-Slavonian ban (*banus Croatiae et Slavoniae, Ban in Kroatien und Slawonien/Ban in Windischland*) controlled both military matters and the entirety of administration in Croatia and Slavonia. Apart from the cavalry and infantry belonging to his office and the monarch’s perimeter strongholds, he also commanded the various armies formed by the counties. The Croatian-Slavonian advancement of the Ottoman Empire’s forces cut the revenues generated by this reduced territory, while the military power and importance of the ban was simultaneously overshadowed by troops funded by the Styrian, Carinthian and Carniolan nobility. This decades-spanning development resulted in the Croatian-Slavonian perimeter in 1559, controlled by an *Obrist (Obrist der kroatischen und windischen Grenze)*. The Vienna military council (*Wiener Hauptgrenzberatung*), held in August 1577, turned administration of the territory over to the newly appointed Inner-Austrian War Council (*Innerösterreichischer Hofkriegsrat*). Another result of the assembly was that the ban’s 500-strong army, sustained through the taxes of Hungarian nobles and stationed in *Varaždin* up until then, was distributed among the castles along the Glina and Kupa.³ By the beginning of the 17th century, the struggles to control Sisak and Petrinja during the

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² Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (ÖStA) Kriegsarchiv (KA) Alte Feldakten (AFA) 1605-12-2; Pálffy 1995: 148.
Long Turkish War pushed back the cluster of defence, somewhat misleadingly referred to in the court as the Vend/Windisch perimeter, to the line of the Kupa. According to the document in the Appendix, the armies of Ban János Draskovits served at Sredičko, Brest, Pokupsko, Gora, Brkiševina, Šišinec and Španov grad, as shown in the table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of stronghold</th>
<th>Cavalry</th>
<th>Trabant foot soldiers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sredičko</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brest</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pokupsko</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gora</td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brkiševina</td>
<td></td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Šišinec</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Španov grad</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Összesen</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Besides the troops in the seven strongholds, the ban commanded an additional 50 cavalrymen as his direct retinue. Thus the ban’s army consisted of a 250-strong cavalry and a 256-strong infantry. He also employed two couriers and horses in Zagreb to transmit urgent messages when needed. Let us note that the document’s author must have miscalculated, as the summary of the excerpt claims 266 men, while the sum number of trabants (attendants/bodyguards?) was actually 256.

The fact that the ban’s cavalry and infantry were ordered to the perimeter line also meant that they were no longer commanded by Archduke Charles, the Generalobrist (Generalobrist kroatischer und windischer Grenze) of Croatian-Slavonian matters, and were managed directly by the Vienna War Council (Wiener Hofskriegrat), as they were not financed by the taxes from Styrian, Carinthian and Carniolan nobles, but rather by the Hungarian treasury.

It is also noteworthy that the Croatian-Slavonian noble assembly (sabor) also hired soldiers from the pecunia haramialis contribution, mostly to protect the fords of the border river – these were under the banate’s command as well.

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4 TÓTH 2000: passim
6 ÖStA KA AFA 1605-12-2
7 ÖStA KA AFA 1605-12-2
9 VÉGH 2020: 81.
Military organization in the Hungarian Kingdom,
as reflected in the banate’s army

The smallest organizational unit of cavalry was the so-called cavalry squad/knight squad, consisting of a minimum of six riders plus a wagon or a cart. The unit was by no means a Hungarian peculiarity, as it could be seen in Western European cavalries until the early 17th century. German-language documents concerning German cavalry repeatedly use the expression lange Reihe or Sattel (saddle), while the French term was Gleve (glaive).

The squad was led by a well-armed knight, accompanied by five lightly armed riders called katona (Hungarian for “soldier”). There were, however, instances in which unaccompanied knights were recruited, just like knights with 2-5 men, or even with 10-20 men. The leading nobleman had to provide his retinue with horses, saddles, weapons and armaments, as well as the wagon carrying their belongings. A good example is the last will of Józsa Ormány, the Sümeg prefect of the Veszprém Diocese, written in 1561. According to this, the man left not only money to his brother Tamás, but also a horse named Pejkó and the related gear (saddle, bonesok, helmets – one gold-inlaid, armour and other equipment), 11 plumes, three draught horses and a six-horse wagon, plus an ermine fur cloak. Mátyás Gelei inherited a black colt and an adult horse called Muszka, with the related armaments (shields, helmets, lances) and two white peacock plumes. Young Vince Sajtár was bestowed a horse bought from Simon Kasza, with shield, armour, lance and spurs, two white plumes, and payment for his service.10

When marching to a campaign, the smaller (less than six) noble units were also organized into squads of six more, whose knights and soldiers collectively maintained a wagon or cart, and camp gear. However, the many smaller units of commoners, with less than six troopers (huszárs), each carried their gear on their spare horses. This meant that the armed and lightly-armed cavalries differed from each other not only in armament, gear, horse breeds and social prestige, but also in camping ability, reflected in the mobility of the two cavalry types. By carrying his equipment on his side horse, a huszár trooper travelled faster and was able to cover greater distances.11

Squads formed Fähnlein companies, their strength maximized at 100 by Article 22 of the 1546 assembly. Of course, a company could be smaller than that. A 1605 document shows that Gábor Chahi had a hundred men, while Caspar Blaseritsch and Georg Krölich had 50-50 cavalrymen.12 However, this did not mean that they

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10 Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár (MNL) Országos Levélőtár (OL) P 57 Bezerédy család lt. II. II. 26.
11 SZATLÓCZKI S. d.
12 Östa KA AFA 1605-12-2
had the same number of horses: in the extant mid-16th-century cavalry musters, at least 125 horses are listed in a 100-strong company. This was likely a usual arrangement, also because units under 100 men had a similar supply of surplus or spare horses.\textsuperscript{13}

The document demonstrates that Fähnleins were led by Hauptmanns. The rank had an extensive meaning in the 16th century, his tasks being not only military, but also administrative in nature.\textsuperscript{14} Thus the term was used in connection with both infantry and cavalry, meaning captain, Fählein leader and commander as well. In 16th-century Hungarian, the word was kapitány, from the Latin caput (head). However, the Hauptmann was not only the leader of the company, he also commanded the largest squad in the unit. These could consist of as many as 20 men.\textsuperscript{15}

The scribe noted the “staff” members of the two Hauptmanns. A standard-bearer (Fähnrich) and a trumpeter (Trompeter) were assigned to the fifty riders, while two from each served in a 100-strong company.\textsuperscript{16} Unfortunately, the document is silent on any deputy or other officers assisting the Hauptmann in his work - which does not, however, mean they were not present.

Interestingly, the German-language document uses the term Hoffähne for the ban’s fifty-strong entourage.\textsuperscript{17} At that point, the word had denoted the bodyguard cavalry assigned to protect archdukes in the field.\textsuperscript{18} It is logical to assume that in the ban’s case, they also served to signify his authority and to protect him.\textsuperscript{19} Accordingly, his direct “staff” also included a lead standard-bearer (Hauptfähnrich), two trumpeters and a drummer (Heerpauker). Besides his fifty riders, one common standard-bearer and one trumpeter also served.\textsuperscript{20}

In the case of the infantry, the ten/hundred-based system was a generic principle, but smaller castles could have a voivodine of twenty-thirty-fifty foot soldiers, each led by a voivode. This organizational unit was further divided into ten-man squads, depending on their full number, led by lieutenants or Rottmeisters, as listed in the document.

\textsuperscript{13} SZATLÓCZKI S. d.
\textsuperscript{14} BAGI 2011: 145–147.
\textsuperscript{15} MNL OL MKA E 211 105. d. 4. tétel 113, folio.; MNL OL MKA E 185 Nádasdi család lt. 62. d. A gazdasági ügyvitel iratai 30. tétel Számadások és vegyes anyag 93-94v
\textsuperscript{16} ÖStA KA AFA 1605-12-2
\textsuperscript{17} ÖStA KA AFA 1605-12-2
\textsuperscript{18} ÖStA KA AFA 1595-12-5.; ÖStA KA Bestallungen (Best.) 550/1597.; ÖStA KA Best. 607/1598.; ÖStA KA Best. 642/1599.
\textsuperscript{19} MERÉNYI 1895: 403.; VÉGH 2020: 81.
\textsuperscript{20} ÖStA KA AFA 1605-12-2
Two important conclusions can be drawn from the above data. On the one hand, the standard-bearer and the piper of a voivodine, along with the Rottmeister himself, were counted in the ten-strong squads. On the other hand, the number of serving infantrymen did not necessarily correlate to the number of their squad. In the case of Gora, 28 men were organized under 4 Rottmeisters. This suggests that the missing trabants had either deserted or were killed in some skirmish. In Brest, the 11 foot soldiers had no Rottmeister. The document does not mention the reason for this. These eleven trabants were neither a squad nor a voivodine. The 79 foot soldiers in Sredičko were, however, assigned to two voivodes.\textsuperscript{21}

Apart from the armies recruited for the monarch, an office was also present in Brest that came under the aegis of the Hungarian military organization, specifically to the private castle structure of feudal lords. The text features the term Burggraf, used/translated as porkoláb in 16\textsuperscript{th}-century Hungarian. The office appeared in the 13\textsuperscript{rd} century and denoted the military leader of a castle. Thus he was responsible for watching over and defending the gate or gates, and the various buildings (armoury, prison, granary). In his stead, the porkoláb could appoint a deputy porkoláb to manage and supervise the guards. This officer was practically one of the trabants, but received slightly higher pay. However, he was not the porkoláb’s general deputy.\textsuperscript{22} The question arises, why was an office of a private lord’s castle on the payroll of the royal army? Though these were two parallel organizations, this was not unusual. There are two examples from the 16\textsuperscript{th} century: a muster list of Fonyód from 1574 cites a porkoláb, Péter Kulcsár\textsuperscript{23}; the same can be found in a 1576 muster list from the castle of Csesznek.\textsuperscript{24}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Castle & Strength of voivodine & No. of lieutenants/Rottmeister & No. of standard-bearers & Piper (Pfeifer) \\
\hline
Sredičko & 39 & 4 & 1 & 1 \\
Sredičko & 40 & 4 & 1 & 1 \\
Brest & 11 & & & \\
Brest & 49 & 5 & 1 & 1 \\
Gora & 28 & 4 & 1 & 1 \\
Brkiševina & 39 & 4 & 1 & 1 \\
Šišinec & 20 & 2 & & \\
Španov grad & 30 & 3 & 1 & 1 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}
Payments in the ban’s army

Data from the 1605 excerpt include the monthly wages of the ban and various officers and soldiers, summarized in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Monthly wage (Forints)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ban</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hauptfähnrich</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban’s two trumpeters</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fähnrich</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trumpeter</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drummer</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voivode</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piper</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porkoláb</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rider</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trabant</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of the data may require explanation. On voivodes and their standard-bearers and pipers, the document states that they were eligible for an extra payment (Übersold), receiving extra money above the trabants’ 3 Forints: voivodes an extra 2 Forints, while standard-bearers and pipers an extra 1 Forint.25

On the other hand, another payment form is featured in the document, so-called table money (Tafelgeld). This was usually a separate source of income, contributing to the proper sustenance of a given office. One of the most famous Hungarian soldiers of the 16th century, Bálint Magyar wrote to Tamás Nádasdi on August 23, 1552, that the sum he received from the future palatine was insufficient, as he “hosts” the other lords using that money as well. Therefore, he explained, a sum that sustained someone else for a week was not enough for him to cover a single day.26

The 1605 excerpt shows that the ban’s monthly payment was complemented with Tafelgeld of 25 Forints. In the cases of Hauptmanns Chahi, Blaseritsch and Kröhlich, the monthly wages are missing from the list, and only their table money is recorded, depending on the number of cavalrymen. For a hundred-strong cavalry, fifty Forints were due, and twenty-five for fifty riders. Thus the total monthly costs

25 ÖStA KA AFA 1605-12-2
of all 506 men in the ban’s army were 2,450 Forints, together with the 8-Forint monthly wage of the couriers in Zagreb, meaning 29,340 Forints a year.\(^{27}\)

Though the document does not provide details, it is worth mentioning how recruits were paid. Today we are accustomed to receiving our salaries on a monthly basis, but it was otherwise for soldiers in the 16\(^{th}\) century. Following the first muster and the accompanying payment,\(^{28}\) recruits received their payments rather erratically. The appointed muster officers examined the riders and foot soldiers in the muster list, asking for their names one by one. They inquired about the number of horses, and whether the mounts on muster were the same as on the previous muster. If a horse had perished, it was to be skinned and its hide nailed to a rack, thus proving why the soldier was on muster with another horse. The availability register was also updated during a muster. First they registered who departed from service and when (desertion or death), and the men replacing them were also noted. Then it was assessed how many extra payments and other goods (food, beverages, fodder, firewood) the soldiers received since the last muster and payment. The value of these was deducted from the calculated payment. However, even this sum was not disbursed to the cavalrymen and infantry, but to the Hauptmanns and squad leaders in the cavalry, and to the voivodes and lieutenants in the infantry.\(^{29}\)

Cavalry officers almost certainly retained a large portion of the monthly four Forints for themselves in exchange for a “loaned” horse, armour and wagon/cart. It is likely that the aforementioned three Hauptmanns did the same, keeping some of the squad’s money for themselves.

**Conclusion**

The appended excerpt from 1605 does not make up for the missing elements in the history of the banate’s perimeter. However, it does provide some insight into the military organization of the Hungarian Kingdom, and into military matters in the Croatian-Slavonian castles. It turns out that a chain of castles was pushed back to the Kulpa line by the beginning of the 17th century in the midst of the fifteen-year war for the possession of Sisak and Petrinja. According to the document in the appendix, in 1605 the armies of János Draskovits served in Sredičk, Brest, Pokupske, Gora, Brkiševina, Šišinec and Španov grad; a total of 200 cavalry and 256 infantry. However, the list also provides an opportunity to gain insight into 16-17. century structure and system of the Hungarian military organization.

\(^{27}\) ÖStA KA AFA 1605-12-2; A bán had költségeinek 16. századi változásáról lásd: PÁLFFY 1995: 121–122., 127.

\(^{28}\) BAGI 2019: 186.

\(^{29}\) ÖStA HHStA H AA Fasc. 80. Konv. A fol. 80v–94v; ÖStA FHKA HFU rN 1. konv. 1542. fol.: 18r–29v
Appendix

Österreichisches Staatsarchiv Kriegsarchiv Alte Feldakten 1605-12-2

Extract was die Khay[serliche] M[a]y[estät] vnder dero Baan vndt Windischlandt, für Kriegsvolckh vnderhalten vnd was Monatlich darauf lauff.

Herrn Baans Statt

Der herr Baan hat Zur leibs besoldung 375f.
Hat vnd[er] seinem Hoffahnen 50 Pferdt Thuet 200 f.
Tafel geldt 25 f.
Hautb fendrich 8 f.
Zwen Trometter 5 f.
Auf ein HeörPaugger 10 f.
Auf ein gemein fendrich vndt Trometter 8 f.
Thuet ein Monadt 631 f.

Zeredißkhy

Chahi Gabor haubtman vber 100 Pferdt darüber geth 400 f.
Tafelgeldt 50 f.
Auf Zwen fendrich vnd Zween Tromett[er] 16 f.
Vnd[er] wayda Petter Dranisch 40 Trabandten, auf die gehet, Sambt des Wayda 5 f. vier Rottmeistern, ein fendrich, ein Pfeiffer vbersoldten 131 f.
Thuet ein Monadt so auf Zeredißkhy gehet 725 f.

Breßt

Tafelgeldt 25 f.
Auf ein fendrich vnd Trometter 8 f.
Alda werden auch gehalten 11 Trabandten so nit auslauffen, Thuet ein Monadt 33 f.
Mer vndter Wayda Marco Zechglaua 49 Trabandten darüber geth Sambt des Burggrauen 3 f. Wayda 5 f. des fendrichs, Pfeiffer fünff Rottmaister vbersoldt 162 f.
Summa So ein Monadt Zue Breßt aufgetheuet thuet 428 f.

Kulpa

Haubtman Georg Krölich hat vnd[er] Ime 50 Pferdt, die werden bey d[er] Kulpa gebraucht darauf gehet 200 f.
Tafelgeldt 25 f.
Auf ein fendrich vnd Trumetter 8 f.
Thuet ein Monadt 233 f.

Gora
Da werden gehalt[en] 28 Trabandten lauff auf Sy Sambt der Wayda Pfeiffer, fendrich vnd vier Rottmaister vbersold Monadtlich 125 f.

Perenggidyna
Vnder Wayda Georg Radtmanwich werden alda gehalten 39 Trabandten, geet auf Sy den Wayda Pfeiffer, fendrich vnd vier Rottmaister, vbersoldten ein Monadt 128 f.

Zyzinacßkhy
Vnder Wayda Geirg Radiewitsch werden gehalten 20 Trabandten, auf die geet Sambt des wayda vnd Zweyer Rottmaister übersoldten ein Monadt 67 f.

Pfanagradt
Vnder wayda Michael Khraberhitsch werden gehalten 30 Trabandten, darüber geet Sambt des Wayda eines fendrichs Pfeiffers vndt 3 Rottmaister vbersoldten ein Monadt 100 f.

Agram
Da werden Zwey Posst Pferdt gehalten darauf ein Monadt 8 f.

Summa alles hieuor beschreibenenden vnkosstens bringt ein Monadt Zusamben 2450 f.
Vnd ein Jar 29340 f.
Der Trabandten od[er] fueßknecht sein allendt halben 266. Jedest 266 Trabandten.
Thuet Zusamen 506 Personen.
Baan Ambt in Windischlandt.
Bibliography


Ugarska vojna organizacija, na temelju izvata o banskoj vojsci iz 1605.

Nakon bečkog Vojnog vijeća (Wiener Hauptgrenzberatung) u kolovozu 1577. banova vojska od 500 vojnika, koja se uzdržavala od poreza ugarskih plemića i bila stacionirana u Varaždinu, podijeljena je po dvorcima duž Gline i Kulpe. Prema dokumentu u Dodatku, vojske bana Jánosa Draskovitsa bile su u Sredičku, Brestu, Pokupsku, Gori, Brkiševini, Šišincu i Španov gradu. Uz pomoć isprave iz 1605. može se prikazati organizacija pješaštva i konjaništva Ugarskog kraljevstva i mjesto banove vojske u novom obrambenom sustavu.

**Ključne riječi:** Rijeka Kupa, János Draskovits, Sredičko, Brest, Pokupsko, Gora, Brkiševina, Šišinec, Španov grad, Hrvatska, Otomansko Carstvo, Hauptmann

**Keywords:** Kupa River, János Draskovits, Sredičko, Brest, Pokupsko, Gora, Brkiševina, Šišinec, Španov grad, Croatia, Ottoman Empire, Hauptmann

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Ilustracija na naslovnici
Muza Klio (Alexander S. Murray, Manual of Mythology, London 1898)

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DOI: 10.17234/RadoviZHP.54

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