
ILLUSTRIOUS EUROPEANS IN MEDIEVAL ALBA IULIA ITALIANS TO THE PRINCELY COURT (1541-1691)

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Abstract

Documentary sources, and especially external narrative sources and a certain part of historiography interested in this topic demonstrate the existence of multiple relations between Alba Iulia, the capital of the Transylvanian Principality, and the Italian Peninsula. There was an obvious historical reality proved by concrete documentary sources and direct references about several Italians' European activity and presence – most of them being recruited from *Societas Jesu* – in the Citadel of the Principality that is turned into good account nowadays. Mention should be made about the following Italians: Jesuit monk Ferrante Capeci, native of Sicily; Ludovic Odescalchi, member of the Jesuit Residence of Cracow, Italian scholar Antonio Possevino, remarkable member of the Jesuit Order in Italy; Pope Pius II (Enea Silvio Piccolomini), author of several works in the field of History and Geography, promoter of one of the Christians' Crusades against the Turks; Apostolic Nuncio Alfonso Visconti, etc. The Italians' presence in Alba Iulia marked a cultural re-orientation and a European type of politics, the spreading and consolidation of several concepts of the Catholic Church, and even an opening towards the values of Renaissance and Humanism of European type that entered in the Transylvanian society during the time of Principality. There was a time when the princes of Alba Iulia sought to consolidate their prestige by means of cultural, social and political activities and events in which they participated and with the help of certain people and objects with interest for art. The history of Alba Iulia owes a lot to many Italians, Jesuit monks and representatives of the Catholic Church, etc. They visited the capital of Principality or stayed here and described the city, the citadel with its monuments, churches or surroundings, and its inhabitants as well. Their accounts, re-discussed and re-interpreted as a continuation of the identity and alterity problem specific to the social imaginary and collective mentalities, represent authentic historical sources and current topics with astonishing results needed in the field of modern historiography.

Keywords: Catholic Church, Jesuit monks, history, cultural manifestations

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1. Introduction

Several chronological distinctive marks, which focus on an interesting epoch from the history of Transylvania, as is that of the Principality, will allow a better understanding of the importance and significance of Italians' presence to Alba Iulia, between 1541-1691, from the perspective of identity between art and spirituality. We consider such a tandem, a singular manifestation of the consequences of their activity in the Capital of Transylvanian principality [1-3]. We cannot ignore either remote consequences of Roman civilization in Alba Iulia, during the same epoch. At that time, as we are about to notice below, the registered effective presence of Italians was a complex phenomenon with different forms of manifestation in the economic, political, social, ecclesiastical and cultural areas [4].

The death of Prince John Zápolya (1540) triggered the problem of succession to Hungary's throne, which – in compliance with the treaty from Oradea (24 February 1538) – came to Ferdinand of Habsburg or to his descendants. The attempts of valorising such political inheritance aroused Turks' complaints, who occupy Buda and transform central Hungary into Pashalik (29 August 1541). By the debates of Diet from Debrecen (October 1541) is acknowledged the suzerainty of the Porte over Transylvania, which together with Banat and Partium established in an autonomous Principality against the Ottoman Empire. This administrative-political structure will be maintained under Turkish sovereignty until 4th of December 1691. Then, in accordance with Leopold's diploma, Transylvania is subordinated directly to the Emperor of Vienna and is included in the Hapsburg Empire [5-10]. The province enjoyed a separate status, being confirmed the privileges of the three political nations and the rights of the four recognized Churches.

2. Discussion

Establishing the residence of Principality in Alba Iulia offered the town the privilege of multiple and visible development, inclusively cultural. The princely court (beginning with reign of queen Isabella and of her son John Sigismund), next to the Episcopal one (until abrogation - 1556), ensured proper setting for such cultural manifestations. In this context, have gathered numerous foreign artists, hierarchs, monks, military men, traders, etc., especially Italians, who were protected by the princes and bishops from Alba Iulia, in accordance with the modern ideas of Europe and related also to the profile of their education. The ambition and wish of the Transylvanian princes of conferring to the Court from Alba Iulia the political and cultural occidental magnificence, determined it finally to become a core of Humanistic culture in Transylvania. There were established institutions of higher education, such as *Collegium Academicum Bethlenianum* (1622), where intellectuals of European dimension carried out their activity (Johannes Henricus Alstedius, Johannes Henricus Bisterfeldius, Martin Opitz etc.), and a printing house [11-13]. It was a period of

time wherein some European cultural trends, of western influence, were extremely familiar at the princely Court. In this context we may notice, with the aid of documents – appealing to notes made by the foreign travellers – the quite significant presence in Alba Iulia of some active, dynamic and educated Italians, animated by the most wide-ranging economic, political, ecclesiastical and cultural goals [14].

Of course, the Italian-Transylvanian connections had a past. We will focus on it a little bit, by the wish of sketching the political, social, ecclesiastic and cultural general framework, wherein the activity and influence of Italians in Alba Iulia manifested during the epoch of Principality. Transylvania was known in Italy by the military and political successes of John Hunyadi and due to the cultural achievements of King Matthias Corvinus, outstanding personalities of the time [15-17]. Similarly, we cannot omit the Latinity of Romanian language and Romanity of the Romanian nation, aspects rediscovered by Italian humanists such as Enea Silvio Piccolomini (1405-1463) [18] or Poggio Bracciolini (1380-1459) [19]. Pope Pius II underlined the first, in the 2nd chapter from the amazing book *La descrizione de l'Asia et Europa [...] e l'Historia de la cose memorabili fatte in quelle, con l'aggiunta de l'Africa, secondo diversi scrittori con incredibile bravità e diligenza*, also known as *Cosmographia* (1501), the Roman origin of Romanians [20].

Another way of closeness and knowing between the two European regions was made by the young Transylvanians undertaking studies in Italian universities [21]. An example may be even the Bishop Ladislau Geréb of Vingard, nephew of King Matthias Corvinus, who was educated at Ferrara. Such a particular fact explains why the residence of Alba Iulia was effectively marked by the influence of Italian politics and culture. In the XVIth century, among the students from Padova were also the future Prince Stephen Báthory and Farcaș Kovacsócszy, and in Rome was Marcellus Nagy, native of Alba Iulia [19, p. 194-196]. During this period, in Transylvania a lot of Italians were hired in different ecclesiastical, cultural or political missions, making the proof of activism, skills and indubitable pragmatic interests. In this way were built communication bridges between two European areas: Italy and Transylvania.

The influence and real outburst of the Italian cultural and political phenomenon in Transylvania manifested during the period of autonomous Principality (1541-1691), when ecclesiastical, cultural and commercial exchanges intensified or ambassadors were sent to Italy (in order to prepare the fight against Ottomans). Now increases the number of travellers and Catholic missionaries who showed interest for the Transylvanian geographic area and history, in the context of Counter-Reformation.

The long row of Catholic missionaries, architects, military men, courtiers, physicians, historians or Italian musicians, reaching Alba Iulia is opened by Giovanni Michele Bruto (1517-1586) [19, p. 300-302]. Initially, he was requested by the Bishop of Oradea, Franciscus Forgach (7 February 1574), reason for which he will arrive in Cluj. He is known, at European level, by the volumes *De rebus a Carolo V Caesare Romanorum Imperatore gestis*,

Frankfurt/Main, 1566 and, especially, due to *Florentinae Historiae libri*, 1562. Giovanni Michele Bruto becomes the courtly historian of Prince Stephen Báthory, and continues the chronicle of Antonio Bonfini. The historian, paid annually with 800 thalers, receives a house in the citadel and provisions of food, so that, throughout two years to end the work requested by the Prince. In 1581, he becomes secretary of Stephen Báthory, King of Poland, yet the fate of his historical work is one unfortunate. After 1586, the same time with King's death, the manuscript including the period of time between 1490 and 1552, came into the possession of Sigismund Báthory, who intended to print it. Yet, the historian will die, without seeing his chronicle being printed.

The Jesuit monk Antonio Possevino (1533-1611) [22] came to Transylvania, in the spring of 1583, having as goal the consolidation of anti-Ottoman alliance. Although he remained for only one month, we owe him the work *La Transilvania* [...] (1584), where we encounter beside many other pieces of information, an interesting and useful depiction of the town, which was at that time, the Capital of Principality. „Alba Iulia, ancient town, was, during our time, the residence of Transylvania Bishop, together with other castles and outbuildings of the Bishop. It is located in a much too beautiful place and now that the Prince resides here together with his councillors also his guard possesses a certain bravery, although it does not comprise too many inhabitants.” [23] The same Jesuit monk notices the existence of Romanian Metropolis in the locality. „These [Romanians AN] have a metropolitan bishop, whose residence is in Alba Iulia and who established almost all their churches they hold now throughout Transylvania. The Prince acknowledges him in this position, he only must bring a letter from any Patriarch or Bishop by which to prove that he is Bishop.” [23, p. 567]

Another monk, Ludovic (or Aloysio) Odescalchi (?-1586), member of the Jesuit residence from Cracow, was part of the team sent from Poland to Transylvania, in 1579. He lived in Alba Iulia for a while, being the confessor of Italian soldiers from the princely guard, preacher and instructor of Prince Sigismund Báthory [23, p. 468-473]. Also a Jesuit monk was the Sicilian Ferrante Capeci (1549-1587). Due to his education, he was appointed Professor and Rector of the Jesuit College from Cluj. He immediately grasps obvious interrelation between Romanian and Italian language, underlining that Italians may learn Romanian in several months [19, p. 309-310]. He made numerous trips to Alba Iulia, as one may notice from his letters, providing an overall picture of the Princely Court. Here he describes the minor Prince Sigismund Báthory, but also his close ones. For example, he makes the portrait of the physician Wolfgang Kowacsócsy [24]. According to his observations, customs and Italian fashion entered in the society of Alba Iulia from the time of Principality. These were effectively cultivated, as here formed an authentic Court of late Renaissance. Ferrante Capeci does not omit the ecclesiastical issues, noticing that in the Capital of the Principality exists a great church (Cathedral), where religious services and sermons are delivered, being attended by even up to 400 of people led by the Prince [24, p. 106].

The first Apostolic Nuncio, accredited next to Sigismund Báthory, was Alfonso Visconti (1550-1608). He was born into a princely family of Milan. He arrived in Transylvania between 1595 and 1598, becoming the main councillor of the Prince and participating such to major political events from the life of Principality [19, p. 139-142]. Based on his recommendations, Pope had sent to the Prince of Transylvania the cap and baton of great defender of Christianity. Alfonso Visconti did not always succeed to stop the foolish and extravagant impulses of the Prince, including the abdicating decision. From the perspective of national historiography, remained interesting information about the diplomatic relations between Prince Sigismund Báthory and Michael the Brave, especially his visit in Alba Iulia, in 1597, with the purpose of ending an anti-Ottoman campaign. The Apostolic Nuncio showed appreciation to the ruler of Wallachia, considering him a brave man, who would deserve being helped: „[...] Egli è homo bravo di cervello et se vole aiutarlo può far assai nel sito dove è tanto nel cor col nemico” [19, p. 141].

The Venetian Giorgio Tomasi (?-1621) also gets in Transylvania as Protonotary apostolic of the Nuncio Alfonso Visconti [24, p. 665-673]. Here he occupies, from 1596 until the enthronization of Cardinal Andrew Báthory, the position of Prince's secretary for Latin and Italian languages [25, 26]. Sent by this to Rome, to record for the Pope the political event, it is not known whether Giorgio Tomasi returned to the Capital of the Principality. Anyway, he lived to the Court from Alba Iulia at least for three years (1596-1599).

Giorgio Tomasi knew that Romanians were aware and proud of their Roman origin, which they honour [19, p. 328]. The apostolic Protonotary also focuses his attention on the princely residence, which he describes. Here he noticed traces of the ancient town Apulum, named like this after the Ampoi River, as it is revealed by work *Delle guerre et rivolgimenti del Regno d'Ungari e della Transilvania*, Venice, 1621 [24, p. 671].

Before becoming Capital of the Principality, to the Episcopal Court in Alba Iulia was shaped an authentic cultural centre, which promoted an elevated spirit and the fine arts of Renaissance. Italian artists and architects carried out their activity here. Amongst their achievements we enumerate the Chapel Lazo (1512) from the northern side of the Cathedral, the oldest construction in Renaissance style kept until nowadays in Transylvania [27]. Queen Isabella (daughter of Bona Sforza and Polish King Sigismund) dissatisfied with the existent comfort, initiates works of restoration to the Princely Palace which will continue throughout whole period of Principality [28]. These efforts, as well as the necessity of continuing the fortification works to the citadel, brought to Alba Iulia an important number of Italian architects, especially during Bátorthy princes' time.

The first known Italian architect, active in the Capital of the Principality, was Antonio da Bufalo, being solicited by the imperial General Gian Batista Castaldo. In a letter, from Alba Iulia, 14 February 1555, he was complaining that the Bishop does not pay him the works, signing as „Antonius Bubafus in toto Regno Transilvania Majestati Suae Sacratissimae architectus” [19, p. 203].

Also now and here, when the Italian system of fortifications gains ground in Transylvania, perform Francesco da Pozzo from Milan and Andrea da Trevisato. The latter is named „[...] supremus magister supra caeteros magistros muratores ac lapicides in Transilvania” (1554) [19, p. 203]. In 1570, the Italian architect of the citadels from Győr and Eger (Hungary), Paolo da Mirandola draws up a project for the consolidation of the fortress from Alba Iulia [29]. The plan was implemented by „caesareo architetto” Ottavio Baldigara, mentioned in the correspondence sent by the Presidium of Transylvania to King Stephen Báthory [19, p. 203].

Enthronisation of Gabriel Bethlen and his rule (1613-1629) meant the beginning of a period of economic prosperity and cultural effervescence, the Prince wishing to transform the town into a real Capital. The system of fortifications is strengthened, works are carried out to the princely palace, to the sewerage and the premises of the Academic College (established in 1622) are built. It worth mentioning amongst the Italian architects involved in these urban public works, the names of Giacomo Resti, Giovanni Landi and Antonio Castello [30]. The first, otherwise very solicited for his services, built in Cluj, Oradea and Făgăraș, but also in Alba Iulia. Here he participates to the sizing of bastions from the princely citadel or the construction of College’s building, holding the position of architect of the Principality [31, 32]. The second, Giovanni Landi, native of Mantua, builds one of the fortress bastions from Alba Iulia and fulfilled an important role in the construction of the castle from Gherla (1634) [31, 33]. Finally, Antonio Castello was involved on building the funerary monument of Prince Gabriel Bethlen from the Cathedral from Alba Iulia [31]. We also mention here the master specialised in realization of fountains, Venetian Giovanni Fontanici (Ioan Fontanicy) [31], who knew to make the water adduction system that Prince Gabriel Bethlen wished to set in Alba Iulia. With such masters the Prince succeeds to build, before 1625, the first aqueduct of medieval Alba Iulia, which transported water in the fortress, from a distance of 5 kilometres, from the place called nowadays ‘Fântâna Hoților’ [34].

A princely Court after the occidental European model, such was that from Alba Iulia, wouldn’t be complete without physicians, musicians and, obviously, courtiers. And quite a few Italians are registered for these occupations in Alba Iulia. Amongst the servants of Hippocrates, who arrived at the princely court, we remark the ‘heretical’ (converted to Unitarianism) Giorgio Blandrata (1515-1588) [19, p. 105-108]. Native of Saluzzo and trained in Padova, Blandrata becomes the physician of Queen Isabella and John Sigismund, but also of Stephen Báthory. He was dreaded in the epoch, due to influence he exerted over the three crowned heads. In fact, the last one will appoint him Counsellor in 1574. He played an essential role in accepting the nomination of Stephen Báthory to the throne of Poland, for which he was rewarded with the donation of a village nearby Alba Iulia [35]. He also got involved in the religious disputes from Transylvania, succeeding to convert to Unitarianism a significant number of people, including John Sigismund. The proselytism and his anti-Catholic

attitude dissatisfied the Jesuit monk Antonio Possevino, as it is recorded in *Le relazioni fra l'Italia e la Transilvania nel secolo XVI* [23, p. 576].

To the name of the influent physician referred a relation concerning presence and frequency of Italians in the citadel from Alba Iulia. It is remembered the 'Italians' Street' where also lived – in a house made of stone (with four rooms) - Giorgio Blandrata [29, p. 189]. This was seconded, in his prophylactic activity, by another Italian physician, Francesco Stancaro [19, p. 105]. On the same street, unfortunately not yet identified in the field (it seems it was inside the citadel) was also rewarded with a house for his services, on 8 May 1595, the Italian musician Petro Busto (?-1595) [24, p. 453-454]. He engaged, more than once, in the domestic and foreign politics of Prince Sigismund Báthory. Otherwise, he was part of the many Italian musicians from Alba Iulia, as Petro Busto himself admits [19, p. 207; 36].

Another Italian physician, Marcello Squarcillupo was in Alba Iulia, at the same time. Reformed, by confession, the physician of Sigismund Báthory dedicated a book to the ruler of Wallachia, Petru Cercel, a lover of Italy as himself declared. We refer to *De fontium et fluviorum origine ac fluxu*, Cluj, 1585, where a fragment is dedicated to his conational Franco Sivori (ca 1560-subsequently 1589), sent as deputation, in 1574, to Sigismund Báthory [24, p. 1-4]. The activity of Giorgio Blandrata, appointed at one moment by the Prince „doctor physicus et consiliarius noster”, will be continued, from 1574 onwards, by Nicolò Buccela from Padova. At the same time, Marcello Squarcillupo is remembered within the constant efforts of the Jesuit monks on determining some locals to bring them back to the Catholic faith [24, p. 82-84].

The row of Italian physicians present in Alba Iulia continues with the surgeon Pietro Mario Quadrio, who through several letters shows himself disappointed of the situation from the Capital of the Principality. Here he had found „[...] only praise and mud [...]” and received a quite modest wage (200 florins), out of which he had to support his family, inhabiting in totally inappropriate conditions. Amongst physicians we may also include the Jesuit monk from Florence, Massimo (Maximus) Milanese, that Giorgio Blandrata wished him by his side as support during his old age. He practiced different jobs, from orderly to gardener and architect, being a gay nature and having a good sense of humour. All these helped him to escape from the plague and famine from 1586, against which he fought together with Giorgio Blandrata [24, p. 78-130].

We cannot ignore from the brief enumeration of the Italian physicians present in Alba Iulia, during the time of Principality, the Swiss of Italian origin Ioannes Muraltus [37]. He took refuge here due to religious persecutions, being Unitarian, as protégé of Prince Sigismund Báthory. He was hosted, together with his brother, at the Court. Shortly after, he succeeds to accumulate a vast wealth, taking on lease the gold and silver mines of the Principality. Due to his economic and political position, Michael the Brave appointed him delegate in Moldavia, to Ieremia Movilă, yet he registered a failure, returning to the Principality at the beginning of 1601 [37].

The Renaissance attitude of the Prince from Central Europe, occidental as orientation, lover and protector of arts, was not unknown either to the princes of Transylvania, who, at the Court from Alba Iulia, maintained an elevated cultural environment and pomp. Special attention was paid to music, especially that sometimes it was part of princes' every day schedule. It is known that Andrew Báthory was playing the harpsichord and Stephen Báthory used to collect musical instruments from different areas of the continent. Thus, it is no wonder that at the princely Palace from Alba Iulia also performed a chamber orchestra, which played for banquets and ceremonies; but an ecclesiastical choir also existed. According to the accounts of Franco Sivori, at the princely banquet, offered „after Italian fashion” by Stephen Báthory [24, p. 25], were more musicians, for whom two rooms from the floor of the Palace [24, p. 24] were reserved.

The influence of Italian culture on the Court from Alba Iulia is proven even by gifts offered to Franco Sivori by the Prince, whose cousins, Stephen and Gabriel Báthory knew very well the Italian language [24, p. 25]. For that matter, Pietro Busto, the remembered musician from Brescia, notices the Italian background from the Court from Alba Iulia, where the Prince „[...] dances after Italian fashion, [...]”; plays very well any kind of instrument and composes music similarly to best musicians. He speaks well Italian and he loves very much the Italian customs; [...]” [24, p. 445]. In such an environment we distinguish another Italian, composer from Padova, Giovanni Battista Mosto [36], who at that time was chapel master of the Prince. He was trumpeter in the famous chapel of the Prince-electoral of Bavaria, and came to Alba Iulia at the same time with Sigismund Báthory, whose close friend he became. He accompanied him in all journeys and excursions together with a small orchestra, whose conductor he was: „[...] and instead of those <Jesuits> [the Prince AN] surrounded by a bunch of good musicians in his trips, whose conductor was M. Giovanni Battista Mosto” [24, p. 445]. The presence of this composer in Transylvania allows the identification of some penetration ways of Venetian music, especially the works of Orlando from Lasso, into the cultural Transylvanian area. Full appreciation of his music was, beyond doubt, the main reason of Giovanni Battista Mosto's burial in Saint Michael Cathedral from Alba Iulia, in 1597.

In the Capital of the Principality was also fostered religious music, which was played frequently in the chapel of the Cathedral (administered by ‘magister cappellae’), whose cantor was the Venetian organ player Nicoletto Menti. About the other members of the chapel we may affirm that to their great majority, they were Italians. A documentary source from 1598 confirms the above information noticing the musicians from the time of Báthory princes,: Petrus Paulus, Iulius Crodi, Pompeius Bononiensis, Johannes Baptista Bonfi, Cristoghanus Polonus, Zefirus Spira, Johannes Maria Rudolfus, Mathaeus, Simon Ponte, Johannes Borussus Constantinus. Special interest for music also showed Prince Gabriel Bethlen, who gathered at the Court numerous musicians. He was even willing to pay 1000 ducats annually, to bring to Alba Iulia the lute virtuoso Iosif Bagliani, as chronicler Georg Kraus confesses [38].

The Italian presence at the princely court from Alba Iulia, between 1541 and 1691, also regards the so-called courtiers. They determined an effective influence on the political life of the Principality or manifested special pragmatic interests in different fields of trade, economy, Church and culture from the Transylvanian area. For example, illustrative are the brothers Simone and Fabio Genga, who received mining rights in Transylvania (on 2 October 1595) [19, 52]. The former was, initially, in the service of the Great Duke of Tuscany, than of Stephen Báthory and finally of the Prince Sigismund Báthory. At a certain time, he also brought on to the princely Court from Alba Iulia his brothers Fabio and Giambattista, Chamberlain of the Prince and Gerolamo, participant in the fights against Turks. He took steps in view of negotiating marriage between Sigismund and a niece of Tuscany's Duke, making a report for the Duke where he depicts the situation of Transylvania. He becomes even great Chamberlain of the Prince, who, otherwise, from the camp from Giurgiu (October 1595), recommends him to the Pope, for the position of Cardinal. Similarly, Simone Genga kept up a relatively intense correspondence, especially with the Duke of Tuscany. He approached here essential issues from the history of Transylvania's Principality (preparations for the anti-Ottoman war; leaving of Sigismund Báthory, with his army, towards Wallachia, being interested by the throne of Moldavia for his brother Fabio [24, p. 409-412], etc.).

On the other side, Fabio Genga was confidant and butler of Sigismund Báthory [19, p. 316]. In 1594, after the suppression of a conspiracy, the Prince sends him as deputation to Pope Clement VIII and to the Great Duke of Tuscany, to justify the execution of the assumed conspirators. Married with Velica, daughter of Ivan Noroceca, Fabio Genga was involved in the campaign for obtaining military and political support in the anti-Ottoman fight from duchies and Italian republics, but especially from Papacy. Thus, he sends to Pope Clement VIII the document *Ambasciata et considerazioni anteposte dal Genga, ambasciatore del Principe Sigismundo Bathori a Papa Clemente ottavo, per ottenere aiuti, l'anno 1594*. In this context, after being ensured of the Romanians support from Moldavia and Wallachia, he launches the idea of chasing away the Turks to Constantinople and building of a key-fortress [19, p. 317; 24, p. 256; 39] on the shore of the Danube, with the support of Italians and Papacy. Following the anti-Ottoman campaign from 1595, Fabio Genga returns to Alba Iulia. Prince Sigismund Báthory intended to enthrone him as ruler of Moldavia, purpose for which Fabio Genga married – it seems – with the widow of Aron Vodă. Complotting and interfering in the political life of the Principality, Fabio Genga, as well as his brother Simone, was killed by general Basta (in Vințu de Jos, in 1601).

Amongst the Italian courtiers that passed through Alba Iulia, we also remember Giovanni Francesco Baviera, member of the illustrious della Rovere family who became nobleman of Sigismund Báthory, Matteo Foresti, Cesare Viadana, the Tuscan ambassador in Transylvania, Giordan Pietro Giordano, the emissary of the Great Duke of Tuscany, etc. They all had a role, more or less

important, in the economic and politic life of the Principality [19, p. 156, 317, 318, 352].

A last category of Italians present in the Capital of the Principality was formed by military men, otherwise vast in number during the epoch. The situation may be explained from at least two perspectives: interest and weakness of princess for Italians and towards everything they represented by their country and civilization and, of course, the frequency of military campaigns, either anti-Ottoman or of different nature, wherein the Principality was involved. During the respective period mercenaries were not lacking from the army of the prince, this being participant in all kinds of actions and military conflicts or wars. Out of this group more military men were part of, who at the same time were also courtiers in Alba Iulia. A suggestive case is represented by Giovan-Andrea Gromo (1518-post 1567) [19, p. 105-113; 23, p. 312-371; 40], the guard commander of Prince John Sigismund. Native of Bergamo, descendent of the renowned Sforza family, Gromo reaches the princely court of Transylvania, being appointed „[...] guard of his person and colonel of Italians [...]”. He wrote *Compendio di tutto il regno posseduta dai re Giovanni Transilvano ed di tutte le cose notabili d'esso regno*, with the purpose of drawing attention and popularity of Italians, especially of Papacy unto the Prince. Amongst others he also offers information on the history rich in legends of Alba Iulia: „[...] it is an ancient town built by the Romans where are still found some vestiges of ancient walls” [23, p. 318]. According to his accounts, „their language <of Romanians AN> is named romanza or romanescha and is a sort of Vulgar Latin. They consider themselves descendants of the Roman colonists. Their law and religion is the Greek one. Finally, these look similar to the peasants of other nations.” [23, p. 320] Insisting on the princely fortification, he notes down more data and information about the history and topography of the settlement [23, p. 343].

Another Italian career military man, who enjoyed the privileges offered by Prince Sigismund Báthory arrived in Transylvania amongst the retainers of Apostolic Nuncio Alfonso Visconti. We refer to Cosimo Capponi (?-1597), nobleman from Rome, received at the Court as aristocrat of the Prince. Within the correspondence of this participant in the fights against the Turks [19, p. 139, 158; 24, p. 503-517] are also remembered other Italians present in Alba Iulia: nobleman Gasparo Turlone (favoured of the Prince, often invited to dinner, but also companion in the game with the ball <giocare al ballone>) [19, p. 156; 24, p. 509-598], and knight Michele Marchion, inhabitant of Alba Iulia on the eve of the Christian campaign. He came, it seems, from Venice together with other soldiers, intending to form a company of riders. The pro-Italian attitude of the Prince aroused the dissatisfaction of local nobility. By the influent Chancellor of Transylvania, Ștefan Josica, ‘enemy’ of the Italians, Transylvanian noblemen manifested openly dissatisfaction, drawing attention to the duplicity and flattery of Italian mercenaries [24, p. 503].

The entrance of the Transylvania Principality in the anti-Ottoman front also imposed, from the beginning, the participation of Italians in the fights of the campaign against Turks, starting with 1595 (including the siege of Giurgiu

fortress). To those remembered above others were added, such as Alessandro di Carpagna, Gerolamo Genga or Agostino Furlano (the last one even saved the life of Prince Sigismund Báthory, when he fell off the horse), fighting besides the Italian body led by the renowned condottiere Silvio Piccolomini (ca 1560-after 1596) [19, p. 72, 76-78, 144, 152, 155-157, 161-162; 24, p. 410, 481-598]. After victory, owed to Michael the Brave, Italians stopped on their way back to Alba Iulia, where the Prince thanks them (through them also to the Duke of Tuscany), praising their military virtues [19, p. 155].

Definitely, the row of Italian military men or of Italian origin serving in Alba Iulia and surrounding areas is much longer. The affirmation is based on several available examples, such as Gian Batista Castaldo [19, p. 104]. Appointed general in the Hapsburg army, he initiated, amongst others, the consolidation works to the fortification of Alba Iulia, introducing in Transylvania the bastionary system (1551-1556). At the same time, we mention Marco Antonio Ferrari, subordinate of Castaldo and captain Vincenzo Zuconi, also enrolled in the Hapsburg army. He is mentioned in Alba Iulia, in the period immediate after the assassination of Michael the Brave (9/19 August 1601), amongst the imperial soldiers under the command of General George Basta.

3. Conclusions

At hand of our cultural and historiographical effort, which we consider just another phase in the valorisation of this prolific issue [4], we establish several conclusions on the presence of Italians to the princely Court from Alba Iulia, between 1541-1691, mainly from the perspective of tandem art-spirituality. Documentary sources, and, especially, external narrative sources and a certain part of historiography interested in this topic demonstrate the existence of multiple relations between Alba Iulia, the capital of the Transylvanian Principality, and the Italian Peninsula. It was an obvious historical reality which is supported by actual documentary sources that can be completed and diversified throughout continuation of investigations, with direct references to several Italians' European activity and presence.

The activity and pragmatic presence of Italians in Alba Iulia is determinable, not that much through their number – although in the fortress was a spot named 'Italians' street', which demonstrates that their number was not to be neglected! – but especially through the diversity of preoccupations and fields of competence which they illustrated. Secretaries, dignitaries, monks, historians, physicians, architects, painters, sculptors, courtiers, military men, etc. all remarked in the public life of the Principality, arousing, more than once, animosity of local and regional, military and political elites. Undeniably, the attitude of princes, favourable to west politics and, more precisely, pro-Italian, constituted an irresistible attraction for Italians. They hoped that they would fulfil themselves, materially, in this new world, that the Principality of Transylvania, and its Capital Alba Iulia, represented territories in which the majority succeeded to consolidate career and accumulate wealth.

The Italian presence in Alba Iulia marked a cultural and political re-orientation, an opening towards the values of Renaissance and Humanism of European type that entered in the Transylvanian society during the time of Principality. There was a time when the princes of Alba Iulia sought to consolidate their prestige by means of cultural, social and political activities and events in which they participated and with the help of certain people with interest in art. The princes aimed at organising in the Capital a Court according to the model of occidental pomp. The Italians that they were surrounded with became counsellors, confessors, courtiers or reliable men, helping them in this meritorious effort with valid cultural and political connotations. Ultimately, the Italian presence in Alba Iulia was also owed to the involvement of Transylvanian principality in the anti-Ottoman front, next to other European powers, some Italian states and especially the Papacy. The connections between the Transylvanian Principality and Italian world were relatively cordial in the epoch, due to the frequent exchanges of deputations and especially due to the special attention that Transylvania with its geopolitical and strategic position received from Vatican. The purpose of all these diplomatic and political efforts was the organisation of an anti-Ottoman coalition [5, 6].

The history of Alba Iulia owes a lot to many Italians, who visited the capital of Principality or stayed here and described the town, the citadel with its monuments, churches or surroundings, and its inhabitants as well. They underlined the oldness of the settlement, but also the noticeable resemblance between Romanian and Italian language. Their accounts, even if subjective, re-discussed and re-interpreted as continuation of the problem of identity and alterity specific to the social imaginary and collective mentalities, represent authentic historical sources and current topics with astonishing results needed in the field of modern historiography [14, 41, 42].

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