

The Captains of the Habsburg 11th Székely Border Guard Hussar Regiment

Csaba HORVÁTH


Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca

E-mail: horvathcs93@gmail.com

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Abstract: The following paper aims to present a prosopographical research about the captains of the Habsburg 11th Székely Border Guard Hussar regiment who served between the Congress of Vienna (1815) and the 1848 revolutions.

Keywords: captains, Habsburg, Székely, Border Guard, service

Rezumat: Lucrarea de față își propune prezentarea unei cercetări prosopografice referitoare la căpitaniii Husarilor secui din regimentul de graniță al armatei Habsburgilor care a servit între Congresul de la Viena (1815) și revoluția de la 1848.

Cuvinte cheie: căpitani, Habsburg, Secui, Grăniceri, serviciu militar

Introduction

The topic of my PhD thesis is the prosopographical research of the entire officers' corp of the 11th Székely Border Guard Hussar regiment from its establishment (1762-1764) until the outbreak of the Spring of Nations (1848). In this paper I have a double aim: firstly I am going to shed light on the living conditions of the captains of the Habsburg army between the end of the Napoleonic wars (1815) and the outbreak of the 1848 revolutionary wave and, secondly, I am going to present some of the partial results of the above-mentioned doctoral research, namely the data concerning the captains of the 11th Hussar regiment in the period between 1815 and 1848. I chose them because the situation of the middle-ranking officers in the pre-1850s Habsburg army was intriguing and it deserves to be analyzed.

The archive sources that I used for this topic are found at the Staff Documents (*Personalunterlagen*) record group of the War Archive (*Kreigsarchiv*) department of the Austrian National Archives (*Österreichisches Staatsarchiv*).

The 11th Border Guard Hussar regiment and its captains

The 11th Border Guard Hussar regiment was established between 1762-1764 by the Grand Duchess of Transylvania, Maria Theresia as part of the Transylvanian Military Border (*Siebenbürgischer Militärgrenze*), which, initially, consisted of six units: two Székely and two Romanian infantry regiments, respectively one Székely and one Romanian¹ cavalry regiment.

Although, nominally, it was a border guard military unit of the Habsburg army, the 11th Hussars were also involved in actions against both internal uprisings (the Transylvanian peasants' revolt of 1784, clashes with unruly peasants during the first phase of the 1848 revolution) and external enemies (War of the Bavarian Succession, the last Austro-Ottoman War, the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars). During the revolution of 1848-1849, the majority of the unit fought against the Habsburg army while two squadrons led by major Paolo Suini continued to serve under the imperial-royal standard. The regiment was reorganized in 1852 as a regular unit.

The personnel of a Habsburg cavalry regiment comprised four groups: the staff officers (*Regiments Staab*, colonel, lieutenant colonel, major, respectively the military chaplain, the military judge, the regiment's doctor, surgeons and other auxiliary personnel), the main officers (*Oberoffizieren*, first and second captain, first and second lieutenant, *Fähnrich*), cadets (those aspiring to be officers) and those in the enlisted ranks (the sergeant, the corporal, the vice corporal, *Gefreiter*, the common hussar).

The cavalry captain (*Rittmeister*, literally 'master of riding') was a middle-ranking officer who was on the upper end of the main officers' corps. The captain was in command of the cavalry squadron², an important subunit of the regiment.

The army of the Austrian Empire and the living standards of its officers (1815-1848)

The Austrian Empire did not wage traditional wars in the period between 1815 and 1848, but it had an active interventionist agenda in the spirit of the Holy Alliance. This came in the form of the military

¹ The Wallachian Border Guard Dragoon regiment was dissolved in 1770-1771, after less ten years of existence. This unit went largely unnoticed by many Hungarian and some Romanian scholars, although exceptions are found in both groups. Liviu Maior, *Români în armata habsburgică. Soldați și ofițeri uitați* [Romanians in the Habsburg army. Forgotten soldiers and officers] (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2004), p. 53.; István Nagy-Luttenberger, *A császári-királyi hadsereg. 1765-1815. Szervezettörténet és létszámviszonyok* [The imperial-royal army. 1765-1815. History of the organization and strength] (Pápa: Gróf Esterházy Károly Múzeum, 2013), pp. 169.

² Nagy-Luttenberger, *A császári-királyi hadsereg*. pp. 44.

interventions of 1821, respectively of 1831 in the Apennine peninsula, respectively the military incursion in Kraków in 1846 that ended with the annexation of the town. There were also other minor military engagements. The Monarchy also experienced domestic revolts, the most significant being the cholera uprising of 1831 in Upper Hungary (modern-day Slovakia) which was crushed by the army.

Despite being the main pillar on which the power of the House of Habsburg-Lorraine rested, the imperial-royal army and its officers' corps experienced a number of shortages in this time period. This was mostly due to the Empire's post-Napoleonic financial problems. The series of wars deeply affected the economy, inflation was at a considerably high rate and the Empire had to devalue its inflated money twice in half a decade (1811 and 1816) in order to stabilize the currency.

The army officers' wages were at an all-time low. A good example is the case of the Fähnrich who, in 1748, received a monthly payment of 16 florins and seven decades later he was paid a mere 19 florins.³ Around 1815, the officers' wages (unless they served abroad) were paid in highly inflated bills. The officers didn't get their entire payment because they had to pay certain deductions like the monthly fee to support the regiments' library, the music band and, if they wanted to get married, the marriage deposit, the payment of their personal expenses (tobacco, furniture, daily meals, leisure activities) and they even had to bail out their subordinates of their debts.

Besides these, the housing conditions in the barracks were deplorable. A number of barracks specifically designed to house officers were built during the second half of the eighteenth century, but these were not welcoming, especially because the furniture was regarded as the officers' personal belongings and, as such, it was taken away by the former inhabitant of the room once he was transferred.

A third hardship came from the fact that the career advancement was visibly slowed down because of the relative peacetime. This goes double for the Székely Hussar regiment because, during the above-mentioned period, this particular military unit was not mobilized at all and it didn't take part in any of the military engagements of the Empire. The latter fact also prompted some members of the military to leave the army and to search for civil careers (*Quittirung*).

³ István Deák, 'A zsoldtalanságtól a nyomorúságos zsoldig' [From no payment to a miserable payment], in Tibor Hajdu (ed.), *A magyar katonatiszt (1848-1945)* [The Hungarian army officer] (Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézet, 1989), pp. 21-22.

The captains of the 11th Székely Border Guard Hussar regiment

Between 1815 and 1848, the number of captains that served as Székely hussars and retired/left with this rank is 86.

In terms of birthplace, 33 captains were born in the Székely seats, 10 came from the counties of the Great Principality of Transylvania, another 10 were born the Kingdom of Hungary, 5 originated from in the Czech lands, 4 were born in the Saxon lands. One person came from the Hereditary Lands (the Viennese Wächtler), Galicia (Jorkasch), Holy Roman Empire (Wolkarth), Prussia (Szydłowsky), Northern Italy (Suini). The birthplace of 18 captains is unknown and, in the case of one person (Belodvich), the place of birth is uncertain (either Nagymihály or Kraków).⁴

Regarding their marital status in this period, the vast majority of the 86 captains was unmarried (46) during the service time, twenty have an unknown marital status, nineteen captains were married and one person was a widower. Out of the married officers, a total number of fifteen had children while the rest (four) were childless.

One of the most interesting topics is the initial rank of the captains. Twenty-nine started their service with an enlisted rank: twenty-five were privates, two future captains were Fouriers (privates with administrative tasks) and other two persons started out as corporals. Twenty-nine captains entered the army with cadet ranks. According to military historian István Nagy-Luttenberger, the cadet ranks were an important officer training institution in the Habsburg army.⁵ seven persons started out as main officers (five Fähnrichs and two second lieutenants). Out of the Fähnrichs, three (Bíró, Imecs, Wächtler) graduated from the Wiener Neustadt Military Academy. The initial rank of the remaining twentyone persons is unknown.

Thirty-nine captains retired during the above-mentioned years - three of them (Czintula, Pünkösti, Tamás) had enrolled in the Honvéd army or the Hungarian National Guard and participated in the fights of the revolution of 1848-1849, one of them (András Tamás) was even executed in modern-day Someșeni/Szamosfalva (now part of Cluj-Napoca) on October 18, 1849 with László Sándor,⁶ ten participated as active military personnel in the Honvéd army of 1848-1849, fifteen

⁴ Vienna, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Personalunterlagen, Conduitenlisten, Kavallerieregimenter, no. 593.

⁵ Nagy-Luttenberger, *A császári-királyi hadsereg*. p. 44.

⁶ György Gaal, *Tört kövön és porladó kereszten. Pusztuló múlt és fájó jelen a Házsongárdi temetőben* [On broken stones and purverulent crosses. Decaying past and aching present in the Házsongárd cemetery] (Kolozsvár: Stúdium Könyvkiadó, 2010), pp. 139-140.

captains died during their service time, seven officers were transferred to other units, three captains remained in the Habsburg army during the 1848 revolution, one captain left the regiment during the 1848 revolution and returned after the revolution (Count Károly Dessewffy de Csernek et Tarkó) and another captain quit the army in 1837 (Baron Mihály Splényi de Miháld).⁷ Furthermore, in the case of nine captains, it is unknown what happened with them after their service in the Hussar regiment.

Among the eighty-six captains, there are two future generals: Baron János Jósika de Braniştea/Branyicska (1813-1885), respectively Baron Paolo Suini della Pieve d'Albigolna (1807-1873). Both of them reached the rank of major general (*Generalmajor*) and both retired as honorary field marshal lieutenants (*Feldmarshalleutnant*).⁸

It also has to be noted that, in terms of origins, the eighty-six captains are a very heterogenous category: among them, one can find a member of the princely dynasty of Lichtenstein (Friedrich), respectively of the Count Kaunitz-Rietberg (Eduard) family, of the Hungarian (Baron Splényi de Miháld) and Transylvanian (Baron Jósika de Braniştea/Branyicska) aristocracy, of the smaller Hungarian (Szveteney de Dolný Ohaj/Nagyóhaj) and Transylvanian Saxon nobility (Dillmann) and also people of a far more humble origin, like those coming from Székely border guard families and one person (Toma Tokan) from a Romanian family.

Conclusions

The research about the eighty-eight captains who were active in the 11th Székely Border Guard Hussar regiment between 1815 and 1848 has similar characteristics to the officers of other Habsburg army units: the captain's corp was a plurilingual and pluricultural community in which the majority of the *Rittmeisters* are unmarried and started out as cadets. Furthermore, the research regarding the captains shows some interesting partial results: a little more than 25% of them started their career at an enlisted rank, the vast majority of them beginning as privates.

⁷ Gustav Amon von Treuenfest, *Geschichte des k. k. 11. Huszaren-Regiments Herzog Alexander v. Württemberg. 1762 bis 1850 Székler Grenz-Huszaren* (Wien: Verlag des Regiments, 1878), pp. 324.

⁸ Antonio Schmidt-Brentano, (<http://www.historie.hranet.cz/heraldika/pdf/schmidt-brentano2007.pdf>), accessed on September 3rd, 2021.

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Vienna, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Personalunterlagen, Conduitenlisten, Kavallerieregimenter, no. 593.

Captain's name	Year of service in the 11th Hussar regiment
Bakó, Sámuel	1787-1831
Baumgartner, Joseph	1831-1848
Beldovich, Anton	1831-1838
Bellay de Felsőbella et Nyitraszeg, László	1816-1826
Betzmann, Alexander	1818-1843
Birra, Lázár	1842-1848?
Bíró József	1826-1840
Bors, Ferenc	before 1804-1830
Botár, Károly	1834-1849
Czetz, János	before 1803-1829
Czintula de Nemesmilitics, Antal	1828-1842
Császár, Sámuel	1809-1834
Cserey de Nagyajta, Lajos	1825-1844
Csulak, Dávid	1831-1849
Deák, József	1791/1792-1831
Dessewffy de Csernek et Tarkó, Károly	1836-1848, 1849-1850
Count Deym und Stritzetz, Friedrich	1829-1834
Dillmann von Dillmont, Friedrich	1821-1840
Domokos, Sándor	1826-1846
Dorschner von Dornimthal, Friedrich	1824-1842
Duhek, Ferdinand	1847
Eberle, Joachim	1799-1805, 1807-1816
Eölbey de Kiseölbö, Antal	1819-1832
Farkas, Jakab	1789-1820
Fejér, János sr.	before 1806-1833
Fejér, János jr.	1826-1849
Ferenczi, Antal	before 1814-1835
Frimont, Peter von	1826
Frenkó, András	before 1806-1834
Forró, Elek	1838-1848
Gayer von Atwasser, Maximilian	1831-1843
Imecs, Elek	1838-1841
Jekey, Ferenc	1835-1841
Jorkasch, August	1838-1839, 1841-1843
Jósika de Braniştea/Branyicska, János	1843-1848
Józsa, Efraim	before 1814-1838

Józsa, Sámuel	1831-1848
Count Kaunitz-Rietberg, Eduard	1834-1835
Konth, Joseph	1817-1833
Kovachevich, Joseph	1833-1842
Kövér, István	1811-1844
Count Kunn, Sámuel	1804-1823
Laurin, Karl	1809-1827
László de Ikafalva, György	1822-1842
Lestyán, János	1773-1775, 1778-1824
Lestyán, Dénes	1823-1840
Prince Lichtenstein, Friedrich	February-April 1831
Litsken, Lajos	1829-1848
Marcant von Blakenswert, Franz	1827-1850/1851
Maurer, László	before 1804-1818
Márk, István	1824-?
Medveczky, Árpád	1846-1848?
Mihály, János	1825-1837
Móritz de Sfântu Gheorghe/ Sepsiszentgyörgy, Dénes	1835-1844
Nagy, Elek sr.	1789/1790-1831
Nagy, Elek jr.	1814-1849
Nagy de Bátorszív, Ferenc	1831-1844
Oláh, Zsigmond	1809-1816
Papp, Mátyás	1810-1826
Popp, Caspar	1800-1812, 1813-1817
Popa, Gheorghe	1813-1843
Pütkösti, Pál	1833-1847
Raikovits, Karl	1808-1817
Rácz, Demeter	1809-1822
Rácz, Sámuel	1820-1833
Rebholtz, Johann	1820-1826
Sándor, András	1822-1837
Somogyi, János	1812-1814?
Baron Mihály Splényi de Miháld	1826-1837
Suini, Paolo	1833-1853
Baron Mihály Splényi de Miháld, Lajos	1833/1835-1840
Szabó, József	before 1810-1824
Szentkereszty, Zsigmond	1834-1848/1849

Szidlovszky, Stanisław	1830-1838
Tamás, András	1801-1839
Tokan, Toma	before 1810-1831
Udvarnoký de Kisjóka, Imre	1816-1835
Varga, Vince	1834
Vitályos, Antal	1813-1849
Voloncs, Antal	1822-1835
Wächtler, Ludwig	1827-1837
Wégh, József	1820-1847
Weér de Köröstarcsa, György	1833-1849
Wernhardt, Sigmund	1844-1854
Wolkarth, Emanuel	1818-1833
Zitta, Joseph	1808-1834

