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CENTRAL AUTHORITY AND ADMINISTRATIVE INSTITUTIONS IN MEDIEVAL TRANSYLVANIA: HISTORICAL-LEGAL AND COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract:
This study examines the organization of central authority in medieval Transylvania from an interdisciplinary perspective situated at the intersection of history, law, and public administration. It proceeds from the premise that institutions cannot be adequately understood solely through the description of their historical evolution but must be analyzed simultaneously in relation to the context of their emergence, the legal form they acquired, and the administrative function they performed within the organization of public authority. To this end, the study employs a three-dimensional analytical model applied to the principal institutions of central authority in medieval Transylvania, namely the Voivode, the Voivode's Council, the General Congregations, the Prince, the Princely Council, the Governor, the Gubernium, the Aulic Chancellery, and the Diet.
The research also includes a comparative analysis of the principal European models of central authority, not as an end in itself, but as a methodological instrument for highlighting the distinctive features of the Transylvanian institutional model. The findings demonstrate that the evolution of central administration in Transylvania reflects a continuous process of institutionalization of public authority, characterized by the adoption, adaptation, preservation, and development of administrative structures shaped both by the European politico-legal context and by the historical realities of the province.
The contribution of this study lies both in its integrated historical-legal and administrative interpretation of the institutions of central administration and in its proposal of a methodological framework applicable to the study of institutions in the history of the state and public administration.
Keywords: *institution; central public administration; Transylvania; Middle Ages; public law.*

Introduction

The study of the institutions of central authority in medieval Transylvania occupies an important place both in Romanian historiography and in scholarship devoted to the history of the state, law, and public administration. Over time, institutions such as the Voivode, the General Congregations, the Prince, and the Diet have been examined primarily from a historical perspective, with particular emphasis on their origins, evolution, and competences within the politico-administrative organization of the province. Existing

approaches, however, generally examine these institutions separately—as historical realities, legal institutions, or administrative bodies—without systematically addressing the relationship between the historical context of their emergence, the legal form they acquired, and the administrative function they performed in the organization of public authority.

The present study seeks to analyze the institutions of central authority in medieval Transylvania from an interdisciplinary perspective situated at the intersection of history, law, and public administration. The research problem does not consist in describing the evolution of each institution individually, but rather in explaining the manner in which these institutions contributed to the organization and institutionalization of public authority within a political space characterized by multiple politico-legal influences and successive constitutional transformations.

The principal objective of this study is to examine the process through which central authority was organized and institutionalized by means of the administrative institutions of medieval Transylvania, highlighting both institutional continuities and the transformations resulting from the evolving relationship between the province and the political authorities upon which it depended throughout the Middle Ages and the early modern period.

The research is based on the hypothesis that the evolution of the institutions of central administration in Transylvania cannot be explained solely by the succession of historical events or by changes in the political status of the province, but rather through an analysis of the manner in which each institution reflects the broader process of organizing and institutionalizing public authority. Accordingly, the fundamental research question comprises two interrelated components: how was public authority organized in medieval Transylvania through its central institutions, and to what extent does this process reflect both the influences of and the particularities inherent in the European model of the organization of political authority?

From a methodological perspective, the study employs a three-dimensional model for the analysis of institutions, based upon the simultaneous examination of the historical context of their emergence, the legal form they acquired, and the administrative function they performed in the organization and consolidation of public authority. Such an

approach makes it possible to integrate historical inquiry, legal analysis, and institutional-administrative interpretation within a coherent research framework. The comparative analysis of the principal European models of central authority serves as a methodological instrument designed to highlight the distinctive characteristics of the Transylvanian model, rather than constituting an independent object of investigation.

The validity of the conclusions advanced in this study rests upon three complementary criteria. First, every assertion is examined in relation to the historical sources and the historical context in which the institution under consideration emerged. Second, it is assessed in relation to the legal foundations governing its organization and operation. Third, it is evaluated according to the administrative function performed by the institution within the broader process of organizing public authority. We contend that only through the simultaneous application of these three criteria can institutions be understood as expressions of the institutionalization of authority rather than as mere historical phenomena.

Within this framework, the institution constitutes the fundamental unit of analysis. The contribution of the present study therefore lies not in cataloguing the institutions of central administration, but in explaining the manner in which they reflect the transformation of political authority into institutionalized authority. History provides the context for the emergence of institutions; law explains their legal form and legitimacy; and public administration makes it possible to understand the functions through which they organize the exercise of power. Together, these three perspectives establish a coherent analytical framework for interpreting the organization of public authority in medieval Transylvania.

1. The Concepts of “Power” and “Institution” in Medieval Europe: The Conceptual Framework of the Organization of Authority

Throughout history, the concept of *power* has been the subject of scholarly inquiry in various fields, particularly in public administration and legal studies. As has been observed, “just as social structures are fluid and hierarchy is not ossified, neither are the boundaries between different discourses on power—whether hidden or public—separated by impenetrable walls [...]” [1].

An understanding of the institutions of central authority in medieval Transylvania necessarily requires that they be examined within the broader process of the organization and institutionalization of political authority in medieval Europe. Despite the diversity of forms of government and the politico-legal traditions characteristic of individual territories, medieval European states underwent a common process of consolidating central authority, manifested through the emergence and development of institutions entrusted with ensuring the exercise, continuity, and legitimacy of political power.

The evolution of these institutions cannot be explained solely by the succession of historical events or by an examination of the legal norms that formally established their existence. Rather, it reflects a broader process of organizing public authority, whereby political power acquired stability through institutional structures capable of transcending the personal nature of rulership and ensuring the continuity of the exercise of public functions. From this perspective, institutions constitute the organized expression of authority, and their development offers one of the most meaningful perspectives for understanding the formation and consolidation of central authority in medieval society.

The analysis of these mechanisms necessarily requires a comparative approach, since the institutional forms developed across the various European political entities responded to similar needs regarding the organization of authority, even though the solutions adopted differed according to the political, legal, and social context of each state [2]. Accordingly, comparison is not intended to identify identical models of institutional organization, but rather to highlight the common functions performed by medieval institutions in the exercise and consolidation of public authority.

Furthermore, beginning in the second half of the thirteenth century [3], the social estates/social classes throughout Europe gradually organized themselves and established representative institutions within the administrative systems of medieval states. Similarly, in the Romanian lands, the estates began to assert their political role by organizing themselves and securing representation within the central administration of the state.

Before proceeding further, however, it is appropriate to provide a brief clarification of the concept of *estate*. According to the *Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language* (*Dicționarul explicativ al limbii române*), the term *stare* (estate) denotes, inter

alia, “a condition in which a person or thing exists; a manner, form, or state in which a person or thing presents itself; the fact of being in a certain position; bodily posture; physical or moral condition; material condition (prosperity); wealth; a social category, group, or stratum; rank, hierarchy, or social status” [4].

2.1. „The Institution” as an Expression of Public Authority in Medieval Europe

The institution constitutes one of the fundamental forms through which political authority acquires legal expression and administrative organization. Beyond the diversity of structures characteristic of individual medieval polities, institutions represent the mechanisms through which power is organized, legitimized, and exercised over the community. In this sense, an institution cannot be reduced to the mere existence of an office or an individual authority; rather, it embodies the stability of political organization and the continuity of the exercise of power beyond the person holding office.

This perspective makes it possible to move beyond an exclusively descriptive approach to the history of medieval institutions. Institutions are not merely administrative structures belonging to a particular historical period; they are legal forms through which political authority acquires stability, continuity, and the capacity to produce legal and administrative effects within the community [5]. From this standpoint, history explains the circumstances surrounding the emergence of an institution, law defines its legal form and legitimacy, while public administration enables an understanding of the functions through which it organizes the exercise of authority.

In the theory of the state, the existence of public authority presupposes not only the recognition of a power to command but also its institutionalization through stable mechanisms of organization and exercise. In medieval society, this process manifested itself through the gradual transformation of the sovereign's personal authority into authority exercised through permanent institutions endowed with their own competences and integrated into an evolving system of government.

Within this context, the concept of legitimacy acquires particular significance. The exercise of power depends not only upon the existence of political authority but also upon the legal and social recognition of the competences of the institutions through which such authority acts. Legitimacy gradually ceases to belong exclusively to the ruler and

becomes attached to the institutions exercising public functions on his behalf, thereby contributing to the stability and continuity of political organization.

Consequently, the process of centralization characteristic of medieval Europe should not be understood solely as the progressive concentration of power in the hands of the monarch, but also as a process of institutionalization of public authority. The historical and constitutional development of the central institutions of medieval Transylvania requires us to distinguish between the successive stages of its constitutional evolution. As Ioan Lupaș observed, these stages arise “naturally from the very characteristic features of this country's past, and therefore from the specific character of Transylvania” [6]. The development of royal councils, chanceries, advisory bodies, and other permanent institutions reflects the transformation of the personal exercise of power into an institutional system capable of ensuring the continuity of government and administration.

2.2. The Process of Centralization in Medieval Europe

The consolidation of central authority constitutes one of the defining transformations of medieval Europe. Although the evolution of the various European kingdoms and principalities followed distinct trajectories and assumed different institutional forms, the scholarly literature identifies a common tendency towards transcending the exclusively personal character of authority and developing permanent institutional structures capable of ensuring the continuity of governance.

In Western historiography, the process of consolidating central authority and the development of medieval institutions have been examined from complementary perspectives. Marc Bloch emphasized the distinctive characteristics of feudal society and the authority relationships that underpinned its political organization [6]. Other scholars have interpreted the development of medieval institutions as one of the essential preconditions for the emergence of the European state. At the same time, considerable attention has been devoted to the relationship between administrative organization and the evolution of state structures.

Beyond the particularities of each political entity, the process of centralization cannot be reduced to the mere concentration of power in the hands of the monarch. It equally

represents a progressive process of institutionalization of authority, through which the exercise of power was gradually transferred to stable institutions endowed with their own competences and integrated into an administrative system characterized by increasing specialization. From this perspective, centralization and institutionalization should not be regarded as distinct phenomena but rather as two complementary dimensions of the same process of organizing public authority.

2.3. European Models of the Organization of Central Authority

Although medieval European states developed institutional arrangements adapted to their own political and legal realities [7], a comparative analysis reveals the existence of common administrative functions that were indispensable to the organization and exercise of central authority. Across the major political entities of medieval Europe, one encounters institutions responsible for exercising sovereign authority, advising the ruler, representing the privileged estates, and organizing the activities of the chancellery, even though their designation, structure, and competences varied from one polity to another.

In France, the consolidation of royal authority was reflected in the development of *the Royal Council* and the *Royal Chancellery*, institutions that contributed significantly to the professionalization of government and the strengthening of monarchical administration. In England, the *Curia Regis* constituted the institutional nucleus from which the kingdom's principal administrative, judicial, and advisory bodies gradually emerged, while *Parliament* acquired an increasingly important role in representing the political interests of the estates.

Within the *Kingdom of Hungary*, royal authority was exercised in close cooperation with *the Palatine* and the central institutions of the realm, while *the Diet* evolved into the representative assembly of the nobility and the other privileged estates.

In Poland, the organization of *the voivodeships* and the operation of the central institutions reflected the adaptation of royal authority to the territorial structure of the kingdom. Similarly, *the Holy Roman Empire* developed a complex institutional system in which *the Imperial Chancellery*, *the Imperial Council*, and *the Imperial Diet* embodied the distinctive constitutional character of imperial political organization.

Considered comparatively, these institutional models reveal the existence of common functions of central authority irrespective of the particularities of individual states: the exercise of political authority, the provision of counsel to the ruler, the representation of the political interests of the privileged community, and the organization of the administrative apparatus through the chancellery. The diversity of institutional forms, therefore, does not preclude the existence of a common logic underlying the organization of authority throughout medieval Europe.

Against this background, the question naturally arises that guides the next part of our study: *where does Transylvania stand in relation to these European models of the organization of central authority?* The answer cannot be obtained merely by identifying institutional similarities. Rather, it requires an examination of the manner in which the Transylvanian political space adopted, adapted, and developed its own institutional structures for the exercise of authority within the broader context of its historical evolution and its integration into the Kingdom of Hungary.

3. The Particularities of the Organization of Central Authority in Medieval Transylvania in the Context of European Models

The analysis of the organization of central authority in medieval Transylvania requires that it be examined both within the general framework of European institutional development and in light of the specific politico-legal characteristics of the Transylvanian polity. While the European models reveal the existence of common institutional functions in the organization of public authority, the case of Transylvania illustrates the manner in which these functions were adapted to a distinctive historical and constitutional context shaped by its incorporation into the Kingdom of Hungary and by subsequent political developments.

From a historical perspective, Transylvania did not experience an isolated institutional development. Rather, it became integrated into the politico-administrative system of the Kingdom of Hungary, within which the central institutions were organized in accordance with the interests of the Crown and the administrative requirements of a frontier territory situated on the eastern border of the kingdom. At the same time, the

ethnic, social, and confessional particularities of Transylvania gave rise to institutional arrangements that cannot be explained solely by reference to the Hungarian model.

Accordingly, the evolution of central authority in Transylvania may be understood as the result of the interaction between the politico-legal framework of the Kingdom of Hungary and the adaptations required by local realities. The Transylvanian institutions were neither simple reproductions of external models nor entirely autonomous creations; rather, they constituted the outcome of a continuous process of institutional borrowing, adaptation, preservation, and development. In this respect, it may be observed that the process of political differentiation was also made possible by the emergence of a hierarchical structure incorporating newly established institutions as well as institutions that had evolved from earlier, unspecialized forms, such as *corporate bodies*, *orders* or *estates*, *representative assemblies*, and *lands*, all of which will be examined in the following sections [8].

The adoption of European institutional models (particularly those of the Kingdom of Hungary) provided the general framework for the organization of authority. Their adaptation to the specific conditions of Transylvania resulted in the development of distinctive institutional competences and relationships. At the same time, certain administrative structures and practices were preserved over several centuries, thereby ensuring the stability of political organization, while the transformations associated first with *the Voivodeship* and later with the establishment of *the Principality of Transylvania* encouraged the emergence of new institutions corresponding to the changing nature of political authority.

Consequently, the distinctive character of the organization of central authority in medieval Transylvania does not derive from the existence of institutions fundamentally different from those found elsewhere in medieval Europe, but rather from the specific manner in which they were incorporated into a unique politico-legal system. It is precisely this combination of external influences and internal institutional evolution that confers individuality upon the Transylvanian institutional model and justifies the analysis of each institution with reference to the historical context of its emergence, the legal form it acquired, and the administrative function it performed within the organization of public authority.

In the following part of this study, this analytical framework will be applied to the principal institutions of central authority in medieval Transylvania in order to highlight the role each played in the process of organizing and institutionalizing public authority.

4. The Institutions of Central Authority from the Perspective of the Three-Dimensional Analytical Model

The analysis of the institutions of central authority in medieval Transylvania marks the stage at which the methodological framework outlined above is put into practice. From this perspective, each institution has been examined according to a predetermined analytical model. Consequently, an exclusively chronological approach, as well as a mere inventory of the powers and competences attributed to each institution, has deliberately been avoided.

The consistent application of this methodological framework has made it possible to move beyond a purely descriptive account and to demonstrate the manner in which each institution contributed to the organization, consolidation, and institutionalization of central authority. Accordingly, the analysis of every institution concludes by assessing its contribution to the broader process of the centralization of public authority. This approach enables individual observations to be integrated into a coherent explanation of the evolution of political organization in medieval Transylvania.

4.1. The Institution of the Voivode

The institution of the Voivode constituted one of the oldest and most significant forms of public authority in medieval Transylvania, embodying both the continuity of indigenous politico-administrative structures and their adaptation to the new constitutional framework established through the incorporation of Transylvania into the Kingdom of Hungary [9]. The emergence and development of the Voivodeship must be understood within the broader context of the evolution of pre-state political formations, namely the Romanian knezates and voivodeships, which preceded the feudal organization of the province and provided the foundations of its administrative system. The gradual conquest of Transylvania by the Hungarian Crown did not lead to the abolition of these structures; rather, they were incorporated into a new politico-legal order in which the institution of the

Voivode retained its name, its essential character, and a substantial part of its traditional competences.

From a legal perspective, the Voivode occupied the highest office within the central administration of Transylvania, exercising authority in the name of the King of Hungary, who possessed the power to appoint and dismiss him. His legal status reflected the distinctive relationship between the institutional autonomy of Transylvania and the suzerainty of the Hungarian Crown. Although he served as the king's representative within the province, the Voivode cannot be regarded merely as a royal official, since the institution itself predated the Hungarian conquest and possessed an established legitimacy within the political organization of Transylvania. The preservation of the Voivodeship, despite repeated attempts during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to replace it with the institution of the Prince, demonstrates both the resilience of local politico-legal traditions and the compromise that characterized the constitutional organization of the province. In this respect, the continued existence of the institution of the Voivode may be interpreted as an expression of the continuity of indigenous administrative structures, adapted to the requirements of a new framework for the exercise of political authority.

From an administrative perspective, the functions of the Voivode extended far beyond the strictly military responsibilities suggested by the etymology of the title. As head of the province, he exercised administrative, judicial, fiscal, and military powers; coordinated the activities of local officials; convened and presided over assemblies of the nobility; and represented central authority in the relationship between Transylvania and the royal government. At the same time, he was responsible for the defence of the province, supervised the collection of revenues owed to the Crown, and participated in the administration of justice, thereby contributing to the maintenance of public order and the enforcement of the law. The breadth of these competences demonstrates that the institution of the Voivode concentrated within itself the principal functions of medieval central administration, serving as the essential link between monarchical authority and the administrative organization of the province.

Examined through the three-dimensional analytical model proposed in this study, the institution of the Voivode illustrates the manner in which public authority was

organized through the combination of indigenous politico-legal traditions and the structures of power characteristic of the Kingdom of Hungary. The Voivode thus represents not merely the highest administrative office of medieval Transylvania, but also the institutional expression of a broader process of adaptation and consolidation of public authority. Through this institution, central authority acquired a stable legal form and an administrative mechanism capable of ensuring the effective exercise of public competences throughout the province. Consequently, the institution of the Voivode demonstrates that the process of centralization in medieval Transylvania was achieved not through the replacement of traditional structures, but through their integration and transformation into an institutional system compatible with the politico-legal organization of the kingdom, while preserving the distinctive administrative identity of Transylvania.

4.2. The Voivode's Council

Within the central administration of the Voivodeship of Transylvania, the Voivode's Council performed an advisory function, assisting the Voivode in the exercise of his authority and contributing to the consolidation of the provincial administrative apparatus [10]. Although the surviving historical sources provide less extensive information than in the case of comparable institutions in the other medieval Romanian principalities, the existence of an advisory body surrounding the Voivode reflects the broader tendency towards the institutionalization of political authority and the gradual specialization of administrative activity.

From a legal perspective, the Voivode's Council did not constitute an authority distinct from the Voivode, but rather an institution designed to assist him in the performance of his official duties [11]. The development of the Council was closely linked to the evolution of the Voivodal Chancellery and to the progressive professionalization of the administrative apparatus. During the early stages of the Voivodeship, responsibility for drafting and preserving the records of the General Congregations rested primarily with ecclesiastical authorities. Subsequently, these responsibilities were assumed by the Voivodal Chancellery, marking a significant step in the consolidation of secular administration.

Within the Chancellery served the Prothonotary of Transylvania, an official responsible for drafting official documents and dealing with a variety of legal matters. Over time, his role evolved from that of head of the Chancellery to the exercise of increasingly important judicial responsibilities. The development of the Chancellery, the creation of the office of the Secretary to the Voivode, and the gradual separation of administrative from judicial functions during the sixteenth century illustrate the differentiation and specialization of the provincial administrative apparatus.

From an administrative perspective, the Voivode's Council provided the technical and legal support necessary for the effective exercise of voivodal authority. The activities of the Chancellery, the drafting of official documents, the preservation of administrative records, and the management of legal instruments constituted indispensable elements of the functioning of central administration. At the same time, the presence of specialized officials (such as the Prothonotary, the Secretary, and the Judge of the Voivode's Court) demonstrates that the exercise of authority was no longer dependent solely upon the personal authority of the Voivode, but increasingly relied upon an administrative apparatus undergoing continuous organization and professionalization.

Examined through the three-dimensional analytical model employed in this study, the Voivode's Council illustrates the transition from the personal exercise of authority [12] to its exercise through specialized administrative structures. The institution demonstrates that the centralization of authority was achieved not only through the strengthening of the position of the Voivode, but also through the development of an administrative apparatus capable of ensuring the continuity of government, the preparation of official acts, and the performance of legal and administrative functions. From this perspective, the Voivode's Council represents one of the earliest manifestations of the institutionalization of the administrative function within the central authority of medieval Transylvania.

4.3. The General Congregations

The General Congregations constituted one of the most significant institutional manifestations of public authority in Voivodal Transylvania, reflecting the participation of the privileged estates in the exercise of political power and in the administration of provincial affairs. Their emergence and development must be understood within the

broader context of the consolidation of the county (*comitatus*) system and the need to assemble representatives of the nobility, the Saxons, and the Székelys in order to address matters of common concern. Convened, as a rule, by the Voivode, the General Congregations gradually evolved into the institutional forum in which the principal administrative, judicial, and political issues affecting Transylvania were debated and resolved.

From a legal perspective, the General Congregations were not merely occasional assemblies but institutions endowed with clearly defined functions within the organization of provincial authority. The congregations of the nobility, usually held at Turda (Torda), brought together the lawful representatives of the counties and adopted decisions concerning territorial administration and the settlement of legal disputes. Contemporary documentary evidence further demonstrates that no strict separation existed between the powers of the feudal state. Consequently, feudal lords and high-ranking officials exercised both administrative and judicial authority, combining the functions of governance and adjudication within the same institutional framework [13].

Alongside these noble congregations, the Saxon and Székely communities possessed their own representative institutions, embodied in the district congregations (*scăunale*) and in the general assemblies of the Universitas Saxonum and the Universitas Siculorum, respectively. These bodies exercised administrative, judicial, and political competences within the framework of their traditional autonomies, thereby contributing to the institutional diversity that characterized medieval Transylvania.

From an administrative perspective, the General Congregations constituted the principal forum for cooperation between the voivodal authority and the privileged estates of the province. Through these assemblies, measures were adopted concerning the administration of the counties, the organization of justice, the defence of the territory, and the regulation of relations among the various privileged communities. The existence of separate assemblies for the nobility, the Saxons, and the Székelys illustrates the distinctive politico-legal structure of Transylvania, characterized by the coexistence of central authority with well-established forms of local autonomy.

Viewed through the lens of the three-dimensional analytical model employed in this study, the General Congregations demonstrate that the institutionalization of authority in

medieval Transylvania was achieved not solely through the consolidation of the central administrative apparatus but also through the incorporation of the representative structures of the privileged estates into the mechanisms of governance. These institutions exemplify the distinctive nature of the Transylvanian model, in which the centralization of authority coexisted with the preservation of traditional forms of representation and autonomy, thereby conferring upon the province's politico-administrative organization a character that distinguished it from other European models.

4.4. The Institution of the Prince

The institution of the Prince marks a fundamental transformation in the organization of central authority in Transylvania, following the collapse of the direct authority of the Hungarian Crown after the Battle of Mohács (1526) and the establishment of the Principality of Transylvania as a distinct political entity [14]. This new constitutional arrangement did not constitute a radical break with the voivodal period; rather, it represented the adaptation of existing institutions to a new politico-legal framework shaped by the relationship between the Principality, the Ottoman Empire, and, subsequently, the Habsburg Monarchy.

From a legal perspective, the Prince became the holder of supreme authority within the state, exercising political, military, administrative, and judicial powers. Although elected by the Diet, the effective exercise of princely authority was, during different periods, contingent upon confirmation by the Ottoman Porte and, later, upon recognition by the Habsburg sovereign. This constitutional feature distinguishes the institution of the Prince both from that of the Voivode, who acted as the representative of the King of Hungary, and from the rulers of the Western European monarchies, whose sovereignty generally enjoyed a greater degree of constitutional independence.

From an administrative standpoint, the Prince directed the entire system of central administration, conducted foreign policy, exercised supreme military command, appointed the principal dignitaries of the state, and supervised the activities of the central institutions. Around the Prince developed an administrative apparatus considerably more sophisticated than that of the voivodal period, reflecting the increasing institutional specialization characteristic of the early modern era.

Examined through the three-dimensional analytical framework adopted in this study, the institution of the Prince demonstrates that the institutionalization of public authority in Transylvania entered a more advanced stage of development, characterized by the consolidation of political autonomy and the expansion of the competences of central administration. The transformation of the Voivodeship into the Principality therefore represents not merely a change in political title but the emergence of a new model of government adapted to the European political realities of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

4.5. The Princely Council

The exercise of princely authority was supported by the Princely Council, an institution that ensured both the collegial character of political decision-making and the continuity of central administration. The emergence and development of this body reflect the progressive professionalization of government and the gradual differentiation of administrative functions from the personal authority of the ruler.

From a legal perspective, the Princely Council functioned as an advisory institution without diminishing the authority of the Prince. Nevertheless, it participated consistently in the formulation of decisions concerning provincial administration, foreign relations, fiscal policy, and military affairs. Its membership comprised the principal dignitaries of the Principality together with representatives of the nobility, thereby endowing the institution with both political legitimacy and an important role in maintaining the balance between central authority and the provincial elites.

From an administrative perspective, the Princely Council coordinated the activities of the principal central institutions and ensured the continuity of government by contributing to the preparation of the Prince's administrative and legal decisions. Its existence reflects the transition from an individual mode of governance to an institutional model in which political decision-making increasingly depended upon permanent administrative structures.

From the perspective adopted in this study, the Princely Council demonstrates that the evolution of central administration was achieved not solely through the strengthening

of the ruler's authority but also through the development of consultative institutions capable of ensuring the stability and continuity of government.

4.6. The Governor

The institution of the Governor emerged within a new constitutional framework shaped by the incorporation of Transylvania into the Habsburg Monarchy and the subsequent reorganization of the province's administration in accordance with the interests of the Imperial Court in Vienna. The office of the Governor embodied the continuity of central authority within a political system in which the Prince no longer represented the supreme authority of the state.

From a legal perspective, the Governor acted as the representative of the Habsburg sovereign in Transylvania, exercising his functions in accordance with the directives issued by the Imperial Court. He did not possess sovereign authority in his own right; rather, he governed the province on behalf of the Emperor, in close cooperation with the other central institutions of the Habsburg administration.

From an administrative standpoint, the Governor coordinated the activities of the provincial administration, supervised the implementation of imperial policies, and maintained continuous cooperation with the Gubernium and the Aulic Chancellery. These institutional relationships illustrate the integration of Transylvania into a centralized administrative system characteristic of the Habsburg Monarchy.

Viewed through the three-dimensional analytical framework employed in this study, the institution of the Governor demonstrates that the institutionalization of public authority continued even after the end of the autonomous Principality, albeit within a different legal and constitutional framework. The exercise of authority was now incorporated into an imperial administrative system distinguished by a considerably higher degree of centralization and bureaucratic organization than that which had characterized the preceding constitutional order.

4.7. The Gubernium, the Aulic Chancellery, and the Diet

The consolidation of Habsburg rule in Transylvania led to the development of specialized central institutions designed to ensure the effective exercise of imperial

authority throughout the province. Among these, the Gubernium, the Aulic Chancellery, and the Diet occupied a central place in the organization of provincial administration and in the institutional evolution of Transylvania.

Established by the Imperial Diploma of 16 October 1690, the Gubernium became the principal collegiate administrative body of the province. Composed of twelve councillors and presided over by the Governor, it exercised extensive responsibilities relating to the administration of justice, the collection of public revenues, the maintenance of public order, and the implementation of directives issued by the imperial authorities. At the same time, the Gubernium represented an institutional continuation of the Princely Council, adapted to the new politico-legal realities imposed by Habsburg rule.

Parallel to the activities of the Gubernium, the Aulic Chancellery of Transylvania served as the permanent institutional link between the provincial administration and the Imperial Court in Vienna. It was responsible for drafting official acts, communicating imperial decisions, and coordinating administrative relations between the central imperial authorities and the provincial administration. Through these functions, the Chancellery contributed significantly to the standardization of administrative practice and to the integration of Transylvania into the bureaucratic system of the Habsburg Monarchy.

The Diet retained its role as the representative institution of the privileged estates, participating in the adoption of the principal decisions concerning the organization of the province and cooperating with the imperial authorities in the exercise of government. Although its competences were progressively restricted, the Diet remained one of the essential components of the Transylvanian institutional system, reflecting the continuity of representative traditions within a fundamentally altered constitutional framework.

Considered together, the Gubernium, the Aulic Chancellery, and the Diet illustrate the final stage of the process of institutionalization of public authority examined in the present study. Whereas the institutions of the Voivode and the Prince embodied authority concentrated in the person of the political ruler, the institutions established during the Habsburg period reveal the emergence of a specialized administrative system characterized by the distribution of competences among distinct public authorities and by the increasingly bureaucratic nature of governance. From this perspective, the evolution of the central institutions of medieval and early modern Transylvania confirms the central

hypothesis of this research, namely that the organization of public authority developed through a continuous process of institutionalization, shaped by historical transformations and by the influence of European politico-legal models.

Conclusions

The analysis of the institutions of central authority in medieval Transylvania confirms that the organization of public authority cannot be adequately understood solely through the chronological succession of institutions or by describing their respective competences. Beyond the political and constitutional transformations that occurred throughout the period under consideration, the evolution of central administration reflects a continuous process of institutionalization of authority, within which administrative structures were constantly adapted to historical developments and to the influence of European politico-legal models.

The present research demonstrates that the distinctive character of the Transylvanian institutional model does not derive from the existence of institutions fundamentally different from those found elsewhere in medieval Europe. Rather, it lies in the manner in which these institutions adopted, adapted, preserved, and further developed mechanisms for organizing authority that were compatible both with indigenous politico-legal traditions and with the evolving constitutional relationships between Transylvania, the **Kingdom of Hungary**, the **Ottoman Empire**, and the **Habsburg Monarchy**. Accordingly, the institutions examined in this study reflect both the continuity of established administrative structures and their capacity to respond to successive political contexts without interrupting the broader process of organizing public authority.

The application of the three-dimensional analytical model has made it possible to examine each institution in relation to the historical context of its emergence, the legal form it acquired, and the administrative function it performed within the framework of central administration. This methodological approach has demonstrated that institutions should not be regarded merely as historical phenomena or autonomous legal constructions, but rather as successive expressions of the same process of institutionalizing public authority. From this perspective, the research hypothesis is

confirmed: the organization of central authority in medieval Transylvania can be properly understood only through an integrated analysis of the historical, legal, and administrative-institutional dimensions of each institution.

Furthermore, the comparative examination of the principal European models of central authority has demonstrated the value of comparative analysis as a methodological instrument of interpretation rather than as an autonomous object of research. Continuous reference to institutional developments across medieval Europe has made it possible to determine the place occupied by Transylvania within this broader context, while also demonstrating that the evolution of Transylvania's central administration formed part of a wider European process of consolidating and specializing public authority, albeit while preserving its own distinctive institutional identity.

The principal contribution of the present study lies both in its reinterpretation of the institutions of central administration in medieval Transylvania through an interdisciplinary approach and in its proposal of a methodological framework that may also be applied to the study of other institutions in the history of the state, law, and public administration. From this perspective, institutions are understood not merely as components of a historical administrative organization [16], but as the legal forms through which political authority acquires juridical expression and administrative effectiveness within the community. It is precisely this integrative perspective that offers a more comprehensive understanding of the process through which public authority was organized and consolidated in both the Romanian and the broader European medieval context.

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