

I.

CHOICE OF SUBJECT AND OBJECTIVES

The dissertation aims at systematising the badges of the Royal Hungarian Army (and the Royal Hungarian Air Force), as well as the *Levente* Youth Organisation between 1938 and 1945; summarising the available knowledge; and publishing the latest research results.

According to the dictionary, a *badge* is a special piece of metal, cloth, or plastic, often with words or symbols on it, that you wear or carry with you to show your rank, official position or achievements. In a military aspect, a badge is an ornament (a part or an accessory) of the uniform, a flag or the equipment, which serves to distinguish between opposing sides or certain groups (military units) from one another.

Badges fastened on clothes have always played an important role throughout human history. The function of distinguishing and identifying badges had become especially significant for military organisations, which worked according to strict rules, as they expressed subordination and represented positions. During the interwar period, Hungarian badges did not only serve as functional items, but as means of expressing the independence of the re-established Hungarian defence forces after the First World War, too. Military badges are closely related to the organisation of the army, and thus, any changes to the structure of the armed forces are reflected by the system of military insignia. Therefore, badges are significant items from the point of view of both sociology and military history.

One should also consider that the Second World War saw the clash between the ideologies represented by the swastika and the red star, two of the most characteristic symbols of power in the 20th century. That aspect lays emphasis on the study of visual communication, means of which were the Hungarian military badges of the period of the Second World War, too. The complexity of the issue of badges is also manifested by the fact that Hungarian military badges of the period even reflected certain political changes, so their study makes it possible to demonstrate, for instance, the coup of the extreme right-wing Arrow Cross Party in October 1944, or the re-valuation of the symbols of the Kingdom of Hungary after 1945.

It is important to emphasise that such a scientific work has not been published in Hungary before, neither in relation to the era, nor concerning other periods of Hungarian military history. While several foreign (American, Austrian, British, French, German, Italian, Russian, etc.) works treat the history, symbolism and cataloguing of military badges, the special Hungarian literature on military history has hardly dealt with Hungarian military badges, and even if some works did, those treated the insignia as parts of the military uniform, instead of examining them separately. Although there have been some popular articles published on the issue, as well as catalogues compiled and privately issued by collectors, those are not scientifically satisfactory and often include several mistakes. To sum it up, no monograph has been published in this field of research so far, and thus, the dissertation fills in a gap.

The work is also necessitated by the fact that both museum curators and collectors require scientific literature on badges, this very special group of items. On the other hand, military historians too may find the research results of the dissertation useful in the course of their activity. The examination of the military symbols of the present-day Hungarian defence forces also requires some knowledge of the Hungarian military badges of the 1930s and 1940s.

II.

SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

As a specialty of the topic, the dissertation covers two otherwise separate historical periods: the late period of the regency of Admiral Miklós Horthy and the extreme right-wing Ferenc Szálasi's time in power. That can be explained by the fact that neither the Royal Hungarian Defence Forces', nor the *Levente* Youth Organisation's legal continuity was influenced by the political events of October 1944. Nevertheless, the influence of the aforementioned political changes on the system of Hungarian military badges is dealt with in detail in the dissertation. (The work treats both the military badges *instituted* between 1938 and 1945, and those that were instituted earlier but were *still in use* during the period. Thus, several other military badges, which were introduced earlier in the interwar period, are being dealt with.) The dissertation can be divided into two

main units: a *study* that discusses all aspects of the topic, and a *catalogue* that offers a system of the period's badges, including items that can be found in Hungarian public and private collections, primarily in the MoD Military History Institute and Museum. The dissertation is made complete by a *picture supplement*, which has been compiled with the aim of completeness, as well as two text supplements.

The *study* is primarily based on the research of archival and printed sources, as well as museum items (badges, period photos and documents), but references are also made to personal memories (*oral history*), when the lack of written sources make it necessary. The structure of the study is the following: after a general introduction to the history of badges, and to the military historical background of the period, the Royal Hungarian Ministry of Defence's attempts to regularise the system of insignia are being dealt with, as well as their result, i.e. the structure of troop badges, service badges, qualification badges and other badges of distinction that were in existence in the early 1940s. In a separate chapter, a hardly researched and published issue, the influence of the coup of the Arrow Cross Party on the system of Hungarian military badges is being treated. Further separate chapters cover the following topics: foreign (allied) states' military badges worn by the members of the Royal Hungarian Defence Forces; and Hungarian military badges worn by foreign soldiers. The Hungarian unit badges of the Second World War are also being discussed in detail, with special regard to the Hungarian supreme military command's opinion on the wearing of such badges. In a separate chapter, the insignia of the *Levente* Youth Organisation are being introduced, to which the required historical and organisational background is provided. The study also deals with the design and the production of the badges, and the related printed documents.

In the *catalogue*, the various groups of badges are being discussed in detail, and proper descriptions of the available objects are also included. The descriptions of the items have been made in compliance with the criteria of exhibition catalogues. The images of the described items can be found in the separate *picture supplement*. The same supplement also includes images of written and graphic documents (award certificates, cards, designs) related to the numismatic material, as well as period photos presenting the wearing of the items. In the catalogue, the various groups of badges are being introduced

in detail through summaries, which are more thorough than the related parts in the *study*, and also include references to primary sources and are provided with footnotes.

At the end of the dissertation, a list of the consulted sources and a bibliography of works published in the field of research can be found.

The dissertation is supposed to analyse the topic in a new aspect and in its entirety: including printed and photographic sources to show that badges are more than just parts of the uniform, even if functionally they accomplish their mission (which is to distinguish and to identify) on the uniform. Badges, however, are not only functional items. They also serve as symbols. Several military troops and units made use of their insignia for representational purposes. Badges often embodied the troops. To prove that, commemorative items, prints and press cuttings are presented.

Archival sources used for the dissertation mostly came from the Military History Archives of the MoD Military History Institute and Museum and the Central Archives of the MoD Military History Institute and Museum. In the Military History Archives, the material of various departments of the Royal Hungarian Ministry of Defence; the Chief of Staff of the Royal Hungarian Defence Forces; the Royal Hungarian 10th Infantry Division; the Royal Hungarian 1st Hussar Division and the Royal Hungarian 101st Fighter Wing Command were researched, and some memoirs also consulted. In the Central Archives, the personal files of officers and other ranks were examined.

From the printed material, to which reference is being made, the Defence Gazette should be mentioned as the primary source of the topic. In the MoD Military History Institute and Museum, research was done in the Numismatic Department, the Commemorative Items Department and the Photo Archives, while in the Hungarian National Museum, the material of the Medal Cabinet and the Historical Photo Department was involved in the research activity. The catalogue also contains some items from the András Jósa Museum in Nyíregyháza. A significant achievement of the catalogue is that it includes badges, printed and photographic documents that had been gathered together (even if only virtually) for the first time ever from public and private collections in various parts of the country (and the world), and taken into an inventory according to a uniform system of criteria.

It is worth mentioning that the outward appearances of badges vary. On flags, drums, saddlecloths, holsters and sabretaches, national and unit insignia usually were embroidered artistically, whereas military headgears and tunics usually bore metal versions of the badges. The dissertation aims at introducing the *metal* badges of the Royal Hungarian Defence Forces and the *Levente* Youth Organisation, used between 1938 and 1945. Although embroidered insignia also appeared on the Hungarian military and *Levente* uniform of the period, those are only being treated in the dissertation when *both* embroidered *and* metal versions of the same badge existed, which is primarily due to practical reasons. The reasons are the following. Firstly, in museums, metal badges belong to numismatic collections, while embroidered insignia usually are considered to be accessories of the uniform. Secondly, after having been sewn on the uniform, an embroidered badge becomes an organic part of the clothes and can only be removed with the help of a tool, whereas a metal badge is usually fastened on the uniform by a pin (or some other fastener) that is part of the badge itself. Therefore, metal badges can easily and “naturally” be removed from the clothes. Thirdly, metal badges are different from embroidered ones regarding their raw materials and production techniques, too. To sum it up, metal badges can be considered as “individual” items, while embroidered insignia find their final place on uniforms.

III.

THE SCIENTIFIC RESULTS OF THE DISSERTATION

Distinguishing signs and marks have been used throughout history to enable friend to be recognised from foe. In a military aspect, distinguishing/identifying insignia became more and more important. In times of war, when distinguishing enemy from ally, commander from subordinate, or an experienced soldier from a recruit could be a question of life or death, their significance multiplied. Thus, in the course of history, military insignia (badges, rank insignia and other ornaments on the uniform) have developed.

Concerning Austria-Hungary, the glorious days of military badges came at the turn of the 19th-20th centuries, and especially during the First World War. That was the

time when qualification badges to reward and to motivate the achievements of the rank and file were introduced in the armed forces of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Although those insignia were called *decorations*, regarding their outward appearance, they should rather be considered as *badges*. During the long years of frontline service in the First World War, such a strong sense of solidarity developed among the troops that they had non-official but most popular unit badges made at their own initiatives and costs, and wore them enthusiastically. Subsequent to the Great War, military insignia first lost their significance during the era of the pacifist Count Mihály Károlyi's government, and then, during the months of the Hungarian "Soviet Republic", new symbols, completely alien from national traditions, appeared on both civilian and military clothes, namely the five-pointed red star, the scythe and the hammer, which were borrowed from Soviet imagery.

After the chaotic historical period between 1918 and 1920, Admiral Miklós Horthy was elected as regent, whose rise to power also marked the beginning of a new era in the field of symbols. Traditional national symbols, such as the Hungarian Holy Crown, the double cross, or the mythical bird named "*Turul*" appeared in the imagery of the new regime both to counteract the previously applied Soviet symbols, and to express the ideological background of the new administration. Certainly, the re-established Hungarian defence forces, called the National Army, and then, from 1922, the Royal Hungarian Defence Forces, applied the same traditional symbols on the military uniform, to represent social cohesion and a historical continuity. The new national army inherited some of its insignia from the former Royal Hungarian Defence Forces, which used to be part of the Austro-Hungarian armed forces. The qualification badges of the rank and file provide an example for that. On the other hand, the Company Officer's Badge, which was newly designed and introduced in 1920, emphasised the independence of the newborn army through its elements of strong national character. Therefore, the Hungarian military badges of the interwar period reflected both the legal continuity between the pre-1918 and the post-1920 Royal Hungarian Defence Forces and were symbols of the independence of the new national armed forces. The latter role had grown stronger and stronger by the end of the era.

On 5 March 1938, in the town of Győr, Prime Minister Kálmán Darányi announced the launching of a large-scale armament programme, which marked the beginning of an era of rapid and open rearmament, with disregard to the limitations of the Trianon Peace Treaty (1920), which had already been violated in a covert way and on a small scale previously. By an agreement signed in Bled in August 1938, even the Little Entente recognised the equal military status of Hungary. As the legal restrictions of the Trianon Peace Treaty on the development of the Hungarian armed forces were lifted in 1938, several new (or previously hidden) branches of the Royal Hungarian Armed Forces were officially established. The structural changes necessitated the supervision and reorganisation of the system of Hungarian military insignia, too. An official position was taken that the various branches of the services had to be distinguished by the use of badges, which was also meant to strengthen the *esprit de corps*.

After 1938, the system of Hungarian military insignia had to be organised on a new basis. Thus, the rearmament procedure opened a new chapter in the story of the national military symbols, too. Although there were cases when the imagery of the Austro-Hungarian armed forces were taken as a model for the creation of new badges (for instance the troop badges of the border rifles and the mountain troops, or the badges of the field and troop gendarmerie), but on the whole, new symbols were applied on the various Hungarian military badges instituted until the end of the Second World War.

The insignia instituted for the members of the Royal Hungarian Defence Forces between 1938 and 1945 may be grouped as follows: *troop badges*, *qualification badges*, *service badges*, *sports badges*, various *distinguishing badges* and non-official *unit badges*.

Special insignia were introduced for those troops that “saw especially hard service in peace and in wartime.” *Troop badges* were worn by paratroopers, mountain troops, border guards, the motorized troops (tank units, armoured car units, motorised infantry, etc), and the assault artillery. Some of those were officially instituted in the pages of the *Defence Gazette*, while others had not been officially established, but several soldiers did wear them during the war.

Qualification badges were to reward the training achievements of the rank and file. Inherited from the armed forces of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the

qualification badges were used throughout the interwar period, and by the end of the 1930s, their scheme had been modified several times and their number had increased significantly. By order of the Minister of Defence, the number of the badges had to be decreased. The elaboration of the new structure of qualification badges had been completed by 1944 only. In 1944, another group of qualification badges were also introduced to reward battlefield accomplishments that could be expressed by numbers, for instance on the basis of the number of tanks destroyed, aircraft shot down, mines cleared, etc.

Service badges included the border guard post commander's badge, as well as the badges for the field gendarmerie and the troop gendarmerie, which had to be displayed by military policemen when on patrol.

A separate group of military badges comprised the *sports badges*, which reflected the achievements of their owners in the field of sports. The Royal Hungarian Defence Forces' *distinguishing badges* among others included the war correspondent's badge, and the insignia instituted in the summer of 1944 for soldiers without a military uniform and forced labourers. Pilots and aircraft crew members of the Royal Hungarian Air Force wore the pilot's badge and the observer's badge.

The non-official *unit badges* of the period were only authorised to be worn in plain clothes by soldiers, but they often fastened them on the military uniform, too.

Apart from the models set by the Austro-Hungarian past, other factors too influenced the system of Hungarian military insignia of the interwar period. From the late 1930s and the early 1940s, and especially as a result of the Royal Hungarian Armed Forces' deployment in the Second World War, a strong German influence was exercised on the scheme. This primarily meant that the pattern of qualification badges awarded by the German ally to reward and to motivate its soldiers' battlefield activity was intended to be adapted to Hungarian conditions. The German influence was being referred to by several contemporary sources, with reference to sports badges and to qualification badges that were instituted after the coup of the Arrow Cross Party.

Beside the insignia of the Royal Hungarian Defence Forces, the badges of the *Levente* Youth Organisation are also being dealt with in the dissertation. The National Defence Act of 1939 defined the participation in the *Levente* Youth Organisation, a

Hungarian pre-military organisation as an obligation for those aged 12 to 23. According to the Act, members of the *Levente* Youth were allowed to wear the badges of the organisation and special badges in case they stood the tests of their age groups. On 1 August 1941, the education of national defence and the physical education of the country's youth came under central control, which led to the reorganisation of the movement. Inside the *Levente* Youth Organisation, which also served as a pre-military organisation, various training activities started and in parallel with that different units were set up, such as water and technical training; training for signal troops, motorised troops, paratroopers and pilot training. After the special training courses, the members of the organisation took tests and in case they were successful, they received qualification badges.

To honour various activities in favour of the *Levente* Youth Organisation, a three-grade badge of honour was instituted and awarded. In March 1943, a badge was established to distinguish those members of the organisation whose fathers were killed in action. In September 1944, the Minister of Defence instituted a badge for training officers of the organisation.

In such an eventful period when symbols played a crucial part, military badges were important means of visual communication. Their system was closely related to the organisation of the army, and any changes to the military structure were reflected by the system of insignia. They also manifested certain political changes, for instance the coup of the Arrow Cross Party in October 1944.

Apart from the Austro-Hungarian traditions and the German influence, the Hungarian military badges of the period primarily reflected the national character in their design and ideology, as well as in the regulations of awarding and wearing. It is no wonder that the insignia of the interwar period and the Second World War were taken as a model when the scheme of symbols of the Hungarian armed forces was established after the political changes of 1989–1990.

Members of the armed forces have always been keen on wearing qualification and identification badges, because those aroused the interest of the public, manifested the suitability of their wearers and indicated a considerable institutional background. Therefore, military badges have always been regarded to be more than just objects,

representing the *esprit de corps* and making their wearers self-confident by giving account of their achievements.

IV.

PUBLICATIONS BY THE AUTHOR ON THE DISSERTATION SUBJECT

- “A 3. (finnországi) téli harc-tanfolyam emlékjelvénye, 1942.” [The Commemorative Badge of the 3rd Winter Warfare Course in Finland, 1942] *Az Érem* 1, (2007): pp. 41–43.
- “A magyar 1. tábori páncélos hadosztály 1943-as téli harcainak emlékjelvénye. Jelvényviselési problémák a m. kir. Honvédségben a második világháború idején.” [The Commemorative Badge of the 1943 Winter Operations of the Hungarian 1st Armoured Division. The Issue of Wearing Badges in the Royal Hungarian Army during the Second World War.] *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 1-2, (2005): pp. 215–231.
- “A Magyar Királyi Honvédség és a leventemozgalom jelvényeinek rendszere, 1938-1945.” [The Scheme of the Badges of the Royal Hungarian Armed Forces and the *Levente* Youth, 1938-1945] *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 1, (2008): pp. 39–67.
- “A magyar királyi honvédség teljesítményjelvényei, 1944-1945.” [Qualification Badges of the Royal Hungarian Armed Forces, 1944-1945] *Numizmatikai Közlöny* Vol. CIV-CV. (2005-2006). Budapest, 2006. pp. 141–152.
- “A m. kir. 52. honvéd gyalogezred alakulatjelvénye (1942)” [The Badge of the Royal Hungarian 52nd Infantry Regiment, 1942] *Az Érem* 1, (2006): pp. 25–26.
- “Ejtőernyős ügyességi és csapatjelvények Magyarországon, 1939-1945.” [Parachute Troop and Qualification Insignia in Hungary, 1939-1945] *Numizmatikai Közlöny* Vol. CII-CIII. (2003-2004). Budapest, 2004. pp. 131–139.
- “Magyar ejtőernyős ügyességi jelvények adományozása német tiszteknek 1941-ben.” [The Awarding of the Hungarian Parachute Qualification Badge to German Officers in 1941] *Az Érem* 2, (2005): pp. 26–29.

- “Magyar katonai jelvények a második világháborúban.” [Hungarian Military Badges in the Second World War] „...és újfent hadiidők!” (*Avagy: a „boldog békeidők” nem térnek vissza*) 1939–1945. Ed. István Ravasz. Budapest, 2005. pp. 321–324.
- “Rohamcsapatjelvények az Osztrák-Magyar Monarchia haderejében.” [Assault Troop Badges in the Armed Forces of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy] Baczoni, Tamás, Kiss, Gábor, Sallay, Gergely Pál, and Számvéber, Norbert. *Halálfejes katonák. Az Osztrák-Magyar Monarchia rohamcsapatai 1916-1918*. Budapest, 2006. pp. 43–53.