

**Theses of university (PhD) dissertation**

The running of Fülek (now Fil'akovo, Slovakia) border castle during the captaincy of István II Koháry (1667 - 1682)

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## I. The object of the dissertation and the defining of the theme

The Fülek border castle still played an important role for Habsburg governance in preventing further Turkish expansion in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. A significant number of armed forces were stationed within the walls of the fort that served not only as a protection against the Ottoman conquerors, but in case of legitimate request they could be used as a police force and also for personal protection.

After the death of his father in 1664, István Koháry the younger became the Commander of Fülek, but could occupy the position only in the summer of 1667. Though his salary as Commander was granted continually by the Court Chamber from 1664 to 1686, that is he was employed by the Court War Council all through his apprenticeship and his three year long captivity, the thesis deals only with those years he was stationed in Fülek, when the nobleman performed his duties as a Commander, there and had great influence on the life of the border castle, that is between 1667 and 1682.

One of the aims of this thesis is to show the organising activity of István Koháry connected to the military, supply and justice tasks of the Fülek garrison: How did he secure and organise the continuous supply of his soldiers? What opportunities did he have for improving and maintaining the walls of Fülek? What methods were available to him for military replenishment? Was István Koháry an impartial judge in military justice?

On the other hand I would like to present the life of a border castle, which was a royal border castle, an administrative centre for nobility and a residential place for civilians all at once at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The correspondence of István Koháry is essential for the research of the history of Fülek between 1667 and 1682. As the military aspect was dominant in Fülek, István Koháry as the Commander had a great say in the administration of the town, who besides was a landowner of part of the town. Thus he was known as a rather influential person, who had a great influence on both

spheres, many listened to his words, asked for his advice and trusted him, which is also shown in his letters. Through reading and elaborating these documents I plan to give a general picture of the everyday life of Fülek, especially regarding military matters.

The main characteristics of Fülek was that noblemen lived on the territory of the border castle in large number, as it housed the staff of officers and general assembly of three counties. The cohabitation of civilians and the army did not lack disagreement and though István Koháry possessed judicial rights within the limits of the border castle, the specifically excessive Magistrates occasionally obstructed the functioning of the justice. The thesis also answers questions: whether military and aristocratic interests could be conciliated in a border castle which was increasingly under the attack of the enemy almost every day?

On the other hand the dissertation deals not only with Fülek, but from the whole territory of Hungary in the third tierce of the 17<sup>th</sup> century gives authentic data, news, minor micro-events and stories which show minor episodes (in everyday language: stories) from the everyday life of Lower Hungary, Upper Hungary and the Turkish occupied territory as periodic phenomena.

## II. Outlining the methods used

During my work I mainly pursued archives research, in the institutions of the Hungarian National Archives as well as in the Heves County and Nógrád County Archives. In the first phase of my research beginning in 2004 I searched for István Koháry in the registers, and systematically followed and read them through and collected the data. In the micro-film research department of the National Archives I searched through the register that contains the Koháry family archives available on films and first I only picked those that could contain data regarding his Fülek command (e.g.: letters from the Turkish era or “kuruc” times, correspondence with Imre Thököly and letters from the Court War Council, etc.). Parallel to this I looked for those letters in the archives of Pál Esterházy that István Koháry wrote him. This was followed by

the rolls from the Koháry family archives that have been recorded as family correspondence. Studying the family documents brought success as most were of military nature, indispensable for unravelling the topic.

Numerous sources were found indirectly. The archives of Szepes Chamber were also studied (E 254), as well as the contributions of the Court War Council (A 14), the archives of early “kuruc” movements (G 1–G 13) and the majority of the archives of Pál Esterházy. In the latter one important information was found, letters from Fülek or written by Koháry that were sent to the general attached or as a letter extract.

During the years long research work new and new angles were discovered, thus the earlier sources were again studied, but this time expanded with these. On the other hand in the Nógrád and Heves County Archives in the minutes of the county council I looked for not only the words of István Koháry (or its Latin equivalent) and Fülek, but for others to such as “praesidium Fülekiensis”, “Supremus Capitaneus hujus loci”, “Vice Capitaneus”, “praesidiarius Fülekiensis”, etc. As a result of this research the number of the usable and valuable texts increased and thus a complete picture could have been drawn about the relationship and life of the counties and the border castle soldiers.

The collected data were processed and interpreted: the summary of the majority was written down, the rest were copied and were provided with keywords and terms, in order to be found any time. Later all the of sources were entered into a computer database, which made the work easier, as the correspondences could be seen faster, on the basis of the registrum it took minutes to find the handwritten source. Certain chapters were divided into smaller parts, the sources related to them were pieced together, interpreted content wise, then composed and so completed in this way.

The biographers of István Koháry have entered relatively few concrete facts into his biography, so they could hardly be a starting point. Earlier biographies tell about his heroism as a Commander and his greatness, favouring his tutoring,

paternalistic and patron virtue, but lack facts of historical value. Thus few scientific literatures were used for the topic.

Although Lajos Merényi and Kálmán Thaly had already published a few source publications from the Koháry archives at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the originals were also looked up in case of any mistakes. (In one of my studies connected to István Koháry, but written not on the topic of the PhD thesis I unravel errors that were made long ago by the author of two contemporary monographs.)

### III. Listing of results as theses

István Koháry the younger was nominated Commander of Füle, right after the death of his father István Koháry senior on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1664, (at the request of his mother, Judit Balassa) by Palatine Ferenc Wesselényi, what was also urged by György Szelepcsényi the Archbishop of Kalocsa and, later Esztergom, as well as István Zichy Chairman of the Chamber and crown guard. Although, because of him being under age and due to his studies István Koháry could not occupy his position as the Commander of Füle, salary was granted for him from 1<sup>st</sup> August. Deputy Commander Mátyás Unger was entrusted to run Füle, but after his death in November 1664 a new leader had to be provided. The new Deputy Commander, Pál Bélteky was appointed by the Court War Council at the beginning of 1665. István Koháry occupied his post in Füle effectively on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1667 after receiving the instructions for command and swearing by the monarch.

The document appointing him as Commander also contained a passage, according to which Pál Bélteky had to supervise all the decisions of the young Commander for a whole year and had to teach him the knowledge that is expected from a border castle Commander.

István Koháry stood his ground as a Commander. There was never a problem with his loyalty towards the monarch, when he had to go on a leave he always asked for permission from Pál Esterházy or Miklós Bercsényi. If the supply and maintenance

of Fülek got into trouble then every time he tried to appear in the county councils by letter, but even personally in front of Pál Esterházy, the Court War Council, moreover he also asked for audition from Leopold I to present the deficiencies.

There was just one problem emerging against him: he deliberately let the soldiers of Fülek out onto the villages and to take Turks prisoners and sack them, and with that the soldiers not only harmed the Hungarian inhabitants but they also violated the extremely volatile Vasvár Peace Treaty and generated another war situation. Because of this István Koháry was reprehended in writing several times, the Chairman of the War Council, Raimondo Montecuccoli ordered him in, moreover the Court War Council decided on his arrest and to relieve him of his post in the summer of 1674, which finally did not occur.

The Fülek garrison of István Koháry always suffered from the lack of staff, as the Court War Council introduced hiring freeze and in place of the deceased or captured soldiers no new ones could be hired. The 1665 military reform specified Fülek to have 400 cavalry, 300 infantry and 100 imperial gunners (musketeer), but this military headcount was only rarely realised. Though the Commander wrote to the authorities on the matter of military replenishment and urged all the time the allocation of fifty musketeers from Szendrő in order to strengthen the citadel, a recruitment order was given only in case of national danger by the supreme war body of the Habsburgs.

István Koháry was successful in complementing the shortage of soldiers with free lads or in other words Heyducks, who camped outside Fülek and were willing to take orders from the Commander for booty only.

The garrison of Fülek very rarely received pay due to the financial difficulties of the Habsburg Empire. The soldiers still did not starve, as they lived from sacking “kuruc” and Turkish prisoners and from food received or gained from civilians and the counties. István Koháry acquired enough food and horse fodder from those counties residing in Fülek and from neighbouring counties. From the time of “kuruc” incursions, from 1672 counties gladly contributed to the supply of Fülek garrison with food and money, as István Koháry promised to deduct these offerings from the sum of

the state-imposed repartition. It also happened that the Commander bought the missing supply from the farms of the Koháry family or other aristocratic families.

The money due for maintenance and building works of the Fülekk fortress also arrived irregularly from the Court War Council. István Koháry regularly indicated the importance of the building works and sooner or later he always received the required amount. Continuous work was always ensured, as István Koháry was almost always given by the counties the parliament-imposed unpaid work (gratuitous labour) together with hands and building material. Gratuitous labour could also be bought off with a sufficient sum by the county. This is how the County of Zólyom situated far away from Fülekk settled its debt, and often other counties residing in Fülekk also used this opportunity. Money could also originate from other sources to build the fort: from county offerings (e.g.: beyond the compulsory work the magistrates in co-operation occasionally decided on the so called “extraordinary gratuitous labour” [extraordinarius gratuitus labor], from those condemned to death, who could have their lives back, if they contributed towards the repair of Fülekk walls), from “kuruc” prisoners’ ransom money and from the voluntary offerings of István Koháry or other private individuals. The Commander preferred money, as he could finance experts and diligent “skilled labour”, because the serfs ordered to do unpaid work and sent by the counties did not do their work professionally. During the work of modifying the groundplan of the fort a chief designer arrived at Fülekk, who was put at István Koháry’s disposal by the Court War Council.

The transport of ammunition of Fülekk troops was done by the boroughs neighbouring Fülekk. When the supply came from a long distance, every county transported it on carts up to its borders, and escort was provided by the garrison of Fülekk. Occasionally though Koháry used the strength of his own family’s dominions: asked for horses and carts from his mother.

István Koháry had judging and sentencing rights only above the members of the Fülekk garrison.

He could not pass sentence over the staff of other border castles, other border castle systems and privileged military centres (e.g.: Heyduck towns), he could only report it to the competent military commander or offer a motion regarding the sentence. In the same way, István Koháry had no sentencing rights over the civilian population outside Fülelek.

Military justice was the duty of the army judge in Fülelek. In the first part of István Koháry's cycle, István Oroszlány occupied this position, who was followed by Mihály Dúl in 1677. Military sentences were passed in the army court, the Chairman of which was István Koháry, and in his absence the Deputy Commander took over the position. The task of the army judge was taking evidence, the issue of the documents connected to legal administration or authentication and collateral assurances, to have the sentences executed passed by the troop courts or military courts, and besides he took the minutes during troop court hearings, moreover in case of the absence of the fort leaders he also took the place of the Chairman.

An officer serving in Fülelek, and occasionally a private were also invited as member of the jury at the troop court hearing besides the Commander, the Deputy Commander and the troop judge. The market judge was also present at the hearing as a permanent civilian member. It was a feature of Fülelek border castle that the sittings of the troop court were held on the same day as the meeting of the county council and members of the magistrates were invited to the jury almost every time.

The soldiers unhappy with the sentence could appeal to the War Court of the Mine District Commander, the Chairman of which was Pál Esterházy or his assistant, Miklós Bercsényi. The sentences passed by the War Court had to be served locally, which were to be made good by István Koháry.

Fülelek was not only a royal border castle, but a borough and at the same time a seat of three counties (Nógrád, Heves and Outer-Szolnok, as well as Pest–Pilis–Solt); consequently a huge number of civilians lived together with the soldiers.

The Habsburg governance could not supply Fülelek soldiers sufficiently, thus the soldiers gained food and produce from the civilians on numerous occasions. The

victims of the soldiers were mainly the inhabitants of villages or boroughs, in counties situated close to Füleke: Nógrád, Pest–Pilis–Solt, Heves and Outer-Szolnok, Gömör, Borsod, Hont; among the distant ones the counties Szepes, Zólyom, Bars suffered from the attacks of Füleke soldiers. Beside them, the soldiers of Füleke harassed the libertinus (enjoying immunity) inhabitants of Jászság and Kunság settlements, moreover the villages in the Great Plain with Serbian inhabitants and settlements east of the River Tisza.

The county nobility particularly resented the violent acquisition of Füleke soldiers, and they sent numerous denunciations both to István Koháry and to his superiors or to the governance, demanding each time the punishment of the soldiers and the return of the values seized.

The three counties settled in Füleke had an especially very bad relationship with István Koháry and the military prefecture, as the deeds of the soldiers were qualified as deliberate, and they saw their own patrician rights violated in that the Commander freed the soldiers caught red-handed one after the other from the county's grips. The nobility used all the available lawful means to prove their truth against the military magistrates of Füleke. As István Koháry protected his soldiers in most cases, there were constant debates that were only interrupted when the enemy seriously threatened Füleke.

The counties having their seats in Füleke in spite of the earlier mentioned misunderstandings realised the danger what the destruction of the border castle and garrison would have meant for the civilian population. That is why they went through not only with the catering, supply and fort building set by the parliament, but on certain occasions they accepted the requests of military leadership, or they themselves (cooperating with each other) voted for special donations, and contributed to the supply and the building of the border castle, even when they were not ordered by the law to support Füleke.

The nobility also tried to maintain the protection of the border castle, with seldom passing a death sentence on the soldiers caught and stood in court, and was satisfied with a minor sentence (imprisonment, fustigation, and fine).

The civilian and military jurisdiction in Fülek were interlocking: though István Koháry preserved his judicial primacy over the soldiers during his period as Commander all along, yet the entire directorate of the counties was a permanent member of the army court hearing.

#### IV. A list of publications issued on the topic of the thesis

1. Observations on the estates of Count István Koháry (1649–1731) in Heves County, in: *AGRIA XLIV*. (the yearbook of István Dobó Castle Museum, edited by: Tivadar Petercsák and Gábor Veres), Eger, 2008, pp 111–131.
2. “...And so the good old regulations and traditions shall be kept...”. István Koháry’s correspondence with the Turkish nobles (1667–1682) of the vilâyet of Eger whilst captain-general of Fülek (Fil’akovo, Slovakia), in: *AGRIA XLV*. (the yearbook of István Dobó Castle Museum, edited by: Gábor Veres), Eger, 2009, pp 105–123.
3. “...What I have heard, I would present to your grandeur as I am obliged...”. Observations on the history of information flow and news network in Upper Hungary in the light of Fülek Commander István Koháry’s correspondence (1672–1682), in: *Fons (Source research and auxiliary history disciplines) XVII*. (2010), issue 1, pp 113–140.
4. “...It is impossible to endure the above mentioned serious matters and trying injuries...” Misunderstandings between István Koháry, Commander of Fülek and the nobility (1667–1682), in: *KÚT*. The publication of ELTE BTK Történelemtudományok Doktori Iskola, year IX. , 2010. issue 2, (memorial issue of Jenő Gergely), pp 148–164.

5. "...They pillaged our village as the Mongols..." The conduct of the raiding garrison of Füleke against the civilians during the captaincy of István Koháry (1667–1682), in: *Kritische Zeiten. Zeitschrift für Humanwissenschaften*, 1. Jahrgang, 1. Heft, September 2010., Wien, pp 2–27.
6. The role of István Koháry Commander of Füleke in the consolidation after putting down the Wesselényi uprising, in: *Kritische Zeiten. Zeitschrift für Humanwissenschaften*, 1. Jahrgang, 2. Heft, November 2010., Wien, pp 2–15.
7. "...The destruction of the patrician liberties still existing up to the present gained through the bloodshed of our ancestors...". The Disagreement between the Füleke Garrison Commander István Koháry (1667–1682) and the Heves and Outer-Szolnok County's Magistrate, in: *AGRIA XLVI. (the yearbook of István Dobó Castle Museum, edited by: Gábor Veres)*, Eger, 2010, pp 93–114.
8. The report of István Koháry on the campaign of the "kuruc"-Turkish troops in Upper Hungary in 1682, in: *Kritische Zeiten. Zeitschrift für Humanwissenschaften*, 2. Jahrgang, 1. Heft, Januar 2011., Wien, pp 2–14.