THESES OF THE DOCTORAL (Ph.D.) DISSERTATION

THE ROLE OF THE HEYDUCK TOWNS IN RÁKÓCZI’S WAR OF INDEPENDENCE.

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Objectives and Theme of the Dissertation

The so called Heyducks played pivotal role in various crucial periods of the 16th – 18th century history of the Hungarians. Princes of Transylvania settled down some groups of the Heyduck in Szabolcs County which process changed the course of their history through founding seven towns. These settlements, one military camp and a temporary quarter among them developed into their homeland.¹

The well-known experts of the Heyducks revealed even the details of the golden age that meant a decisive period of these town’s evolution. The characteristic hierarchy of the Heyduck towns emerged due to the social transformations of the 17th century. In parallel, the descendants of the late soldiers through generations changed the military services as the key of their subsistence for peaceful farming.

In consequence of the Heyducks succeeded to protect their privileges for decades, these groups could found a community independent and capable to safeguard its interests. The Ottoman vengeance followed the campaign of Rákóczi György II in Poland broke the force of the Heyducks which was quite difficulty recovered. Their military power was never restored and the Heyducks were more of victims than orchestrator of the war against the Ottomans. The new system brought a fundamental change for the privileged groups just like the Heyduck towns of Szabolcs County.

¹ The titles of Balogh István’s source-book publications reflect well that process, in which the Heyducks who were paid with land could shape seven settlements originally served as their temporary quarter. Balogh 1999.
The Heyducks’ main aim in the last two decades of the century was to protect and maintain the privileges, avoid the dependence or a vulnerable state in which the citizens lived in the Heyduck towns of Bihar would be exposed to be settled to the Derecske manor. The Rákóczi’s War of Independence broke out in that period of uncertainty when those Heyduck settlements seeking for their role and place in that chaotic era hesitated to join the rebellion at early stage of the conflict.

Following the review of scholarly materials dealing with the Heyducks, I came to the conclusion that the study of eight years of Rákóczi’s War of Independence was relevant as the available works focusing on regional or national aspects brought only partial data regarding the said period.

The Heyduck towns’ actual role, the activity of their regiment and the bad relationship between them and Szabolcs County as well as Debrecen seemed to be grey area of their study. Furthermore, the research on the Heyduck captains cannot be regarded total as study of the military career of Captain Buday István and Captain Szemere László is still pending. That approach is supported by Nyakas Miklós, Balogh István and Szendrey István who have explained several cases independently from each other that various issues of the 18th century history of the Heyduck towns are unexplored as the monographies and other works don’t cover all aspects.
Methodology of the Dissertation

Following the review of the regional works dealing with the Heyducks we came to the conclusion that the study shall proceed parallel in two directions: processing regional archives just like the national collections could reveal data relevant for the dissertation.

In case of regional issues we aimed to focus on the county archives incorporated to the National Archives of Hungary, among them the fonds related to the Rákóczi’s War of Independence belonging to collection of the Hajdú-Bihar County Archives, the Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County Archives, the Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County Archives as well as the Pest County Archives.²

Regarding the national institutions, the collection of the Hungarian National Archives of the National Archives of Hungary, Manuscripts of the National Széchenyi Library and the Ministry of Defense Institute and Museum of Military History Archives must be highlighted. Collections belonging foreign archives contributed enormously to explore the career of general captains of the Heyduck towns, Buday István and Szemere László.

In case of processing the collection of county archives we sought to get a holistic picture, beyond the county and Heyduck district minutes. The related papers, records,

² I owe great thanks to the staff of the archives who willingly contributed to the preparation of the present thesis.
economic reports, town files multiplied the volume of the available documents and data.³

In our basic research we managed to acquire information and data in such a volume which made it possible to assemble the itinerarium and archontology of these towns.⁴

The systemic processing of documents related to Rákóczi’s War of Independence kept in the National Archives of Hungary allowed us to put issues into a wider, holistic context and support, refute the former one-sided conclusions or approach them from a distinct aspect.

The Károlyi family’s archives and its tremendous correspondence or muster rolls are essential for the scholars of the Rákóczi’s War of Independence. Due to the work of a careful research group these fundamental documents became available in digital means that smoothened the work of the interested scholars.⁵

The digitalised and online available sources must be highlighted as well which were very useful in writing the present dissertation.⁶

The Thaly collection belonging to the collection of the Manuscripts of the National Széchenyi Library, the Szemere family papers and the minutes keeping the copies of princely judgements provided answers not only for local issues, but gave insight to the ways how the Heyduck towns of Szabolcs County appeared in affairs of national level.

³ The copies of manuscripts belonging to the archives of Upper Hungary (Bártfá and Eperjes) were provided by Oláh Tamás whose contribution is acknowledged and appreciated.
⁵ Károlyi DVD
⁶ https://hungaricana.hu/hu/adatbazisok/leveltar/
We sought to provide answers for the issues set at the early stage of the research and improve, complement the results of former studies. Deep research was applied to have a complete exploration of the given issues, keeping the study of the primary sources in the foreground.

In case of researching and processing the papers kept in public collections the digital notetaking and various tabular data recording methods were implemented. The harmonisation and unification of mass databases proved to be applicable in case of assembling the itinerarium and archontology.

Following the early stage of the research it revealed that the data, approaches, assessments included by the former works could be concerned mostly as guidelines and the study of the documents of the public collections could not be omitted. Among our plans was the publishing the documents of the Heyduck towns in order to facilitate the work of scholars of these settlements.

As we made progress in collecting it was learned that due to the large amount of sources, the said goal could be achieved only through digital means. In consequence of that in the present dissertation we undertook only to summarize the studied data.

Regarding setting the structure of the dissertation our aim was to create chapters and sub-chapters providing answers for the former issues. It must be emphasized that we did not intend to deal with the national level of the public history of Rákóczi’s War of Independence only in those cases when these processes and phenomena affected the role of the Heyduck towns. Our first intention was to compare the local sources and complement with the documents kept in national public collections in order to give a more detailed picture about the position of these towns. The regional works related to the
Heyduck towns were reviewed and the data of military services furnished by these townships regardless of these services were provided for their own regiment or the so called kuruc community. A special emphasis was given to the issue of conscription, supplying the regiment of the Heyduck towns, reinforcements and their military actions.

The career histories of Buday István and Szemere László related to the Heyduck towns and their regiment. Only few minor studies and articles dealt with the general captains appointed by the prince, which papers were concerned only slightly with the relationship of these soldiers and the Heyduck towns.

The role of Szabolcs County’s Heyduck towns in Rákóczi’s War of Independence was only a marginal field of study for the scholars of the Heyducks who dealt only with sub-issues of that topic. The purpose of the present dissertation is to seek and provide answers for the unanswered questions of the period 1703-1711 through comprehensive study of the available data of the public collections. Of course we cannot regard the research complete, it is rather a summary of our present knowledge.
Results

Generations of historians studied the role and history of the Heyduck settled down in Szabolcs and Bihar Counties resulted a library of works related to that topic. Regarding the 16th – 18th century history only the milestones of the history and activity of the Heyducks, the factors had impact on the consolidation of that group are reviewed in the dissertation. The actual military force of the Bocskai István’s rebellion was given by armed groups called Heyducks.

The resettlement initiated by Bocskai, a landlord who was elected prince stretched through the whole 17th century up till the unfortunate military campaign of Rákóczi György II in Poland which was followed by the punitive expedition of the Ottomans. That shocked the region of the Heyducks of Szabolcs and Bihar Counties in its foundations. Although the towns relying on their noble past managed to remain notable, but it can be proved that due to the considerable loss of their military reputation the privileges once believed to be rock solid turned to be jeopardized and questioned by the new administrational system which was after the reconquest.

The taxation and the census of 1702 meant that dark clouds were gathering which meant a drastic fundamental change for the Heyducks of Szabolcs County who committed everything to preserve their independence, and at least some of their privileges as well. Through the envoys’ lobby in the Chamber of Szepesség, Leopold I confirmed the remaining privileges of the Hayducks and that meant a relief for the uncertain townships. The Hayducks lost their original military role and position by the 1660s and generation after generation of the towns did not insist to restore them. Peaceful and farming lifestyle became the desirable for the townspeople which they
aimed to protect and maintain. Perhaps that’s the reason why the Hayducks of Szabolcs County were doubtful and reluctant regarding the outbreak of Rákóczi’s War of Independence.

The Heyduck towns located in the basis of the War of Independence intended to make the best of the new circumstances. It revealed soon that they didn’t have much choice concerning joining to the rebellious forces as Rákóczi and the kuruc military leadership counted on the probable military potential of the Heyduck towns.

Bercsényi Miklós and Rákóczi Ferenc II as leaders of the rebellion especially at early stages of the war aimed to bind the Hayducks to their cause as tightly as possible through confirmation the Hayduck’s privileges attained in the 17\textsuperscript{th} century, moreover the Hayducks’ thirtieth exemption was proclaimed for the interested parties. The townships felt comfortable and content were soon given a taste of consequences of lightly taken responsibilities.

The kuruc military leadership, especially Rákóczi, Bercsényi and Károlyi Sándor kept sending orders, claims which were fulfilled by the Heyduck towns with great difficulties. The burden on the capacity of Heyducks were increased gradually by the leaders who had not expected a prolonged rebellion. The three connected towns, Kálló, Téglás and Balmazújváros formed a more or less common interest group with the Heyducks regarding the fulfilment of the military liabilities, only Kálló meant exception which had different goals.

Kálló went beyond their means in case of conscription, military services and taxations. Rákóczi made it clear for Szabolcs County that Kálló must stay undisturbed as the township served together with the Heyduck towns and met with all the imposed liabilities. Towards the end of the
rebellion the leaders of the seven towns and Kálló aimed to maintain that status, but Pálffy János put an end to the disputes quite quickly. He indicated that Kálló could not be added to the list of the towns and it was still under the jurisdiction of Szabolcs County, regardless Rákóczi’s concessions in the last eight years.

One can easily conclude that the seven Heyduck towns supported the rebellion according to their means, but they kept their own interests in the foreground and surrendered to the imperial troops without battling if necessary.

The seven Heyduck towns during the eight years of war of independence similarly to other counties sought to meet with the requisitions of the kuruc or imperial military in line with the given situation. The fact that the Heyduck towns hid behind the privileges could not shirk their responsibilities reflects well increase of the rate of the exhaustive military services. Apart from founding and supplying their own regiment, just like every counties of the region controlled by the kuruc troops, the towns had to contribute to the feeding and quartering of the kuruc forces, especially at the time of ongoing military campaigns.

The towns aimed to restore the privileges which were cut in the 17th century. Although the princely benevolence these demands were met, the reality and the developments of the rebellion was sobering and they could not afford stay out of full contribution to the cause of the rebellion. According to the archival documents on can follow the increase of the demands which meant a huge financial and material burden on the shoulders of the townships.

The Heyduck towns went through a constant transformation in the 17th century which was manifested in the consolidation of the municipal administration. The Heyducks who were
settled down in once inhabited settlements following the first decades of the 17th century enjoying the privileges sought to establish a solid internal system. Examples are known for the joint action of the towns from the early stages of the examined period, but the offices of promoting common interests emerged only by the end of the century.

Heyduck who attained prominent position because of their military virtues lost their impact gradually during the second half of the 17th century. The punitive expedition resulted by the policy of Rákóczi György II just worsened their situation. By the time of the reconquest the Heyducks lost their original role as a military class and they did not have significant part in the campaigns and battles took place in the country.

The thinking of the Heyducks was transformed from generation to generation and the military service was regarded as burden rather than their main activity. Nevertheless, the Heyduck identity and the memory of the progress made by their ancestors was still alive in the descendants who emphasized that in case of confirmations their privileges.

Rákóczi envisaged an important role for the privileged groups (Jassic, Cuman and Heyduck groups) and expected their military potential. The prince overestimated their military virtues characterised the privileged groups, actually their fighting spirit eroded in the previous decades. Rákóczi required establishment of a cavalry regiment from Heyducks of Szabolcs. Customary the regiment would gather and set camp under their own banners and the commands of their own elected officers.

Reports, accounts on the 17th century Heyducks were vivid in the memories of the high command of the kuruc army, whose military schemes relied heavily on the military potential of all the privileged classes.
That perception, approach was well-grounded as those who worked on the reformation and transformation of the country into a Kingdom did not count on these privileged groups as military classes. Thus made them to believe that these territories would unite to support the cause of the rebellion as the individual and collective grievance would turn these communities against the new system.

Following the outbreak of the Rákóczi rebellion the Heyduck towns of Szabolcs County support the rebels through forming a regiment which remained an active military unit up till the end of 1710. In the regiment included ten companies apart from the citizens of the seven towns, soldiers from Téglás, Balmazújváros and Kálló (between 1706 and 1708 in case of Téglás and Balmazújváros) served together with the Heyducks.

The regiment reached the ideal strength of one thousand soldiers only perhaps at the early stages of the Rákóczi’s War of Independence. According to the military records, the real number of the troops was around seven or eight hundred. Moreover, the conscription of infantry was a problematic issue occurred from time to time.

The Heyduck towns of Szabolcs County due to their collective nobility were not obliged to conscript infantry, the volunteers enlisted to their own less disciplined cavalry regiment. Nevertheless, Palocsay, Bagossy and Károlyi as well demanded infantry from the Heyducks, especially in order to tighten the blockade of Várad. Orders imposed the conscription of four infantrymen per each household for the counties. These regulations were several times attempted to be extended by force to the Heyducks as well. In case of that issue Kálló distinguished itself as in 1706 the township had almost two hundred infantrymen in various units of the kuruc army.
It was disputed in several cases that the Heyduck towns preferred to hire mercenaries in their regiments in order to avoid the personal involvement. These accusations were not groundless, but it must be emphasized that the conscription methods of the Heyduck towns did not really differ from the schemes of recruitment applied by other counties. As it reveals from the sources hiring mercenaries was not only the Heyduck town’s practice, but rather a general tendency. Only for the extremely patriotist kuruc leadership was it strange that not everyone was willing to die in the battlefields for the cause of the homeland.

The election of the general captain can be regarded as an important milestone of the cooperation of the townships as the captains must be elected and accepted by all the townships. The first leader who can be noted as general captain was Désány István, who resigned from his office and even moved from Nánás after the ordered conscription. It is still unknown who led the townships between the resign of Désány and the outbreak of Rákóczi’s War of Independence, but according to some approaches Nánási Jakab could fulfil the title. Nánási later had an impressing career. In line with the sources the Prince had to take sides regarding the election of the general captain. Rákóczi appointed Buday István of Bölse as the leader of the Heyduck townships and their regiment.

The former sub-lieutenant of Bihar practiced control over the Heyduck towns till the May 1706 when he was succeeded by Szemere László of Szemere. The office of general captain was most probably vacant in the year preceded the outbreak of Rákóczi’s War of Independence that smoothed the appointment of Buday. No source has occurred yet which could suggest that an incumbent Heyduck general captain would be removed from his office because of Buday. Such a step would make the Heyduck towns to anger about Rákóczi.
Preceding the outbreak of the rebellion there was no permanent only temporary vice-captain serving alongside the general captains of the Heyduck townships. The permanent vice-captain as office made sense only after the arrival of Buday István as the new general captain resided quite rarely in the towns. That situation required an official who could be a connecting link between the townships and the absentee general captain. In those cases the vice-captains represented the seven towns, supervised the collection and delivery of tax in goods or money, monitored the sound operation of the mail service and had a crucial role in settling the conflicts of the neighbourhood.

Buday István of Bölse born around 1654, in the last third of the 17th century got a taste of the fights of the reconquest. Buday had served as vice-captain of Szentjobb for a short period, then he filled the office of sub-lieutenant if Bihar County from August 1688. After the end of that thirteen years long career he was occupied by his considerably expanding lands, when the rebellion led by Rákóczi Ferenc II shook the whole country to its foundations.

The scholarly works dealt only superficially with the origins, family background and relationship network of Buday István. The present dissertation aims to clarify several unclear issues of the Buday’s career which remained out of the scope of the previous studies. The new archival sources, family papers contained previously unknown data which made it possible to answer certain issues related to the family history of Buday István.

Following the outbreak of Rákóczi’s War of Independence Buday István of Bölse (sub-lieutenant of Bihar County between 1688 and 1701) was among the first who joined the rebellion. The considerable extension of his lands in the Hegyalja and Bihar regions and the military and civil offices
as well increased Buday’s public awareness and respect which did not decrease even after he had resigned from his office in 1701. In the vineyard of Tokaj his land lay next to Rákóczi’s and Bercsényi Mikós’ properties which factor ensured Buday’s loyalty as soldier in the rebellion.

Buday István quickly rose through the ranks: marshal, then general captain of the Heyduck townships of Szabolcs County and commander of the regiment of the Heyduck towns. In 1704 Sennyei István was replaced by Buday who took charge of the troops fought in the blockade of Szatmár. After the unsuccessful siege he served in Upper Hungary, then in the Danube-Tisza Mid-Region. In May 1706, following his resign as general captain of the Heyduck townships Buday got a new commission. As the vice-general of the Danube-Tisza Mid-Region Headquarters he was entrusted with the task of military logistics. Following the dissolution of the headquarters Buday took part in the Transylvanian campaign under the charge of Károlyi Sándor, later he occurred in the Upper-Tisza Region. After 1708 he withdrew and he operated rather in the region he knew well. Buday served the cause of the war of independence till the end of his days, the autumn of 1710.

Szemere László of Szemere was born after 1657 as the son of Szemere László sub-lieutenant of Zemplén County and Vay Kata to a landowner family of Zemplén County. Only a few data are known regarding his years preceded the outbreak of the war of independence. Nothing is known about his former military role. The family belonged to the wealthy noble class, having control over large lands gave influential figures to Zemplén County. The 1670 rebellion which was oppressed by the imperial troops in time affected the Szemere family as well. They had to endure a considerable loss of their lands in exchange for the pardon of Szemere László. These
developments sowed the seed of anti-Habsburg sentiment in the younger Szemere László as well.

He was appointed as brigadier early in 1704, but up till 1710 he could not achieve promotion. Szemere in lack of military experience sought to accomplish the missions and perform his duties diligently, but his indulgence and inexperience (common characteristics of the officers) had in many cases more negative than positive consequences.

Bercsényi who tended to be cynical put the adjective “mutus” next to the name of Szemere in one of his letters. That attribute occurred in other cases as well in Rákóczi’s or Károlyi’s reproachful correspondence. They did not consider Szemere as a firm handed man or someone who was capable to make decisions, but as there was no better, Szemere or other members of the leadership could not be replaced.

The Rákóczi’s War of Independence broke out in 1703, in a period when the seven Heyduck townships of Szabolcs County together with Kálló and for a short time with Téglás and Balmazújváros lost their military potential and struggled for the protection and maintenance of their privileges. The new administration that followed the reconquest aimed to clarify the legal status of the privileged territories which threatened the Heyduck towns of Szabolcs County with total incorporation as it happened to the settlements of Bihar. The conflict reached its zenith in 1702 consolidated a bit and that meant an opportunity for the towns which increased the pace of self-organisation. The news of outbreak of Rákóczi’s rebellion and his calling reached the towns in that insecure circumstances.

The towns were reluctant for a while, but the expanding rebellion did not leave them much time to think and the kuruc troops appeared all around pushed the descendants of the
Heyducks into the direction of joining the rebels. The townships of Szabolcs County could undertake the formation and supplement of one loosely disciplined cavalry regiment. Apart from that, in later periods of the war the increase of requests and demands went far beyond the original burdens.

The settlements sought to meet with the issued tasks and the so called quantums according to their means. In that case they were not left behind by the undertakings of the neighbouring counties. They managed to have a good relationship with Buday István among the general captains appointed to lead the townships, while Szemere László was regarded as a “newcomer” till the end of Rákóczi’s War of Independence who was not capable to understand the Heyducks. The towns had been serving through eight years of the war became totally exhausted by 1710 and the approaching imperial troops did not give them chance, thus the settlements had to surrender and accept the downfall of the war of independence.
List of publications related to the dissertation

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Hungarian scientific articles in Hungarian journals (6)

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11. Török, P.: Bőszaörmény, mint központ: a hajdúvárosok közgyűléseinek toposza a regionális
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List of other publications

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Hungarian scientific articles in Hungarian journals (8)


Other journal articles (1)


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