

STUDIEN ZUR SPRACHE, GESCHICHTE UND KULTUR DER TÜRKVÖLKER

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Identity and Culture in Ottoman Hungary



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	7
List of Contributors	8
Introduction (<i>Pál Fodor – Pál Ács</i>)	13

BASIC FORMS OF OTTOMAN IDENTITY

<i>Pál Fodor</i>	
The Formation of Ottoman Turkish Identity (Fourteenth to Seventeenth Centuries)	19
<i>Balázs Sudár</i>	
The Ottomans and the Mental Conquest of Hungary	55
<i>Zsuzsa Kovács</i>	
The Library of the <i>Müfti</i> of Buda in the Marsili Collection, Bologna	69

NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE AGE OF OTTOMAN RULE

<i>Tibor Martí</i>	
Count László Esterházy: The Military Career of a Young West Transdanubian Aristocrat	123
<i>András Péter Szabó</i>	
“True Hungarian Blood”: Noble Nationalism in the Post-1657 Crisis in Transylvania	141
<i>Szabolcs Varga</i>	
The Image of Ottoman Hungary in Bosnian Heroic Epics	163

BORDER-CROSSERS: MULTIPLE IDENTITIES DURING OTTOMAN RULE

<i>Gabriella Erdélyi</i>	
Marriage and Voluntary Conversions in the Hungarian–Ottoman Frontier Region	183
<i>Pál Ács</i>	
The Rise and Fall of a Notorious Renegade: The Story of Sásvár/Şehsuvar Bey, 1580	209

ARTS AND HANDICRAFTS DURING OTTOMAN RULE: IMPACTS AND MUTUAL EFFECTS

Árpád Mikó

Fate of the Liturgical Equipment of Late Medieval Cathedrals
in Hungary in the Early Modern Age225

Ibolya Gerelyes

Ottoman-Balkan Jewellery in Ottoman Hungary: Typology and Spread239

Emese Pásztor

Fashion à la Porte

Was There a Turkish Fashion Trend in Hungarian

Aristocratic Homes During the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries?255

Borbála Gulyás

The Fight Against the Ottomans in Hungary

and the Court Festivals of the Habsburgs in the Sixteenth Century277

Rumen István Csörsz

From the Turkish Pipes to the Hungarian *töröksíp*301

THE CHANGING IMAGE OF THE TURKS IN LITERATURE AND FOLKLORE

Emőke Rita Szilágyi

Teucrisive Turci: History of an Ideologically Laden Designation

in Fifteenth-Century Latin Works327

Ágnes Drosztmér

The Captivity of Mihály Szilágyi and the Love of the Princess:

Evaluating Parallels Between a Hungarian and an Ottoman

Turkish Romance347

THE CULTURAL MEMORY OF OTTOMAN RULE

Gergely Tóth

Vestigia barbarae gentis: Mátyás Bél on Ottoman and

Post-Ottoman Hungary367

Index of Names and Places387

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. The Flag of Barbarossa Hayreddin52
2. Mitre of Pál Bornemisza (Abstemius)230
3. Pair of Candlesticks from Óbuda231
4. Reliquiary Bust of St Ladislaus233
5. Standing Cross235
6. The Gyöngyös Gradual237
7. Disk-shaped Ear Pendant244
8. Filigree-decorated Dress Ornament – Brooch246
9. Head Ornament with Sheet-metal Pendants, Kajdacs247
10. Head Ornament with Sheet-metal Pendants, Battonya248
11. Filigree-adorned Hair-pins with Spherical Heads, Glogon249
12. Filigree-adorned Hair-pins with Spherical Heads, Pécsbányatelep250
13. Child's Overcoat (*mente*) Tailored from a Turkish Caftan261
14. Back of a Chasuble Sewn from a Turkish Caftan262
15. István Esterházy's *mente* With "Turkish sleeves"266
16. "Turkish Cushion for the Coach"270
17. Turkish Turban Cover, Table Cloth of the Communion Table
in the Calvinist Church of Ónod271
18. "Transylvanian Carpet", Uşak272
19. Back of a Chasuble Sewn from a Turkish Velvet Blanket273
20. Ottoman Turkish Ornamental Horse Tack275
21. Tournament on the Periphery of Vienna289
22. Naval Battle and the Siege of a Firework Fortress
on an Island of the Danube292

COUNT LÁSZLÓ ESTERHÁZY: THE MILITARY CAREER OF
A YOUNG WEST TRANSDANUBIAN ARISTOCRAT

Palatine Miklós Esterházy (1625–1645) was one of the most eminent statesmen of the Hungarian Kingdom who determined the network of political relations between the political elite of the kingdom and the House of Habsburg in the first half of the seventeenth century. He had an important role in concluding several peace agreements with the Ottoman Empire, and thus an impact on the development of Habsburg–Ottoman relations at that time.¹ His second wife, Krisztina Nyáry (1604–1641) was the widow of Imre Thurzó, the wealthiest Protestant aristocrat of the age and potential heir to the palatine's title. The eldest son from this marriage was László (1626–1652), whom paternal legacy predestined for a pre-eminent political role had he not died a

¹ My investigations in Vienna were made possible by support from the Pro Renovanda Cultura Hungariae Foundation's special section "Students for Science", by the Austrian-Hungarian Foundation, the Stipendienstiftung der Republik Österreich and the "Lendület" Holy Crown Research Group at the Research Centre for the Humanities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, for which I herewith express my gratitude.
Géza Pálffy, 'Pozsonyból a Magyar Királyság élére. Karrierlehetőségek a magyar arisztokráciában a 16–17. század fordulóján (Az Esterházy, a Pálffy és az Illésházy család felemelkedése) [From Pozsony to the leadership of the Hungarian Kingdom. Career possibilities in the Hungarian aristocracy at the turn of the 16th–17th centuries (The rise of the Esterházy, Pálffy and Illésházy families)]', *Századok* 143 (2009) 853–882. Idem, 'Aufstieg der Familie Esterházy in die ungarische Aristokratie', in Rudolf Kropf – Wolfgang Gürtler (eds.), *Die Familie Esterházy im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*. (Wissenschaftliche Arbeiten aus dem Burgenland, 128.) Eisenstadt, 2009, 13–46. István Hiller, *Palatin Nikolaus Esterházy. Die ungarische Rolle 1625–1645*. Wien–Köln–Weimar, 1991. István Bitskey, 'Esterházy Miklós, a hitvitázó nádor [Miklós Esterházy, the palatine and religious polemist]', in Gábor Kecskeméti (ed.), *Tarnai Andor emlékkönyv* [Studies in honour of Andor Tarnai]. Budapest, 1996, 31–42. András Szilágyi, 'Egy rendhagyó sikertörténet a XVII. században – Esterházy Miklós életpályája [An unusual success story in the 17th century – the career of Miklós Esterházy]', in Áron Tóth et al. (eds.), *"És az oszlopok tetején liliomok formáltattak vala" – Tanulmányok Bibó István 70. születésnapjára* ["Now the capitals that were on the tops of the pillars in the vestibule were of lily-work" – Essays in honour of István Bibó]. Budapest, 2011, 79–88. Idem, 'A kincstár történetének rövid áttekintése' [A brief review of the history of the treasury], in András Szilágyi (ed.), *Műtárgyak a fraknói Esterházy-kincstárból az Iparművészeti Múzeum gyűjteményében* [Art works from the Esterházy treasury in the collection of the Museum of Applied Arts]. (Thesaurus Domus Esterhazyanae, I.) Budapest, 2014, 9–36.

hero's death – together with another three Esterházys (Tamás, Gáspár, and Ferenc) – in the battle of Vezekény (today Vel'ké Vozokany, Slovakia) in 1652 at the young age of 26.² A study of the young count's career cannot be taken out of the social context which prized martial virtue high, making military forays an inherent part of his everyday life and, without exaggeration, the most important activity of his life. The idea of fighting against the Porte was paired with daily clashes and by implication the thought – and acceptance – of glorious death.³ Sacrificing one's life for the country, the idea of heroic self-sacrifice was inherent in the self-identity of the Hungarian nobility passed down from father to son. Several examples of the course taken by aristocratic lives in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries could be cited, but in order to illustrate this type the present paper revisits the brief military career of Count László, a member of the Esterházy family.

Participant in Raids

Count László Esterházy first studied (with Jesuits) in the capital of the Habsburg Empire, Vienna, and then in Nagyszombat (today Trnava, Slovakia).⁴ When his father died in the autumn of 1645, he returned to the family

- 2 Tibor Marti, *Gróf Esterházy László (1626–1652). Fejezetek egy arisztokrata család történetéhez* [Count László Esterházy (1626–1652). Chapters in the history of an aristocratic family]. PhD thesis, PPKE BTK, Budapest, 2013.
- 3 László Szilasi, 'Argumenta mortis (Érvek és ellenérvek a hősi halálra: becsület és méltóság a régi magyar elbeszélő költészetben és emlékiratokban) [Argumenta mortis (Arguments for and against heroic death: honour and dignity in old Hungarian narrative poetry and memoirs)]', *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 101 (1997) 217–234. István Bitskey, 'A vitézség eszményének változatai a XVI–XVII. század fordulójának magyar irodalmában [Variations of the ideal of military virtue in the Hungarian literature of the turn of the 16th–17th centuries]', in Tivadar Petercsák (ed.), *Hagyomány és korszerűség a XVI–XVII. században* [Tradition and modernity in the 16th–17th centuries]. (Studia Agriensia, 17.) Eger, 1997, 203–215. Péter Szabó, 'Nádasdy Ferenc és Pálffy Miklós vitézi kultusza [The cult of valiance of Ferenc Nádasdy and Miklós Pálffy]', in János Fatuska – Éva Mária Fülöp – Gyöngyi László (eds.), *Tata a tizenöt éves háborúban* [Tata in the Fifteen Years' War]. (Annales Tataiensis, 1.) Tata, 1998, 139–147. Sándor Bene, *Theatrum politicum. Nyilvánosság, közvélemény és irodalom a kora újkorban* [Theatrum politicum. Publicity, public opinion and literature in the early modern age]. (Csokonai Könyvtár, 19.) Debrecen, 1999, 337.
- 4 In the matricula of Nagyszombat University for the academic year 1644–45 László Esterházy is registered as a student of the logics course: Attila Zsoldos (ed.), *Matricula Universitatis Tyrnaviensis, 1635–1701*. Budapest, 1990, 48.

estates (among which Fraknó [today Forchtenstein, Austria], Kismarton [today Eisenstadt, Austria], Sempthe [today Šintava, Slovakia], etc. were the most important), and with the guidance of elder and more experienced family members such as Dániel and Farkas Esterházy, he acted strictly in line with his father's last will. Accordingly, he fought to preserve the family heritage.⁵ Not only his fine manly stature, but martial virtues and bravery in raids made him well-known in broad circles. Only 19 when his father died, László became the *főispán* (*supremus comes*) of Sopron County in 1645,⁶ and from late 1648 he was also captain-general of Pápa.⁷ When the bishop of Pécs, Pál Hoffmann gave the funeral sermon at the burial of the young count,⁸ the oration conjured up Count László's person and external features in detail⁹ and made special

- 5 Judit Fejes, 'The Marriage Policy of the Esterházy Family after the Death of Palatine Miklós', in Katalin Péter (ed.), *Beloved Children: History of Aristocratic Childhood in Hungary in the Early Modern Age*. Budapest–New York, 2001, 216–224. Most recently Noémi Viskolcz, 'Esterházy Anna Júlia (1630–1669) [Anna Júlia Esterházy]', *Századok* 149:4 (2015) 873–903.
- 6 He was the *főispán* of Sopron County from 25 September 1645; cf. Zoltán Fallenbüchl, *Magyarország főméltóságai 1526–1848* [Top dignitaries of Hungary 1526–1848]. Budapest, 1988, 96. On László Esterházy's tenure as *főispán* of Sopron County: Péter Dominkovits, 'Főúri familiárisok. Sopron vármegye alispánjai a 17. században [Familiars of aristocrats. Alispáns of Sopron County in the 17th century.]', in Nóra G. Etényi – Ildikó Horn (eds.), *Idővel paloták... Magyar udvari kultúra a 16–17. században* [Then palaces... Hungarian court culture in the 16th–17th centuries]. Budapest, 2005, 511–529. Idem, 'Graf Ladislaus Esterházy, Obergespan des Komitats Ödenburg/Sopron', in Kropf – Gürtler (eds.), *Die Familie Esterházy*, 161–178. Idem, 'Gróf Esterházy László, Sopron vármegye főispánja [Count L. Esterházy, *főispán* of Sopron County]', *Századok* 143 (2009) 883–903.
- 7 Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (ÖStA), Kriegsarchiv (KA), Hofkriegsrat (HKR), Prot. Bd. 298, fol. 456r: *Esterhasi bitt umb conferirung der Oberhauptmanschafft zu Papa* (November 1648).
- 8 'Hoffmann Pál Esterházy László, Ferenc, Tamás és Gáspár fölött [Pál Hoffmann rendering homage to László, Ferenc, Tamás and Gáspár Esterházy], Vienna, 1653', in Gábor Kecskeméti – Hajnalka Nováky (eds.), *Magyar nyelvű halotti beszédek a XVII. századból* [Funeral sermons in Hungarian from the 17th century]. Budapest, 1988, 127–154. Apart from the speech of the bishop of Pécs, Tamás Pálffy of Erdőd also rendered homage in Latin (RMK III, 1830) during the funeral (*ibid.*, 155–169). On the burial of László Esterházy: Péter Szabó, *A végtisztesség. A főúri gyászszertartás mint látvány* [The last tribute. The aristocratic funeral as spectacle]. Budapest, 1989. Noémi Viskolcz, 'Az Esterházyak temetkezéseiről a 17. században [On the funerals of the Esterházy family in the 17th century]', *Művészettörténeti Értesítő* 58 (2009) 245–268.
- 9 'He ... had a fine open face, the miraculously finely wrought, highly balanced limbs and body of a valiant champion, he cut a dignified lordly figure from top to toe, which earned him the epithet beautiful count not only at home but in public as well. On a par with his good looks was his strength; there was no one tall or corpulent in his court whom he could

mention of his chivalry, also confirmed by other recollections.¹⁰ He was chivalrous, but also famous as a formidable warrior who showed the enemy no mercy when Christian captives had to be freed. Count László inherited a rich tradition of valiance from his forefathers, with several members of the family killed in action against the Ottomans.

Hungarian aristocrats who were linked, apart from the proximity of their estates by an intricate web of kinship and family relations, often organized joint raids on the border area between the Hungarian Kingdom and Ottoman Hungary (where many of their estates were located) and on several occasions their parties pushed deep into Ottoman territory. Their aim was "to counter" raids by Ottoman marauders and other atrocities, and to capture Turks or liberate Christian prisoners. Though prohibited by the Vienna Aulic War Council (*Wiener Hofkriegsrat*) in the "wartime peace years", these (private) military actions were not reckless adventures, or simple looting. It was an important component of the "ideology" of the war against the Porte to protect the estates, the territory and population of the country, to lay claim to the temporarily occupied areas, to free the Christians in Ottoman captivity, and to "bring the conquerors to heel", "to keep them at bay". The aristocrats set out for a raid with their private troops and *familiares* (Hungarian type of vassals, a nobleman's military escort); the success and efficiency of an action was usually measured by the number and value of prisoners captured.¹¹ The way

not have knocked down with one elbow (if he had wanted to). No one shot at the target more accurately, or stretched the bow tauter, or hit the ring more precisely, or rode a horse more powerfully than he." Kecskeméti – Nováky (eds.), *Magyar nyelvű halotti beszédek*, 141–142, cited by Sándor Iván Kovács in 'Eszterházy László véletlen haláláról írt Zrínyi uram versei [My lord Zrínyi's poems on the accidental death of László Eszterházy]', *Somogy* 11:1 (1983) 78.

- 10 Once a prisoner in the court of János Kéry, Mustafa Bey wrote to Ádám Batthyány about his good relations with Count László, stressing that he treated his Turkish captives humanely.
- 11 There is a wealth of literature on the characteristics and forms of keeping prisoners: beside the works of Sándor Takáts (for instance, *Rajzok a török világból* [Sketches from the Turkish world]. Vols. I–III, Budapest, 1915–1917) several modern analyses are available: János J. Varga, 'Rabtartás és rabkereskedelem a 16–17. századi Batthyány-nagybirtokon [Maintenance of and trade in prisoners on the large estates of the Batthyány family]', in János Kalmár (ed.), *Unger Mátyás Emlékkönyv* [Essays in honour of Mátyás Unger]. Budapest, 1991, 121–133. János J. Varga, 'Hadizsákmány és rabkereskedelem, mint az emberi kapcsolatok formái a Dunántúlon a török hódoltság korában [Trading in war spoils and prisoners as forms of human relations in Transdanubia in the Ottoman age]', *Levéltári Szemle* 42:3 (1992) 16–20. Pál Fodor, 'Adatok a magyarországi török rabszedésről [Data on

raids were conducted was determined by the unwritten rules of custom in the frontier areas.

During his years of training, Count László learned the skills of the martial arts from no less a personality than Captain-General Ádám Batthyány I (1610–1659),¹² his future father-in-law. In his early youth he often met (mostly at the Batthyányis) one of the most outstanding personalities and military commanders, Miklós Zrínyi (1620–1664), with whom he fostered a friendship as revealed by the letters written to him by Zrínyi¹³ and the lost poem Zrínyi wrote upon László's death.¹⁴ A number of diverse sources evidence that the three aristocrats often staged joint raids, fighting valiantly with their troops and achieving considerable successes with their actions. For instance, in August 1651 they hurried to the help of the captain of Kiskomárom (today Zalakomár), László Pethő of Gerse who was beset by the Ottomans, putting

taking prisoners by the Ottomans in Hungary]', *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 109:4 (1996) 133–142. Géza Pálffy, 'Ransom Slavery along the Ottoman–Hungarian Frontier in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century', in Géza Dávid – Pál Fodor (eds.), *Ransom Slavery along the Ottoman Borders (Early Fifteenth – Early Seventeenth Centuries)*. (The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage. Politics, Society and Economy, 37.) Leiden–Boston–Brill, 2007, 35–83. Further literature on the Batthyány estates: Hajnalka Tóth, 'Török rabok Batthyány I. Ádám uradalmaiban [Ottoman captives on the estates of Ádám Batthyány I]', *Aetas* 17:1 (2002) 136–153. Most recently: Ilona Tarkó, *Rabkereskedelem és anyagi kultúra a XVI–XVII. században a Batthyány család levéltára alapján* [Prisoner trade and material culture in the 16th–17th centuries based on the archives of the Batthyány family]. PhD thesis, PPKE BTK, Piliscsaba, 2012.

- 12 On the career of Ádám Batthyány I (1610–1659) and the role of members of the Batthyány family in frontier defence: Géza Pálffy, 'A Batthyány család a törökellenes határvédelemben a XVI–XVII. században [The Batthyány family in border defence against the Ottomans in the 16th–17th centuries]', *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 122:2 (2009) 321–356. Idem, 'A Batthyány család és a dunántúli határvédelem a XVI–XVII. században [The Batthyány family and border defence in Transdanubia in the 16th–17th centuries]', in Zsuzsanna J. Újváry (ed.), *Batthyány I. Ádám és köre* [Ádám Batthyány I and his circle]. Piliscsaba, 2013, 41–66.
- 13 See also Kovács, 'Eszterházy László', 75–87.
- 14 Miklós Zrínyi's letters to László Esterházy in print: Gábor Hausner – Sándor Iván Kovács – Péter Kulcsár (eds.), *Zrínyi Miklós Összes Művei* [Complete works of Miklós Zrínyi]. Budapest, 2003, letters Nos. 55, 172, 187, 191.

the numerically superior enemy to flight,¹⁵ and liberating the strategically important fortress.¹⁶

Date	Place	Presence of László Esterházy
1 January 1649	"The clash occurred at Véged (today Zalavég) – 'that was some brawl' – from where they drove the fleeing Turks to Ali-bánfa, then Pölöske, and Balás (today Zalaszentbalázs), for some 40 km." ¹⁷	"The troops of the Count with his own standard"; Ádám Batthyány's invoice book reveals that on 1 January 1649 Count László took part with 92 horsemen
End of August 1651	Kiskomár (today Zalakomár), Segesd	With Zrínyi, Puchheim, Batthyány: to assist people of Kiskomár
After 25 January 1652	towards (Székes) Fehérvár	In January 1652 Batthyány and his son-in-law László Esterházy set out for Fehérvár for a little "trial" with 1,047 horsemen (97 of them belonged to the Count)

The close connection between Ádám Batthyány and László Esterházy is more conspicuous when their personal meetings are taken into account: the main source here is Ádám Batthyány's itinerary.¹⁸ The notes reveal that in 1648 and

15 On the history of the fortress of Kiskomárom in these years: Róbert József Szvitek, *Kiskomárom végvár szerepe a dél-dunántúli védelmi rendszerben* [The role of the border fortress of Kiskomárom in the defence of South Transdanubia]. PhD thesis, Budapest, 2008, 26–28.

16 László Esterházy arrived under Kiskomárom with his father-in-law Ádám Batthyány: Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára [Central Archive of the National Archives of Hungary, Budapest – henceforth MNL OL], P 1315, 4. cs., p. 339.

17 Zsuzsanna J. Újváry, 'Batthyány I. Ádám, a vitéz katona [The valiant soldier Ádám Batthyány I]', in Újváry (ed.), *Batthyány I. Ádám és köre*, 137.

18 Ádám Batthyány's diary (*itinerarium*) for the years 1641, 1644–1648, 1650–1652: MNL OL, P 1315, 2. cs, fols. 119–178.

in 1650–52 they met almost every month, László visiting Count Ádám in Németújvár (today Güssing, Austria) or Rohonc (today Rechnitz, Austria) most cases, but they also met elsewhere on different occasions. For example they met on László's request on 18 July 1646 in Pozsony (today Bratislava, Slovakia), where Ádám Batthyány, along with Pál Pálffy, the influential Hungarian politician (president of the Hungarian Treasury, later palatine), tried to promote the László Esterházy's success in a possessory action for Kismarton against his brother-in-law Ferenc Nádasdy III (1611–1671)¹⁹ through his personal presence.

Both attended the diets of 1647 and 1649: in autumn 1646 László Esterházy sent several letters to asking Ádám Batthyány whether King Ferdinand III had set out for the diet from Vienna and when he might arrive,²⁰ and in some letters he wrote from Pozsony in 1647 he sent news of the candidates for the palatine's post.²¹ In addition to the correspondence, other sources also evince the frequency of joint, successful, and memorable raids: Ádám Batthyány's invoice book reveals that on 1 January 1649 Count László took part in a raid with 92 horsemen; in late August 1651 and on 18 January 1652 he also made inroads with Count Ádám, in the latter case with 97 horsemen.²² Finally, intriguing information is provided by a list written around 1650, including the number of soldiers Miklós Zrínyi, Ferenc Nádasdy, László Esterházy, and Ádám Batthyány joined the raid with, as well as the necessary provisions:

"List of the number of horsemen and infantrymen to be provided for:²³

The Right Honourable Ádám Batthyány's horsemen No 1,293, foot soldiers No 652

The Right Honourable Zrínyi's²⁴ horsemen No 400, foot soldiers No 300

From frontier strongholds horsemen No 234, foot soldiers No 453

19 László Esterházy to Ádám Batthyány, MNL OL, P 1314, Missiles, No 12.090, and 12.091. Cf. Fejes, 'The Marriage Policy of the Esterházy Family', 132.

20 László Esterházy to Ádám Batthyány, MNL OL, P 1314, Missiles, No 12.096, 12.097 (both dated Fraknó, 7 and 9 September 1646).

21 László Esterházy to Ádám Batthyány, Pozsony, 18 September 1646, MNL OL, P 1314, Missiles, No 12.099. Count János Draskovich (1603–1648) was elected palatine by the diet on 25 September 1646.

22 Újváry, 'Batthyány I. Ádám', 140–141.

23 MNL OL, Archive of the Batthyány family, P 1322, documents pertaining to the landowner family and the employees on the manorial estates, 53. cs., No 1005, s. d. (c. 1650).

24 Miklós Zrínyi was ban of Croatia and Slavonia from 1648.

The Right Honourable László Esterházy's horsemen No 200, foot soldiers No 100
 The Right Honourable Ferencz Nádasdy's horsemen No 150, foot soldiers No 100
 Also, German cavalry and infantry."²⁵

Though the figures are occasional and incidental, alluding presumably to an armed force compiled for a single incursion, the magnitude of the figures well suggest the potential military force that could be combined from each aristocrat's private armed force; besides, they reveal the roles taken in the leadership of the raid, and their status and position within the national armed forces. The figures suggest that in terms of size this action was similar to the raid at Igal in 1641²⁶ (one of the largest such Hungarian military undertakings during the period of Ottoman rule in Hungary).

Péter Keglevich's diary entry of 31 August²⁷ confirms the data for the last days of August 1651, also providing an interesting report on the events of those days: "We were under Segesd, and some German count Puchaim,²⁸ deputy president of the War Council was our commander; there were Ban Count Miklós Zríni (Zrinsky), Count László Eszterházy, Ádám Battiani, the general of the Kanizsa frontier, and me with the Kanizsa frontier defence troops; a part of the town was devoured by fire because grenades were hurled by our troops at it and had it not been his majesty's order to Puchaim, we would have captured it. We settled around Szent Grót²⁹ and encamped there,

25 The original order of the names in the document: 1. Miklós Zrínyi, 2. Ferenc Nádasdy III, 3. László Esterházy, 4. Frontier troops from strongholds opposite Kanizsa, 5. Ádám Batthyány I.

26 László Fenyvesi, 'Az igali portya és a körmendi kótyavetye balkáni tanulságai [Lessons drawn from the Igal raid and sale of the booty at Körmen for the demographic history of the Balkans]', in Sándor Bodó – Jolán Szabó (eds.), *Magyar és török végvárak, 1663–1684* [Hungarian and Ottoman border fortresses, 1663–1684]. Eger, 1985, 199–218.

27 Péter Buzsini Keglevich (Keglevics): deputy captain-general of the border area opposite Kanizsa between 1641 and 1656. Géza Pálffy, 'Kerületi és végvidéki főkapitányok és főkapitány-helyettesek Magyarországon a 16–17. században [District and border fortress captain-generals and deputy captain-generals in Hungary in the 16th–17th centuries]', *Történelmi Szemle* 39:2 (1997) 280.

28 Hans Christoph Puchheim (Puchaimb): captain-general of the fortress of Komárom (1639–1651), vice president of the Aulic War Council from 1652, field-marshal. Pálffy, 'Kerületi és végvidéki főkapitányok', 284.

29 Szentgrót: frontier fortification against Kanizsa, today Zalaszentgrót.

some six thousands of us. The bishop of Veszprém at that time, György Széchény³⁰ was also with us."³¹ László Esterházy gave memorable evidence of his personal courage there, which was also recalled by Pál Hoffmann in his previously mentioned sermon for the late count: "He gave awe-inspiring indication of his courageous heart just last year under Segesd, when – with a volley of cannonballs flying around his head – he would have charged at the pagan horde without being frightened the least, had the command of his perspicacious and valiant father-in-law not kept him back."³² In the battle of Vezekény on 26 August 1652, there was no one to hold the young count back from the "sortie" and thus he sacrificed his young life in the anti-Ottoman fight by winning "the crown of martyrdom".

The course of life for a seventeenth-century young aristocrat often ended in tragedy: just think of László Rákóczi who also died young in an unsuccessful attempt to besiege the fort of Várad (today Oradea, Romania) in 1664,³³ of Ádám Erdődy, killed during an Ottoman incursion in 1668,³⁴ or Ádám Zrínyi who died a heroic death later.³⁵

The rise of the members of the Esterházy family to the highest ranks in the early seventeenth century was not only on account of their growing wealth and outstanding political roles, but due to their military ranks and participation in the anti-Ottoman struggles, which claimed several lives among them, ensuring that they deserved a place among the old Hungarian nobility, who had shed their blood in the fight against the Ottomans ("pagans") for centuries. The

30 György Széchényi (Szécsény, 1605/06–Nagyszombat, 1695).

31 Farkas Deák (ed.), 'Keglevich Péter naplója 1599–1661 [Diary of Péter Keglevich 1599–1661]', *Történelmi Tár* 13 (1867) 246.

32 Kecskeméti – Nováky (eds.), *Magyar nyelvű halotti beszédek*, 142.

33 László Rákóczi (1636–1664): the son of György Rákóczi I's second brother Pál; he died on 27 May 1664, during the unsuccessful attack on Várad. Ildikó Horn, 'Rákóczi László pályája (1633–1664) [Career of László Rákóczi]', *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 103 (1990) 61–91.

34 Ádám Erdődy, son of Imre Erdődy and Éva Forgách, captain of Petrinja in Slavonia. See Zuzana Ludoviká – Árpád Mikó – Géza Pálffy, 'A szepeshelyi Szent Márton-templom, egy felső-magyarországi katolikus központ késő reneszánsz és barokk sírkövei és halotti címerei [Late renaissance and baroque tombstones and funeral coats of arms in the St Martin church of Szepeshely (today Spišská Kapitula, Slovakia), a catholic centre in Upper Hungary]', *Művészettörténeti Értesítő* 56 (2007) 327–328.

35 Ádám Zrínyi: son of Miklós Zrínyi, who lost his life in the battle of Szalánkemén (today Stari Slankamen, Serbia) (19 August 1691). Gábor Hausner, 'Zrínyi Ádám [Ádám Zrínyi]', in Sándor Bene – Gábor Hausner (eds.), *A Zrínyiek a magyar és a horvát történelmében* [The Zrínyis in Hungarian and Croatian history]. Budapest, 2007, 165–180.

following rightly applies to the Esterházy family, as it does to the ancient Báthory, Drágffy, Perényi, Zrínyi, Dobó, Balassa families among others: "There is no noteworthy family in Hungary, which did not have to mourn on many an occasion for their brave men who fell in sacrifice: they were bulwarks of the neighbouring countries and provinces toward the east."³⁶

The Captain-General of Pápa

Issued by the chancellery of the Aulic War Council, Ferdinand III's deed of 7 November 1648 appointed Count László Esterházy captain-general of Pápa (*Oberhauptmann zu Papa*) upon his request,³⁷ as the protocol entry of the War Council attests. This made him the second Esterházy – after his brother István (captain-general from 1639–41)³⁸ – to command one of the major fortresses in the frontier zone of Győr (*Raaber Grenze*) with crucial importance in defence against the Ottomans. After his imperial recognition (lord-in-waiting at the Imperial Court) and the decoration awarded by the Hungarian estates (knight of the golden spur) this position was a major station in the independent career of the young count. Firstly, he had himself applied for this post, which his father had never filled (only his brother had), and besides, additional factors in acquiring the post may have been his more frequent meetings with his intended father-in-law, General Batthyány, the experience of the first encounters with the Ottomans, as well as his experience of life at a frontier fort. However, the acquisition of the position was probably also largely motivated by the significance of Pápa and its demesne for the family over a considerable length of time. The seizure of the Pápa domain is an interesting and intriguing

36 Source of the quotation: 'A Bocskaihoz csatlakozott rendek kiáltványa Európa népeihez a szabadságharc kitörésének okairól és a török elleni küzdelem megszakításának ideiglenességéről' [Proclamation of the estates joining Bocskai addressed to the nations of Europe on the causes of the outbreak of the war of liberation and on the temporariness of the interrupted fight against the Ottomans]. Szerencs, April 1605, in István Sinkovics (ed.), *Magyar történeti szöveggyűjtemény* [Chrestomathy in Hungarian history]. Vol. II/1, 1526–1790, Budapest, 1968, 268; for its new edition, see Miklós Nyakas, *Az "ismeretlen" szerencsi kiáltvány. Hasonmás kiadás* [The "unknown" proclamation of Szerencs. Facsimile edition]. (A Bocskai-szabadságharc 400. évfordulója, VI.) Debrecen, 2006.

37 Cf. note 7 above.

38 Instruction for István Esterházy, captain-general of Pápa: 21 May 1639 – ÖStA, KA, Bestallungen (Best.) Prot. Bd. 2., pag. 8. (No. 20.) Its signature: ÖStA, KA, Best., Kt. 9, No. 1314.

example of Palatine Miklós Esterházy's practice of increasing his landed property; although in 1630 he put it in pawn to László Csáky, he reckoned with it as an important estate in the long run, which also made the acquisition of a military position possible for his family (for István Esterházy in 1639).

The interest of the Esterházys, particularly Count László in the Pápa domain is patently revealed by sources documenting his steps and efforts around the fortress and fortress domain of Pápa. First, the legal status of the domain had to be clarified. Upon his request, Pál Pálffy (as chief justice) summoned the cathedral chapter of Győr to submit the documents concerning Pápa to him.³⁹ The documents revealed who the person was whom László had to approach in order to redeem the Pápa estate pawned to László Csáky: Mrs Gáspár Konszky born Zsuzsanna Balassa.⁴⁰ A protocol record in the archives of the cathedral chapter of Pozsony, with notarial functions dated 15 September 1648 says that the estate was redeemed from pawn for the same amount (80,000 florins) for which Csáky had passed it on to Balassa earlier.⁴¹ From 1648 Count László was the captain-general and legal landowner of Pápa.

László Esterházy took his position as captain-general seriously. On matters of the fortress of Pápa and the frontier town he gave orders when in possession of thorough and up-to-date information, which he gained from his correspondence and communication with his subordinates, primarily the Pápa bailiff János Dominovics and his vice captains. In his absence his deputies governed the frontier station: Pál Somogyi until 1649 and István Radovány after 1650. Their letters give detailed reports on the condition of the fortress, on the garrison, and the prisoners; they also reveal that the captain-general of Győr, Philipp Graf von Mansfeld (1589–1657) often meddled with matters concerning Pápa, particularly with the completion of major constructions and the transfer of German troops, with considerable impact on the composition of military units in Pápa.

39 Győr Diocesan Archives, Notarial documents of the chapter, Theca V., No. 25067.

40 The contents of his later testament pertaining to Kassa (today Košice, Slovakia) were discussed by Béla Vilmos Mihalik, 'Katolikus megújulás az egri egyházmegyében (1634–1746) [Catholic revival in the Eger diocese]', in Zoltán Péter Bagi – Adrienn Horváth (eds.), *Mozaikok a Magyar Királyság 16–17. századi történelméből* [Mosaics from the 16th–17th-century history of the Hungarian Kingdom]. Budapest, 2012, 170.

41 Slovak National Archive (SNA), Notarial Archive of the Pozsony Cathedral Chapter, Protokolli, Vol. 39. (1648–1649), No. 185, pag. 274–276. *Datum feria sexta post festum Nativitatis Beatae Mariae virginis* (15 September 1648).

The fact that László Esterházy was the *főispán* of Sopron County bolstered both his application for the position of captain-general of Pápa, and after its acquisition, his position with the Aulic War Council in regard to his requests in the interests of the border fort. It is known from Péter Dominkovits's research that in the seventeenth century almost all of Sopron County was obliged to provide free labour (*gratuitus labor*) for the fortification of Pápa fort.⁴² Initially, as a candidate for the post, it must have been an advantage for László Esterházy that he was the *főispán* of that county. And it would not have been immaterial for the War Council at the same time, firstly, who the actual owner of the Pápa estates was; secondly that the position of captain-general had been filled by another Esterházy – István – earlier; and finally, that László was head of the county responsible for providing free labour for the fort of Pápa from the beginning of the century. Thus, the interests of the family and the Viennese War Council were joined on this matter, and the concordance of *privatum* and *publicum* was clearly in favour of László's appointment.

That said, it is then thought provoking that in 1649 the deputy of the captain-general of Pápa, Pál Somogyi urged Sopron County to provide the failing fortification work as soon as possible.⁴³ What is more, one can find documentary evidence that on one occasion the *főispán* of Sopron County tried to hinder the performance of *gratuitus labor* in spite of the fact that he was the captain-general of Pápa fort: at the general assembly of Veszprém County in 1651 it was proposed that upon the request of István Radovány, then deputy of the captain-general of Pápa, a letter ought to be written to the *főispán* of Sopron County, László Esterházy telling him that if he should withdraw the peasants from rendering free labour on the fortification of Pápa, then the nobility of Veszprém County would follow suit.⁴⁴ Eventually, the magistrates

42 Péter Dominkovits, 'Sopron vármegye ingyenmunka-adója a pápai vár erődítésére a XVII. század derekán (1622–1670) [Duty of free labour imposed on Sopron County for the fortification of Pápa fort in the mid-17th century]', *Acta Papensia* 2:3–4 (2002) 203–220.

43 This means that in the first years of László Esterházy's tenure as *főispán* of Sopron County – at least until 1649 – Sopron County amassed a large amount of arrears in free labour to be rendered for the fortification of Pápa. As Pál Somogyi complained, "*gratuitus labor* was missed for five whole years when no money was presented". Letter of Pál Somogyi, deputy captain-general of Pápa to Sopron County, MNL Győr-Moson-Sopron County Sopron Archive (hereafter: MNL SL), Sopron County Archive, documents of the noble assembly of Sopron County (SVMLt), IV. 1.b (pallium: 1649).

44 MNL Veszprém County Archives (VemL), Veszprém County Archives (VMLt), IV.1.a – Documents of the small and general assemblies of Veszprém County. Protocols, 1651; on the second day prior to the feast of Bishop Saint Martin (*generalis congregatio*); those

of Veszprém County did send a letter to László Esterházy which warned the captain-general with due courtesy that "the *gratuitus labor* meant to be expended on this Praesidium was not presented by Your Excellency's bailiff from your holdings, instead he wants to divert it to other private property of Your Excellency." Shocked by the illegal practice the nobility of Veszprém County decided to take steps on the matter during the next diet: "The holding back of serfs by the nobility must be put before the country; for what the country spends on the survival of the nation cannot be diverted for private benefit."⁴⁵ In other words: *privatum* and *publicum* did not coincide in this case. However, more research would be needed to establish the extent to which this case might characterize László Esterházy's general practice, whether Veszprém County was right in protesting.

The fortified town of Pápa was a manorial centre and economic entity in addition to its military-defensive functions. It is wrong to believe, however, that the subsistence of Pápa (pay of the soldiers, food, arms, etc.) could be ensured from the landed property belonging to the fort. From the second half of the sixteenth century the wages of the fort troops, including the captain-general, was traditionally provided by the estates of Lower Austria. Proof of this is László Esterházy's letter of May 1652 to the estates asking them to send the arrears of the pay for Pápa.⁴⁶ Earlier, the count even urged Palatine Pál Pálffy to intervene for the delivery of the considerable arrears in soldiers' pay.⁴⁷ Luckily, there is a statement in German in the family archives⁴⁸ which itemizes the seven months' pay remitted by the Lower Austrian estates for 1650, actually handed over later that year in Vienna in various forms, as follows:

present included a high priest as well, János Szanyi ("Ill. et Rev.").

45 MNL OL P 124 (documents of Count László Esterházy), No. 1495. Pápa, *feria secunda proxima ante Festum Beati Martini Episcopi, loco nempe ac die, celebrationis Congregationis nostrae*. A. D. 1651.

46 László Esterházy's request to the Lower Austrian estates for the remittance of the arrears in payment (3,670 thalers, 85 denars). 29 May 1652. MNL OL P 108 Rep. 40, Fasc. C, No. 60.

47 MNL OL P 124, No. 987, Pál Pálffy to László Esterházy, 3 February 1651.

48 MNL OL P 108 Rep. 2 et 3, Fasc. H, No. 129: 1650, *Specificatio solutionis Capitaneatus Papensis*.

"In Bezahlung Ihrer gräfl[ichen] Herrn Oberhauptmanns zu Pappa Herrn Graf[en] Ladislai Esterhasii gebürendten siben Monnath. Vierdet hiemit geliefert und Abgefieriht	
Erstlich in Gelt	659 fl. 54 kr.
Silber ganz Verguldt dreyssig March vier Loth ⁴⁹	
jedes March pro	24fl. 726 fl.
fünf Stück Scheptuch ⁵⁰ welche außtragen	260 fl.
Summa bringt die völlige liferung	1645 fl. 54 kr.
Datum Wienn dem 24 decembris,	
Anno 1650	Michael Glacz." ⁵¹

It is indicative of the stalling payments from Lower Austria that László Esterházy occasionally pressed for the remittance.⁵² Sometimes he even turned to the ruler on military matters concerning Pápa: in his petition of 1 September 1650 he reported that ignoring the laws of war, the Ottomans attacked his troops forming the company that went to receive the Turkish delegation, slaying several among them and taking the rest into captivity. He was asking the ruler to intercede for the release of his captured soldiers without ransom.⁵³

During his tenure as captain-general, the fort of Pápa underwent considerable fortification, for which he had requested a separate allocation from the War Council, which he did receive as his acknowledgement reveals. The captain-general of Győr, his superior, Mansfeld supervised the construction

49 Mark and *lat* (= half an ounce, *lotum*): units of measure; on weights of precious metals. István Bogdán, *Régi magyar mértékek* [Old Hungarian measurements]. Budapest, 1987.

50 Kind of broadcloth; see Walter Endrei, *Patyolat és posztó* [Cambric and broadcloth]. (Mikrotörténelem) Budapest, 1989, 236.

51 Michael Glacz was *Grenzunterzahlmeister* at that time in charge of issuing the border troops' pay on behalf of the estates. See about him from 1661: Niederösterreich Landesarchiv (NÖLA) SA A-VII-36. fols. 393-394 and NÖLA SA A-VII-65. fol. 18 and fol. 21. The data was pointed out to me by Géza Pálffy.

52 Hungarian Academy of Sciences Library, Coll. of Manuscripts, copies of deeds of HAS Historical Committee, Raudnitzer Archiv, Sign. C. 37., László Esterházy to Prince Eusebius Wenzel von Lobkowitz, president of the War Council, Nagyhöflány (today Großhöflein, Austria), 30 November 1651: *Ich nochmahlen gehorsamblich Euer fürstl. ... Gnadt erhalten undt wegen meiner Pappauischen Graniz Besoldungs Austandt mit fürstl. Gn. meiner in gedankh verbleiben...*

53 The rough and clean copies of the petition survive: MNL OL P 124, 7. cs., No. 1714, pag. 20-23.

and use of the allocated sum,⁵⁴ an activity in which he was indeed effective. There was frequent demand for building materials from his estate: the ruler called on him to contribute to the reconstruction of Alsólendva, for example,⁵⁵ and his important patron Pál Pálffy, who was duly renowned for his constructions⁵⁶ also turned to him in several cases.

Prior to his ceremonious inauguration as captain-general, László Esterházy applied to Ferdinand III for a separate flag and drums for the garrison of the fort, as was customary in the age.⁵⁷ It is noteworthy that upon the submitted application the War Council ordered the court treasury to issue the necessary amount of money on 2 December 1648. On 15 December the treasury summoned the chief master of war payments (*Hofkriegszahlmeister*), Hans Friedrich Leuter to report on the necessary costs based on previous general practice. He replied that according to practice in those parts, the equipment of the infantry needed no more than 200 guildens, and he had seen to the remittance of that sum through the Hungarian administration.⁵⁸

As his itinerary reveals, László Esterházy visited Pápa several times (though he was instructed as captain-general to be present there permanently), and sojourned in the town for lengthier periods of time: on 22 September 1649, 13-19 February 1651, 3 March 1651 (and almost throughout March), and 27 January-14 March 1652 he was surely in or around the fort. He knew his soldiers personally; when the voivode of Pápa (János Pesti) died, he proposed a person (Ferenc Körösi) as his successor.⁵⁹ This latter information is

54 MNL OL P 124, No. 717.

55 MNL OL P 124, No. 1469: Ferdinand III to László Esterházy, Vienna, 25 April 1651: Ádám Batthyány had already contributed to the reconstruction and fortification of Alsólindva (today Lendava, Slovenia) and Nempti (i.e. Lenti) burnt down by the Ottomans; therefore, the ruler asked László Esterházy to partake of the work by providing piles and timber for the fortification and have them transported there by his subjects.

56 On Pál Pálffy's constructions: Anna Fundarek, 'Pálffy Pál építkezései [Pál Pálffy's constructions]', *Sic Itur ad Astra* 15:1 (2003) 15-34.

57 ÖStA Finanz- und Hofkammerarchiv (FHKA), Hofkammerarchiv (HKA) Familien-Akten E 75. fols. 10-11. prior to 2 December 1648: *ratione vexilli et timpanarum mandatum de more militaris istius officii omnino necessarium.*

58 *Ibid.*: *Zuerzeugung inuermelter fahnen vnd hörpauggen auf dergleichen Gränczen ist mehrers nicht dann Zwaighundert gulden vnnd dieselben von der Hungarischen Cammer Zugeben gebreüchig [sic!] gewesen.*

59 HAS Library, copies of deeds of the Historical Committee, *ibid.*: *Proxime euolutis diebus Egregio condam Joanne Pesti, cuius sublato per eius mortem officium Vaivodatus Praesidii Papensis in vacantia haeret, et quia eidem subjectus miles Pedestris sine Capite, in confusione persistere nequit, neque Praesidio commode servire praesentium exhibitor*

complemented by an entry in the December 1650 protocol of the War Council saying that in keeping with practices of the time, Esterházy and the deputy of the captain-general of Győr, István Zichy nominated three persons for the voivodship of Pápa: István Kőrösi, György Vajda,⁶⁰ and Márton Tóth.⁶¹

During Esterházy's frequent absences his deputies were acting commanders on matters arising in the border fort. His trustworthy deputies were Pál Somogyi⁶² until 1649, and István Radovány⁶³ after 1650, the latter identified as "cavalry lieutenant of His Majesty here" by deputy captain-general of Győr, István Zichy writing to Ádám Batthyány in October 1647,⁶⁴ that is, Radovány rose from being a hussar captain in Győr to the position of vice commander of Pápa. An experienced and ambitious soldier, he had quite a good knowledge of the region and could be "deployed" at a number of places. There is another piece of information about him from Zichy, dating from September 1648: "During his stay in Linz His Majesty conferred the title of captain of Vázsony upon Lieutenant István Radovány, but since the legal status of the Vázsony estate was unclarified, he did not occupy the post but decided to wait until matters were cleared up."⁶⁵ Since the proprietorship of Vázsony (today Nagyvázsony) passed on to Zichy, the deputy captain-general of Győr asked for Radovány to be assigned of the position. Finally, Radovány was transferred to Pápa about which he himself informed László Esterházy,⁶⁶ not failing to

Egregius Franciscus Kőrösi pro obtinendo illo munere instet, eundem tanquam bene meritum, et sufficientem personam, alias etiam ibidem possessionatum dirum, Vestrae Domini Illustrissimae et Excellentissimae recommendo; rogando eandem, ne gravetur ad dictum vacantem vaivodatium promovere. (Kismarton, 26 September 1650.)

60 MNL OL P 707 (Archive of the Zichy family), 542. cs. (fols. 294–295); No. 11.543, letter of György Vajda to István Zichy: Pápa, 16 December 1651.

61 ÖStA, KA, HKR, Bd. 301, 1650 Reg. [fol. 513v:] [December 1650] [30]: *Esterhasi Ladislaus Oberhauptman zu Pappa und Obristleutnant zu Raab. P: vacierend[e] wäy[vo]da[tus]stell zu Pappa, darzur Sie [?]den Stephan Kőröschy, Georg Wajda und Martin Totty vorschlagt.*

62 Possibly it was Pál Somogyi, who often substituted for his superior, who was mentioned as captain-general of Pápa summoned to testify before the chapter of Veszprém: MNL VemL, Veszprém Chapter Prot., (Protocol of testimonies), Vol. I, *feria secunda post dominicam quasimodogeniti A. D. 1649*, pag. 723.

63 In the list of Pápa citizens he is included as "István Radvány".

64 MNL OL P 1314, No. 53064. Győr, 14 October 1647.

65 MNL OL P 1314, No. 53075. Győr, 14 September 1648.

66 MNL OL P 124, No. 1074. István Radovány to László Esterházy, Pápa, 29 September 1651: "His Excellency the Count General [Mansfeld] delegated me here to the position of vice captain with His Majesty's consent".

detail the assignment he had received from the captain-general of Győr. This clearly indicates – as is made explicit by the instruction for the captain-general of Pápa – that the general of Győr kept interfering with the matters of Pápa.⁶⁷ The deputy commander of Pápa received orders and instructions from both László Esterházy and the captain-general of Győr, Mansfeld.⁶⁸ Radovány apparently took a great liking of the border town, because he remained in service during the commandership of Pál Esterházy from 1653, and from November 1654 until 1661 he became *alispán* of Veszprém County as well.⁶⁹

To sum up: the post of captain-general of Pápa was a decisive station in the independent career of the palatine's son that went farther than what paternal legacy predisposed for him. His military virtue (reinforced in part at the court of Ádám Batthyány), personal courage, and awareness of his high birth – paired with a true love of life: Count László was fond of merry-making, dancing, riding, archery – intertwined to determine the life course of this outstanding member of a West Transdanubian Hungarian aristocratic family, whom posterity only remembers for his death and its circumstances.

67 *Ibid.*

68 See for example: MNL OL P 124, Pápa, 11 November 1651. A relatively detailed description of a punitive sortie by the Győr troops in return for the Turkish devastation of the bishop of Veszprém's Gyirmót estate (led by the *bey* of Székesfehérvár): MNL OL P 124, No. 1078, 7 April 1652.

69 István Radovány was elected *alispán* of Veszprém County in November 1654: he informed Pál Esterházy who succeeded his elder brother in the position of captain-general of Pápa in a letter: MNL OL P 125, (box 9), No. 3614 and MNL VemL, VMLt (Assembly protocols) Vol. 1, 86.