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**The Deputy District-Captain-Generals of Ádám Batthyány
Nobiliary-Military Careers in Seventeenth Century Transdanubia**

Theses of the Ph. D. Dissertation

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1. Research history and the aim of the dissertation

The aim of this dissertation is to outline the careers of the Transdanubian deputy district-captain-generals serving under borderfortress-captain-general against Kanizsa and Transdanubian district-captain-general *Ádám Batthyány* (1610–1659), based primarily on their correspondences surviving in the *Batthyány* family’s archive. The dissertation tries to describe the different opportunities of several noble families – for example the *Ráttky* family of *Salamonfa*, who lost the majority of their lands in *Zala* County; *János Keczer*, who presumably were forced out from his estate in *Croatia* and the *Káldy* family of *Felsőkáld*, who possessed land in *Vas* and *Sopron* County – to gain new lands and establish careers in the wake of the ever expanding Ottoman occupation. It will be observable that for these nobles, the simplest and most effective way to succeed was to serve in the courts of those aristocrats who played a pivotal role in the military leadership of the border defense system against the *Turks*. For these nobles, this undertaken service provided not only financial security but the possibility of gaining positions in the counties or even major military roles too. As such, the focus of the dissertation is the study of the careers of those nobles who occupied the highest military rank attainable by the local nobility in *West-Transdanubia*.

To understand the different – even compared to each other – scope of duties of these so called “public persons”, namely the Transdanubian deputy district-captain-generals, as well as their regional and national roles require the short review of the published researches and studies about the aristocratic courts, county officials and – adherent to these – family retainers of the era.

Fortunately many studies were published regarding these subjects in the past few decades. From the standpoint of the dissertation, it is essential to highlight the importance of the monography of *András Koltai* which discuss the history and inner workings of the court of *Ádám Batthyány*. He also studied the literacy of *Ádám Batthyány* and published a separate source publication about the Hungarian court regulations too. However, the need to examine the court culture –primarily and not objectionable from the point of view of researching the elites of the era – appeared in

the late 1980's. The collection of essays edited by Ágnes R. Várkonyi called "Hungarian Renaissance Court Culture" was followed by many fine publications in the past few years. Maybe the volume edited by Nóra G. Etényi and Ildikó Horn, called "Palaces in time" can be viewed as a successor to the book edited by Ágnes R. Várkonyi. In the aforementioned book, not only court culture was studied, but essays about the careers of family retainers were also published. Regarding the course of aristocratic obsequies, the book of Péter Szabó cannot be avoided. Related to this, the essay of Zsuzsanna J. Újváry about the costs of the burial of László Esterházy in the volume called "In Pompous Palaces and Ornate Stone Walls" should be also noted. In the same volume an essay was published by Tibor Martí about the representation and everyday life of the Esterházy family in Kismarton, and also essays about the Esterházy family's representation in general. The need of conducting further researches in regard of the retainers and the aristocratic courts is noticeable in the volume called *The Centuries of the Batthyány Family*, which contains the written versions of the presentations given during the Batthyány conference in Körmend. In addition it is quite welcoming, that in the past few years many dissertations choose to examine in detail the careers and courts of different aristocrats.

In regard of the military aspect of the service of retainers, the works of János Varga J. can not be avoided. He analyzed the subject in books and many smaller essays. For example he examined the financial background of retainers, the customs of prisoner trades, the organization of the Hungarian aristocrats' military or the inner workings of the military courts. In addition to these, he studied the retainers' payment and other duties associated with them. From the perspective of military history, quite a few papers provided additional information regarding the operation of particular border fortresses or the conduct of different military campaigns, based on the correspondence of retainers.

In the past decade more and more biography of individual retainers were published. These essays concentrated on the individual successes of retainers or dealt with intergenerational studies, featuring the history of particular noble families in the early modern age. It should be noted that – thanks to the abundance of remaining

sources – the study of the Transdanubian nobility can be viewed as well processed, partially owing to the work of Péter Dominkovits.

Even so, there are quite few studies about those retainers who held the office of Transdanubian deputy district-captain-general. In most cases, their role was discussed only laconically to supplement more important historical events or in few cases their correspondence were used without presenting their full biography. Géza Pálffy, who published the archontology of the border fortress-captain-generals, district-captain-generals and their deputies, noted that the biography of the persons holding significant roles in the border defense system were largely unknown.

The career of each deputy district-captain-general should be analyzed along the axis of lord–retainer relationship because the armies – and most importantly the courts – of the Hungarian aristocrats aimed to absorb the more talented and able nobles so an individual aristocrat could extend his/her influence in public affairs. In order to do this they aimed to fill the important county positions (for example the office of sub-lieutenant) with their own retainers, moreover their retainers could represent the counties during the diets too. This was particularly important if an aristocrat, who possessed significant estates in a county, did not held the title of lord lieutenant of said county. This was the case in one of the main area of our research, Vas County, where although Ádám Batthyány held all the important military positions, the office of lord lieutenant was held by the members of the Nádasdy family. To counter this, Ádám Batthyány appointed twice the captain of his personal army to the position of deputy district-captain-general. In this way he was able to strengthen his influence over the Transdanubian counties.

Based on the above it could be noted that the service in an aristocrat's court was quite important for the advancement of the nobility. The connection between the service in the court of aristocrats, holding county offices and the military functions could be viewed as a “love-triangle”: the three different functions could strengthen each other, but more often than not, these functions clashed with one other. In addition to this it could be observed that from the three functions usually just one became

primary: in the case of Ferenc Káldy of Felsőkáld the service in Batthyány's court, while for János Keczer of Radován the military office became conspicuous.

In virtue of the above mentioned this dissertation makes an attempt to present the life and carrier of each Transdanubian deputy district-captain-general as fully as possible, thereby contributing to the better knowledge of the middle management of the border defense system. The situation is complicated by the fact that deputy district-captain-generals were appointed directly by the district-captain-generals, so in their cases the appointment was not approved in Vienna, which means usually there are no written records about it. Because of this a question arises: is it even possible to determine the exact date of the appointment? Based on the processed sources we are looking to answer the following queries: how much the obtainment of the deputy district-captain-general office helped in climbing the social ladder for the individuals in question and also which office held by these retainers – the deputy district-captain-general' office, the government offices or the service in a lord's court – was the more dominant function in their carrier.

2. The followed methodology and the structure of the dissertation

The remaining correspondence of the Transdanubian deputy district-captain-generals kept in the archives of the Batthyány family – which can be found in the Hungarian National Archives – provides the base of the dissertation.

As it was mentioned before, the correspondence of the Transdanubian deputy district-captain-generals cannot be considered totally unknown for researchers. The letters of Menyhért Ráttky was used by László Nagy and Péter Dominkovits. In his works, Péter Dominkovits referred to multiple letters of Ferenc Káldy, sr. of Felsőkáld which were worthy to publish on their own. The correspondence of János Keczer, deputy district-captain-general and also captain of Csákány fortress, was partially used to supplement the study of the Rába-river, as a natural border in the era. His role in the upkeeping the border defense system as well as his connection to the Batthyány family were examined only partially.

The processing of the letters was executed according the following methods. First I have transcribed almost 1000 letters addressed to the members of the Batthyány family, written by Ferenc Káldy of Felsőkáld, János Keczer and Ferenc Káldy Jr. of Felsőkáld (all of them also served as captains of Ádám Batthyány's personal army). Because of the identical name of father and son, the notation "manu propria" – which was legible in most cases – showcased which of the letters were handwritten by the sender. In the case of Ferenc Káldy Sr., it made it possible to connect the letters – mainly those that lacked dates – to him and his almost identical handwriting also helped to identify questionable documents. After the transcription, I evaluated the letters and after that I summarized each one. The summaries were placed in a chart and I added keywords to them. This made it possible to thematically organize the source documents. Besides the correspondence collection of the Batthyány family, the personal records of Ádám Batthyány were also used to complement the work, mainly the magnate's laconic itinerary, which was used to confirm the information written in the deputy-generals letters.

The letters of the deputy district-captain-general's widows should also be mentioned. As it happens neither the exact birth date, nor the date of death of the deputies are known in most cases. However from the few letters of these widows, I was able to determine the exact date of death and also the place and date of burial of the persons in question.

The study analyzes the career, connections and financial position of each Transdanubian deputy district-captain-general one by one and it emphasizes on the extensive functions of the deputy generals. The comparative analysis of these persons' careers is discussed at the end of the dissertation as a recapitulation.

The first five chapters begin with the discussions of the antecedent research, the archival sources and also contain a chapter summarizing the history of the era. The transition of the border defense system in West-Transdanubia is also discussed. To provide a whole picture, I outlined the biographies of those officers, who held the position of Transdanubian deputy district-captain-general between the fall of Kanizsa (1600) and Ádám Batthyány's appointment to Transdanubian district-captain-general (1633), based on the studies published so far and their letters surviving in the archives of the Batthyány family. It should be noted that during this period, several nobles who held the deputy general position served in the court of the Nádasdy family (Menyhért Ráttky of Salamonfa and his son, György Ráttky). It did not come as a surprise since the district-captain-general was Pál Nádasdy.

The core of the dissertation is the examination of the lives and careers of Ferenc Káldy sr. of Felsőkáld and János Keczer. Ferenc Káldy was the offspring of a wealthy noble family from Vas County, who occupied a position of trust in the court of the Batthyány family. The gradual progression of his career can be partially explained by this position. The chapters about Ferenc Káldy discuss his involvement in county politics (he was tax-collector and sub-lieutenant in Vas County) and his participation in the Hungarian diets separately. Due to the nature of the source material, his role in the court of the Batthyány family was analyzed in detail. The examination of his personal connections includes his relationship to

Ádám Batthyány, highlighting his functions as a person of trust in the court and as the captain of the personal army of the Batthyány family.

Compared to him there was János Keczer, who achieved the same positions, namely he succeeded Káldy as the captain of the Batthyány army and as Transdanubian deputy district-captain-general. In contrast with Káldy, whose multi-layered service as a retainer was more determinative, the life of János Keczer can be viewed as a typical (and successful) military career of the 17th century. In the case of János Keczer, his captaincy of Csákány and his participation in the fight against the Turks were the more dominant aspects, so the detailed examination of his functions connected to these themes were in focus.

As an amendment I also presented the lives of the nobles who held the office of Transdanubian deputy district-captain-general after the death of Ádám Batthyány, such as the careers of Ferenc Káldy Jr. of Felsőkáld and the last deputy general, Pál Festetics.

The dissertation concludes with a compilation of the deputy generals' assorted letters.

3. New results

Based on the examination of the careers of those nobles, who held the position of Transdanubian deputy district-captain-generals, we can determine the following:

Considering their social and financial dispersion, most of the deputy district-captain-generals belonged to the class of the wealthier nobility, as all of them possessed land on the territory of West-Transdanubia. The main difference between them was the following: while some of them – the two Ferenc Káldy of Felsőkáld and Zsennyey Gáspár of Kiszsenye – originated from families based in Vas County and most of their lands were also within the territory of the county, the others like the Rátky family of Salamonfa (Menyhért and György) and the Eördögh family of Pölöske originally possessed lands in Zala and Somogy Counties, and most of their lands became lost due to the Turkish advance, or were situated at the edge of Turkish occupied lands.

As far as we know, János Keczer however, did not have significant possessions in West-Transdanubia. We do not have much information about his family either, but it is assumable that the family originated from Croatia or Slavonia. János Keczer had some smaller interests in Varasd County, but based on our current knowledge he could not be considered a wealthy noble. The father of Pál Festetics was only a steward in the court of the Batthyány family. Pál's financial growth can be connected to his participation in the Great Turkish War.

Referring to the social connection, it can also be observed, that the marriage policies of the deputy generals in the 17th century was very similar to each other. All of them married members of Transdanubian noble families (for example the Kisfaludy family of Kisfalud), but it was also frequent to marry widows in order to gain more lands.

The so called “love triangle” mentioned before, namely the connection between service as retainers, holding county offices and military functions, it can be said that for the persons who were titled deputy district-captain-generals, the common factor was their service as retainers. Most of the deputy generals has

undertaken service at the courts of aristocratic families owning huge landmasses in Transdanubia, namely in our cases they served the Batthyány or the Nádasdy family. The identity of the (officially) appointed district-captain-general was decisive in gaining the office, because the district-captain-general was allowed to appoint his deputy-general. We know only one exception, Menyhért Ráttky, but due to the reorganization of the border defense system (because of the loss of Kanizsa) during the Long Turkish War and his own military experience, he was able to occupy higher ranking military positions mostly reserved for aristocrats. A tendency can be also observed that most of the deputy generals (György Ráttky, Ferenc Káldy and János Keczer) were simultaneously the leaders of the lord's own military might, meaning that the district-captain-generals often connected the two offices. This cannot be considered surprising, since the district-captain-generals were in command of the far less important part of the border defense system, namely the temporary soldiers paid by the counties, the troops of the insurrection, additional cavalry and infantry forces paid by the taxes voted upon by the estates and also the private armies of the lords. Thereby the deputy district-captain-generals rose in rank above the other captains leading the armies of the aristocrats.

As it was mentioned, the role of these nobles in the courts of the aristocrats was pivotal in attaining the position of deputy general. The service was of course multi-layered. In the case of the deputy generals, they found their place and tasks within the courts based on their previous positions (for example captaincy of a border fortress or county offices such as sub lieutenantcy). While some (Menyhért Ráttky, János Keczer and Pál Festetics) managed to prevail through their military positions, others (like Ferenc Káldy or Simon Eördögh) distinguished themselves by holding important county offices. This however did not mean that these nobles did not possess military experience or any military past, but through their careers not the military role was dominant.

It can be also determined that the deputy district-captain-general office was not the most prominent role in the life of these nobles, with the exception of

Gáspár Sennyey, but his was an ostensive case due to him taking the side of Gábor Bethlen. The other military ranks held by Menyhért Ráttky was more significant than the office of deputy district-captain-general and the main function of György Ráttky in turn was his service in the court of the Nádasdy family, namely him being the captain of the family's own forces. In the case of Ferenc Káldy sr. – him being the most trusted advisor of Ádám Batthyány –, his role as a retainer was also the more prominent, but his political career and connections made him even more remarkable. János Keczer became the captain of Csákány fortress as a retainer, which role he kept even after his appointment to the deputy general's office.

It can be also noted that in the case of Menyhért Ráttky and Ferenc Káldy, while they were unable to transmit the deputy general office directly to their descendants, their sons were able to acquire the position later on.

The obtainment of the position not only meant a higher social status but it offered other advantages too. From a military point of view, the deputy generals commanded the cavalry and infantry contingent payed by the taxes of the estates (150 horsemen and 100 infantrymen), which was quite important to the border fortress captain János Keczer, even if the contingent was not the most remarkable part of the border defense system. Another benefit was the regular annual payment, since not only the district captain-general, but his deputy received allowance for filling in the position. The payment, of course, faltered in the era.

It is necessary to discuss the usefulness of the deputy generals' correspondence, which are serving as the base of this dissertation. In the case of some nobles, quite numerous letters survived, thus I was able to present fully comprehensive career paths. Owing to these letters, the relationship between lord and retainer was quite interpretable. Of course these documents contain a lot of irrelevant or hardly interpretable information, so it is easy for someone to lose oneself in them, but in the end these letters are quite useful: they can supplement the study of the inner working of the aristocratic courts – especially the court of the Batthyány family –, but they also contain information about everyday life in

the 17th century, or about the sicknesses of the writers. The letters of János Keczer can also be used to examine the building history of Csákány fortress in the 17th century, to study the everyday life on the front lines, or to analyze the regular border skirmishes too.

4. Publications on the subject

Főúr és familiáris viszonya id. felsőkáldy Káldy Ferenc Batthyány II. Ferenchez és Lobkowitz Poppel Évához írt levelei alapján. In: Társadalom- és életmódtörténeti kalandozások térben és időben. A nyugat-dunántúli végektől a Kárpátokig. Szerk. J. Újváry Zsuzsanna. Piliscsaba, 2014. 77-91. o.

Az 1646–1647-es pozsonyi országgyűlés egy résztvevőjével. Felsőkáldi Káldy Ferenc levelei dominuszának, Batthyány I. Ádámnak. In: Hadi és más nevezetes történetek. Tanulmányok Veszprémy László tiszteletére. Szerk. Kincses Katalin Mária. HM Hadtörténeti Intézet és Múzeum, Budapest, 2018. 51-65. o.

Adalék a Szent Koronáért elzálogosított nyugat-magyarországi területek visszacsatolásáért felelős bizottság működéséhez. In: „A magyar múltat kutatni, írni és láttatni – ez által szolgálni a hazát”. Tisztelgő kötet J. Újváry Zsuzsanna 25. Pázmányos oktatói éve előtt. Szerk. Biró Bence–Miski Péter–Törtei Renáta. Budapest–Piliscsaba, 2020. 173–184. o.

Két úr között. Észrevételek Salamonfai Ráttky György Batthyány I. Ádámmal írt leveleivel kapcsolatban. In: Történelmi kalandozások térben és időben. Szerk. J. Újváry Zsuzsanna. Budapest 2020. 27–37. o.

Festetics Pál dunántúli kerületi főkapitány-helyettes tevékenysége a török alóli felszabadító háború időszakában. In: Oszmán-magyar viszony a 16–18. században. Tanulmányok a Magyar Királyság és az Oszmán Birodalom népeinek – magyarok, törökök, rácok, tatárok, zsidók, görögök és egyéb népek – hétköznapjairól; egyén és közösség viszonya. Szerk. J. Újváry Zsuzsanna. Budapest, 2020. 331–362. o.

Presentations held on the subject

2013. 11. 29.: Főúr és familiáris viszonya id. felsőkáldy Káldy Ferenc Batthyány II. Ferenchez és Lobkowitz Poppel Évához írt levelei alapján
Társadalom- és életmód-történeti kalandozások térben és időben. A nyugat-dunántúli végektől a Kárpátokig konferencia, PPKE-BTK, Budapest

2018. 01. 12.: Két úr között. Észrevételek Salamonfai Ráttky György Batthyány I. Ádámmal írt leveleivel kapcsolatban
Életmód-történeti pillanatképek II. konferencia, PPKE-BTK, Budapest.

2018. 05. 24.: Ifj. Festetics Pál levelei (1674–1690)
Hétköznapok az oszmán uralom idején. Egyén és közösség viszonya konferencia, PPKE-BTK, Budapest.

2019. 01. 24.: Temetkezési szokások a dunántúli főkapitány-helyetteseknél a XVII. században
Társadalom- és Életmód-történeti konferencia, PPKE-BTK, Budapest