

Preface

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The region where the modern frontiers of Croatia, Hungary and Austria meet was protected against the Ottoman occupation by chains of smaller and larger defences (fortresses, watch towers, outposts, fortified castles, engineer barricades, water barriers) established along the Rába, Mura and Drava Rivers in the seventeenth century. A part of this system was the defensive zone of Muraköz, including about a dozen outposts, managed by members of the Zrínyi family; hence its contemporary name, the *Zerinische Grenze* (“Zrínyi border area”). Beginning with 1649, Miklós Zrínyi (VII, 1620–1664), Ban of Croatia and Slavonia, directed its defence as the Captain General of Muraköz and Légrád.¹ This charismatic military leader of the border fights, one of the high dignitaries of the Kingdoms of Hungary and Croatia, a politician with European perspectives, added a new stronghold to this border defence system in the summer of 1661. It was meant to keep the Ottoman territories found beyond the Mura under closer control, and to hold Kanizsa (an important Ottoman *vilayet* centre) at bay. Zrínyi-Újvár was built from rammed earth and timber “in the Hungarian way”, to the north of the confluence of the Mura and Drava Rivers, on the left bank of the Mura, making effective use of the favourable geomorphological and other natural features of the region. It played an important role in international anti-Ottoman schemes and served as a *casus belli* for the outbreak of the Ottoman–Habsburg War of 1663–1664.

It was during this war (in June 1664) that the Ottoman main army led by Grand Vizier Köprülü Ahmed took the fortress after more than three weeks of siege, and subsequently levelled it to the ground. The sixth article of the armistice agreement accepted by the envoys of Habsburg Leopold I, Holy Roman Emperor and King of Hungary, and Sultan Mehmed IV in Vasvár, on 10 August, stated that neither party would be allowed to rebuild the fortress and post guards in it. Zrínyi-Újvár existed for only three years, but it was the focus of Europe’s attention from 1663 to 1664. Finally, it completely disappeared from the face of the earth and slowly faded from historical memory, as well. Compared to its strategic significance and the large number of pamphlets and pictorial representations that have survived about it, until the late twentieth century, we had little information about the location and character of the fortress, as well as the circumstances of its establishment and its end. The reason for this lies not only in the complete destruction of the stronghold, but also in the diverse perceptions of its role already among the contemporaries.

¹ For the latest summary of Miklós Zrínyi’s life’s work, see the following volume published in Hungarian and English: *Sándor Bene – Nóra G. Etényi – Gábor Hausner – József Kelenik – Ágnes R. Várkonyi: Zrínyi-album [Zrínyi Album]*. HM Zrínyi Nonprofit Kft. 2016.

The history of the location, role, building and destruction of Zrínyi-Újvár came back to the forefront of international interest with the launch of cross-border, interdisciplinary research programs in the mid-1990s, which focused on the historical investigation of this special border region flanked by the Mura and Drava Rivers and the triple frontier stretching there.

In Hungary, the historical research and excavation of Zrínyi-Újvár was initiated by László Vándor, archaeologist, supported from the side of history by Ferenc Szakály, an internationally renowned researcher of the Ottoman period, and a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Finally, the on-site investigations were carried out with the collaboration of experts from the Institute and Museum of Military History of the Ministry of Defence, the Miklós Zrínyi University of National Defence (since 2011 National University of Public Service), the Directorates of Somogy and Zala County Museums – historians, military historians, military engineers, cartographers and archaeologists. Their work was supported by the municipalities and helpful residents of Belezna and Őrtilos (these settlements share the area and neighbourhood of the fortress today).

Our research group – comprising mainly former and current teachers of the Faculty of Military Science and Officer Training at the National University of Public Service, and its predecessor the Miklós Zrínyi University of National Defence – has been conducting systematic battlefield investigations in the immediate vicinity of the current Croatian–Hungarian border since 2005.

The first results of this research can be found in a volume entitled *Zrínyi-Újvár emlékezete* [The Memory of Zrínyi-Újvár] published at Argumentum in Budapest, in 2012. At that stage of the research, the emphasis was on new sources and their historical interpretation, whereas the study of on-site excavations and finds occupied a minor role due to the scarcity of financial and human resources. Since then, we have adopted a number of state-of-the-art technical solutions, instruments and methods in order to gain the most comprehensive and accurate picture possible of the fortress, its surroundings and the siege of 1664. In this book, after discussing the construction, role and siege of the fortress, we present the latest results of excavations beginning with 2012 (including the archaeological excavation of a section of the wooden post structure and the well of the fortress). Furthermore, we demonstrate non-destructive survey methods, which can be used to obtain information without disturbing the ground surface in order to detect, investigate, evaluate and interpret subsoil anomalies of archaeological interest.

The presentation of techniques and methods based on different principles of surveying and their potential areas of application have therefore received significantly greater attention in our volume than in the 2012 edition. We obtained new results in the metallographic (electron-microscopic and X-ray Fluorescence Spectroscopy) analyses of artillery and infantry projectiles and their shrapnel, which can be connected to the Ottoman siege of Zrínyi-Újvár in 1664, as well as in the archaeometric analysis of iron nails used for the construction of the well uncovered from the well in the spring of 2017. Additionally, we carried out a xylotomical analysis of timber materials used for the well. Last but not least, we dedicate a major case study in our volume to 3D imaging and modelling, in which we demonstrate through the examples of Zrínyi and Zrínyi-Újvár the possibilities of their application in archaeology and their use in education. Virtual/augmented reality-based solutions can become useful tools for interactive teaching of history. In a prototype version

prepared while developing a virtual view of Zrínyi-Újvár, we can explore the contemporary landscape and the fortifications in the role of Miklós Zrínyi himself.

In the last chapter of our work, we include again the texts of the most significant Christian and Ottoman written sources on Zrínyi-Újvár.

We do hope that by applying the up-to-date methods and tools of history, archaeology and engineering side by side, we shall be able to unveil the past, and bring to light the historical heritage that has been destroyed but preserved deep in the ground, and thus bring out from the obscurity of oblivion an important piece of Miklós Zrínyi's life's work.