

The Construction and Siege of Zrínyi-Újvár as Reflected by Written Sources and Contemporary Sketch Maps

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Extant sources about the construction of Zrínyi-Újvár

The earliest accounts of the construction of the fortress date from June 1661.¹ According to narrative sources, in May Zrínyi inspected and took possession of the hill found in the vicinity of the confluence of the Mura River and Kanizsa Stream, which belonged to Ottoman Hungary. A fortified castle of the Kecskis, a family in very close relationship with Zrínyi's great-grandfather, once stood on this hill. Referring to that this castle was found "almost on his own estate", Zrínyi started to build his fortress there. On 5 July 1661, István Vitnyédy, one of Zrínyi's "noble servants", informed Menyhért Keczer, a leading member of the Protestant nobility of Upper Hungary and an influential supporter of the Thököly family, about the construction of the fortress: "My lord started to build a strong fortress between Légrád and Kotori, on this side of the Mura River, in the neighbourhood of the Ottomans. It was formerly called Kecskévár, and his lordship called it Új Zrínyivár ['New Zrínyi Fortress'] after himself. He is in the camp in person, and his soldiers fight there with success..." According to Vitnyédy, three bastions had been completed by that time, and it only took a few more weeks to finish the construction.²

Contemporary sources and later historical works have preserved the name of the new fortress in many forms. In official documents it was called 'Zerinische Schantz', 'Zerinische Castell', 'Neuen Zrinischen Vestung', 'Neuen Serinischen fortezza', or 'Neuen Zrinischen Forte'. It was occasionally also referred to as 'Zrinische Palanka', 'Posto Neue Serin', 'Serinwahr', and 'Neuen Vestung Zrin var'. Montecuccoli called it 'forte Zrini', and in the sketch of siege drawn by him in 1664, it is labelled 'Schantz Neü [sic!] Serin'. According to an account by Evliya Çelebi, the Ottoman Turks called it Jeni Kála. Zrínyi himself used the term Zrínyi-Újvár in one of his letters written in Hungarian on the spot, on 20 May 1662. That is why, we adopt this latter.³

¹ Reports by Walter Leslie, Captain General in Varasd (today Varaždin, Croatia). ÖStA KA IHKR Vindica Prot. Bd. 68. July 1661. fol. 91–95; August 1661. fol. 100–107.

² István Vitnyédy's letter to Menyhért Keczer, Sopron, 5 July 1661. *Fabó* XV. 1871. 157.

³ *Luraghi* II. 1988. 430; *Evliya* 1985. 571; ZMÖM 1958. 313. After Tibor Klaniczay, who wrote a monograph on Zrínyi (*Klaniczay* 1964. 703), we use the name Zrínyi-Újvár, although even Zrínyi himself called it in various ways. His letter dated 13 August 1663, written by his own hand in Italian contains the term "nova fortezza Zrin", whereas the Latin copy of his last will and testament dated 6 April 1662 comprises the form "arcem et praesidium nostrum Novum Zrin". ZMÖM 1958. 563, 610.



Figure 1.

The portrait of Miklós Zrínyi, in the background Zrínyi-Újvár and Zrínyi's camp in the Muraköz (inscription dated 1662), copperplate engraving by an unknown German artist

Source: OSZK, App. H. 3030

The construction was financed by Zrínyi mainly from his own income. It was built up with the free work of serfs coming from Zrínyi's estates in Muraköz, and the surrounding estates, counties and towns, as well as with the work of day labourers.⁴ Additionally, he also asked for (and received, according to scattered data) some money and various equipment for the construction from the neighbouring Styria and the Republic of Venice.⁵

According to Zrínyi's intention, the fortress served not only the defence of Muraköz and his own estates found there, but also that of Styria. Furthermore, it was built as a base of offensive actions from the onset, as it is testified by the letter of the above-mentioned István Vitnyédy dated August 1661: "It is certain that, if his lordship can keep it, *Kanisa* will be *Sub continua obsidione* [under constant siege]."⁶

⁴ See, for example, Zrínyi's letter requesting the judges and senators of Varasd for a week's serf labour, Zrínyi-Újvár, 25 July 1661, as well as his letter addressed to János Gersei Pethő, Zrínyi-Újvár, 8 August 1661. ZMVL 1997. 120, 121.

⁵ Miklós Zrínyi turned to the Styrian Estates and the War Council in Graz for help in his letters written at Csáktornya, on 26 March 1662. ZMVL 1997. 122–126. Radoslav Lopašić, for example, published a report dated January 1671, which lists the aid (weapons, cannon, cannonballs, ammunition and building materials) that Miklós Zrínyi received from the Styrian Estates upon his request. Lopašić 1883. 136–139. For the support provided by the Styrian Estates to Miklós Zrínyi, see also the study by István Czigány in the present volume.

⁶ István Vitnyédy to István Lenturics, Sopron, 28 August 1661. Fabó XV. 1871. 173.

The construction of the fortress was directly related to the events that occurred in Transylvania, namely the armed struggles led by Princes György Rákóczi II and János Kemény. Zrínyi started building the fortress after the Transylvanian Diet (held on 23 April 1661, in Beszterce [today Bistrița, Romania]) declared secession from the Sublime Porte on the proposal of Prince János Kemény, and negotiations started in Vienna about supporting Transylvania. In response, a huge Ottoman army was launched against János Kemény, under the command of Serdar Köse Ali Pasha. With the construction of Zrínyi-Újvár, Zrínyi sought to engage the Ottoman forces. So did the imperial commander Raimondo Montecuccoli, who wanted to achieve the same goal with a diversionary manoeuvre against Buda or Esztergom.⁷

Zrínyi succeeded in distracting some Ottoman forces from Transylvania with the construction of the fortress itself. As early as July 1661, Grand Vizier Ahmed Köprülü ordered Mustafa Pasha and Hassan Pasha, both of whom knew the border fortress district facing Kanizsa very well, to inhibit the construction. According to some accounts, for this reason, an Ottoman army of over 10,000 soldiers was amassed around Pécs.⁸ The fortress represented an intolerable provocation in the eyes of the Ottoman Turks. This is clearly shown by the numerous attacks launched against the fortress from the very beginning of the building, as well as by the fact that during the negotiations between the Habsburgs and the Sublime Porte, one of the conditions of the agreement was the destruction of Zrínyi-Újvár. In April 1663, Köprülü Ahmed demanded again the surrender of Zrínyi-Újvár in an ultimatum, and because he did not achieve this, the fortress served as a *casus belli* for the outbreak of the Great Ottoman War of 1663–1664.⁹ During this war, in August 1663, the Pashas of Bosnia and Kanizsa attacked the fortress with approximately 8,000 soldiers, which – in the absence of Zrínyi – was successfully defended by Zrínyi's younger brother, Péter Zrínyi.¹⁰ On 27 November 1663, the Ottoman Turks, reinforced by major forces and bridge construction units, attempted crossing over the Mura River at Kotori, which was prevented by Zrínyi in a fierce fight lasting for a whole day.¹¹ On 21 January 1664,

⁷ See Montecuccoli's proposal submitted to the emperor: Umilissimo parere intorno alla conservazione dell'Ungheria, e della Transilvania (25 February 1662). ÖStA KA Nachlasse Mémoires B/492/c/8/18. Its critical edition: Testa 2000. 128–133. The document has already been published by Veltzé: *Ausgewählte Schriften* IV. 1900. 95–108. According to this, Transylvania cannot be directly assisted by the deployment of the royal army in it, because, due to the great distance, half of the army would die before its arrival. Therefore, the only possible way to help Transylvania is to carry out a diversionary manoeuvre. See also B. Szabó 2011.

⁸ ÖStA KA IHKR Vindica Prot. Bd. 68. August 1661. fol. 107r-v.; ÖStA KA HKR Prot. Bd. 324. 10 August 1661. fol. 197r.; ÖStA KA HKR Prot. Exp. Bd. 323. August 1661 fol. 375r. See also, the letter of Miklós Zrínyi to an unknown person, Martianež, 28 June 1661. ZMVL 1997. 116. According to a contemporary, "the Ottoman Turks made a resolution [decision], even if they had to leave Transylvania temporarily [...] to demolish it [...] completely [...]". (The letter of Georg Fenth, the notary of Köszeg, to Ferenc Mankóbüki Horváth, 17 October 1661. Cited by Kovács 1998. 913.) In June 1661, the Sultan allegedly executed the infamous and feared Seydi Ahmed, the Pasha of Kanizsa, because he could not prevent the construction of Zrínyi-Újvár. *Fabó* XV. 1871. 160, 163. Cf. *Sudár* 2011. 888–909.

⁹ *Perjés* 1999. 150–159; R. *Várkonyi* 2010. 292–293.

¹⁰ István Vitnyédy to Rottal, Sopron, 19 August 1663. *Fabó* XVI. 1871. 108–109; Historischer Loorbeer-Krantz der Christlichen Rittersleute. Nürnberg, 1664. (OSZK App. H. 909.) 142–143; *Zimmermann, Martin*: Denkwürdige Historia. Augsburg, 1665. (OSZK App. H. 942.) 12; *Gradelehn, Johann*: Hungarische, Siebenbürgische Moldau-Wallach... Chronica. Frankfurt a. Mayn, 1665. (App. H. 943.) 678–679.

¹¹ Miklós Zrínyi to Leopold I, Légrád, 28 November 1663. ZMÖM 1958. 327–329.



Figure 2.

A contemporary pamphlet on the clash between Miklós Zrínyi and Ali Pasha in November 1663, with the depiction of Zrínyi-Újvár in the upper left corner of the image

Source: MNM TKCs T 1040

the reinforcement troops of the Rhenish Alliance led by Julius Hohenlohe and the army of Zrínyi gathered under Zrínyi-Újvár, and launched their winter campaign from there, which was meant to be the first action of their offensive war against the Ottomans.¹²

The strategic importance of the construction of Zrínyi-Újvár was also known in the Viennese Court. High Seneschal Duke Portia, President of the Privy Council, who supported peace with the Ottoman Turks, condemned Zrínyi. However, those who urged to take action against the Ottoman Turks welcomed the construction of the fortress.¹³ In 1661, even Raimondo Montecuccoli, Zrínyi's later opponent, acknowledged the role that the fortress had in the blockade of Kanizsa. Moreover, in 1662, he himself considered launching an attack southwards on Kanizsa.¹⁴ The judgement about Zrínyi-Újvár in the Imperial Court was influenced by fights between the so-called "Spanish" (pro-peace) party and the "Italian" (pro-war) party with alternating outcome.¹⁵ In the summer of 1661, the supporters of the Ottoman war became temporarily stronger in Vienna, – in July 1661, even Montecuccoli was sent to Transylvania to help János Kemény¹⁶ – and thus Zrínyi was allowed (without formal permission) to build a fortress on Ottoman land. Additionally, Guislain Segers d'Ideghem von Wassenhoven, an experienced Dutch military engineer of the Imperial War Council was also sent to his aid,¹⁷ and even one and a half hundred musketeers were posted in the fortress, under the command of Zrínyi.¹⁸

The construction of the fortress was, therefore, not the individual act of a single lord, as it was held by historiography based on Montecuccoli's later works, especially his memoirs written for Emperor Leopold I in 1670, during the dissolution of the conspiracy of the estates organised by Zrínyi and Frangepán (*Della guerra col Turco in Ungheria*), as well as the representative biography of Leopold I by Gualdo Priorato (*Historia di Leopoldo Cesare*) reflecting Montecuccoli's views. Instead, (at least in 1661) it was an enterprise, supported by the Imperial Court, Venice and the Styrian Estates, connected to and fitting well into the international struggles against the Ottoman Empire, and above all the Ottoman–Venetian War that had already been fought for over a decade in the Mediterranean region.¹⁹ All this is well reflected in the great international attention it received. Dozens of pamphlets

¹² *Perjés* 1989. 37–41, 59–60; *Perjés* 2002. 373–382.

¹³ *R. Várkonyi* 1985. II. 1089.

¹⁴ *Marczali* 1880. 754. Montecuccoli considered a possible attack against Kanizsa and/or Esztergom in his proposal entitled *Combinazione della guerra contr'al Turco in Transilvania, ed Ungheria*, formulated on 9 March 1662. ÖStA KA Nachlasse Mémoires B/492/c/8/20. Kart. 3. fol. 3r.; *Testa* 2000. 137.

¹⁵ *R. Várkonyi* 1985. II. 1089; *Bérenger* 2004. 156–161.

¹⁶ For this, more recently, see *B. Szabó* 2011. 930–933.

¹⁷ As early as 1654, Wassenhoven received a monthly pay of 50 forints, on the ruler's order. ÖStA KA HKR Prot. Exp. Bd. 307. 1653–1654. fol. 429r. 28 March 1654. Domokos 2012. 48. Zrínyi asked the Styrian Estates already in 1657 "to order the Dutch military engineer, who was otherwise hired for the needs of the province", to assist the fortification work of the Csáktornya Fortress as soon as possible. The letter of Miklós Zrínyi to the Styrian Estates, March 1657. ZMVL 1997. 96.

¹⁸ For transferring 150 musketeers of the Wallis Regiment to Zrínyi-Újvár, see ÖStA KA IHKR Vindica Prot. Bd. 68. September 1661 fol. 148; ÖStA KA HKR Reg. Prot. Bd. 324. 7 November 1661. fol. 289v.; ÖStA KA HKR Prot. Exp. Bd. 323. 7 November 1661. fol. 479a; István Vitnyédy to Menyhért Keczer, Sopron, 23 November 1661. *Fabó* XV. 1871. 175.

¹⁹ *R. Várkonyi* 2010. 292–293. For this, see also the study by István Czigány published in the present volume.



Figure 3.

Csáktornya (Serinwar) and Zrínyi-Újvár (Neu Serin war) on the other side of the Mura, coloured copperplate engraving from 1663

Source: MNM TKCs 58.2478



Figure 4.

The sieges of Zrínyi-Újvár and Kolozsvár represented together with the bust of Zrínyi, on a contemporary German copperplate engraving

Source: MNM TKCs T 4655

and reports dealt with the events of 1663 and 1664, and approximately sixty pictorial representations have remained of it.²⁰

The irregularly shaped earth and wood fortification, according to our current knowledge, could originally take in 300 guards.²¹ It was later extended, and an advanced defensive work and ditches had been added to it by 1664. In 1662, while work on the fortification was still in full swing,²² Colonel Jacob von Holst, military engineer, was sent to Zrínyi-Újvár by the Imperial War Council because of the protest of the Sublime Porte. He was charged with inspecting the site from the perspective of defence against the Ottoman Turks. Holst found it indefensible from a large army and reported that “because of his location, it could not be improved, either”.²³ Subsequently, under the pressure of the strengthened pro-peace party and the repeated Ottoman demand,²⁴ the ruler ordered the demolition of the fortress. However, Zrínyi refused it, and did not carry out the order. On the contrary, he expressed his firm conviction that Zrínyi-Újvár was an establishment “that served the benefit of the entire Christendom” and continued the building. In early 1662, he had a wide fishpond dug to the east of the fortress – implementing a late sixteenth-century plan – that was filled up by leading the water of the Mura River into Visszafolyó-patak [Backflow Stream], and building a sluice on it.²⁵ We do not know exactly when, but presumably sometime in 1664, after the arrival of French military engineer Dubois D’Avancourt, a triangular advanced defensive work was constructed in the dry ditch, on the western side of

²⁰ For the former, see *G. Etényi* 2003; for the latter, see *Cennerné* 1997. 172–177; *Szalai–Szántai* II. 2006. 158–161. (It contains fifty-nine pictorial representations of Zrínyi-Újvár.) Nevertheless, some of the engraved representations, vedutas, labelled Serinwar, in reality, depict one of Zrínyi’s strongholds in Muraköz, the well-constructed Csáktornya. This had previously misled even researchers. The cover of a representative volume on Zrínyi-Újvár published in Croatia in 2001, for example, shows a fictitious view entitled “Serinwar” by J. W. Valvasor, which, in fact, represents Csáktornya. *Petrić–Feletar–Feletar* 2001. cover and 34–35.

²¹ According to Zrínyi’s memoir written to Emperor Leopold I in Vienna on 17 July 1664, the fortress was previously defended by 120 German and 150 Hungarian soldiers (ZMVL 1997. 221.). Priorato also writes about 300 soldiers (*Priorato* II. 1670. 407.), while a Viennese account dated July 1661 records a 500-strong garrison. *Marczali* 1880. 754.

²² In his last will and testament dated 6 April 1662, Zrínyi also writes about further plans to fortify Zrínyi-Újvár. ZMÖM 1958. II. 391, 611.

²³ The commission of Holst: ÖStA KA HKR Reg. Prot. Bd. 326. 12 April 1662. fol. 78v. He sent his report (“Holst Relation Zrinische Vestungen und Stätt”) to the Imperial War Council in July: ÖStA KA HKR Exp. Prot. Bd. 325. fol. 286r. See also: *Priorato* II. 1672. 106.

²⁴ During the peace negotiations in May and June 1662, the Grand Vizier told Reniger, the legate sent to the Porte, that the destruction of the fortress was one of their conditions for maintaining the Habsburg–Ottoman peace. In May and June, several conferences were held on peace conditions in Vienna, headed by Duke Portia. ÖStA KA HKR Exp. Prot. Bd. 325. July 1662. fol. 287r-v.

²⁵ The ditch leading the water of the Mura River into the Kanizsa Stream (and thus raising its water level) was completed in April 1662. István Vitnyédy to István Rabby, Locsmánd (today Lutzmanssburg, Austria), 8 April 1662. *Fabó* XVI. 1871. 195. It is also shown on the sketches by Holst and Esterházy: „ff. Gräben, so der graff von Zrin machen lassen den wald vor die guarnison zu versichern vnd zu gebrauchen.” *Hrenkó* 1979. 127. Raising the water level of the Kanizsa Stream at Kakony with the water of the Mura was proposed by the *Muster Comission*, made up of war councillors and border fortress captains (including György Zrínyi IV!, the grandfather of Miklós Zrínyi) supervising the border fortress district of Kanizsa, as early as 1577. They found that the Ottomans could easily cross the stream both on horseback and on foot because of the low water level. *Kelenik* 2005a. 353; *Hausner–Négyesi–Papp* 2005. 836.

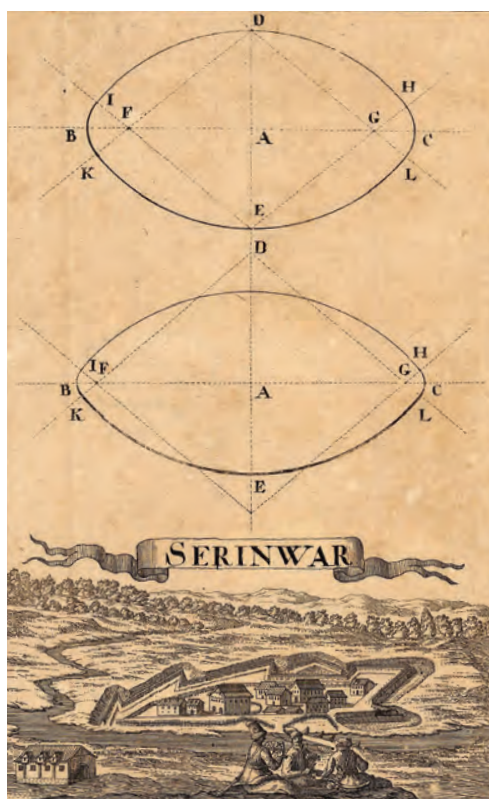


Figure 5.

Zrínyi-Újvár in a copperplate engraving by Justus van der Nyport

Source: Birckenstein 1686. (OSZK, App. H. 1217)

the fortress. Additionally, on the other side of the Mura – that is on the right bank of the river – a bridgehead (*redoute*) was established with a capacity of about fifty men, which was connected to the other bank by a bridge.²⁶

²⁶ For the capacity of the *redoute*, see *Priorato* II. 1670. 407. According to a letter of Márk Forstall, the court priest of Zrínyi, D'Avancourt "made excellent defences and mines for the fortress": Manuscripts of the National Széchényi Library OSZK KT Fol. Gall. 75. II. fol. 184a–187a. Published by *Bíró* 1989. 197. The fact that the expansion of the defences of the fortress above was executed by him is also indirectly confirmed by a letter written by a military engineer called Damian von Niedeggen to Montecuccoli in November 1663. He then regarded the fact that the defences of the fortress were completely open to the River Mura as one of its weaknesses, and suggested that defensive posts should be built against the Ottoman attacks below the fortress, on the island of the Mura. Consequently, the *redoute* on the other side and the palisade running to the river still did not exist in November 1663. They were probably established after the arrival of D'Avancourt, and under his direction. (Nevertheless, Niedeggen believed that – in spite of its deficiencies – Zrínyi-Újvár was stronger than Érsekújvár [today Nové Zámky, Slovakia] due to the surrounding forests and marshes! ÖStA KA AFA 1663/11/6. fol. 441v. *Domokos* 2012. 45.) On the activity of D'Avancourt during the siege of Zrínyi-Újvár: ÖStA KA HKR Prot. Exp. Bd. 328. fol. 307r., 336r-v., 340v.

The extant letters written by Miklós Zrínyi contain very little information about the construction of the fortress and its geographical environment. On 5 July 1661, Zrínyi informed members of the Imperial War Council about military reasons for the building. Unfortunately, the suitable location of the fortress was presented only verbally (and presumably with a drawing) by the military engineer Wassenhoven, who was involved in the construction, but that drawing did not survive.²⁷ In addition to his letter addressed to the Imperial War Council, Zrínyi wrote about the fortress in three other letters and in his last will and testament drawn up in April 1662. His letters, particularly the one written to the ruler on 27 June 1664, describing the camp in the Muraköz and blaming Montecuccoli for his military strategy, as well as his bitter memoir made in Vienna on 17 July 1664, after the fall of the fortress, can be used as sources about the siege of Zrínyi-Újvár.²⁸

From the narrative sources, only those are worth considering the authors of which took part in the siege, that is, personally visited the site. We are in a fortunate situation, because we know three authors (two from the Christian camp, and one from the camp of the besieging Ottoman Turks) who left behind relatively long, evaluable descriptions of the fortress and the events that occurred there. What is more, these include sketches and accounts by Raimondo Montecuccoli, the Imperial Commander-in-Chief leading the defence: “This fortress had been built to serve as a bridgehead for a bridge that allowed crossing over the Mura River towards Kanizsa, and to secure the retreat of troops returning from raids in peacetime. If the raiders were pursued by the Ottoman Turks, they could find shelter there with their loot, and could easily cross the bridge. This place was insignificant because it had no ditches, no covered paths, no form and no wings, either. Its defensive lines were very short. The level of construction was low and sloping, but the earthen embankment was high and very narrow. Nevertheless, it was dominated by one hill, and the Ottoman Turks set up their battery on it. Inside [the fortress], there was neither land, nor space. It was open on both sides, because the walls were not built to the water. An open area was left between the walls and the water. Therefore, from the very first moment to the last, there was equally a danger that it would be occupied in close combat.”²⁹

The given description offered by Montecuccoli – as it was emphasised by the Hungarian scholarship decades ago – should be treated with strong source criticism. He wrote all this in 1670, during the dissolution of the Wesselényi Conspiracy, in his memoirs compiled for Emperor Leopold I. The main purpose of this work was to justify the Peace of Vasvár, and to transfer responsibility to the Hungarians.³⁰

²⁷ Miklós Zrínyi to the Imperial War Council, Légrad, 5 July 1661. ZMVL 1997. 117–118.

²⁸ Ibid. 159–162, 213–222.

²⁹ *Raimondo Montecuccoli: Della guerra col Turco in Ungheria*. In: *Luraghi* 1988. II. 428–431. *Montecuccoli* 2019. 214. In his report written to Emperor Leopold in 1664, Montecuccoli also disparaged the fortress: “It was therefore an insignificant, small place: it had no ditches, no contrascarpa, no shape, no wings and no earthen rampart inside, either. It was completely open to the water, so it was likely to fall already in the first hour of a siege, let alone in the last. It was also unsuitable for raids because of the steep parts and the opposite hill. Additionally, it was so confined that only a few men could fit in without causing too much confusion, and hindering one another. So it was not worth defending it at all.” *Raimondo Montecuccoli: Relazione della campagna dell’Armata Cesarea nell’Anno MDCLXIV*. ÖStA KA AFA 1664/13/29. fol. 6r.

³⁰ *R. Várkonyi* 1975. 90; *Perjés* 1961. 180.

The other description of Zrínyi-Újvár was left for the posterity by the young Pál Esterházy, a devoted follower of Zrínyi. His memoir entitled *Mars Hungaricus* was written in Latin shortly after the fall of the fortress. In the summer of 1664, Esterházy was himself at the head of his 900-strong army in the camp of the Hungarians set up next to Kotor (today Kotoriba, Croatia on the right bank of the River Mura. (On the sketch by Montecuccoli, he appears by the name.) According to the testimony of his letters addressed to his wife, he was personally present in the besieged stronghold. Esterházy first entered Zrínyi-Újvár on 23 June. He walked around the fortress, and had it even drawn: “I walked everywhere” – he wrote to his wife on the following day – “and I am sending to you its *delineatio*.” In his letter dated 30 June, he again mentions his visit to the fortress. On 14 July, he inspected the remains of the defences which had already been blown up and burnt down by the Ottoman Turks, and he also took a look at the Ottoman gun emplacements. His letters confirm and here and there complete with useful pieces of information (such as a reference to the “lower fence” of the fortress) what he wrote in *Mars Hungaricus*. The source analysis of his memoir shows that Esterházy gave a more or less accurate account of the events in which he himself had participated, using his own notes and contemporary documents.³¹

The Christian sources above are well complemented by the description of Zrínyi-Újvár and its siege provided by Evliya Çelebi, the Ottoman world traveller. In the spring of 1664, Evliya rushed from Bosnia to Hungary in order to participate in the Ottoman campaign. Except for a period of about eight to ten days, he was present during the whole siege. By that time, he had travelled almost all over the Ottoman Empire (*nota bene*: in 1660, he even visited Zrínyi at Csáktornya). In his work entitled *Seyahâtnâme* [Book of Travels], he summarised the experiences he had had during his travels. In Volume 6 he writes about the location and shape of Zrínyi-Újvár (*Jeni kala* in Turkish), and the events of the siege.³² According to Çelebi: “It was built by Zerin oğlu [...] when Sohrab Mehmed Pasha was the Vali of Kanizsa and Kanizsa was burnt down, with the aim to occupy Kanizsa, on this side of the Mura River, on the land belonging to Kanizsa, in a distance of three hours from Kanizsa, despite the peace treaty [...]. Although Sohrab Mehmed Pasha repeatedly urged him, saying ‘Demolish this fortress!’, he was not willing to do so. Instead, he fortified the fortress even more, and placed twenty thousand selected soldiers in it, who kept plundering and destroying the Islamic province [...]. The fortress was constructed of wood, like Kanizsa, on a wooded and shady promontory, on the bank of the Mura River. To be sure, the damn enemy rebuilt it into an Iskender fortress.”³³

³¹ Hausner 1989. 11–14. Géza Pálffy has called attention to some of Esterházy’s errors, but this does not change the fact that the memoir provides an accurate picture of the events, fundamentally based on sources. Pálffy 2016. 33–34.

³² Evliya 1985. 571–576, 587–591.

³³ Evliya 1985. 571–572.

Contemporary cartographic depictions of Zrínyi-Újvár



Figure 6.

Drawing of the siege of Zrínyi-Újvár by Raimondo Montecuccoli, 1664

Source: Montecuccoli: Relazione. ÖStA KA AFA 1664/13/29. Beilage A.

Montecuccoli attached a sketch map showing the siege of Zrínyi-Újvár to his report about the 1664 campaign.³⁴ It is “accurate and reliable, albeit succinct. It indicates only the main elements. It does not depict the buildings of the fortress, either. The fortress is placed on an elevation, but in a way that its floor plan is shown on the side-view picture of the row of hills.”³⁵

It is intriguing that the description of the siege of Zrínyi-Újvár issued in the history written by Gualdo Priorato under the supervision of Montecuccoli is not illustrated with this picture. Instead, it includes a copperplate engraving by Cornelis Meyssens, a Viennese engraver. This shows only the most important landscape features: the Mura River, the Kanizsa Stream and Visszafolyó-patak [Backflow Stream], a small fortress of irregular shape on the left side of the river, as well as a line drawing of Ottoman approaching trenches and artillery trajectories.³⁶ The source of this depiction is a site plan by another important chief officer of the imperial army stationed in Muraköz, namely Colonel Jacob von Holst, military engineer, who had visited the fortress on behalf of the Imperial War

³⁴ Montecuccoli: Relazione. ÖStA KA AFA 1664/13/29. Beilage A.

³⁵ Hrenkó 1979. 126.

³⁶ Priorato II. 1672. between pages 404 and 405. Cf. Cennerné 1997. 175. (D 177), and Szalai–Szántai II. 2006. 160.

Council as early as 1662.³⁷ During the 1664 siege of Kanizsa, Holst was the commander of the artillery, and “before the arrival of Lieutenant General Freiherr von Sparr in the camp” under Zrínyi-Újvár, he also commanded the imperial artillery. The authentic sketch made by Holst was engraved in copperplate by Johann Martin Lerch, working in Vienna, and was published as printed graphics.³⁸

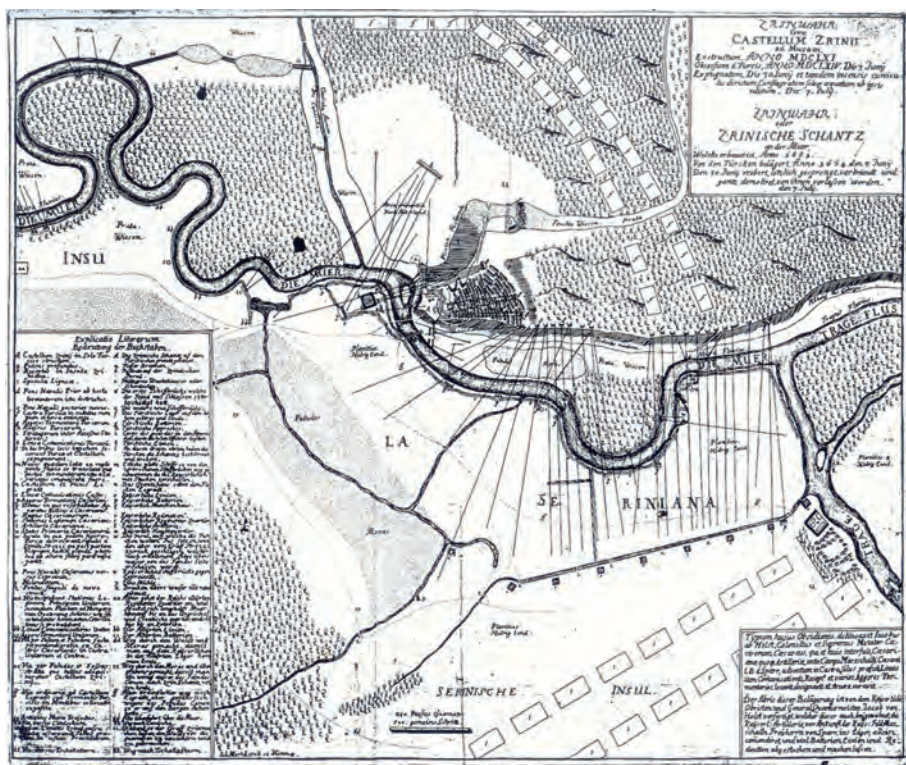


Figure 7.

Site plan of the siege engraved into copperplate by Johann Martin Lerch after a sketch by Colonel Jacob von Holst, military engineer

Source: Szalai–Szántai II. 2006. 159.

³⁷ Holst was also experienced in the construction of fortresses. In 1671, for example, he worked on a number of strongholds in Upper Hungary (Ecsed [Nagyecsed], Kálló [Nagykálló], Tokaj and Kassa [today Košice, Slovakia]), and participated in the fortification of the Szatmár Castle [today on the territory of Satu Mare, Romania]). A number of his castle drawings have been preserved. The images of Kővár (today part of Remetea Chioarului, Romania) and Szamosújvár (today Gherla, Romania), for instance, were included among the illustrations of Priorato's representative work. *Priorato* I. 1670. between pages 726 and 727, and between pages 728 and 729. For his activity, see *Domokos* 2006. 1059–1071.

³⁸ A copy that survived as a single sheet: MNM TKCs 6495 T. See also OSZK App. H. 2098, cf. *Cennerné* 1997. 175.

The nine-line Latin title of the 47.5 × 38 cm image and its nine-line long German equivalent can be read in the top right corner: *ZRINWAHR sive CASTELLUM ZRINII ad Muram, Exstructum ANNO MDCLXI, Obessum á Turcis, ANNO MDCLXIV. Die 3 Juny, Expugnatum, Die 30. Juny et tandem incensis cuniculis dirutum Conflagratum soloque aequatum ab ipsis relictum Die 7 July. / ZRINWAHR oder ZRINISCHE SHANTZ an der Muer, Welche erbauet ist Anno 1661. Von dem Türcken belägert Anno 1664. den 3 Juny, Den 30 Juny erobert, letzlich gesprengt, verbrandt und gantz demiliret, von ihnen verlassen worden, den 7 July.*

The name and titles of Jacob von Holst, the creator of the site plan, that he had in the imperial army are written in Latin and German in the lower right corner: “Typum hujus Obsidionis delineavit Iacobus ab Holst, Colonellus et Supremus Metator Castrorum Caesareus, qui et huic interfuit, Caesarianeae quoque Artilleriae, ante Campi Mareschalli Caesarei L.B. a’ Sparr, adventum in Castra solus praefuit, Lineas item Communicationes Receptavit et varios Aggeres Tormentarios locavit, designavit et [...] curavit. / Der Abriss dieser Belägerung ist von dem Kayserlichen Obristen und General Quartiermeister Jacob von Holst verfertigt, welcher dieser auch beygewohnet, die Kayserliche Artillerie, vor Ankunft der Kayserlichen FeldMarschalln Freyherrn von Sparr, ins Läger, allein commandiret, und viel Batterien, Linien und Redoutten abgestochen und machen lassen.”

Below, on the left, next to the legend running in two parallel columns, the name of the engraver was indicated, again in both Latin and German: “*Ioh.Mart:Lerch sc: Viennae*”.

The depiction made by Holst is very detailed. It has a scale of 1:11,000, and its top is the east. Its key to symbols used runs from A to kk. The image shows a winding river, the plan of a fortification on the left bank of the river, the siege weapons around it and their artillery trajectories.

The appendix of the *Mars Hungaricus* by Pál Esterházy also contains a coloured sketch map in ink of the same scale, with the following caption: “Geometrical site plan and depiction of Zrínyi’s fortification, Zrínyivár by the Mura River, which was occupied in 1661. The Ottoman Turks laid siege to it on 3 June 1664. They took it again on 30 June. They eventually exploded it, burnt it down, and completely erased it from the face of the earth. On 7 July, in the same year, it was abandoned.”³⁹ The sketch is nothing other than a copy of the sketch map by Holst.⁴⁰

According to written and pictorial sources, today it can be said about the real strength of Zrínyi-Újvár that it did not belong among the main fortresses. However, its size and the number of its guards made it one of the most important strongholds in the border fortress district of the Croatian Ban (or even the border fortress district facing Kanizsa, which was geographically closer to it). By 1663–1664, it had become capable of upsetting the local balance of power between Christendom and the Ottomans due to its strategic location and construction.⁴¹

³⁹ “Geometrische Delineation vnd abbildung des Zrinischen Schantz Zrinwahr ahn dem Muhrflusse, welche erobert worden [erbauet wardt] Anno 1661. Von dem Türcken belägert Anno 1664. den 3 Juny. Den 30 Dito erobert. Letzlich gesprengt. Verbrant vndt gänztlich demoliret. Von Ihnen verlassen worden darauff zu folgten 7. July desselbigen 1664. Jahrs.” MNL OL T. 2. XXXII. 1064.

⁴⁰ Domokos–Hausner 2008.

⁴¹ In 1661, for example, 2,884 soldiers served in the captaincy facing Kanizsa. There were ca. 450 men at Egerszeg, ca. 200 men at Lenti, ca. 650 men in Muraköz. Furthermore, 500 imperial mercenaries served



Figure 8.

Pál Esterházy's coloured sheet map showing the siege of Zrínyi-Újvár

Source: MNL OL T. 2. XXXII. 1064

The 1664 siege and fall of Zrínyi-Újvár

During the Great Ottoman War of 1663–1664, which broke out partly on the pretext of Zrínyi-Újvár, Kanizsa was besieged in accordance with the military plans of Zrínyi and his circle between April and May 1664. The Christian army lifted the siege of the castle on 1 June 1664, when hearing about the approach of the Ottoman rescue army.⁴² The retreating troops crossed the Mura on 3 June. A smaller part of them occupied Zrínyi-Újvár, but most of them were stationed on the other side of the Mura. Zrínyi suggested that they should stay on the left bank and set up camp on the hills in front of the fortress in order to gain

in the ban's outposts, which were also under the command of Zrínyi. They were complemented by Zrínyi's private army (consisting of 8,000–9,000 soldiers) stationed in his estates in Muraköz. At the same time, the Fortress of Kanizsa, which had developed into an Ottoman military and administrative centre, was defended by 1,670 men. Additionally, the total number of Ottoman mercenaries serving in the fortresses of the Kanizsa Vilayet was 3,000 and a few hundred. *Czigány* 2004a. 88–90, 102–103. See also the study by István Czigány in the present volume.

⁴² For the antecedents to the siege, see *Perjés* 1989. 42–85; *Perjés* 2002. 377–418. We discuss the siege based on our own research and that of György Domokos. *Domokos–Hausner* 2008; *Domokos* 2011; *Domokos* 2012; *Hausner* 2012.

time with active defence, but his proposition was not accepted by the other generals.⁴³ Thus, the elevations of the Légrád vineyard stretching in front of the fortress were given up to the army of the Grand Vizier arriving there on the following day. The Ottoman army (at least 40,000–50,000 soldiers)⁴⁴ made several attempts to cross the Mura River by force, but these were repeatedly repulsed by the units of Generals Hohenlohe and Strozzi based in the Muraköz. At the same time, the Ottomans established gun emplacements on the occupied hills opposite Zrínyi-Újvár. On June 7, they started digging approaching trenches. On the following day, they also began firing at the fortress, that is, regular siege operations started.⁴⁵ According to a contemporary record, the Ottoman artillery fired at the fortress, the bridgehead on the other side of the river, and the bridge with six old (i.e. large) siege cannons and about 60 howitzers from well-established cannon emplacements.⁴⁶

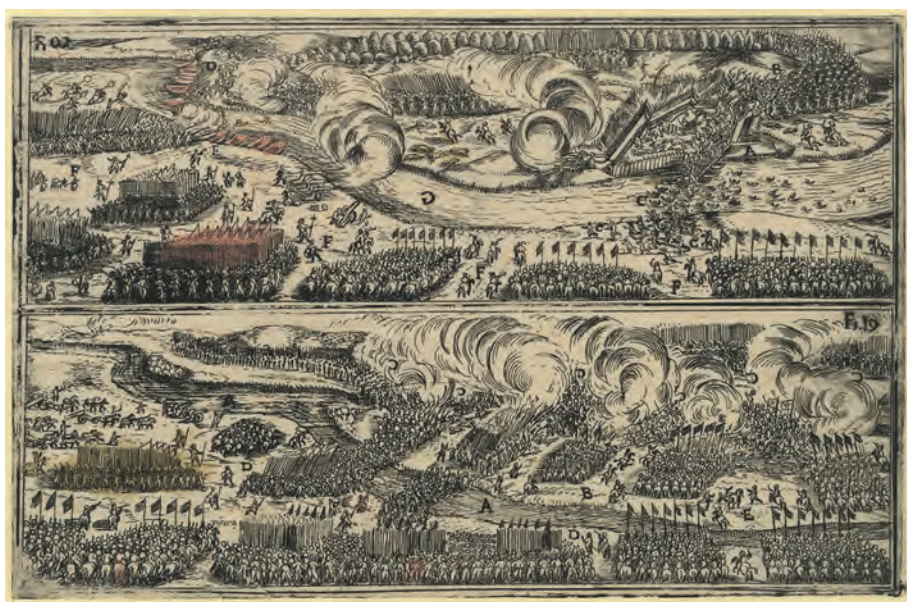


Figure 9.

The siege of Zrínyi-Újvár, copperplate engraving by an unknown German artist, 1665

Source: MNM TKCs 58.2476

⁴³ Walter Leslie, the Captain of the Slavonian (or Wendish) frontier district with Varasd (today Varaždin, Croatia) at its centre, suggested the same in 1661. It was therefore an acceptable, established practice in military profession. *Domokos* 2012. 46.

⁴⁴ Scouts estimated the Ottoman army relieving Kanizsa to consist of 40,000–60,000 soldiers. ÖStA KA AFA 1664/6/4 fol. 892v., 893r. However, in his memoir submitted to Leopold I in Vienna on 17 July 1664, Zrínyi considered this an overestimation. ZMÖM 1958. II. 369.

⁴⁵ On the events of the siege see *Esterházy* 1989. 162–167, 251–254; *Perjés* 2002. 408–417; *Domokos–Hausner* 2008. 252–264.

⁴⁶ *Nagy* 1877. 271–272.

In the wake of the events, military leadership in Vienna decided to redeploy the army led by Montecuccoli from the Danube to the Mura. On 4 June, Montecuccoli received the order issued by Leopold I to leave for Zrínyi-Újvár and take over the command of the allied troops. The Italian commander recorded this in a diary. According to this source, he submitted a petition to the emperor before his departure, in which he pointed out that, in his opinion, the fortress could not be defended. In spite of this, the Viennese Court decided that the fortress had to be held as long as it was possible and reasonable. Therefore, Montecuccoli did not receive a direct order to give up the fortress. The ruler relied on the military expertise of the general field marshal and his generals how long they would defend the fortress.⁴⁷ Montecuccoli arrived at the camp on 15 June. According to his diary, on 17 June, he held a council of war to determine how to keep the fortress for the longest possible period of time. At this meeting, Montecuccoli, as Commander-in-Chief, took decisive measures to organise the defence. He deposed the former commander of the fortress, who was an officer in the imperial troops. He was replaced with Lieutenant Colonel Tasso from Strozzi's Regiment, another imperial officer, who must have been more obedient to Montecuccoli. At the same time, he arranged for the deployment of troops along the rather long frontline (he commanded Zrínyi and his men to watch over the line of the Mura), and gave an order to change the exhausted defenders of the fortress every day.⁴⁸ According to a contemporary account, 1,200 men were garrisoned in the fortress, and the same number of soldiers stood by to assist them.⁴⁹

At the war council held on 17 June, it was also resolved that they would defend the fortress in every possible way “with mines, countermines, furnaces, crossbeams, tree-trunk barricades, palisades, buried bombs, hand grenades, large grenades, counter-battery weapons and similar military tactics”.⁵⁰

After all, the fortress was able to hold up the vastly superior forces of the Ottoman Turks, with the support of the main army stationed beyond the Mura, for more than three weeks. The Ottomans could only seize the fortress in hard fight, at the expense of huge human and material losses. According to the unanimous testimony of written and visual sources, as well as our own investigations carried out at the site for many years (and the finds discovered there), the Ottomans employed the entire arsenal of contemporary fortress fight under the walls of Zrínyi-Újvár. They dug a dense system of approaching trenches around the fortress, bored mines and raised large, carefully built embankments for cannons, which even won the admiration of Pál Esterházy, who visited the site after the siege. Finally, on 27 and 29 June, a siege was launched against the ravelin. The defenders strongly resisted with well-directed firing from the walls and the other side of the river, boring and exploding countermines, and sorties aided by the main army, as described by Montecuccoli.⁵¹ On 29 June, Lieutenant

⁴⁷ Nagy–Hausner 2011. 706–708, 725.

⁴⁸ See Montecuccoli's summary report written to the emperor: *Relazione*. ÖStA KA AFA 1664/13/29. See also *Priorato* II. 1672. 410–416; *Esterházy* 1989. 162–168, 250–257.

⁴⁹ ÖStA KA AFA 1664/6/39. fol. 961r.

⁵⁰ *Montecuccoli*: *Relazione*. ÖStA KA AFA 1664/13/29. fol. 7–8.

⁵¹ A countermine blown up on the day of Pentecost (23 June) buried several Ottoman ditches, but the corporal who set off the explosives also died. ÖStA KA AFA 1664/6/33. fol. 949r., 1664/6/ad 36 ½. fol. 955r-v. At the same place, there is also information about a sortie originally planned for 22 June, which was postponed several times due to rain, and then because of the possible betrayal of an escaped soldier. A report dated 27



Figure 10.

The explosion of Zrínyi-Újvár, copperplate engraving by an unknown German artist, 1664

Source: OSZK, App. H. 909

Colonel Tasso, the commander of the defenders, reported that the fortress became so ruinous, as to be indefensible, and the Ottomans were already at the very bottom of the walls.⁵² Thus, at Montecuccoli's command, the "fine artillery weapons were taken out of the fortress" on the Mura, and the undermining of the fortress began. Early in the morning, on 30 June, however, the Ottomans launched another siege, and they finally succeeded in their third attempt to capture the moat. Subsequently, the superior Ottoman army started to attack from there, and the demoralised defenders ran scared out of the fortress without blowing up the previously made mines. During the siege of 30 June and the retreat over the Mura Bridge, approximately 800 Christian defenders lost their lives. Thus, contrary to Zrínyi's opinion,⁵³ Zrínyi-Újvár was not abandoned, but rather seized by the Ottomans.

Following the occupation of the fortress, the Ottoman leadership was indecisive for several days. In the first days of July, they still considered retaining the fortress and even started to rebuild it, but eventually decided to demolish it,⁵⁴ which was carried out on 7 July,

June tells about a raid on the Ottoman food supply near Kotoriba. Another describes the progress of the siege. According to this, the trenches of the Ottomans were only fifteen steps away from the fortress. They set up five batteries and were incessantly firing with their cannons, albeit with little success. However, they lost many men. ÖStA KA AFA 1664/6/39 ½. fol. 961r.

⁵² *Montecuccoli: Relazione.* ÖStA KA AFA 1664/13/29. fol. 9v.-10r.; *Ibid.* 1664/7/1.

⁵³ Miklós Zrínyi to Leopold I, Vienna, 17 July 1664. ZMÖM 1958. II. 371–372, 595–597.

⁵⁴ According to a diary entry recorded by an unknown Hungarian eyewitness on 1 July: "The Ottomans are rebuilding the fortress very diligently." Nagy 1877. 274; *Evlia* 1985. 591.

with the mines made by the Christian defenders. According to the account by Pál Esterházy, who witnessed the events, the moat of the fortress was later filled up with earth mixed with gunpowder, and the corpses of Christians were thrown into the wells. "The whole fortress was destroyed in three days by the tireless work of the army to such extent that no trace of it remained. It did not look like an inhabited place, but rather a neglected hill. And thus, the tremendous effort made by Count Zrínyi came to nothing in three days."⁵⁵ Moreover, so that it would not cause any problems in the future, it was included in the Peace Treaty of Vasvár made on 10 August, ending the war of 1663–1664, that no party could rebuild and garrison Zrínyi-Újvár, the fortress which provoked the conflicts.

⁵⁵ Esterházy 1989. 167; *Montecuccoli: Relazione*. ÖStA KA AFA 1664/13/29. fol. 17.