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„Hungarian conquistador in México (1864 – 1867)”

The prosopography of the Hungarian soldiers in the Mexican Austrian Volunteer Army, and their narrative sources, in addition to other new research results of this project

Theses of the PhD Dissertation

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I. The topic and of the doctoral research

There is no need of detailed history about the Second Mexican Empire, but I would like to introduce it quite briefly. The political situation was quite tense, and it was full of crisis in Mexico and Napoleon III. took the chance of gaining influence over the country. The French intervention against Mexico began on December of 1860 with the help of Great Britain and Spain. The latter two armies went out of Mexico shortly after the intervention letting the French alone. Although the French army was defeated on May 5th 1862, thanks to the back-ups, eventually the French Army alone occupied the capital and a significant part of the country. The Second Mexican Empire was proclaimed on 1863 helped by Napoleon III. and Maximilian Habsburg was invited to the Mexican throne in the same year by a Mexican delegation. The young ruler with his wife and in his small delegation arrived at Mexico in spring of 1864 and he ruled as the emperor of Mexico till 1867 when he was executed by the republican army. In accordance with the treaty of Miramar, Franz Joseph's younger brother had a chance to recruit a small army from the Hapsburg Empire as well. It is very important that this was a volunteer army and it was not obligatory to join. The original name of this army was Mexikanische Österreichisches Freiwilligenkopsrs or sometimes called Österreichisches-Belgisches Freikorps because the Belgian ruler sent more than 1000 soldiers from Belgium. This military group's recruiting started in the spring of 1864 and the volunteers were transported from the port of Trieste to Mexico since November in the same year. The total number of this army was around 7100 people (According to different sources Austrian, Hungarian, Polish, Czech, Italian, Slovenian, Croatian, Serbian, Romanian, Ukrainian, Slovakian etc.). This army served in Mexico till the end of 1866 or the middle of 1867 under the French headquarters of commander general Bazaine. According to Lajos Tardy, 1046 people joined the army of Maximilian Habsburg from the Carpathian basin but, in the light of my new research, this number is higher. The fall of the Second Mexican Empire was due to two turns in the world politics. Firstly, the American Civil War had been settled and the Monroe doctrine was being executed again in the foreign affairs. Thus, the government of the USA was able to put pressure on the French emperor to withdraw his forces from Mexico. The other event that causes the fall of the Second Mexican Empire was a European issue. In 1866 Prussia defeated the Habsburg army at Königrätz, that is why Napoleon III. – in fear of a Prussian attack against France – broke the treaty of Miramar and started to withdraw his forces from Latin-America. The last groups of French soldiers left

Mexico in March of 1867. This event had a negative effect on the moral of the Mexikanische Österreichisches Freiwilligenkorps as well. This force was dismissed and transported back to Europe at the end of 1866 and in the beginning of 1867. Maximilian Habsburg with a small amount of his Mexican supporters and approximately 1000 volunteer soldiers who were still loyal their emperor was in a very difficult situation. The number of republicans supported by American weapons and volunteers dramatically increased. The imperial forces could control only four major cities in the given year. These were Vera-Cruz, Puebla, Mexico City and Querétaro. The significant part of army of the Habsburg Emperor was rallied north of Mexico City in Santiago de Queretaro, where a decisive battle would have been intended against the enemy forces coming from the north. However, the imperial forces were encircled and were being starved for several months. Later, the Emperor and his two generals were executed near Queretaro in June 19^t 1867, and Mexico City capitulated two days later in in June 21^t as well.

II. The aims of the doctoral research

The title of the PhD thesis: „*Hungarian conquistador in Mexico (1864 – 1867)*”: *The prosopography of the Hungarian soldiers in the Mexican Austrian Volunteer Army, and them narrative sources, moreover other new research results of this project.* The most important accomplishment of my research so far is that I have obtained the right to study, use, and extend the private inheritance of a Hungarian historian, Lajos Tardy (1914-1990) who studied this field thoroughly in the 1980’s (his inheritance includes many private documents which were sent to him by the descendants of the soldiers) but was unable to finish his work due to his death in 1990. With this title I would like to honor the memory of his career. The main goal of this thesis is to research, introduce and analyze the newest data and sources of the Hungarian soldiers in the Austrian Volunteer Army of Maximilian Habsburg in Mexico. During the research I set the mentioned below goals:

- ❖ To review the inheritance of Lajos Tardy.
- ❖ Research of the Hungarian and international sources about the Hungarian soldiers in the Austrian Volunteer Army.
- ❖ Research, synthesize and systematization of the narrative sources (memoirs, letters, reminiscence, etc.) about Mexican Adventure of the Hungarian soldiers in the Austrian Volunteer Army.
- ❖ The revision and the clarification of the number of the Hungarian soldiers of the Maximilian Habsburg Emperor of Mexico and create a new database of them with a prosopography analyze.
- ❖ To give rise to a historiography summary about the Mexican adventure and analyze country by country the roles they played in history (for example Mexico, United States, France, Belgium etc.) with a special attention to countries (Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Slovenia, Poland, Romania etc.) which were part of the Habsburg Empire before the I. World War.
- ❖ To investigate photos, illustrations etc. and to publish a photography album about the Mexican Adventure and the Hungarian soldiers in Mexico.
- ❖ To set right some false information which were published in the Hungarian materials about this topic before.

During the research, one of the main goals was to form a work in Hungarian language in order to present the history of the Austrian Volunteer Army in Mexico through the recruiting, transport, and later destiny of soldiers in view of the Mexican Campaign between 1861 – 1867.

The question now arises as why is it important to do a research focused on just one nation group in a multiethnic army group? On the one hand Lajos Tardy focused that soldiers who were born in the territory of the historical Hungary, and we continued his project, as well as we can find many same examples in the international materials, there were published books about the Czech, Polish, Italian, Slovenian etc. members of the event too. On the other hand, there has also been the experience on the topic of the Hungarian soldiers in Mexico during the 1860's. It is not a popular argument in the Hungarian public, including the history science as well. Which work focused this story many of them sources were just the other published material, monography, or article without archive documents. Moreover, it is an important point of view that the Hungarians took an important part in the history of Second Mexican Empire as well. They served near by the emperor (in the palace guard) and the officer corps of the Austrian Volunteer Army too. One specific point to be raised the Hungarian man, József Tüdős (in later a famous restaurant owner in Budapest) who was the butler of the Maximilian Hapsburg in the latest period, and he escorted the emperor to the Cerro de las Campanas in Querétaro where the execution happened on 19 June 1867.

III. The abstract of the PhD thesis

The structure of the PhD thesis consists of three volumes:

1. The *Body text* (I–VI. chapter) includes the historiographies of the Mexican Adventure, the history of the Second French Intervention in Mexico and the Second Mexican Empire as well and the function of the Austrian Volunteer Army. Moreover, in this part we publish the prosopography analysis of the Hungarian Soldiers of the emperor Maximilian Hapsburg and systematization of their narrative sources.
2. In the *Appendix (Database)* (VII–XI. chapters) we publish 48 life stories of those Hungarian soldiers and the database of the 1308 number soldiers who were born in Hungary and served in the Austrian Volunteer Army in Mexico. Moreover, this part involves many unpublished resources from the inheritance of Lajos Tardy and also, we added a list of officers of the volunteer army too.
3. The third bigger part of the thesis is the *Annex (photographs, documents, and illustrations)* (XII–XVII. chapters), which incorporates those photos, illustrations, maps etc. that were found during the doctoral investigation in private and public collections.

Considering the aims of the PhD project, this research and thesis principally is a basic research. During the last years, we could expand a lot of sources about the examined topic in Hungary, Mexico, Austria, United States and Belgium. These materials were collected, analyzed, and systematized from public and private archives, published things and the contemporary press. Thanks to this work and of course to the use of the fundamental readings we can publish a thesis in a new content and structure and to create a new database which did not exist before. We believe that the quantity of the collected materials and sources point beyond the limits of this work and offer many new research directions.

After the acknowledgement and the presentation of aims, in the third chapter (*III. The „Mexican Adventure”*) of the thesis we present the international historiography of the Second French Intervention in Mexico and the Second Mexican Empire. During the last decades some comprehensive historiography books were published in this topic. It is important to point out the outstanding works of Martin Quirarte (*Historiografía sobre el Imperio de Maximiliano*) and Erika Pani (*El Segundo Imperio. Pasados de usos múltiples*), which helped to get acquainted with the previous research. In this subsection we present the historiography of the

publishing materials involved country by country (Mexico, United States, Great-Britain, Spain, France, Belgium). Also, this subsection includes the historiography of the history of the Austrian Volunteer Army in Mexico, which as far as we can tell, did not happen till nowadays. In the second part of the third chapter, we present the history of the Austrian Volunteer Army in Mexico in view of the history of the Second French Intervention in Mexico and the Second Mexican Empire.

In the first part of the main chapter of the PhD thesis (*IV. Hungarians in the “New American Empire”*) we bring out in five subsections the historiography of the topic in Hungarian language, or some works which were published in other languages about the Hungarians in the Second Mexican Empire since 1870 till nowadays. On this basis, we can declare that in the Hapsburg Empire till the World War I it was a romantic image of the tragedy and empire of Maximilian Hapsburg. In this period some eyewitnesses published their recollection and memoirs. In general, many of these authors wrote inimical keys about the Mexicans and they blamed the French for the collapse the Second Mexican Empire. The first specialized literatures were published between the I. and the II. World War, and during this period many descendants of soldiers published secondary Mexican reminiscences too. After 1945 during the communist regime, the topic of the overseas empire was not popular in Hungary, in 1950' and 1960' some Hungarian Americans writers published some articles about the topic in United States. In the 1960' and 1970' the interest to universal history was renewed in Hungary and to help this, the topic of the Mexican Adventure somewhat showed up the horizon again. In the following time were published the works of Bueno Salvador (*Cinco siglos de relaciones entre Hungría y América Latina*), Endre Medziboroszky (*Repercusión del «imperio» de Maximiliano y de la lucha independentista del pueblo mexicano en la prensa húngara contemporánea*) and Lajos Tardy (*Az 1864-67. évi mexikói „önkéntes hadtest” magyarországi résztvevői*). After the end of communism in Hungary the Historians and Specialists of the Latin-America studies started to discover the story of the Hungarian soldiers in Mexico with Maximilian Hapsburg. In the last three decades, many works of stories of local areas focused on the topic, but the majority of them based on the Tardy's monograph.

In the second subsections we revealed the Hungarian migration to Mexico till 1867 with many archive sources from Mexico and United States (*Hungarians in Mexico before the Second Mexican Empire*). This part of the thesis confirms that some Hungarians arrived in Mexico with the French Foreign Legion (during the research we can identified the first

Hungarians in this military group), the household of Maximilian and the Austrian Navy as well. Furthermore, in this epoch a few Hungarians served in the Mexican Republican Army too. Before this investigation the number was considered to be higher, like in the Hungarians in the American Civil War. With this research we rectified their number, and we could identify anonymous letters which were written by a well-known Hungarian officer in the Republican Army, called István (Csala) Zákány. In his letters he gives a clear and comprehensive view of how he and his fellows carried a weapon transport from California to Sinaloa.

In the third part of the main chapter (*IV. 3. / The database of the Hungarian soldiers in the Austrian Volunteer Army*) we supervised the number of Hungarian soldiers in the Austrian Volunteer Army. We present the previous assessments, we give a list of the resource base and take the prosopography analysis, with the data mentioned below by every soldier: religious affiliations, qualification, previous military and war experience, arm, troop, office rank, the last registry in the military register and the farther destiny after the collapse the Second Mexican Empire.

The last subsection (*IV. 4. / The narrative sources of the Hungarian soldiers*) of the main chapter contains the systematization of the narrative sources (memoirs, letters, reminiscence, etc.) about the Mexican Adventure. In the first subsection of it we enumerate the narrative sources of the Austrian Volunteer Army which were written by the Austrian, Check, Polish, Slovenian, Italian etc. soldiers. As far as we know, no one has carried out this type of work before. The second subsection consists of eight separate parts. In this session we present the narrative sources of the soldiers who were born in the historical Hungary which we found during the research project. We organized the sources by types: 1. anecdote and stories in obituary; 2. diaries; 3. memoires; 4. letters; 5. secondary published sources; 6. interviews; 7. a real story about the Mexican Adventure in a Hungarian novel which was probably based on a true story; 8. humbug “stories”.

In the *Appendix (Database)* we publish 48 life stories of those Hungarian soldiers and the database of the 1308 number soldiers who were born in Hungary and served in the Austrian Volunteer Army in Mexico. Parallel to the list of Lajos Tardy the new number is higher with 262 men, but 123 of them were recruited in 1866 and finally they were not transported to Mexico. In the database there is more information around 200 people as well, which could be part of a further research direction (for example social history, diplomacy history, medical history, economy history etc.).

Moreover, this part involves many unpublished resources from the inheritance of Lajos Tardy: some chapters of finally unpublished his book and the diary of Fráter Farkas who served as a palace guard of Maximilian for a long time. His narrative document was given to Mr. Tardy like a private source by a descendant three decades ago. Furthermore, in this part we added a list of officers of the Mexikanische Östereishische Freiwilligenkorps too.

In the Annex (*Annex (photographs, documents, and illustrations)*) we publish an album with photography's, illustrations, lithography, maps etc. about the Mexican Adventure and the Hungarian soldiers in Mexico.

IV. Summary of the research results

In this PhD thesis, we present the results of our several years of Hungarian and international research, during which we found a rich source base during the exploration of sources in public collections in Europe and the Americas. During our investigations, we tried to prepare a useful synthesizing work for both domestic and international historiography. During our research, we concluded that exploring the history and characteristics of the populous Hungarian contingent can provide important data to the analysis of the history of the Second Mexican Empire and especially its military history. The former "sons of our country" can be found in the immediate environment of the Mexican emperor Maximilian Hapsburg (both in his bodyguard and in the imperial court), as well as in the officers of the Mexican volunteer army, several of whom recorded their own experiences in Mexico in their narrative sources. These historical records serve as an important source for understanding and studying the era. One of the important results of our research is that Lajos Tardy's legacy, as a historian, has been almost completely processed by us, which has been further expanded by adding numerous Hungarian and international (Mexican, American, French, Belgian, Austrian, etc.) sources.

We believe that thanks to the dissertation, a more extensive historical summary of the events of Maximilian Hapsburg's Mexican Empire and the Austrian volunteer army in Mexico has now become available in Hungarian, and a historiographical summary of the Hungarian and foreign language publications on the subject has been compiled, which lays the foundation for further research. About works that, according to our current knowledge, have not been carried out before. When the written work was completed, we also tried to correct the erroneous findings in the domestic literature and put them on a scientific basis. The value of the dissertation is also increased by the fact that it contains an international historiographical summary, especially in which the historiography of the topic for the successor states of the Habsburg Empire (Austria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Italy, Slovenia, Romania, etc.) is mentioned by country as well.

In this academic work, new data can also be read about the Hungarians living in Mexico in the 1860s, as well as about the people who came to the Latin American country with the imperial court and the Austrian Navy, and we also cover the early history of Hungarians serving in the French Foreign Legion. Also, an important subchapter is the presentation of the Hungarians who fought on the side of the republic.

One of the main results of the research can be considered the revision of the number and composition of soldiers of Hungarian origin, as well as the compilation of the prosopography database of the Hungarian staff and its analysis according to various aspects (place of origin, religion, nationality, occupation, etc.). The Hungarian staff data of 1,046 people previously reported by Lajos Tardy was expanded by 262 people, so we now have more detailed information on 1,308 people. The biographies of forty-eight of the soldiers who took part in the Mexican adventure were explored in more detail and published in our article, most of whom have received little attention in Hungarian historiography until now, even though many of them held important positions during the events in Mexico or had a remarkable career in the later in Hungary and in the wider world. It was also possible to point out significant results about the periods of life before Mexico, according to which several members of the Hungarian staff of the Austrian Volunteer Army served in the Hungarian Revolutionary Army in Hungarian War of Independence in 1848-49, and several participated in the international military conflicts of the 1850s and 1860s.

We consider another great result of our work is the exploration, collection, synthesis, and structured processing of narrative source materials (memoirs, letters, reminiscences, etc.) related to the Hungarian staff, and it can be said that among the established goals, the collection of the photographic legacy of events in Mexico and Hungarian volunteers has also been successfully completed. too. We hope that this work will serve as a useful database and a stimulating guideline for larger international research, as well as a prosopography manual for the history of the Hungarian-born soldiers who fought in Mexico during the period 1864-1867 during the reign of Maximilian. We hope that in the future there will be opportunities for both the Austrian Volunteer Army, the second French Intervention in Mexico, and the II. Mexican Empire to investigate the history of the Mexican Empire in more detail within the framework of a broader, multinational (Mexican, American, French, Belgian, Austrian, Czech, Italian, Polish, etc.) research, because the topic still contains many further research opportunities.

V. Published materials in the topic

1. A mexikói osztrák önkéntes sereg magyar honos katonáinak életrajzi adattára a legújabb kutatási eredmények tükrében (*Database of the Hungarian soldiers in the Austrian Volunteer Army in Mexico in the light of a new investigation*) (under publishing)
2. „Negyvenöt csata hőse”: Varjassy Béla élettörténete és visszaemlékezései („*Hero of forty five battles*”). *Life story and memories of Béla Varjassy*) In. DEZSŐ Tamás – PÓCZA István: *Batthyány Lajos Alapítvány Doktori Ösztöndíjprogram Tanulmánykötet 2020/2021*. Budapest, 2022. (536–576.)
3. A mexikói veteránok az 1877-78. évi orosz-török háborúban (*The Mexican veterans and the Russian-Turkish War in 1877-1878*) In. *Orpheus Noster*, 13. évf. (2021) 1. sz. (87–101.)
4. *Some Question About the Recruitment of Hungarian Soldiers in the Army of Maximilian Hapsburg the Emperor of Mexico*. In. (Edited by) Viktória Semsey- Petra Balaton – Csaba Horváth – José Antonio Sánchez Román: *National Identity and Modernity 1870-1945*. L’Harmattan. Budapest – Paris, 2019. p. 173-185.
5. A mexikói kaland és a querétarói sortűz – Interjú Bobay Istvánal (*The Mexican Adventure and the volley-firing in Querétaro – interview with István Bobay*) 06.17.2017.
<http://ujkor.hu/content/a-mexikoi-kaland-es-a-queretaroi-sortuz-interju-bobay-istvannal>
6. Tallózás a „mexikói kaland” emlékei között: Hadtörténeti Intézet és Múzeum. (I. rész). (*Gleanings in the memorial of the Mexican Adventure: Military History Institute and Museum. First part*) In. *A Hadtörténeti Múzeum Értesítője*. 17. kötet. (2017) p. 277-313.
7. Az Österreichische Freiwilligenkorps Habsburg Miksa mexikói császársága idején. (*The history of the Austrian Volunteer Army during the rule of Maximilian Hapsburg*) In. (Szerk.) Fülöp József – Mészáros Márta – Tóth Dóra: „*A szél fúj, ahová akar*”: *Bölcsészettudományi dolgozatok*. Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem – L’Harmattan Kiadó. Budapest, 2016. p. 201-214.
8. A magyar huszár, aki túlélte Mexikó Habsburg császárat (*The Hungarian Hussar who outlived the Emperor of Mexico*) 01.11.2015.
<http://mno.hu/tudomany/a-magyar-huszar-aki-tulelte-mexiko-habsburg-csaszarat-1260119>
9. 19. századi magyar emlékek a Hawaii-szigeteken. (*Hungarian memories in the Hawaiian Island from 19th centuries*) In. (Szerk.) Ferenc Attiláné Szöcs Éva – Gazda József – Szabó

Etelka: *Kőrösi Csoma Sándor – Az igazság keresése.* Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Közművelődésügyi Egyesület. Sepsiszentgyörgy, 2015. p. 545-580.

10. Egy kalandos sorsú magyar huszár, Jajczay József élettörténete: Különös tekintettel a Hawaii-szigeteken végzett kapitányi és kiképzői tevékenységére és az egyéb 19. századi hawaii-magyar történelmi kapcsolatok kérdésére. (*The adventurous life story of a Hungarian hussar called Jospheh Jajczay: In his captain and drill master carrier in the Hawaiian Royal Household Troops and others Hungarian-Hawaiian historical relationships from the 19th centuries*) In. *Századok* 148. évf. 3 sz. (2014) p.747-777.
11. Jajczay József nyomában a Hawaii-szigeteken, Egy kalandos sorsú magyar huszár a 19. Századból. (*Follow up of Joseph Jajczay in Hawaii: An adventurous life story from 19th century*) In. Vasváry Collection Newsletter, 2014/ 1.
http://www.sk-szeged.hu/statikus_html/vasvary/newsletter/14jun/bobay.htm