

*University of Szeged*  
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**THESES  
OF THE DISSERTATION**

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*Hungarian Hussar Weapons up to the War of Independence of  
Rákóczi in the Light of the relics*

**SZEGED**  
**2008**

## **I. The goals, the sources and the methodology of the research**

The most important goal of the dissertation is to introduce the weapons of the hussars from the beginning to the fall of the war of independence of Rákóczi. Besides this the treatise also pays heed to the hussars as an arm. I selected this subject mostly because my present workplace, the Armoury of the Hungarian National Museum possesses almost all of the relics of the hussars up to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. János Kalmár's in his book, "Régi magyar fegyverek" (Old Hungarian Weapons) also deals with the weapons of the Hussars. His work was published in 1971, almost 30 years ago, and his earlier, 40-50 years old papers were incorporated as well. The scientific works of the last decade highlighted the early centuries of the history of the hussars. The aforesaid reasons made a new treatise based on the latest scientific results necessary. In this paper beside the weapons of the Hungarian National Museum. I have analysed the weapons of many domestic and foreign museum and private collections. Furthermore I have also used the data provided by several contemporary testaments, inventories, diaries, letters, ration books and limitations. Pictorial representations, such as 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century tombstones, coat of arms, etchings and paintings, as they display the different ways of use, fixing and wearing of the weapons. Extracts were also used many times, because their intense style, language, and contents made our treatise more vivid. Our goal was to place the surviving relics chronologically into their proper historical milieu, and thus give a complete picture of the early centuries of the "most Hungarian" arm.

## **II. The structure of the dissertation**

The dissertation is divided into three main chapters, each consisting of several sections. The title of chapter II is "About the Origin of the

Hussars”, it gives a review of the development of heavy and light cavalry in Hungary from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The 1<sup>st</sup> section deals with the cavalry of the Árpád period. The “quiverededs” and “beweaponeds” of the 14<sup>th</sup> century are discussed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> section. It is clear by the Angevin period, that the Hungarian army was consisting of light cavalry using bow and arrow and heavy cavalry using lance. Besides these two arms the 3<sup>rd</sup> section also deals with the hussars, emerging in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, while the 4<sup>th</sup> one is about the hussars and heavy cavalry of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The 5<sup>th</sup> section gives a new approach towards the emerging of the hussars and produces new results. By comparing the hussars to the heavy cavalry it became clear, that the most important feature of both the hussars and the heavy cavalry was the charge with staff weapons, the handgrips were only of secondary importance. The lances and the light lances were 4–4,5 metres long on the average, this also determined their primary use at the cavalry charges, when the kinetic energy of the horses were also concentrated on the tip of the weapons. The hussars of southern Slav origin were the lightened version of the classical western type cavalry regarding either in their way of fighting or in their equipments. Their emergence was in a great part due to idea, that the lance charges, typical of the heavy cavalry can be accomplished without remarkable protective armament and with light lances similar to the lances in length. From the early 15<sup>th</sup> century the fleeing Serbs were incorporated into the Hungarian army under the name hussar, because the light cavalry, used as an auxiliary of the heavy cavalry and called “quiverededs” in the contemporary sources, similarly to the earlier times, was equipped with bow and sword only. The light lance charges made the hussars a preferred arm in Hungary, and their employment was spread on the detriment of the “quiverededs”. King Matthias Hunyadi incorporated them into the second order of his mercenary army. After the battle of Mohács the hussars gradually played the part of

the heavy cavalry and from the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century with strengthened protective armament they became the only mounted soldiers in Hungary.

In the third chapter the attacking weapons of the hussars are discussed. The 1<sup>st</sup> section is about the sabre re-emerging in the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. From the 15<sup>th</sup> century they were used in greater number, mainly on Turkish impact and from the end of the century it was transmitted by the hussars to the Hungarian nobility. The separate Hungarian type of sabre evolved in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and beside the hussars it spread at all arms in Hungary. The 2<sup>nd</sup> section discusses the history, the types and the ways of use of a special hussar stabbing weapon, the thrusting sword. The 3<sup>rd</sup> section introduces the evolution of falchion and its types in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century. In the 4<sup>th</sup> section the transformation of the mace into insignia and its history is traced and enlightened by extracts. The 5<sup>th</sup> section discusses the use and the types, such as war hammer and axe. The 6<sup>th</sup> section is about the most characteristic hussar weapon, the light lance. It was always made of pine with a small head. It broke easily, so the hussar did not fall off the horse to the ground as his light lance hit the body or the armament of the enemy. It was the light lance charge that made the hussars extremely fearsome, and this is why the Serbian hussars were incorporated into the Hungarian army. The 7<sup>th</sup> section introduces the firearms improved during the "military revolution", the appearance and the rapid spread of the wheel-lock pistol and carbine amongst the hussars.

In the fourth chapter the protecting weapons of the hussars are discussed. The development of the oriental, conical helmets from the 11<sup>th</sup> century is summarized in the 1<sup>st</sup> section. The hussar helmet is clearly of Ottoman origin, it was evolved by the early 16<sup>th</sup> century

under strong Mameluk influence. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the shape of the hussar helmet – mainly that of the skull of the helmet – changed significantly. Besides the helmet as another sign of oriental influence the mail cap can also be found amongst the accoutrement of the Hungarian light cavalry, primarily in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The 2<sup>nd</sup> section describes the usage of the hussar half armour and coat of mail. The 3<sup>rd</sup> section introduces the chronological development of the hussar shield. This evolved in the Balkans from the heavy cavalry shield, and was a lightened version of the former type.

### **III. The new scientific results of the dissertation**

The dissertation succeeded in accomplishing new achievements on the emergence of the hussars, on their fitting into Hungarian military, and also on the interpretation of this arm. Regarding the weaponry the examination of the usage and the chronological development of the sabre, the thrusting sword, the falchion, the mace and the hussar shield produced – occasionally surprising – new results. The usage of three types of sabres can be attested in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and the Turkish version spread amongst the hussars. The separate Hungarian type evolved from the Turkish one in the 1550's and 1560's. The thrusting sword evolved because of the use of the sabre. It was a sword with a blade suitable for stabbing only, while the sabre was basically a cutting weapon, thus they complimented each other in the armament of the hussars. The falchions evolved from the former sword types with broad blades, and like the thrusting sword became complementary weapons beside the sabre, too. The development of the mace and its transformation into insignia is well described. The Balkan origin of the hussar shield is also attested; it evolved there from the earlier heavy cavalry shields.

#### IV. The potentials of the further research

The dissertation gives a complex approach of the Hungarian hussar weapons, but it is certainly not complete. The number of the studied objects can be increased by the weapons kept abroad and by the primary sources. Our goal is to continue the review of the objects by publishing the catalogues of the hussar weapons of the museums, and thus take them into the stream of domestic and foreign research.

#### V. Significant scientific publications of the author

- A kopaszi-zátonyi fegyverek.* Folia Archeologica 43. (1994) 251-278.
- Török díszbuzogány a Károlyi gyűjteményből. (A 17. század második felének méltóságjelvénye az Oszmán-török birodalomban).* Folia Historica 19. (1994-95). 187-196.
- A hegyestőr (Egy speciális szűrőfegyver története).* Folia Historica 18. (1993) 177-203.
- Török hatás a magyar fegyvereken a 15-17. században.* Folia Archeologica 44. (1995) 213-242.
- Egy „portai forma” szablya a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum fegyvertárában.* Keletkutatás 1995/tavaszi. 147-154.
- Kemény János erdélyi fejedelem tatár buzogánya. (Krimi tatár fegyverek a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeumban).* Folia Archeologica 46. (1997) 179-194.
- A Fegyvertár. A 200 éves Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum gyűjteményei.* Szerk.: Pintér János. Budapest, 2000. 333-351.
- Egy keleti díszsisak a tatárjárás korából.* Móra Ferenc Múzeum Évkönyve-Studia Archeologica 9. (2003) 361-367.

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*Néhány gondolat a törökről.* In.: Török. Válogatás magyar magángyűjteményekből. Szerk.: Moró Csaba. Budapest, 2006. 8-23.

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*A magyar szablya 100 éve.* In: A szépség óhajtása. Öltözködés-kultúra az 1700-1815 közötti Magyarországon. Szerk.: Ihász István. Budapest, 2008. 37-43.