

NUOVA **ANTOLOGIA**   
**MILITARE**  
RIVISTA INTERDISCIPLINARE DELLA SOCIETÀ ITALIANA DI STORIA MILITARE

N. 5  
2024

Fascicolo 19. Giugno 2024  
**Storia Militare Moderna**



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### *Nuova Antologia Militare*

Rivista interdisciplinare della Società Italiana di Storia Militare  
Periodico telematico open-access annuale ([www.nam-sism.org](http://www.nam-sism.org))  
Registrazione del Tribunale Ordinario di Roma n. 06 del 30 Gennaio 2020  
Scopus List of Accepted Titles October 2022 (No. 597).  
Rivista scientifica ANVUR (5/9/2023)



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For the Journal: © Società Italiana di Storia Militare  
([www.societaitalianastoriamilitare@org](http://www.societaitalianastoriamilitare@org))

Grafica: Nadir Media Srl - Via Giuseppe Veronese, 22 - 00146 Roma  
[info@nadirmedia.it](mailto:info@nadirmedia.it)

Gruppo Editoriale Tab Srl -Viale Manzoni 24/c - 00185 Roma  
[www.tabedizioni.it](http://www.tabedizioni.it)

ISSN: 2704-9795

ISBN Fascicolo 9788892959330

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Banner With the Lion of St. Mark (banner) Italy, Venice, 1675.  
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TÓTH FERENC,

## *Silva Rerum.*

*Tanulmányok a nemesség és eszméik vándorlásáról  
Európában a nagy változások idején (XVII-XIX. század) –  
Études sur la circulation de la noblesse et ses idées en  
Europe à l'époque des grands changements  
(XVIIe - du XIXe siècles),*

Budapest: LineDesign, 2021. 376 p.



In the Early modern period, Polish and Lithuanian noble families kept what were known as *silva rerum*, family chronicles supplemented by heterogeneous handwritten documents. This term, chosen as a surtitle by Professor Ferenc Tóth, aptly sums up the spirit of his book. Like the family chronicles he refers to, the author brings together in this volume a variety of publications that trace individual destinies while highlighting previously unpublished historical documents. The subjects selected for this volume are presented in chrono-

logical order. They trace the circulations of the nobility and its ideas in Europe, a subject well known to Ferenc Tóth, who has published numerous works in this field, notably on Franco-Hungarian relations. This is a recurring theme in this bilingual work, which highlights the destinies of Franco-Hungarian nobles, as well as sources on the history of Hungary in the modern era, written in French, the international language of the time.

The book's first two contributions focus on two little-known writings by Charles of Lorraine. The first is his diary, published by the author in 2017. The presentation in the volume (pp. 193-211) clearly summarizes the various possible contributions of this source. Firstly, it is a major testimony on the history of Hungary's reconquest against the Turks at the end of the 17th century, through Charles of Lorraine's detailed descriptions of the campaigns. His diary also provides information on various aspects of the military history of this period, such as the Hungarian petty warfare. After several victories against the Turks, Charles V of Lorraine attended the coronation of Archduke Joseph as King of Hungary in 1687, and took the opportunity to present the Emperor with his political testament, the subject of the second study in the book (pp. 213-224).

This document, published as early as 1697 in Leipzig, is well known to historians, but has so far attracted little interest. Yet, as Ferenc Tóth points out, it contains some very interesting recommendations for the Emperor. First and foremost, there are diplomatic recommendations, with Charles of Lorraine advising the Habsburgs to abandon Spain and concentrate on Central Europe, and Hungary in particular. The prince also proposed innovative changes in domestic policy, suggesting that taxes be extended to all social strata. But if the Political Testament of the Duke of Charles de Lorraine is of particular interest to the historian, it is undoubtedly because of its influence on imperial politics in the 18th century. This question remains complex, however, for although the Austrian monarchy's policy towards Spain seems to follow the line drawn by Charles de Lorraine, Ferenc Tóth acknowledges that "the link between his text and imperial decisions nevertheless remains unclear and hidden" (p. 224), a frequent problem in the history of ideas.

Other studies in the book highlight the author's stimulating archival discoveries, such as François Maurice de Lacy's *Essaye sur la Hongrie*, preserved in the Vienna Military Archives (pp. 237-266). This officer, of Irish origin, distinguished himself at the head of the imperial troops during the Seven Years' War. His dazzling rise to prominence enabled him to head the military administration from the

end of 1767. It was at this point that he began writing his *Essaye sur la Hongrie*. The first chapters provide a geographical, social, cultural and political overview of this Central European region. Ferenc Tóth devotes particular attention to analyzing the third chapter, devoted to the genius of the Hungarian nation. In it, Lacy defends the idea of an “innate Hungarian capacity for the art of war” (p. 245), a conception that is in line with the theses disseminated by the military literature of the period. This analysis of the interest and stakes of Lacy’s text is followed by an 18-page annotated critical edition of the source in question. This rich contribution provides historians with a previously unpublished document that offers a wealth of information on the history of Hungary and its representations in the Age of Enlightenment. During this same period, the kingdom was also influenced by French religious and intellectual ideas, as Ferenc Tóth shows with the example of the Szombathely diocesan library (p. 277-285). This collection of five thousand volumes, originally built up by Bishop François Hrzan, included a high proportion of Jansenist books. It included famous authors such as Pierre Nicole and François Arnauld. Alongside these books were the complete works of several French Enlightenment thinkers: Montesquieu, Voltaire and Rousseau.

The history of books is also given a place of honor in the study devoted to François de Tott’s library (p. 287-306). Thanks to a catalog of books put up for sale in 1790, the collections owned by this well-known figure from Ferenc Tóth can be traced and analyzed. The 237 works listed, grouped into 158 entries, provide interesting insights into François de Tott’s intellectual background. The high proportion of military works, such as Turpin de Crissé’s *Commentaires de César*, is obviously linked to the owner’s military career. The presence of treatises on poliorcetics, in particular those by Vauban and Béliidor, is particularly noteworthy, providing an insight into the theoretical basis on which Baron de Tott was able to contribute to the reinforcement of Ottoman defensive works in the Dardanelles from the 1770s onwards. François de Tott’s mission in the Ottoman Empire was short-lived, however. After a series of setbacks in the East, he returned to France in 1776. The penultimate contribution in the book is devoted to this part of his life.

It highlights the Baron’s plans for the conquest of Egypt (pp. 307-339). The weakening of the Ottoman Empire after the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774 prompted the Ministry of the Navy to draw up a conquest project was to secure trade in the Levant, which could be threatened by the eventual fall of the Ottoman Empire. Preparations for this undertaking were entrusted to François de Tott, who was commissioned in 1776 to gather information under the guise of a mission

to inspect the scales of the Levant. He summarized the main observations of his secret mission in a memoir entitled *Compte rendu de la Mission secrete du baron de Tott*, several rich passages of which are offered by Ferenc Tóth in his publication. The figure of Baron de Tott is thus a prime example of the intensity of noble circulations in the Age of Enlightenment, of second-rate cosmopolitanism and of his diplomatic role. These various phenomena are also embodied, in the book, by two other characters linked to the Hungarian colony of Rodosto.

The first is Kelemen Mikes (pp. 225-236), who accompanied François II Rákóczi on his exile to the colony. This period of his life was marked by intense translation and writing activity, but he also maintained links with French diplomats, particularly the ambassadors in Constantinople. The example of Mikes raises the question of relations between France, the Ottoman Empire and the Hungarians of Rodosto. These ties became particularly complex at the time of the Greek War of Independence (1821-1832). Grégoire Keösseck, the subject of the book's final contribution (pp. 341-353), epitomizes this problem. Consul of France in Rodosto, he came from a Hungarian family close to the Rodosto Greeks. Although "his position as ambassador required him to maintain loyal relations with the Ottoman authorities" (p. 347), Keösseck showed his support for the Greek insurgents by granting French diplomatic protection to Greek refugees. Ferenc Tóth also shows that he sought to influence French diplomacy towards the Sublime Porte by listing the exactions committed by the Turks in his diplomatic correspondence. Charles Émeric de Reviczky (p. 267-276), from an old Hungarian family, also played a key diplomatic role. Thanks to his in-depth knowledge of foreign languages, he represented the imperial power in a succession of diplomatic posts across Europe: Poland 1772, where he worked to legitimize the empress's rights over Polish Galicia, then Berlin in 1781 and finally London in 1785.

Ferenc Tóth's fruitful research, carried out on a European scale in France, Austria and Hungary, has brought together a wealth of contributions to the history of the international circulation of the nobility and its ideas. It also sheds interesting light on several aspects of the political, diplomatic and military history of modern Europe. Last but not least, this bilingual edition undoubtedly contributes to the dynamism of Franco-Hungarian scientific dialogue, by enabling French researchers to become acquainted with publications originally published in Hungarian, and vice versa.



A Smart Macaroni, Caricature from "Martial Macaroni", in Anne S. K. Brown Military Collection. Courtesy by Brown University (see West, «The Darly Macaroni Prints and the Politics of "Private Man.»», *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 25.2 [2001], pp.170-1.

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