

PH.D. DISSERTATION THESES

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**The Turkish Slave Trade and Material Culture in the 16<sup>th</sup>–  
17<sup>th</sup> century according to the Family Archive of the  
Batthyánys**



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## I.

The PhD. Dissertation is about the Ottoman slave trade and its material culture in the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> century. There have been many studies concerning this topic published, but so far no Hungarian literature has worked out in detail the so rich Batthyány material in connection with this topic. To study the topic is important not only as the Hungarian Turkish Rule formed the unwritten law of slave trade but as a result Turkish articles got to be sold in big amount.

The Turkish invasion pulled the Hungarian Kingdom apart. The border area between the Hungarian Kingdom and the parts of Hungary under the Turkish rule got bigger and bigger, the Turkish slaves came from this area, and the Turkish went 70-100 kilometers into Hungary, over the fortresses. As a respond, the Hungarian valiant warriors of the marches raided as well, they were 'encouraged' by the lack of pay and the valour and they also hoped for loot. It was typical on both sides that they could not keep the frontiers clean as even during the time between the bigger military expeditions there was no complete peace either. Despite the rules stated in peace agreement both parties went into the other's territory to get hold of some extra benefits to their pay for example slaves or extra territories for the Turkish Empire, or new taxpayers.

Several questions have been asked many times in technical literature why and how the Christian Hungarian noblemen (Batthyány, Zrínyi, Nádasdy) got involved in trading slaves on the frontiers, what profit they could make of it and whether they could get rich because of this. The dissertation is trying to give answer to these questions.

## II.

The dissertation is using the documents of the Batthyány family's ducal side available in the Hungarian National Archives and mainly those which have something to do with Turkey (P 1313). The great amount of documentations was first discovered by Sándor Takáts in the 19th century. In the 20th century Vera Zimányi's rearrangement of the Archives that were damaged both at the end of WW 2 and in the fire of 1956 made it possible to study these certain documents. The resource material of more than 1 100 pages gives an overall picture of the one hundred year long (1587–1690) Turkish slave trade and slave keeping in the West Transdanubian Region. In the given period first Ferenc II Batthyány captain general, later Adam I Batthyány captain general in Transdanubia had the necessary infrastructure to keep and feed slaves. It is the time that formed the unwritten law of keeping slaves. There are only a couple of resources left from the time of Kristof II and Adam I.

There are three outstanding notebooks or books as resources. The first longer one is an eighty-one page long notebook, which starts with a regular list of contents stating the slaves names and on which page the referring data can be found. The other source is a much longer book that is a 353 page long register of more than 500 slaves (1637–1658). The third is a more complex 56 page long document containing a coherent text. The beginning of this volume must have been torn of as the regestrum starts with page 3 and Ramazán Kanizsai Csonka was given number 6, so 5 other people must have been listed before him. Unfortunately, this kind of 'damage' is also present in the other resources as well, which made the research work even harder.

Thus with examining documents on the Batthyány family's ducal side available in the Hungarian National Archives it is possible to describe the slave trading and keeping customs of the given period. It is also possible to give a picture of the trade and material culture which was present on the side of slave trading and keeping. The data present in the documents are put into charts and diagrams to give a better picture of tendencies.

### III

The greatest scientific achievement of the dissertation is to describe the slave trading and keeping on the borders in the West Transdanubian region in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and all these are supported by exact data and numbers.

The ways of keeping slaves can be studied in Adam I Batthyány's case in the surviving documents. The captain general usually bought the slaves on auctions or he himself caught them or they were given to him as gifts or in slaves' exchange procedures. It was exceptional when he paid for the slaves in cash, sometimes he paid for the slaves with textile goods, fossil salt, wheat or a vineyard. The most expensive slaves were worth some thousand forints the less expensive slaves were worth only twenty forints. The value of a prisoner depended on their religion, rank and sex, both the ransom and the price of Turkish – more exactly Muslim – officers was the highest, while on the lower end there were the Serb women and children. Thus Adam I Batthyány got hold of the slaves on very different prices and ways. It can be stated that in connection with slave trading there was a huge cash flow as well. Between 1637 and 58 Batthyány spent annually 3 700 forints on an average on buying slaves. (this is only the

written number so it could be even higher). He invested twice as much money in only purchasing slaves as he earned in cattle trade which was the number one branch of trade that time (according to Vera Zimányi's study Batthyány earned 1 332 tokens, 2 000 forints with cattle trade.)

The nobleman spend lot of time on bargaining for his slaves: the offered and the demanded ransom usually were different. The rate of these is changeable, the bargained ransom stated in the documents and the actually paid ones are in wide range of scale. There were times when the slave holder paid only 1.2 times more than the demanded (Besir), other times it was 67 times more (Operka Mehmed Váli) , certainly it depended on what the captain general got to know about the given person's family, social and financial background.

The slave could go back to get ransom in the territory under Turkish rule under strict conditions and with bailors. The institution of 'conditio' and bailors was rather complicated. In terms of conditions the same forms can be found from the beginning, even at Ferenc II Batthyány's time, but it became more widespread during his son's, Adam's time. The bailors' task was not simple The slaves had to go back to the territory under the Turkish rule many times, on an average the number of the journeys taken was 6. The three Serb slaves numbers of journeys, 20, 31 and 33, are rare and outrageous. The time spent in slavery is also considerable, as it could be 5-6 and sometimes 19 years. The traditions of slave keeping did not change for two centuries, but as the number of slaves grew, the institution became more accurate and precise. Although Adam I Batthyány wrote down everything, making the system more transparent and predictable, he could not prevent escapes and the loss they resulted in. All the necessary information (price, promised, demanded, bargained and paid) was provided only in connection with 35 people. In these cases the paid ransom is 6.16

times more than the price, so 71% ransom can be considered high but it not general. In all – taking the other slaves into account – according to available and calculated data Adam I made 4-5 times profit on his slaves.

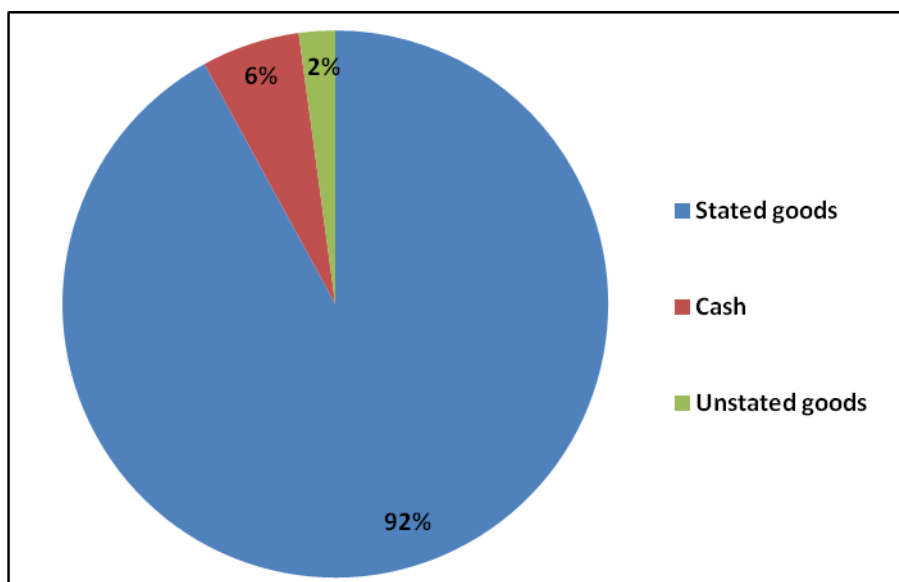
The material culture can be described by the demanded and brought goods. Noblemen’s demand changes from time to time. It seems that during the last period thy rather demanded cash, but in proportion a given article was more important which reflects the certain captain general’s desires.

**1. chart: The demanded ransom in percentage at different times**

Time periods	Cash%	Stated goods%	Unstated goods%	Fossil salt%	Christian slaves%
II. Ferenc (1587–1611)	23%	58%	18%	1%	—
I. Ádám (1640–1658)	20,2%	45,2%	7,9%	18,2%	8,5%
II. Kristóf and II. Ádám (1676–1690)	26,6%	39,9%	7,7%	25,8%	—

Between 1587 and 1611 the slaves paid for their freedom with a stated article not so much in cash.

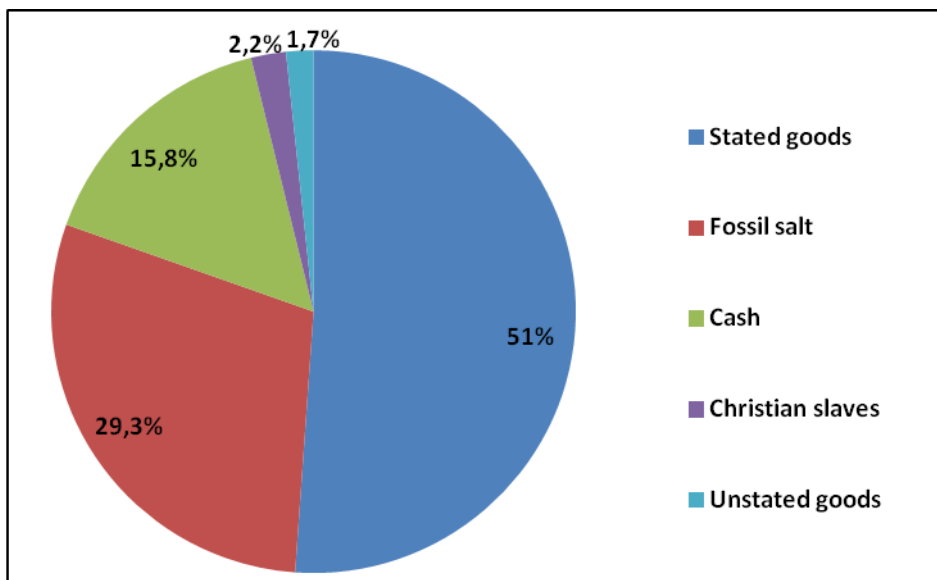
**1. diagram: The goods given Boldizsár III Batthyány and Ferenc II Batthyány in percentage between 1587–1611**



Between 1641 and 1658 the ratio of articles decreased compared to the previous period, and then fossil salt was rather common ransom. The

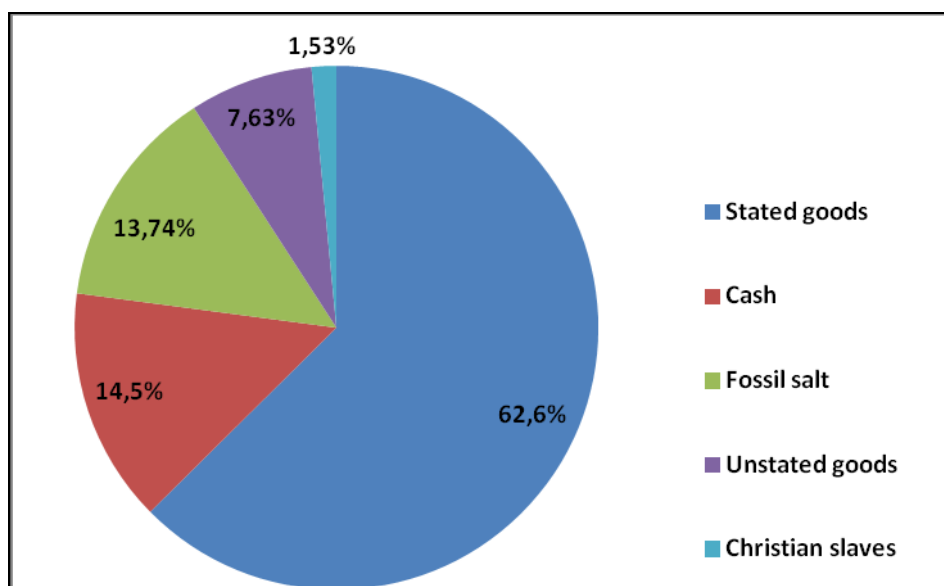
number of must be freed Christian slaves is not a high but important category. At this time the number of ransom paid in cash became higher.

**2. diagram: The goods given to Ádám I Batthyány in percentage between 1641–1658**



Between 1679 and 1689 the ratio of articles is the highest, the second on the list cash and fossil salt still paid an important role.

**3. diagram: The goods given to Kristóf II Batthyány és Ádám II Batthyány between 1679–1689**



All together the Turkish and Serb slaves brought a lot of articles to the Batthyánys, the richer Turkish slaves brought the horses suitable for



noblemen, harness, weapons and clothes, while the Serbs brought the everyday goods. There was a rather high demand for Turkish leather goods, footwear: boots, slippers that were made in the center cities of the territory ruled by the Turkish. Now it is hard to imagine that clothes were worn by generations even in noble families as well as in common ones. The Goods collected through Turkish and Serb slaves played an important part in maintaining the Batthyánys' court. The fossil salt, cattle, linen, boots and furs served as a pay for officials and animals were used as food for the common. Although there is a difference between the states of demanded and provided goods, the nobleman could get hold of articles that were valuable and important for him.

**2. chart: The products brought in different periods in percentage**

Periods	Cash%	Stated article%	Unstated article%	Fossil salt%	Cristian slave%
Ferenc II (1587–1611)	6%	92%	2%	—	—
Ádám I (1640–1658)	15,8%	51%	1,7%	29,3%	2,2%
Kristóf I and. Ádám II (1676–1690)	14,5%	62,6%	7,63%	13,74%	1,53%

The value of the provided article was stated by the slave holder, the slaves often argued on the value with the gaoler but it was the captain who mostly won. No wonder why as between 1640 and 1650 Adam I was the ruler of everything on his state, he had the last word in everything, he made the final decision on people, goods life and death.

It can be stated, there was a great movements of slaves and Turkish goods, there are great values in question, but it was rather expensive to keep slaves, which was made even more costly by the death rate and the escapes or the unpaid ransom.

It can be said that in the time of Adam I Batthyány slave trade was on large scale but it was enforced by historic circumstances.

## IV.

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