

## FIREARMS WITH THE ZRÍNYI COAT OF ARMS

### VATRENO ORUŽJE S GRBOM OBITELJI ZRINSKI

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Received / Priljeno: 11. 10. 2022.

Accepted / Prihvaćeno: 12. 5. 2023.

Review / Pregledni rad

UDK / UDC: 623.44“16”

929.52ZRI

94(439:497.5)“16”

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#### SUMMARY

*For centuries, members of the Zrínyi family were outstanding heroes in the struggle against the expansion of the Ottoman Empire. The constant fighting led to the development of a rich and renowned arsenal of weapons, of which they were very proud. These weapons, banners, regalia and armour were a reminder of victorious battles and great deeds in the halls and corridors of the castle in Csáktornya. The battles of Mohács and Szigetvár, the Thirty Years' War, countless raids, the Winter Campaign, the siege of Kanizsa and the defence of Zrínyi-Újvár are events in the life of the Zrínyi family that were remembered with pride by members of the family. In his will, Miklós Zrínyi (VII) (1620-1664) repeatedly refers to the fate of the accumulated weapons, as he strives to keep the collection intact. Unfortunately, after the fall of the Zrínyi-Frangepán uprising and the execution of Péter Zrínyi and Kristóf Frangepán, the imperial troops destroyed and partially plundered the Zrínyi estates, during which a significant part of the weapons and artefacts were lost. No detailed inventory has yet been found of the weapons that were once in the possession of the Zrínyis, so even identifying individual items requires a great deal of wide-ranging research, hard work and luck.*

**Key words:** Miklós Zrínyi (VII), defence of Zrínyi-Újvár, firearms, Zrínyi family, Zrínyi coat of arms, Zrínyi armoury, firearms with the Zrínyi coat of arms

**Ključne riječi:** Nikola VII. Zrinski, Novi Zrin, vatreno oružje, obitelj Zrinski, grb obitelji Zrinski, arsenal oružja Zrinskih, oružje s grbom Zrinskih

Below we present the firearms bearing the Zrínyi coat of arms that we have managed to find as a result of our research over the years.

*Keywords: Zrínyi family, Zrínyi coat of arms, Zrínyi armoury, firearms with the Zrínyi coat of arms  
»We need good arms in our country«*

Members of the Zrínyi family fought against the expanding Ottoman Empire for centuries, so it is not surprising that they built up a rich arsenal of weapons that was also renowned by their peers. The interest of the Zrínyi family in new, high-quality weapons and military innovations is well illustrated by a woodcut of Miklós Subič Zrínyi from 1566, showing the hero of Szigetvár holding a wheel-lock



**Figure 1.** Woodcut of Miklós Subič Zrínyi by an unknown German master, with a wheel-lock pistol in his right hand, 1556 (Source: Hungarian National Museum, Historical Picture Hall)

(friction wheel) pistol in his right hand.<sup>1</sup> At that time, this firing mechanism was a novelty, not only on the front against the Turks, but also throughout Europe.<sup>2</sup>

The Hrvatski povijesni muzej in Zagreb also houses a 16<sup>th</sup>-century wheel-lock pistol made in Augsburg, which, according to an engraved inscription on a plate attached to it, belonged to Miklós Szigeti Zrínyi in 1551.<sup>3</sup> (Monok n. yr. 38) The firearms from the former armoury of the Zrínyis, presented below, include several pieces from the workshops of renowned armourers and a grenade launcher as well.

According to his surviving library index and library, Miklós Zrínyi (VII) (1620-1664) kept up to date with the latest military innovations (Klanciczay 1991, pp. 227-247), and, in his military works, he also emphasised the need to equip the army with modern weapons. »We need good arms in our country«, he wrote in his programmatic essay on the renewal of the Hungarian armed forces, *Az török Afium ellen való orvosság (Remedy against the Turkish Opium)*, and in his military manual known as the *Tábori kis tracta (Little Study of the Camp)*, he also speaks of the weaponry needed for cavalry and infantry soldiers. (Zrínyi 2021, pp. 193, 203-204)

The Zrínyi armoury in Csáktornya kept both personal and decorative weapons, items of war booty and those received as gifts, and as, a military arsenal, a significant number of edged weapons and firearms necessary for the defence of the Muraköz region and especially Csáktornya.

## THE SEARCH FOR ZRÍNYI WEAPONS

The armoury of the Zrínyis was thus very rich, as is confirmed by the description of the Dutch traveller Jacobus Tollius (1630–1696), who visited Csáktornya in 1660. He wrote: »In the porticoes were placed weapons captured from the Turks, such as bows, quivers, maces, shields, etc., but all these were outshone by the steel swords of Dömöczk, the hilts and scabbards of which, decorated with gold and

<sup>1</sup> Half-length portrait of Miklós Zrínyi. Woodcut by an unknown German master, 1556. "Aigentliche Contrafactur dесс Volgeborne(n) Ritterliche(n) Grafen / Herrn Niclas von Serin Kö(niglicher Kay(serlicher) M(aiestät) & gewesner General Obrister In der Beuestigung / Siget. Im 1566." Below the picture is a 19-line German poem in two columns: "Der Ritterlich Mann ausserkorn..." Hungarian National Museum, Historical Picture Hall 7899.

<sup>2</sup> The wheel-lock, which became widespread in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, offered a solution to a very important problem. No longer dependent on a smouldering fuse, the weapon could be stored for almost any length of time with a cocked firing mechanism, making it suitable for ready-to-fire carrying and for firing instantly if necessary.

<sup>3</sup> Hrvatski povijesni muzej 11611. The barrel is octagonal; the end is round with a smooth inside finish. The armourer's stamp is on the back of the barrel. The ignition has a wheel-lock mechanism with a simple engraving of a circle and a sun. The pistol grip is made of pear wood with an ivory inlay in a mesh pattern. According to the engraved inscription on one of the plates – 15 NIC COM ZR 51 –, which was still visible at the time of the inventory by Prof. Marija Šerčer, and can therefore be attributed to Miklós Zrínyi of Szigetvár. One inlay plate is of later origin than the others. The pistol belonged to the gun collection of Milan Praunsperger and was acquired when the collection was purchased. <https://mek.oszk.hu/06600/06643/06643.pdf> (Downloaded 30 May 2022)

*precious stones, were a sight to behold. Bloody Turkish flags flown in the porch proclaimed countless victories. The Count's heroic feats were captured in beautiful paintings. On the third and fourth days, we visited the famous library, then the armoury, where the cannons, bombs, spears, swords and rifles are countless.*» (Kövér 2013, p. 8)

Most of the weapons, as mentioned, have been lost. It is worth reading the description of the plundering of the Zrínyi property following the Zrínyi-Frangepán uprising. The quantity and quality of the Zrínyi weapons scattered around is still astonishing. During the pillage, the imperial army stole hundreds of expensive weapons, and transported valuable objects by the cartload. (Siklóssy 1919)

We began our intensive research into the history of the Zrínyis two decades ago, with the support of the then Zrínyi Miklós University of National Defence.<sup>4</sup> Our results have been presented in several previous papers. We also looked at Zrínyi-Újvár and the other fortifications built to protect the Muraköz region.<sup>5</sup> In this paper, we will attempt to present some of the weapons associated with the Zrínyi family that bear the Zrínyi family coat of arms.<sup>6</sup> Our work is a direct continuation of our article published in the journal *Podravina* in 2017, in which we presented a sabre in the collection of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.<sup>7</sup>

In our research, we drew on the seminal work of János Kalmár (Kalmár 1965). We consulted, among others, the writings of Pierre Terjanian (Terjanian 2013) and Vladimir Dolinek (Dolinek 2010), who, after establishing personal contact, provided valuable advice and additional information to our work.<sup>8</sup> We obtained relevant – though not yet complete – documentation from the Visser Collection and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, analysed several auction catalogues and visited Bítov (German: Wötau) to consult with our Czech colleagues.<sup>9</sup> Much to our surprise and delight, we have also come across sources that Hungarian and Croatian historiography had not known about until now.

Our research really took off when we visited the Czech Republic. The Zrínyi family is linked to the Czech aristocracy in several ways. The second wife of Miklós Zrínyi (IV) (1508–1566), the hero of Szigetvár, was Countess Eva von Rosenberg (1536–1591) from Bohemia, who gave Zrínyi a son. The child, born in 1565, was named János. After the death of her husband, the widow and her son moved first to Monyorókerék (now Eberau) and then to Český Krumlov in 1568. János Zrínyi quickly assimilated into the Czech aristocracy, and in 1603 he chose a wife from amongst them. János Zrínyi died in 1612 without a successor. He was buried in the church of the Vyšší Brod monastery, next to the Rosenberg family grave. His personal weapons and funeral shield were hung on the chapel wall. His grave-stone and funeral shield are still there today. (Buzek – Jakubec – Král 2009)

More interesting for our research is the fate of the son of the poet and general Miklós Zrínyi (VII). Ádám Zrínyi (1662–1691) died as a soldier at the battle of Stari Slankamen (Serbia). His widow, Mária Katalin Lamberg (1664–1717), remarried in 1693, and around 1700 she took the possessions left behind

<sup>4</sup> The Zrínyi Miklós University of National Defence was replaced by the University of Public Service in 2012. One of its key units is the Faculty of Military Sciences and Officer Training; its lecturers, researchers and students continue to carry out this research.

<sup>5</sup> A non-exhaustive list: Hausner Gábor – Padányi József (ed.): *Zrínyi-Újvár emlékezete. (In memory of Zrínyi-Újvár)*. Argumentum Kiadó Budapest, (2012), 201 p.; Gábor Hausner – András Németh (ed.): *Zrínyi-Újvár: A Seventeenth-Century Border Defence System on the Edge of the Ottoman Empire*. Ludovika Egyetemi Kiadó Budapest, (2020), 350 p.;

<sup>6</sup> The results of an earlier phase of the research were published in 2018. Lajos Négyesi – Tibor Kovács S. – József Padányi: *Zrínyi-szablyák. (Zrínyi sabres.) Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 2018. 131. pp. 3–27. and Padányi József – Hausner Gábor – Négyesi Lajos – Dragutin Feletar – Petar Feletar – Hrvoje Petric: *Utvrada Novi Zrin na Muri*. Čakovec: Meridijani izdavačka kuća, 200 p. (2021)

<sup>7</sup> Lajos Négyesi – Tibor Kovács S. – József Padányi: *Sablja Sigetskog Nikole IV. Zrinskog. Podravina* 2017. (16) pp. 43–58.

<sup>8</sup> Pierre Terjanian was a curator at the Philadelphia Museum of Art from 2002 to 2012, and has worked at the Metropolitan Museum of Art since 2012, while Vladimir Dolinek is the author of several books and publications; both are experts on medieval weaponry.

<sup>9</sup> We would also like to thank the Czech experts Lenka Vánkova, Petr Subik, Jan Binder and Alojz Flachbart for their dedicated support.

after *Ádám Zrínyi* – the treasury, the collection of arms, paintings and the library – to her new husband's residence in *Bítov*, Moravia. (Klaniczay 1991, pp. 67-82; Hausner 2012) Since the male line of succession was broken, after decades of dispute, the Daun family became the owners of the *Bítov* manor, and with it the *Zrínyi* possessions. The last descendant of the house of Daun died in 1904, leaving the estate to the related Haugwitz family. They moved *Bítov*'s furnishings, including the armoury, to their nearby headquarters in *Náměšť nad Oslavou*, and sold *Bítov* in 1906. In 1945, the Haugwitz family's property was confiscated and the castle in *Náměšť nad Oslavou* was earmarked as the summer residence of the president of the republic. In 1949, the armoury was returned from *Náměšť nad Oslavou* to *Bítov*, but with the addition of older weapons from the Haugwitz estate. The weapons were not on display, as the castle was closed to visitors for a long period of repairs. After some of the weapons were stolen in 1970, the collection was moved to a more secure location. Weapons from the collection were exhibited at *Vranovi Castle* for a short period in 2002. The *Bítov* armoury was opened to the public in 2003, but it is still not easy to visit. After six months and several exchanges of letters, we received permission to visit the armoury.

The origin of some of the weapons currently in *Bítov* can no longer be established. Weapons originally stored in *Bítov* are mixed with the Haugwitz legacy, there are many copies, and – comparing the situation today with earlier inventories – we also know that some of the weapons have been removed or have disappeared.<sup>10</sup>

Our task was not made any easier by the fact that the scant literature mentioned above often contains contradictory data, conflicting opinions and is not without errors. Our aim is therefore also to try to put the information in order, to organise it and to enrich the *Zrínyi* research with new results.

*János Kalmár* had made a thorough study of the weapons associated with the *Zrínyi* family that were known at the time. (Kalmár 1965)

A valuable study of the *Bítov* collection can be found in the *Archaeologiai Értesítő* (*Archaeological Bulletin*) (Majláth 1891). In 1890, *Jindřich Daun* died and his widow put the property in *Wötau* up for auction. *Béla Majláth*, representing the Hungarian National Museum, visited the castle on this occasion, and his first impression was that the collection was in disarray, with no sign of conscious collection or record-keeping. For this reason, he could only assume that a complete knight's attire, four chainmail shirts, two ivory and pearl-encrusted firearms, *khanjars*, a mace and a beautifully made Italian round shield had also come from Hungary. Unfortunately, he does not explain how he came to this conclusion, nor why the rifles bearing the *Zrínyi* coat of arms escaped his attention. At the same time, his remark that the inventory of *Ádám Zrínyi*'s belongings, made in 1692, was already incomplete and consisted of very damaged sheets, is telling.

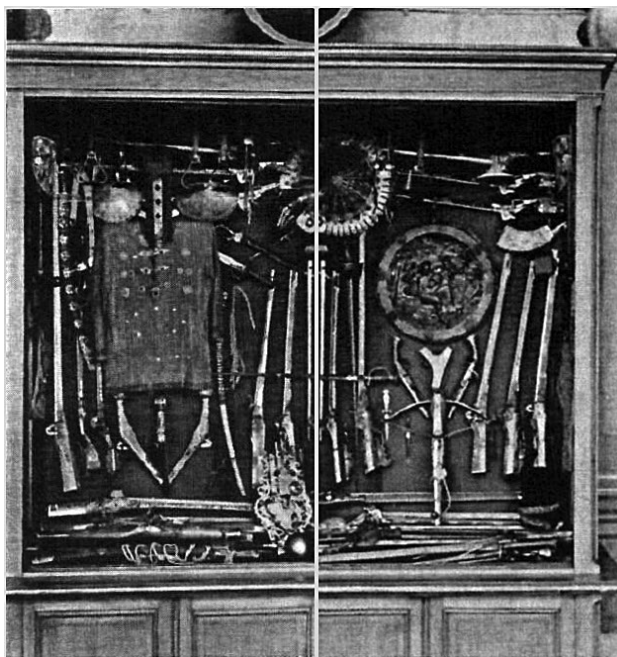


Figure 2. Photo of the repository, with part of the *Bítov* collection (Source: Terjanian 2013, 114)

<sup>10</sup> We found a footnote indicating that *Heinrich von Haugwitz* (1901-1966) transported part of his collection to *Vaduz* (*Liechtenstein*) during the last years of the Second World War. "The proceeds from the sale of the weapons were enough to support our family after the war". The latter was stated by his daughter *Johanna*. (Terjanian 2013, p. 112)

A photograph from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is known, taken from a part of the repository of the Bítov collection. Of the 86 objects in the repository, the 1914 inventory clearly identifies 11 as heirlooms of the Zrínyi family. It contains swords, pistols, chainmail armour and rifles. The quality of the photo is not very good, which does not make it easy to identify the objects (Figure 2).

It is worth spending a little more time with the artefacts in the repository. The fact that they were housed in a separate repository shows that they were held in high esteem. The conclusion would be that they were selected for their value, provenance and uniqueness, and that some of them are clearly of Zrínyi heritage. It is tempting to conclude that the repository contains artefacts belonging to the Zrínyi heritage, based on inventory or memory, but unfortunately we have no clear evidence, only partial references.<sup>11</sup>

In our study, we will only deal with those weapons that bear the Zrínyi family coat of arms, and are therefore directly related to the family.

### GUNS WITH THE ZRÍNYI COAT OF ARMS

These firearms were not placed in the repository, but in the corridor. This fact does not support our assumption that the Zrínyi goods were placed in the repository. It is difficult to imagine that the two weapons, which clearly bear the Zrínyi coat of arms, would have escaped the attention of the repository's furnishers. At the same time, we know of a description in which it is suggested that the inventories of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century include the weapons mentioned (»*Flintlock musket, Antonio Franzino barrel, with coat of arms on the lock*, and »*Flintlock musket, Lazari Cominaz barrel, with coat of arms on the lock*«), but – despite the Zrínyi coat of arms on the lockplate – the inventory compilers did not identify



**Figure 3.** Flintlocks marked with the coat of arms of the Zrínyi family in Bítov (Source: photo by the author)

<sup>11</sup> We should definitely mention the account of the renowned literary historian Andor Tarnai (1925-1994), in which he gives a report on his study trip to Czechoslovakia in 1959. As he writes: "In Námest, I learned that the Haugwitzes, with their rich collection of weapons, kept a special cabinet for certain items attributed to the Zrínyis. They originally came from Bítov and came into their possession with the castle there. When the castle in Námest became state property, they said, they were moved back to Bítov. The Haugwitzes' long-time servants and the castle's caretaker after nationalisation mentioned that, of the weapons, the most valuable pieces had disappeared in 1945. I had only been able to obtain photographs of the original state of the collection and the weapons attributed to the Zrínyis." (Tarnai 1960, p. 301)



**Figure 4.** The Zrínyi coat of arms on the lockplate of the weapon (Source: photo by the author)

the objects or link them to the Zrínyi family. (Dolinek 2010, p. 49) So it is also possible that this is why they were not included in the repository, among the featured objects. (Figures 3 and 4)

The barrel of one of the weapons bears the name of the gunsmith »LAZARI COMINAS«. The name and the workshop are not unknown. It is and has always been of outstanding quality, as can be seen from the fact that many aristocratic collections contain weapons from here.

### PISTOLS WITH THE ZRÍNYI COAT OF ARMS

Two very similar pistols, both linked to the Zrínyis, are described in accounts but these are not identifiable in the repository mentioned above. It was Kalmár who first wrote about the weapons that were offered by a Swiss dealer to the Hungarian National Museum in an exchange deal in the post-war years.<sup>12</sup> Kalmár says: *»A striking feature is the unusually thick barrel of the pair of pistols and the carbine, which seems inexplicable for this type of ornate weapon. Even more striking is that the pistol stocks are painted with wavy lines, rather than bearing the usual engraved or carved decoration. A rather early use of the flint primer can be observed on these firearms. In this era, the wheel-lock ignition was still very much the norm. On the lock plate is the engraved name of the gunsmith »Matthias Brants, Neustadt«. On the muzzle of the barrels, in a medallion with a plastic frame, we find the motto of the poet Zrínyi: SORS BONA NIHIL ALIUD (Good luck, nothing else). Similarly to the muzzle, the rear third of the barrel is encircled with a sectioned plastic ring ornament.«*(Kalmár 1965, p. 15.)

Terjanian also gives an account of these weapons. He writes: *»The Namiest collection included two flintlock pistols. Both have a thick gilded brass barrel with decoration, inscription field, leafy vine decoration and the Zrínyi family motto. The lock is made of steel, decorated with flowers and bears the*

<sup>12</sup> We cannot help but recall the short statement that we referred to in footnote 10 on the sale of certain weapons.



**Figure 5.** Photographs of the pistols\* (Source: Philadelphia Museum of Art)

\* Photographs of the pistols pictured – described in the Terjanian article – can be found on the Philadelphia Museum of Art (PMA) website at <https://www.philamuseum.org/collections/permanent/230282.html?mulR=185074734911> and <https://www.philamuseum.org/collections/permanent/230283.html?mulR=104749015311> (Downloaded: 1 November 2021)

*name of the maker: Mathias Brants Nevstat. The wood is coloured, with nice veins, probably maple root.*« (Terjanian 2013, p. 116)

Even with the apparent similarity, the two weapons are clearly distinguishable (Figure 5). On the one hand, the pattern of the wood is different, and on the other, there are visible differences on the lockplate.

The Kienbusch catalogue also includes a photograph of the two pistols. The subtle differences that distinguish the pistols from each other are identifiable on these as well. As described in the catalogue:

»686: *Pair of Flintlock Pistols*

*German (Neustadt), about 1680*

*The walnut stocks are painted with wavy stripes in dark brown stain. They are hexagonal at the butt and have a sharp ridge in the forestock on the reverse side. The furniture is brass, the butt caps being embossed in high relief with grotesque heads. The locks are bright steel engraved with dots and curling lines. In the center of each plate is the signature MATHIAS BRANTS/ NEVSTAT. The heavy brass barrels, of the mortar type, are turned with moldings at the breech, center, and muzzle. There is a long chamber for the charge, running half the length of each barrel, and then the bore widens to hold a grenade or heavy projectile. On the fore part of each barrel is a brass shield chased in relief with masks, leaves, and scrolls framing the motto SORS/ BONANIHIL/ ALIVD (»Nothing other than good fortune«). The plain steel trigger guards are large enough to accommodate the second finger, to counterbalance the barrel weight. There are walnut ramrods tipped with brass. The trigger guard of one pistol is bent.*

*Collection: Heinrich, Count of Haugwitz-Namiest.*« (Kienbusch 1963, p. 310)

Today the two pistols are in the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. According to our research, the pistols were sold directly to the Blumka Gallery in 1950, from where they first became part of the Kienbusch Collection, and then, after the collector's death in 1977, the property of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

### CARBINES WITH THE ZRÍNYI COAT OF ARMS

Perhaps these weapons have travelled the most mysterious path. The first time we meet them is in Kalmár's writing, since he makes reference to a carbine when describing the pistols (»A striking feature is the unusually thick barrel of the pair of pistols and the carbine«) (Kalmár 1965, p. 15.)

He then writes: »The thick barrel of the carbine also features a strong plastic ring ornament in the last third of the barrel, and even a front and rear sight. On the muzzle, we see a medallion identical to that of the pistol, with the text of the Zrínyi motto. In the middle of the barrel, under a leaf coronet, we see the towered castle wall of the Zrínyi coat of arms in a Baroque-style frame, with a six-pointed star



**Figure 6.** The carbine with the Zrínyi coat of arms in the book of János Kalmár (Source: Kalmár 1965, p. 16)

*shining on its battlements.*<sup>13</sup> *The known Zrínyi coat of arms depictions have two stars, one on each side of the tower, in a floating position. The sentence strip below the coat of arms reads: ...S PERP. A ZRIN. (Nicolaus Comes Perpetuus a Zrin). The name of the gunsmith Anthon Baker is engraved on the lock plate.*» (Kalmár 1965, p. 15.)

It is worth highlighting a feature that the author has already emphasised when describing the pistols: *'the walnut grips are painted with dark brown, wavy patterns'*. We cannot claim that the wooden parts of the carbine are made of walnut, but the wavy decoration is very striking.

Kalmár also publishes these pictures in a later work, but the accompanying description is not quite the same: *»The barrels of the Zrínyi carbine and pair of pistols in the Armoury of the Vötteu Castle have a 17<sup>th</sup> century Turkish influence. The cast bronze barrels are unusually large, with a strong, plastic ring running around the muzzle and rear third. The plastic medallion cast on the barrel bears the motto of Miklós Zrínyi: SORS BONA NIHIL ALIUD. On the barrel of the carbine, in addition to the motto, is the Zrínyi coat of arms.*» (Kalmár 1971, p. 223) It is not clear where the new information provided compared to the previous description comes from (Figure 6). Unfortunately, neither the coat of arms nor the motto is visible in this picture. The carbine appeared in the auction catalogue of the Fischer Gallery in Switzerland on 1 December 1965 as a *»grenade launcher*» and was sold.

The issue of the carbine is also dealt with in detail by Dolinek, in his study mentioned earlier. In 1999, the renowned Dutch arms collector Henk Visser approached him with some photos.<sup>14</sup> The photos show a carbine bought in England, but the engravings and decorations could not be identified by Dutch experts. (Figure 6) After it was found that the Zrínyi coat of arms was visible on the weapon, they came to János Kalmár's book, which contains a description of a similar carbine. The Visser carbine was purchased in the late 90's and is very similar to the Kalmár carbine.

However, if we look closely at the images and descriptions published by Kalmár and Dolinek, we can see that these are of two different weapons, as several differences can be identified in the images obtained, which are shown in Figure 8.

The most striking differences are the veining and rounding of the stock of the guns, the shape of the trigger guard framing the trigger, the decorative brass rings and the bore in the side of the barrel of one gun. These are also strong arguments for the difference in the weapons, but the final proof was the

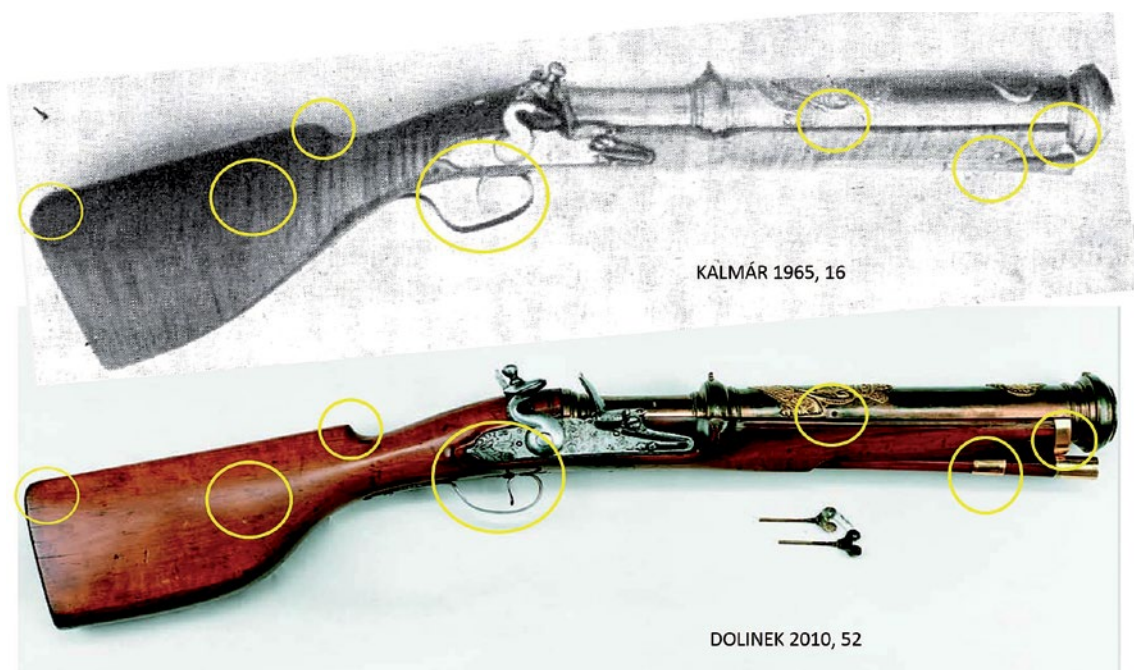
<sup>13</sup> Originally, the Zrínyi coat of arms always had two stars. That is, when the king had allowed the Zrínyi family to add to their existing – pair of black eagle wings – coat of arms that of the extinct Ernsth family of Csáktornya, with the bastion with a stone wall and a six-pointed gold star both to the right and left. This is the form approved by the king. Later, the coat of arms itself was used inconsistently, but the one star is certainly not correct; the engraver made a mistake in this case.

<sup>14</sup> Hinderikus Lucas Visser (1923-2006) was a Dutch collector whose family collection is estimated to be worth between 150 and 200 million dollars.





**Figure 7.** Photo of the carbine purchased by Henk Visser\* (Source: Dolinek 2010, p. 52 and Bonhams auction house)  
\* Here we would like to thank the Bonhams staff – David Williams, Andrew Currie and Sasha Thomas – for their quick and selfless help and for the photos they provided.



**Figure 8.** Clearly visible differences on the two carbines (by the authors)

photograph from Philadelphia. The inscription (SORS BONA NIHIL ALIUD) is clearly legible, so the difference in the Zrínyi inscriptions is the decisive difference, which, on the Visser carbine, is SORS BONA NIL ALIUD. Based on all this, we can conclude that there are two grenade launchers with the Zrínyi coat of arms (Figure 9).

The Visser carbine featured in the Dolinek article was put up for auction again in 2007, after the collector's death, for £6600. The catalogue provides the following information next to the weapon: »With heavy sighted copper-alloy barrel (originally gilt) in two stages separated by pronounced stepped mouldings, and with a further stepped moulding at the rear of the narrower breech section the forward section cast in relief with a gilt cartouche enclosing the motto 'Sors Bona Nil Aliud' above gilt owner's coat-of-arms, coronet and title 'Comes Nicolaus Perp. A Zrin', short integral tang secured from beneath, flat bevelled lock with later inscription 'Anthon Bochen' and engraved pointed convex tail, the convex cock retained by a bolt from the inside (top jaw and screw expertly replaced), moulded fruitwood



**Figure 9.** The difference in the inscriptions on the two carbines (by the authors)

full stock (minor repaired cracks and insets) inlaid with lines of twisted brass wire and with bellied butt, flat iron trigger-guard, single brass ramrod-pipe, later brass muzzle band, and brass-tipped ramrod (lock and trigger-guard with minor surface pitting) 78.1 cm.«<sup>15</sup>

The image on the auction page clearly identifies the carbine previously shown in the Visser collection, which is also referred to in the catalogue.

Terjanian also commemorates the weapon, which bears the number 1977-167-813 in the inventory of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. As he writes: »This group includes a short musket with a heavy, gilded brass barrel of similar shape and decorated in a similar manner, with the Zrínyi motto and the Zrínyi family coat of arms, with the inscription 'Comes Nicolaus Perp: A Zrinyi'. The steel lock, also engraved with floral ornamentation, bears the signature 'Anthon Bolken', and the wooden stock is similarly coloured. The coats of arms and the inscriptions on the barrels of the pistols and musket prove that these firearms, which date from around 1660 based on their style, come from the former armoury of Miklós Zrínyi. The barrels were placed in a wooden socket and fitted with imported locks.

Nothing else is known about Anthon Bolken, except that his name appears on the breech of a very similar short-barrelled musket, once owned by Zrínyi and later part of the Henk-Visser collection (catalogue no: 806).« (Terjanian 2013, p. 116) By looking through the available Visser catalogues, we have managed to find the item referred to, and can therefore confirm the data provided by Terjanian.<sup>16</sup>

## GRENADÉ LAUNCHER WITH THE ZRÍNYI COAT OF ARMS

Just when we thought we knew everything we could about the Zrínyi weapons to be found and started to summarise the results, we received a package. It contained a finely crafted book on various weapons, and a handwritten letter calling out attention to one of the items in the book. To our great surprise and delight, we saw a grenade launcher with a four-arched metal plate decorated with leaf motifs on the stock, with the coat of arms of the Zrínyi family engraved in the centre to identify the owner of the weapon. The engraver was familiar with the basic rules of heraldry. The crest, with a pointed base edged with receding and curved motifs, is divided into two fields by a line. The (heraldic) right field shows the familiar pair of eagle wings floating facing each other, while the (heraldic) left

<sup>15</sup> Source: <https://www.lotsearch.de/lot/a-rare-dutch-flintlock-so-called-pyrotechnic-gun-cir-ca-1660-40106724?page=10&orderBy=lot-startPrice&order=ASC> (Downloaded: 1 November 2021)

<sup>16</sup> The item referred to can be found at: The Visser Collection. Arms of the Netherlands in the Collection of H. L. Visser. Volume I. Catalogue of Firearms, Swords and Related Objects. 298.



**Figure 10.** The Zrínyi coat of arms on the grenade launcher (Source: photo by the author)



**Figure 11.** The grenade launcher (Source: photo by the author)

field shows a brick rectangular alternately laid thrice castellated castle wall and a thrice castellated castle tower with two windows. It is interesting that the engraver did not depict the pointed six-pointed stars floating on either side of the castle tower, which is found in the original coat of arms. The crest is engraved with a nine-point, pearl-encrusted, gem-encrusted crown of rank, denoting the title of count nobility. Between the crown and the upper, curved part of the crest, a double winged putto head can be seen, as if protecting the coat of arms. To both the right and left of the coat of arms floats a beautifully crafted heraldic rose. A peculiarity of the representation is the hitherto unknown putto and the two heraldic roses (as decorative elements) (Figure 10).



**Figure 12.** Engraving indicating the date of production (Source: photo by the author)

The weapon is a rarity of military technology. A grenade launcher that is capable of launching incendiary bullets, small bombs and grenades. It was mainly used during castle sieges, by shooting the charges into the castle, where they would cause a fire. The range of fire was 250-300 metres (Figure 10).

The weapon has a four-ring, large calibre, bronze barrel with a sight. The friction wheel is spoke-engraved in a pattern imitating the wheel of a cannon. The friction wheeled lockplate is engraved with a castle-siege depiction, showing the trajectory and impact of cannonballs. At the muzzle of the barrel, the wooden bedding is horn-sealed with burn marks. The number 14 was burnt into the robust, brown walnut stock, probably marking the place where the weapon was kept in the armoury. The lid of its stock cavity is ribbed, and – judging by its size – it could have contained a cleaning kit. The bone plate behind the barrel-tail projection bears the inscription »PGR« and the year 1652, probably the date of its manufacture (Figure 11).



**Figure 13.** Decorations of the grenade launcher (Source: photo by the author)

The base plate of the stock is also made of bone, with engravings of grenade devices. The stock of the grenade launcher is decorated with a full-length engraved bone plate with a siege scene (Figure 12)

The weapon with the Zrínyi coat-of-arms is a very fine example of a grenade launcher, and the Hermitage has a similar, though less ornate, example.<sup>17</sup>

Another weapon with the coat of arms of the Zrínyis, another item from the armoury that went to the dogs! An interesting fact about the weapon is that it was found in Slovenia at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, where it was bought by a collector, and it was then brought to Hungary.

## SUMMARY

Little of the Zrínyis' material heritage can be identified today: the remains of the library of the Zrínyi family in Zagreb (Klaniczay 1991), the decorative sabre, helmet and doublet of Miklós Zrínyi (IV) in Vienna (Kovács S. 2018), his gunpowder holder in Keszthely, several objects in Philadelphia and some in Bítov. The family's considerable collection is scattered, and finding and identifying them is virtually impossible.

In our study, we have undertaken to present the weapons found during our research, marked with the Zrínyi coat of arms, and thus with great certainty linked to the Zrínyi family. To this end, we studied the collection in Bítov on the spot, including two muskets associated with the Zrínyi family. In the course of our research we found several sources – not published in Hungarian – including publications and auction catalogues. We reviewed the electronic catalogue of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Visser catalogues, and contacted several renowned foreign experts. The research was not made easier by the fact that some of the weapons on display changed hands at unidentifiable times and by unidentifiable routes. As far as we know today, the former owners of some of the weapons in Bítov cannot be identified because the inventories have been destroyed or are incomplete.

We do not consider the research closed. On the one hand, the location of some of the weapons linked to the Zrínyis has not been confirmed, and on the other hand, the presentation of other objects linked to the family is still to be done. We are confident that systematic research will bring further results, enriching the Zrínyi literature.

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<sup>17</sup> The description of the weapon is from the book that was donated as a gift, but we can't say more about the source – for now.

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## SAŽETAK

Stoljećima su članovi obitelji Zrinski bili istaknuti heroji u borbi protiv širenja Osmanskog Carstva. Stalne borbe dovele su do razvoja bogatog i glasovitog arsenala oružja, čime su se iznimno ponosili. Razno oružje, stjegovi, amblemi i oklopi bili su podsjetnik na pobjedničke bitke i razne povelje u dvoranama i hodnicima dvorca u Čakovcu. Bitke kod Mohača i Sigeta, Tridesetogodišnji rat, brojni pohodi, Zimska vojna, opsada Velike Kaniže i obrana Novog Zrina detalji su iz života obitelji Zrinski kojih su se članovi te obitelji s ponosom sjećali. U svojoj oporuci Nikola VII. Zrinski (1620. – 1664.) više puta spominje sudbinu skupljenog oružja, nastojeći zbirku sačuvati netaknutom. Nažalost, nakon neuspjeha Urote Zrinsko-frankopanske i smaknuća Petra Zrinskog i Frana Krste Frankopana, carske su trupe uništile i djelomično opljačkale posjede obitelji Zrinski, pri čemu je izgubljen značajan dio oružja i artefakata. Još nije pronađen cjelokupni inventar oružja koje je nekoć bilo u posjedu Zrinskih, a identificiranje zasebnih predmeta zahtijeva opsežno istraživanje, ogroman trud i sreću.