

# THESES OF PHD

## **ROLES AND IMAGE-BUILDING**

**THE SOCIAL REPRESENTATION ROLE AND THE POLITICAL  
MENTALITY OF A 17TH CENTURY NOBLEMAN, ISTVÁN KOHÁRY**

**ÉVA HAJZER-MÓDLI**

ELTE Faculty of Humanities

Historical Doctoral School

Cultural History Doctoral Programm

Supervisor: Dr. János Gábor Várkonyi

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## **I. The purpose and the object of the research**

István Koháry, the supremus of Fülek and later, iudex curiae regis, was an unavoidable figure of his own age - the second part of the 17th and the first part of the 18th century - however, he is not well known today. His name appears in historical and literary studies from time to time, analyzing his military, political and literary roles and works in shorter or longer studies and criticism, but these authors have not examined his technique of image-building, his representation activity, his various social roles, and role conflicts. However, it is worth asking the question that the man, around whom a determining legendarium was built by posterity, how he formed the portrait of his historical memory in his lifetime by the conscious building of his image.

The purpose and the object of the research was:

- on the one hand, it was to undertake a reality test of the many components of the posthumous Koháry reception, which are often questionable, and to determine the possible reasons for incorporating these elements into a legendarium;
- on the other hand, it was to explore the social and political representation role of Koháry through a complex analysis of his image-building strategy (conditions, components, tools, techniques, goals, representations); and to get a picture of his political motivations;
- thirdly, it was to show the roles associated with his statuses and their role requirements, how he identified with them, or what role conflicts he encountered.

The definition, examination and presentation of these aspects served the primary purpose of proving the thesis that Koháry had consciously built his image in his life and he himself founded the decisive, often questionable components appearing in his later legends.

I have accordingly examined the portrayal of Koháry's historiography; as well as the count's whole image-building process. For the former, I have analyzed in detail the portraits of Koháry created by historians of different ages in the light of political and social relations. In the latter case, I presented in detail the beginnings of the count's image-building process, the process of forming the condition system of that, and then its conscious formation and the need for legacy.

István Koháry, at the end of his university studies and his thesis sheets (in Géza Galavics's interpretation of the thesis sheets by expressing the relationship of the disputable students with reality), which could be seen as the first impressions of the conscious image-building process, first demonstrated his technical knowledge and relation to the world.

After his studies, when he became supremus - his goals were to set up and consolidate his image, to which, in my opinion, were necessary success factors (family reputation, connections, wealth, studies, personal reputation, loyalty, representation). I have analyzed the existence of these factors and the whole process of acquiring / building them.

When I examined the conscious formation of his image, I made the subject of analysis his communication strategy, the "products" of his representation, and the most important components in his representation.

Subsequently, relating to the legacy of his image, I examined Koháry's educational principles and values, which also served to create self-presentation, identification and long-term memory. In the meantime, mainly relying on the family's private correspondence, I paid attention to Koháry's adaptation to his different roles and their requirements, his conflicts with them. Through this I tried to get a more complete picture of the controversial components that appear in his biography.

My aim was to focus my attention onto aspects of Koháry's life-work which were otherwise considered as a complementary background to other aspects, while seeking a response to a multiple-time question that has not been yet analyzed in detail: What image did Count István Koháry projected of himself in his life, what influence did it have on his later historical portrait and whether these two were in connection with each other?

## II. The source of the research

The resources of the entire Koháry oeuvre can be divided into different source groups. Of these, I highlight those that were essential to my work during my dissertation's research.

### a) Private and official family letters; diplomas; statements; reports

The Koháry-Coburg family archive was found until the beginning of the last century in the castle of the family in Szentantál, that crossed the border after World War I. The family archives were forced to transit after the order of archives in Slovakia. The original material, namely the documents of the Koháry-Coburg family (Rodovy Archiv Kohary-Coburgov), were transferred to the Banská Bystrica archives (Státny Oblastny Archiv v Banskej Bystrice). In Hungary, a significant part of it in the 1970s and 1980s was also researchable in microfilm thanks to the collaboration between Slovakian and Hungarian archives. The very rich source of Hungarian, Latin and German sources can be viewed in microfilms at the National Archives of Hungary of Lánglilium Street (MNL-OL C - Czech and Slovak microfilms), but the research is made difficult by the fact that the various documents do not have follow any chronological or thematical integration. The main sources of my dissertation were these microfilms.

The original documents from the library of the family can be found at National Archives of Hungary of Bécsi kapu street (MNL-OL P 2257, unit 667, lot 5-7: documents by István II. Kohary), the 17th and 18th century documents were included in the archives of the collection of Albert Nyári, which also served as a resource for the preparation of my work.

The archival material of the families closely related to the Koháry family can be found in the archives of mentioned above, in particular in the archives of Pál Esterházy (MNL-OL P 125: The Archives of the Esterházy Family, Palatine of Pál Esterházy).

### b) Old prints and manuscripts

The National Széchényi Library's Old Prints contains the first biographical work on Koháry, *Posthuma memoria* in Latin, which is one of the main sources of my theses. Furthermore, most of the preaching and prayer books published in printing related to Koháry's patronage activities. The library's manuscripts department holds the Count's Hungarian printed poems (poems of poetry) and a number of manuscript collections (OSZK Fol. 151., OSZK Quart. Hung, 193, 981, 4159) which were the object of the study in the literary historical approach of Koháry's representational activity.

### c) Visual representations

Several sources were also available in the field of visual representation, a significant part of it is found in the Apponyi collection of Széchényi Library (OSZK App. M. 78.), a Koháry engraving drawn by Johann Andreas Pfeiffel from the first half of the 18th century, Carl Wilhelm Brand oil painting. In addition, the surviving picture source is a thesis sheet for the Second Dispute of the supremus; a painting from 1685, depicting the count freed from captivity. Liberation as a central topic is also reflected in the countenance picture of the count, which is now held in the baroque collection of the Museum of Fine Arts - the Hungarian National Gallery. Also listed here are the representation of the family's coat-of-arms (aristocratic families with important meaning and representational value), which can be found in different old prints.

Visual representations of Koháry in the historical works of the posterity were also the source of my dissertation.

### **III. The results of the research**

The dissertation analyzes István Koháry's career from a new and unexamined point of view, complementing the results of the existing research so far, relying on a source material which full processing can further delineate the historical portrayal of the count.

The most basic result of my research is the presentation of István Koháry's image-building process and the comparison of its image-building components with the Koháry image in the historical traditions, focusing on the period from 1663 to 1703.

1. My primary task was to present the process of creating a suitable image for Koháry, identifying and analyzing seven success factors (family reputation, relationship network, wealth, studies, personal reputation, loyalty, representation) which were essential components of the noble man's successful career.
2. I have shown that the image István Koháry wanted to convey on himself, - with a certain knowledge of the representation techniques and methods taught -, was the image matching the Lipotic image-political concept and the Jesuit concept.
3. I pointed out that after the loss of Fülekk, and the wasted years of captivity, he began the truly conscious shaping of his image, in which these elements played a major part with a positive effect. He built the foundations of his prison mythology, which lived vividly in his historical memory.
  - In terms of his representational activity, the most pronounced component, the central subject, was always the history of his liberation. Communicating this held a definite importance to him. On the one hand, he built a common fate with its ancestors; on the other hand, he built the image of his captivity for Christ and Christianity into his image conception and into public consciousness.
4. I analyzed the reality of the dominant, but fairly questionable components in the legendarium of the Koháry reception, and studied the causes and motivations of these inclusions to the portrait of the count. According to the sources, I concluded that the incorporation of these elements into the reception was the primary purpose of the fact that the story tried to identify his role and to redefine the history of the Hungarian history in the light of changing political and social conditions.
  - The biographical element of Koháry's fictional encounter with Miklós Zrínyi was clearly an identification role in his narrative writing.

- The positive display of Imre Thököly's wife, Ilona Zrínyi in prison mythology wished to resolve the paradoxical situation in which the encounter with Zrínyi would be believable, and Zrínyi, as Koháry's role model, is displayed.
  - The creation of Imre Thököly's vicious figure at the reception did not come from the works of István Koháry, but was largely based on the 18th century historiographical tradition's negative portrait; it exaggerated Thököly's cruelty to Koháry.
  - Koháry's religious zeal and celibacy was explained in the historiographical tradition in most cases by the fact that he was meant for priesthood. His subsequent serious injuries were mentioned in the context of the question of marriage abandonment. From private correspondence, it was revealed, that on the one hand he avoided marriage because of material reasons, on the other hand from the mere lack of disinterest. His priorities were his military duties and this overshadowed everything else in his life. However, in my opinion, there is a need for further research into answering these questions and finding the causes.
5. In examining the various roles and status of István Koháry, it has become clear that he was thinking in a hierarchized system.
- For him his current administrative status and related duties and roles were the most important, and therefore his obligations in relation to other statuses (e.g. head of household) were neglected. This resulted most of the family's conflict.
  - During the initial period of his supremus status, it was difficult to comply the requirements of the courtly instructions associated with the supremus role, with the family tradition, the military lifestyle, his values and his mentality. What do I mean of this? On several occasions he broke the peace of Vasvár with the Turks. He also defied the points of the supremus' instruction when he and his soldiers were involved in the raiding of the Turks. In 1674, he was therefore arrested and summoned to Vienna for an official audition.
6. In my dissertation, I called Koháry intentionally a 17th century's noble man. The key elements of his image were based on events of the 17th century and the "products" of his 18th century's representations were, in fact, the reminiscence of the important events of his youth. Even the historical works analyze longer the 17th century part of his life, while those 31 years from the 18th century, which was not short and insignificant (elected in 1714 as *iudex curiae regis*). In my opinion, this is largely due to Koháry himself, who in his life deliberately sought to build and shape his image by attributing great importance to the events of the 17th century.

My work presented with the use of contemporary sources the count's representation and was also subjected to his judgment in his own age. I think that the research of these and their results can explain the presence of the questionable components that appear in the Koháry's reception of the posterity, while at the same time they can help examine the reality content of the legendary elements and provide new knowledge in shading his portrait. Of course, the purpose of my dissertation could not be to create a paradigm-ending concept, but I think István Koháry's image, social prestige, public and private roles, and the examination of the evolution of his relation are indispensable to show a real portrait of the nobleman.

#### **IV. Earlier publication on the topic**

MÓDLI, 2014 = Éva, Módli: „I can also say that the card is the mirror of the world” – The cardgame as the allegory of the baroque’s „overturned” world in the poem of István Koháry. In: Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények, 118. (2014) 6. 840-862.