

# EAST CENTRAL EUROPE: BETWEEN THE BALTIC AND THE ADRIATIC

OSTMITTELEUROPA: ZWISCHEN OSTSEE UND ADRIA

VOLUME / BAND 1

ISSUE / HEFT 1



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The University of Debrecen  
Faculty of Humanities  
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## The Bátori family and Mohács and the History of Nyírbátor from 1279 to 1847 (Nyírbátor, 25 September 2025)

The *Bátoris and Mohács* conference and the book launch for *The History of Nyírbátor from 1279 to 1847* were organized by the Hungarian National Museum Public Collection Center – Hungarian National Museum István Báthori Museum, the Town of Nyírbátor, and the Circle of Friends of the Museum on 25 September.

The event was opened by Gábor Báthori, director of the institution. In his speech, he emphasized that the significance of the event lies in the fact that, on the one hand, a high-quality event was successfully organized on the eve of the first anniversary of the reopening of the István Báthori Museum, and on the other hand, the 500th anniversary of the Battle of Mohács is approaching, and in connection with this, a conference was held in Nyírbátor, which also has a connection to this historical event, as the town belonged to the former estate of the Bátoris of Ecsed, who took part in the decisive battle. The head of the institution presented the programs: first, he introduced the three invited historians, Richárd Horváth, Norbert C. Tóth, and Tibor Neumann, then he gave a preview of the book presentation on the history of Nyírbátor and drew the attention of the audience to the recently opened exhibition by Zsuzsa Makrai, an enamel artist born in Nyírbátor, entitled *The Principality of Transylvania and the Ottoman World*, which will be on display until 31 January 2026.

The conference began with a presentation by Richárd Horváth (ELTE-HTK TTKI) entitled *The State of the Border Fortress System in 1526*. The researcher first reviewed the meaning of the term “border castle” and then examined how the defence of the southern part of the Kingdom of Hungary developed from the Angevin to the Jagiellonian period. His speech revealed that the term “border castle” was not yet in use during the reign of King Sigismund

of Luxemburg; it was first mentioned in the Great Law Code of 1435 and only then did its use become widespread. Horváth emphasized that the increasingly frequent use of the term is related to the growing Ottoman threat.

Although castles were already being built in the borderlands of Transylvania in the 1370s, the construction of castles in the southern part of the Kingdom of Hungary only began after the defeat at Nicopolis in 1396. The researcher added that the crisis did not develop in the decades before the Battle of Mohács, but already existed under Sigismund of Luxemburg, as building castles to defend such strategic points was quite costly. It was also revealed that significant castle construction took place during the reign of Matthias Corvinus. At this point, Richárd Horváth noted that the term “wooden castle” was used as a synonym at the time, and that such castles were not considered weaker than stone castles. According to the researcher, the term “border castle” appears more frequently in the sources of the Jagiellonian period because these structures were increasingly in need of renovation. At the end of his presentation, Horváth asked the audience whether we can speak of a line of border forts or a system of border forts at the time of the Battle of Mohács. He believes that this was the time when the defence of the southern border began to take on the form of a *system*, but it was not until the 1540s and 1550s that it became fully organized, when the western part of the Kingdom of Hungary came under the rule of the Habsburg Empire.

In his presentation entitled *The Bátoris of Ecsed in the Battle of Mohács*, Norbert C. Tóth (HUN-REN-MNL-SZTE Hungarian Medieval Research Group) described the journey and participation of Palatine Stephen Bátori (III) and his younger brother, Andrew Bátori (IV), Comes of Somogy, in the Battle of Mohács, as well as their subsequent escape from the battlefield. He also refuted several stereotypes associated with the battle based on sources and the lifestyle of people at the time. One of the first misconceptions is that the Hungarians lost the battle because the mobilisation was carried out too late. Based on sources, the researcher proved that a significant part of the army already set out from Buda at the beginning of June, adding that the Hungarians could not leave earlier because of the harvest, otherwise they would have had no supplies. C. Tóth emphasized that the timing of the mobilizations was also greatly influenced by the devastating epidemics that were raging at the time, which could easily appear in a marching army. Another misconception is that all the money was stolen from the treasury, which is why King Louis II of Hungary was unable to raise a sufficient army. Norbert C. Tóth contradicted



this by claiming that valuable items in the treasury were recorded separately and, if necessary, melted down to mint coins with which to pay the soldiers.

After that, the researcher showed a drawing by the papal nuncio Antonio Giovanni da Burgio depicting the Hungarian army going into battle, with Palatine Stephen Bátori standing next to the king. His presentation revealed that the two brothers travelled a long way to reach the plains of Mohács, which he also depicted on an edited map. C. Tóth emphasized that the participation of the Bátori family was significant because, after the Szapolyais and Perényis, they were one of the most influential families, which provided approximately 1 000 soldiers. At this point, the speaker questioned another stereotype, namely that not enough people fought against the Ottomans. By way of comparison, he mentioned that during the Italian Wars, the French king at the time could not field an army larger than 10 000 men, meaning that even in his own era, King Louis II was able to deploy a respectable number of soldiers. In addition, the speaker explained that the two dignitaries managed to survive the conflict because they did not fight in the main force and were able to escape in time. Finally, the researcher concluded his presentation with the thought that, in the long run, the Battle of Mohács was not a defeat, as the Ottomans did not succeed in permanently occupying the Kingdom of Hungary.

The conference came to a close with a presentation by Tibor Neumann (ELTE-HTK TTKI) entitled Participants from Szabolcs, Szatmár, and Bereg counties in the Battle of Mohács. Similar to the previous speaker, he also examined the participants in the conflict, but in a broader context. He added that this research is being conducted within the framework of the Mohács 500 consortium project together with several historians, namely Dávid Faragó, András Péter Szabó, and Szabolcs Varga, and that the achievements of this project are their merits as well. Their main goal is to find as many heroes who died in the Battle of Mohács as possible by the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle.

He then showed who fought against the Ottomans on the Mohács plain from the three counties, ranging from the highest to the lowest ranks. Among the participants was George Szapolyai, Count of Szepes, owner of the estates of Szatmár and Debrecen, the younger brother of Palatine Stephen Szapolyai. He was one of the most prominent Hungarian lords; his mother was the second cousin of Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I (Habsburg), and his sister was the wife of the King of Poland. He also played an active role in Bohemian domestic politics. He died in battle, and according to sources,

he fought valiantly. He also mentioned John Drágfi, Judge Royal, and Péter Perényi, Crown Guard, as examples. He then examined the familiars of certain nobles, namely Gregory Csapi, who represented the Losonc family in the Battle of Mohács, and the Bornemisszas of Ártánháza, who served Andrew Bátori and who helped the nobleman from Szabolcs escape from the battle. However, based on the sources, it was possible to identify some serfs as well, such as Benedict Kálmándi, who was a servant of the parish priest of Nyírbátor. Tibor Neumann added that, on the one hand, not much is known about the participation of serfs, and on the other hand, it is not certain that members of this social class fought, but merely provided assistance.

Afterwards, Antal Máté, mayor of Nyírbátor, gave a welcoming speech and introduced Éva Kujbus Mecsei, retired director of the county archives, to hold the book review of the volumes written by archaeologist Péter Németh and historian László Szabolcs Gulyás. In her presentation, she pointed out that this is a remarkable work, as no previous work summarises the history of the city from its beginnings to 1847 in such detail. It is particularly interesting that the synthesizing work had to be edited in two volumes. Accordingly, Kujbus presented the volumes separately. The first volume was written by László Szabolcs Gulyás, who covered the history of Nyírbátor from the first mention of the town in 1279 to the decline of the Bátori family in the seventeenth century. The second was written by Péter Németh, who examined the events in local context from the time the Bethlen family acquired the estate until the end of the Reform Period. The retired archivist emphasized that the authors managed to create a work that is full of new insights, professional, but also understandable to the lay audience. She encouraged everyone to get hold of the two volumes and read them.

The event concluded with the closing remarks of Gábor Báthori, who ended his speech with the following thought: “Let us live together with Mohács”.

# **EAST CENTRAL EUROPE: BETWEEN THE BALTIC AND THE ADRIATIC OSTMITTELEUROPA: ZWISCHEN OSTSEE UND ADRIA**

## **Aims and Scope**

The East Central Europe: Between the Baltic and the Adriatic (ECE) is a peer-reviewed academic journal published by the Institute of History at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Debrecen. As its title suggests, the journal focuses on the history of Central Europe, covering the region between the Baltic and Adriatic Seas. This region was for centuries a crossroads and meeting point where diverse ethnic groups, religions, traditions, and political entities interacted in unique ways. In addition to studies directly examining the history of the region, the editors welcome methodologically and/or theoretically relevant contributions for the analysis of historical processes.

The journal seeks to create an interdisciplinary platform to facilitate dialogue and disseminate new research on the region, whose findings are often limited in international scholarship due to language barriers and the influence of national narratives. To support this goal, ECE is an open-access journal, published at least once annually, available in both print and online formats.

## **Zielsetzung**

Ostmitteleuropa: Zwischen Ostsee und Adria (ECE) ist eine begutachtete wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift, die vom Historischen Institut der Philosophischen Fakultät der Universität Debrecen herausgegeben wird. Wie der Titel schon andeutet, konzentriert sich die Zeitschrift auf die Geschichte Mitteleuropas, insbesondere auf das Gebiet zwischen Ostsee und Adria. Diese Region war über Jahrhunderte ein Schnittpunkt und Begegnungsraum, in dem unterschiedliche ethnische Gruppen, Religionen, Traditionen und politische Einheiten auf einzigartige Weise interagierten. Neben Studien, die die Geschichte der Region direkt untersuchen, erwarten die Herausgeber methodisch und/oder theoretisch relevante Beiträge zur Analyse historischer Prozesse.

Die Zeitschrift möchte eine interdisziplinäre Plattform schaffen, um den Dialog zu fördern und neue Forschungsergebnisse über die Region zu verbreiten, deren Ergebnisse aufgrund von Sprachbarrieren und der Prägung durch nationale Narrative international nur begrenzt bekannt sind. Zur Unterstützung dieses Ziels ist ECE eine Open-Access-Zeitschrift, die mindestens einmal jährlich erscheint und sowohl in gedruckter als auch in digitaler Form verfügbar ist.

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