

Defeat as Victory and its Cultural Impact

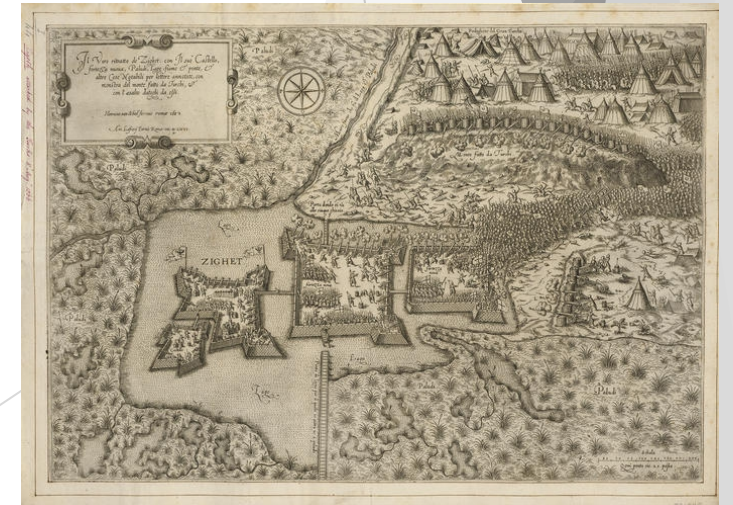
Case-study of Nikola Šubić Zrinski and the Battle of Szigetvár

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The Siege and the Battle

- siege: 5. 8. - 7. 9. 1566.
- sides: Habsburg Empire vs. Ottoman Empire
- commanders: Count Nikola Zrinski / Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent
- strengths: 2300 men / 117 000 men
- casualties: all but 7 defenders / 35 000 Ottoman soldiers



- Sultan Suleyman launched a new campaign to conquer Vienna
- Zrinski defeated the vanguard of the army at Šikloš
- Sultan decides to turn part of the army against Szigetvár
- Zrinski and the defenders take an oath that they will defend the town till the last breath
- Constant Ottoman attacks and fightings, significant losses on both sides
- Defenders retreat first from the New Town to the Greater Town, and then to the Old Town
- Maximilian II. Habsburg doesn't send any help (keeps the entire army close to Vienna)
- Zrinski declines offers and threats and refuses to surrender the town
- 7. September: the Old Town caught fire during one attack, defenders decide to take the final charge

Formation of cultural memory: historiography and collective memory

Historiography

- Franjo Črnko, *Podsjeđanje i osvojenje Sigeta*, 1566/1567;
- Ferenc Forgách, *Zigethi Hungariae claustris praestantissimi vera descriptio, et obsidionis epitome*, 1587;
- Nikola/Miklós Istvánffy, *Historiarum de rebus Ungaricis Libri XXXIV*, 1622;
- Juraj Rattkay, *Spomen na kraljeve i banove Kraljevstava Dalmacije, Hrvatske i Slavonije*, 1652;
- Marko/Marcus Forstal, *Stemmatographia Mavortiae Familiae Comitum de Zrin*, 1663-1665;
- Pavao Ritter, *Kronika aliti spomen vsega svieta vikov*, 1696;
- Pavao Ritter, *Plorantis Croatiae saecula duo*, 1703;
- Andrija Kačić Miošić, *Razgovor ugodni naroda slovinskoga*, 1756;
- Joseph von Hormayr, *Oesterreichischer Plutarch*, 1807.
- Matija Mesić, *Život Nikole Zrinjskoga, sigetskoga junaka*, 1866.

Narrative formation

F. Črnko (1566/1567)	F. Forgach (1587)	N. Istvánffy (1622)	Juraj Ratkaj (1652)	Marko Forstal (1663-1665)	Andrija Kačić Miošić (1756)	Matija Mesić (1866)
Sultan Suleiman launches a campaign with a large army			Sultan Suleiman launches a campaign with a large army			Sultan Suleiman launches a campaign with a large army
Zrinski defeated the vanguard of the army			Zrinski defeated the vanguard of the army			Zrinski defeated the vanguard of the army
Zrinski and the defenders take an oath to defend the city to the end			Zrinski and the defenders take an oath to defend the city to the end			Zrinski and the defenders take an oath to defend the city to the end
						Zrinski and the defenders feel strong Croatian patriotism
Constant Ottoman attacks			Constant Ottoman attacks			Constant Ottoman attacks
	Sultan Suleyman offers Zrinski rule over Croatia if he surrenders Szigetvár			Sultan Suleyman offers Zrinski rule over Croatia if he surrenders Szigetvár		Sultan Suleyman offers Zrinski rule over Croatia if he surrenders Szigetvár
	Sulejman pretends to have captured Zrinski's son and threatens to execute him if he doesn't surrender the city			Sulejman pretends to have captured Zrinski's son and threatens to execute him if he doesn't surrender the city		
		Sultan died during the siege			The king did not send help to the defenders	
Strongest Ottoman attack, the town caught fire				Strongest Ottoman attack, the town caught fire	Strongest Ottoman attack, the town caught fire	
Heroic battle, Zrinski and many defenders were killed						

Collective Memory

Illustrium vitae et imagines:

- Heinrich Pantaleon, *Teutscher Nation Heldenbuch*, 1568;
- André Thevet, *Les vrais pourtraits et vies des hommes illustres grecz, latins et payens*, 1584;
- Jacob Schrenck von Notzing, *Der aller durchleuchtigisten und großmächtigen Kayser*, 1603.



- Croatian epics:
- Brne Karnarutić, *Capture of the town Szigetvár*, 1584;
- Petar Zrinski, *The Siege of Szigetvár*, 1651;
- Pavao Ritter, *Farewell at Szigetvár*, 1684.

- Various folk poems



19th century

- numerous works of art inspired by Szigetvár:
36 musical works; more than 70 paintings; more than 100 literary works



Opera *Nikola Šubić Zrinjski* (1876)

- composer: Ivan Zajc; libretto: Hugo Badalić
- historically pretty (not completely) accurate
- instant success
- emotional pivotal scenes well known in cultural memory: Zrinski's and the defenders' oath; the decline of sutlans offers; heroic final charge
- the opera became a sort of forum for the expression of Croatian patriotism during the 19th and especially in the 20th century



**Thank you for your
attention!**