



## *Francis -Rákóczi II (1676-1735)*

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank you for your attendance and interest in this culture historian exposition and lecture that we have organised for today. The exhibition and the lecture are to introduce one of the greatest leaders of the Hungarian nation of its history. Prince II Rákóczi Ferenc, who was the leader of the Great Liberty War between 1703-1711 against the Habsburgs and sought to bring independence for the Hungarian Kingdom.

You have every right to ask why should this person from the Hungarian culture and history be presented here in the Netherlands. We have many reasons. We, the organisers found it important to exchange not only language, artistic or business knowledge about each other, but also the history and traditions of the Netherlands and *vice versa*. My personal experience is that by knowing the history of the land, to which I have moved to and now live in, explains a great deal about its society. At the same time, by knowing the history of Hungary allows my new family and friends to understand me. As I study Dutch history, the rocks, the dunes and the buildings slowly but surely start to tell their stories and legends to me, therefore I am becoming more and more a person who belongs here in the Netherlands.

The opportunity to arrange this lecture arose because the year 2006 was declared by the government's culture department to be a double memorial-year for the Hungarian nations. On one hand we remember the world-wide famous composer, Béla Bartók – who was born 125 years ago - all over the world. On the other hand, mostly in Hungarian societies all over the world, we remember our great Prince Rákóczi II..

Ferenc (Francis) Rákóczi II was born 330 years ago, and spent the last years of his life in exile in Rodosto – today known as Tekirdag – in Turkey. Exactly 100 years ago his body was brought back to his homeland and buried in Kassa (Kosice) – which today is in Slovakia. A hundred years – a century - is often an anniversary when people sit down for a while and remember. We, Hungarians, do the same, and we would share our remembrance with you today.

But we do not do this without you. In our lecture we also focus on the moments the Dutch nation tried to support Rákóczi II and his followers in their struggle, war and difficulties. It is not well-known, but it is fact. The Dutch nation supported him and his war by diplomacy, politics, religion and publication for long-long years.

Today, after a brief review of the actual history of the Netherlands and the Carpathian Basin, I would like to present a brief summary of the life and war of Prince Rákóczi II of Hungary and Transylvania, the Dutch intermediary-role, and furthermore Rákóczi's presence in our lives today.

Before the lecture, for their support of this exhibition, I would like to thank his Excellency, Count Festetics, Honorary consul of Hungary in Haarlem and Ms. Csilla Tordai here in the Netherlands, whilst in Hungary to the Rétközi Museum in Kisvárd – who owns the exhibition, Dr. József Kriston Vizi, cultural advisor, Dr. Edit Tamás in Sárospatak, museologist and Rákóczi – expert in the Rákóczi Museum of the National Museum in Hungary and Dr. László Dám, director of the Directorate of the Museums of Province Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and doцент of the University of Debrecen. We regret, that they cannot be present here today, although the original plan was that they would welcome you and hold the lecture. They and we apologise and kindly ask you to accept the presentation by me today.



Mányoki Ádám: Rákóczi Ferenc II. (1708)  
 (1673, Szokolya - 1757, Drezda)

## ***Historical Review***

### **Hungary**

The Hungarian Kingdom was one integrated state in the Carpathian Basin as of the year of 1000 when Saint Stephen I established the Hungarian State. The state was multinational in terms of nations and religions. However, when the Ottoman Empire struck into Hungary in the 16th century and occupied the middle part of the country, the state was broken to pieces. Whilst the Eastern side, including Transylvania, reported to the Sultan, the Western side of the country through heritage was under the rule of the Habsburg emperor, and only the North Eastern area had some kind of independence. The Sultan was not able to conquer more of the western parts of Europe. When he threatened Vienna, the unified European army was ordered to Hungary and thus ended the Ottoman occupation of the Hungarian territory in 1686. The broken status of the country however did not end. The western side and some of the middle region was ruled by the Habsburg emperor who held the Hungarian crown, but was not crowned with it, whilst the Northern and Eastern regions were struggling and fighting for the Hungarian independence further. During this time the Protestantism spread throughout Europe. The Protestants found a home in the Northern and Eastern regions, in the Carpathian Basin including Transylvania, whilst in the Western part under the rule of the Hapsburgs, the Catholicism stayed strong. The country was heavily divided.

### **In the Netherlands**

This period was not without difficulties on the other side of Europe in the Dutch areas. At this same period Holland fought for its independence not only from the Habsburgs but also from Spanish and French influence. Following a crisis in 1619, the United Provinces turned to the Golden Ages and became one of the most powerful nations in Europe. They had a strong relationship with the French Royal Court; however this relationship became worse and worse by the year of 1660. In Holland the Protestantism found roots and became one of the strongest protestant centres in Europe. With England their relationship changed from time to time. In 1652 the first English-Dutch war took place; in 1665 the second. In 1668 they participated in the three alliances against Louis XIV, the French king. The years of 1688 and 1689 are known as the 'Glorious Revolution' when Willem III (of England) became the king of England. Between 1701 and 1703 the Spanish throne-heritage war took place. The Peace Treaty in Utrecht in 1713 closed a period for Europe, which defined the future of it for the long term in our common history as well.

### ***Francis Rákóczi II. (1676-1735)***

In this very hectic period for Europe Ferenc, (Francis) Rákóczi was born in Borsi in Hungary (today Borša, Slovakia) on 27 March in 1676. He died in Tekirdağ (known in Hungarian as "Rodostó"), Ottoman Empire, April 8, 1735). He was the Prince of Transylvania and leader of a Hungarian uprising between 1703 and 1711 against the Habsburgs. The Rákóczis were one of the richest landlords of the Kingdom of Hungary. His grandfather and father were princes of Transylvania. Rákóczi used his fortune to aid the cause of the Hungarian freedom from the rule of the Habsburgs. Between 1703 and 1711, he led a revolt against Habsburg rule in the northern parts of Hungary. His rebellion (the Francis II Rákóczi Uprising, also known as the 'Kuruc' i.e 'anti-Habsburg War) failed, but Hungarian nobles were subsequently allowed to rule over their lands and people as long as they swore allegiance to the Habsburg emperor. The pro-Habsburgs were called "labanc".

His father, Francis I Rákóczi, died when Francis II was still a baby. His grandfather and great-grandfather, both called George Rákóczi, were Princes of Transylvania. His mother, Ilona Zrínyi, was the daughter of Péter Zrínyi, Ban of Croatia.

Upon the death of Francis I's, Ilona Zrínyi requested guardianship of her children; however, the advisors of Emperor Leopold I insisted that he retained guardianship of both Francis and his sister, especially as Francis I had requested this in his will before death. Despite further difficulties, Ilona Zrínyi was able to raise her children, while the Emperor retained legal guardianship. The family lived in the castles of Munkács (now Mukacheve, Ukraine), Sárospatak

and Regéc.

Ilona Zríny's second husband, Imre Thököly— "Kuruc-King" as he was called— was heavily involved in politics at this time and took little interest in Rákóczi's education

Due to the war of Thököly's, Antonio Caraffa besieged their residence, Munkács in 1686. Ilona Zrínyi successfully defended the castle for three years, but capitulated in 1689. The two Rákóczi children fell again under the guardianship of Leopold I, and moved to Vienna with their mother. They regained their possessions, but could not leave the city without the Emperor's permission. Rákóczi grew up under the education of Jesuits, they educated him as a catholic, loyal to the Habsburg royal court and he almost forgot the Hungarian language.

When Rákóczi was 17, the Emperor released him from his mother's guardianship, allowing him to manage his own properties. His sister Julianna had brought this about by marrying a powerful Austrian, General Aspremont, and interceding for Rákóczi. He lived with the Aspremonts until his marriage in September 1694, to 15-year-old Princess Amelia, daughter of the Duke of Hessen-Theinfeld and a descendant of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary. The couple moved to the Rákóczi castle at Sárospatak, where Rákóczi began to manage his properties.

The Treaty of Karlowitz (Karlócai béke in Hungarian) on January 26, 1699, that was made between the Ottoman Empire and the Holy League, Thököly forced Ilona Zrínyi into exile. Rákóczi remained in Vienna, under the Emperor's supervision. Relying on the prevalent anti-Habsburg sentiment of this time, remnants of Thököly's peasant army started a new uprising in the Hegyalja region of Northeastern Hungary, which was then a part of the property of the Rákóczi family. The peasant army captured the castles of Tokaj, Sárospatak and Sátoraljaújhely, and asked Rákóczi to become their leader, but he was not eager to head what appeared to be a minor peasant rebellion. He quickly returned to Vienna, where he tried his best to clear his name.

Rákóczi met and at the end became a good friend of Count Miklós Bercsényi, whose property Ungvár (today "Uzhorod" in Ukraine) was next to his own. Bercsényi was a highly educated man, the third richest man in Hungary (after Rákóczi and Simon Forgách), and was related to most of the Hungarian aristocracy. Besides the common interest of aristocracy, Bercsényi tried to convince him of the Hungarian's interest and of independence from the Austrian hegemony.

## The Rákóczi Uprising

As the House of Habsburg was on the verge of dying out, France was looking for allies in its fight against Austrian hegemony in Europe. Consequently, they established contact with Rákóczi and promised support if he took up the cause of Hungarian independence. An Austrian spy seized this correspondence between Rákóczi and France and brought it to the attention of the Emperor. As a direct result of this, Rákóczi was arrested on April 18, 1700, and imprisoned in the fortress of Wiener Neustadt. It became obvious during the preliminary hearings that, just as in the case of his grandfather Péter Zrínyi, the only possible sentence for Francis was death. However, with the aid of his pregnant wife Amelia and the prison commander, Rákóczi managed to escape and flee to Poland. Here he met with Bercsényi again, and together they took up contact with the French court..

Three years later, the War of the Spanish Succession forced a large part of the Austrian forces in Hungary to leave the country temporarily. Taking advantage of the situation, 'Kuruc' forces began a new uprising in Munkács, and Rákóczi was asked to head it. He decided to invest his energies in a war of national liberation, and accepted the leadership. On June 15, 1703, another group of about 3000 armed men, headed by Tamás Esze, joined him near the Polish city of Lawoczne. Bercsényi also arrived, with French funds and 600 Polish mercenaries.



Most of the Hungarian nobility did not support Rákóczi's uprising, because they considered it to be no more than a jacquerie, a peasant rebellion. Rákóczi's famous call to the nobility of Szabolcs County seemed to be a futile gesture. He did manage to convince the Hajdús (emancipated peasant warriors) to join his forces. By late September 1703 Rákóczi's forces controlled most of Hungary to the east and north of the Danube, conquering Transdanubia soon after.

Flag at Rákóczi – Uprising

Since the Austrians had to fight Rákóczi on several fronts, they felt obliged to enter negotiations with him. However, the victory of Austrian and British forces against a combined French-Bavarian army in the Battle of Blenheim on August 13, 1704, provided an advantage not only in the War of the Spanish Succession, but also prevented the union

of Rákóczi's forces with their French-Bavarian allies.

This placed Rákóczi into a difficult military and financial situation. French support gradually diminished, and a larger army was needed to occupy the already-won land. Meanwhile, supplying the current army with arms and food was beyond his means. He tried to solve this problem by creating a new copper-based coinage, which was not readily accepted in Hungary as people were used to silver coins. Nevertheless, Rákóczi managed to maintain his military advantage for a while – but after 1706, his army was forced into retreat.

A meeting of the Hungarian Diet (consisting of 6 bishops, 36 aristocrats and about 1000 representatives of the lower nobility of 25 counties), held near Szécheny (Nógrád county) in September 1705, elected Rákóczi to be the "fejedelem" (ruling Prince) of Hungary, to be assisted by a 24-member Senate. Rákóczi and the Senate were assigned joint responsibility for the conduct of foreign affairs, including peace talks.

On the encouragement of England and the Netherlands, peace talks started again on October 27, 1705 between the Hungarians and the Emperor. Both sides varied their strategy according to the military situation. One stumbling block was sovereignty over Transylvania – neither side was prepared to give it up. Rákóczi's proposed treaty with the French was stalled, so he became convinced that only a declaration of independence would make it acceptable for various powers to negotiate with him. In 1706, his wife (whom he had not seen for 5 years, along with their sons József and György) and his sister were both sent as peace ambassadors, but Rákóczi rejected their efforts on behalf of the Emperor.

On Rákóczi's recommendation and with Bercsényi's support, another meeting of the Diet held at Ónod (Borsod county) declared the deposition of the House of Habsburg from the Hungarian throne on June 13, 1707. But neither this act, nor the copper currency issued to avoid monetary inflation, were successful. Louis XIV refused to enter into treaties with Prince Rákóczi, leaving the Hungarians without allies. There remained the possibility of an alliance with Imperial Russia, but this did not materialize either.

At the Battle of Trencsén (Trencsén county, today in Slovakia), on August 3, 1708 Rákóczi's horse stumbled, and he fell to the ground, unconscious. The Kuruc forces thought him dead and fled. This defeat was fatal for the uprising. Numerous Kuruc leaders transferred their allegiance to the Emperor, hoping for clemency. Rákóczi's forces became restricted to the area around Munkács and Szabolcs county. Not trusting the word of János Pálffy, who was the Emperor's envoy charged with negotiations with the rebels, the Prince left Hungary for Poland on February 21, 1711.

In Rákóczi's absence, Sándor Károlyi was named Commander-in-Chief of the Hungarian forces, and quickly negotiated a peace agreement with the representative of the House of Habsburg. Under its provisions, 12,000 rebels laid down their arms, handed over their flags and took an oath of allegiance to the Emperor on May 1, 1711 in the fields outside Nagymajtény, in Szatmár county.

The Peace of Szatmár did not treat Rákóczi particularly badly. He was assured clemency if he took an oath of allegiance to the Emperor as well as freedom to move to Poland if he wished to leave Hungary. He did not accept these conditions as he doubted the honesty of the Habsburg court. Further, he did not even recognize the legality of the Peace Treaty, as it had been signed after the death of the Emperor Joseph I on April 17, 1711, and which terminated the pleni-potential authority of János Pálffy, the representative of the House of Habsburg.

## Exile

Supported by Tsar Peter I of Russia, Rákóczi was offered the Polish Crown twice.. He turned the offers down, though, and remained in Poland until 1712, where he was the honoured guest of the Polish aristocracy. For a while he lived in Danzig (today's Gdańsk) under the pseudonym of Count Sárosi.

He left Danzig on 16 November, 1712, and went to England, where Queen Anne, pressured by the Habsburgs, refused to receive him. Rákóczi then crossed the Channel to France, landing in Dieppe on 13 January, 1713. On 27 April he handed a memorandum to Louis XIV reminding him of his past services to France and asking him not to forget Hungary during the coming peace negotiations for The War of the Spanish Succession. But neither the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 nor the Treaty of Rastatt in 1714 made any mention of Hungary or Rákóczi. No provisions were made to allow Rákóczi's two sons, who were kept under surveillance in Vienna, to rejoin their father.

Prince Rákóczi, although not recognised officially by France, was much in favour in the French court. After the death of Louis XIV on 1 September, 1715, he decided to accept the invitation of Turkey (still at war with the Habs-

burgs) to move there. He left France in September 1717, with an entourage of 40 people and landed at Gallipoli on 10 October. Although he was received with honours, his desire to be the head of a separate Christian army to help in the fight against the Habsburgs was not given serious consideration.

The Ottoman Empire signed the Peace Treaty of Passarowitz with Austria on 21 July, 1718. Among its provisions was the refusal of the Turks to extradite the exiled Hungarians. Two years later, the Austrian envoy requested that the exiles be turned over, but the Sultan of Turkey refused as a matter of honour. Rákóczi and his entourage were settled in the town of Tekirdağ – Rodosto as we Hungarian name it -, relatively distant from the Ottoman capital. A large Hungarian colony grew up around this town on the Sea of Marmara sharing the sentiment of the writer Kelemen Mikes, who said, “I had no special reason to leave my country, except that I greatly loved the Prince.”

Rákóczi lived in the Turkish town of Tekirdağ (Rodosto) for 22 years. He adopted a set routine: rising early, attending daily Mass, writing and reading in the mornings, and carpentry in the afternoons. He was visited occasionally by his son, György Rákóczi. Further military troubles in 1733 in Poland awakened his hopes of a possible return to Hungary, but they were not fulfilled. He died on 8 April, 1735.

Rákóczi's testament, dated October 27, 1732, left something to all of his family members, as well as to his fellow exiles. He left separate letters to be sent to the Sultan and to France's Ambassador to Constantinople, asking them not to forget his fellow exiles. His internal organs were buried in the Greek church of Tekirdağ, while his heart was sent to France where he had spent his lovely days together with his wife, and who was buried there, too. After obtaining the permission of the Turkish authorities, Rákóczi's body was taken by his faithful chamberlain Kelemen Mikes to Constantinople on July 6, 1735 for burial in the Galatian (then Jesuit) church, next to his mother Ilona Zrínyi., and according to his last wishes,

His remains were moved on 29 October, 1906—one hundred years ago—to the St. Elisabeth Cathedral in Košice (Hungarian: Kassa) where he is buried with his mother and his son.

## ***The Dutch participation and – or support of Rákóczi II***

The Dutch i.e. the United Provinces took part or were involved directly or indirectly in the Rákóczi Uprising in many aspects. Holland played a role as mediator or as a peace-ambassador together with England between 1704-1706.

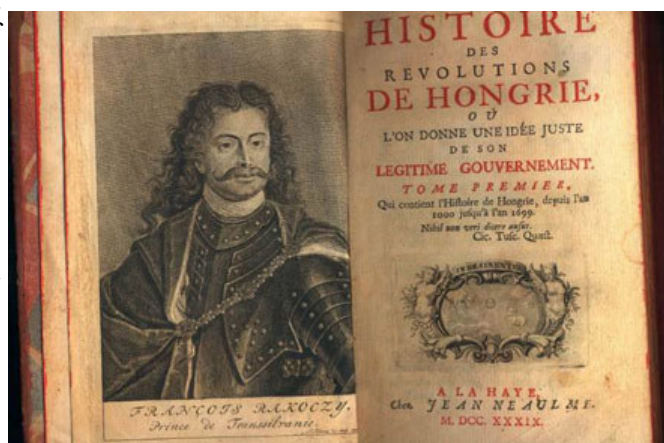
They became interested in two main aspects.

In one hand the area which was governed by the Rákóczi was mainly protestant. Being such it was of great interest to the Protestant United Provinces to support a very strong Protestant bastion in Europe such as North eastern Hungary and Transylvania.

Commercially they were interested – just like the English – as well. The House of Habsburg was financed by the Oppenheimer bank-house. After the death of Oppenheimer in 1703, the emperor looked for another financial support and found it mainly in England and in Holland. As a guarantee, the golden, silver and other precious metal, furthermore the salt – mines in North and Transylvania was offered and accepted. However, these mines laid in the territory of Rákóczi II.

Both England and Holland had an interest in finalising this war as soon as possible and with the most peaceful solution. Jan Jacob Hamel-Bruyninx (1661-1738), the delegated ambassador to Vienna by The United Provinces (the Netherlands) later Count Rechteren participated on the meetings in Hungary. The mediation for a peace agreement failed as the uprising failed. It was not the fault of the mediators only. The international situation of Europe, politics and interest, the ‘balance of power’ could not deliver it in any aspect.

As we mentioned Rákóczi was convinced that the legitimacy of Hungary and the Independent Transylvania should have been recognised in the Peace Treaty in Utrecht. He prepared



Rákóczi Ferenc: Histoire des Revolutions de Hongrie  
Published in Den Haag 1739



everything for this. However, his hope did not come true. The situation was discussed; however the Treaty does not mention anything about it.

But Rákóczi was not forgotten. His memoir of *Histoire des Revolutions de Hongrie* was first published in Den Haag in 1739.

We have other Dutch connections that are not about Rákóczi himself, but for instance, about his portrait painter, Ádám Mányoki. Rákóczi sent him to the Netherlands with some diplomatic tasks and for some development in his arts. Mányoki stayed in the Netherlands until 1712.

## **His memory**

The time of Prince Rákóczi II was not a glorious time. However, today he is considered a national hero in Hungary. Streets and institutions are named after him in almost all Hungarian cities, towns and villages. He was not only a leader of an uprising, but a state organizer with enlightened thinking. During the short time that he ruled the country and Transylvania he proved his talent as head of state in diplomacy, sensibility of the different ranges of the society. He was a forerunner of the formation of a modern state. He was to establish a state based on mercantilism. He ably governed a multinational population not only by nations but religions. Despite all his talents, the international situation, the effort of setting the 'balance of power' in Europe did not work for him, although the majority of the anno European states supported his efforts theoretically. He failed, as the mediators for the peace in the Carpathian – basin failed in their diplomatic effort. But still, Rákóczi has become a national hero whose memory still lives on. Most Hungarians associate his last name with him alone, not other members of the same family.

Rákóczi's portrait can be found on Hungarian banknotes. Until it was withdrawn from circulation, it was on the 50-forint note. Since then it appears on the 500-forint note.

The Hungarian terms in the military –areas such as “hussar”, “csákó” etc derive from the time of exile, after the Rákóczi-Uprising. The effective “easy-rider”-formation of the “kuruc”s, later on, “hussar”s was integrated into the Western military formation; even the easy tank-formation in the Netherlands is called the “husaren”.

A well-known patriotic tune of the era (composer unknown), is also named after Rákóczi - the Rákóczi March- , as it was reputed to be his favourite. Hector Berlioz orchestrated the piece, and it was also used by Franz Liszt as the basis of his Hungarian Rhapsody No.15.

Hungarian associations in emigration are named after Rákóczi and his fellows, just like the ones here in the Netherlands, the Rákóczi Club in Limburg, or the Mikes Kelemen Kör, the association of Hungarian science and literature .

If you visit Hungary beyond Budapest or the Lake Balaton, you might realise that all castles and fortresses are in ruins and most of them covered by the soil of the centuries. The emperor, after breaking the Rákóczi Uprising gave an order to destroy all Hungarian fortresses in the revolt-area to prevent another uprising ever in history. He could not avoid it. About hundred years later, Hungarians rose in 1848-1849, which was broken too, but still it led to the dualism in 1867 and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Another hundred years later 1956 another Hungarian Uprising followed for “PRO PATRIE ET LIBERTATÉ” ...whether there are fortresses, or not.

MA. Éva Lilla Kronauer

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