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Relatives and Miles

A Regional Approach to the Social Relations of the Lesser Nobility in the County of Somogy in the Eighteenth Century

ABSTRACT

Through seven socio-economic criteria the author establishes three characteristic levels of the lesser nobility of Co. Somogy in the eighteenth century, than takes samples consisting of three families from them. The analysis is based on the assumption that the geographical extent of social relations is reflected by the network of places where these families brought their wives from or married off their daughters to. The conclusion of this regional approach to the social relations of the lesser nobility is that the typical geographical sphere of life was the narrow neighbourhood of their village for the petty nobility, while for the well-to-do gentry it was approximately the county and for the wealthy and influential leading families it was a larger geographical unit.

While at the time of its foundation in the early eleventh century the system of counties (*comitatus*, *vármegye*) in the kingdom of Hungary was a bulwark of royal power, from the end of the thirteenth century it had been gradually transformed into the organ of the local self-government of the nobility. In the eighteenth century the nobility exercised the bulk of administration, certain judicial and local legislative power through the organization of the county. The head of the county was the *főispán* (*supremus comes*) appointed by the king, usually a lay or ecclesiastical lord absent from the county, while the actual self-government of the county was directed by the elected *alispán* (*vicecomes*). It was in this century that the development of the modern state apparatus gathered momentum, and the central government made efforts to subordinate the county. However, to enforce royal decrees resisted by the county authorities, it had no other means but the army. This last argument remained, though an exceptional measure. The county enjoyed considerable autonomy for the central government had no alternative executive organ on the regional

and local level, and its leading officials were existentially independent noblemen elected by the noble assembly.

According to received opinion in Hungary, the county was the realm of the lesser nobility. But can we reverse this statement? It should therefore be possible to get to know the lesser nobility by studying one particular county? I encountered for example records on several members of the Spissich family while investigating the noble society of Co. Somogy in the eighteenth century. They did not own large estates, and I did not see find any evidence in Somogy which would have elevated this family above the average of the lesser nobility. Only later did I find out that the Spissich family gave three *alispáns* in the eighteenth century, though not in Somogy, but in Co. Zala and across the Dráva, in Croatia.¹ Presumably the prestige of the Spissich in Somogy was augmented by the fact that they had influential relatives in the leadership of the neighbouring counties: county borders did not prevent social effects from crossing.

If this is so, we should try to establish the 'social sphere' of the Hungarian nobility in the eighteenth century. I shall attempt to do so on the example of Co. Somogy, by concentrating on the geographical sphere of a single social phenomenon, but one of central importance: marriage. However, an overall investigation embracing the entire lesser noble society of the county would take several years. Therefore we have to limit our inquiry to a selected sample of individual cases. In order to be in any sense representative of the lesser nobility, the families² to be surveyed must be selected in a statistically more or less relevant sampling. Such a procedure demands that we define certain social layers within the lesser nobility and take samples from these layers.

I.

The process in which the nobility became a legally unified order from a conglomerate of various privileged groups was formally completed in 1351 by an act recognizing the equal rights of every nobleman. This principle found its way into István Werbőczy's *Tripartitum* (1514), the collection of Hungarian customary law, that had lasting influence on the mentality of Hungarian nobility. The turbulent sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed a strong numerical expansion of the nobility through the practice of granting noble privilege to masses of commoners. According to the population censuses of the 1780s noble privilege embraced approximately 5% of the population. The legal fiction of *una eademque nobilitas* (one and the same nobility) united groups of very diverse social status within one order. Among these only the separation of the titled aristocracy is evident. The hidden differences among the 'lesser nobility' (*köznemesség*) were, however, at least as significant as those between aristocracy and lesser nobility. I tried to define certain social levels within the lesser nobility by applying a complex set of criteria, as a basis of a stratified sampling.

My investigation included the lesser noble families living in Co. Somogy between 1715 and 1815. These unconventional landmarks were chosen because it was the law 1715:86

which re-established Somogy as an independent county, after it had been united with neighbouring Zala in the age of Ottoman occupation.³ The inclusion of the period of the Napoleonic wars is predicated by the extreme richness of sources. This research could not have been done without the light they shed on the state of affairs at the end of the previous century,—first of all on landed property and on prestige, factors that do not usually change rapidly.

In establishing the layers within the lesser nobility I applied seven criteria. I do not claim that these would clearly define the social status of every single lesser noble family in Co. Somogy, but my goal this time was nothing more than to select some clear cases.

In 1807, a register was set up.⁴ It contained all those inhabitants of the county who were subject to contribution in one way or another to the noble levy (*insurrectio*). The list includes 77 noblemen from 39 families of the lesser nobility with an income of at least 2000 florins per annum. According to the law 1805:1, they were obligated to take arms up or—if they were not able to fight in person—to send one mounted soldier at their own expense.⁵ This was the highest income category in the law, indicating that these people did not only enjoy noble privilege based on past merits, but that they were believed to be capable of fulfilling the nobility's ancient obligation of defending the country. Their economic background was considered to be sufficient for this by contemporaries.

A list drawn up after a comprehensive investigation of noble status in 1754-55 includes the names of 332 noblemen and noble widows for Co. Somogy and—surprisingly enough—two more families.⁶ My second criterion was, therefore, whether a family had at least one member on this list.

I have found 30 families satisfying both of the above criteria. These families were raised high the average of the lesser nobility by their assumed ability to serve in the noble levy at their own expense. Their presence in the second list ensures that these families lived in Somogy not only in 1807, but also a half century earlier, so in the greater part of the hundred years in question. I applied five further criteria to define the higher layer of the county nobility. Half of the 30 families did not show positive results for any of the five investigations, being clearly of a lower social status within this group. From these 15 families I have chosen three representing the middling rank of the gentry (*birtokos köznemesség*): the Bakó, Borda and Mérey families.

I tried to select representatives of the upper stratum of the gentry by applying the following five criteria. There were noblemen with honorary titles such as royal councillor or royal chamberlain. These titles naturally raised their family above the average of the gentry. During my research I met nine families in eighteenth-century Somogy having members who were royal councillors or could boast with a royal chamberlain's keys.

With the exception of the *főispán* the leading comital officials were elected by the noble community of the county, more precisely, by the minority present at the assembly. The most prestigious offices were those entailing greater independence⁷—i.e. greater power. The *alispán* was the actual head of both the executive and the judiciary in the county. He

sometimes had a deputy: the *másodalispán* (*substitutus vicecomes*). The direct control over the administration was exercised by the county recorder (*ordinarius notarius, főjegyző*).⁸ His importance is reflected by the fact that he was very often elected *vicecomes* after his tenure as recorder. The chief magistrates (*ordinarius iudex nobilium, főszolgabíró*) represented the authority of the county in the districts in person, one in each. (The county was divided into a growing number of districts, from two to five in our period.) To these positions in local administration power I added the two deputies sent to the national Diet by the county. In eighteenth-century Hungary the division of power between king and Estates was very uneven with most of it resting with the ruler, but since the Diet retained the exclusive right to vote both for the recruits for the army and for raising taxes, it could preserve much of its bargaining power—usually exploited to protect and entrench noble privilege. As my third criterion I have selected noble families which had at least two members in the above defined political elite during the hundred years between 1715 and 1815. There were eight in Co. Somogy.

A thorough study reveals the credit relationships in the county between 1756 and 1812. Nine families of the wealthy gentry are prominent from this point of view as the greatest creditors among lesser nobility.⁹ Belonging to this group did not only mean being especially rich, but it also entailed a significant social influence over the wide group of debtors.

Just as the register of income from the year 1807, the roll of landed property from 1806 served the preparation of the war against Napoleon. The expenses of the solidiers to be sent by the county (*militia portalis, portális katonaság*) were shared out among the landed proprietors. It was calculated on the basis of the number of acres possessed, but the total amount was reduced by 5650 acres if the family had given one mounted noble solidier to the noble levy, the average income of this land was believed to be necessary to cover the expenses of sending a mounted solidier. Therefore they contributed to the obligations of the whole county corresponding to the amount of the rest of their land. This calculation had slightly different results than that of the law 1805:1. Lesser noble families having members possessing at least 5650 acres were somewhat fewer than those having 2000 forints per year: only 23.¹⁰

Two catalogues of the nobility of Co.Somogy divide the lesser nobility into two; they distinguish between 'Nobles' and 'Honourable Noblemen'. This is one of the few cases where we can encounter expressed value judgements of contemporaries on prestige. The registers mention only five noblemen in the upper category both in 1806 and in 1808.¹¹

I have selected the representatives of the upper stratum of the gentry the following way: from the 30 families fulfilling the first two criteria (of having at least one member in the catalogue of noblemen set up in 1754-55 and another having an income of minimum 2000 forints a year in 1807) I have picked out those which fulfill at least three criteria of the last five as well.¹² I have found seven families of this type. I have then omitted those belonging to the tiny group of "honourable noblemen" to get a sample which can represent a wider

social layer. So the following three families remained: gyulai Gaál,¹³ Inkey and Somssich. In our investigation they will represent the wealthy and powerful gentry, the so called *bene possessionati*.

As for the income, both these layers were situated in the upper tenth of the gentry: the first level representing within this a better, almost the best position, while the other group represents a much weaker economic position—but still within the upper one tenth of the gentry.¹⁴ The vast majority of the lesser nobility lived on an even lower level: those having a small plot of land and those not having any at all. Therefore I think it advisable to fix another point of orientation and—if only for the sake of control—to introduce a third level as well.

The term 'petty nobility' (*kisnemesség*) denotes a colourful compound of several social groups. The most numerous of them were the *curialisták* (*curialistae*) in eighteenth-century Somogy.¹⁵ They lived in so called noble villages, where noblemen (each possessing one single plot of noble land) lived like peasants but still had noble privilege. They might be regarded as a Hungarian yeomanry, because free peasants were nearly absent in Hungary by this century.¹⁶ In the eighteenth century there were five noble villages in the county: Nagyszakácsi, Nemesdéd, Nemeskiszalud, Nemespátró and Nemesvid. From their petty noble population I have selected the Bereczk, Kovács and Kulcsár families for comparison. I do not claim of course that the above defined levels lived separate social lives. The network of real social relations is evidently more tightly knit than to be described by a handful of criteria, especially when each of them is horizontal.

By the procedure sketched above I arrived at three times three lesser noble families. Three groups representing three characteristic levels. Three families in each group—to reduce further the risk of presenting something atypical as typical and to level off to some extent the unavoidable unevenness of sources. As far as the lowest group is concerned I must nevertheless note that I had to choose families which offered sources ample enough to make this investigation possible. I should suppose that this fact is enough in itself to claim that these families were of a higher social status than the average of the *curialistae*. I would like to make this circumstance explicit even if I think I have good reason to believe that this will not distort the picture and they can still act as a control-group in this analysis.

II.

In the followings I would like to draw conclusions about the geographical extent of social relations from the marriages. I think that the network of places our lesser noble families imported their wives from and married off their daughters to is a good indicator of all kinds of social contact. It is not at all by chance that one girl gets married to the son of the next door gentleman, while the other is taken by the prince on a white horse.

Before getting down to the details, a few words should be said about the possible and probable shortcomings of this approach. The first of these is that I have not of course found

every relative in my sources. The collecting of data could not be complete even in the case of the nine families in our samples. Furthermore in some cases I could only put a mark to the centre of estates of the related family, only hoping for that they really lived there. The maps depict all the landed property possessed by members of the family in question between 1715 and 1815, and the home of all the related families in this period.

I shall mention 'related family' or simply 'relatives' in the followings, but it should be clear that I will not mean anybody else by these terms but the original nuclear family of the husband or wife married with a member of one of these nine lesser noble families, even though, Hungarian nobility counted relatives in a much wide circle.

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Members of the Bereczk family lived and possessed small plots of noble land in Nemesdéd. The majority of their relatives (seven families) lived in the same noble village, one related family not far from here in Csákány. One female member of the family lived with her husband in Szentpéterúr in Co. Zala.

Map 1. Relatives and estates of the Bereczk family¹⁷



Legend:

- + related family
- +? related family (uncertain case)
- x related family with an unknown seat (I mark the town of the county they lived)
- x? the same as above (uncertain case)
- settlement where the family in question possessed land
- settlement owned entirely by the family in question
- ◎ home of the family in question (or that of one of its branches)

The second *curialista* family, the Kovács lived in Nemesvid along with most of their relatives. They had noble land in this village and in the neighbouring Nagyszakácsi. I have not found any member of this family marrying someone from another county.

Map 2. Relatives and estates of the Kovács family



Also members of the last family representing the lowest level, the Kulcsár family lived in Nemesvid. They possessed a certain amount of land outside this noble village as well, the farthest plot at about five Hungarian miles' distance (approximately 42 kilometres). When identifying their relatives, I have not met families from other counties in my sources.

Map 3. Relatives and estates of the Kulcsár family



Among the families representing the intermediate level we shall first investigate the case of the Bakó family living in Nagyszakácsi. In the eighteenth century they had only some remnants of the great estates they had possessed in the seventeenth. Both these possessions and the related families are relatively evenly spread over nearly the whole area of Somogy. Even they did not have, however, more than one related family outside the county.

Map 4. Relatives and estates of the Bakó family



The Borda family represents another type: they had a whole village, Pamuk in their hands, and the network of the related families is clearly centered around this village.

Map 5. Relatives and estates of the Borda family



The Méreys are one of the most ancient gentry families in Hungary. They are autochthonous in Co. Somogy, but by the eighteenth century members of this family lived in several parts of the country. In our period three of its branches were living in Somogy: the first in Bárd, the second in Szerdahely and the last in Tab. (The investigation is of course restricted to them.) They had possessions in 25 villages of the county. A high percentage of their relatives lived outside Somogy, all of them in the western part of the kingdom.

Map 6. Relatives and estates of the Mérey family



The gyulai Gaál family is already one representing the upper level in our investigation. The centre of the family was Büssü, but some members lived also in Boronka in 1807, where the gyulai Gaáls possessed some land. The majority of the related families lived outside Somogy.

Map 7. Relatives and estates of the gyulai Gaál family



The block of estates of the especially wealthy Inkey family was situated in the south-western corner of the county adjoined by the less extended possessions in Zala. The Inkeys had entire villages in Co. Somogy. The centre of the family was Iharosberény. I could hardly find relatives. The reason for this is that the more populous of the two branches moved to Pallin in Co. Zala and was therefore left out of the investigation.

Map 8. Relatives and estates of the Inkey family



The Somssich family is probably the most famous one among the gentry in Co. Somogy. It became known nation-wide later in the nineteenth century and two of its branches got the title of count. The lands of the family were scattered throughout the county. The centres of estates were Somogysárd and Kadarkút. The related families lived mostly outside Somogy, and two of them lived outside Hungary: one in Vienna, the other in one of the provinces of the Czech crown.

Map 9. Relatives and estates of the Somssich family



III.

We have already seen, where our nine families married from. We cannot however draw statistical conclusions from the case of each family, we do not have enough data to do so. We may venture, however, tentatively tabulate some data by adding up the information we have about each group. (See Table 1.)

Table 1.

Name of the family	Related families				Total of		Grand total
	in Somogy		outside Somogy		identified	unidentifiable	
	number	%	number	%	families		
Bereczk	8		1		9	8	17
Kovács	5		0		5	0	5
Kulcsár	5		0		5	1	6
Group No. 1	18	95	1	5	19	9	28
Bakó	9		1		10	4	14
Borda	9		0		9	2	11
Mérey	9		7		16	14	30
Group No. 2	27	77	8	23	35	20	55
Gyulai Gáál	3		9		12	1·4	26
Inkey	2		1		3	2	5
Somssich	2		10		12	2	14
Group No. 3.	7	26	20	74	27	18	45

Admittedly, the number of cases I could not identify is rather high. But the difference between the three groups is still conspicuous. 95% of the related families are from Co. Somogy in the case of our *curialista* families, almost one fourth of the relatives of the group of intermediate position lived outside the county, while this figure is as high as 74% in the case of the group representing the upper stratum of the gentry.

This result is not at all surprising. I dare say it could be predicted by any expert of the age without any investigation. But we do not have to stop at this point. We can make a further step in processing the data collected, we can draw a map on the basis of them. Marking all the related families would however mix up rule and exception. To avoid this I suggest the following technique: 20% of the marriages is a value high enough to contain the exceptional

cases when the marriage was due rather to chance than to regular social contact. The rest (80%) can still contain the overwhelming majority of marriages, emerging from regular social relations. On the map summing the results of this approach the lines encircle 80% of the related families of the three groups. The 20% outside the line are of course the relatives living at the farthest places from the residence of our lesser noble family, they are not automatically identical with the exceptional marriages, which do not fit the regular pattern. (They are of course unknown, separating them is almost impossible.) We can nevertheless suppose with a strong but necessary simplification that the farther two families lived from each other, the looser their contacts were, and the more the marriage between their members was due to pure chance. (See Map 10.)

Map 10. Relatives of the three groups under investigation



Legend:

— line
 -.- line
 ---- line

encircling 80% of the relatives of the families in Group 1.
 encircling 80% of the relatives of the families in Group 2.
 encircling 80% of the relatives of the families in Group 3.

Four fifth of the relatives of the three *curialista* petty noble families lived in two neighbouring noble villages at only one Hungarian mile from each other: in Nemesvid and Nemesdéd (where of course also our three families lived). In the case of the group in intermediate position in this analysis the line encircles a territory which is surprisingly close to that of the county of Somogy. One settlement of the county of Zala is inside (and a part of Lake Balaton, of course), the southernmost territories of Somogy are outside—but that is all the difference. And as far as the *bene possessionati* are concerned, the line marks a territory which is almost exactly identical with that of Transdanubia. It is a very well defined geographical region, and it was often a unit in history since the Roman *provincia* of Pannonia, too. However, that it could be a unit of social history as well, is a new hypothesis worth further exploring.

It is evident that our map is partly drawn by chance. If we had had other families in the sample, if I had been able to identify more relatives (or less), the three borderlines would have been different. I think nevertheless that on a higher level of abstraction we can neglect this and draw some conclusions of more general nature.

We can conclude that our regional approach to the social relations of the lesser nobility (represented here by marriage) suggests that the typical geographical sphere of life probably formed by regular social contacts was the small area of the narrow neighbourhood of their village for the petty nobility, while for the fairly well-to-do gentry it was approximately the county, and for the influential and wealthy leading families it was a larger geographical unit.¹⁸

In this reasoning several logical steps were connected only by probability and not by certainty. Moreover, it is only based on a sample of three times three families and not on a comprehensive investigation. The conclusion is therefore rather a hypothesis than a hard fact. I hope, however, that it might provide a starting point for further research.

Notes

1. Iván Nagy: Magyarország családai czímerekkel és nemzékrendi táblákkal [Families of Hungary. With coats of arms and genealogical tables], Vol. 10. Pest: Ráth Mór, 1863. 330.

2. By family I mean patrilineal family, descendants of the same father on the male line and having the same surname; regardless of the possible split of this family into branches which might have been the reality already at the beginning of the eighteenth century or which might have happened during the century.

3. Ede Reiszig: Somogy vármegye története [The history of Co. Somogy]. In: Dezső Csánki (ed.): Somogy vármegye. Budapest: Apollo–Országos Monográfia Társaság, n.d., 481.

4. Somogy vármegye Lajstroma mind azoknak Jövedelei eránt, kik az Országos Felkelésre kötelesek az 1807. esztendei Országos Ajánlásra tett Bevallások szerint. Somogy megyei Levéltár [Somogy County Archives] IV.1.i. (Nobilitaria) Fasc. No. 49, Ö: 944/955.

5. Magyar Törvénytár. 1740-1835. évi törvényczikkek [The Code of Hungarian Laws]. Budapest: Franklin Társulat, 1901. 319.

6. János Illésy: Az 1754-55. évi országos nemesi összeírás [The National Register of Noblemen of 1754-55]. Budapest: Athenaeum, 1902. 87-89.

7. Lajos Mocsáry: A régi magyar nemes [The Old Hungarian Nobleman]. Budapest: Franklin Társulat, 1889. 165.

8. Károly Vörös: A feudális megye bürokráciája [The Bureaucracy of the Feudal County]. História X.(1988) 1. 15.

9. Tibor Tóth: Hitelezők és adósok. A kölcsönforgalom kérdéséhez Somogyban, 1756-1812 [Creditors and Debtors. To the Problem of Credit Relationships in Co. Somogy, 1756-1812]. Budapest: KSH Könyvtár és Dokumentációs Szolgálat, 1979. 51-52.

10. Conscriptio possessionis 1806. Somogy megyei Levéltár [Somogy County Archives] IV.1.h. (Conscriptiones) Ö: 282 (Magyar Országos Levéltár [Hungarian National Archives] Filmtár [Microfilm Library] Microfilm No. 37097).

11. T. N. Somogy Vármegyének Fő Papi, Zászlós, Előkelő és Nemesi Rendjeinek Laistroma. Készült 1806-dik Esztendőben Augustus 10-dikén. and T. N. Somogy Vármegyének Fő Papi, Zászlós, Előkelő és Nemesi Rendjeinek Laistroma. Készült 1808-dik Esztendőben Augustus 8-dikán. Both: Somogy megyei Levéltár [Somogy County Archives] IV.1.i. (Nobilitaria) Fasc. No.42 (Magyar Országos Levéltár [Hungarian National Archives] Filmtár [Microfilm Library] Microfilm No. B1329).

12. Theoretically it would be possible to 'loose' certain well-known gentry families at this point of the investigation, because they might be absent from this list precisely because of the unquestionable nature of their noble status. (Cf. János Illésy: Az 1754-55. évi országos nemesi összeírás [The National Register of Noblemen of 1754-55]. Budapest: Athenaeum, 1902. 3-4., Imre Wellmann: A köznemesiség gazdálkodása a XVIII. században [Management of Lesser Noble Estates in the Eighteenth Century]. A Nógrád megyei Múzeumok Évkönyve VII.(1981) 62-64.) But as far as Co. Somogy is concerned, the summary of the results of the investigation in 1754-55 must have contained these families as well, because I could not find but one family, the Paiss, which showed positive results in three cases when examined through the last five criteria, but which was to be put aside because its absence from the list of noblemen from 1754-55.

13. In this study I do not mention the occasional noble prefix, I write Somssich and not sárdi Somssich (Sommssich of Sárd), Inkey and not pallini Inkey (Inkey of Pallin) etc. I make an exception in the case of the gyulai Gaál family to distinguish them from the alsószilvágyi Gaál (Gaál of Alsószilvágy) family, which was not present in Co. Somogy until the end of the eighteenth century, still had a member elected *alispán* in our period.

14. The register from 1807 contains the names of 1016 lesser nobles, 4 more families and in 10 cases it uses the term 'the successors of So-and-so'. Members of 39 families had an income higher than 2000 forints per year: 52 persons, 1 family, the heirs of Mérey and Ország-altogether less than 10%. (Somogy vármegye Lajstroma mind azoknak Jövedelei eránt, kik az Országos Felkelésre kötelesek az 1807. esztendei Országos Ajánlásra tett Bevallások szerént. Somogy megyei Levéltár [Somogy County Archives] IV.1.i. (Nobilitaria) Fasc. No. 49, Ö: 944/955.)

15. According to the estimate of Zoltán Kovács there were 130-150 *curialista* families among the total of 300-400 families of the nobility in Somogy. (Somogy megye és községeinek népességi viszonyai a török uralom megszűnésétől az első népszámlálásig [Population of Co. Somogy and its

Villages from the End of the Ottoman Rule to the First Population Census]. Manuscript, 1959. 73.) The population census found 2108 noblemen (grown-up and juvenile males) in Co. Somogy in 1784-85. 799 of them lived in the five noble villages. (Summarium der Bevölkerungs-Beschreibung von der Simegher Gespansschaft von Jahr 1784/5. Magyar Országos Levéltár [Hungarian National Archives] Kancelláriai Levéltár Acta Generalia A 39 1786/4772)

16. Alajos Degré: A magyar nemesi (curialista) községek szervezete és gazdálkodása 1848 előtt a Dunántúlon [Self-Government and Management of Estates in the Hungarian Noble (*curialista*) Communities in Transdanubia Before 1848]. In: Ilona Bolla-Andor Csizmadia-Alajos Degré-Pál Horváth: Tanulmányok a falusi közösségekről. Pécs: Pécsi Tudományegyetem, Állam- és Jogtudományi Kar; 1977. 55.

17. The maps were drawn on the basis of the following sources: Somogy megyei Levéltár [Somogy County Archives] IV. l.f. (Orphanalia varii) Fasc. Nos. 4, 6, 11, 12, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 41, 42, 50, 51, 53, 54, 55, 57, 60, 61; Conscriptio possessorum et praediorum, 1786. Somogy megyei Levéltár [Somogy County Archives] IV. l.h. (Conscriptiones) Box No. 15, Ö: 284. (Magyar Országos Levéltár, Filmtár [Hungarian National Archives], Filmtár [Microfilm Library] Microfilm No. 37095); Somogy megyei Levéltár [Somogy County Archives] IV. l.i. (Nobilitaria) Fasc. "Ba", "Be", "Bi-Bu", "Ga", "I-J", "Ki-Ko", "Kó-Kv", "Me-Mu", "Somssich" and the rolls already quoted (see notes Nos. 3 and 9); Somogy megyei Levéltár [Somogy County Archives] IV. l.x. (Miscellanea) Vegyes iratok XVIII-XIX. század. Fasc. 1, 4, 6, 7, 11; Somogy megyei Levéltár [Somogy County Archives] XIII. (Archivia familiaria) Depositum Bereczk Fasc. Nos. 2, 3. Vols. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 13, 16; Summarium der Bevölkerungs-Beschreibung von der Simegher Gespansschaft von Jahr 1784/5. Magyar Országos Levéltár [Hungarian National Archives] Kancelláriai Levéltár Acta Generalia A 39 1786/4772; Matricula Parochiae Nemesvid. Taufregister 1784-1816. Magyar Országos Levéltár [Hungarian National Archives] Filmtár [Microfilm Library] Microfilm No. A3803; Béla Baranyai: Somogy vármegye nemes családai [Noble Families of Co. Somogy]. In: Dezső Csánki (ed.): Somogy vármegye. Budapest: Apollo-Országos Monográfia Társaság, n.d.; Ibolya Felhő (ed.): Az úrbéres birtokviszonyok Magyarországon Mária Terézia korában [Socage tenements in Hungary Under Maria Theresa], Vol.I.: Dunántúl [Transdanubia]. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1970. 183.; Iván Nagy: Magyarország családai címerekkel és nemzékrendi táblákkal [Families of Hungary. With coats of arms and genealogical tables], Vols. 1-13. Pest: Ráth Mór, 1857- 1868.; Ede Reiszig: Somogy vármegye története [The history of Co. Somogy]. In: Dezső Csánki (ed.): Somogy vármegye. Budapest: Apollo-Országos Monográfia Társaság, n.d.; Agath Véssey Lajosné Somssich: Somssich Pál élete és működése [Pál Somssich's Life and Work]. Budapest: Vajna és Bokor, 1944.

18. The usual procedure would be to confront my results with those of similar investigations. The complete absence of any other research of this type makes this however impossible. It is easily understandable that social historians were primarily interested in social strata and not geographic regions if they asked the question: 'Where did the spouse come from?'. Now I have to confine myself to mentioning two studies which touch our problem. Writing about the early fifteenth century Erik Fügedi stated on the basis of the example of four related gentry families that marriages demonstrate the exclusiveness of this social layer (*castellani* in contemporary terminology), what had a regional dimension as well: they 'looked for their spouses within their own geographic range'. Unfortunately this is not specified more closely. (Erik Fügedi A Szentgyörgyi Vincze család [The Szentgyörgyi Vincze Family]). A Veszprém megyei Múzeumok Közleményei XI (1972) 265. In a monography about the wealthy gentry (*középbirtokos nemesség*) of Co. Tolna (eastern neighbour to Somogy) in

the first half of the nineteenth century, József Glósz writes that they had estates all over Transdanubia due to this gentry's living in North-Western Hungary and in the Little Hungarian Plane in the age of the Ottoman occupation on the one hand, marriage and inheritance on the other hand. József Glósz: Tolna megye középbirtokos nemességének anyagi viszonyai a 19. század első felében [Economic situation of the gentry of Co. Tolna in the first half of the nineteenth century]. I A Wosinszky Mór Múzeum Évkönyve XVI (1991) 7.) These remarks might reinforce my guess but they cannot at any rate substitute meticulous research, which might prove or refute it.

**HISTORY & SOCIETY
IN CENTRAL EUROPE
2
MEDIUM ÆVUM QUOTIDIANUM
29**

**Nobilities in Central and Eastern
Europe:
Kinship, Property and Privilege**

edited by

János M. Bak

**Hajnal István Alapítvány
Budapest**

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LECTORI SALUTEM!

The aim of the editors and publishers of this series of occasional papers is to present recent results of research in social history to the international public. In the spirit of the Hungarian historian of Europe, István Hajnal (1892-1956), we believe that the history of "small nations" may highlight aspects of general development that are less visible in the life of major civilisations.

The volumes in this series will address specific aspects of social development in medieval and modern central Europe. We intend to focus on the region between the German lands and the Byzantine-Russian world, to explore similarities and differences in this area. Instead of arguing the validity of the term, we shall publish studies that may enable our readers to decide to what extent is "central Europe" a historical reality or merely a dream of intellectuals and politicians. That is why we chose a medieval map for our cover: it emphasizes the centuries-old connecting function of the great rivers but contains no ephemeral political boundaries.

It is also our hope to contribute to the understanding of present developments and upheavals in a region about which few critical analyses are available in the English-speaking world. At the same time we should like to foster modern methods and approaches in social history, for so long neglected in our countries.

The present volume appears in close cooperation with the *Medium Aevum Quotidianum* Society and contains studies mainly on medieval and early modern nobilities of the region. The papers of two recently deceased Hungarian medievalists as well as articles of a Czech, a Polish and a Bulgarian historian discuss the social history medieval nobilities. Two articles, on Hungarian and Austrian nobles of the ancien régime look at social mobility and estate in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The volume closes with an essay by István Hajnal on the end of the noble-corporatist world in nineteenth-century Hungary. With publishing three articles of the generations preceding ours, we wish to bow to those who taught us, without wanting to hide that their questions and answers are not necessarily ours. By printing papers of younger scholars, in turn, we hope to present recent research in the area on topics that are discussed among social historians everywhere.

The volume editor wishes to express his gratitude to those friends and colleagues who assisted in the - often almost unsurmountable - task of translating and editing the Czech, Magyar and Polish contributions: Catherine Allen, Simon Carne, Tamás Domahidy, Vera Gáthy, Ryszard Grzesik, and Paul Knoll. Needless to say that he alone feels responsible for the remaining shortcomings, which are, probably, many. Maybe, we shall publish once a volume only on the intricacies and pitfalls of translating medieval and medievalist texts.

H & S

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