

Theses of Doctoral Dissertation (PhD)

Edit B. Gál

István Orczy

**Becoming a Royal Counsellor from the Provisor of the
Bishop of Eger**

The Career of a Lesser Nobleman in the First Half of the 18th Century

Supervisor:

Dr. Sándor Gebei

Doctor of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and
university tutor

ESZTERHÁZY KÁROLY UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED
SCIENCES

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I. Antecedents of Research

Taking advantage of my specialization (history, archives and museology) at the *Mátra* Museum of Gyöngyös, I have completed research since 1984 on the history of architecture of the Orczy Castle that houses the aforesaid museum and on the connection between the Orczy family and the town of Gyöngyös.

At the outset, I carried out some research on the life of Baron Lőrinc Orczy, following which I expanded the scope of this research to the data processing of the land ownership of other family members, such as József, László, Lőrinc II as well as the Szapárys of the female line as inheritors, who held a predominant role in the life of the town.

Simultaneously, out of the boundaries of Gyöngyös, I analyzed demesnes of Heves County as well as their history of ownership and farming, which also integrally included lands either owned or leased by the Orczys.

Although it was István Orczy who by his espousal took possession of 1/48th of the Nyáry bequest and as a result became a land owner not only in Gyöngyös but also in many towns in Heves and Külső-Szolnok Comitati and as a result established the economical background of the family and acquired the rank of baron, his personality and career was poorly researched.

The objective of this doctoral dissertation is to remedy this deficiency.

II. Objectives

The primary task of research is to present the mentality and way of thinking of the [Hungarian] nobility in the beginning of the 18th century through the life of an educated and ambitious lesser nobleman, in context of a given environment, in this particular case, of the history of Heves, Eger and Gyöngyös Comitati. I exerted efforts to identify certain social and economical factors that determined how an educated young man of the gentry, who started his career as the plenipotentiary of the Telekesy family and in his age of 25 became the provisor of Bishop István Telekesy, became one of the Hungarian barons by his age of 60 and took possession of such a property that established the status of his family among the aristocratic families of the nation for two centuries. By the presentation of the career of István Orczy and of his role in the Rákóczi's War of Independence and in domestic politics afterwards, this research is integrally connected with the history of Heves and Külső-Szolnok Comitati in the beginning of the 18th century.

István Orczy was primarily known as the administrator of *Jászkun* District and as the chief captain of rising noblemen that defeated the Péro insurgency. His role in the Rákóczi's War of Independence has been researched poorly, and the economical

progression of his family that can be associated with his personality is only scarcely known and researched.

Historical sources chronicle the members of the *Arczi*, *Arczill*, *Orczill* family from the 15th century onwards. The objective of the initial phase of research was to identify the earliest data, in consideration of the availability of sources, anent where this family appeared for the first time and what members it had in that period. I also scrutinized whether they took part, and if yes in what capacity, in the social and political life of Somogy and Vas Comitati and what status they held “on the social ladder” of the particular comitatus. I sought data in respect of the financial status of the family in the 17th century, what property they owned and where in the 16th and 17th centuries and how they managed to procure their assets (endowment, inheritance, acquisition) and how they performed their management.

The family, or at least part of it, “switched homeland” and moved from Somogy Comitatus to Vas Comitatus. Why was it necessary and which family line did it?

The following move is connected with István Orczy, because he was the one who accompanied Bishop István Telekesy to the town of Eger in 1699 and from 1708 onwards became a landowner by virtue of his espousal in many settlements in Heves and Külső-Szolnok Comitati. Why did he choose the town of Gyöngyös as the centre of the family? The partial property that he acquired through his wife included only one

or two households only in many settlements. As for inherited property, Gyöngyös was the largest and the most populated settlement. Was this the reason that convinced Orczy of maintaining a residential home in the prairie town and of purchasing relevant real estates there?

His political career stems from the Rákóczi's War of Independence. The question is what role he had in this war, when and what motivated him to side with the prince, and after that when and how he became loyal to the emperor again. Experts' opinions published in bibliography so far very much differ in concern to whether Orczy only imitated his loyalty to Rákóczi, while he maintained correspondence with Pálffy, or he assisted the imperial forces from 1710 when the castle of Eger and Heves Comitatus was re-occupied, because he saw the hopeless end of the war. What inspired him to side with the prince? His respect toward Telekesy who earned the attention of Rákóczi and the kuruc or his well-assessed political interest?

Last but not least, I also analyze how his intensifying political power and influence impacted his economical growth, and by taking advantage of this sort of influence, where he acquired new lands owned by him and what factors influenced the establishment of local homesteads (Mád, Tiszaabád, Erdőkövesd, Újszász).

III. Method of Analysis and Sources

In order to process this theme, I used sources available partly in archives and partly at museums, but I also had an opportunity to scan the written and illustrative records owned by the family. I started the investigation of the history of the life of István Orczy at the Archives of Vas County of the National Archives of Hungary that closed with little success regretfully. As for his offices in the diocese of Eger and followingly in Heves and Külső–Szolnok Comitati, I checked the minutes of general meetings and other documents related to such meetings available at the Archives of Heves County of the National Archives of Hungary. As to the time period when he served as a prefect, the XII. (Clerical authorities) archive group, including XII–3 “The economical archives of the archdiocese of Eger” and “Books of legal instruments (Libri) and documents” (XII–3/A) available also at the Archives of Heves County were somewhat useful sources.

The archives in connection with the Orczy family safeguarded at the National Archives of Hungary provided sources for the history of the family and of their homestead management primarily in the course of research. Unfortunately, very few documents have been preserved in concern to the history of the Orczy family before the 18th century. Primarily Familiaris (P519) and Miscellanea (P520) include documents connected with István Orczy. In Familiaris, only the “Orczy, barones”

(BOy) division contains documents of family nature, the rest is of property right nature mostly. The Petrovay documents originally categorized there are missing nearly totally. The history of the Orczy and Petrovay families was first researched by György Petrovay in 1890 who published it in a periodical titled “Turul”. When he was appointed as the chief archivist of Máramaros Comitatus in the beginning of the 1900s, he took these documents in addition to other archives that concerned the Orczy family to Máramarossziget.

Being relevant in view of research, this division also contain letters written by Telekesy which are partly instructions addressed to István Orczy as a prefect, partly personal compositions, which reveal their relationship from the beginning.

In Miscellanea, mostly sources in concern to the offices of the Orczys are available: these (“Jazyges, Cumani et Hajdones”) include assessments of taxation, reports connected with István Orczy’s office as *Jászkun* Captain as well as documents related to the distraintment of the order of knighthood and the invalids. This division also contains the majority of his correspondence with Pálffy, and interestingly it also contains contracts of loan deals made by his wife, Zsuzsanna Petrovay as well as other documents of family argument between the consorts in this respect.

I primarily used accounts, statements and legal entitlement documents safeguarded in the archives of the family to process the

history of the estates owned by the Orczy family and how they managed them. The family archives safeguarded at the National Archives of Hungary, as has been referred to, is incomplete and it is “intermingled” with the Haller archives, nay with the Bedeghi–Nyáry archives which have been amalgamated with it and have been part of it consequently. As a result, its advantage is that it contains adequate sources that present the early history of the estates, especially those acquired through the Nyáry line.

The Archives of Szabolcs–Szatmár–Bereg County of the National Archives of Hungary safeguards a few documents in concern to their property in Császlóc, Ung Comitatus; these definitely prove István Orczy’s possession there.

The investigation and data processing of various written sources constitute the basis of the research on the history of demesnes. Maps provide excellent ground to study a particular territory and/or settlement. Naturally, the analysis of maps is insufficient to know more about the history and/or operation of a particular village, town or larger economical entity. Nonetheless, I believe that, compared with other sources, it might have an important role in the data processing of the economical and social development of settlements located within a particular demesne, because the “history” of a demesne coincides with that of the settlements.

The collection of the Historical Archives of the Dobó István Castle Museum safeguards the legacy of Imre Soós, the former director of the Archives of Heves County, which primarily includes manuscripts in concern to the history of the settlements in the county.

As a museologist, I consider the collection, analysis and application of illustrative and tangible sources connected with the particular person a very momentous action in addition to written records. In this particular case, I scrutinized Orczy's dolman safeguarded in the Textile Collection of the Historical Repository of the Hungarian National Museum and I also used paintings owned by the family.

IV. The Most Recent Scientific Results

István Orczy, who is considered to be the “founding father” of the baron line of the Orczy family, was the member of the branch of the ambitious landed gentry who became an influential aristocrat in the first half of the 18th century by taking advantage of his contacts made during his career in offices and of his cunning manoeuvres in political life, hence creating ground for the huge property of his dynasty afterwards.

His career started in the landed gentry in Vas Comitatus at the end of the 17th century, and reached its peak and became complete in the ‘30s of the 18th century.

We have little knowledge of his ancestors. According to records, they lived as *Arczi*, *Arczill*, *Orczill* of the lower nobility in Somogy Comitatus in 1428. It is relevant that some of them (Ferenc Orczyi’s son János and Péter Orczyi of Somogy Comitatus as witnesses) were referred to as royal men in minutes of testification recorded in the middle of the 15th century. In the 1540-50s, János Orczy was employed by Kristóf Batthyány, and his letter chronicles that he had “lost” his property while fleeing from fights, but he was able to benefit from his competence to serve his lord. This proves that the members of the family were members of the nobility and were educated people which

had an impact on their history during the ensuing centuries. As the Ottoman invaders advanced, they moved to the upper regions of the country, quasi fled from them, and they reportedly settled in Vas Comitatus in the second half of the 16th century, where they took possession of lands in Söpte in 1591 and in Csömöte at the end of the 17th century.

Owing to lack of sources, the early financial status of the family cannot be defined accurately. The archives of the Orczy family contains mainly instruments of certification in concern to a few estates which only provide a vague view of property moves in the 16th and 17th centuries, so that estates having been the most relevant to them can be defined only. According to these documents, Söpte, Csömöte, Nemescsó and Kis-Pösse in Vas Comitatus were the most relevant lands to the family.

As to Arczills, particular names can be identified in the minutes and letters, but according to instruments in the archives of the family, it was Gergely I from whom the lineage can be derived with no interruption. As to the members of the family, István II was the judge of the Comitatus Court in the middle of the 17th century, and György was the captain of the banderium of Vas Comitatus in 1686.

This lineage includes István Orczy, the first outstanding character of the family whose place and date of birth and schools are very much disputed by experts in the bibliography. He was born

in Kis-Pösse in September 1669 according to Petrovay, or in Orci in September 1669 according to Mária H. Kakucska, or in Kőszeg on 18 May 1677 according to Gusztáv Heckenast. The latter seems to be confirmed by the register of births in Kőszeg which chronicle that István as the son of Gergely Orczil and Julianna was Christianized on the date above. According to the entry dated 29 December 1749 in the register of deaths of the St. Bartholomew parsonage: “*Sepultus est Illustrissimus Baro Stephanus Orczi Viduus omnibus Sacr. munitus Annorum 79.*” Therefore, he was born in 1669/1670. But there is a difference of 7 years between the two dates registered in Kőszeg and Gyöngyös!

Although his place of birth is unknown, his place of education is revealed by Orczy himself in his last will dated 1742 that reads: “*I shall endow twenty-five forints with the church of Kispösse in noble Vas Comitatus where I was educated in my childhood.*”

According to bibliography, István Orczy graduated in Kőszeg and in Vienna. The register of births for intermediate education available in Kőszeg starts in the year of 1689. This is the year when a nobleman, István Orczil attended *minores* class, finished fourth grade until 1692, and assumably carried on his studies elsewhere. If we assume that he finished his last two grades elsewhere, he must have graduated in his age of 17 in 1694. This is the year when he was employed by Telekesy. Therefore, we may assume that he was

supported by Telekesy to complete his university studies. Although his name cannot be identified in the rosters of the university in Vienna and of other universities, it is certain that he had higher education degree, because without such education he could not be appointed as the director of livestock of the bishop or later as Deputy Lord Chief Justice.

He was employed by Telekesy in 1694 with whom he moved to Eger in 1699 where he was appointed as the provisor of the bishop's property first and as the farm-bailiff of the bishop's demesnes in 1704 as the next step on the "social ladder". As has been stated in his last will, he served Telekesy for 16 years, but they maintained their relationship until the bishop's demise.

Perhaps his relationship with the bishop determined his participation in the Rákóczi's War of Independence. Experts argue whether Orczy imitated his loyalty to Rákóczi all the way, while he maintained correspondence with Pálffy, or he was guided by his respect toward Telekesy who earned the unconditional attention of Rákóczi and the kuruc, or he acted merely to satisfy his own well-assessed political ambition. His correspondence with Pálffy demonstrate that he assisted the imperial forces only from 1710 onwards, when the re-occupation of the castle of Eger and Heves Comitatus occurred, because he saw the hopeless end of the war. He wrote his first letter dated 19 November 1710 in Eger, followed by many more.

Their ensuing relationship was determined by Orczy's unequivocal loyalty to the emperor that can be dated to this date. The first relevant endowments came as a result of Pálffy's intermediation who endowed part of the confiscated assets and property with him as a reward. Service for this was nothing else but reporting the routes of kuruc troops and to sustain security for the provisions of the imperial forces.

His social advancement from that point of time, i.e. from 1710, was very impressive. In 1710, upon János Pálffy's recommendation, who found him to be the "proper person" for the assignment, he was appointed as the royal superintendent in charge of the assessment of fiscal assets in Heves, Borsod, Gömör and Zemplén Comitati. Held on 22 December 1710, the general meeting of the comitatus chaired by the presidency of Lord Lieutenant Telekesy appointed him as the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of the comitatus to replace Pál Dévay. He was in this office until 1715.

In 1708 in Eger, István Orczy espoused Zsuzsanna Petrovay who was 20 years younger, and whose father was the court marshal of Rákóczi in Tálya and the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Ung Comitatus, and whose brother, who was loyal to the emperor until his demise, was the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Pest-Pilis-Solt Comitatus. The wedding was celebrated by Telekesy. Witnesses were Ferenc Rétey, the vice captain of Eger and magistrate István Tarródi who was Orczy's former classmate in Kőszeg from Vas Comitatus.

His economical growth was based on the Nyáry's assets as dowry, but more relevant property endowments and procurement by own right can be associated with his subsequent political career.

In 1708, Orczy energetically made efforts to re-purchase assets to which his wife was entitled. As he recorded in his last will, he paid for them by using his salaries earned in his offices, nay he expanded them by acquisitions. After a long series of conflicts, finally Par. 10 of Article 10 of the Decree of 1715 stipulated the return of the Nyáry's assets. The lawsuit took a long time and was closed in 1726 only. In that period, Orczy held high power: he was the *Jász kun* District Chief Captain of the German order of knighthood, and the royal court judge from 1724 onwards. It is most likely that the latter also contributed to that the family could obtain their livestock "licitly".

After their marriage, he became a landowner in Gyöngyös through his wife, so that the town of Gyöngyös became the centre of the family. His first deal of trade was reportedly made in 1708. He exchanged a plot in "Street Solmos" for the residence of Francis II Rákóczi that was located in the "Piarcsi district". In 1712, as a reward for his loyalty to the court, the Thököly assets of Gyöngyös were endowed with him as a 10-year-pledge for an amount of 1,500 Rhine forints; he was given a royal endowment for them in 1717. In 1722, he became one of the richest landowners in the town.

On 10 May 1714, Lajos Ferenc revoked the assignments of the

delegates of the administration of the order of knighthood, and so István Orczy, the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Heves and Külső-Szolnok Comitati and one of the landowners in Tarnaörs was appointed as the superintendent of the order of knighthood. István Orczy was a character that had an outstanding but unfairly forgotten role in the history of Jászkunság and who, during his term of administratorship from 1722 onwards, supervised districts, towns and settlements of the Jászkunság from their new family castle in Tarnaörs and Gyöngyös. As a result of his appointment, the administrative independence of the Jászkun District and the inner autonomy of the settlements were recovered.

He was in office until 5 August 1733. Serving as a Jászkun Captain for 20 years was a very important part of István Orczy's career.

From the '10s of the 1700s he started purchasing lands in significant proportion. Mád, Ond and Vilmány, owned formerly by Rákóczi, were acquisitions of the Orczy family that yielded the best income for decades. If lands in Zemplén Comitatus are defined as *one* of the most profitable demesnes for the family, those in Tiszaabádi can be defined as *the* most profitable unambiguously. Income from latter estate assured the economical stability of the family until the middle of the 19th century. While viniculture was primal in Mád and Vilmány, animal husbandry was the most momentous in Tiszaabád and Tomaj puszta. Animal husbandry dominated the economy in Újszász, Pest

Comitatus which the family started to purchase from 1722 onwards and which became one of the centres of the clan that was divided into four branches in the beginning of the 19th century.

If István Orczy's whole life is evaluated, and if the process of his social and economical rise is assessed in whole, it must be pinpointed that the most determining period of his life was the term of 15 years commencing the day he moved to the comitatus. He finished his service for the bishop in 1710 and 1711, and from 1714 onwards he was appointed as the administrator of the Jászkun District.

Naturally, Telekesy and from 1710 onwards, Pálffy as well as Orczy's relationship with them also contributed to his peaking career which reached its zenith when he gained the title of Hungarian baron and royal counsellor in 1736.

This doctoral dissertation principally focuses on the first 50 years of this aristocrat, but, in order to give a complete view of his "story", it also describes family relations, relatives, and other events that had taken place until his demise in 1749, because these are indispensable to provide a complete biography. The following section briefly outlines their lands and at the same time the kismet of the family.

V. List of Publications Published in concern to this Theme

Publications in concern to the Orczy family

- A deprő-parádi uradalom működési vázlata az 1820-as számadáskönyv alapján. (Orczy-gazdaságok a 18.–19. században I.) (The operation outline of the demesne in Debrő-Parád based on the financial statements dating to 1820.) In: AGRIA XXVII-XXVIII. Szerk.: Petercsák Tivadar) Eger, 1992. 223-232.
- Az Orczy-család társadalmi, gazdasági felemelkedése a 18. században és a 19. század első felében. (The social and economical advancement of the Orczy family in the 18th century and in the first half of the 19th century.) In: Mátrai Tanulmányok (Szerk.: Horváth László) Gyöngyös, 1993. 9-26.
- Kastélyok, fogadók a 18. században. Historia 1993. 5. sz. (Castles and inns in the 18th century. “Historia”, 1993. Vol. 5.)
- Az Orczy-család vagyoni helyzete és javai a XIX. században. Archivum supplementum ad honorem Béla Kovács dedicatum. (Szerk.: Bán Péter – Á. Varga László) (The financial status and assets of the Orczy family in the 19th century.) Eger, 1993. 69-86.

- A deprő-parádi uradalom átvételi leltára 1777-ből. (The inventory of acceptance of the demesne of Debrő-Parád dating to 1777.) In: AGRIA XXIX-XXX. (Szerk.: Petercsák Tivadar) Eger, 1994. 223–232.
- Adatok a gyöngyösi Orczy-kastély építés és birtoklástörténetéhez. (Data to the construction and history of possession of the Orczy castle in Gyöngyös.) In: AGRIA XXXIV. (Szerk.: Petercsák Tivadar) Eger, 1998. 119-140.
- Az Orczy-bárók. Család- és birtoklástörténeti vázlat. (Baron Orczys. Outline of the history of the family and their properties.) In: AGRIA XXXVI. (Szerk.: Petercsák Tivadar) Eger, 2000. 63-99.
- Birtokviszonyok és gazdálkodás Hevesen a 18. században. (Property status and economy in Heves in the 18th century.) In: Tanulmányok Hevesről (Szerk.: Petercsák Tivadar) Heves, 2001. 130-157.
- A tiszabádi uradalom 1835. évi leltára. Forrásismertetés. (Archives of the demesne in Tiszaabád dating 1835. Presentation of the sources.) In: AGRIA XXXVII. (Szerk.: Petercsák Tivadar) Eger, 2001. 255–273.
- Erdőkövesd 1774. évi inventárium. (The inventory of Erdőkövesd dating 1774.) Historia est ... (Írások Kovács Béla köszöntésére) (Szerk.: Csiffáry Gergely) Eger, 2002. 125-141.
- Az Orczy-kert története I. (The history of the Orczy garden, I.) In: Mátrai Tanulmányok (Szerk.: Horváth László) Gyöngyös, 2003. 57-80.

- Az Orczy kastély építés– és birtoklástörténete. (The history of the construction and possession of the Orczy castle.) In: Mátrai Tanulmányok (Szerk.: Horváth László) Gyöngyös, 2005. 11-34.
- Az Orczy-kert története II. (The history of the Orczy garden, II.) In: Mátrai Tanulmányok (Szerk.: Horváth László) Gyöngyös, 2005. 59-67.
- Adatok Orczy Lőrinc életéhez a források tükrében. (Data to the life of Lőrinc Orczy in view of available sources.) In: AGRIA XLIV. (Szerk.: Petercsák Tivadar – Veres Gábor) Eger, 2008. 177-205.
- Az Orczy család négy birtokközpontjának, Újszásznak, Gyöngyösnek, Tarnaörsnek és Erdőkövesdnek a fejlődése a 18-19. században I. Újszász (The development of the four centres of properties of the Orczy family (Újszász, Gyöngyös, Tarnaörs and Erdőkövesd) in the 18th and 19th centuries, I. Újszász) In: AGRIA XLVI. (Szerk.: Veres Gábor) Eger, 2010. 179-204.
- Az Orczyak tisztaabádi uradalma a 18-19. században (The demesne of the Orczys in Tiszaabád in the 18th and 19th centuries.) In: Uradalmak kora Discussiones Neogradienses 10. (szerk. Szirácsik Éva) Salgótarján, 2010. 219-236.
- Orczy István társadalmi felemelkedésének előzményei. (Antecedents of the social advance of István Orczy.) In: AGRIA XLVII. (Szerk.: Veres Gábor) Eger, 2011. 177-189.

- A deprő-parádi uradalom a XVII.-XVIII. században. (The demesne of Debrő-Parád in the 18th and 19th centuries.) In: Birtokosok és birtokok. Discussiones Nogradiensis 12. (Szerk.: Szirácsik Éva) Salgótarján, 2012. 47–70.
- Orczy István Heves megyei birtokai a XVIII. század elején (István Orczy's properties in Heves Comitatus in the beginning of the 18th century.) In: Új élet a birtokon. Discussiones Nogradiensis 13. (Szerk.: Szirácsik Éva) Salgótarján, 2013. 167–192.
- Mád és Ond. Orczy István Zemplén megyei birtokai. (Mád and Ond as István Orczy's estates in Zemplén Comitatus.) In: Discussiones Nogradiensis 14. (Szerk.: Szirácsik Éva) – megjelenés alatt

Other Publications Related to the History of the Family

- Főúri életmód egy vidéki városban. Adatok a Hallerek gyöngyösi birtoklásához. (The way of life of aristocrats in a town in the countryside. Data to the possession of the Hallers in Gyöngyös.) In: AGRIA XXXIX. (Szerk.: Petercsák Tivadar) Eger, 2003. 403-440.
- Az Almásyak birtoklása Heves és Külső-Szolnok vármegyében a XVII.–XVIII. században. (The possessions of the Almásys in Heves and Külső-Szolnok Comitatus in the 17th and 18th centuries.) In: AGRIA 41. (2005) (Szerk.: Petercsák Tivadar) Eger, 2005. 217–249.

Other Publications Related to the History of Estates

- A hatvani uradalom birtoklás és igazgatástörténeti vázlata, különös tekintettel a Grassalkovichok földesuraságára. (Outline of the history of possession and management of the estate in Hatvan with special regard to the landownership of the Grassalkovich family.) In: Mátrai Tanulmányok (Szerk.: Horváth László) Gyöngyös, 1997. 139-164.
- A hatvani uradalom a Grassalkovichok idején (1746-1851) (The estate in Hatvan in the time of the Grassalkovich family 1746-1851) In: AGRIA XXXV. Szerk.: Petercsák Tivadar- Veres Gábor) Eger, 1999. 147-176.
- A hatvani uradalom a XVIII. században, az 1796-os összeírás tükrében. (The estate in Hatvan in the 18th century in view of the 1796 inventory.) In: Grassalkovichok emlékezete (Szerk.: Horváth László) Hatvany Lajos Múzeum Füzetek 15. Hatvan, 2001. 113–126.