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**István Zichy and the Hungarian Chamber.
Careers from the Hungarian Chamber during the first half of the 17th
century**

Thesis of doctoral (Phd) dissertation

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Topic of the Dissertation

In my doctoral dissertation, I examine the careers of the presidents and officials of the Hungarian Chamber, which played a decisive role in the history of Kingdom of Hungary during the 16th and 17th centuries. István Zichy (1616–1693) stands at the center of my thesis, but alongside him, I also examine the careers of the seven secular chamber presidents appointed before him during the 17th century, creating parallel biographies. The focus of the work is the question of what similarities and differences can be seen in the careers of István Zichy and his seven predecessors. In addition, attention is given to how positions were acquired in the families of the chamber presidents. Thus, in the case of the eight families, I pay special attention to their schooling, building family relationships, and efforts to gain positions at the Vienna Court and in the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary.

In the framework of the dissertation, the careers of the chamber officials of the first two thirds of the 17th century, especially the members of the chamber council, are analyzed. This is also very important because, in addition to the chamber presidents, the councilors had the greatest influence on the operation of the institution, and under the right circumstances, these men were also important participants in the national politics and diplomatic missions.

The results of previous research on the topic

The political changes that took place in the economic and social relations of the Kingdom of Hungary after 1526 were among the first to affect the administration of the country. The Hungarian Chamber, organized by Ferdinand Habsburg on a foreign model became the most significant financial office of the era. From the first time the chamber established in Buda in 1528, ceased its activities after a few years of uncertain operation. Following the decision of Ferdinand Habsburg, the institution was reorganized in Bratislava, where it continued to function almost undisturbed until the end of the era.

Historical research on the Chamber began relatively early. Already in the middle of the 18th century, Mátyás Bél published the first lists of the chamber officials from the 16th and 17th centuries. The first remarkable researcher of the topic was Ignác Acsády, who presented the organization of the Hungarian and the Spis Chambers in two volumes. In his work, he primarily focused on the organization and the structure of the offices and the description of their operation.

In the middle of the 20th century, Győző Ember in his famous work which is considered a fundamental work to this day, republished a list of known officials. In the chapter which is dealing with the Hungarian Chamber he outlined the formation of the office and its operation. He created his work mainly based on Hungarian archival sources, including chamber instructions.

Further research on the institution subsequently showed varied picture. During his research, Zoltán Fallenbüchl, mainly relying on the material of the Hungarian archives, succeeded in clarifying the previous databases and published new lists of chamber officials from the 17th and 18th centuries. It is an important detail that the first serious analyses of chamber employees were carried out in these papers. In the process, useful findings were made regarding the chamber officials family relationships, education and wealth growth. Fallenbüchl's work was also considered pioneering because, in contrast to previous research, which mainly focused on the operation of the chamber, the employees of the office were the first to be the focus of attention.

At the same time, István Nagy tried to reconstruct the operation of the chamber even more thoroughly than before. He also conducted his research based on documents found in Hungarian

archives. In the process, Győző Ember goes beyond his previous achievements and deals in detail with some parts of the office. It was an important step forward that in his work he placed more emphasis on rural administrative units such as the thirtieth tax offices, the activities of the mining and salt chambers, as well as their relationship with the central institutions. Furthermore, serious results were achieved in the field of tax administration.

Recent research on the chamber also shows a varied picture. The results of the researches of István Kenyeres must be mentioned, which mainly provide new data in the field of tax matters and estates under chamber administration and their officials. And thanks to the works of Lajos Gecsényi, we were able to learn more about the careers, relationships and wealth growth of the officials of the Hungarian and Spis Chambers during the 16th and 17th centuries. The common point of the recent researches is that the sources relating to the Kingdom of Hungary found in the Austrian archives are increasingly involved.

Recently, the work of Ágnes Póka and Frederik Federmayer should be highlighted in terms of research related to the chamber. Ágnes Póka mainly conducts research focusing on the establishment and early operation of the Spis Chamber in Upper Hungary, as well as its leading officials. Thanks to her work, we managed to learn new information about a previously slightly neglected area, and we got a good view of the activities and careers of the leading officials of the newly organized institution. More recently, she has been conducting similar career history research on the officials of the Hungarian Chamber in the 16th century.

The Slovak academic, Frederik Federmayer, has recently published several excellent studies in Slovak, German and Hungarian about the employees of the Hungarian Chamber. As a genealogist, Federmayer explored the history and relationships of several official families in his works. The financial growth and official advancement of these families are also an important part of his works. In the course of his research, he mainly uses documents from Bratislava and Slovakian archives, and to a lesser extent from Austrian and Hungarian institutions.

Questions and starting point

The activity of István Zichy (1616–1693), who is the focus of this thesis, was not unknown to me, as he was the main character of my master's thesis. I have supplemented and clarified the section of his life up to 1672 in several places. His relationship with the Hungarian Chamber aroused my interest even then, and encouraged me to take a closer look at Zichy's career on a wider scale, doing research on either his entire career or just a part of it.

One of the most important parts of my work is the parallel presentation of the careers of István Zichy and the other secular chamber presidents, as this provides the best opportunity for comparison: What were the similarities and differences in the careers of the eight secular chamber leaders who held office between 1608 and 1672? Were there similar career paths over time and were the family backgrounds the same in all cases? Have members of completely different social groups made it to the top of the financial institutions of the Kingdom of Hungary? Are there any signs of their own awareness in building careers and acquiring the presidency of the chamber?

The first important point of investigation in the thesis is the family background and career patterns of the chamber presidents. In this, context I reviewed the lives of the ancestors of the eight chamber presidents back to their grandparents.

As the second point of investigation, I examine the careers of the chamber presidents themselves down to their selection as presidents. Here, it is primarily necessary to determine, in comparison to István Zichy's classic military career, how common it was for others to be surprisingly appointed to the top of the financial administration after a basically unremarkable career. The question is how possible it is to draw up groups based on the different career

patterns. Furthermore, an important detail is whether there are similarities in the lives of the eight noblemen in their studies or at other stages of their lives. One of the most important questions of the thesis is the reconstruction of the selection and appointment process of chamber presidents. In the case of other offices, such events were already known to Hungarian and foreign scholars. So far, the research has not paid enough attention to the selection of the leadership and other officials of the chambers, either in Hungary or in the case of the other states of the Habsburg Monarchy, even though we are talking about the selection of institutional leaders who operate under the same conditions in all areas of the Habsburg state. The question is how possible it is to model and reconstruct the process. What political groupings and interests were behind the selection of a chamber president? How different was the selection of István Zichy in 1655 from previous instances?

The examination of the bureaucratic elite, like the circle of councilors working alongside the chamber presidents, is of similar importance. The selection of the group is particularly justifiable because, in addition to the presidents, they were the ones who had the greatest influence on the operation of the office, and for each of them, this represented the peak of their career. Therefore, I tried to answer questions such as the origin and education of the councilors, the determination of possible career patterns, and their relationship with the presidents.

Finally, the last part of the dissertation returns a bit to the chamber presidents, more precisely to their families: How much they participated in planning the careers of their children and grandchildren and how much influence they had on their family's marriage policy. In addition, their role in the integration into the aristocracy of the Habsburg Monarchy is a very prominent aspect of the work.

Methodology and research

Thanks to previous research, the work with the life of István Zichy and his predecessors did not have to start entirely from scratch. A relatively large amount of information has survived about Zichy, but the same cannot be said of his predecessors in office. That is why it was necessary to search for career points that can be specified in the paths of life of all these men. In addition to the archives of the Zichy family, fragments of other family archives have survived, such as those of the Lippayas, included in the archives of the Batthyány family. The archival materials are, in all cases, mainly estate documents, but I managed to find a few documents here and there, which give a glimpse into the internal life of families and even important milestones in the careers of individual members. In the case of most families, the lack of documents is clearly due to the fact that these families died out too early and the materials belonging to the archives of related families were carelessly handled and discarded several times, or the destruction caused by wars over the centuries has contributed to the fact that the once significant groups of documents have shrunk to a fraction or completely disappeared.

Archival research and the processing of documents, the extraction of data formed a significant part of the work, as well as the integration of these data into a system and process. In recent years, I have tried to create a coherent text that highlights processes from mosaics and fragments.

I tried to supplement the data on István Zichy and his office predecessors (the data obtained from the family archives) with documents created during the operation of the central government bodies of the Kingdom of Hungary and the Habsburg Monarchy, which are in the Österreichisches Staatsarchiv Haus, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Finanz- und Hofkammerarchiv, and to a lesser extent they can be found in the archives of the Altes Münz- und Bergwesen. These made up the bulk of the resources used. Furthermore, the Hungarian chamber and chancellery archives should be mentioned, but in the case of the latter, I only carried out minor research, since previous specialist literature is mostly based on the documents found there, so I only

carried out new research in the most necessary cases. In the case of the cancellary, the *Libri Regni* in particular proved to be very helpful in supplementing and clarifying what was known on many points when the materials left in the family archives were incomplete. Furthermore, I came across a lot of useful information during my research in Hungarian aristocratic and noble family archives, which provided good supplementary information, among which the Nádasdy family archives and the Batthyány family archives are worth highlighting.

In addition to the original sources, I tried to integrate as many previously published sources into my thesis as possible. Since the distribution of archival materials related to the life of István Zichy and the other chamber presidents is very uneven, I tried to select the parts of their lives that can be easily dated. At the same time, it was also necessary to ensure that certain sections were not too rich in data, especially in the case of Zichy, which could have distorted the proportions of the thesis. Therefore, the thesis was a little skewed at the chamber presidency, since only István Zichy's presidency has a quantity of data worthy of an academic thesis, while there is hardly any information or sources for others.

Important results of the dissertation

Thanks to the sources and huge amount of literature, the dissertation sheds light on many new, so far unknown or only partially known details and tries to present the career of István Zichy, who played an important role in the history of the Hungarian Chamber, and his seven predecessors in a new light.

The first chapter deals with the ancestors of the noblemen who reached the presidency of the chamber, who were known by name in the majority of cases, but their paths, careers and the foundations they laid were almost unknown. The work thus joins in with research on the western Hungarian nobility and examines the possibilities of the nobles among the eight families of chamber presidents in a slightly wider, interregional area. As a result of the work done, it is clear that all eight families came from roughly the same environment and had the same financial background. We are talking about lesser nobles and gentry families, which regularly produced talented members who, thanks to their hard work, rose higher and higher in the ranks. The members of the first generations tried to get by in almost the same way and mostly tried to survive the shock and losses caused by the Battle of Mohács in the servitor network. The emphasis in this case is on survival, starting over and the opportunities provided by the changing circumstances. Most of them were able to increase and consolidate their positions only at the county level. However, in a legislative environment, they often rose to the level of subaltern. The members of the second and third generations were now able to go beyond the borders of the counties and tried to play a role in regional or even national politics. It is clear that they were able to assert themselves at the national level, mainly alongside the senior judges – palatin, chief judge, etc. – or in the parliaments, as well as in some military careers. A career in the church was not much of an option for any of the families.

In the second chapter, István Zichy and his career could not be compared with the aristocrat families already examined, so I definitely felt the need to use the other secular chamber presidents as a basis for the comparison. During the investigation, it became clear that the nobles who were selected as chamber presidents can be divided into three larger groups based on their careers. The first is the circle of those who served as soldiers either in the Hungarian territories or abroad. The second group included those who were mainly in the judiciary at the level of the senior judges were typically active in this sphere as judges. Among the members of the last group are those who selected by the Hungarian Chamber from among its own members. Interestingly, the most populous group is made up of people who previously had no connection to the office, having served as soldiers. It is also clear from the parallel careers that István Zichy and his seven predecessors had almost the same educational background. All of them attended

Jesuit schools, and later typically studied at the universities of the Hereditary Provinces and the German territories. After leaving school, they all achieved great success in their fields. In more than one case, they were excellent diplomats and negotiators, who stood their ground in crucial situations. Last but not least, their loyalty to the Habsburg rulers was unquestionable.

One of the most important results of the dissertation was my investigation of the documents regarding the selection and appointment of chamber presidents, through the help of which it was easy to reconstruct the processes. Basically, various selections are relatively well known in the history of the Kingdom of Hungary, such as the selection and installation of the king, the palatine or the princes of Transylvania, and there are even examples of chief judges, and more recently works have been published about archbishops. However, this knowledge was lacking in the case of chamber presidents, the persons leading the country's most important financial office. This is particularly important, because after 1608, instead of ecclesiastical presidents, the management of the office fell into the hands of secular powers. And with this, a completely new system was formed. The palatine and the archbishop of Esztergom – as the two most important political agents – regularly nominated their own candidates. In addition, the chamber, as a body, also had the obligation to nominate candidates. Furthermore, individuals with their own ambitions could apply for the vacant position themselves. At the beginning of the era, based on the acquired data, the selection of another ecclesiastical figure did not even arise, but, as time went on, the system of presiding bishops came to be restored. Due to the numerous candidates and interest groups, the selection of the new chamber president was preceded by serious struggle among the various parties. Although the final decision about the appointment of the new president rested with the king, the most likely candidates were those who, in addition to the domestic dignitaries, could count the President of the Court Chamber among their supporters. On the occasion of induction into office, the oath taken before the ruler or his representative, as well as the representatives of the orders, was considered a high point in the inauguration. Also, the procedure whereby the new president was introduced to his office by the superiors sent by the Vienna Court Chamber was established. Reconstructing the processes was somewhat impeded due to the lack of resources, but a framework was created by comparing the eight years of the selection and appointment. In this way, perhaps the most important moment in the career of István Zichy and his seven predecessors was brought to light.

In the case of the Chamber, an important detail was omitted. Due to the varying number of sources, it was not possible to present the activities of the chamber presidents well, so I decided to deal more with the circle of chamber officials, including the councilors who help the presidents' work the most. As part of the work, it was possible to determine the total number of councilors appointed to office between 1600 and 1672 and to clarify previous anomalies. In addition, the careers and opportunities of the councilors, as well as their roles and relationships, were significantly fleshed out. As in the case of the chamber presidents, it was also possible to map out the background of the individual officials and the relationships they managed to establish among the councilors, as well as showing results in terms of their social integration. The different career types can be clearly observed in the case of nearly half of the hundred councilors. Among them there is a classic official career, which ranges from clerks who served in the ranks of the chamber almost all their lives to those who won the position of councilor as a kind of reward. Although most of them were more like clerks and their work was limited to the management of financial affairs or the operation of an office at a higher level, it was possible to identify and describe several councilors who had diplomatic merits.

It also became clear that, in most cases, being a chamber councilor was the peak of one's career, from which there was only the rarest of cases where it was possible to move on. In the case of the educational background, the Jesuit connection was typical for the presidents as well as for the councilors.

Finally, the thesis examined the future possibilities for the chamber presidents. In this context, I examined the marriage policy, the education of children and grandchildren, and their integration into the aristocracy of the Viennese court and the Habsburg Monarchy. In the case of presidents, with a few exceptions, it was not possible to marry into aristocratic families. On the other hand, the children steadily chose wives from this circle. In fact, it is somewhat above average among the chamber president families that, unlike other members of the Hungarian aristocracy, they were already marrying foreign wives in the middle of the 17th century. Thus, both the vertical and horizontal possibilities in marriage expanded for them. It should be noted that only the Zichys managed to take advantage of this in the long term, as all the families except them had died out by the beginning of the 18th century, or at least the "chamber president's branch" disappeared. Serious changes can also be observed in terms of education. These families uniformly recognized that a Jesuit education offered them a great opportunity to study a first-rate and up-to-date curriculum. In the case of children, they also tried to finance their university studies, but among the presidents' children, relatively few of them made it to foreign universities. Despite of the serious expenses, the children and grandchildren of the presidents' were no longer able to repeat the outstanding career of their parents' grandparents.

It is clear, especially in the case of István Zichy, that the parents paid serious attention to getting their children better positions and titles within the Kingdom of Hungary and at the court of the Habsburgs. This also increased their familiarity with the ruler and laid the foundation for their future influence. In the case of the sons and grandsons of István Zichy, it is easy to follow how the father first obtained chamber titles for his sons, and then tried to endow his sons with additional titles, not only ones at court. In the twilight of his life, he even tried to get an ecclesiastic position for his grandson Pál Zichy, who was considered the black sheep of the family. In the case of the other families, this was done to a limited extent. Most of the children's parents were unable to help because they died before having the chance to advance the children's position.

The thesis enriches our knowledge about the members of the Hungarian nobility, including the members of the second line of the aristocracy, with many new findings. At the same time, it gives an insight into the career patterns of a newly emerging group, the group of aristocratic lords in office. In addition, important new data relating to the history and operation of the Hungarian Chamber has come to light, which sheds new light on the operation of the Chamber and the perspective of its staff of officials.

Publications related to the thesis

Adatok a Magyar Kamara elnökeinek és leszármazottaiknak az iskoláztatásáról a 17. században. (Data on the education of the presidents of the Hungarian Chamber and their descendants in the 17th century) In.: Nemesi oktatás és elitképzés a kora újkori Magyar Királyságban. Ed.: Zsolt Kökényesi, Budapest, 2022. 207–224., 17 p.

Rejtőzködő mecénás vagy mecenatúra nélküli főúr? Adalékok Zichy István, a Magyar Kamara elnökének mecénási tevékenységéhez. (A hiding Patron or a Lord without patronage? Additions to the Patronage of chamber president István Zichy.) In.: Magyar Könyvszemle 137(2022) 4 pp. 478–491., 14 p.

Hiding patrons or lords without patronage? Additions to the patronage of the Presidents of the Hungarian Chamber with outlook to the Habsburg Monarchy In.: Pro & Contra Central European Studies in Humanities 5(2022) 2. sz. 5–29. 25 p.

Adalékok Nádasdy István nyugat-európai utazásához. Levelek ifjabb Zichy István levelestárcájából. (Additions for István Nádasdy's west-european travel. Letters from István

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A birtokelkobzások végrehajtásának gyakorlata a Wesselényi-féle rendi szervezkedés felszámolása után Trencsén vármegyei példák alapján. (The practice of confiscation of properties around the Wesselényi magnate conspiracy, based on examples from county Trencsén) In.: *Doktorandusz hallgatók IX. konferenciájának tanulmányai*. Ed. Rita Szuromi, Eger, 2020. 135–146., 11 p.

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