

ABSTRACTS

Gábor Czoch: The Town as Landowner: Kassa (Košice) and its Villages before the Emancipation of Serfs

This study of the relationship between village and town analyses a unique historical situation whereby the town acted as the overlord of the villages, rather than simply being a market outlet or information hub for them. In this function, the town played an integral role in various aspects of the peasants' day-to-day life: acted as judge, collected taxes, regulated the use of forests, controlled the mill, alcohol sales, the abattoir, and was the patron of the parish priest as well.

The case study examines Kassa (presently Kosice, Slovakia's second largest city), which was one of the most important regional centres in the Kingdom of Hungary in the first half of the nineteenth century. In the 1840s, due to the privileges as chartered town, as well as other royal grants, Kassa was entitled to hold seventeen villages and a market town. The study examines the economic impact of owning lands and the everyday relations between the town as landowner and its villages before the 1848 Revolution and its aftermath abolished this form of feudal co-dependence. The analysis suggests that although the town generated significantly more revenues from financial transactions (investment and loans) than from its villages, this income was far from insignificant. Judging by the villagers' legal cases presented to the council, the town can be characterised as a strict and consistent, but not tyrannical overlord. The town's relationship with its villages can be seen as patriarchal: villages were not considered merely as a source of income, but were also recipients of support and care. While villagers were keen to find loopholes in the system and circumvent feudal control, they were also acutely aware of their dependency on the town as their overlord.

Péter Granasztói: Who's the Highest Bidder? The Network of Second-Hand Goods: The Micro World of Kiskunhalas Auctions (1780–1850)

The study is an analysis of the complex micro world of fifty-six estate sales that took place in Kiskunhalas, a market town on the Great Hungarian Plain, between 1780 and 1850. It begins with the description of the auction process and goes on to reconstruct the composition of bidders at each auction and, finally, examines the individual bidders' buying strategies and motivations. Another aim of the study is to reveal social relationships and networks through the persons present

at auctions as socially and culturally defined events. In conclusion, the micro-level analysis of Kiskunhalas auctions suggest that items originally owned by tradesmen, merchants or the Catholic parish priest very seldom ended up with poorer farmers. On the social level, buyers at auctions formed strongly guarded networks: members of well-defined social groups, such as tradesmen or the urban elite, were more likely to attend auctions of their own peers. The social layer of the town's affluent landed gentry constituted another clearly identifiable network of buyers, who attended a large number of auctions. Middle- and smallholders, however, replenished their tools and equipment at auctions of farmers of similar means, or wealthier on occasion. Second-hand items purchased at auctions and elsewhere played an important role in the sparsely furnished world of traditional peasant communities. While for poorer layers of society auctions were the only affordable means to replace tools and objects, even wealthier people considered them a good opportunity to make purchases.

Gábor Kármán: The Supporters of Mihnea: The Social Network of a Wallachian Pretender in Constantinople, 1654–1657

Throughout the early modern period, there was a constant presence of pretenders from the voievodates of Moldavia and Wallachia in Constantinople, who sought support in the Ottoman capital for gaining the thrones. The case of Mihnea, the alleged son of Voievod Mihnea Radu of Wallachia and Moldavia, himself voievod of Wallachia in 1658–1659, is singled out by the exceptionally detailed documentation that illustrates the network this pretender managed to maintain at the Sublime Porte. Thanks to the surviving Transylvanian correspondence and Mihnea's excellent contacts with the principality's embassy, a much deeper insight could be offered into the pretender's activities and networks than what could have been written based exclusively upon the widely studied Venetian, French or Imperial diplomatic correspondence. The contacts of this Wallachian pretender can be regarded as exceptional, as he, like foreign embassies and some Ottoman politicians, had direct contact to the House of Osman, through the person of Atike Sultan, daughter of Sultan Ahmed I, and her husband, Doğancı Yusuf Pasha. The Transylvanian correspondence also revealed important details about the much more typical case of Vasile Lupu, as well as about phenomena which were not documented so far. One such phenomenon was the practice that ruling voievods tried to neutralize other pretenders with making them sign an oath, or even secure their political support in the Ottoman capital in exchange for a regular salary. From a comparative perspective, the case of Mihnea can illustrate that Moldavian and Wallachian rulers (and would-be voievods) were much more deeply integrated into the political hierarchies and decision-making circles of the Ottoman Empire than the princes of Transylvania.

András Keszei: On the Sea of Forgetting

Although it often remains unnoticed, memory is inseparable from forgetting. The process of remembering, which includes different stages from experiencing to encoding and retrieval would be impossible without the selection of forgetting. It is necessary in order to unburden the human mind, which would otherwise suffer from serious problems related to the processing of surplus information. We cannot pay attention to everything happening in our environment. There is too much information to be processed, but even more important is the fact that we simply do not need that much for our ordinary lives. What we will not forget has relevance in regard to our personal aims, self understandings, norms and values which are embedded in wider sociocultural contexts. Forgetting as a deeply social phenomenon is operating through well defined social mechanisms. Remembering in social context is based on communication. Unmentioned information or certain aspects of the original information are likely to fade away. The more we are silent about certain memories the less they can spread in society and become part of the collective memory of the wider society. Traumatic pasts that may haunt whole social groups cannot be easily worked through in the context of silence. We tried to examine the workings of forgetting and silence by analyzing examples from twentieth century Hungarian history.

Judit Klement: Network of Companies: Corporate Co-operation in the Early Twentieth-Century Steam Mill Industry in Budapest

Frequent occurrence of the same names within an industrial sector always signify something. The analysis of the position holders before the First World War reveals a unique manifestation of this phenomenon among Budapest steam mill corporations from the 1900s. A smaller portion of personal overlaps was part of the preparation process for the merger of two companies, the Erzsébet Steam Mill Inc. and Pannónia Steam Mill Inc. The larger share of personal concentration, however, is not a sign of a similar pending merger, but a particular form of corporate co-operation. In 1904, the First Budapest Steam Mill Inc. drew the Pest Millers' and Bakers' Steam Mill Inc. and the Lujza Steam Mill Inc. into its sphere of interest, which continued with the Erzsébet Steam Mill Inc. in 1912, and the Pest Roller Mill Inc. in 1916. Based on the analysis of the corporate roles and the ownership of shares, as well as a surviving secret contract, the study describes the relationship between these corporations and reveals that the funding force behind this particular corporate network was, in fact, the Hungarian Commercial Bank of Pest. This business practice was an attempt to save the deteriorating position of large Budapest steam mills on the market.

Gábor Koltai: Agitators on the Train: Railway Agitation among Budapest Commuters (1949–1953)

The study presents the government's efforts to develop and maintain party propaganda on trains used by commuters working in Budapest, and the responses to these efforts by the commuters and agitators themselves. Launching the so-called railway agitation is a true reflection of the regime's plans to exercise the widest possible control over society.

The principal sources for this study are the agitation reports, which provide a unique insight into the period between 1949 and 1953. Although it is not possible to verify whether dialogues recorded in these party documents reflected reality, they are still helpful in reconstructing the real discourses that took place, and in understanding the responses that were of interest for the representatives of the Establishment. The reports mostly provide details about the agitators' day-to-day activity, problems arising from the unusual place of operation, as well as an insight into contemporary public transport conditions and the daily lives of commuters. Railway agitation was only sustainable for a limited period of time: the intent to maintain and stabilise this programme eventually failed. This story suggests that even in its strongest period, the party state, often characterised as monolithic or totalitarian, was unable to enforce its will on society at all times – what is more, it sometimes failed to run its own apparatus according to plan.

István Lengvári: “Theoretically, I might be the most qualified person for the job, but nowadays it is the least that matters.” Issues of Favouritism in the Correspondence of Mihály Pekár, Professor at the Medical Faculty in Pécs

Only fragments of the private correspondence of Mihály Pekár, professor of medicine and dean of faculty at the Elisabeth University (first in Pozsony/Bratislava, then in Budapest, and finally in Pécs) were acquired in auctions by two archives of Hungary. The author analysed and gave a short summary in his paper how favouritism is reflected in these private letters: who and why used one's influence. In addition, fourteen selected documents are also published in full length to illustrate those cases.

Judit Majorossy: A Town in the Space of “Regional” Networks. Spatial Dimensions of Extra-Urban Connections of Medieval Pressburg Burghers (1430–1530)

In her paper the author was concerned with a different approach to source analysis related to a town in the late medieval Hungarian Kingdom, namely Pressburg (today Bratislava), and she presented how and to what extent one particular town book can partially reveal elements of the regional social network of its burghers. The selected source material was the protocol of last wills including 850 texts between 1430 and 1530. In the study she also included four maps to illustrate how far the regional network of the town extended in the given period.

Csaba Sasfi – Péter Szegedi: The Student Body of the College of Physical Education 1925–1948

The study examines the social composition of the student body at a unique institution of higher education, the College of Physical Education, Budapest, based on college registers from its foundation to the time of solidifying the one-party system in Hungary. The basic figures reveal a slightly higher number of men than women, and suggest that nearly half of the student body came from urban backgrounds, more than twenty-five percent from the capital, while another twenty-five percent came from rural communities. The religious composition more or less reflects the proportions of contemporary society, although Jews were significantly underrepresented. The analysis shows the presence of a female group from the Budapest elite in the early years, which shrank during the years of economic depression and the post-war coalition period. Parallel to this process, other groups are shown to have gathered ground in this period, such as those of the so-called petit intelligentsia (officers, teachers) and economically independent men with children.