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Abstract of the PhD Thesis

of

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„If God is with us, who is against us...”

The Private Life of Tamás Nádasdy in Four Aspects,

on the Basis of Archival Sources

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I. The chosen research topic and basic data about the sources

During my research, I used the the Nádasdy family archives in the National Archives of Hungary. Apart from the domestic correspondance of palatine Tamás Nádasdy, I examined financial documents, selected miscellaneous letters, other documents and inscription books. Since – due to their enormous quantity - citing or publishing all the letters in the appendix I used in this thesis is impossible, here I publish the numbers of the microfilms I used:

Hungarian National Archives (MOL)

Hungarian Chamber's Archives

Nádasdy Family Archives (E 185)

Mf 6876, 6896, 6897, 6899, 6900, 6904, 6905, 6906,

6907, 6910, 6911, 6913, 6916, 6917, 6925, 6926; and:

supplementary repository registers B1527, 1531)

Documents concerning the public life of the Nádasdy family and inscription books from the 16-17th century)

(31 986)

Accounts and miscellaneous materials (31 997)

There are several parts of this enormous collection published in print, such as:

Károlyi Árpád, Szalay József: Nádasdy Tamás nádor családi levelezése. (Domestic Correspondance of Palatine Tamás Nádasdy.) Budapest, 1882.

Vida Tivadar (vál., ford., jegyz.): „Szerelmes Orsikám...”. A Nádasdyak és Szegedi Kőrös Gáspár levelezése, („My Loving Orsi...”. *Correspondance of the Nádasdys and Gáspár Szegedi Kőrös*) 1988. (Magyar Levelestár)

Szmollény Nándor: A középkori Szeged műveltsége, Gaspar Fraxinus de Zegeginus és Nádasdy Tamás levelezése. Szeged, (Education in the Medieval Szeged, Correspondance of Gaspar Fraxinus de Zegeginus and Tamás Nádasdy.) 1910.

Óze Sándor: 500 magyar levél a XVI. századból. Csányi Ákos levelei Nádasdy Tamáshoz 1549-1562. 1-2. (500 Hungarian Letters from the 16th Century. Letters of Ákos Csányi to Tamás Nádasdy 1549-1562. 1-2.) Budapest, 1996.

Furthermore, small-scale correspondances were published on the pages of *Történelmi Tár, Századok, Hadtörténeti Közlemények* by for example János Gersei Pető, László Kerecsényi, Márk Horváth, Farkas Perneszi and Bálint Magyar. Moreover, in theses like *Letters of Anna Nádasdy and Gábor Majláth*. (In: E. Tóth: *Hungarian Letters of Anna Maylád. Thesis*. Piliscsaba, 2002.)

Nevertheless, if we skip through the published and unpublished materials mentioned above, we can make the list more precise by finding further interesting letters and notes. I have found further letters by Orsolya Kanizsai, Ferenc Nádasdy, their doctor Gáspár Szegedi Kőrös, their prefect Ferenc Sennyei, just to mention the most significant ones.

Since those who lived far away from each other could not talk about the events in their lives, writing letters functioned as information exchange. While reading them, one of the difficulties was that very often, only one half of the exchange of letters is known, sometimes only the question, sometimes only the answer, and the result of the events or the whole problem is explained in a third party's letter. It is like reading every second page of a book. There are also letters that contain very few information, only functioning for strengthening a relationship, or just as an act of politeness or love. People do not find their everyday life worth noting down, it is the special events and memorable occasions they write about, thus those source materials that gives us the tiniest piece of information, but informs us about everyday life must be appreciated.

By far, the language of the letters did not get much attention, perhaps partly because the material contains so many more significant topics which are preferred. However, these documents are worth being examined linguistically, as they reveal a lot about their age and their writers. About an age that made more and more people note down their troublesome businesses.

II. Methodology of research

Psychology has discovered long ago that by grouping the information we have about someone, we can find some basic connections in his life, which even himself is unaware of. By this, we can get to know him more and understand his actions. The key is how we group the information, and the model we use. Other humanities have already taken advantage of interdisciplinarity, that is, in this case the idea of applying psychology in another scientific area. Therefore, a psychological model can be essential in historical research, for drawing a historical figure's more precise profile and getting to know an era better.

The Tschümperlin-model that is used for drawing a social curriculum and was added a psychical-spiritual dimension by Hollstein-Brinkmann is known in human sciences since 1993. These two form the structural psycho-social heptagon by Tschümperlin-Hollstein-Brinkmann. This model or a more complex version of it, containing four dimensions is also applied at Semmelweis University. They are:

- physical
- psychical
- social
- spiritual

The first three dimensions, historically speaking approaches were already applied before the Change of Regime, and the fourth one can be more widely used from 1990. Physical approach contains the person's biography, his physical state and everything having an influence on it.

The psychical approach means his psychological state and his obtaining and capability of mental health. That is, whether he can fulfil certain ages' challenges and can step onr up on the Erikson-scale.

The criteria of the social approach tells us about his family relations, people belonging to his social network, and how far or near are they from him in this network. It is important, to what extent he can rely on them and what kind of psychical sources they mean for his goals. Is the preservation of social values present in his life?

Spiritual approach is in a lot wider sense than religiousness, since any relationship with the transcendent can belong to this area, for example, refusing the existence of all transcendence is a kind of spirituality. To cease it, or to translate unexpressable feelings to the language of meaningful words is highly difficult, and to a certain extent, sociology of religion, or furthermore, pastoral-sociology have come across this obstacle and is still struggling with this condition. There is no universally accepted definition of spirituality yet, since it is such a complex and various phenomenon. Most researchers agree that it is a general non-material, but mental factor of man, however, being present in his material life and all other stages of his life, defining his thinking and behaviour.

While applying this method, there is one big difference between a man from the past and one from the present: that in the first case we cannot ask him to clarify something, and we are between the limits of the given sources. This way, it is not enough that we know what kind of information we need to draw the main lines of the profile, we have no chance to ask, thus in this case we analyse the available sources concerning these aspects. This way, of course we are aware that by discovering new sources, our theories can go out of date, or supplemented with more information. This means that in an ideal case, those written in this thesis will need additions and corrections, perhaps by myself, as new materials not yet published can come into light. Therefore we should look on this thesis as a snapshot from centuries ago that we analyse and the years coming will erase, and the only question is to what extent.

In the physical aspect of Tamás Nádasdy's case, we can examine the topic of health and illness, and nutrition. The psychic dimension contains his career itself, how he rose to the palatine's standing, the highest dignity in the country and how he became a happy family man. The social dimension consists of the question of preserving values, his relationship with sciences and his patronage activity. Drawing his full social network would reach across the limits of this dissertation, thus, we could only focus on his wife, and in relation with her, his marriage. The fourth dimension, spirituality arises in view of his patronage activity and also his nutrition, but will be discussed separately, taking new aspects into account.

III. Short summary of scientific achievements

This dissertation aimed at examining the private life of palatine Tamás Nádasdy from four aspects. These aspects are the physical, the psychical, the spiritual and the social. Due to the limits of the sources given and a PhD dissertation, these four aspects are not equally present in this thesis, but the reader should not be misled: all of them are equally important.

The significance and novelty of the research is the act of comparing the information from the so far known and from the unpublished sources, thus we get to know more about Tamás Nádasdy, his surroundings, and the conditions in Hungary of the time.

We can get an insight of the language of his correspondance with the smallest social circle, which is one of the first captivating examples of correspondance on everyday life in Hungarian. Further analysis of these letters by a version of the method derived from the models by Tschümperlin and Hollstein-Brickmann integrated into archive sources, Tamás Nádasdy appears in different roles in front of us according to the four dimensions mentioned above. As a man struggling with the difficulties of an unusual life, ascending to a higher existence from crises, and searching for God, a mecenator, a husband, a father and a man dealing with physical pains. Studying his life, there are times when we get to know more about Nádasdy through the people close to him than from the sources directly about him. This way, we become acquainted with him from his wife, Orsolya Kanizsai's and his doctor (and may also be called friend) Gáspár Kőrös's letters and through the events in the first years of his beloved but rarely seen son, Ferenc's life.

We find out, that one of the key points of Nádasdy's success was that he could make use of his excellent social network, of which the main foundation-stones were his family, especially his wife, Orsolya Kanizsai. This marriage of convenience with differences of age and status gradually become an accepting communion, filled with gentle feelings and sincere care for one another, although it was under a hard test, since the husband dealing with countrywide affairs was away from home a lot. It is very likely that the husband could build up his career leading to the highest national honour, because his father and wife provided him with a safe background. Among other issues, we have to deal with the character of Orsolya Kanizsai because her husband's life could not have been totally fulfilled without her. They constituted such a strong unity, that we cannot discuss one without the other.

The motto of the Nádasdy family was: „If God is with us, who is against us?” This one sentence summarizes their spirituality best, as in my opinion, in Tamás Nádasdy’s case it is more appropriate to speak about spirituality than denomination. The latest researches tend to support the point that at the dawn of the development of different denominations, which exactly coincides with Nádasdy’s life, it was very rarely visible to which denomination a man committed to. As for Tamás Nádasdy, passionate discussion took place about which denomination he chose, and none of the sides could show up a decisive argument, since he preserved his Catholic originis, but was also open to the ideas of Reformation. Furthermore, astrology was also a part of the family’s life. We cannot find a clear statement of him concerning this topic, and we can only surely declare that his whole family demanded pastoral care, and both him and his wife showed visible signs of searching for God.

In Nádasdy’s view of life, not only religion was present, but also an interest for sciences, culture and arts. These are frequently inseparable, for example in his patronage activities. It is sure, that for him, it was more than the satisfaction of a need for generativity or representation, since his education could have competed with a scientist of his time; and he was also very susceptible to theological questions, although his behaviour was very modest in this topic. Erasmus and Melanchton had a great impression on him, and he received many Reformed intellectuals, who with no doubt filled a gap in the age of the tragically declining Catholic intellectualism. Thus, Sárvár became one of the aristocratic courts filling the gap of Hungarian royal courts.

Another interesting aspect of the Nádasdy court was horticulture and in connection with that, alimention which we regard as part of the physical dimension. As usually in courts of the age, nutrition there was also an important mean of representation, but our sources reveal that it also played a major role in health and curing, for instance, the doctor prescribed a private menu for his patients, as well as the children and their nannies. The two main meals, lunch and dinner habitual in whole Europe, were featured there too, held at 10 and 17 o’clock and consisted of an average of 6 or 7 courses. In only special cases can we read about breakfast or eating in the afternoon.

High level of meat consumption (in this aspect, they deviated from Europe) and strong seasoning were both characteristics of this Hungarian aristocratic court, but the novelties of the age had also appeared: new kinds of food made of cereals. Since they kept the abstinent

days, the importance of these new meatless food had grown, but did not oust fish out which was already vasily consumed, since the considerable fish consumption characterizing Hungary was also present there, and was further supported by the setup of fish ponds.

However, beef stayed the most frequent kind of meat, since swines were kept for their intestines, and their most precious part, the fat. Eating poultry in the 16th century was rather an indication of rank, and they also ate wild birds with pleasure – hazel-grouse, quail, capercaillie. Killing games – even for aristocrats – was not only entertaining but also played an important role in the meals, as a wild boar or deer served as a great amount of meat. Sending the bagged animals to each other counted as an act of kindness.

During meals, porridges were served even at the lord's table, and the most characteristic meals of the age were made of cabbage. Cabbage was part of every meal in one form or another, and stuffed cabbage became Hungary's special culinary crest of the age. Large amounts of vegetables and fruit(, in the winter, dried or preserved) were also consumed. The Nádasdy court was famous for growing fruits.

Besides pears, apples, peaches, sour cherries, cherries, plums, strawberries, melons (watermelon and cantaloup), and nuts they were also known for growing vegetables: peas, lentils, carrot, pumpkin, cabbage, lettuce, spinach, and cucumber. They always sent crops, cuttings and saplings to their relations of high rank, even for the emperor.

By using the name horticulture, we are challenged: under this name, we can think of a fruit-garden, a vegetable-garden, a herb-garden, an ornamental garden, a game reserve, or any combination of the above. Leaves also bears many meanings. It is likely that the garden of the Nádasdy's was made the „Hungarian way” (therefore they grew vegetables and ornamental plants together), and they probably had their own chestnut grove, cabbage patch and they also gathered in the fruits and mushrooms growing wild. From their purchase records, we know that they purchased a great amount of lemon trees, but they should have served as ornaments, since they kept buying lemons and oranges. Same in the case of herbs: though they had a herb-garden, maybe it did not cover their needs, as they kept purchasing them from abroad.

As for beverages, we can read records about spring water, wine, beer and spirits. The most important of these was with no doubt, wine. The quality of wines were very diverse, and although, drinking wine did not count as a luxury, the best ones could only get on the lord's table. In the case of the Nádasdy's, we can read about the planting of *kadarka*, a kind of

grapes yielding red wine, however, drinking white wines was more common. They considered the grapes of the mountain of Gelse as their best wine, but they also mention the wines *ramfolt* and *pinel*. Beer consumption also existed, but in a smaller percentage. About Orsolya Kanizsai, we know that she preferred *boza*, the beer of the Cumanians and honey beer over wine. They also produced some kind of palinka (and they rather used it as a medicine), but the description did not remain, only the tool used for its production.

However, the physical dimension does not only contain alimentation, but also health. Concerning this, I wrote about the health conditions of the age, comprising healing people and their philosophy behind their activity. Conditions of the age and the most intimate problems of the family get revealed in front of us at the same time. This way, we also gain information about that period.

We get to know that even the Nádasdys suffered from the decaying hygienic conditions and states of health caused by wars. For example, the wife felt really bad shipping on lake Fertő and on other trips, because of the bad and swampy water, and sometimes even Sárvár seemed unbearable because of the sluggish water in the moat. The degrading circumstances were ideal for infectious diseases, and the courtspeople were in despair many times when they thought that the spectra of that age, plague is among them, as many of them kept to their beds at the same time. Their fear was just, since there was no effective remedy known apart from isolation. Their fear was frequently increased by furuncles on their bodies, which, however, was not caused by plague, but from skin diseases due to the bad conditions.

Skin diseases were common even among those who spent more time on grooming. For example, at the Nádasdy home, we could have found many basins, washbowls and pools, which they brought with them on their trips, too. They also liked spas and thermal waters - the palatine suffered from gout, and his sickly, long-time infertile wife could find a cure there. In this aspect, they deviated from Europe again, where the fervour for baths and bathing decreased, mostly because of the spreading of contagious diseases.

From the correspondance between the sickly spouses and their doctors, we get to know that they suffered from a lot of illnesses and hired a large scale of curing people. Since in the age they did not always call doctors in case of illness (and since qualified doctors were fairly rare in Hungary), they turned to barbers, pharmacists, midwives, and herb and bath experts. The

Nádasdy court was exceptional in the aspect that they had their own doctor, Gáspár Kőrös, and had set up their own pharmacy. This way, not only courtspeople but also further relations turned to them for advice or „borrowed” their doctor. Kőrös must have been an exceptional doctor, the reason for his popularity being his good temper and great knowledge. He asked for medical consultation for the members of the aristocratic family many times. The palatine made use of it, and used the facilities of the Viennese court, while he had himself cured with those doctors, too. He was really in need of them, suffering from testicles hernia, renal disease, gout, a leg disease (maybe deriving from that) and skin disease. However, his death was not caused by any of these, but plague.

Orsolya Kanizsai underwent pleurisy, flus and states of fever cramp during her lifetime. She had a bad eyesight, therefore she used glasses. She had hemorrhoids, indigestion, and from the herbs prescribed for her, we can conclude that she also had liver and bilious diseases. However, her greatest problem was that she could not give a heir to her husband, and that might have been a source of her depression. We do not know the cause of her infertility – it could be some kind of neoplasm in her uterus, an epithelial inflammation, or an infection left from her previous pregnancies. Their doctor, Gáspár Kőrös, treated her for years with medicines and cleaning her uterus out with injections, until these efforts were crowned with success and Ferenc Nádasdy was born. The first months of the mother and child are rare treasures of the age from medical and childhood-historical aspects.

According to the sources remained, we can clearly see, that the Nádasdys’ attitude towards children was very close to ours nowadays in the aspect that they considered childhood as an individual and qualitatively different period of a lifetime, furthermore, they cut it into stages, in a rudimentary way. Children were not treated as little adults, however, they had been prepared for life from the beginning. They drew up pedagogical principles, but also left a lot of time for playing.

In accordance with the practice of the age, they did not only raise their own children in their court, but also other noble boys and girls sent there for education, and many orphan relative children. (This also gave a boost to his court’s splendour and power.) However, our most detailed notes are about the two most significant people for them, Gábor Majláth and Ferenc Nádasdy. The prime of the boys’ education was that they could learn in Vienna and had free access to the emperor’s court when they reached early adolescence.

To sum up, it can be stated that Tamás Nádasdy's personality divided his contemporaries, too, but even his enemies recognized his talent and his wide knowledge competing with that of scientists. Beyond his personality, his career rising from a lower nobility to the palatine rank could not have been possible without his individual spirituality, his family providing him with a safe background and his most faithful vassals. From his correspondence, we found out that in his younger years, he shared his inner thoughts and dilemmas with his father, later with his wife, while towards the world, he was always self-confident in social, political and other questions. He always showed patience and gentleness towards his family, while he treated his enemies so hard, that he was under investigation in the charge of murder for a few times. For the researcher, it is hard to decide which Tamás Nádasdy should she had an image in the head of? The husband, who wrote sweet words for his wife even when he was 60 years old, the father, struggling with national problems but bothering with toys and cradles, or the murderer acting on the moment and the conspirator taking part in the assassination of his political opponent? Perhaps they were all part of him at the same time? Like the rarely home-coming aristocrat, never resting concerning his career, but at the same time, always knowing the smallest details of his domestic affairs, enthusiast of many activities, like gardening, fishing and dance, lived together in him. The image of his spirituality and religiousness is also very complex, as I have discussed it above.

His enthusiasm and patronage of humanism, science and arts is part of his whole lifetime, thus, he bequeathed lasting treasures for the posterity, however, his measures for earning the material resources needed for them and his military ideas caused dissatisfaction in his contemporaries many times, to the extent that his critics called him greedy.

I hope this dissertation provided more information for us about Tamás Nádasdy's personality and everyday life, by discussing different dimensions of his personal life, while our image of him stayed delicate, and we got to know more about some questions concerning the history of ideas of that age.

At the end of a human lifetime, the most important thing is to think over what we are leaving behind and if we are satisfied with it. We could not know how Tamás Nádasdy, at the end of his life, was looking back to it. Was there peace in his soul when he died? But the posterity

could not resist even in these days to be engaged with his life, and the sources remained contain further information.

IV. Publications on the topic of discussion

Asztalos Bernadett, *Kanizsai Orsolya reformkonyhája* (The Reform Kitchen of Orsolya Kanizsai), in: *Művelődés* 5, LIII/2000 Kolozsvár

Asztalos Bernadett, *Egészségügy Nádasdy Tamás nádor udvarában* (Hygiene in the Court of Palatine Tamás Nádasdy), in: Fejérdy, Gergely (Hg.), *Tanulmányok fél évezred magyar történelméből* (Studies of Hungarian History from the Sixteenth Century to the Modern Age), Piliscsaba 2002

Bernadett Asztalos: *Das Alltagsleben adeliger Frauen in der frühen Neuzeit in Ungarn*, In: Fürstin und Fürst. Familienbeziehungen und Handlungsmöglichkeiten von hochadeligen Frauen im Mittelalter. Herausgegeben von Jörg Rogge, *Mittelalter-Forschungen* Band 15, Herausgegeben von Bernd Schneidmüller und Stefan Weinfurter, Jan Thorbecke Verlag (Stuttgart), Ostfildern, 2004, 139-150. ISBN 3-7995-4266-3.