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Short Thesis for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

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**Noble families of foreign origin with military and administrative career in the 15th
and 16th centuries in West-Hungary**

with special regard to the Baumkirchers, the Grafenecks and the Weispriachs

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I. The aim and structure of the thesis

The dissertation examines those noble families of German and gentry origin, who were able to obtain lands in the Counties of Moson, Sopron and Vas, as well as their careers and the history of their estates in West-Hungary. I pay special attention to three families, the Baumkirchers, the Grafenecks and the Weispriachs, because although their landownership in this region was not episodic, it still has an important role in their plans for decades and generations.

The timeframe of the research cannot be specified precisely. The historical-political situation which allowed these nobles from the Holy Roman Empire to seize Hungarian estates and titles, escalated by the infighting after the unforeseen death of King Albert of Hungary (1439) and some crucial decisions and events, which increased the influence of Duke Frederick of Habsburg (1424–1493) from the Leopoldian cadet-branch (who became 1440 King of the Romans, 1452 Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire) and his younger brother, Duke Albert (1424–1463) in the western part of the West-Hungarian region. I count among these decisions, that Queen Elisabeth, wife of King Albert entrusted her newborn son, King Ladislaus V (1440–1457) and the Holy Crown of Hungary to King Frederick and pledged the town Sopron to him. The extinction of the male-lineage of the counts of Forchtenstein (1446) had been also a watershed moment, because Duke Albert acquired their estates (Fraknó/Forchtenstein and Kabold/Kobersdorf). Andreas Baumkircher and Ulrich von Grafeneck showed up in these fateful years in Szalónak/Schlaining (County of Vas) and Sopronkertes/Baumgarten (County of Sopron) as military officers of the late emperor, but 1451 appeared Balthasar and Sigmund, the Weispriach brothers from the Archdiocese of Salzburg, too. Then these three families had more or less influence in this region until the extinction of their male-lineage or beyond that by the matrilineal kinship, but in the case of the Grafenecks their presence ended in the early 16th century, the Weispriachs keep their influence to 1572. Consequently, the closing time of the research was different in certain cases. However, I should point out that this constellation which in the mid-15th century made possible the entering of these noble families to the service of the Habsburgs as military or administrative servants, persisted to the mid-17th century.

The Leopoldian branch of the Habsburgs could get supremacy in the territory of five-six West-Hungarian estate between the Danube and the *Őrség* region during the 15th century. They supported their intervention at the beginning with Frederick's rights as the ward of King Ladislaus, then legitimized it by the Treaty of Wiener Neustadt and Sopron (1463) and the Treaty of Pozsony (1491), respectively. As the examined family members were active in this thin frontier zone and its neighborhood, the framework of the research does not cover the whole territory of the counties Moson, Sopron and Vas, just the western parts of them.

I set an aim of the dissertation not just the description of the career of the family members and their relationship with each other and the local nobility of foreign or Hungarian origin. In order to analyze the effects of their activity on the development of their Hungarian possessions, I discuss in details the estates themselves. The Appendix I contains the relationship between these noble families and the Church, because I found it important to show the attitude of the mercenary-captains and their everywhere-present institutes.

II. The sources, literature and the methods of the research

The processing of my subject was complicated, because of the spread of primary sources. Only the Baumkircher family archive survived as part of the Batthyány family archive of Körmend, which preserves now in the National Archives of Hungary, Budapest. I should extend my research to those city archives, *loca credibilia* (ecclesiastic institutes with the right of verification) archives and family archives which was related the region and I hope to find unknown information. The starting point of my work was the *Antemohácsiana* Collections of the National Archives of Hungary [the collections of the original documents (DL) and photocopies of charters (DF) dated before the Battle of Mohács (29 August 1526) and their databases on the internet, besides the fonds of the Austrian State Archives. They proved to be an almost infinite basis of sources of career and estate history. On the other hand, I had a lack of relevant narrative sources, among the historians of Hungary just Antonio Bonfini and Miklós Istvánffy paid attention to these families, which were active on the frontier, and consequently had just local influence with rare exceptions when they acquired important roles in the government (for example Andreas Baumkircher as ispán of Pozsony). The history writing of Austria (the chronicles of Thomas Ebendorfer and Jakob Unrest) is more useful for the significant activity of the family members in the Erblande of the House of Habsburg during the 15th century.

In the first place, the scholarly works of the Burgenlandian and West-Hungarian workshops gave me literature to this research, which are dedicated essays and monographs for local history. In addition, it is a very fortunate thing that the number of those papers which mentioned the role of the Baumkirchers, the Grafenecks and the Weispriachs in wider picture, for example in connection with the Treaty of Pozsony (1491) or the Habsburg-Hungarian relations are increasing recently. Of course, we cannot state that the writings for local history was narrow-minded, quite the contrary. These diligent basic researches excited the curiosity of those researchers towards the topic too who are dealing with the elite, the administration of Hungary and the Lands of the Habsburgs and the international relations of this age.

However, I have to point out that the process to explore the sources and place them in context is not finished. We need more basic researches to know events in detail. The authors have been citing instead of primary documents often the unverified information of the older literature and a lot of times they used terminology imprecisely. I have set myself to correct these hardened mistakes, for this reason some parts of the dissertation contain extreme circumstantial data sequences and surprising dating which was known in the literature differently till now. This circumstantiality describes especially the case studies of the crises of tenancy which I want to describe as not just the outcome of the *Weispriach-Fehde* and the action for possession of the Baumkirchers, but I would like to expound every circumstances of these processions.

III. Outcomes

The legal status of the West-Hungarian domains which came under Habsburg authority

In the first part of the dissertation I examine the legal status of those estates which came under Habsburg authority according to the Armistice Agreement of Radkersburg (1447), the Treaty of Wiener Neustadt-Sopron (1463) and the Treaty of Pozsony/Bratislava (1491). The literature of the last century called these domains on the basis of sources from 16th century (e.g. the

terminology of the laws of the time) pledges in the hand of Austria. István Bariska realized correctly that these sources ought to be compared with those agreements which had warranted the special status of them. From the coeval treaties and pacts, it is clear that Frederick III and his son, Maximilian I of Habsburg of the Leopoldian cadet-branch got special rights instead of Austria. Bariska concluded from them that the members of House Habsburg had hold these pledges as subjects of the Hungarian kings in exchange for the Holy Crown, which was 1463 released by Frederick III to King Matthias of Hungary (1458–1490). But this so-called pledges-for-the-crown theory did not give explanation why was the re-exchange regulated only in the case of two domains (Fraknó/Forchtenstein and Kabold/Kobersdorf) and why won the Habsburgs all of the royal prerogatives over these territories. It was unprecedented of this age, although the Hungarian sovereigns had put their royal domains in pawn to their subjects regularly. According to the sources it seems likely that most of these estates were not pledges in the sight of the contemporaries, however Frederick III and his son get them as ‘the other king of Hungary’, because the treaties of 1463 and 1491 recognized their title as ‘King of Hungary’. It explained why could they have sovereignty over this territory. The pledge theory spread in the 16th century, because the Habsburgs availed themselves of their rights to pledge their West-Hungarian domains to noblemen of German origin who stood at them service, they brought the *Carolina*, the code of law in the Holy Roman Empire in and they administrated them by the authorities of Lower Austria. Furthermore, Maximilian I donated the in the 15th century united estate of the West-Hungarian Szarvkő/Hornstein and the Lower Austrian Seibersdorf 1518 as a fief. The Austrians claimed 1550 Borsmonostor/Klostermarienberg too under the pretext that the patrons of this abbey were from the Treaty of Pozsony always the captains of Kőszeg, which was in the hand of Archdukes of Austria.

History of the domains and captaincy of the town Sopron

In the dissertation I summarize the estate-history of 12 domains of the region of Western Transdanubia. It was shown that these were more or less precisely reconstructible despite the mostly lacking basis of sources. As a result of research among the primary sources I could rectify the statements of the literature in a number of cases. The history of Sopron could have riven the framework of the dissertation even if I had made an abbreviated version of it, for this reason I could deal with a local institute of the captaincy of Sopron, which got hold of increasing importance in these centuries.

Estate policy

The documents related to the Baumkirchers in the archives of the family of Batthyány (of Körmend) in a case of the ‘united’ domains of Rohonc/Rechnitz and Szalónak/Schlaining enable me to examine the result of possession of these foreign domain-holders to the territory and the inhabitants. It is clear that the member of the family of Baumkircher had long-term plans with the estates and instead of short-term despoilment they started a calculated development program. The most important part of it was the improving of Szalónak, the center of their holdings with a building of a residence castle and privileging the local people. As a result of them the settlement could develop into a middle-sized town (*oppidum*, *Stadt*) and the guild-system appeared there too. In the end of the 15th century just few landowners be found in

Hungary who can be a match for Georg Baumkircher with regard to the numbers of *porta seu fumus*, I mean the tax base in their estates. It represented that although his lands were not particularly huge and he had only two castles, their estates were among the most populated parts of Hungary. Unfortunately, the fruits were largely destroyed by the Ottoman campaign 1532. It is worth mentioning that the mass of possessions which seized by the Baumkirchers with various way could not have form an estate if the landowner had not organized and integrated them to a homogeneous frame which he can leave in one piece. Without the beginnings of this organization in the Baumkircher era the family of Batthyány had not succeed this integration in the case of Rohonc and Szalónak or the formerly estate of Girolt/Gerersdorf which was annexed to Némétújvár/Güssing.

Careers and social networks of the family members

In this part of the dissertation I deal partly with the origin and contact network of the three emphasized families and their history before the 15th century, on the other hand the career of the members of these families. It was presented in separate chapters only in the cases of some family members who played important role in Hungary. Two chapters dedicated to the brothers Wilhelm and Georg Baumkircher and Andreas and Ulrich von Weispriach respectively instead of a single person, because in their stories was overlapping with each other. These biographies also suitable to state the assertions of the literature precisely and to qualify them. I close this passage with a summary to appraise the activity of the family members in Western Hungary from the point of view of the long-term expansion of their family. Sometimes they had difficulty in holding and increasing their possessions, the circumstances were not be favorable to them at all times. Their right of possession over their pledge-domains depended on the pledger, in most cases the king, he should be having an interest in the prolongation of this legal relation instead of allowing the rival noblemen to seize them with redemption. In the mid-15th century, they could serve their rulers with military service but the turn of the century the conditions were favorable for the diplomatic service, consequently the pledgees were fluctuating always. The career of Hans von Weispriach launched in the 16th century due to his fortunate marriage and the excellent relations of his wife in the archducal (later royal) court of Ferdinand I as well as the loans which he provided his sovereign, thereby he became one of the most influential persons in this region by mid-century despite both his military and diplomatic service was not too successful or important. I had to qualify a statement of the literature about the importance of the family network of the Weispriachs, because it was proven that János Chorón (and by him the family of Batthyány) was not related to Hans von Weispriach, consequently the number of estates quite decreased which was possessed by Weispriach and his relatives simultaneously compared to the claims of the previous scholarly works. The end of the examined period could be characterized by the rising of the Hungarian landowners and pledgees (the Batthyánys, the Chorons, the Oláhs) and those noblemen of Lower Austria who got important functions to defend the capital city of Vienna was not recruited among them who have pledges in Western Hungary.

Crises and their solutions

In four case studies I deal with the methods of troubleshooting applied by these families when his new seized Hungarian estates got into jeopardy. These crises were all brought on problems with successions, two of them the family lack successor of the male line, in the other cases they were underage. All stories resulted different outcome. The heirs of Ulrich von Grafeneck lost all of their Hungarian estates except Szarvkő after the death of Ulrich (1487) because of wrong political decisions, and they could not regain them. In the event the last male member of the lineage sold all of his claim and joined the Hospitallers. The daughters of Hans von Weispriach also gave up the estates of Fraknó and Kismarton/Eisenstadt 1572 to the treasury, but they asked and got the pledge-money due to them. After the extinction of the male line of the Baumkirchers (1501) the matrilinear descendants of the family started long-term litigations to secure the estates of Rohonc-Szalónak and Császárvár/Cesargrad themselves. Although these processes were sometimes violent, they followed the rules of the Hungarian procedural law and turned out so successful that the families of Erdődi and Batthyány who claimed the possessions could seized them only the 1540s. For Lánzsér/Landsee which was a pledge of the Weispriachs escalated a real feud after the death of Ulrich von Weispriach (1506), because King Vladislaus II of Hungary (1490–1516) want to redeem it. The widow of the deceased Ulrich in order to defend her minor children's interests after she lost a litigation enforced a German legal institution of *Fehde* which made her possible to defend herself with violence and armed against the presumed grievance. The dragged-on feud caused plenty of harm to the citizens of Sopron and the villenage of the domains of the Weispriachs (Lánzsér and Kabold) but she could achieve her basic aim since her children kept Lánzsér.

The relationship with the Church

In the Appendix I deal with the history of the relationship between the three emphasized families and the Church. It can be established that the family members in spite of their military activity made an effort to support the Church for the sake of their salvation. It is observable a few times that they did it with unusual methods. Ulrich von Grafeneck and Andreas Baumkircher founded monasteries for a Hungarian Pauline Order, and Hans von Weispriach from the mid-16th century became a supporter of the Lutheran Reformation, he made an attempt to provide educated Lutheran pastors for the Croats who immigrated increasingly in his lands.

IV. Publications

Monograph

Az óvári uradalom a Szentgyörgyi és Bazini grófok korában. Mosonmagyaróvár, 2019.

Papers

A kaboldi uradalom és a kaboldi báróság 15–16. századi története. *Turul* 90. (2017) 111–122.

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Baumgarten im Mittelalter. In: Ortschronik Baumgarten, 1267–2017. Der Ort, die Geschichte, die Menschen. Red.: Renate Roth. Baumgarten, 2017. 36–46.

Egy 16. századi soproni ispán és városkapitány, Hans von Weispriach életútja 1550-ig. *Soproni Szemle* 69. (2015) 8–15.

Egy 18. századi őstábla forrásértéke. *Turul* 88. (2015) 110–117.

Egy kis uradalom születése. Adalékok az alsólászlói kastély felépítéséhez. *Soproni Szemle* 73. (2019) 87–100.

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„Iaurinicum” Grazból. Veit von Fladnitz és a győri egyházmegye tizedei. In: *Primus inter omnes. Tanulmányok Bedy Vince születésének 150. évfordulójára*. Szerk.: Arató György–Nemes Gábor–Vajk Ádám. Győr, 2016. 171–187.

Német zsoldosvezérek, magyar remetéik. In: *Micae mediaevales IV. Fiatal történészek dolgozatai a középkori Magyarországról és Európáról*. Szerk.: Gál Judit, Kádas István, Rózsa Márton, Tarján Eszter. Budapest, 2015. 43–58.

Új szempontok és új források a 15. századi Nyugat-Magyarország történetének kutatásában. In: *Akikre büszkék vagyunk. Válogatás a Fiatal bölcsészek a tudományért intézményközi TDK konferencián bemutatott dolgozatokból*. Szerk.: Jankovics Mária. Szombathely, 2012. 41–47.

Weispriachné háborúja - Egy 16. század eleji Sopron megyei konfliktus eseményei és értékelése. *Történelmi Szemle* 55. (2013) 471–489.

Zwischen Kaiser und König: Die Familie Kanizsai und ihre verlorenen Herrschaften in Westungarn. In: *Die Kanizsai und ihre Zeit*. Hg.: Gert Polster. Eisenstadt, 2019. 23–38.