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Institutional Structures and Elites in Sălaj Region and in Transylvania in the 14th–18th Centuries



Edited by
ANDRÁS W. KOVÁCS



ROMANIAN ACADEMY
Center for Transylvanian Studies

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The coat of arms from 1418 of the Csese (Kese) of Dans and of Keresztúr family, inherited later by the Wesselényi family (National Archives of Hungary, Collection of pre-1526 charters, DL 105473). Photo by ÉRIKA CZIKKELYNÉ NAGY.

Maps by BÉLA NAGY

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Contents

• Editors' Note	5
• Institutional Structures and Elites in Sălaj Region in the 14th–17th Centuries	7
Editing and Publishing Historical Sources in the Research Institute of the Transylvanian Museum Society Tamás Fejér	9
The Authorities of Middle Solnoc and Crasna Counties in the Middle Ages András W. Kovács	31
The Affiliation of Medieval Sălaj (Szilágy) Region in the Mirror of Social Relations Géza Hegyi	67
• Institutional Structures and Elites in Transylvania in the 15th–18th Centuries	101
Remarks on the Careers of the Vice-voivodes of Transylvania in the Late Middle Ages (1458–1526) András W. Kovács	103
Transylvanian Places of Authentication and Ecclesiastical Intellectuals in the Middle Ages Emőke Gálfi	139
Remarks on the Activity of the Cluj-Mănăstur Place of Authentication in the Age of the Transylvanian Principality Zsolt Bogdándi	155
Fortress-Building in 16 th -Century Transylvania. The Recruitment of Labour Force Klára P. Kovács	163
The Inquisitors in the Judicial Practice of Cluj at the End of the 16 th Century László Pakó	181
The Manorial Court of the Reformed Parish of Cluj (1676–1695) Anikó Szász	199
The Lord my God Has Given My Wife a Child. Childbirth in 18 th -Century Transylvania Andrea Fehér	221
The Local Exercise of Power in Sătmar county at the Beginning of the 18 th Century Judit Pál	237
• List of Authors	252

The Local Exercise of Power in Sătmar county at the Beginning of the 18th Century*

JUDIT PÁL

The patron-client relation

HISTORIOGRAPHY HAS dealt extensively with the development of the bureaucracy in the eighteenth century,¹ but there is still little information on the exercise of power on the local level. The functioning of institutions cannot be fully grasped without understanding the functioning of personal relations, especially not under the circumstances when the underdeveloped bureaucracy – with its low number of civil servants and very limited resources – had to face a complex set of relations and, what is more, a “feral” world which resembled Eastern Hungary in the wake of the defeat of the rebellion led by Francis Rákóczi II.

In the analysis of the development of the state and bureaucratization process in the early-modern period, the patron-client relation can serve as a useful theoretical model.² The role of the patron-client relations was often emphasized when dealing with the development of the early-modern state as well as the administration. At the time, loyalty was not yet an abstract bureaucratic loyalty, but it was much more linked to personal ties. Without the latter, in the early-modern period, it would have been very difficult to rule the state and operate offices, or even borrow money and obtain information.³ As Wolfgang Reinhard argues: “the early-modern patron-client relations constitute that system of the socially-accepted and morally-founded micro-political behaviour patterns, which is at the same time considered as the emblematic blueprint of the cultural politics of early-modern Europe.”⁴

There was certain debate surrounding this concept, some having a too wide perception of it,⁵ while others drawing the attention to its pitfalls.⁶ Demarcation

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always entails difficulties, it is not easy for instance to separate it from the kinship relations. The patron-client relation was multifaceted, its forms of manifestation being typical of a certain country or region. These relations became pervasive almost all over Europe, being present at Courts, universities, towns, the papal curia, cloisters; moreover, Reformation also spread by means of these channels (according to certain sources, Luther was one of the most efficient patrons).⁷ In Central-Eastern Europe, the phenomenon was firstly and more thoroughly analyzed by the Polish historiography. In the eighteenth century virtually the entire Polish-Lithuanian nobility was pervaded by the patron-client relations.⁸

One of the basic features of the patron-client relations is mutuality as well as asymmetry and inequality: it is about such an asymmetrical type of relationship in which the individual with a more prominent social status offers certain advantages to his client through his prestige, economic possibilities and connections, while the latter “reciprocates” with other services. However, the relation between patrons and clients went beyond material exchanges, being also characterized by immaterial factors such as service and loyalty. An important aspect is the consensus between the partners, the voluntarism from the part of the client without which the nature of the relation would be different. The patron-client relation has manifold forms, albeit it is generally characterized by durability. The stronger the hierarchy and the smaller the mobility is within a society, the more stable and lasting is the patron-client relation. However, we should keep in mind that at this point we are dealing with social roles: somebody could be patron in one social order and client in another.

Patrons played a significant role in the obtainment of offices. Helping relatives and clients obtain offices counted as a social responsibility. One of the most important – if not the most important – aspect of a career was the identification of the right patron and the development of personal relations. Ultimately, social networks also facilitated mobility. Even if bureaucratic rules were in place, they were too weak to serve as general norms. Personal relations played a much greater role than formal rules in the management of bureaucratic issues. As Valentin Grobner argues, in the early-modern period there was not so much a gap or a precipice between bureaucratic norms and practices, but rather a space where those who held bureaucratic positions moved and which they used according to their logic.⁹ The micro-historical researches on the early-modern era also indicate that there was no entirely coherent and structured norm system, and that the social actors used the cracks in the system to manipulate the norms and give various interpretations to the rules for their own interests.

Our sources do not allow us to reconstruct entire social networks, but the revelation of some of their aspects can take us closer to answering the question regarding the role that the patron-client relation played within the exercise of

power on the local level. Below, I will analyze such a “mediator” from the early eighteenth century, who acted simultaneously on several levels: he played some sort of mediating role between the town council, the state power, and the Károlyi aristocratic family.

The location: Eighteenth-century Satu-Mare

SATU-MARE WAS the longest-held territory by the *kuruc* army; its fortress was an important strategic point, thus suffering extensive damage on several occasions during the freedom fight led by Francis Rákóczi II. After the burning of the town the local inhabitants fled, and only slowly returned to their homes. According to a census conducted around the time of the Treaty of Satu-Mare, the town had a total of 101 citizens and 42 cottars, while the number of empty dwellings reached 169.

Despite the devastation, the town council took advantage of the situation in order to obtain the status of free royal town, which it had tried to obtain on several occasions before, but failed. After persistent efforts, their attempt was finally successful: the status of free royal town of Satu-Mare (Szatmárnémeti) was legally enacted in 1722. However, the expenses that accompanied the obtainment of the new status as well as the corresponding redemption of fiscal possessions and smaller royal usufructuary rights surpassed the financial possibilities of the town and finally led to its indebtedness. Furthermore, mostly due to the aforementioned problems, the town council also came into conflict with one of the most prominent landlords in the region and the Lord Lieutenant (*főispán*) of the county, Sándor Károlyi. He was disturbed by the town’s efforts for independence not only as Lord Lieutenant, but also as the owner of the two manors and one of the pubs belonging to them, over which a bitter dispute started between him and the town. The rights over the pub was the most sensitive issue in the dispute, but other thorny issues arose as well. Both parties used every strategy in the conflict, from intelligence gathering to the bribery of officials, and they also tried to mobilize all their personal connections. Károlyi also had a trusted person within the town, the *tricesimator* (collector of the one-thirtieth tax) Gábor Erős from Satu-Mare, who provided him with valuable information.¹⁰

The two “main characters”: Sándor Károlyi and Gábor Erős

SÁNDOR KÁROLYI (1669–1743) was Francis Rákóczi II’s general and trusted man, but he was able to erase his *kuruc*¹¹ past due to his role in the conclusion of the Treaty of Satu-Mare (1711). His career progressed afterward, and in 1712 he was awarded the title of Count. In the meantime he also significantly increased his wealth. In 1708, Rákóczi II pledged to him the landed estate in Erdőd, which had previously been in the property of the Treasury. In 1720, he managed to obtain a royal letter of donation for the estate. He continued to acquire new estates, and due to his manifold financial transactions he managed to extend their surface considerably, paying great attention to their organization and rendering them economically viable. After the Treaty of Satu-Mare, he remained one of the leading political figures in Hungary, playing an important role in the Diet of 1712–15 and later becoming a councillor at the re-established Royal Council of Governors (Helytartótanács).¹² Károlyi – a gifted man with a strong personality – succeeded in developing an extensive network of clients as well.¹³ In his capacity as Lord Lieutenant of Sätmar County he always paid close attention to the management of the county’s affairs. Actually, the Károlyi family was the only truly powerful aristocratic family whose wealth and social connections expanded well beyond the borders of the County.

We have little information on the origins of Gábor Erős, but we know for certain that he was a nobleman. In the seventeenth century, several members of the Erős family married into landed noble families. Gábor is first mentioned in late seventeenth-century documents as an employee of the Chamber in Szepes (where he acted as a clerk there in the period 1690–93) and a *provisor* in Satu-Mare (for the period 1694–1703), which meant that he managed the local estates of the Treasury.¹⁴ Then, he took part in Rákóczi’s rebellion. In the period 1711–23 he once again acted as *provisor* of the Treasury estates in Satu-Mare, but at the same time he held the positions of *vicetricsesimator* until 1718 and then full-fledged *tricesimator* in the same town. Thus, one can say that Erős had a typical career. At the Chamber, most bureaucrats were of noble origin, albeit there were a few with bourgeois origin as well. However, the possibilities for advancement were limited, for instance a clerk could never become a councillor. Most often, like in the case of Erős, the peak of a career meant a position at the *Tricesima* (Harmincadhivatal).

The position of *tricesimator* was a fairly important one: at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, the institutions with the biggest personnel were the Chambers and the One-Thirtieth Offices. The latter played not only a supervisory role, but also a political one. In most places,

the *tricesimatori* were the representatives of the central government, and in this capacity they confronted the local landed aristocracy. They were the owners of their office, they had to offer material guarantees and were liable with their own estates. This can explain why at the time of his accession to office the average age of a *tricesimator* was 40–50.¹⁵ Thus, by 1711 Erős must have accumulated significant wealth in order to acquire a position at the *Tricesima*, albeit in his capacity as a *vicetriximator* at the time, he still did not count as a royal civil servant. After the rebellion led by Rákóczi, the Chamber in Szepes was reorganized and much of the former personnel had to leave.¹⁶ Therefore, Erős also had to rebuild his connection network and reassess his career.

Erős was one of Károlyi's trusted and loyal men who served under him in the *kuruc* army, and whose services Károlyi used on different occasions. As it was common practice at the time, there was no clear separation between the public official and private activities, thus Károlyi sent him either to inspect the troops or to solve financial matters. During the *kuruc* military operations, Erős was Károlyi's quartermaster officer, and in this capacity he was entrusted with the procurement of provisions for the army from the inhabitants of Satu-Mare. After the conclusion of the Treaty of Satu-Mare, Károlyi asked for clemency for several of his close associates, including Erős, thus making the latter more indebted to him. However, Károlyi also benefited a great deal from "his well-chosen connections and those individuals who supported him unconditionally."¹⁷ It is very likely that Erős acquired the position of *tricesimator* with Károlyi's support. This position was equal to that of *iudex nobilium* (szolgabíró); moreover, at the time, the *tricesimator* position was more coveted as well: it was obviously more lucrative, and apparently quite prestigious, albeit it involved "servitude," as Erős complained on several occasions.

The first Catholic offensive in Satu-Mare at the end of the seventeenth century

BASED ON the few sources at our disposal, we can claim that Erős's relationship with the town council was ambivalent. It seems that although he lived in the town, he had only official and "business" relations with the council. Erős was one of the main characters in the first big clash between Catholics and Reformed Protestants for the town leadership, which took place at the end of the seventeenth century. Taking advantage of the prevailing political situation in the country, the local Jesuits – who had settled in Satu-Mare in 1639 – attempted to forcefully tip the balance of power in favour of the Catholics in this mostly Reformed Protestant town.

One of the antecedents is that on 15 December 1690, a royal decree ordered that beginning with the following year royal commissars had to be dispatched to every local election. They were usually Chamber functionaries, and they had many prerogatives: apart from supervising the election process, they also supervised the management of the town, the administrative and judicial activity of the magistrate, as well as the situation of Churches. The instructions reveal the anti-Protestant measures.¹⁸ However, it is very likely that such commissars were not dispatched to Satu-Mare until 1694, when the Jesuits filed a complaint against the town council for having elected a Reformed Protestant *iudex primarius* (mayor). Consequently, the Chamber in Szepes annulled the results and dispatched Erős as a commissar to supervise the local elections from 1695. His personal intervention ultimately facilitated the forceful imposition of a Catholic *iudex primarium* in the town.¹⁹ After protests from the town council, they contested its privileges and ordered an inquiry against the council members.²⁰ We do not know what the result of the inquiry was, but at the end of 1697 the Chancellery finally agreed on the free election of urban office-holders. The further expansion of Catholic influence as well as the interference of central authorities in the life of the town was interrupted by the outbreak of the *kuruc* rebellion.

The Károlyi pub affair

AS WE saw above, the town was gravely affected by the events. Part of the treasury goods was also destroyed during the armed conflict. Based on the 1712 census, we were able to assess not only the extent of the Treasury's wealth, but also the magnitude of the destruction.²¹ Whereas the Treasury owned landed estates, vineyards, mills, and a brewery, the pubs represented the most important income source. There were a total number of seven pubs in the two town areas and the castle, part of which were in the ownership of the council; nonetheless, pubs generated a yearly income of 2,100 forints to the royal manor.²² Their acquisition was what the town also aimed for at the time.

Both Sándor Károlyi and the former fortress commander Gückel owned pubs in the town. The fact that the royal benefices had been in Károlyi's hands since 1708 further increased his direct interest in the town's endeavours. Erős played an interesting role in the story. As a representative of the Chamber, he had to inventory all the Treasury assets. As a client of Károlyi, however, he provided the latter with valuable inside information on the steps taken by the town council. For a while – it seems – Károlyi let him take over the pub in order to avoid an open conflict with the town representatives. One of Károlyi's letters reveals that in 1697, Gückel took over the former's pub due to accrued taxes. For a couple

of years he managed the pub, but the town council suspended its activity based on a decree issued by the Chamber in Szepes. Therefore, Károlyi sued and recovered the pub in 1703. After the Treaty of Satu-Mare, however, Gückel's men came to the fore as well. Then, Károlyi gave the pub over to the *tricesimator* Gábor Erős, because in this case the town council would not harass him anymore. He was aware that Erős – as a representative of the Chamber – could have hampered the council's redemption of Treasury assets and royal usufructuary rights. However, when he took the pub back from Erős, the council once again turned to the Chamber in Szepes.²³

Thus, for as long as Erős managed Károlyi's pub, the council did not sue him due to his power and influence. Even though we do not know every detail of the affair, it is still worth asking ourselves what the explanation of this situation might be: Erős's connections at the Chamber (given that he should have been denounced at his "own" office, the Chamber in Szepes), the direct and actual power which he exercised as a *tricesimator* in Satu-Mare, or rather the network of personal connections that he developed as a local resident? His correspondence does not reveal the latter possibility; moreover, it seems that he had very limited contact with the council, unless it was about official affairs. His sporadic references to this matter indicate that he considered himself part of the landed nobility and made derogatory remarks about the town council. His social and family connections were all linked to the county nobility.

The council left no stone unturned in order to achieve its goals: apart from the acquiring of the status of royal town, the liquidation of the Károlyi- and Gückel-owned pubs was also high on its agenda. The first goal, despite Károlyi's initial staunch opposition, proved easy to achieve. However, the achievement of the second goal was an entirely different matter. The town offered 20,000 forints for the treasury assets and the smaller royal usufructuary rights. The value appraisal and the handling of legal matters took a long time. The Chamber in Szepes entrusted Erős with the inventory of the treasury assets.²⁴ It seems that Erős played a double game. He apparently promised support to the council, while he was evidently thoughtful of the Chamber and Károlyi as well. He paid close attention to every step taken by the council and informed his patron of them; moreover, it seems he even hampered the council's endeavours as much as he could. All this did not happen "for free," but in exchange for favours. For instance, in the matter of the assignment of quarters for soldiers, Erős repeatedly requested Károlyi to intervene at the villages, where he had landed properties.²⁵

However, when the Chamber ordered the Treasury assets to be handed over to the council, Erős got into a difficult situation; obviously the order of the Chamber as well as the fear of a denunciation weighed much heavier than the pressures coming from the council. Therefore, there was a boundary – which

he could not (or did not want to?) cross – between his official duties and requirements on the one hand, and his allegiance to Károlyi, on the other. However, he did not owe any loyalty towards the council. It seems he cleverly manoeuvred between the sides, since he managed to assure even the council of his support. In the autumn of 1713, it repaid him for his services by awarding him and his inheritors two lots.²⁶ Indeed, Erős helped the council in its dispute over the Gückel pub, while in the dispute between the council and his patron he obviously defended the latter.

By the autumn of 1713, the town had got into a very tough financial situation. Thus, it embarked on a feverish search for funds, given that they had taken a 20,000 forints loan to purchase the treasury assets, and in September they were unable to pay the 8,000 forints instalment. It was not at all surprising if we take into consideration that in 1715, the town's revenues amounted to 7,400 forints from which it also had to cover the usual expenses.²⁷ It seems this was the time when Károlyi became inclined to settle with the town council, because he requested Erős to reach an agreement with it over the sale of all his town assets for 5-6,000 forints. But the agreement fell through after Erős wrote to him: "they are beggars, swimming in debt."²⁸ Due to the mounting debts, they were compelled to pledge four pubs received from the Treasury to the *iudex primarius* and several councilmen. Nonetheless, the council continued to ask various individuals for smaller or bigger loans, usually with a 10% interest.²⁹ Among the lenders one can find noblemen and army officers from the region, as well as residents of Debrecen or Levoča (Lőcse). Gábor Erős was one of the lenders. In 1715, he loaned the town 1,000 *florenus Rhenensis* and that is why he was pledged two pubs in the Némethi area of the town.³⁰ Until then, these pubs had represented one of the most important and surest revenue sources for the town and the manors. Erős was aware of this, given that he managed to obtain the pubs as pledge for the loan; the council was able to redeem them only in 1725.³¹

The patron-client relation

ERŐS MAINTAINED a steady correspondence with Károlyi. There was a formal side as well: he regularly congratulated the latter on the occasion of various religious holidays, wished him good health so that "I can benefit from it by remaining under your fatherly wings."³² Erős "courted" Károlyi on several occasions; but, due to his numerous commitments and Károlyi's trips, he only seldom visited the latter at his home in Carei (Nagykároly). Most times, however, they discussed official matters via correspondence. Erős took care of Károlyi's businesses in Satu-Mare: he placed orders with local manufacturers, made purchases,

audited the reports of the *Comites curiae* (udvarbíró) in Satu-Mare, and he closely followed the conflict between the council and the Army at Károlyi's behest. He also did several services to Károlyi's wife. Their Catholic faith was also a binding factor. Therefore, Erős went to prayer-meetings to the Károlyis several times.

He also wrote about personal matters, his illnesses, difficulties, and he asked for advice during the Tartar incursion (1717). Other times he complained about his difficult life, his long absences from home, even during Christmas; then, he was ordered to make the inventory of estates in Bihar (Bihar) County and Baia Mare (Nagybánya), but as he stated: "I am but a servant, and I must act in good faith."³³ This remark reveals the noblemen's relation to the bureaucratic life, but at the same time he was also aware of the material (and other type of) advantages that this job involved.

What really mattered to his patron was the inside information that he could provide due to his position. He constantly fed Károlyi with information that he obtained from the Chamber in Szepes regarding when and which estates were being listed. For instance, Károlyi wanted and finally managed to obtain ownership rights³⁴ over the manor in Erdőd which Erős inventoried and which was then appraised by the Chamber based on his inventory.³⁵ However, a complaint against Erős was filed at the Chamber which questioned the accuracy of his inventory and subsequently raised the price of the manor. In direct violation of his instructions, he sent the inventory to Károlyi, albeit he pleaded with him to keep it a secret, because it was against the rules. Later, the affair of the village of Tătărești (Réztelek) near Satu-Mare emerged amid doubts about its appurtenance. Erős again showed readiness to assist his patron: "as what shall I record and list the military food rations in Tătărești..., I am expecting your Excellency's instructions."³⁶

In 1721, in the absence of specialists, Károlyi entrusted him with the implementation of one of his pet projects, namely the construction of a glass furnace.³⁷ Apparently Erős had some knowledge in this area, and his good command of German helped him communicate with the Bohemian master builder. The reports that he wrote after his inspection visits at the glass furnace indicate his competence: he expressed his opinions on the materials, the manufactured pots and the installations, described the missing tools, made inventories, and drafted instructions, the latter in both Hungarian and German. Later, however, Károlyi entrusted his other client Gábor Badda with the supervision of the furnace's activities.

When Károlyi as well as the town became indebted, Erős offered loans to him (them). In reality, Károlyi was virtually indebted all the time – it was part of his landed estate policy – and indeed, he often resorted to loans, which counted both as great help and a mutually advantageous business venture. In exchange, Erős turned to Károlyi for different favours. For instance, he asked the latter

to take a certain official document that concerned him from the Chancellery, he requested smaller favours (wooden planks or acorn for his pigs), or he asked for his support in various official or non-official affairs. The most important show of support from Károlyi was during his appointment as *tricesimator*. After the Treaty of Satu-Mare, there were discussions about the reorganization of the *Tricesimae*, and in 1713 there was a strong rumour about the closure of the office in Satu-Mare. Károlyi was very eager to feed Erős with information in this matter as well. Erős repeatedly asked Károlyi to intervene at the Chancellery for his appointment as *tricesimator*. We are not certain what it was due to – Károlyi’s recommendation, Erős’s connections, or bribery – but in November 1720, the latter was already reporting about success to the former. On another occasion, Erős asked for help from the County via Károlyi: thus, in 1721 he built a mill, asking Károlyi to order the deputy lord lieutenant to assist in the building of the dam.³⁸

The last matter in which Erős requested Károlyi’s assistance was his attempt to seek damages from the War Council. Albeit Károlyi sent the recommendation, he blamed him for failing to obtain a vineyard for him from the Treasury. Erős vividly expressed his shock: when he read his patron’s letter, “I felt like sinking into the ground, my blood froze, and like a person beaten to within an inch of his life, my heart, body, and soul are filled with anguish;” he would never hurt anybody “let alone his Excellency, from whom I expect all the best, and whom I recognize and regard as my father-figure, second only to God.”³⁹ However, in the matter of the vineyard he considered himself innocent since – as he claimed – nobody asked for his help.

Therefore, the relationship between Erős and Károlyi was not characterized only by unilateral support, but also by the provision of smaller services by the other party. They were linked by a complex web of mutual interests. Erős also had a business relationship with Károlyi – at least for a while – in the sense that he rented two of the latter’s manor pubs (one of them in Ardud [Erdőd]). As we saw above, he sometimes came into a conflict of interests with Károlyi due to either his own dealings or his representation of the Chamber’s interests. On several occasions, he drew Károlyi’s attention to the arrears of pay or the abuses committed by the latter’s men in their dealings with the *Tricesima*. Apparently, Károlyi’s men – due to their confidence in the authority of their lord – did not observe the rules. Sometimes they denounced him to Károlyi for his alleged activities against the latter. In these situations, Erős was always compelled to exculpate himself. The rhetoric of his letters is very interesting in this respect: “I have to admit the blood froze in my veins, my heart throbbed at the thought that Your Excellency was angry with me.” He continues: “[I have already] fallen twice into your disfavour” due to “false accusers,” but “I am a steadier

servant of Your Excellency” than the accusers. He also asks him to show his usual leniency: “I honestly say it to you: I would rather be dead than be out of Your Excellency’s favour.”⁴⁰

The couple of eventful years following the Treaty of Satu-Mare – when, as we saw, Erős played an important role in the legal disputes between Károlyi and the town council – were followed by years characterized by the mutual exchange of information, smaller services as well as interventions, which lasted until 1725. There is almost no mention of our *tricesimator* in any document from the last five years of his life. The explanation can be found in Károlyi’s diary entry from April 3, 1725: “Disaster befell His Lordship Gábor Erős as he took ill with apoplexy.” However, Erős lived for another five years after falling ill, and died only in 1730. In the last years of his life, he turned to Károlyi only for a few minor favours. However, because Erős was no longer in the position to return the favours, their relationship deteriorated somehow. However, in his last letter to Károlyi from February 1730, when he congratulated him upon his return home, Erős described himself as his “long-time and loyal servant.”⁴¹

As a worthy patron, Károlyi took care of Erős’s sons as well. According to the available sources, Erős and his wife Mária Dersőffy (Dessewffy), who was also born in an upstanding noble family in Sätmar county, had three sons. After the passing of Mária he married Erzsébet Illyési, who remained his wife until the end, and with whom he had a daughter. He went to great length to ensure a good living for his sons from his first marriage, and to this end he turned to Károlyi for support. For a while, his son István worked in Károlyi’s service, later holding several official positions the same as László, while Gábor was very likely an employee at the Chamber.

Erős’s career-path can be described as successful given the difficult circumstances of the early eighteenth century: he managed to survive the defeat of Rákóczi’s freedom fight, then he occupied a position that matched his standing, and not least he succeeded in augmenting his wealth considerably.⁴²

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IN COMPARISON to other clients of Károlyi, Erős was only during the Rákóczi uprising in the direct service of his patron, which is exactly what makes their relationship interesting, as well as the fact that he held a public office. As a young man, Erős fought alongside Károlyi in the *kuruc* war, and it is very likely that the latter intervened for his pardon. This only strengthened their relationship, Erős being connected to his patron by gratitude as well as a tangled web of mutual interests. Erős himself was a relatively independent and well-off nobleman, as a *tricesimator* he held a public office, which involved important power positions on the local level, and as such, his relationship with Károlyi was founded on the system of mutual advantages. However, the very submissive and apologetic attitude

of the “autonomous” Erős when his patron became infuriated with him reflects very well on the mentality of the age. From behind the patriarchal relationship, the great distance that separated patron and client comes to light.

Sándor Károlyi, the Lord Lieutenant of Sătmar county and the wealthiest landlord in the region, developed a considerable network of clients in order to ensure his power base and the management of his estates. The bureaucratization process started to unfold only later at the end of the eighteenth century; therefore, at the beginning of the century the old world’s lack of differentiation manifested itself in the absence of differentiated scopes of duties and the primacy of personal connections. Until the end of the eighteenth century we can still talk about the existence of a “patrimonial domination” if we were to use Max Weber’s category; one of its features is that the concepts of “jurisdiction” and “authority” as they are understood today were virtually unknown. Later, these duties will be carried out by paid state and county civil servants as well as manorial clerks, but at the time, there was still no clear separation between them. The example of Erős illustrates this state of affairs very well, as he carried out a great diversity of duties at Károlyi’s behest. But what was the basis on which the Lord Lieutenant entrusted a theoretically independent civil servant – who did not depend on Károlyi materially and even sometimes lent money to him – with various duties, including the building of a glass furnace? The difficult circumstances made people more dependent on one another. Károlyi’s client network also partly served the goals of taking over a land that was almost depopulated and defenceless in front of natural forces, making his estates functional and profitable, and ultimately becoming the master of the county. Both parties depended on each other; the forms of collaboration were quite diversified, but this cannot be stripped down to a simplistic give-receive type of relationship, given that the personal character, religious ties, as well as loyalty played a major role in their relationship, and these are the aspects that made Erős a genuine client.

□

Notes

1. Wolfgang Reinhard, *Geschichte des Staatsgewalt. Eine vergleichende Verfassungsgeschichte Europas von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (München: C. H. Beck, 1999).
2. Sharon Kettering, *Patrons, Brokers and Clients in Seventeenth-Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Hans-Heinrich Nolte, “Patronage und Klientel: Das Konzept in der Forschung,” in *Patronage und Klientel. Ergebnisse einer polnisch-deutschen Konferenz*, ed. Hans-Heinrich Nolte, Beihefte zum Archiv für Kulturgeschichte, Heft 29 (Cologne and Vienna: Böhlau, 1989), 1–17; Antoni Maćzak, *Ungleiche Freundschaft. Klientelbeziehungen von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* Deutsches Historisches Institut Warschau, Klio in Polen, vol. 7. (Osnabrück: Fibre, 2005).

3. Wolfgang Reinhard characterized the clientelism as “Instrumentum Regnandi ersten Ranges.” See Wolfgang Reinhard, “Freunde und Kreaturen. Historische Anthropologie von Patronage-Klientel-Beziehungen,” *Freiburger Universitätsblätter* 37 (1998): 176.
4. Reinhard, “Freunde und Kreaturen,” 127–141.
5. There are authors such as Victor Morgan who view Feudalism as a specific manifestation form of the patron-client relation. Victor Morgan, “Some Types of Patronage, Mainly in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England,” in *Klientelsysteme im Europa der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Antoni Maćzak, Schriften des Historischen Kollegs, Kolloquien, no. 9 (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1988), 91–115.
6. Heiko Droste, “Patronage in der Frühen Neuzeit. Institution und Kulturform,” *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 30 (2003): 555–590; Mark Hengerer, “Amtsträger als Klienten und Patrone? Anmerkungen zu einem Forschungskonzept,” in *Ergebene Diener ihrer Herren? Herrschaftsvermittlung im alten Europa*, eds. Stefan Brakensiek and Heide Wunder (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 2005), 45–78.
7. For the Holy Roman Empire, see Peter Moraw, “Über Patrone und Klienten im Heiligen Römischen Reich des späten Mittelalters und frühen Neuzeit,” in Maćzak, *Klientelsysteme*, 5–12; Volker Press, “Patronat und Klientel im Heiligen Römischen Reich,” in Maćzak, ed., *Klientelsysteme*, 19–46.
8. Wojciech Tygielski, “A Faction Which Could not Lose,” in Maćzak, ed., *Klientelsysteme*, 177–201; Zofia Zielińska, “Magnaten und Adel im politischen Landleben Polen-Litauens des 18. Jahrhunderts,” in Maćzak, ed., *Klientelsysteme*, 203–210. For the Habsburg Court see: Mark Hengerer, *Kaiserhof und Adel in der Mitte des 17. Jahrhunderts. Eine Kommunikationsgeschichte der Macht der Vormoderne*, Historische Kulturwissenschaft, vol. 3 (Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2004), Karin J. MacHardy, *War, Religion and Court Patronage in Habsburg Austria. The Social and Cultural Dimensions of Political Interaction, 1521–1622* (New York: Palgrave, 2003); Thomas Winkelbauer, *Ständefreiheit und Fürstenmacht. Länder und Untertanen des Hauses Habsburg im konfessionellen Zeitalter*, Österreichische Geschichte 1522–1699 (2 vols, Vienna: Ueberreuter, 2003); Winkelbauer, *Fürst und Fürstendiener: Gundaker von Liechtenstein, ein österreichischer Aristokrat des konfessionellen Zeitalters* (Vienna and Munich: Oldenbourg, 1999), 255–287.
9. Valentin Groebner, “Angebote, die man nicht ablehnen kann. Institution, Verwaltung und die Definition von Korruption am Ende des Mittelalters,” in *Institutionen und Ereignis. Über historischen Praktiken und Vorstellungen gesellschaftlichen Ordens*, eds. Reinhard Blänkner and Bernhard Jussen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998).
10. Judit Pál, “Der Preis der Freiheit. Die freie königliche Stadt Szatmárnémeti am Anfang des 18. Jahrhunderts,” in *Ergebene Diener*, eds. Brakensiek and Wunder, 123–143.
11. The term denotes the anti-Habsburg rebels from the end of 17th and the beginning of 18th century.
12. Ágnes Kovács, *Károlyi Sándor*, Magyar História Életrajzok (Budapest, Gondolat: 1988).
13. András Vári, “Ergebene Diener ihrer Herren. Wandel der Machtausübung im Komitatsleben und in der Privaten Güterverwaltung im Ungarn des 18. Jahrhunderts,” in *Ergebene Diener*, eds. Brakensiek and Wunder, 203–231.

14. Zoltán Fallenbüchl, *Állami (királyi és császári) tisztségviselők a 17. századi Magyarországon. Adattár* (State bureaucrats in 17th-century Hungary) (Budapest: Osiris, 2002), 89.
15. *Ibid.*, 17–23.
16. Zoltán Fallenbüchl, A szepesi kamara tisztségviselői a XVII–XVIII. században (The bureaucrats of the Chamber in Szepes in the 17th and 18th century), *Levéltári Közlemények* 38, no. 2. (1967): 193–236.
17. Kovács, *Károlyi Sándor*, 136.
18. István Nagy, *A magyar kamara 1686–1848* (The Hungarian Chamber) (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1971), 39.
19. Mihály Sarkadi Nagy, *Szatmár-Németi szabad királyi város egyházi és polgári története* (Ecclesiastical and civil history of the royal town of Satu Mare) (Satu Mare: Kovács Mártonnál, 1860), 125–126.
20. Romanian National Archive Cluj County Branch, Cluj-Napoca (Direcția Județeană Cluj ale Arhivelor Naționale, Cluj-Napoca; henceforth: Nat. Arch. Cluj) F 20 Archive of the town Satu Mare (Arhiva orașului Satu Mare), Documents, no. 317, 321, 345/1695.
21. National Archives of Hungary (Magyar Országos Levéltár; henceforth: Nat. Arch. Hung.), E 156 Urbaria et Conscriptiones, no. 47: 20, 21.
22. Bertalan Bagossy, Szatmár-Németi története (The History of Satu Mare), in *Szatmár-Németi sz. kir. város*, ed. Samu Borovszky (Budapest, s. a.), 232–233.
23. Nat. Arch. Hung. P 392 The Károlyi Family (Károlyi család), vol. 18, Lad. 17. no. 162a.
24. Nat. Arch. Hung. E 158, no. 47:20.
25. Nat. Arch. Hung. P 398 Károlyi Family, Missiles, no. 16240, Gábor Erős's letter to Sándor Károlyi, Satu Mare, on 22 September 1712.
26. Nat. Arch. Cluj, F 20, no. 8. Protocollum Magistratuale Ci(vi)t(a)tis Szatthmár Anno 1704 usque 1724, on 29 October 1713.
27. On January 20, 1715, they reached an agreement with the Treasury, which stipulated that it should pay a total of 41,773 *florenus Rhenensis* for the royal usufructuary rights and the stock. 1715. Antal Szirmay, *Szatthmár vármegye fekvése, története és polgári esmérete* (The position, history, and civil knowledge of Satu Mare county (2 vols., Buda, 1810), 188.
28. Nat. Arch. Hung. P 392, vol. 18, Lad. 17, no. 147. Gábor Erős' letter to Sándor Károlyi, Satu Mare, on 1 November 1713.
29. The legal interest level was 6%.
30. Nat. Arch. Cluj, F 20, no. 553/1713.
31. Nat. Arch. Cluj, F 20, no. 11.
32. Nat. Arch. Hung. P 398, no. 16231, Gábor Erős' letter to Sándor Károlyi, on 16 August 1716.
33. Nat. Arch. Hung. P 398, no. 16247, Gábor Erős' letter to Sándor Károlyi, on 2 July 1718.
34. In 1708, Rákóczi offered Károlyi the estate in Erdőd, which previously belonged to the Treasury, in return for a loan that he gave to the prince. The estate remained in his property after the end of the freedom fight, but he managed to obtain the ownership right only in 1720. Kovács, *Károlyi Sándor*, 198.

35. Nat. Arch. Hung. E 158, no. 8:18. The first inventory and assessment are dated 3 December 1713 and 1 June 1715, respectively.
36. Nat. Arch. Hung. P 398, no. 16276, Gábor Erős' letter to Sándor Károlyi, on 5 December 1720.
37. The glass furnace in Solduba (Száldobágy) was one of Károlyi's earliest such business ventures. It was finished in 1722, and it produced many good-quality products in the 1720s. However, at the end of the decade it came into a state of neglect which – despite Károlyi's support – finally led to its closure at the end of the 1730s. Kovács, *Károlyi Sándor*, 192–193.
38. Nat. Arch. Hung. P 398, no. 16278, Gábor Erős' letter to Sándor Károlyi, on 13 June 1721.
39. Nat. Arch. Hung. P 398, no. 16296, Gábor Erős' letter to Sándor Károlyi, on 14 November 1723.
40. Nat. Arch. Hung. P 398, no. 16265, Gábor Erős' letter to Sándor Károlyi, on 19 December 1719.
41. Nat. Arch. Hung. P 398, no. 16306, Gábor Erős' letter to Sándor Károlyi, on 13 February 1730.
42. In 1725, during his sickness, the Chamber inventoried his wealth, which revealed that apart from his house in Satu-Mare, estates, and vineyards he also owned several smaller estates with serfs in various villages across Satu-Mare county. Nat. Arch. Hung. E 156, no. 47: 30.

Abstract

The Local Exercise of Power in Sătmar county at the Beginning of the 18th Century

The paper analyzes the exercise of power on the local level from the early eighteenth century presenting a “mediator” from Satu Mare (Szatmárnémeti), who acted simultaneously on several levels: he played some sort of mediating role between the town council, the state power, and the Károlyi aristocratic family. Sándor Károlyi, the Lord Lieutenant (*főispán*) of Sătmar (Szatmár) county and the wealthiest landlord in the region, developed a considerable network of clients in order to ensure his power base and the management of his estates. Gábor Erős was a relatively independent and well-off nobleman, as a *tricesimator* (*harmincados*) he held a public office, which involved important power positions on the local level, and as such, his relationship with Károlyi was founded on the system of mutual advantages. Both parties depended on each other; the forms of collaboration were quite diversified, but this cannot be stripped down to a simplistic give-receive type of relationship, given that the personal character, religious ties, as well as loyalty played a major role in their relationship, and these are the aspects that made Erős a genuine client.

Keywords

patron-client relation, local power, Satu Mare, 18th century