

Eötvös Loránd University. Faculty of Humanities

DOCTORAL THESES

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**ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANISATION AND OFFICERS OF
CITIES IN ZALA COUNTY, 1850-1860**

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Budapest, 2016.

Although the comprehensive and final settlement of the municipal administration in Hungary was not carried out under the neo-absolutist government following the repression of the 1848-1849 revolution, the then conducted reorganisation of public administration did not leave the structure of municipal administration unaffected. The legal status of Hungarian municipalities was governed by imperial laws, provisions defining partly the status of the Hungarian provincial crown land and partly its interior administration, and mainly by directives issued for county authorities. The new governance system – partly adopting the earlier jurisprudence – handled all of the settlements belonging to the lowest level of the administrative organisation as political administrative units, and unanimously used the term “municipality” to describe them. Thus, the former royal free cities and market towns having a more developed administrative organisation, as well as simple villages were also considered “municipalities”.

On the basis of the above, we wanted to achieve two main objectives during the making of this dissertation:

1. The follow-up of measurements taken at a national, district and county level in the public administration of towns of Zala county, and the registration of changes in the administrative organisation of the indicated towns, taking into consideration the reorganisation of public administration carried out in the era.
2. The analysis of the constitution of officers in the towns of Zala county and the recording of personal changes so that the operation of officer corps could be overviewed as a whole and in their process.

During our researches we reached the following conclusions:

At the time of introducing the new public administration system, the imperial and royal authorities in Zala county considered five settlements in Zala county, namely, Zalaegerszeg, Nagykanizsa, Keszthely, Tapolca and Sümeg, which owned the previously organised judgement council, as settlements having city status. This classification did not change until the end of the period of neo-absolutism.

The period of military government, 1849-1850.

- Due to the unification of military and civil governance, the final organisation of political authorities could not be carried out. This also affected the status and competence of town officers.
- Besides political reliability, moral integrity, expertise, German language proficiency, sense of duty, accurate and responsible work were also basic requirements of the appointment of officers. Besides political reliability and expertise, quite great emphasis was laid on moral integrity in particular.
- Within the military district of Sopron, Zala county belonged at first to the civil district of Pécs, and then, from November 1849 to the civil district of Székesfehérvár. Designation of the city council fell within the jurisdiction of the district lord lieutenant, while the practical conduct was carried out by the government commissioner at the head of the county, on other words, by the prefect.
- The officer corps of the five cities were appointed At the end of 1849 - beginning of 1850. The operation of the city councils of 1848 was ceased, and the previous city assemblies were suspended. The people were “represented” everywhere by the appointed body named “honorary councillors” instead of the elected city councils.
- In the period between April and June 1850 the headcount of officer corps was significantly reduced as a result of the intervention of the district lord lieutenant, and it stabilised everywhere around June.
- Although, those “compromised in the rebellion” were constantly kept from obtaining any important public administration jobs, it certainly cannot be said, that the new allocation of city offices was carried out by only taking into account political aspects. The prefect, Lajos Bogyay strived to select locally recognised persons with authority and confidence, preferably such persons, who seemed adequate due to their qualification or mental faculties, had some experience in public administration and could take forward matters in progress.
- Bodies governing the cities (the council and the “honorary councillors”) were provided extremely limited margins as far as the independent administration of the respective cities was concerned, but they did not even try to use these limited margins.

The period of the provisory unit, 1851-1853.

Preparations for the division of the military and civil governance, and the final formation of the political public administration began in the Spring of 1850. The military districts ceased from 01 January 1851, and five new administrative districts were established. Zala county belonged to the administrative district of Sopron from the beginning of 1851.

- Different provisions issued in this period, and the so-called “principles” issued upon the deletion of the imperial constitution as of 31 December 1851, generally consolidated the supremacy of counties over the municipalities.
- The strive for the consistent enforcement of supervision and control necessitated the reorganisation of the lowest level of public administration. In order to make the system’s operation more efficient, the new organisation of notaries was established within the administrative districts, the legal status of royal free cities and boroughs were regulated by a separate provision on 18 August 1851.
- The possibility of establishing bodies for the government of cities through election was also a concern. The regional authorities left the decision on election or appointment to the discretion of the prefect. Preparations for election were, however, stopped by a decree passed by the minister of the interior at the end of 1851 on the grounds of an upcoming revision of the constitution.
- Election preparation process also began in the five cities of Zala county in the autumn of 1851, the electors were listed and classified in corps, etc. However, the prefect, Lajos Bogay recommended the district lord lieutenant the establishment of administrative organs in all cities through appointment.
- As of 1851, the previous “agency” appointed from above, comprised of the so-called “honorary councillors” began to be called a committee after the Austrian model (Gemeindeausschuss) in Zala county.
- In the majority of cities in Zala county complete stability could not be achieved even by the middle of 1850. The main reason for this was that all authorities supervising the administration of cities – at district, county and borough level alike – emphasized from the beginning the temporary nature of the appointment of officers in the hope that a municipal act would be drawn up. Therefore, holding an office did not mean a sure living for anybody. Beside their office work, several officers pursued a civil occupation, moreover, in many cases, they gave up their office in favour of this.
- Given the above, fluctuation was quite significant among all officers in employment.

- As regards city administration, both the county and the cities themselves in Zala county – despite the shutdown of organizing works initiated as a result thereof – considered the directive concerning cities issued by governor Károly Geringer on 18 August 1851 as authoritative until the middle of the 1850s.
- In important personal and other matters concerning the cities, the county usually asked the opinion of the boards and councils of the respective cities via the high magistrate’s offices. The explanations and notes attached to the opinions and recommendations of cities by the high magistrate significantly influences the senior decisions. The final decisions were made at the regional authorities.
- The two bodies, the council and the municipal board, that governed the cities, hardly had any opportunities to have any independent initiatives. If they had an opportunity, they could refer to the county through the high magistrate, and in case of a request from a more supreme body, their request was forwarded by the county. The cities received almost everything “ready”.
- The county authority gained the main role in the selection of the personnel for the administrative bodies of cities, since the persons recommended for the individual office positions by the county were most of the time accepted by the regional authorities. However, the personality of the respective high magistrate meant quite a lot, since, during the drawing up of personal proposals introduced to regional authorities, the county always took into consideration what the high magistrate of a given city said about the respective candidates.
- The cities themselves could only win smaller modifications and allowances in a given case. In this respect, the activity of the municipal board could exert their influence to gain favourable decisions, therefore, the social make-up of the board was important. Otherwise, the city council mechanically did what it was expected to do.
- As regards the administration of cities, the credentials of the council and the municipal board substituting the representative body were mainly confined to the delivery of opinions and proposals. However, this did not have to be taken into account.
- The cities had the most independence in employment of servants and conventional serfs, the conclusion of contracts with them, and the specification of terms thereof. The supreme authorities seldom interfered with this.

The period of definitive administration, 1853-1860.

The administrative system was transformed according to the imperial principles issued upon the termination of the octroyed constitution of 04 March 1849 on 31 December 1851. This became the set-up of neo-absolutism intended to be definite. The Hungarian lord lieutenancy, which was previously seated as political high authority in one centre, in Buda, was divided into five, so-called departments, and the individual departments were established in the district centres. The lord lieutenancy departments started to operate on 01 May 1853. Zala county belonged to the Imperial and Royal Lieutenancy Department of Sopron.

The reorganisation of county authorities was finished by 01 August 1853. The decree of the minister of the interior, justice and finance dated on 06 April 1854 sanctioned the new organisation of public administration in Zala county as well with a changed district division.

- In the course of administrative transformations carried out at a national, district and county level in 1853 and 1854, a new hierarchy of cities was established. The privileged status of royal free cities disappeared. The five county cities (Buda, Pozsony, Sopron, Kassa, Nagyvárád), as well as Pest and Debrecen were given a prominent place. The administration of the seven cities was supervised by the lord lieutenancy departments, while the royal free cities and other towns along with municipalities were controlled by the county authorities.
- The notice issued by the Ministry of the Interior on 04 April 1855 informed that the temporary settlement of city councils could also be started before the issuance of the long-awaited municipal act.
- As a result of the above decree, the lord lieutenancy department of Sopron decided, that the settlement of “notable municipalities” under its jurisdiction shall also be carried out. This was executed in such a way, that the former royal free cities (Sopron, Kismarton, Ruszt, Kőszeg, Pécs and Győr) and Szombathely, among cities located in administrative areas under the jurisdiction of the lord lieutenancy department, gained more independence as regards their internal, so-called political administration. The other cities gained no such license, but the administrative bodies of county seats and settlements already considered as cities were significantly transformed.
- As regards the arrangement of cities, Lajos Ambrózy, the head of the lord lieutenancy department of Sopron, formulated the following important policies:
 - the redundant jobs must be terminated, the uniform ones must be merged.

- one main goal is the management of the administrative system by intellectuals
 - when administering the cases assigned to them, the officials should use their full potential.
 - the payments should be determined in a way to insure a subsistence sufficient for the officers concerned
 - the individual job roles should be accurately circumscribed and filled with real content
- All of this aimed at establishing a modernised city administration in compliance with the fundamentally new, evolving civil relations. (To achieve the most effective performance by the least amount of officials.)
- The ideal was to establish an officer corps that lived only from work in the office and concentrated all their energy on their office work, the main requirements of which were expertise, an adequate level of education and moral integrity.
- Lajos Bogyay, who was at the head of the Zala county authority recommended the arrangement of the administration of the previously mentioned five cities in the middle of 1855. He also proposed to place them under the direct supervision of the county, but this did not happen.
- By its decree issued at the end of 1856, the lord lieutenancy department further reduced the headcount of personnel in the cities of Zala county, saying that these cities did not have significant administrative roles.
- Mayors were put at the head of cities. Before the appointment of potential candidates, they tried to receive reliable information, sometimes even entirely confidential information, about them in every regard.
- Other positions of city officer corps were filled in by tender. As a result of the system of tenders, one could choose from significantly more candidates than before, when the noble magistrates made proposals on the potential officers based on the opinion of the city council.
- The previous “municipal boards” were replaced by the “municipal councils”, the members of which gained their post by appointment. When these were established, the different religious denominations and social strata in cities, in addition to the intelligence, political reliability and moral integrity of potential members had to be taken into account according to higher directives.

- Mayors and municipal councillors were appointed in the cities of Zala county in the Spring of 1857. In the bodies of the latter, they strived to more participation on behalf of the intellectuals.
- The new city councils of the cities of Zala county were also established by the end of 1857. The professional aspects are principally applied in the course of appointments. The headcount was significantly reduced.
- They intended to utilise all of the administrative organs of cities only for execution, some policing and the control of current financial affairs.

Although the characterizations of the individual officers included information on political reliability, this aspect pushed into the background by the end of the decade as regards their employment. They paid more attention on this in the first half of 1850, while after the reorganisation, qualification, knowledge, language proficiency and last but not least the quality of the relationship with the local community mattered more.

In several cases, the enforcement of independent will, the utilisation of limited margins were hindered by the noble magistrate supervising the cities. Its right to supervision, of which we could not dispose in the abovementioned period, proves, that the governance did not consider the market towns similar to the cities of Zala county qualified for the independent administration of their affairs. The state expressed its will through the county apparatus, that also comprised the noble magistrate. This will, as justified by the events in Zala county in the past decade, did not acknowledge any autonomy neither at national, nor at local level: it only saw the achievement of its objectives on the lowest levels of the administrative organs. Thus, the persons deemed to execute the otherwise progressive measures assisting civil development could not even identify themselves with these measures.

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The overdue municipal act was drawn up in 1859. However, its execution did not happen in the political situation that arose as a result of an unfolding national resistance in Hungary. The reorganisation of county and city self-governments based mainly on the principles of 1848 began at the end of 1860 and the beginning of 1861, which was somewhat delayed in Zala county due to the re-annexation of Muraköz. As regards municipal administration, there were no national regulations yet. However, the period of neo-absolutism finally terminated. The

fight for full autonomy, and “independent self-governance” long awaited by townspeople had to be continued thereafter under different political conditions.



TECHNICAL TRANSLATION

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