

Elections in one Hungarian county in the period of expanding political publicity and participation. Career paths in the county administration, 1806–1830.*

Abstract

The purpose of the study. In the present work, I explore the career paths of public servants from a long-neglected but controversial period in Hungarian historiography. The study of the personnel of the county administration can easily seem to be autotelic, but with the right questions we can reflect not only on national but also on continental processes. The turn of the 18th and 19th centuries was a period of significant structural change at European level, the emergence of the public sphere, its consolidation and institutionalization.

Applied methods. My main goal to reconstruct the magistrate elections and career paths of county officials in one Hungarian county (Somogy). The analysis focuses on the career experience of various officials. In my data collection covering the elections between 1806 and 1830, I recorded and examined a total of 292 obtainment of office.

Outcomes. The impact of the structural changes is clearly visible in the county world, where the shortage of officials was replaced by an over-application. With the increase of new recruits, the daily-paid honorary functionaries became permanent auxiliary posts in Somogy, creating a new entry level for administration.

Keywords: careers, county, elections, elite, office-holders

1. The Hungarian early modern county administration, the list of magistrates and the examined county

Before moving on to our concrete analysis, it is necessary to introduce the early modern Hungarian administration and its typical middle-level unit, the county (*'vármegye'* or *'comitatus'*).¹ After the Ottoman wars, Hungary underwent significant political and administrative transformations as a part of the Habsburg Monarchy, the kingdom's structure reflected the influences of both indigenous traditions and Viennese governance. The nobility

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¹ The names of institutions and offices used in the study are given in both the Hungarian and Latin languages of the period. Other but atypical middle-level administrative units were royal free cities and privileged districts.

within the counties wielded considerable influence, not only in administrative matters but in shaping local policies too. The legal system in early modern Hungary was also closely tied to the middle-level administration, each county had its own jurisdiction authority, legal matters were often resolved at this level. In the 18th and the early 19th century, the Habsburg rulers heavily relied on the economic and military aid of Hungarian administration. The counties' general and partial assemblies,² comprised of noble landowners and their representatives, were the forums for decision-making, contributing to the cultural and social identity of the region.

Each county had its own administrative personnel, including a chief prefect (*'főispán'* or *'supremus comes'*), who was appointed by the monarch. These high-ranking officials were local administrators, trusted representatives of the king, managing the most important domestic affairs. The position dates itself back to the medieval period and continued to exist into the early modern era. However, by the 18th century, most chief prefects were residing outside their designated counties, they only appeared at general assemblies when it was necessary to. The daily administration was instead ran by a vice prefect, later two vice prefects (*'alispán'* or *'vice comes'*), who were elected by local noblemen. Given the chief prefects' usual absence, they became the face of authority, the person who connected the local and central level of administration, presiding over the county assemblies and courts. Apart from them, other central county magistrates can be divided into three groups: the notaries, running the documentation of legal proceedings, the tax collectors responsible for financial affairs, and the public attorneys who served as legal prosecutors. The counties themselves also had smaller administrative units, subcounties, supervised by noble judges with the help of jurors and commissioners.³ The magistrate's work were aided by 'auxiliary' personnel and daily-paid, per diem officers.

Translating Hungarian (or Latin) office names to English is not an easy task. Most works examining the topic of early modern administration opted to use the positions' original Latin names or tried to find an equivalent post in the Anglophone world (for example lord lieutenant as a synonym for chief prefects). It's clear that neither method is perfect. The first one doesn't really resolve the issue of comprehension, while the second one might oversimplify and misrepresent the nuanced roles of positions as it was pointed out by István Szijártó.⁴ In her 2009 PhD thesis, Julianna Erika Héjja published a glossary of possible approximate translations, and in this work I heavily rely on her list, however, I also disagree with some of her renditions. Instead, I use the following magistrate names. (Figure 1.)

² 'Nagy- és kisgyűlés' or 'generalis et particularis congregatio.'

³ The Hungarian word *'járás'* and its Latin equivalent *'districtus'* could be easily translated to 'district,' however, to avoid the confusion with the 'districts' of regional courts (e.g. District Court of Kőszeg), I use the name subcounty instead.

⁴ Szijártó, I. (2020): 7.

Figure 1: The list of the ‘most important’ county magistrates and their names in English, Hungarian and Latin. The first row with the grey background highlights the variants I consistently use in this work.

List of the ‘most important’ county magistrates ⁵				
English name		Hungarian name	Latin name	Number of office-holders at a time ⁶ and the way of obtaining the post
Kovács, D. L. (2024)	Héjja, J. E. (2009)			
Royal magistrates at the top of county administration				
chief prefect ⁷	Lord Lieutenant	főispán	Supremus Comes	One at a time, appointed by the monarch
deputy chief prefect, administrator	–	főispáni helytartó, adminisztrátor	Administrator	One at a time, appointed by the monarch in the place of a regular chief prefect
‘Central’ magistrates				
ordinary vice prefect, first vice prefect	subprefect	rendes alispán első alispán	Ordinarius Vice Comes	One at a time, elected by the county’s general assembly
deputy vice prefect, second vice prefect	deputy subprefect	helyettes alispán második alispán	Substitutus Vice Comes	One at a time, elected by the county’s general assembly
chief notary, head notary		főjegyző	Ordinarius Notarius	One at a time, appointed by the chief prefect or his deputy
first vice notary		első aljegyző	Primarius Vice Notarius	One at a time, appointed by the chief prefect or his deputy
second vice notary		második aljegyző	Secundarius Vice Notarius	One at a time, appointed by the chief prefect or his deputy

⁵ County magistrates or officials who usually took part in the general assembly and their names were kept in the proceedings by the notaries.

⁶ The number of holders of same offices can vary greatly between different counties and time frames, the data here reflects only one certain county (Somogy) between 1800 and 1830.

⁷ It has to be noted that even my renditions are not perfect. For example, I translate the Hungarian ‘ispán’ word as ‘prefect’ while actual prefects (‘*praefectus*’) also existed at the examined period, albeit as the leading officials of large landowners’ manors. To avoid confusion, we have to differentiate between county and manorial prefects. However, it complicates the situation that some estate managers in manors were also called ‘ispán’, meaning that we actually have two different types of manorial ‘prefects’ too, a governing prefect and an estate manager prefect.

archivist		levéltáros	Registrator, Registrator, Archivarius	One at a time, appointed by the chief prefect or his deputy
chief tax collector, head tax collector		főadószedő, kasszatartó	Generalis Perceptor	One at a time, elected by the county's general assembly
accountant		számvevő	Rationum Exactor	One at a time, elected by the county's general assembly
ordinary attorney, first attorney	public attorney	tiszti főügyész, tiszti első ügyész	Ordinarius Fiscalis	One at a time, elected by the county's general assembly
deputy attorney, second attorney	deputy attorney	tiszti alügyész, tiszti másodügyész	Vice Fiscalis	One at a time, elected by the county's general assembly
Subcounty magistrates ⁸				
chief noble judge	chief administrative officer	főszolgabíró	Ordinarius Iudlium, Ordinarius Iudex Nobilium	One at a time in each subcounty, elected by the county's general assembly
vice noble judge	district administrator	alszolgabíró	Vice Iudlium, Vice Iudex Nobilium	Two at a time in each subcounty, elected by the county's general assembly
(subcounty) juror	jury	(járási) esküdt	Jurassor	Two at a time in each subcounty, elected by the county's general assembly
(subcounty) vice tax collector		(járási) aladószedő	Particularis Perceptor	One at a time in each subcounty, elected by the county's general assembly
(subcounty) commissioner		(járási) biztos	Commissarius	Two at a time in each subcounty, elected by the county's general assembly
'Auxiliary' personnel				
chief medical officer		tiszti főorvos	Physicus	One at a time, appointed by the chief prefect or his deputy

⁸ In the early 1800s, Somogy was consisted of five subcounties, these seats were Kaposvár, Szigetvár, Marcali, Igal and Babócsa.

chirurgion	seborvos	Chirurgus	One at a time in each subcounty, appointed by the chief prefect or his deputy
geometer	földmérő	Geometra	One at a time, appointed by the chief prefect or his deputy
dungeon keeper, ‘castellan’	várnagy	Castellan	One at a time, appointed by the chief prefect or his deputy
lieutenant	hadnagy	Locumtenens	One at a time, appointed by the chief prefect or his deputy
Daily-paid, per diem county magistrates			
county court judge, judge of the County Court	táblabíró	Tabulae Judiciariae Assessor	Any number at a time, appointed by the chief prefect or his deputy
honorary functionary	becsületből szolgáló	Honorarius Officialis	Any number at a time, appointed by the chief prefect or his deputy
deputy (or envoy) of the Diet, deputy (or envoy) of the Parliament	vármegyei követ a diétán	Alegatus Comitatus ad Diaetam	Two at a time of a Diet, elected by the county’s general assembly

Although the focus of my research is only one county, following the Italian ‘*Microstoria*’ school, I am actually looking for answers to big questions in a small place, namely how the expansion of public sphere has changed the early modern Hungarian county world. Through this localized lens, I anticipate contributing valuable insights to the larger narrative of political evolution and societal shifts. Somogy itself is located in the southwestern part of Hungary, in the so-called Southern Transdanubia region, at the southern shores of Lake Balaton. Before a ‘liberation war’ at the end of the 1600s, the region was occupied by the Ottoman forces for more than a century, causing the complete destruction of previous Hungarian administration and noble population. The county had to be fully reorganized in the early 1700s. One hundred year later, the county’s seat, Kaposvár, still looked like a large village with only three streets, the first pharmacy and secondary school just got opened, showing how much the region lagged behind the rest of the country in terms of urbanization and modernization. What makes Somogy an ideal county to make an in-depth examination? First of all, it had a relatively well-preserved archival holdings, which allows me to track changes in local administration and noble estates over time. Secondly, it is an excellent case study of a county that had to be rebuilt from scratch after a major historical upheaval, which makes it particularly interesting to trace the process of state-professionalization. (Figure 2.)

Figure 2: Europe after the Congress of Vienna (1815). Inside the Austrian Empire and Hungary, Somogy is highlighted with red.⁹



2. Declining and expanding political participation in one Hungarian county's elections¹⁰

In the multilingual Kingdom of Hungary, the press literature and political debates stimulated by the Diet of 1790–1791 clearly show the dawn of a new era.¹¹ The expansion of the public sphere, the emergence of the need for political participation can be seen not only at the national level (with the appearance of parliamentary reports, the publication of diet speeches), but also

⁹ Map source: *Europe after the Congress of Vienna (1815)*, in: Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Congress-of-Vienna#/media/1/628086/214576> (accessed January 4, 2024).

¹⁰ The contemporary sources typically refer to the county elections as ‘renewals of magistrates’ or ‘reconstructions of seats’ or ‘restaurations of seats’ or ‘restoration.’

¹¹ Vaderna, G. (2019): 9–18. briefly discussed the relationship between the press and the public sphere in Western Hungary.

in the local dimension of each county. In Somogy, for example, the speeches delivered at the inauguration of the county's chief prefect were published for the first time in 1798.¹² If we take a look at the number of participants in Somogy's county elections, we can observe a spectacular increase in the period. From the beginning of the 18th century, the county listed the names of the most important persons attending its assemblies,¹³ at that time, however, this group was still a narrow elite of a few tens of people, and the number of those recorded by name only approached one hundred by the 1770s.¹⁴ Although the increase was already significant during the 18th century, this change was still largely due to the increase in the population of the county. The status of the listed (county magistrates, local landowners, representatives of the large landowners) remained the same during the period. A real caesura can be drawn after 1790, but even more so after the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. (Figure 3.)

Figure 3: The number of named participants and magistrates at the elections in Somogy, 1790–1830.¹⁵

Dates of county magistrate elections in Somogy	Named participants		Named participating magistrates		%	Chief prefects
May 4, 1790	100		30		30%	Károly Sigray
September 21, 1795	93	-7	40	+10	43%	
May 20, 1800	59	-34	30	-10	51%	
August 11, 1806	47	-12	27	-3	57%	Ferenc Széchenyi
August 8, 1808	92	+45	41	+14	45%	
August 23, 1813	156	+64	52	+11	33%	László Teleki
October 8, 1817	186	+30	62	+10	33%	(deputy chief prefect)
May 3, 1824	257	+71	84	+22	33%	József Sigray
June 30, 1828	153	-104	55	-29	36%	(deputy chief prefect
August 3, 1830*	144	-9	57	+2	40%	until 1825)

¹² Unfortunately, I have not been able to find the original work, but Tertina, M (1801): 21. reported the fact of publication.

¹³ From a source-critical point of view, it must be noted that the lists have never been exhaustive. The frequent concluding phrases of the lists (e.g. “*and numerous noblemen from the county*”) make it clear that not all participants in the meetings were recorded, but only those public personas who were considered more important and worthy of mention. (For example, the recording of jurors, vice tax collectors, war commissioners at the bottom of the county hierarchy was often omitted even in the early 19th century.) Nevertheless, the number of those mentioned by name does allow us to infer, if not exact figures, trends. The lists are helpful in capturing the perception and the changes of the elite in one county, showing who and which groups were considered part of the elite at particular moments: Degré, A. (1972): 122–133. Partially examined those who appeared at elections in multiple counties, while Polgár reflected on Degré's data from Somogy: Polgár, T. (2004): 39–43, 48.

¹⁴ Information on the participation in the 18th century elections is provided by Szijártó, I. (2006): 132.

¹⁵ Magistrate elections based on Lajos Nagy's archival aid and Tamás Polgár's data collection: HU-MNL-SVL-IV.1. b.-1/1790. máj. 4.; 719/1795; 618/1800; 1480/1806; 1248/1808; 1430/1813; 2053/1817; 879/1824; 2046/1828. In 1830 only a partial restauration took place, when local estates voted for a new first vice prefect and the chief prefect appointed a new head notary and vice notaries. HU-MNL-SVL-IV.1. b.-1605/1830.; 1606/1830. The elections between 1817 and 1824 were also reported by Degré, A. (1972): 122–132.

The restoration of 1790 reflects the figures of previous elections in the second half of the 18th century, but afterwards there was a visible decline. This trend is not difficult to associate with the intensifying domestic and foreign political situation after 1795 (French Revolutionary Wars, the growing censorship, the developing public disillusionment). Also, the change of the county's chief prefect undoubtedly contributed to the decline. Count Károly Sigray, who was rarely present in the county because of his age and declining health, resigned in the spring of 1798, getting replaced by Count Ferenc Széchenyi.¹⁶ Sigray had previously followed the patterns he inherited from the early modern estate world, and did not seek to transform the existing county-administrating structures. However, Széchenyi, who moved to Somogy at the beginning of his commission, regulated the procedure of the 'reconstruction of seats' at his very first magistrate renewal in 1800. Voting was made conditional on registration in a noble cadaster or on possession and residence in the county, and even the presentation of a certified credential was required for voting by proxy.¹⁷ The new regulations were probably deliberately designed to limit the number of people who could take part in the elections, in order to prevent any tumultuous scenes.¹⁸ Dissatisfaction with the legislation is shown by the fact that the statute was revised eight years later, some of its points "*have been contrary to the customary freedom of the nobility*".¹⁹

The low point in the political participation of county residents was clearly the 1806 restoration, where the number of names at the renewal assembly did not even reach fifty. It is particularly interesting that nearly two thirds of the participants were county magistrates, whose attendance – at least in theory – was a mandatory requirement for their re-election. The only other participants were county court judges and representatives of the large manors, who were also deeply involved in local public life. The low turnout perhaps reflects Széchenyi's high level of disapproval and unpopularity. A year later, the chief prefect came into conflict with the local landowning aristocracy,²⁰ an opposition was formed, backed by the disaffected estates.²¹ In 1808, the revival of public life is marked by the high number of participants in the county assembly, which has not been seen since 1795. In 1811, Széchenyi, presumably tired of political

¹⁶ During the Josephine period, Count Ferenc Széchenyi has already been the chief prefect of Somogy as an royal district commissioner between 1785 and 1786.

¹⁷ For the text of the 1800 renewal regulations, see Polgár, T. (2004): 49–51.

¹⁸ The events in Somogy four years earlier may also have played a role in the birth of the statute. In the run-up to the Diet of 1796, the local nobles did not elect the candidates of the absent chief prefect, Sigray. Instead they voted for the second vice prefect, László Czindery, after he made a 'rebellious' speech. Because of his action, Czindery was banned by the Viennese chancellery from appearing in Pressburg (Bratislava) before the start of the Diet, and was not even allowed to travel to the city. Csánki, D. (1914): 501–502.

¹⁹ Polgár, T. (2004): 40. extracted from HU-MNL-SVL-IV.1.b.-1-1250/1808.

²⁰ The conflict started when Széchenyi's manorial personnel fired on the serfs of Count László Schmidegg, while Baron Antal Majthényi questioned the legality of Széchenyi's land purchases. Despite being highly-regarded today as the founder of Hungarian national library and museum, Széchenyi became extremely unpopular by the end of his chief prefectship in Somogy. When he stepped down, the county appointed a committee that supposed to visit the leaving official at his residence, but only three magistrate turned up at the previously agreed time. HU-MNL-SVL-IV.1.b.-1- without registration number/1811. szept. 9.

²¹ Fraknói, V. (1902): 263–270 and HU-MNL-SVL-IV.1. b.-1-1376/1807. The dissatisfied estates mentioned grievances like the mishandling of Somogy's military rebellion in 1800, the subsequent failure to pay compensation for the victimized nobles, the corruption during the construction of the county house ('*vármegyeháza*'), the failure to follow the legal time limit for the renewal of seats, the filling of vacant positions without consultation, the harassment of office-holders, etc.

battles, finally resigned voluntarily from his office.²² Under the administration of his successor, Count László Teleki, who were only a deputy chief prefect, the renewal attendance increased spectacularly. The process coincided with the slow relaxation of censorship that began in the last years of the Napoleonic Wars.

The period between 1812 and 1825 was for a long time recorded in Hungarian historiography as a period of turmoil. The absence of a parliamentary life and the governing by decrees were serious stigmas. The appearance of the small land-owning and landless nobles at the county assemblies was also largely interpreted negatively. In 1819, the Viennese court made it compulsory to vote in person at elections by the means of a so-called votisation decree.²³ Historians have long believed that the regulation was a deliberate misunderstanding of the principle of publicity, in order to enrich the lower nobility and weaken the middle noble classes. The latter group was viewed as the bastions of the estate's politics.²⁴ István Soós was not the first to reconceptualize the decree, but following Elemér Mályusz, he again drew the attention to the fact that the measure was primarily aimed at curbing 'noisy' restaurations. With the abolition of elections by public acclamation and the introduction of individual voting, the small land-owning and landless nobility did indeed become more interested in the renewals than before. Their vote became a value, but as the elections in Somogy show, their participation was already on the increase well before 1819. New individuals and groups had already appeared by then. The number of those listed by name permanently exceeded 100, and even 200 in 1824.

The increase of participation is well illustrated by the fact that from 1813 onwards special committees, deputations had to be appointed to maintain the order of the renewals.²⁵ In 1823, the county – in line with the votisation decree – significantly expanded and revised the regulations of restaurations. The regulation-makers wrote down the possibilities of entering the noble cadastre, the exclusion of the insane, prisoners and those with criminal records, the ways for noble youths to gain the right to vote (independence from paternal authority, division of property, majority), and tried to ensure the early secrecy of the election. Only one point in the statute was vetoed by the county's governor in 1822. The old custom of prior consultation was not included in the adopted version of the new regulation.²⁶ (Figure 4.)

²² Csánki, D. (1914): 508. and Fraknói, V. (1902): 271–274.

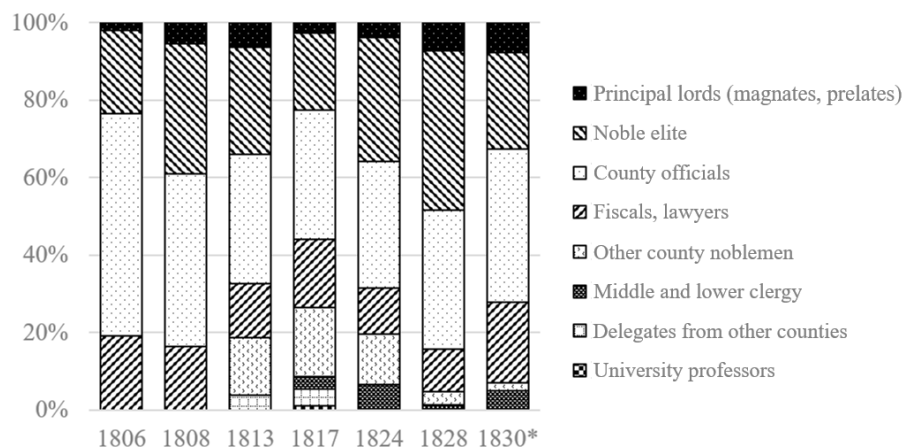
²³ In Somogy, in accordance with the decree, the first magistrate election was held in 1824. Unfortunately, unlike in other counties, the records of the assembly do not show how many people voted in the restauration (this could have been an exceptional way of finding out how many people actually attended the assembly). Although the 257 people listed by name is a far cry from the other restaurations of the period, we can certainly estimate many times that number in actual attendance. Five separate counting commissions were appointed to count the votes, and a total of 1437 names were included in the noble census dated a year later. Csánki, D. (1914): 620; HU-MNL-SVL-IV.1.b.-879/1824.

²⁴ For the historiography of the so-called votisation decree, see Soós, I. (2009): 66–73.

²⁵ HU-MNL-SVL-IV.1.b.-1430/1813.; 2053/1817.; 879/1824.

²⁶ For the regulation's text see Polgár, T. (2004): 53–61.

Figure 4: Grouping of those who attended the elections by name: Somogy, 1806–1830.²⁷



The restaurations of 1813 and 1817, under the administration of László Teleki, broke the exclusivity of the local elite, which had previously consisted of principal lords, noble elites, county officials and manorial representatives. For the first time, a large number of county nobles without any formal titles were listed. An examination of their composition reveals that their families were mainly small landowners, landless nobles who had fallen from the ranks or later rose to the top.²⁸ In 1813 there were 23 persons of this status, in 1817 and 1824 33, but after that there was a spectacular decline, in 1828 there were only 5, and finally in 1830 only 3 names among the ‘titleless’ nobles of the county.²⁹ The disappearance of this group may be paralleled with the increase in the number of the county court judges:³⁰ 74 of them appeared at the restauration in 1824, and a further 40 were appointed later.³¹ It clearly became an established practice that the presence of landlords, clergymen and delegates of other counties was honored with the title of country court judge without any actual responsibilities. In 1817, even two professors of the University of Pest – who had won nobility only a few years earlier – were given this honor.

In addition to the small landowners of the county, the middle and lower clergy also appeared as a new political-forming group. They were represented by name at the Somogy’s elections from

²⁷ A detailed breakdown of each category on the stacked column chart, from the top to the bottom: principal lords (magnates, prelates), noble elite (royal chamberlains, royal councilors, royal judges, county judges), county officials (paid county personnel, honorary and auxiliary functionaries), attorneys, lawyers (manorial representatives, the lawyers of multiple noble families), other county noblemen, middle and lower clergy (catholic seniors, parish priests, protestant preachers etc.), delegates from other counties, university professors.

²⁸ Good examples of the small landowning families mentioned here are the Báránys, the Thulmons, the Bereczks, the Némeths, the Szmodicses. HU-MNL-SVL-IV.1. b.-1430/1813.; 879/1824.

²⁹ HU-MNL-SVL-IV.1. b.-1430/1813.; 2053/1817.; 879/1824.; 2046/1828.; 1605/1830.

³⁰ County court judges (*táblabíró*) or assessors were daily-paid, per diem magistrates who served in the various courts of the county. They also played a role in interpreting and applying laws, being responsible for ensuring that legal decisions were consistent with the existing regulations of the time. Sometimes they had administrative tasks too.

³¹ For the 1824 appointments of the county court judges see HU-MNL-SVL-IV.1.b.-880/1824.

1817. However, their movement for participation was not without opposition. For example, at the aforementioned election of magistrates in 1817, Ágoston Molnár, the administrator of the parish of Kadarkút, wished to speak in order to voice his opposition to Ferenc Somogyi, the chief noble judge of Igal.³² However, his wish was denied by the nobles. His name is nevertheless on the list of those present.³³

In 1824, Somogy outright protested against the lower clergy's right to vote.³⁴ The county was briefly forced to comply with new royal orders, but the following year the matter was taken up to the Diet. Other counties also supported Somogy's position, and from 1828, the parish priests and preachers were no longer allowed to vote again. Their names were also no longer listed, but they were still allowed to attend the assembly as observers, but only a few deans and one senior were noted among those present.³⁵

The taking away of rights shows that the slow expansion of public participation maybe started in the 1810s, but the process towards the dawn of Hungarian Reform Era was not at all straightforward. The early modern estate framework remained intact, but besides the wealthy middle noble classes (the so-called *bene possessionati*), the small landowners, the landless nobles and the lower clergy also began to shape the local politics. In the following, I will examine what impact the expansion of the public sphere had on the personnel of the county officials, and whether the traditional career paths of the earlier period were transformed.

3. Research background for the study of career paths, local and temporal specificities

In a 2010 study, István Szijártó laid down a new direction for the research of Hungarian county officials.³⁶ He examined Somogy's seat restorations from 1715 to 1800, and compiled a database of the elected magistrates, candidates and others who appeared in these elections.³⁷ In his research, Szijártó focused on the interconnections between national and local elites, so his

³² Chief noble judges (*'főszolgabíró'*, *'ordinarius [sometimes 'supremus'] iudlium'* or *'ordinarius iudex nobilium'*) served as the chief magistrates in subcounties, presiding over local courts, overseeing law enforcement. Molnár, who claimed he had the right to speak at the assembly, resented that Somogyi had allegedly beaten and iron-chained a nobleman, committing a violation of the law. According to the parish priest, the situation was aggravated by the fact that the nobility of Somogyi also was in question and he should not have held office at the first place (the official's brother, György Somogyi, was forced to prove his nobility in 1808, and despite his success, the younger brother's lineage was again called into question a decade later). The noblemen of the county clearly did not share Molnár's position, and at the elections they 'restored' Somogyi in his seat. Eventually, the parish priest got expelled for his vehement behavior not only from the assembly, but from his post in Kadarkút too. To see the story with more details: Kovács, D. L. (2022): 71–84.

³³ HU-MNL-SVL-IV.1.b.-879/1824.

³⁴ Apart from the prelates, only the parish priests and preachers who had acquired nobility „in their own right” were recognized the right to vote. „[...] since this question belongs directly to the Diet, therefore, without going into any explanations of the law in relation to the centuries of the past, [...] the parish priests have never been given a vote [...]” Polgár 2004, 55, 59.

³⁵ Degré thought that Somogy's position on the exclusion of the lower clergy was based on the Protestants' fear of Catholic pressure. However, I would not interpret the event as a confessional conflict given the proportional representation of the Catholic and Protestant churchmen at the 1824 restoration (besides 10 parish priests, there was 1 senior and 6 preachers). Degré, A. (1972): 131.

³⁶ Szijártó, I. (2010): 445–466.

³⁷ These data were published as part of a large database compiled by Szijártó's *Diaeta* working group: <http://szijarto.web.elte.hu/diaeta-index.html>

published results only covered the central county officials (vice prefects, notaries, chief tax collectors, attorneys, noble judges). The smaller subcounty offices were excluded from the study (vice tax collectors, jurors, war commissioners), noticeably distorting the drawn conclusions. The omission of the lowest level of the hierarchy ‘misrepresented’ career paths, e.g., the vice noble judges appears to be a typical first office, if one ignores the fact that many of them were promoted from lower subcounty positions. The under-representation of small land-owning and landless nobles who occupied the majority of subcounty offices may also be wrongly suggested by the omission.

The first control study of Szi­jártó’s work was published in 2012 by Richárd Sebők,³⁸ who used Julianna Erika Héjja’s magistrate list³⁹ from Békés county to extend the scope of the data collection and also included previously left-out offices (jurors, war commissioners and paid Country Court judges). In his conclusion, Sebők pointed out not only the differences between Somogy and Békés, but also that the inclusion of ‘small offices’ shows differences compared to Szi­jártó’s basic survey. The chief and vice noble judges tended to start their careers as jurors or commissioners, while for members of the central apparatus (vice prefects, chief tax collectors, chief notaries, etc.) the results were not materially changed by the extension. Those who reached the top of the hierarchy normally did not start their careers from the lowest subcounty office level, but from the more prestigious seats of vice notaries or deputy attorneys.

Szi­jártó himself put his observations on Somogy under scrutiny in later works.⁴⁰ In his comparative analysis of the available archontologies of Zala, Heves, Ung, Békés, Csanád and Baranya, he compared the (sometimes fragmentary) records of the offices of the different counties, acknowledging that although the different counties covered a wide range in terms of space and degree of professionalization (i.e. size and structure of the official corps), it is not possible to draw national generalizations with complete certainty (e.g. due to the lack of examined counties from Upper Hungary). Based on the verification of his earlier research and his correction by the inclusion of jurors and war commissioners (but only as previous career histories), he divided the offices of the 1700s into three groups: 1. the typical entry-level offices, held first in the hierarchy (in addition to the two subcounty offices mentioned above, these included vice noble judges, vice notaries, deputy and ordinary attorneys), 2. the transitional positions, where the ratio of newcomers to those with previous experience was broadly similar (chief noble judges, chief tax collectors, chief notaries), and 3. the top of the hierarchy where previous office-holding experience was almost mandatory (vice prefects). Szi­jártó specifically emphasized the role of chief noble judges, which for certain high-prestige families were typical entry offices, unlike the general average. For small landowners, landless families this level also have been an unscalable ‘ceiling’ (at least without outstanding talent, expertise or network of contacts). Although he was unable to prove it at the national level, in Somogy, for certain noble ‘dynasties’ even running for the chief noble judge’s office was considered to be beneath their prestige. Their members were only candidates for vice prefects. Overall, Szi­jártó created a very structured picture of the Somogy’s officer corps, where professionalization and conscious

³⁸ Sebők, R. (2012): 312–320.

³⁹ To see the archontological and prosopographical data from Békés: Héjja, J. E. (2009b): 101–521.

⁴⁰ Szi­jártó, I. (2014): 1273–1296; Szi­jártó, I. (2021): 57–105.

career paths are by far the highest among the counties he studied. In the present work, I intend to reflect on these claims as a continuation of the research after 1800, covering the first three decades of the 19th century.

While my study's temporal scope may appear notably limited in comparison to Szijártó and Sebők, who both documented complete historical periods, my choice of the 1806 restoration as a starting point was influenced by Szijártó's research end date (1800). The seven elections of magistrates that I am working on could be considered as a generation's lifetime. The relevance and effectiveness of the county research covering only a few decades is supported by the work of other authors with a similar focus.⁴¹

Another argument in favor of the short duration of my study is the spectacular difference between the restorations of 1806 in Somogy and those of 1824 and 1828. Not only the number of participants increased with the widening of political publicity, but also the number of offices held. Although the number of officials on permanent salaries remained constant throughout, the situation was different for those appointed by the chief magistrate on an honorary basis. They were usually paid a daily wage for their work. A striking example is the comparison of the number of officials listed by name from 1806 to 1824.⁴² (Figure 5.)

Figure 5: Those who held office at the renewals by name, their grouping and their proportion in relation to the total number, with those serving in honor highlighted in bold: Somogy, 1806–1830.

	1806		1808		1813		1817		1824		1828		1830*	
County officials	27	1,00	41	1,00	52	1,00	62	1,00	84	1,00	55	1,00	57	1,00
Central magistrates ⁴³	20	0,74	25	0,61	22	0,42	24	0,39	25	0,30	26	0,47	26	0,46
Subcounty magistrates ⁴⁴	7	0,26	15	0,37	15	0,29	17	0,27	21	0,25	15	0,27	14	0,25
Honorary functionaries	0	0,00	1	0,02	11	0,21	17	0,27	31	0,37	10	0,18	13	0,23

⁴¹ See in Pest Dombóvári, Á. (2011): 169–204; in Győr Dominkovits, P. (2000): 63–72; in Zala Molnár, A. (1989): 18–30; in Vas Tilcsik, Gy. (2000): 19–38; in Csongrád Sáfrány, T. (2022): 531–562; and in Baranya Pintér, T. (2024/a); Pintér, T. (2024/b). On the general methodology of research and digital datamining see Pintér, T. – Kovács, D. L. (2023): 144–166.

⁴² The distinction between paid and per diem officials is significantly overshadowed by the fact that the official's salary alone could hardly ensure the maintenance of the standard of the office. As Károly Sigray, chief prefect of the county, put it in 1791: „*the members of the Magistrate of the County do not so much strive for little wages as for good behaviour.*” HU-MNL-SVL-IV.1. b.-11/1791-márc-21. Earlier examples of honorary office-holdings can be found in Somogy, but in these cases there were only 1-2 officials at a time, and there is no evidence of permanent positions.

⁴³ In addition to the main offices of the county (first, second vice prefects, chief notary), I have included other offices of the central apparatus (chief tax collector, ordinary and deputy attorney, vice notary, archivist) in this category, as well as the chief and vice noble judges, who were much more prestigious than any other subcounty magistrates.

⁴⁴ Subcounty jurors, vice tax collectors and war commissioners, whose appearance at the renewal of the election only became a regular practice in the examined period.

Physicians and surgeons	0	0,00	0	0,00	1	0,02	1	0,02	4	0,05	1	0,02	1	0,02
Geometers	0	0,00	0	0,00	1	0,02	1	0,02	1	0,01	1	0,02	1	0,02
Castellans and lieutenants	0	0,00	0	0,00	2	0,04	2	0,03	2	0,02	2	0,04	2	0,04

It seems that Somogy's officer corps 'overloaded' with competent magistrates at the beginning of the 19th century, which coincides with the rise of political participation at the same period. The two phenomena must be related. From then on, besides the paid officials, we also find permanently some honorary officials (mainly honorary deputy attorneys, vice notaries, jurors, in some rare cases vice noble judges too). It is interesting that these permanent appointments did not become 'real', paid offices over time, e.g. third jurors per subcounties were elected only from the 1840s, until then the chief magistrate appointed additional honorary jurors in each subcounties. It can be assumed that there was an internal demand for the expansion of the officer corps, but this was probably not done for financial reasons (the salary of a per diem was clearly lower than that of a 'permanent' official). Moreover, the issue was ultimately decided not by the county, but by the Council of Viceroy ('*Helytartótanács*'), which 'guarded' the tax forints. The stingy attitude of the central administration is illustrated by the fact that when Somogy decided to create a new subcounty (Babócsa) in 1790, the government was reluctant to remunerate the new offices for months.⁴⁵

It can be concluded that a significant number of honorary officials were active in Somogy at the time of my study, so their complete omission – contrary to the methodological approach of Szijártó, Sebők and Sáfrány – would not be appropriate in my opinion. Consequently, if an official held an honorary position beforehand, I have also recorded it together with the salaried posts. Similarly, I extended the scope of the collection to include manorial representatives involved in restaurations, since preliminary research had already shown personal connections (e.g. in the case of the Kacs Kovics and Siklósy families, which had established their rise in the service of larger landlords). I also tried to extend my field of vision beyond the county boundaries. Of the neighbouring counties, Fejér and Zala have a completed archontology, and Baranya has an archontology in preparation. Somogy's assembly records also indicated the possibility of office-holding elsewhere.

Methodology, general findings on the magistrates of Somogy

In the following chapters I will reconstruct the career paths of county officials in Somogy. The analysis focuses on the number of offices held. In my data collection covering the elections

⁴⁵ HU-MNL-SVL-IV.1. b.- 14/1791. 01. 10.; 12/1791. 03. 21.

between 1806 and 1830,⁴⁶ I have recorded a total of 292 office obtainments with 277 previous career histories. Since my main focus was on changes that took place during the restaurations, I only included personnel changes between elections if I came across sources or publications that referred to them.⁴⁷

I think it is important to note that I'm technically not working with persons, but with the holdings of particular offices. It is clear that a person usually holds several offices. To give just one example, Antal Igmándy is listed three times in my database: once as a vice noble judge in Szigetvár, once as a chief noble judge in Szigetvár and once as a chief notary of the county. Of course, we are talking about the same man, but I am examining him in the context of different positions at different stages of his career. While as a vice noble judge he appeared as a newcomer to the officer corps, as a chief notary he was an experienced senior official with two previous terms of office.

In the period under study, a large number of office types existed in Somogy, even if we ignore the so-called 'auxiliary' posts (geometers, physicians, surgeons, dungeon keepers, lieutenants, etc.), who were significantly different in prestige and function from the rest of the hierarchy. For the sake of clarity (and ease of representation), I decided to divide the offices into seven groups. I will analyze the generalities for the whole officer corps through these categories. The groups are: 1. vice prefects (first and second vice prefects), 2. notaries (chief and vice notaries, archivists), 3. tax collectors (tax collectors, accountants), 4. attorneys (ordinary and deputy attorneys), 5. subcounty noble judges (chief and vice noble judges), 6. subcounty 'small offices' (subcounty vice tax collectors, jurors, commissioners), and 7. honorary functionaries (honorary vice noble judges, vice notaries, vice attorneys, jurors). (Figure 6.)

Figure 6: Wages of county officials included in the study from 1790 and 1848.⁴⁸

County magistrates	Payment	
	1790	1848
first vice prefect	1 000 Ft	700 Ft
second vice prefect	500 Ft	350 Ft
head notary	600 Ft	500 Ft
first vice notary	300 Ft	250 Ft
second vice notary	250 Ft	150 Ft
head tax collector	600 Ft	500 Ft
(subcounty) vice tax collector	250 Ft	150 Ft
accountant	250 Ft	200 Ft

⁴⁶ Of course, I also tried to cover the pre-1806 careers of the people who held office between 1806 and 1830, using the records of the elections of 1785, 1790, 1795 and 1800, as well as István Szijártó's Diaeta workgroup's database.

⁴⁷ The works and archival aids of Lajos Nagy, István Szijártó and Tamás Polgár were great help in reconstructing career paths in Somogy.

⁴⁸ Payment records based on: HU-MNL-SVL-IV.1. b.-3/1790. máj. 19. and Palugyay, I. (1848): 182.

chief noble judge	400 Ft	300 Ft
vice noble judge	250 Ft	150 Ft
(subcounty) juror	100 Ft	
(subcounty) commissioner	150 Ft	
ordinary attorney	400 Ft	300 Ft
deputy attorney	250 Ft	150 Ft
archivist	300 Ft	300 Ft
County court judges, honorary and surrogated functionaries	daily-paid per diem	

I will examine the history of these positions in the following, but it should be noted that I have not only focused on these positions in the data processing, but also paid attention to other career stages. For example, if a person rose to a county post as a county court judge, I recorded this post in the same way as for other county posts.⁴⁹

Following Szi­jártó’s lead, I first wanted to know what proportion of the entire officer corps had at least one previous office, how many were new entrants at each level, and what changes could be observed compared to the 1700s. For this purpose, I felt it necessary to compare not only the author’s results for Somogy but also for the 18th century in general with my own findings. (Unfortunately, the comparison was somewhat complicated by the fact that, compared to Szi­jártó’s data, I extended my own sample to include the small subcounty offices, honorary officials.) I also looked at Tímea Sáfrány’s Csongrád research as a control, keeping in mind the minimal overlap in time between the two studies and the significantly different structures of the counties processed.⁵⁰ (Figure 7 and 8.)

Figure 7. Entries into the county offices examined by István Szi­jártó: Somogy, 1715–1800.⁵¹

	All of the offices		Vice prefects		Notaries		Tax collectors		Attorneys		Subcounty noble judges		Subcounty ‘small offices’	Honorary offices
Promotion from other post	62	34%	10	59%	13	43%	6	50%	8	35%	25	26%		
No previous office record	118	66%	7	41%	17	57%	6	50%	15	65%	73	74%		
All	180		17		30		12		23		98		–	–

⁴⁹ Unfortunately, I have not been able to fully process the appointments of the county court judges. Chief prefects usually appointed a large number of county court judges during the renewals, however, the appointments were not limited to restorations.

⁵⁰ Sáfrány started his investigation in 1825, I finish mine in 1830. Unfortunately, I was unable to include other control counties due to the lack of similar methodological approaches.

⁵¹ Szi­jártó, I. (2010): 447; Szi­jártó, I. (2014): 1290; Szi­jártó, I. (2021): 650.

Figure 8: Entries to the county offices examined by István Szijártó: Zala, Heves and Outer-Szolnok, Békés, Ung, Baranya and Csanád, 18th century.⁵²

	All of the offices		Vice prefects		Notaries		Tax collectors		Attorneys		Subcounty noble judges		Subcounty 'small offices'		Honorary offices	
Promotion from other post	359	42%	79	68%	47	33%	38	50%	17	20%	178	41%				
No previous office record	499	58%	37	32%	94	67%	38	50%	69	80%	261	59%				
All	858		116		141		76		86		439		–		–	

Both the investigations of Somogy, which ignored 'small offices', and the investigations of other counties, which included them, show that more than half of the appointments to offices were made without any career history during the 18th century. The exception is the vice prefects, where the majority were 'tried and tested' officers. In the case of the chief tax collectors, both records show an equality between new and old members of the officer corps. It is interesting to note that in Somogy, despite the fact that Szijártó did not examine other 'small offices', the proportion of people with previous experience is higher among notaries and attorneys than in other counties. This also shows that the first signs of professionalization, which are less noticeable elsewhere. Some of the main offices were started to get systematically filled by their 'lower' counterparts (e.g. the ordinary attorneys were selected from among the deputy attorneys). The omission of jurors and commissioners is only spectacular in the case of the subcounty noble judges, where there are certainly far fewer completely new entrants than the published Somogy data suggest. (Figure 9.)

Figure 9: Entries in the county offices I examined: Somogy, 1806–1830.

	All of the offices		Vice prefects		Notaries		Tax collectors		Attorneys		Subcounty noble judges		Subcounty 'small offices'		Honorary offices	
Promotion from other post	169	58%	11	100%	22	76%	8	89%	10	77%	50	81%	41	54%	27	30%
No previous office record	122	42%	0	0%	7	24%	1	11%	3	23%	12	19%	35	46%	64	70%
All	292		12		29		9		13		62		76		91	

⁵² Szijártó, I. (2014): 1292; Szijártó, (2021): 659.

Moving on to my own results from the early 19th century, there are clear changes from the earlier period. The officer corps as a whole became dominated by those who have previous career experience, the path to gain the office of prefect was completely closed from outside the hierarchy. Experience was also strongly valued among the notaries, chief tax collectors, attorneys and subcounty noble judges, only one in five rose to these posts without past office record. It is clear that the only entry levels for the county officer corps were the subcounty 'small offices' or honorary posts. By the early 1800s, Somogy's official elite clearly got overfilled with competent human resource.

Sáfrány's results in Csongrád are in some respects consistent with, but in others radically different from, what I have found in Somogy. It's clear that Csongrád's officer corps still shows the general conditions of the 18th century. It can be concluded that we see a slight majority of those without official experience, although a key factor in this is that Sáfrány did not consider commissioners, 'auxiliary' officers, unpaid county court judges and manorial representatives as previous career histories, as I did in my own approach.⁵³

Summary

The beginning of the 19th century shows clear changes in Somogy compared to the previous period. The expansion of the political public sphere can be perfectly traced in the attendance of the elective assemblies. From the 1810s, in addition to the small land-owning and landless nobility, the lower clergy also began to participate in public life, although their movement faced serious resistance from the estates. The effect of structural change can also be seen in the county magistrates. The shortage of officials at the turn of the century was replaced by an over-application. The per diem honorary offices became permanent auxiliary posts, creating a new entry level of administration.

Of course, the data aggregated as groups of offices somewhat obscures the true picture. For example, a chief notary and vice notary represent completely different stages in the career paths, yet here they are grouped under one heading. In my following publications, I consider it an important task to analyze each of the offices that make up the groups outlined above.

Sourcebooks

HU-MNL-SVL-IV.1.b, Somogy Vármegye Nemesi Közgyűlése és Albizottsága iratai, b. Köz- és kisgyűlési jegyzőkönyvek (Protocollum generalium et particularium congregationum).

⁵³ Sáfrány, T. (2022): 531–562.

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