

Az udvar vonzásában – A magyar főnemesség bécsi integrációjának színterei (1711–1765) [In The Pull of the Court: The Scenes of the Viennese Integration of the Hungarian Aristocracy]. By Zsolt Kökényesi.

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The heyday of the Hungarian nobility's integration into the Viennese Imperial Court of the Habsburgs is inspected from a novel perspective by Zsolt Kökényesi, a research fellow at the Department of Early Modern History at the Eötvös Loránd University. Having been doing archival studies for over a decade, he started his archival research in the field of the present monograph in his doctoral dissertation, which he defended in 2016. His recent book analyses the actors and scenes of integration under Charles VI and during the first half of Maria Theresa's reign, specifically between 1711 and 1765, two fundamental landmarks in Habsburg–Hungarian relations: 1711 marked the end of the Rákóczi War of Independence (the Hungarian estates' last revolutionary war against the dynasty) and the beginning of the close co-operation between the Court and the Hungarian political elite, whereas 1765 brought a disruption in their relations. After the bitter experiences of the 1764–1765 Diet, the Hungarian estates were not convened for a quarter-century.

Filling an important research gap in Hungarian court studies, Kökényesi gives a comprehensive analysis of this half-century of co-operation characterised by a growing presence of the Hungarian nobility (more precisely the members of the *natio Hungarica*) in the Court while strengthening their position in the government. From the beginnings of court studies in Hungary in the 1980s, either the princely court in Transylvania or the households of the Hungarian upper nobility stood in the focus of historical research. More recently, mainly Géza Pálffy's research has started to turn historians' attention towards the challenges of the Viennese court integration, although Pálffy's analysis is confined to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Aiming to encourage future investigations of the topic, the appendix gives a summary of Kökényesi's database.

Kökényesi offers a new perspective on eighteenth-century Habsburg–Hungarian relations, as the process and the significance of the Hungarian nobility's court integration is re-interpreted and freed from the negative value judgements of contemporaries and several nineteenth and twentieth century historians. The topic of representation is only briefly touched upon, as the author plans to dedicate a second volume to the symbolic aspects of the aristocrats' court presence.

In the first section of the book, Kökényesi gives an overview of Hungarian students at Viennese educational institutions. These early contacts to the imperial city are proven to be of great significance, as based on archival material, it is found that prior to their appointment almost all chief officeholders in the period had some relations (often regarding their education) to Vienna. Whereas the presence of nobles from Western and Lower Hungary was most prevalent in Vienna, the Hungarian Noble Guard and the *Theresianum* played an important role in strengthening the Transylvanian nobility's ties to the imperial residence as well.

The next section identifies the government institutions of outstanding importance for the Hungarian nobility's court integration, namely the Hungarian and Transylvanian Court Chancellery, the Hungarian Court Chamber, and even the Aulic War Council, and the Lower Austrian Government. The author does not follow an institutionalist approach, instead his focus is on the nobles themselves who held court or government offices, acting as the agents of integration. We learn about their family backgrounds, kinship ties, their marriage contacts, as well as their career trajectories and personal networks. Based on this prosopographical study, typical family strategies, places of origin and career prospects characterising this rather heterogenous group are revealed.

Kökényesi provides evidence to show that only aristocrats from families with prominent court positions and excellent contacts to the Viennese court society were appointed as chief officeholders. Members of such aristocratic families as the Esterházy, the Pálffy, the Batthyány, the Nádasdy, or the Erdódy managed to influence governance matters of the Habsburg Monarchy. Although these families continued to be predominant throughout the entire era, under Maria Theresa the Viennese presence of nobles from Eastern Hungary and Transylvania was strengthened. We also get a glimpse of the career prospects and strategies of lesser noblemen who appeared on lower levels of government offices as councillors or secretaries. Kökényesi convincingly shows that while family networks and patron-client relationships often played a decisive role in the nobles' successful application to government offices, they did not necessarily guarantee the success of their ambitions. He also emphasises that serving in Viennese government bodies did not always mean the height of a person's career. After serving for a few years, numerous Hungarian

councillors moved to the institutional systems of the Kingdom of Hungary or the Principality of Transylvania.

The third (and last) section underlines the importance of examining this integration process not only in the Monarchy's institutional system but also in the physical space of the city of Vienna. Court integration required the presence (for periodic visits or for permanent residence) of Hungarian nobles in the imperial city. Kökényesi thus gives a detailed portrayal of the different types of accommodation opportunities available for the nobles, as well as of the difficulties they encountered due to the shortage of housing and high property prices. The dynamic of the integration process appearing in the urban space and the urban space affecting this process is introduced.

As Kökényesi delineates the scenes of court integration, ranging from various educational institutions, through the Habsburg Court, and the central government bodies to urban dwellings, we see the very same areas on which the so-called 'absolutist compromise' was based.¹ According to Dewald, although the estates had lost their earlier political significance in the era of Absolutism, the nobility still benefited from serving the monarch at the royal court, in central bureaucracy or as high-ranking military officers. Depicting a detailed picture of the platforms and agents of the Viennese integration, Kökényesi's book gives the first comprehensive insight into this Europe-wide development from the perspective of the *natio Hungarica*.

Literature

Dewald, Jonathan. *The European Nobility, 1400–1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

1 A model proposed by Jonathan Dewald: Dewald, *The European Nobility*.

