

# WHO OWNS THE LAND, OWNS THE COUNTRY? LAND TENURE AND GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF THE ARISTOCRATIC LORD-LIEUTENANTS' IN DUALIST- ERA HUNGARY

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The study examines the evolution of the proportions of the aristocrats in a well-defined group within the political elite in Dualist-era Hungary, the lord-lieutenant corps, and the reasons behind it. It explores the territorial distribution of aristocratic lord-lieutenants and the role of land ownership in this context. This involves investigating the extent to which the land structure correlated with the proportion of aristocratic lord-lieutenants. It also analyzes the extent of land ownership among these lord-lieutenants, the size and temporal changes of estates and how their land holdings correlated with the counties they were appointed to lead.

The proportion of nobility in the lord-lieutenants' ranks during the Dual Monarchy era, although showing some fluctuations, significantly decreased. Not only did their distribution differ over time, but there were also significant regional variations. The proportion of aristocrats did not show any significant correlation with the land structure (in terms of overall large estates, aristocratic large estates, or estates over 100 acres), the proportion of different ethnicities, or the spatial distribution of the titled persons. The aristocratic lord-lieutenants' landholdings underwent however significant changes during the dualist period. While at the beginning of the era, one-third of them had landholdings over 10,000 acres, by the turn of the century, only a few of them retained such extensive estates, and increased the number of smaller landowners. The lord-lieutenants still formed the most conservative group within the political-administrative elite, and they largely preserved their homogeneity.

Key words: Lord-lieutenants. Aristocrats. Landholding. Estates. Local ties. Dualist-era. Hungary. Geographic distribution. Hereditary lord-lieutenants.

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## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

In the last decade of the 19th century, a German-language newspaper in Braşov (Brassó/Kronstadt) depicted the ideal image of the lord-lieutenants (*főispáns*) as follows: “*Preferably, they should be counts or barons, but in any case, unconditional supporters and instruments of the respective government (...).*”<sup>2</sup> The large number of aristocrats among the lord-lieutenants was already recognized by contemporaries and treated as evident in historical writings.<sup>3</sup> However, until now, no comprehensive study has been undertaken on this matter.

In my study, I examine a well-defined group within the political elite, known as the lord-lieutenant corps, between the spring of 1867 and October 1918. This period spans from the Austrian-Hungarian Compromise (*Ausgleich*) to the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.<sup>4</sup> Within the Lord-Lieutenant Corps, I examine the evolution of the proportions of the titled persons and the reasons behind it. Additionally, I explore the territorial distribution of aristocratic lord-lieutenants and the role of land ownership in this context. This involves investigating the extent to which the land structure correlated with the proportion of aristocratic lord-lieutenants. Conversely, I also analyze the question from another perspective: I assess the extent of land ownership among these lord-lieutenants and whether they were linked to the respective counties to which they were appointed by virtue of their estates.

Regarding the political weight and role of the aristocracy during the Dualist era, both contemporaries and historians had differing views, although there was a consensus that their role was significant.<sup>5</sup> In his dissertation, Ernő Lakatos argued that the Hungarian political elite, particularly the nobility, wielded tremendous

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- 1 This study was supported by a project of the Czech Science Foundation, no. 20-19463X, *Social mobility of elites in the Central European regions (1861–1926) and transition of imperial experience and structures in nation-states*.
  - 2 FILTSCH. Verwaltungszustände im Großkokler und Bistritz-Naszoder Komitat (I.). In *Kronstädter Zeitung*, 19. Nov. 1889, Vol. 53, no. 270.
  - 3 During the Dualist era, the aristocrats comprised about one-third of the lord-lieutenant corps. BALÁZS. A középszintű közigazgatási apparátus személyi állományának vizsgálata a dualizmus időszakában. In *Történelmi Szemle*, 1986, Vol. 29, no. 1, p. 124.
  - 4 I omitted the urban lord-lieutenants from the examination; initially, they were separate from the county lord-lieutenants. However, later on – with a few exceptions – it became a common practice to appoint the county lord-lieutenant also to the leadership of cities with municipal rights located within the territory of the county.
  - 5 A brief historiographical overview of research on the aristocracy: BALLABÁS. A magyar főnemesség társadalomtörténete a dualizmus korában. Szakirodalmi előzmények és az elmúlt évek új kutatási eredményei. In BALLABÁS and PAP, ed. *Képviselek és főrendek a dualizmus kori Magyarországon. Vol. 1. Parlamentarizmustörténeti tanulmányok*. Eger 2020, p. 147-157.

power due to their substantial financial influence. The Upper House ensured “*the rights of the old estate in governing the state*”, but even apart from this, “*they had almost exclusive influence on legislation, and even on the application of laws*”.<sup>6</sup> Sociologist Ferenc Erdei, who wrote his influential study around the same time as Lakatos but which was published much later, also believed that the influence and prestige of the nobility persisted into the 20th century. He argued that their impact “*nearly continuously prevailed in societal leadership and political life*”. Moreover, in Hungary, the aristocracy “*remained the possessor of a continuous political leadership role*”.<sup>7</sup> In recent decades, however, despite acknowledging the weight of the aristocracy, the prevailing opinion is that the emancipation of the county landowning gentry from the dominance of the large-scale landed aristocracy began as early as the 18th century.<sup>8</sup> As a result, the landed gentry gradually assumed power first within the counties and later at the national level during the 19th century. The question has been extensively analyzed by László Péter, whose conclusions differ from Lakatos’s perspective. László Péter concluded that in the 19th century, the gentry possessed greater political influence, although the aristocracy remained an independent social force.<sup>9</sup>

In my investigation, I included every aristocratic lord-lieutenant appointed by the monarch (151 individuals).<sup>10</sup> I treated separately those who received their noble rank during their tenure as lord-lieutenant (but might have been listed as aristocrats in the case of subsequent appointments). As for those who received a promotion afterward (10 individuals), I mentioned them but did not include them in the calculations.

Hereditary aristocratic titles became widespread in Hungary from the 16th century onward, following the example of the Holy Roman Empire, as Hungary was part of the Habsburg Monarchy. The rulers granted hereditary baronial and

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6 LAKATOS. *A magyar politikai vezetőréteg 1848–1918. Társadalomtörténeti tanulmány.* Budapest 1942, p. 28.

7 ERDEI. A magyar társadalom a két világháború között (I). In *Valóság*, 1976, Vol. 19, no. 4, p. 44.

8 See SZIJÁRTÓ. A vármegye és a jómódú birtokos köznemesség. In IDEM. *Nemesi társadalom és politika. Tanulmányok a 18. századi magyar rendiségről.* Budapest 2006, p. 138.

9 PÉTER. Az arisztokrácia, a dzsentri és a parlamentáris tradíció a XIX. századi Magyarországon. In KONTLER, ed. *Túlélők. Elitek és társadalmi változás az újkori Európában.* Budapest 1993, p. 191-241.

10 The investigation is based on my own data collection. Regarding promotions to noble ranks and family connections: KEMPELEN. *Magyar főrangú családok.* Budapest 1931; GUDENUS. *A magyarországi főnemesség XX. századi genealógiája.* Vol. I-V. Budapest 1990. Additionally, I used archival sources from the Hungarian National Archives (Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár, Országos Levéltár, hereafter referred to as MNL OL) K 148 Ministry of the Interior, Presidential Documents. As for landownership, I list my sources in the respective subsection.

count titles – later, very rarely, ducal titles – for various merits and to gain the support of influential families.<sup>11</sup>

I consider aristocrats to be individuals who themselves or whose ancestors received a promotion and held the title of baron, count, or duke, whether it pertains to Hungarian, Austrian, or Holy Roman Empire ranks. Many draw a clear distinction between the old nobility and the “new nobility”, especially among those derogatorily referred to as “industrial barons” – although none of the latter group were appointed to the lord-lieutenant corps. Undoubtedly, there are differences between these groups, but neither of them was entirely homogeneous. Moreover, I believe that the investigation should also encompass those whose fathers or the individuals themselves received a promotion after the subject’s birth, as we are dealing with a living system. Hungary was a monarchy, and in the 19th century, rulers continued to bestow titles, just as they did in previous centuries. Several individuals within the examined group received their promotion due to their merits in public administration.

The dynamics of the process are well demonstrated by the numbers: between 1849 and 1867, 52 individuals received baronial or comital titles from the lands of the Hungarian Crown. From the Compromise (1867) until the reform of the House of Magnates in 1885, 33 individuals received such titles, but only 10 of them were newly granted noble ranks. However, following this period until the disintegration of the Monarchy, there were 274 additional promotions.<sup>12</sup> Among the latter group, we find several lord-lieutenants as well. The overwhelming majority of the 151 individuals examined came from the historical aristocracy, with nearly half of their families receiving titles before the 18th century, and four-fifths (81.3%) obtaining their first promotion before 1800.<sup>13</sup> In smaller numbers, members of families who received promotions during the first half of the 19th century and the period between 1849 and 1867 are also present. During the Dualist era, a total of 23 lord-lieutenants can be found, who either received their titles (mostly baronial) during their tenure in office (7) or after it. Among the 78 aristocratic families, there are 9 “*indigena*” families, which means they had foreign origins but were naturalized in Hungary, with 11 members, and there

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11 PÁLFFY. Utak az arisztokráciába – bárói címszerzők a XVI. századi Magyar Királyságban. In PAPP and PÜSKI, ed. *Arisztokrata életpályák és életviszonyok*. Debrecen 2009, p. 9-23.

12 BALLABÁS. Főnemesi rangemelések Magyarországon a dualizmus korában. In *Századok*, 2011, Vol. 145, no. 5, 1215-1244; HALMOS. Rangemelések a Habsburg Monarchiában (A rendi kontinuitás statisztikai elemzési lehetőségei az újnemesek és a gazdasági elit példáján). In Á. VARGA, ed. *Vera (nem csak) a városban. Tanulmányok a 65 éves Bácskai Vera tiszteletére*. Debrecen 1995, p. 447-448.

13 For *indigena* families, I considered the date of obtaining the aristocratic title abroad as the starting point.

are two “mixed” families, the Pálffy-Daun and the Zichy-Ferraris.<sup>14</sup> I did not include the Haller family, who were originally Nuremberg patricians and became established in Hungary as early as the 16th century, nor the noble families with Croatian roots (such as the Keglevich and the Petrichevich-Horváth). As for the distribution of titles: besides the sole prince (*herceg, Fürst*) and one marquess (*örgróf, Markgraf*), nearly two-thirds (63.5%) of the lord-lieutenants held count (*gróf, Graf*) titles, and more than a third (35.7%) held baronial (*báró, Baron* or *Freiherr*) titles.

My initial hypothesis is that the proportion of noble lord-lieutenants was higher in counties where 1) the institution of hereditary lord-lieutenancy persisted until the mid-19th century; 2) there was a higher percentage of large estates; 3) the “population density” of aristocrats was higher. I have only partially examined the latter aspect, and it is difficult to quantify how family and regional traditions, which played significant roles, influenced the matter. Additionally, I am analyzing the size and temporal changes of aristocratic lord-lieutenants’ estates and how their land holdings correlated with the counties they were appointed to lead. My hypothesis regarding this is that, due to changes in the role of the lord-lieutenant, the proportion of larger landowners, primarily those holding over 10,000 acres of land, diminishes. To assess local ties, I will compare my findings with Magdolna Balázs’s sampling to verify how applicable her conclusions are to aristocratic lord-lieutenants.<sup>15</sup>

### **The hereditary lord-lieutenants**

The origin of the lord-lieutenant office dates back to the Middle Ages, and at the beginning of the examined period, we still encounter a peculiar relic, the hereditary lord-lieutenant title (*supremus et perpetuus comes*). This title was associated with an ecclesiastical or secular dignity or passed down within a family. Its first mention dates back to the 13th century when the Archbishop of Esztergom referred to himself as the hereditary lord-lieutenant of Esztergom County. During the 17th and 18th centuries, the granting of the lord-lieutenant title continued in Hungary, and the practice became widespread (though not in Transylvania). Moreover, even in counties governed by non-hereditary lord-

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14 This percentage is much lower than that of *indigena* families. According to calculations made by Veronika Tóth-Barbalics based on eligibility for membership in the House of Magnates, during the time of the House of Magnates reform, 28% of noble families were naturalized citizens. TÓTH-BARBALICS. *Indigenák a főrendiházban a dualizmus időszakában*. In SZIJÁRTÓ, ed. *Az indigenák*. Budapest 2017, p. 189-213.

15 BALÁZS. *A középszintű közigazgatási apparátus, 116-124*. In the study, the local connections of the lord-lieutenants, deputy lord-lieutenants, and mayors during the Dual Monarchy period were analyzed based on five sample years.

lieutenants, it was common for the monarch to appoint members of the same family as lord-lieutenants in a significant part of the counties.<sup>16</sup> From the mid-18th century, administrators were appointed to lead the county if there was no suitable male member of the hereditary lord-lieutenant's family who could be appointed as the actual lord-lieutenant (e.g., due to minority).<sup>17</sup>

In the 18th century, there were nine ecclesiastical and one secular dignitary (palatine), as well as 14 families holding such titles. By the mid-19th century, the title remained with the Archbishop of Esztergom and Eger, the Palatine, and seven families. Before the revolution of 1848, the following counties were led by hereditary lord-lieutenants (with the respective dignitary or family holding the title): Bereg (Count Schönborn), Esztergom (Archbishop of Esztergom), Heves (Bishop of Eger), Komárom (Count Nádasdy), Pest-Pilis-Solt (palatine), Pozsony (Count Pálffy), Sopron (Prince Esterházy), Szepes (Count Csáky), Turóc (Baron Révay), Ung (Count Waldstein-Wartenberg), and Vas (Count Batthyány).<sup>18</sup> In March 1867, upon the Hungarian government's proposal, the monarch confirmed the hereditary lord-lieutenants, but the majority of them were exempted from "*the obligation of actual governance in the respective counties*".<sup>19</sup> Changes occurred in the counties of Bereg, Heves, Sopron, and Vas, but in the first two aristocrats were appointed. In essence, out of the 11 counties where the institution of hereditary lord-lieutenants still remained in 1867, only three of the hereditary lord-lieutenants received actual appointments (in Komárom, Pozsony, and Turóc), and only two non-aristocrat substitutes were appointed as acting lord-lieutenants (in Bereg and Vas).

The title itself was not abolished by the first administrative law of the dualist era, Act XLII of 1870. However, with the provision in Section 52 that the monarch appoints lord-lieutenants to the head of each county regardless of the hereditary lord-lieutenants, the title became insignificant thereafter.<sup>20</sup> This change also affected the number of titled lord-lieutenants, since non-aristocrats could be appointed to counties where hereditary lord-lieutenants (both secular and ecclesiastical) were previously in office.

16 See HAJNIK. *Az örökös főispánság a magyar alkotmánytörténetben*. Budapest 1888, p. 3-5.

17 HAJNIK, *Az örökös főispánság*, p. 12-18.

18 The hereditary lord-lieutenancy of Szepes County passed to the Csáky family in 1651, following the Szapolyai and Thurzó families. Turóc County's hereditary lord-lieutenancy was granted to Ferenc Révay by King Ferdinand I in 1532, who later became the palatine's deputy. HAJNIK, *Az örökös főispánság*, p. 79-85.

19 MNL OL, K 148, 1867-3-780, Draft of the Supreme Resolution, 31 March 1867.

20 The sovereign continued to appoint a member of the Pálffy family as a count in Pozsony (Pressburg), and according to Article 4 of the Act Modifying the Organization of the Upper House of Parliament in 1885, they remained a member of the Upper House (*Főrendiház*). However, this appointment was no longer associated with the lord-lieutenant title. HAJNIK, *Az örökös főispánság*, p. 39.

As a result of the law, in the spring of 1871, regular lord-lieutenants were appointed to the head of the respective counties as well.<sup>21</sup> János Lónyay, the governor of Bereg County, also received a new appointment. The Minister of the Interior politely informed Count Schönborn (Erwein Friedrich Karl von Schönborn-Buchheim) about this, requesting him to continue supporting the government. However, it is noteworthy that the clause stating that the minister proposed Lónyay's appointment with Schönborn's "approval" was crossed out from the wording.<sup>22</sup> Similar letters were received by the other hereditary lord-lieutenants as well. In the letter addressed to János Simor, Archbishop of Esztergom, the Minister of the Interior also expressed hope that the government can continue to rely on his support, even though "*his direct influence over the county has ceased*".<sup>23</sup> The Minister brought to "*the esteemed knowledge*" of Prince Miklós Esterházy, as the hereditary lord-lieutenant of Sopron County, the person whom the monarch appointed as the new lord-lieutenant.<sup>24</sup> Later, they even dispensed with this formality.

However, for the time being, there were no significant changes in the respective counties. At the head of Esztergom County, Count Ágoston Forgách, titular bishop, remained in office. He had been appointed as deputy lord-lieutenant in November 1861, based on the recommendation of the Archbishop of Esztergom. Count Lipót Nádasdy remained as the lord-lieutenant of Komárom County until his passing in 1873. He had held the position of hereditary and actual lord-lieutenant even before 1848, and his appointment to this role was later reaffirmed, just like Baron Simon Révay in Turóc County. However, after that, we no longer find not only Nádasdy and Révay but not a single aristocrat among the lord-lieutenants of these two counties. Count István Károlyi returned to the helm of Pest County, where he had previously served as the acting lord-lieutenant in 1848 and 1860. In Pozsony County, they continued to appoint a member of the Pálffy family (János), as the lord-lieutenant. The Minister of the Interior highlighted in the proposal that "*in Pozsony County, he possesses considerable landed property*".<sup>25</sup>

The situation in Szepes County is intriguing, where the hereditary lord-lieutenant position was passed down within the Csáky family. Following the October Diploma, in the autumn of 1860, Ágoston Csáky assumed not only the hereditary but also the actual role of the lord-lieutenant. Albin Csáky had already been the hereditary lord-lieutenant since 1865, but until the spring of 1867, the

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21 MNL OL, K 148, 1871-3-708.

22 MNL OL, K 148, 1871-3-628, Private letter from the Minister of the Interior, 8 April 1871.

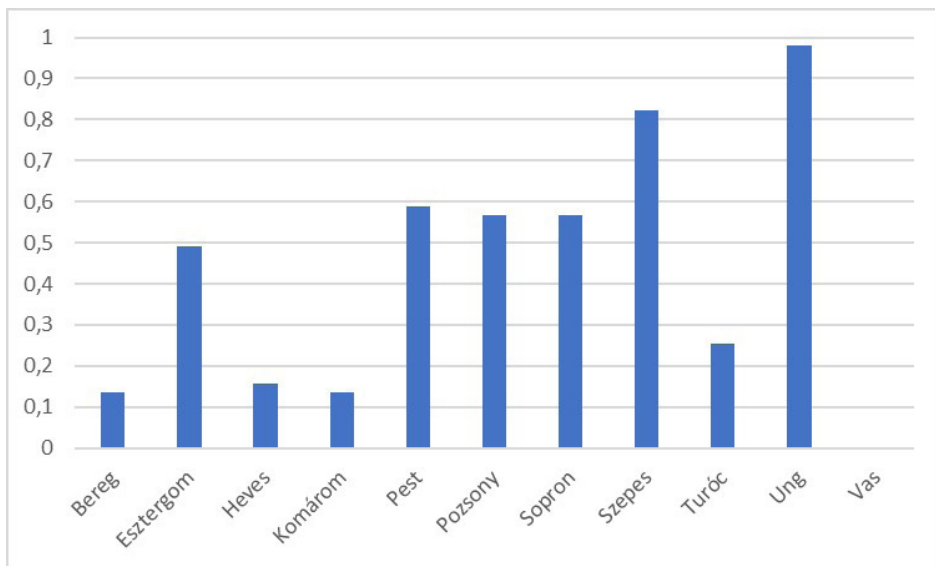
23 Ibid.

24 MNL OL, K 148, 1871-3-628, Private letter from the Minister of the Interior, 18 May 1871.

25 MNL OL, K 148, 1871-3-628.

affairs were managed by administrator Norbert Mauks on his behalf. However, the Andrassy government reinstated the previous situation and granted him the “*lord-lieutenant position of Szepes County, which is hereditary in the Csáky family, (...) entrusting him at the same time with the personal governance of this county*”.<sup>26</sup> Although the hereditary lord-lieutenancy diminished and became an insignificant title, members of the Csáky family continued to hold the position of county lord-lieutenant for four decades, from March 1867 to December 1905. During this time, four members of the Csáky noble family (Albin, Gyula, Zénó, and László) succeeded one another at the head of the county. Zénó and Albin were brothers, and László was Albin’s son.

Diagram No. 1: The proportion of aristocratic lord-lieutenants in those counties where the institution of hereditary lord-lieutenancy persisted until 1867



If we follow the lord-lieutenants of these 11 counties throughout the entire period, we can observe that in some of them, the proportion of aristocrats remains below the average relative to the number of years (Bereg, Heves, Komárom, Turóc), while in a few counties, it exceeds the average (Esztergom, Pest, Pozsony, Sopron, Szepes). Vas County represents one extreme, where no aristocrats were found among the lord-lieutenants during the Dual Monarchy period, while Ung County stands at the other end, where aristocrats occupied the position for nearly the entire period (98% of the time).

26 MNL OL, K 148, 1867-3-780, Draft of the Supreme Resolution, 31 March 1867.



Clearly, if there was a family tradition like in the case of the Csáky family, who were willing to hold office and had enough adult male members in the family, it contributed to Szepes County behaving quite differently from places like Vas or Bereg County, where there were also hereditary lord-lieutenants in the past. In the latter counties, the Austrian Schönborn-Buchheim counts were not interested in Hungarian politics, let alone administration; they regarded their estates merely as a source of income and visited them at most during the hunting season. During the time of Erwin Schönborn-Buchheim, these connections somewhat strengthened. During the millennium celebrations, the newspapers reported that he “*already delivers a congratulatory speech to our homeland in Hungarian, although he still speaks Hungarian with an accent*”.<sup>27</sup> Until the turn of the century, we find members of the Lónyay and Perényi families at the helm of the county, who also held significant elite positions in neighboring counties.

However, as the diagram clearly shows, the institution of hereditary lord-lieutenancy itself did not influence the proportion of aristocratic lord-lieutenants in later years.

### **The transformation of the roles of the lord-lieutenants**

According to another hypothesis, the fluctuation in the proportion of aristocrats among the lord-lieutenants may be correlated with the transformation of their roles. To investigate this, I will briefly outline the evolution of the lord-lieutenants' functions.

The lord-lieutenants played a significant role in the administration of the dualist era. They were appointed by the monarch upon the recommendation of the Minister of the Interior to head the counties. Their role was twofold: administrative and political, making them trusted representatives of the government at all times.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, they formed a connection between the government and the county administration, as well as between the central and local elites. Act XLII of 1870 and, especially, Act XXI of 1886 significantly expanded their powers, leading to a transformation in their role. Their position evolved from one of dignity to a more functional office, although it remained somewhat in between throughout the era until its end. It did not become a formal office, so, for example, the Qualification Act of 1883 did not apply to the lord-

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27 KIRÁLY. Schönborn-Buchheim Ervin gróf és a munkács-szentmiklósi uradalom. *Ujkor.hu* (published at 7. 9. 2018) <https://ujkor.hu/content/schonborn-buchheim-ervin-grof-es-munkacs-szentmiklosi-uradalom> (11. 4. 2023)

28 See PÁL. Research on High Hungarian Officials in the Dual Monarchy: the Case of Transylvanian Lord-Lieutenants. In ADLGASSER and LINDSTRÖM, ed. *The Habsburg Civil Service and Beyond: Bureaucracy and Civil Servants from the Vormärz to the Inter-War Years*. Vienna 2019, p. 149-166.

lieutenants, but they were increasingly burdened with administrative tasks. They presided over public assemblies and sessions of the administrative committee, and their responsibilities included supervising the administration of the county. At the same time, they were expected to represent the government's policies and support the candidates of the governing party during elections. In addition to these duties, they also had numerous social obligations, such as presiding over associations and other representative tasks.

The expectation arose from Act XLII of 1870 that

*“the lord-lieutenants exert increased activity in the county entrusted to their leadership, which entails constant or prolonged presence within the county, thereby continuously asserting their personal influence to ensure the proper conduct of affairs and promote the interests of the government”*.<sup>29</sup>

It was not easy to meet this expectation, especially for those high-ranking nobles who owned estates in multiple counties. For instance, the exemption of Count István Erdődy, the lord-lieutenant of Sáros County, in 1871 was justified by the Minister of the Interior with the fact that he could not fulfill this requirement *“due to his family and personal circumstances on one hand, and on the other hand, because he maintains his regular residence in Vas County, far from Sáros County, which was entrusted to his governance”*.<sup>30</sup> Erdődy requested his exemption himself, citing that *“the economic management of my various distant estates and my paternal duties requiring annual visits take up much of my time and keep me away”*.<sup>31</sup>

The changes resulted in the resignation of several lord-lieutenants who either could not or did not want to adapt to the new expectations. It is true that in many cases an aristocrat was also appointed in their place. Baron Béla Bánffy, lord-lieutenant of Kraszna County, and baron Lajos Vay, lord-lieutenant of Borsod County, were among those who resigned. In his resignation letter, the latter offered excuses, stating that if he did not always meet the government's expectations, it was not due to lack of goodwill, *“but rather the difficulty of the tasks during the period of transformation, which, I sincerely admit, were not in balance with my abilities and talents”*. As a result of the reorganization of the counties,

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29 MNL OL, K 148, 1871-3-628, The proposal of the Minister of the Interior to the sovereign, 30 March 1871.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid., Erdődy to the Minister of the Interior, October 1870 (the day is missing).

*“it is undeniable that the duties of the lord-lieutenants increased, and the burden of responsibility placed upon them became more significant. Therefore, I feel that my advanced age and weakening strength do not allow me to adequately fulfill these increased obligations.”*<sup>32</sup>

Vay was dismissed, but instead, his son, Béla, was appointed as the new lord-lieutenant. Similarly, in 1872, Count Aladár Andrassy requested his resignation from the position of Zemplén County’s lord-lieutenant due to *“changed family circumstances”*. In his place, the monarch appointed his brother, Manó Andrassy, who was the lord-lieutenant of Gömör and Kishont counties, citing his extensive connections, influence, and *“the fact that he resided on his estates in Zemplén County as the most suitable candidate for the successful fulfillment of the lord-lieutenant position in Zemplén”*.<sup>33</sup>

Several other lord-lieutenants also resigned due to the establishment of administrative committees in 1876, which increased the responsibilities of the lord-lieutenants once again. Among them was László Szögyény-Marich, the lord-lieutenant of Fejér County, who had been in office since 1865 and was a former Second Chancellor. He cited that the performance of the lord-lieutenant’s office requires *“vigilant attention and unwavering diligence and activity”*, which, unfortunately, he lacked due to his *“physical and mental decline”*.<sup>34</sup> At this time, Count Ádám Vay, the lord-lieutenant of Szabolcs County, resigned as well, and he also cited the reason that assuming the role of chairman of the administrative committee entailed significant responsibilities, which he could no longer undertake.<sup>35</sup>

The Act XXI of 1886 further expanded the powers and duties of the lord-lieutenants. As a result of this, the 76-year-old Count Napóleon Török resigned after nearly two decades of serving as a lord-lieutenant. His trembling handwriting confirmed the written:

*“Considering the decline resulting from my old age and the diminishing of my mental strength due to 19 years of official duties – and also taking into account the greater demands of the new era, which require even greater efforts –, I have come to the conviction that I must put an end to my official activities.”*<sup>36</sup>

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32 Ibid., 1872-3-1824, Vay to the Minister of the Interior, 2 May 1872.

33 Ibid., 1872-3-737. The proposal of the Minister of the Interior to the sovereign, 5 March 1872.

34 Ibid., 1876-3-3768, Szögyény to the Minister of the Interior, 27 June 1876.

35 Ibid., 1876-3-5243. Vay to the Minister of the Interior, 8 June 1876.

36 Ibid., 1886-3-822, The lord-lieutenant of Ung County to the Minister of the Interior, 10 February 1886.

A symbolic step further diminished the authority of the lord-lieutenants and signaled the ongoing transformation. Until the reform of the House of Magnates in 1885, the lord-lieutenants were members of the Upper House of the parliament, even if they were not aristocrats. However, due to the reform, they were excluded, which was also justified by the separation of legislative and executive powers.<sup>37</sup> At that time, two-thirds of the hereditary members and over half of the aristocratic families were excluded, because they did not meet the requirements. Out of the 728 members (31 dukes/princes, 452 counts, and 245 barons) before the reform, only 198 (27%) remained.<sup>38</sup>

The political role of the lord-lieutenants did not diminish, as it was not particularly significant even before, through their membership in the Upper House; rather, it symbolized another “*demotion*” only in a symbolic sense. Some of their contemporaries also saw it this way. István Beliczey, in his letter of resignation as the lord-lieutenant of Békés County, alluded to this as well:

*“with the dissolution of the old Upper House, the ancient institution of the lord-lieutenants ceases to exist, as it was an integral part of it. By revoking their legislative power, the authority of the lord-lieutenants is confined to the field of administration”*.<sup>39</sup>

The abolition of the membership in the Upper House did not bring about significant changes; it merely sealed the multi-decade process in which the office of the lord-lieutenant gradually shifted from being a dignified position to a more administrative one. I will come back to the transformation within the lord-lieutenant’s corps in relation to land ownership.

### **Aristocratic lord-lieutenants by the numbers**

In the subsequent analysis, I will investigate the changes in the proportion of noble lord-lieutenants within the lord-lieutenant corps. To establish a comparative baseline, let us begin by examining the situation in the pre-1848 period: in 1842, slightly over half (53.7%) of the chief officials in Hungary and Transylvania were aristocrats. In Hungary, their proportion was 57.6%, whereas in Transylvania, it was only 40%, even though I only considered the *Comes Saxonum*, excluding the Saxon seats and regions.<sup>40</sup> Four individuals received

37 For this issue, see: SZABÓ. I. rész (1867–1918) In BOROS and SZABÓ. *Parlamentarizmus Magyarországon (1867–1944)*. Budapest 1999, p. 97 and TÓTH-BARBALICS. *A magyar országgyűlés a dualizmus korában. II. A főrendiház (1865–1918)*. Budapest 2021, p. 216-219.

38 BALLABÁS. A főrendiház 1885. évi reformja és a magyar főnemesség létszáma. In BALLABÁS and PAP, ed. *Képviselők*, p. 201-217.

39 MNL OL, K 148, 1889-3-1380, The lord-lieutenant of Békés County to the Minister of the Interior, 15 May 1885.

40 The majority of Saxon seats were quite small in size, and the territorial administrative re-

subsequently promotions. Pongrác Somssich, the lord-lieutenant of Baranya County, had a distinguished career, serving as vice-palatine, chief justice, and state councillor, and was elevated to the rank of count by the monarch (1845) for his service as a knight of the Order of St. Stephen.<sup>41</sup> The other three lord-lieutenants received Austrian baronial titles during the Neoabsolutist era, partly in recognition of their administrative merits, but more importantly as a reward for their loyalty to the dynasty.<sup>42</sup>

Two decades later, after the restoration of Hungary and Transylvania's traditional administrative structure following the October Diploma (1860), half (51.4%) of the chief officials (lord-lieutenants, chief captains, chief royal judges) appointed in 1860-61 (53.8% in Hungary, 43.7% in Transylvania) were selected from among the aristocracy. Therefore, the abolition of feudal relations did not bring significant changes in this regard.<sup>43</sup> Two individuals later received the title of baron.<sup>44</sup> The lord-lieutenant corps of 1860-61 is interesting for another reason as well, because many of its members were reappointed between 1865 and 1867: in 1865, just over a third (35.2%) of the 1860-61 lord-lieutenant corps returned, but the titled persons were slightly underrepresented in this group. The proportion of aristocrats significantly declined to 39.7%, and the ratio between Hungary (38.4%) and Transylvania (43.7%) reversed.

The change of elites, which had taken place in several stages before the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, was completed in the spring of 1867 when the monarch appointed new individuals to lead more than half of the counties upon the recommendation of the new Hungarian government (47.3% of them were aristocrats). Two-fifths (42.6%) of the 1865 chief officials remained in their positions, and one-third (33.8%) of them had already been lord-lieutenants in 1860-61. The proportion of titled persons returned to its previous level: they

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form of 1876 abolished or merged them. Therefore, and due to the different traditions and electoral system, I did not include them in the analysis. If we were to include the Saxon seats and regions, the proportion in Transylvania would drop below 25%. The source of the data: *Közhasznú Honi Vezér, gazdasági, házi és tiszti kalendárium*. Pesten 1843, p. 228-240, 256-257.

41 BARANYAI. Somogy vármegye nemes családai. In CSÁNKI, ed. *Somogy vármegye (Magyarország vármegyéi és városai)*. Budapest s. a., p. 628.

42 The following individuals are concerned: László Nopcsa (lord-lieutenant of Hunyad County, 1855), Antal Atzél (acting lord-lieutenant of Békés and Csongrád Counties, later lord-lieutenant of Torna and then Csanád County, 1857), and Albert Petrichevich-Horváth (chief royal judge of Háromszék, later Marosszék, 1857).

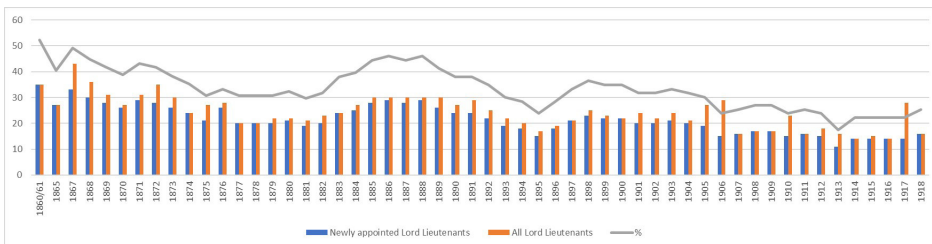
43 The source of the data: *Politikai Ujdonságok*, Vol. 6 (08-11-1860) No. 45, (06-12-1860), No. 49.

44 József Rudics (Bács-Bodrog, 1874) and Gábor Daniel (Udvarhelyszék, 1912), while Ferenc Fiáth, whose father received an Austrian baron title during the neoabsolutism era, became a Hungarian baron in 1874.

constituted half of the entire lord-lieutenant corps (49.2% in the spring of 1867, and 48.5% in the summer – 51.9% in Hungary, and 37.5% in Transylvania). Moreover, we also find four individuals who received their titles subsequently.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, at the time of the Compromise, the aristocrats truly dominated the lord-lieutenant corps.

The large number of such appointments may have been influenced not only by traditional practices but also by the Hungarian government’s desire, after the Compromise, to appoint individuals at the head of counties who could exercise authority and command local public opinion through their prestige and influence. In several cases, former lord-lieutenants from the 1848 and/or 1860 periods were reinstated, and the government also rewarded prominent members of the liberal opposition with lord-lieutenant appointments. As these individuals were financially more independent, they were not compelled to take up office earlier, except for political reasons. Consequently, they did not compromise themselves in the previous era. This observation also applies to a significant portion of the former *bene possessionati*, the upper echelon of the landed gentry.

Diagram No. 2: The proportion of aristocrats among the lord-lieutenants



When we examine the attached chart, several trends become evident. Firstly, the aristocracy did not reach this initially high proportion again within the lord-lieutenant corps. However, the generally decreasing trend shows fluctuations: their proportion steadily declined until the early 1880s, reaching below 40% in 1870. Some members of the old generation accustomed to the traditional lord-lieutenant dignity and role retired from the increasing administrative duties, brought about by the application of the administrative law (Act XLII of 1870), as

45 In addition to the aforementioned Gábor Daniel, Antal Radvánszky (Zólyom, 1874) received a baron title, while Lajos Tisza (Bihar) and László Jankovich (Somogy) were granted count titles in 1883 and 1885, respectively.

well as the establishment of administrative committees and the assignment of their presidencies to the lord-lieutenants (Act VI of 1876). In addition to these factors, the fusion of the Deák Party and the Left Center Party in 1875 also contributed to the increase in candidates, mostly from the former *bene possessionati* layer. Over the course of a narrow decade, significant changes were observed: by 1875, less than a third of the counties were led by aristocratic lord-lieutenants (30.8%).

In the second half of Kálmán Tisza's government, starting from 1884, the number of aristocrats once again increased, reaching the second-highest proportion in 1886, with 46%. Although other factors also played a role, and two elevations in rank in 1885 (László Jankovich, lord-lieutenant of Somogy County, and György Mailáth Jr., lord-lieutenant of Esztergom County, both received count titles) contributed to the increase, I believe it demonstrates Kálmán Tisza's efforts to enhance the position and authority of the lord-lieutenants, a goal that his biographer also highlighted.<sup>46</sup>

The change of the Ministers of the Interior itself makes little or no difference, but government changes do have a much more significant impact. As evident from the graph, after the peak between 1886 and 1891, the number of aristocratic lord-lieutenants decreased again during the first Wekerle government, with only 23.8% being titled in 1895. With the rise of the Bánffy government, their number slightly increased, but then it fluctuated and decreased once again. By 1913, less than one-fifth of the lord-lieutenants (17.4%) were aristocrats. After the outbreak of the First World War, we again observe a mild increase, which is further amplified during the Esterházy and the third Wekerle governments. By 1918, one-fourth of the lord-lieutenants were aristocrats (25.3%). The number of newly appointed aristocratic lord-lieutenants surges during government changes – and even more so during politically crisis-inducing government changes –, obviously related to the replacement of the lord-lieutenant corps: the highest number of aristocrats were appointed in 1867 (16), followed by 1917 (13) and 1906 (11), when the previous opposition coalition came to power.

The question arises whether there could have been a correlation between the decline in grain prices and the observed rise in the number of aristocrats within the lord-lieutenant corps during the 1880s. In other words, did economic factors also contribute to this phenomenon alongside political considerations, and if so, to what degree? If we examine agricultural prices, especially the price index of the most significant agricultural product, grain, we can observe that after the 1873 financial crisis, a grain downturn set in, characterized by fluctuations, which led to a steep decline in Hungary during the 1880s. Only from the mid-1890s can we start talking about a new period of prosperity, despite the fact that the industrial

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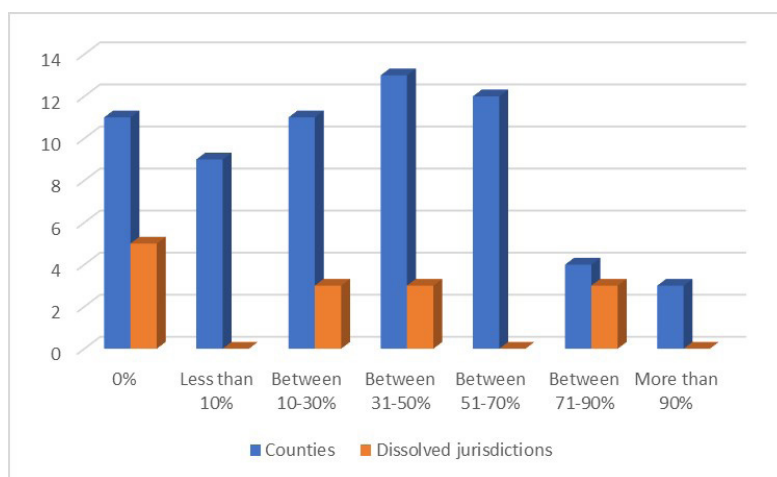
46 KOZÁRI. *Tisza Kálmán és kormányzati rendszere*. Budapest 2003, p. 295-297.

sector had already experienced a recovery by the late 1880s.<sup>47</sup> In light of this, it would be worth examining how this development might have increased the willingness of lesser-landed titled persons to take up official positions in the future. At the beginning of the period, the income of lord-lieutenants ranged from 2,500 to 4,000 forints (Guldens), but by the end of the era, they received a salary of 8,000 to 12,000 crowns (equivalent to 4,000 to 6,000 forints), with an additional few thousand crowns for housing and personal allowances. The remuneration for the lord-lieutenants, therefore, effectively supplemented their income and enabled smaller landowners to maintain a lifestyle befitting their rank.<sup>48</sup>

### Regional breakdown

The proportion of titled lord-lieutenants not only changed over time but also showed significant spatial variations. The following graph illustrates the distribution of the administrative units based on the duration that a noble lord-lieutenant held the position. Due to the territorial administrative reform of 1876, some administrative units ceased to exist, and these were counted separately. In the case of the newly established counties, I took into account the period between 1876 and 1918.

Diagram No. 3: The distribution of the counties according to the tenure of aristocratic lord-lieutenants



47 KÖVÉR. A reformkortól az első világháborúig. In HONVÁRI, ed. *Magyarország gazdaságtörténete a honfoglalástól a 20. század közepéig*. Budapest 1997, p. 260-261.

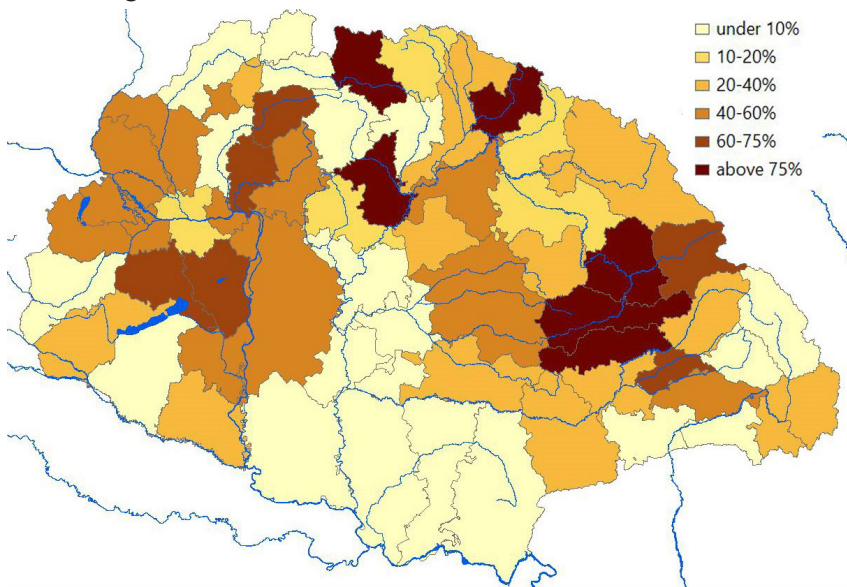
48 For example, Sándor Bethlen, the lord-lieutenant of Torda-Aranyos County, had a total landholding of 1,177 acres, which generated an annual income of 10,334 crowns according to the cadastral records, approximately equivalent to the lord-lieutenant's salary.



As illustrated in the graph, one-third of the counties (20 counties) either had no titled lord-lieutenants or only had them for a very short duration (less than 10% of the time). In another third of the counties, the proportion of aristocrats did not exceed half of the mentioned period (11 counties had 11-30%, and 13 counties had 31-50%). However, in one-third of the counties, the majority of lord-lieutenant positions were occupied by aristocrats (12 counties had 51-70%, four had 71-90%, and three had over 90%). Among the seven counties with over 70% proportion, four were from Transylvania. Kolozs, Szolnok-Doboka and Ung had the highest proportion, while Kis-Küküllő and Torda-Aranyos, along with Borsod and Szepes counties, had a proportion between 71% and 90%.

When we map the results, a remarkable regional pattern emerges.<sup>49</sup>

Map No. 1: The geographical distribution of aristocratic lord-lieutenants based on the length of their tenure



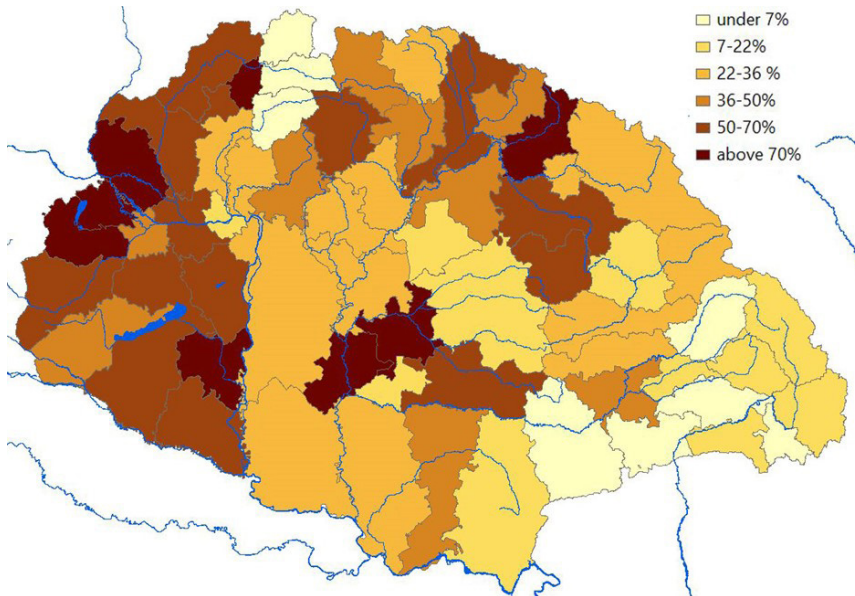
It is evident that in the southern and central parts of Hungary – which largely correspond to the former Ottoman-controlled territories – non-aristocrats

49 I am grateful to Gábor Demeter, a researcher at the Institute of History in Budapest, for creating the maps, which illustrates the state after the territorial-administrative reform of 1876. An interesting point of comparison could be the regional disparities drawn based on complex development indicators in the early 20th century: DEMETER and HORBULÁK. Regional socio-economic inequalities before and after the collapse of the Hungarian Kingdom – Modernization, “Magyarization” and economic exploitation from a different perspective. In *Historický časopis*, 2021, Vol. 69, no. 5, p. 913.

typically occupied the position of lord-lieutenants. Titled lord-lieutenants were mainly found in the Transylvanian counties, in the central regions of Pest-Pilis-Solt-Kiskun, Fejér, Tolna counties, stretching up to Nógrád, Hont, and Zólyom counties, as well as in the northwestern region (Győr, Hont, Moson, Pozsony, Sopron counties). Additionally, Borsod, Szepes, and Ung counties also stood out with significantly high proportions of aristocrats.

Based on the literature, I attempted to compare the obtained values with a few indicators. Obviously, these are quantifiable indicators, as there are other factors that come into play, which are either difficult or impossible to quantify. The first example is tradition and mentality, while the second one is the “*population density*” of the aristocracy. The latter can be attempted to some extent, but it is challenging to tie some noble lord-lieutenants to specific locations since their estates often spread across multiple counties, and they themselves were mobile. Moreover, some lord-lieutenants were appointed to lead a county that was foreign to their original residence. I tried to compare my data with Daniel Ballabás’s research on the geographical territory inhabited by aristocrats,<sup>50</sup> but the results did not show any correlation.

Map No. 2: The proportion of aristocratic estates exceeding 500 acres



50 I thank Dániel Ballabás for providing the table that served as the basis for the map, published page 198 of his study. The data in the table includes the birthplace, marriage place, and place of death of the aristocrats, not their residence, which would indeed be very difficult to determine. BALLABÁS, A magyar főnemesség társadalomtörténete, p. 196-199.

One of the obvious assumptions was that the values might be related to the land ownership structure. Therefore, I examined the proportion of estates exceeding one hundred, respectively five hundred cadastral acres based on the 1897 agricultural directory.\*

	Lenght of the tenure of aristocratic officials compared to the total period (%)	The number of settlements where aristocrats lived	Proportion of holdings over 500 hold (in relation to total land in the county)	Proportion of holdings over 100 hold (in relation to total land in the county)	Proportion of aristocratic landowners from holdings over 500 holds	Share of Hungarians% (1910)
Lenght of the tenure of aristocratic officials compared to the total period (%)	1	,173	,020	,034	,011	-,029
The number of settlements where aristocrats lived	,173	1	,447**	,448**	,349**	,126
Proportion of holdings over 500 hold (in relation to total land in the county)	,020	,447**	1	,982**	,555**	,551**
Proportion of holdings over 100 hold (in relation to total land in the county)	,034	,448**	,982**	1	,560**	,598**
Proportion of aristocratic landowners from holdings over 500 holds	,011	,349**	,555**	,560**	1	,188
Share of Hungarians% (1910)	-,029	,126	,551**	,598**	,188	1

\* 1 cadastral acre = 0.575 hectare

\*\* The stars mean that the corresponding variable is significant.

I also looked at the proportion of estates exceeding five hundred acres held by aristocrats (as shown in the map above)<sup>51</sup> and compared it with the proportion of Hungarian and other ethnic groups' populations in the respective counties, as well as the spatial distribution of aristocrats.<sup>52</sup> The results are presented in the previous correlation table.

The result of the linear regression analysis, despite the apparent correlations,<sup>53</sup> turned out to be negative. It seems that the proportion of noble lord-lieutenants' tenure does not show a significant correlation with any of the mentioned factors. After numerous calculations, we have returned to the initial state. The distribution might have been influenced not only by random and demographic factors (e.g., illness or death affecting the tenure of a lord-lieutenant) but also by various other variables that we cannot quantify. However, we can attempt to explore regional or local explanations for these patterns.

### **The changes in the size of land holdings**

In the case of landholdings, in addition to the size, it is also essential to examine their geographical distribution, specifically whether the lord-lieutenant owned land in the same county where their appointment was made. However, determining the land holdings of individual persons can be a challenging task. Records of landholdings exceeding 100 cadastral acres were compiled starting from 1893. Before that, clarifying the landownership of specific families and individuals would require extensive archival research.<sup>54</sup> To uncover the land holdings of

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51 *A Magyar Korona országainak mezőgazdasági statisztikája. II. Gazdacímár.* Budapest 1897. The volume based on the 1895 data collection contains records of "operating unit" rather than landowners, and its data usage raises several issues. The most significant problem is that if the agricultural operating unit was mixed – meaning it included both landowners and tenants – it becomes impossible to determine the territorial proportion. Additionally, purely forest and pasture farms were omitted from the statistics. Nevertheless, I believe that despite these limitations, it can still be used to indicate larger territorial differences and trends. For more information on the issues and usability of the registers, see PUSKÁS; EDDIE and LÁNC. Adatbázis az 1911. évi Gazdacímár adataiból a gazdaság- és társadalomtörténeti kutatások számára. (A számítógépes adatfeldolgozás tapasztalataiból.) In *Történelmi Szemle*, 1977, Vol. 20, no. 2, p. 315-318.

52 Once again, I am grateful to Gábor Demeter for the calculations.

53 For example, the number of aristocratic lord-lieutenants, or the correlation between the proportion of estates over 100 and 500 acres and the proportion of aristocratic landholdings, but this does not bring us any closer to solving our question.

54 Except for a few fortunate cases where biographies were written or family histories were processed from this perspective. For further exploration of this question, refer to Dániel Ballabás's work titled *A magyar főnemesség földbirtokviszonyai a dualizmus korában. Szakirodalmi áttekintés az 1911. évi gazdacímár adatai.* In BALLABÁS and PAP, ed. *Parlamentarizmustörténeti*, p. 329-345.

aristocratic lord-lieutenants, I utilized the registers of land owners from the years 1893, 1897, and 1911. These sources provided valuable information on their landownership during those periods.<sup>55</sup> Each of these considered only land holdings of at least 100 acres within a single locality. However, as they were compiled at different times, using diverse methods, and partly serving different purposes, the utilization of these data raises several methodological concerns.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, there were several lord-lieutenants who passed away before the data collection for the 1893 register of land owners. If they died early and had no male heirs, their land holdings from that period cannot be fully reconstructed solely from these sources.<sup>57</sup> It is also a problem later as well, especially with the 1893 register of land owners, that the “*landowner listed on the cadastral land deeds often did not match the landowner in the land registry*”.<sup>58</sup> I considered only the landholdings under the names of the individuals; those under the names of their wives, fathers, or children were not taken into account.<sup>59</sup>

I also did not include the territory of entailments in the total value either because, firstly, according to the law, the individuals were only life tenants and not owners of the entails, and secondly, the data is not always clear. It would have required a separate investigation to determine who were the life tenants of which entailments and when. For those who do not appear in the registers of land owners at all, in some cases, I could not ascertain whether this was due to them not having landholdings of at least one hundred acres, or because the land was not registered under their names. Due to the aforementioned and other issues, my data require further corrections and refinements. However, they can already be used to estimate the land size of aristocratic lord-lieutenants and examine whether their land holdings were connected to the county they were appointed to lead.

At the beginning of the period, Károly Keleti mapped the landholdings in Hungary. In the narrower sense of Hungary, at that time, we find more than two million properties with an average of 17.3 acres, while in Transylvania,

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55 BAROSS, ed. *Magyarország földbirtokosai. Az összes 100 holdnál többel bíró magyar birtokosok névsora, a tulajdonukban levő földterületek művelési ágak szerinti feltüntetésével.* Budapest 1893; *A Magyar Korona országainak mezőgazdasági statisztikája. II. Gazdaczimtár.* Budapest 1897; RUBINEK, ed. *Magyarországi gazdaczimtár. Magyarország, Horvát- és Szlavónországok 100 kat. holdon felüli birtokosainak és bérlőinek címjegyzéke, az egyes megyék részletes monográfiájával.* Budapest 1911.

56 See note 54. 1897 includes the operating unit, not the estate.

57 If there were heirs, I tried to estimate the estate on the basis of their data.

58 PUSKÁS; EDDIE and LÁNC, *Adatbázis*, p. 317.

59 I used the landholdings of fathers or children as estimated data for those individuals who were not listed in the three mentioned sources.

there were 636 thousand properties with an average of 14.9 acres. However, this distribution was highly uneven.<sup>60</sup>

Table No. 2: The numerical distribution of medium and large estates after the Compromise

Landholding size (cadastral acre)	Hungary	Transylvania	Total
200-1,000	11,525	2,223	13,748
1,000-3,000	3,258	624	3,882
3,000-5,000	673	145	818
5,000-10,000	401	94	495
over 10,000 acres	166	65	231

According to Keleti's calculations, the medium-sized estates (200-1,000 acres) accounted for 14.9% of the total land area in Hungary (11.9% in Transylvania), the large estates between 1,000 and 10,000 acres accounted for 32% (24.9% in Transylvania), and the "*latifundia*" over 10,000 acres accounted for 7.4% (12% in Transylvania).<sup>61</sup> Keleti criticized the "*caste-like classification*", meaning that in the circles of landowners, not only the "*degree of possession based on acreage determines social status, but also the more prestigious name, perhaps even the degree of nobility, determines the circles in which the individual can move or wants to move*".<sup>62</sup>

Scott M. Eddie analyzed the changes in land ownership structure during the Dualist era and sought to understand their impact on economic development. His research not only reveals the high proportion of medium and large estates in Hungary but also highlights regional differences and temporal variations. Estates over 200 acres accounted for approximately half of the total land area, and this proportion remained relatively constant throughout the period. However, the composition of this category changed significantly. The percentage of estates ranging from 200 to 1,000 acres slightly decreased, while the proportion of estates between 1,000 and 10,000 acres significantly declined between 1885 and 1914. In contrast, there was a substantial increase in the proportion of *latifundia* exceeding 10,000 acres.<sup>63</sup>

60 KELETI. *Hazánk és népe a közgazdaság és társadalmi statistika szepmontjából*. 2. ed. Buda-Pest 1873, p. 148.

61 In Transylvania, the latter were forest estates. KELETI, *Hazánk és népe*, p. 150.

62 KELETI, *Hazánk és népe*, p. 162.

63 EDDIE. The Changing Pattern of Landownership in Hungary, 1867–1914. In *The Economic*

Table No. 3: The evolution of land ownership structure (in percentage)<sup>64</sup>

Landholding size (cadastral acre)	1867	1885	1914
200-1,000	14.3	12.5	11.3
1,000-10,000	30.6	30.2	20.3
over 10,000 acres	8.5	9	19.4

The above data confirm the image of the decline of the gentry, but at the same time, even the less affluent layers of the aristocracy experienced impoverishment. The beneficiaries of this process were undoubtedly the wealthiest magnates, owners of *latifundia*, and capitalist entrepreneurs involved in agriculture and leasing. Some of the landowners who had taken loans following the abolition of serfdom were hit hard by the crisis of 1873 and were forced to sell their estates or struggled with debts. The medium-sized estates faced pressure from both small and large estates. Additionally, there was a significant proportion of tied land holdings.<sup>65</sup>

The reduction in estates mainly affected the category between 500 and 5,000 acres.<sup>66</sup> The agricultural crisis was mainly weathered by estates below 200 acres and the large estates. The latter managed to reduce costs through mechanization and also sought to assert their interests in the political sphere. As a result, the polarization of the landholding structure increased even further by the end of the period.<sup>67</sup> The reform of the Upper House of parliament in 1885 also reflects the polarization within the aristocracy. According to Dániel Ballabás's calculations, for the 3,000-forint tax census, the pure cadastral income of the landholding had to reach 11,765 Guldens. It is noteworthy that in 1911, out of the 1,148 adult male members of aristocratic families, only 243 (21.2%) reached this income level.<sup>68</sup>

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*History Review*, 1967, New Series, Vol. 20, No. 2 p. 293-310.

64 The source of the table: EDDIE, *The Changing Pattern*, p. 296.

65 80% of the estates over 10,000 acres fell into this category at the outbreak of World War I. EDDIE, *The Changing Pattern*, p. 297-299.

66 EDDIE, *The Changing Pattern*, p. 305.

67 EDDIE, *The Changing Pattern*, p. 305-309.

68 BALLABÁS. „De kérdem... vajjon oly könnyű-e akkora vagyont szerezni, a mely után – a földbirtokot értve – háromezer forint adót kell fizetni?”. A földadócenzenushoz szükséges földingatlan nagysága. In DOBSZAY et alii, ed. *Rendi országgyűlés, polgári parlament. Érdeképviselet és törvényhozás Magyarországon a 15. századtól 1918-ig*. Budapest; Eger 2020, p. 477-478.

Eddie examined the seven statistical regions of the era separately and concluded that considering the conditions of the peripheral areas (with a larger proportion of forests), a relatively uniform picture emerges. However, for the estates over 1,000 acres – which constituted 0.1-0.2% of all holdings – significant differences exist: in Transylvania, they accounted for 18.3% of the land area, in the region between the Tisza and Maros rivers 25.7%, but on the right bank of the Tisza 39.8%, and on the right bank of the Danube 43.6%.<sup>69</sup>

Tibor Kolossa and Julianna Puskás mapped the development of aristocratic landholdings based on the 1911 register of land owners in the early 20th century. A quarter (24.3%) of the land area over 100 acres was owned by aristocrats.<sup>70</sup> True, they also leased out their holdings to a great extent, with more than a third (34.5%, representing 46.6% of the arable land) being under the management of tenants. The 1911 register of land owners provided information on the cadastral income of the holdings, with the titled persons receiving 12.7% of the total cadastral income.<sup>71</sup> Kolossa and Puskás also highlighted the polarization that manifested within the aristocracy: *“A small group of 68 noble trustees owned 34.5% of all aristocratic holdings, 16.5% of individual holdings over 100 acres, and 4.61% of the total land area of the country.”*<sup>72</sup> According to them, although the aristocrats did not own the entire country, they had particularly strong positions, especially in the Transdanubian region. The regional differences also reflect *“different historical experiences, especially regarding the methods of land reclamation and redistribution following the Turkish occupation period”*.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, this can also be observed in the geographical distribution of titled lord-lieutenants.

Before analyzing the data, it should be noted that there were significant variations among different types of landholdings. It matters whether it was arable land, pasture, forest, or, for example, vineyards. The location and management of the holdings also play a crucial role. The 1911 register of land owners provides information on the cadastral income of the holdings, but I could not use it fully as only a portion of the data comes from this source. However, the size of the land alone does not allow us to draw conclusions about the wealth of the owners. Baron Kálmán Kemény, for example, owned a landholding of

69 EDDIE, *The Changing Pattern*, p. 300.

70 KOLOSSA and PUSKÁS. A 100. kat. holdon felüli birtokterület tulajdoni és birtokkezelési struktúrája Magyarországon 1911-ben. In *Agrártörténeti Szemle*, 1978, Vol. 20, no. 3-4, p. 444-480. The proportion of estates over one hundred acres was 54.7%, and it was equally divided between individual landholders and legal entities.

71 KOLOSSA and PUSKÁS, A 100. kat. holdon, p. 478-480.

72 KOLOSSA and PUSKÁS, A 100. kat. holdon, p. 480.

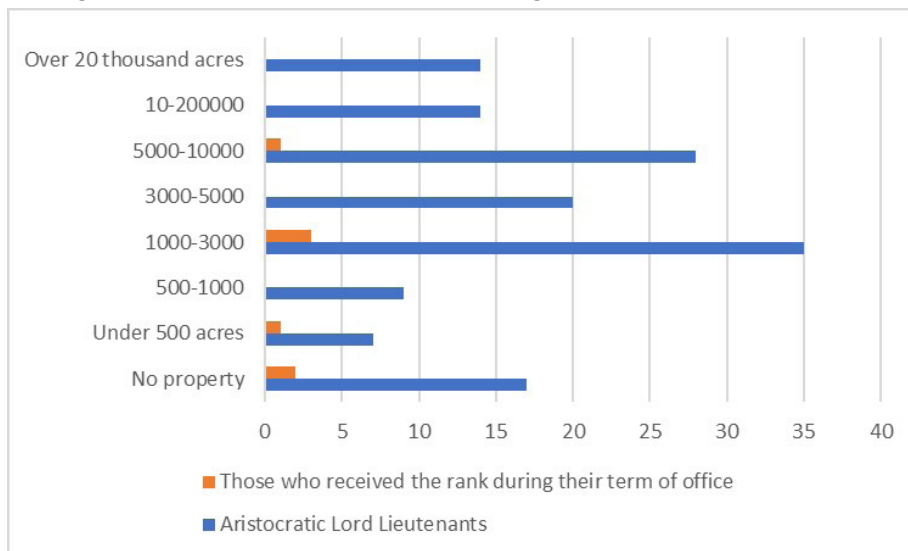
73 EDDIE, HUTTERER and SZÉKELY. Fél évszázad birtokviszonyai. Változások a trianoni Magyarországon területén, 1893–1935. In *Történelmi Szemle*, 1990, Vol. 32, no. 3-4, p. 346.



over 24,000 acres, but the majority of it was covered by forests, which had relatively modest cadastral income. One of his nearly 12,000-acre holdings had an income of only 1,978 crowns in Maros-Torda County, while a 117-acre parcel had an income of just 29 crown. On the other hand, Gyula Szalavszky's 142-acre landholding in Nyitra county had an income of 2,565 crowns. Therefore, the size of the landholding alone does not provide a reliable basis, and further nuances need to be added by exploring the different cultivation branches and, to the extent possible, the income sources. However, this task is almost hopeless, and it can only be achieved in certain case studies to obtain a complete picture of the wealth of a given lord-lieutenant.

The following diagram illustrates the size of landholdings owned by the aristocratic lord-lieutenants. They had an average of 7,475.2 acres (excluding those who were subsequently granted the rank, 7,597.3 acres). The aforementioned polarization is evident here as well. Less than a quarter of them (23.8%) had landholdings below 1,000 acres, or they were not landowners at all. Remarkably, only slightly over one-tenth (11.2%) of the aristocratic lord-lieutenants possessed landholdings below 1,000 acres. The largest group (38.4%) was composed of those who owned landholdings between 1,000 and 5,000 acres. One-fifth of them (19.2%) had landholdings between 5,000 and 10,000 acres, and slightly fewer (28 individuals, 18.5%) had *latifundia* over 10,000 acres.

Diagram No. 4: Distribution of landholdings

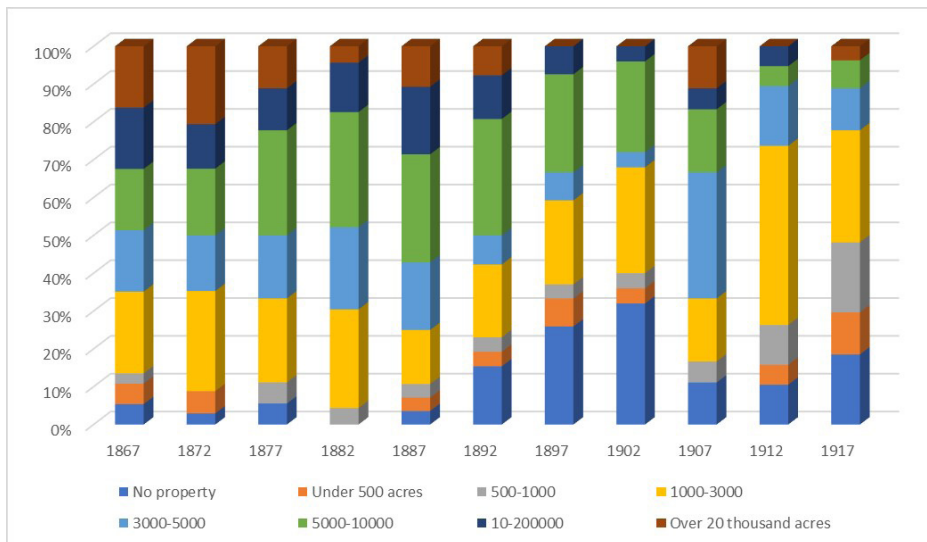


It is significant to note that more than three-quarters (76.1%) of the lord-lieutenants belonged to the small group of landowners with holdings exceeding 3,000 acres. The largest landowners were Prince Pál Esterházy with over 71,000

acres (spread across 43 settlements in the counties of Somogy, Tolna, Turóc, Vas, and Zala), György Károlyi and his son Gyula (the latter with 64,550 acres in Békés, Csongrád, Heves, Nógrád, and Szatmár counties), and Count János Pálffy (58,470 acres across 62 locations in Pozsony and Nyitra counties). The largest landowner in Transylvania was Baron Zoltán Bánffy with 51,580 acres, but more than 40,000 acres of this consisted of forests. Count Manó Andrassy had holdings of around 35,000 acres in Zemplén, while Count József Batthyány possessed land of similar size in Bihar, Győr, Heves, Moson and Pozsony counties. Count István Károlyi also had extensive holdings in seven counties across the country.

I also examined how the landholdings of the lord-lieutenants changed over time. One of my initial hypotheses was that the proportion of large landowners decreased as the authority and workload of the lord-lieutenants increased. Consequently, it was expected that they would be required to be present in their counties, and this could negatively impact the willingness of larger landowners to take up such positions.

Diagram No. 5: Variation over time in the size of the estates of the lord-lieutenants



The above diagram displays the distribution of landholdings among aristocratic lord-lieutenants in 5-year intervals. Despite the limited number of cases, the trend outlined in the hypothesis becomes evident. In the year of the Compromise (1867), owners of latifundia exceeding 10,000 acres constituted one-third (32.4%) of the lord-lieutenants. Subsequently, their proportion declined, and although it experienced a temporary increase towards the end of Kálmán Tisza's government, it fell below 10% by the turn of the century (7.4% in 1897). After

1906, following the rise to power of the opposition coalition, it increased again. However, in 1912 and 1917, we find only a few representatives of this category.<sup>74</sup> Gradually, such lords disappeared from the ranks of the lord-lieutenants, like Count János Pálffy, lord-lieutenant of Pozsony County, who allocated 5,000 Guldens from the inauguration banquet fund to a county pension institution and also offered his salary to charitable purposes.<sup>75</sup> In contrast, while in 1867, landowners with estates below 3,000 acres comprised only a third (35.1%) of the aristocratic lord-lieutenants' group; by the turn of the century, they constituted over half (59.2% in 1897), and by the end of the era, they accounted for three-quarters of the group (77.7% in 1917).

The smaller landowners were not in an easy situation. The impoverishment of this social group was a topic widely discussed during the era, and the above-mentioned studies also confirmed this view. Presumably, for many of them, it was not only the prestige of the lord-lieutenant position but also the salary attached to it that contributed to accepting the office, and it is not surprising that their proportion increased within the lord-lieutenant corps. It seems that Count Gábor Bethlen, the lord-lieutenant of Nagy- and Kis-Küküllő counties, also struggled to make ends meet from the income of his 3,779-acre estate. His tax arrears and other debts caused much concern not only for him but also for the Minister of the Interior. Bethlen, during the course of the case, indignantly wrote, "*To describe how I fell into tax arrears would be quite lengthy, but two-thirds of the country's landowners will not be surprised by this*".<sup>76</sup> Bethlen was not the only one who accumulated debts, even if his case cannot be generalized. In the spring of 1870, Gedeon Ráday, the son of the chief captain of the Jászkún district, was involved in a financial affair. His father was acquitted, lest the bankruptcy proceedings "*affect even the dignity of the chief captaincy he held*".<sup>77</sup> The exoneration of Baron Zsigmond Perényi, the lord-lieutenant of Bereg and Ugocsa, in 1889 was also greatly influenced by the upheaval in his financial circumstances. According to the government's standpoint, this situation also posed a threat to the prestige of his position.<sup>78</sup>

Small landowners, such as Baron Zsigmond Diószeghy, who served as the lord-lieutenant of Szolnok-Doboka county and owned only 520 acres of land,

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74 In the initial period, there were more aristocrats among the lord-lieutenants, so in 1867, out of the 37 nobles, 12 had estates over 10,000 acres, while in 1907, out of the 18, only three (16.6%) remained. Despite the distortion caused by the small numbers, the trend is evident.

75 *Pesti Napló*, 22. 08. 1871, Vol. 22, no. 192, p. 1.

76 MNL OL, K 148, 1883-3-2554, Bethlen to the Minister of the Interior, 10 April 1881.

77 *Ibid.*, 1870-3-839. The proposal of the Minister of the Interior to the sovereign, 27 March 1870.

78 *Ibid.*, 1889-3-1375. The proposal of the Minister of the Interior to the sovereign, 14 April 1889.

of which less than half was arable land, were heavily reliant on their salaries. He would have been willing to continue his service even when the Károlyi government placed him on temporary retirement on 4 November 1918. He requested that the years spent in county service be taken into account for his pension, citing his two sons in the military and his underage children whose support posed financial difficulties.<sup>79</sup>

The authority secured by landownership and social status, as well as the prestige provided by family connections, were extensively exploited by governments throughout the era. Referring to these factors was a recurring element in appointments. The independent financial situation was highlighted almost in every case, with particular emphasis on landownership. In 1887, for the position of lord-lieutenant of Torda-Aranyos County, the Minister of the Interior stated in his proposal: *“I have chosen Count Géza Bethlen, one of the most prestigious landowners of the county.”*<sup>80</sup> During the appointment of one of the lord-lieutenants in Vas County, it was not only noted that he was a *“prominent landowner”* but it was also emphasized that his candidacy for the position *“was warmly recommended by the county aristocracy and landowning middle class”*.<sup>81</sup> The influential endorsers who carried authority also played a significant role in the appointments, also favoring the selection of lord-lieutenants from these same social strata.

### Local ties

The absence of local connections was not a disqualifying factor, but a lord-lieutenant could exert more influence if they were a local person and owned estates within the county. Therefore, in 1872, when the lord-lieutenant of Sopron County resigned, prince Pál Esterházy, lord-lieutenant of Moson County, was appointed as his successor, as he was deemed the most suitable candidate due to his extensive estates, connections, and influence. Similarly, count József Batthyány, owner of vast estates in Moson County, was appointed as the lord-lieutenant of that county, as he resided there and held authority and popularity in the region.<sup>82</sup>

Next, I examined the extent to which the lord-lieutenants were connected to their respective jurisdictions through their estates. I created several categories:

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79 Ibid., 1918-11-690. The former lord-lieutenant of Szolnok-Doboka County to the Minister of the Interior, 21 November 1918.

80 Ibid., 1887-3-773. The proposal of the Minister of the Interior to the sovereign, 23 February 1887.

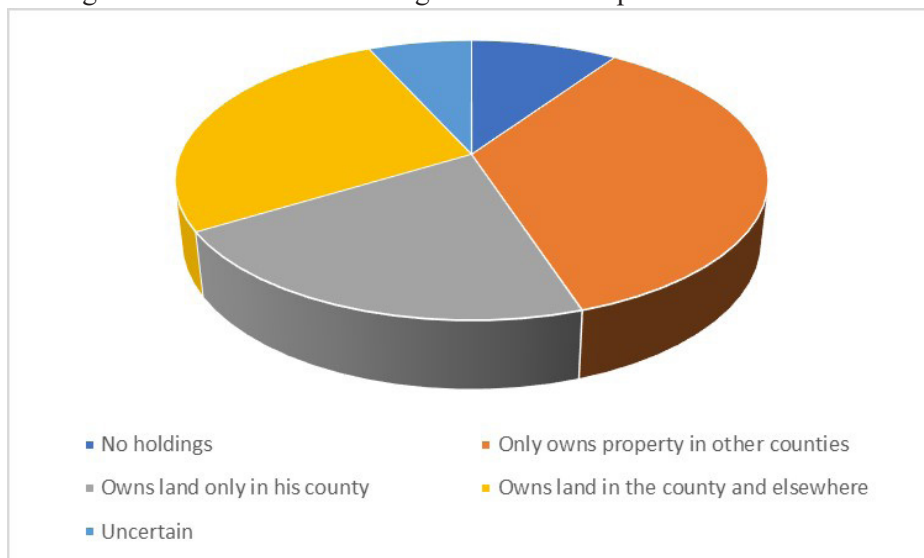
81 Ibid., 1871-3-708.

82 Ibid., 1872-3-4856. The proposal of the Minister of the Interior to the sovereign, 16 September 1872.

those who had no estates at all; those who owned estates in other authorities; those who only had estates within their own county; those who had estates in multiple locations, including the relevant authority; and lord-lieutenants who served in multiple jurisdictions but owned estates only in one of them. The first two categories, understandably, were not connected to their respective jurisdictions through their estates. The closest ties were observed among those lord-lieutenants who exclusively owned estates within their own county. About half of the lord-lieutenants were connected to their counties through their estates, but less than a fifth of them had estates exclusively within the jurisdiction where they held the lord-lieutenant position. Furthermore, one-tenth of the lord-lieutenants served in multiple jurisdictions, but only owned estates in one of those locations.

If we examine this issue not only from the perspective of individuals, but also from the perspective of the counties, we can observe that out of the 178 occasions<sup>83</sup> when an aristocrat was appointed, approximately half of them were lord-lieutenants who had estates linked to the county, while the other half did not have such connections through their estates.

Diagram No. 6: Local ties through land ownership



A tenth of the lord-lieutenants (9.5%) had no estates (or are not listed in the registers of land owners), over a third (35.3%) owned estates in other counties,

83 Indeed, the number is higher than the total number of lord-lieutenants because some individuals were appointed to the leadership of two or, rarely, more counties simultaneously or consecutively. Lajos Kürthy held the record in this regard, serving as lord-lieutenant in multiple counties, including Liptó, Árva, Zólyom, Bars, and Komárom.

more than a quarter (26.9%) owned estates both in other places and in the respective county where they served, and only about a fifth (21.3%) had estates solely in their own county. There are also cases where the lord-lieutenant himself had no estate, but other close family members (father, siblings) had estates in the given county – these are listed in the “uncertain” category.

Due to the small number of cases, it is not possible to evaluate the situation in individual counties. If we consider only those counties where there were at least four aristocrats among the lord-lieutenants (there were 20 such counties), some of them show a distribution across different categories, and no clear trend emerges. In the following seven counties, the majority of the lord-lieutenants were local landowners: Hunyad (four out of five, three being landowners only there), Kolozs (five out of seven, and the other two had their fathers as landowners there), Pozsony (four out of five), Szabolcs (four out of five), Szepes (four out of six, with a likely fifth one), Szolnok-Doboka (all six out of six), and Torda-Aranyos (all four out of four). In contrast, in Beszterce-Naszód County, none of the four aristocrats were landowners there, in Moson County two out of six, and in Nyitra County, none of the five were. I currently do not have an explanation for the latter case, but if we examine the land structure of Beszterce-Naszód County, it becomes evident that there were hardly any large landholdings in the hands of private individuals. Therefore, there was no local landowner class from which lord-lieutenants could have been appointed. In Moson County, there were many entailed estates, and the number of eligible titled candidates for appointment was low. However, it is evident that in the Transylvanian counties, not only was the proportion of aristocrats among the lord-lieutenants generally very high, but they were mostly local landowners, hence they were connected to their respective counties. This was true even in counties like Hunyad, where the Romanian population constituted the overwhelming majority.<sup>84</sup> The other three counties also had a Romanian majority, but the former aristocratic and noble landowners still held significant political influence. The lord-lieutenants mostly continued to be appointed from those noble and aristocratic families that had been governing the respective jurisdictions for centuries.

Local connections were mostly considered an advantage, but by the turn of the century, this expectation started to diminish. As evident from Magdolna Balázs’s sampling, the proportion of “strangers” increased until the turn of the century, with half of the lord-lieutenants having no local ties to their respective counties, but there was a subsequent decrease in this trend.<sup>85</sup> However, Balázs did not take into account that in many cases, the appointed lord-lieutenants came

84 In 1910, 79.9% of the population was Romanian-speaking. *A Magyar Szent Korona országának 1910. évi népszámlálása*. Vol. I. Budapest 1912, p. 408-409.

85 BALÁZS, A középszintű közigazgatási apparátus, p. 118-119.

from neighboring counties. Kálmán Kemény, for example, was appointed to lead a neighboring county. They removed the following passage from the proposal as unnecessary justification:

*“It is true that he has estates in Torda-Aranyos County, but this cannot be an obstacle to his appointment as the lord-lieutenant of Alsó-Fehér County, as these two counties are adjacent to each other, with the same ethnicities present in both counties, and political interests and social customs are also very similar.”<sup>86</sup>*

## Conclusions

Despite the industrialization that took place during the dualist period, Hungary remained an agrarian country until the end of the era. In the mid-19th century, the proportion of the agricultural population accounted for three-quarters of the total population, and by 1910, it still constituted nearly two-thirds (62.4%) of the population.<sup>87</sup> Indeed, it is not surprising that landownership remained the most prestigious form of wealth, enhanced by the prestige provided by one’s lineage and social status. The special status of landownership was encapsulated in a common saying of the era: *“akié a föld, azé az ország”*, which means *“whoever owns the land, owns the country”*. It is understandable that the large landowners with holdings exceeding 1,000 acres, who possessed nearly 40% of the land, enjoyed a special prestige. Alongside tradition, the governments consciously utilized this as a tool to ensure the authority of their *“outstretched arms”*, the lord-lieutenants.

The lord-lieutenants had to make an impression. The criticism faced by József Szlávy, the former Prime Minister, during the short tenure of Gábor Baross as Minister of the Interior in 1889, sheds light on the selection criteria and difficulties of lord-lieutenant appointments. It was deemed unwise to appoint a young chief county notary as lord-lieutenant in counties where *“dynastic families”* resided, such as in Békés. *“Firstly, because it is impossible for such a person to make an impression on the families, and secondly, he cannot win over these families for the government.”<sup>88</sup>* To make an impression, it was primarily essential for the lord-lieutenant to come from a prestigious family, and factors such as lineage, noble

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86 MNL OL, K 148, 1885-3-1848, The proposal of the Minister of the Interior to the sovereign, 12 May 1885.

87 KÖVÉR. *Iparosodás agrárországban. Magyarország gazdaságtörténete 1848–1914*. Budapest 1982, p. 123; KATUS. *A modern Magyarország születése. Magyarország története 1711–1914*. Pécs 2009, p. 420-321.

88 KOZOCSA, ed. Justh Zsigmond naplója és levelei. Budapest 1977. In *Hazai napló*, 21. May 1889. <https://mek.oszk.hu/05600/05631/html/02.htm#b949> (04. 11. 2020.)

title, land ownership, and extensive family connections were expected attributes. One scene from Miklós Bánffy's *Transylvanian Trilogy* is emblematic of this. Bánffy, who had firsthand experience of the world of Transylvanian aristocracy as a former lord-lieutenant himself, opens the first volume with a description of a rural aristocratic family celebration. During the lunch, they also invited the lord-lieutenant and seated him in a prominent place, which greatly flattered his vanity, although his status as an outsider – not being “one of them” – was emphasized in doing so.<sup>89</sup> The social weight and prestige of the aristocracy were still very high, and undoubtedly, being “one of them” gave a person an inherent authority. Moreover, it was much easier for them to gain acceptance among the influential circles of the county.

The proportion of aristocracy in the lord-lieutenants' ranks during the Dual Monarchy era, although showing some fluctuations, significantly decreased. While in 1867, they constituted about half of the group, before World War I, their presence decreased to less than one-fifth, and by the end of the war, only a quarter remained in charge of the counties. Not only did their distribution differ over time, but there were also significant regional variations. As we have seen, the proportion of aristocrats did not show any significant correlation with the land structure (in terms of overall large estates, aristocratic large estates, or estates over 100 acres), the proportion of different ethnicities, or the spatial distribution of the titled persons. Even those counties where the institution of hereditary lord-lieutenants persisted until the mid-19th century did not exhibit similarities. In further research, it is necessary to examine the role of regional and family traditions to gain a deeper understanding of these patterns.<sup>90</sup>

What is clear, however, is that the aristocratic lord-lieutenants' landholdings underwent significant changes during the dualist period. While at the beginning of the era, one-third of them had landholdings over 10,000 acres, by the turn of the century, only a few of them retained such extensive estates. The number of landless or landowners with estates under 500 acres advanced during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but this trend reversed afterward. By the beginning of the 20th century, the proportion of landowners with over 5,000 acres also decreased, and the majority of this group consisted of landowners with estates ranging from 500 to 3,000 acres. When we compare this with the findings of

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89 BÁNFFY. *Erdélyi történet. Vol. I. Megszámláltattál*. Kolozsvár 2002, p. 44.

90 For example, from the regional study of András Cieger, it is evident that local factors, power relations, and personal connections play a significant role. Cieger. *Interests and Strategies. An Investigation of the Political Elite of the Sub-Carpathian Region in the Age of Dualism (1867–1918)*. In PÁL and POPOVICI. *Elites and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe (1848–1918)*. Frankfurt am Main 2014, p. 191-210. The role of family factors will be analyzed separately in a dedicated study.



Scott M. Eddie, which suggest that the decline in landholdings primarily affected the category between 500 and 5,000 acres, while the category with over 10,000 acres increased the most, the trend becomes evident that for aristocrats with more modest wealth, taking up official positions provided one solution to maintain a lifestyle befitting their rank. Not only contemporary references but also the evolution of the lord-lieutenants' estate sizes suggests that as the role of lord-lieutenants transformed, the owners of large estates (*latifundia*) gradually became less willing to take on the increasing administrative responsibilities. Instead, they concentrated on their own estates and social life. On the other hand, the landless or less wealthy individuals continued to gladly accept appointments to the increasingly bureaucratized office that was losing its former luster. For them, the lord-lieutenant's office not only represented prestige and power but also provided additional income. The situation somewhat reversed: at the beginning of the era, governments utilized the prestige derived from the status and wealth of aristocrats to consolidate the political situation and strengthen the position of the lord-lieutenants. However, by the end of the era, in many cases, the appointment to the lord-lieutenant's office elevated the prestige of impoverished titled individuals.

While a clear explanation for the regional distribution of aristocratic lord-lieutenants has not been found, distinct regional patterns are evident. In the former Ottoman territories, there are few or no aristocratic lord-lieutenants, with the majority of them being concentrated in Transylvania and the western-northwestern parts of the country. It is worth noting that in Pest County, which had its seat in the capital city, and in the former capitals, Pressburg (Bratislava, Pozsony) and Cluj (Koložsvár), aristocratic lord-lieutenants were predominantly appointed. Undoubtedly, this was partly driven by the desire for representation, where having a lord-lieutenant from a wealthy and prestigious background, specifically from an aristocratic family, was considered important.

Due to its unique historical traditions, Transylvania requires a separate explanation. The role of the aristocracy in the region has been examined in a separate study.<sup>91</sup> The Transylvanian aristocracy was much less wealthy than their counterparts in Hungary, and they had significant traditions of political and administrative involvement. Within the region, there are also differences: in most parts of Székely Land, in the "leader county" of the Saxons, Szeben, and in the predominantly Romanian-speaking Fogaras County, the proportion of aristocrats is low (or very low). The aristocratic lord-lieutenants were primarily concentrated in five counties where they had their estates and where they resided, with the

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91 PÁL. Die politische Rolle der siebenbürgischen Aristokratie vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg. In WAKOUNIG; HORČIČKA and ŽUPANIČ, ed. *Habsburgischer Adel: Zwischen Nation – Nationalismus – Nationalsozialismus (1870–1938/1945)*. Wien; Hamburg 2021, p. 195-213.

exception of Beszterce-Naszód, which had a Saxon-Romanian composition. Until 1917, only aristocrats held the position of lord-lieutenant in Kolozs County. This had symbolic significance as Cluj (Kolozsvár) remained a regional center and a meeting place for the Transylvanian aristocracy, serving as a hub for social gatherings and marriage alliances. In those counties where Romanians and Saxons formed the overwhelming majority and the land structure differed – lacking large estates, but featuring various forms of communal land ownership and state-owned lands –, the proportion of outsiders among the lord-lieutenants was high. In some cases, they appointed landowners from neighboring counties, or they selected lord-lieutenants from more distant regions.

In the Transdanubian region dominated by large estates, particularly in the northwestern counties, aristocrats were also appointed as lord-lieutenants to ensure prestige. Here, a small landowner or a landless gentry would not have had the authority among the influential families of large landholders, while in other northern counties – and elsewhere as well – local influential noble families were also considered, such as the Justh family in Turóc.<sup>92</sup>

According to Magdolna Balázs's research, the proportion of individuals without local connections (using her terminology, position divergent and incongruent) was highest among the lord-lieutenants, particularly in Transylvania and the northern counties. She attributes this to the fact that "*the central authorities deliberately appointed lord-lieutenants who did not come from these regions, and mostly – with the exception of the Saxons – were not members of any ethnic minority, considering the ethnic tensions in these counties*".<sup>93</sup> In the case of aristocratic lord-lieutenants, one cannot draw such a clear-cut conclusion. Clearly, in certain cases, non-local individuals were deliberately appointed to lead a county. However, as we have seen, in counties where there were Hungarian local landowners, we find them also at the helm of predominantly ethnic-minority inhabited counties. The absence of local individuals in cases like Beszterce-Naszód or Brassó counties can be attributed to the specific social and landholding structure that simply lacked suitable candidates from the local community.

Due to tradition, economic and social conditions, the continued prestige of landownership and rank, the "*appropriate candidates*" remained predominantly representatives of the former landowning nobility and aristocracy until the end of the era, but gradual changes can also be observed. Even so, the lord-lieutenants still formed the most conservative group within the political-administrative elite – and by conservative, I mean not in terms of ideology but in terms of the

92 See DEMMEL. *Pánszlávok a kastélyban – Justh József és a szlovák nyelvű magyar nemesség elfeledett története*. Budapest 2014.

93 BALÁZS, A középszintű közigazgatási apparátus, p. 122.

composition of the group –, and they largely preserved their homogeneity. In comparison to the Members of Parliament, not only did entrepreneurs – not to mention those of Jewish origin – fail to appear among the lord-lieutenants until the end of the era, but individuals with a bourgeois background and/or those who pursued intellectual careers also belong to the rare exceptions.

Arno Mayer expressed a sharp opinion about the persistence of the old regime in Europe and the significant role of the nobility until the outbreak of World War I, seeing the source of all evil in the nobility's attachment to power.<sup>94</sup> In historical scholarship, the picture has become much more nuanced today, but it is certain that in several parts of Europe, the nobility did not lose its grip on power.<sup>95</sup> We cannot directly compare the lord-lieutenants with the administrative elite of the other part of the Monarchy, as the nature of their offices significantly differed. However, the aristocrats with large estates also sought to preserve their positions in those regions, to the extent allowed by the general suffrage introduced at the beginning of the 20th century.<sup>96</sup> A very similar situation can be observed in Croatia, for understandable reasons, where the majority of the lord-lieutenants were noble.<sup>97</sup> In Prussia, before World War I, not only did nobles make up the majority of the governments, but they also dominated the leadership positions in the middle-level administration.<sup>98</sup> In Great Britain, where the weight of large estates was similar, wealthy landowning families also played an important role in political life.<sup>99</sup> In 19th-century Italy, we also find aristocrats

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94 MAYER. *The Persistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War*. New York 1981.

95 See LIEVEN. *The Aristocracy in Europe, 1815–1914*. Hampshire; London 1992. A significant portion of the international literature does not differentiate between aristocrats and nobles, which is justified by the small number and status of the nobles. However, in Hungary, one cannot equate the large group of landless petty nobles with the aristocrats, as there are notable distinctions between them.

96 ADLGASSER. Der höhere Adel im altösterreichischen Parlament. Ein Überblick. In TÖNSMEYER and VELEK, ed. *Adel und Politik in der Habsburgermonarchie und den Nachbarländern zwischen Absolutismus und Demokratie*. München 2011, p. 215-223; HÖBELT. Der Adel und die Kurie des Großgrundbesitzes 1861–1918. In TÖNSMEYER and VELEK, ed. *Adel und Politik*, p. 251-263; VELEK. Politische Organisation der Großgrundbesitzer in den böhmischen Ländern 1860–1914 am Beispiel des sog. konservativen Großgrundbesitzes in Böhmen. In TÖNSMEYER and VELEK, ed. *Adel und Politik*, p. 265-317.

97 IVELJIĆ. Der Adel in Kroatien und Slowenien: Zwischen glanzvoller Tradition und ungewisser Zukunft. In WAKOUNIG; HORČIČKA and ŽUPANIČ, ed. *Habsburgischer Adel*, p. 218.

98 The *Oberpräsidenten* (11 out of 12) and *Regierungpräsidenten* (23 out of 36), somewhat similar to the lord-lieutenants, but even a significant number of lower-ranking officials. Kaelble. *Französisches und deutsches Bürgertum 1870 – 1914*. In KAELBLE. *Eine europäische Gesellschaft? Beiträge zur Sozialgeschichte Europas vom 19. bis ins 21. Jahrhundert*. Göttingen 2020, p. 51.

99 Around 1880 66,1% of the total land were held in estates of more than 1,000 acres, and at the

in leading positions,<sup>100</sup> although a slow withdrawal can be observed from the 1870s onwards.<sup>101</sup> Árpád von Klimó compared the high-ranking officials in Italy with those in Prussia: while in Prussia between 1866 and 1890, half of the top officials were nobles, in Italy, only 13.7% of them held noble titles.<sup>102</sup> Even during the Third Republic in France, despite the small number of aristocrats, they “continued to exercise a disproportionate amount of authority, prestige and influence in French society”.<sup>103</sup>

The Hungarian aristocracy was not homogeneous even in the past, and it did not remain unchanged during the period under discussion. In Germany, there is extensive scholarly literature on the phenomenon of “*position keeping*” (“*oben bleiben*”).<sup>104</sup> For the above analyzed aristocratic lord-lieutenants, the position of lord-lieutenant increasingly fit into the “*oben bleiben*” strategy as well. As Ewald Frie noted regarding the territories east of the Elbe: “*It is true that the nobility faded. But nobles remained on top.*”<sup>105</sup> The First World War brought about a radical turning point. After the war, the noble landowners who ended up in the new countries lost a significant portion of their estates and political influence due to land reforms. In Hungary, there were indeed no radical land reforms, and the aristocracy did not entirely lose their position in politics either,<sup>106</sup> but significant changes still occurred. This is evident from the fact that during the interwar period, there were hardly any aristocrats present in the lord-lieutenant corps.<sup>107</sup>

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top “*of the pyramid were 250 territorial magnates, each with more than 30,000 acres*”, and “*national administration and local government were still dominated by the landed classes in the third quarter of the nineteenth century.*” CANNADINE. *The decline and fall of the British Aristocracy*. London 1992, p. 8-11, 14.

100 KÖRNER. *Politics of Culture in Liberal Italy. From Unification to Fascism*. New York; London 2009, p. 22.

101 CARDOZA. *Aristocrats in Bourgeois Italy. The Piedmontese Nobility, 1861–1930*. Cambridge 1997, p. 69-70.

102 KLIMÓ. *Staat und Klientel im 19. Jahrhundert. Administrative Eliten in Italien und Preußen im Vergleich 1860–1918*. Köln 1997, p. 97-98.

103 MACKNIGHT. *Aristocratic families in republican France, 1870–1940*. Manchester; New York 2012, p. 3.

104 BRAUN. Konzeptionelle Bemerkungen zum Obenbleiben. In WEHLER, ed. *Europäischer Adel 1750–1950* (Geschichte und Gesellschaft-Sonderheft, no. 13). Göttingen 1990, p. 87-95. More Central and Eastern European studies on the subject: HOLSTE; HÜCHTKER and MÜLLER, ed. *Aufsteigen und Obenbleiben in den europäischen Gesellschaften des 19. Jahrhunderts. Akteure, Arenen und Aushandlungsprozesse*. Berlin 2009.

105 FRIE. Adel um 1800. Oben bleiben? In *Zeitenblicke*, 2005, Vol. 4, no. 3. <https://www.zeitenblicke.de/2005/3/Frie> (14. 03. 2023)

106 GYÁNI and KÖVÉR. *Magyarország társadalomtörténete a reformkortól a második világháborúig*. 2. ed. Budapest 2001, p. 223-236.

107 Among the lord-lieutenants between the two world wars, only 16 had landholdings exceeding 1,000 acres, and among them, there were six aristocrats in total. TAKÁCS. A főispáni kar

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