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The Castle as a Venue for the Rise of Elites in the Regions: A Probe into the Upper Hungary in the late Middle Ages **

The text focuses on the relationship among the medieval castle, its social background and the careers of castle officials. It is based on present archontological research as well as prosopography approaches. Using the example of six castles in the regions of Zvolen/Zolyom and Tekov/Bars County in the late Middle Ages, it is possible to define the circle of officials of higher and middle degree: captains, castellans and stewards. During 1402 – 1526, this heterogeneous group consisted of approximately 108 persons. About a quarter of them were castle officials coming from the relevant castle estate or county, as well as officials of foreign origin settled during their service in the given region. Almost three quarters of the officials had not shown any connection with their home region. The post of castellan had been held mostly by poor landowners and occasionally by noble burghers. The office of the steward for which the designation *provisor curiae* had also been used, had not required a noble title and was also held by subjects. The establishment of officials during their service at the place of work had taken place through the acquisition of property. Officials who had or had been creating a property background in the region had worked in their positions longer, including multi-generational service. On the contrary, officials had shown the fluctuation without ties to the place of work.

Keywords: medieval castles, social mobility, making of elites, Upper Hungary, Slovakia

In this contribution, I'll try to shed some light on the relationship between the centre and the peripheries of a castle estate in the social sphere. I admit, at first sight, this is a well-known topic that has been much talked about in recent re-

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search. My goal is to put the traditional view of the tension between the social elites and their surroundings to the test. In the Slovak national narrative, the castle symbolises this exact point of view, as it was the home of foreign oppressors. This conflicting view of castles is present in the collective historical awareness even today. It leads to perceptions of backwardness and marginality of the exploited territory.¹ Modern research notes that medieval castles were, understandably, centres of power. There, power was held and further divided. At the same time, however, it points out that castles were networking places that supported social mobility.²

The following questions arise: How did the castle affect the social composition of the population surrounding it? How did the castle generate social elites in its surroundings? Were these elites mostly local or foreign? In terms of geography, not ethnicity. The basic question is, how did the castle aid the locals in climbing the social ladder. This arises from the current archontological and prosopographic knowledge of select Hungarian castles. I've chosen two neighbouring counties to base my research in: Zvolen (Hungarian: Zólyom) and Tekov (Hungarian: Bars) in medieval Upper Hungary. I focused on six castles within the selected counties: Zvolen, Lupča, Víglaš, Dobrá Niva, Šášov and Revište. Their ownership and estates varied. Not even their administrative models were one and the same. The reason for the selection is that they were originally under the control of the king or queen. Moreover, these castles and domains were adjacent to each other. The other nearby castles of Hrušov and Levice were not under royal control. In the region there is also Krupina, which was not only a fortress, but mainly a royal town. On the other hand, the six castles were similar in their appointed officials. The authority of these officials was not always strictly specified, two officials could even hold authority over the same administrative subjects. Therefore, I chose to define the persons mentioned in the sources as captains, castellans, and stewards as castle officials. I focused my attention to the Late Middle Ages. The older time periods provide sufficient data only for one of these castles. The

¹ This is summed up in an essay by the influential socialist intellectual Vladimír Mináč from 1968, entitled "Where are our castles?" See Vladimír Mináč, *Vybrané spory* (Bratislava: Národné literárne centrum, 1997), 11-18. On the criticism of the concept of plebeian history of Slovaks see Eva Krekovičová, "Mýtus plebejského národa", in: *Mýty naše slovenské*, eds. Eduard Krekovič, Elena Mannová and Eva Krekovičová (Bratislava: Academic Electronic Press, 2005), 86-93; Dušan Škvarna, "Rozpor medzi kolektívnou pamäťou Slovákov a minulosťou Slovenska", *Acta historica Neosoliensia* 13 (2010), No. 1: 268-277; Daniela Dvořáková, Denisa Gura Doričová and Tomáš Gális, *Stopy stredoveku. Rozhovory o ľuďoch temnej doby* (Bratislava: N Press, 2023), 203-210.

² Martyn Rady, *Nobility, Land and Service in Medieval Hungary* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 112-126, 133-143; Charles Coulson, *Castles in Medieval Society. Fortresses in England, France and Ireland in the Central Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 186-187, 252-253, 382-383; Katarina Predovnik, "The Castle as Social Space: An Introduction", in: *Castrum Bene 12. The Castle as Social Space*, ed. Katarina Predovnik (Ljubljana: Ljubljana University Press, 2014), 16-19.

Šášov castle boasts a series of known castellans and deputy castellans from the 14th century. Back then, it quarrelled with the nearby abbey in Hronský Beňadik. Therefore, I focused on a period beginning at the start of the 15th century. There is data on castle officials available for all the six castles in this time period with some unavoidable gaps. I based my research on the monumental archontological work by Pál Engel. He gathered information regarding castle administrators up to the middle of the 15th century. In some cases, I provided additional information for more accurate details. The currently ongoing project on Hungarian secular archontology has not yet published a volume dedicated to castles in the Late Middle Ages. I could, therefore, rely only on the partially published data about the Zvolen castle. It was the only one of the six castles that served as a seat of a county head, sometimes substituted by a captain. For the period after the middle of the 15th century, I subjected the castles to my own research. I have already published the lists of castle officials up to the end of the Middle Ages.³ In some cases, I refined the data to be more accurate.

The sources I focused on range from 1402 to 1526. Working with statistics was inevitable. However, I view it only as a means to an end. Quantification like this is mainly supportive in value.⁴ Originally, I identified 112 officials. I later reduced the number to 108. This is because I had identified the same persons operating at different castles.⁵ Out of the 108, I could safely determine the origin of 82 people, based on a surname or a nobiliary predicate. That is 76 %. I could not reliably

³ Pál Engel, *Magyar középkori adattár. Magyarország világi archontológiája 1301–1457. Középkori magyar genealógia* (Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézet – Arcanum digitéka, 2001), CD-ROM, section Várnagyk és várbirtokosok, entries Dobronya, Lipcse, Revistye, Saskó, Végles, Zólyom; Pavol Maliniak, “Dobrá Niva”, “Lupča”, “Revište”, “Šášov”, “Víglaš”, “Zvolenský zámok”, in: *Stredoveké hrady na Slovensku. Život, kultúra, spoločnosť*, ed. Daniela Dvořáková (Bratislava: Veda, 2017), 286, 343, 371, 395, 420, 424; Norbert C. Tóth et al., *Magyarország világi archontológiája 1458–1526 II. Megyék* (Budapest: MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont, Történettudományi Intézet, 2017), 382–390.

⁴ For statistical methods in the research of officials in medieval castles, see e.g. Erik Fügedi, “Királyi tisztség vagy hűbér?”, *Történelmi Szemle* 25 (1982), No. 3: 483–509; Waldemar Bukowski, *Burgabowie zamku Krakowskiego XIII–XIV wieku* (Kórnik: Biblioteka Kórnicka, 1999), 16–17; Robert Šimůnek, *Správní systém šlechtického dominia v pozdně středověkých Čechách. Rožmberská doména 1418–1472* (Praha: Historický ústav AV ČR, 2005), 27–28, 377–378, 511–512; Cosmin Popa-Gorjanu, *Medieval Nobility in Central Europe: The Himfi Family* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Mega, 2019), 138–145.

⁵ The nobleman Mikeš (Nicholas) of Jemniště was the Zvolen castle captain at first. He later became the captain of Šášov castle. Elemér Mályusz, ed., *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár III* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1993), 227, nr. 754; Elemér Mályusz, ed., *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár IV* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1994), 50, nr. 7, 193, nr. 765, 195, nr. 778; Elemér Mályusz, ed., *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár VII* (Budapest: Magyar Országos Levéltár, 2001), 250, nr. 959. The nobleman Ladislav of Necpaly was the Šášov castle captain. Then he was the captain of Dobrá Niva castle. Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára Budapest (hereafter: MNL OL), funds Diplomatikai levéltár (hereafter: DL) 94 464, Diplomatikai fényképgyűjtemény (hereafter: DF) 237 119, 249 911. The nobleman Peter Koler de Loromberk was the Zvolen castle captain at first. Then he became the captain of Šášov and Revište castles. MNL OL-DF 249 991, 249 931, 249 795, 271 356, 213 398, 250 001, 249 798.

determine the origin of 26 people, i.e., 24 %. They were either incomplete designations, i.e., *Laurentius castellanus*, or unclear ones, i.e., *Martinus Litteratus*.⁶ In other cases, I could not identify the surname at all. This is mainly the case of several Dobrá Niva officials at the end of the Middle Ages. Their surnames are *Gardesycz*, *Kokoschycz*, *Ylowycz*, *Gralich*, *Dagoczich* and the like.⁷ I assume they originated in Croatia. Officials with an unclear origin were commonly given last names like *Kowach* (Smith) or *Kerchmar* (Innkeeper).⁸ It pointed at their lowborn status. I assume, based on the given context, they could have been former local subjects.

I was mainly interested in 82 officials with a clear origin. Most of them – 60, that is 73 % or almost three quarters, had no clear ties to the local regions. They did not remain at the castle, nor in the region, once their service was over. The fact that they are in the majority has to do with the origin of the castle owners or holders. They were magnates from other regions, preferring their own officials. On the other hand, 22 officials, i.e., 27 %, show steady ties to their stations. This part consisted of two comparably sized groups. The first group of 12, i.e., 15 %, was formed by officials coming directly from the adjacent region. They were local landlords and lesser nobles who served at the nearby castles. Other than them, the castles employed several officials of non-noble origin. They came from the nearby cities and towns.⁹ The origin of these people is determined by genealogical relationships, their estates, service data, and, in the case of burghers, tax registers. The other group consisting of 10 people (12 %) featured officials who came from a region outside of the researched county. These persons were first generation settlers at the castle in which they were stationed. This is evident from the change of their nobiliary predicate or the prolonged use of an old surname in a new environment. Other than nobility, this group features several former burghers promoted into nobles.¹⁰

The exact circumstances of castle officials within the research sample taking over their posts are not clear. Castles of other regions feature rare, preserved service contracts from the 15th century. Barbara of Cilli, Queen of Hungary, used these contracts to appoint the “stewardship and castellanship” (*pflugweis und burggraffschaft*) to a specific castellan.¹¹ Oral appointments were still the most common, however. The appointed official had to swear an oath. The oath, while a

⁶ MNL OL-DF 261 389, 205 697.

⁷ Štátny archív v Banskej Bystrici (hereafter: ŠA BB), fund Zvolenská župa (hereafter: ZŽ), box nr. 1, Protocollum congregationis I, pag. 3, 46, 48, 83.

⁸ MNL OL-DF 205 637, 205 639.

⁹ See the Appendix 1: The list of officials of local origin.

¹⁰ See the Appendix 2: The list of established officials.

¹¹ MNL OL-DF 265 286; MNL OL-DL 68 981. From the correspondence between the owners of Revište castle at the end of the 15th century we know about the hiring of new servants on the basis of their reputation and recommendation. MNL OL-DF 266 570; MNL OL-DL 21 083.

symbolic act, reflected the official's duties. When a castle and its domain had several owners, an agreement was usually made to pick a castellan together. This can be viewed as a precaution against conflicts of power. In such circumstances, a castellan was appointed only temporarily. Such was the case of Šášov castle at the end of the 15th century.¹² Its counterpoint was a confirmation of termination of service. Its written form was again very brief, significantly limiting our level of knowledge on the matter. Using a modern vocabulary, we could see it as a dismissal. Using Latin terminology of the times, a *littera conservationis*. Such a confirmation is linked to Víglaš castle. The holder of the castle, Master of the Treasury Blasius Ráskay, issued it in Buda in 1503. He confirmed that the castellan Nicholas Dúbravický had served loyally and bravely, and that he handed the castle over in a good state.¹³ Analogically, this was becoming an obligatory practice in the Kingdom of Bohemia. People without a termination confirmation were not to be taken into any further service.¹⁴ Such practice was not yet common in Hungary. We are free to assume, however, that Nicholas Dúbravický asked for such a confirmation precisely because he planned to take on a different office.

Donations granted by estate owners were also an important mechanism for establishing and integrating former officials. They appear in the sources throughout the whole focus period, even during the War of the Hungarian Succession in the middle of the 15th century. An estate could have been given to an official by the King, a magnate owning the estate, even a person holding a castle as a pledge. An interesting fact is that donations were often given to officials who hadn't yet spent any significant time in office. This shouldn't necessarily surprise us. Receiving estates in a new place of residence could have been a reward for previous service. At the same time, it bound the official to their new office. The benefactor, of course, expected loyalty in return. The estates given were usually smaller villages, settlements, or mills. A particularly interesting trait in most cases is the location. The estate was usually at the edge of the castle domain, from which it was excluded after the donation.¹⁵ A prudent move, as the homogeneous nature of the castle domain was not disturbed – on the other hand, it shrank. Donations for castellans, deputy castellans, or stewards, are linked to the castles of Lupča, Víglaš, Zvolen, probably also Dobrá Niva. For the sake of completeness, it needs to be said that the process of estate acquisition by officials in their new posts is not always well documented. If the estate was not owned by the King, the benefactor had to ask for a donation confirmation.¹⁶

¹² MNL OL-DL 46 430, 90 257; MNL OL-DF 266 567.

¹³ Imre Benkó, "A Dubraviczai Dubraviczky-család XVI-ik században", *Turul* 30 (1912), No. 4: 147.

¹⁴ Šimůnek, *Správní systém šlechtického dominia*, 321-323.

¹⁵ The villages of Selce, Oravce, Dúbravica, Sebedín, Zolná, *Merthehaza*, Breznica are mentioned in the following text.

¹⁶ See the Appendices 1 and 2.

An example is a charter issued by King Matthias Corvinus in 1464, confirming the donation made by the nobleman Jost, captain of Víglaš. At an undisclosed earlier time, Jost gave the village of Sebedín, a mill, and a manor in the village of Zolná to the nobleman John Steck, *Burcrabius dictus*. In 1464, Matthias Corvinus ordered the monastery in Šahy and the representants of the Zvolen County to introduce John Steck into his new ownership.¹⁷ The donation thus became legal. The donated estates were at the western rim of the Víglaš domain. The whole transaction features more interesting facts, however. The charter does not mention the relationship between John Steck and captain Jost. It does, however, mention the nickname *Burcrabius*, which is also the German designation for a castellan – Burggraf. It also designates John Steck with the title *nobilis*, meaning nobleman. We know that he came from the mining town of Kremnica, Steck being a local burgher family. It would seem he was a castellan in service of Jost, who demonstrated a German identity (he came from Pomerania, from the Küssow family) and stayed in touch with the nearby mining towns regularly.¹⁸ During his service, John Steck was likely promoted from a burgher into a nobleman.

All six castles of interest feature captains. The first documented evidence of this office dates to the rule of King Sigismund of Luxembourg. The phenomenon may have something to do with the Hussite threat. Zvolen castle is the first to employ the rank of captain. It was the administrative centre of the region, responsible for the defence of the whole county with the royal county head at the helm. The distinction between castellans and captains was much more than a mere name difference. The castellans mainly financed the military garrison and craftsmen. They also took care of the maintenance and supply of the castles. During conflicts, the castle garrison grew and the rank of captain was added.¹⁹ In the period after Sigismund's death, the captains, being military commanders as well, defended the castles during the succession wars. At the same time, some of them held the castles as pledges for the loans they gave to Queen Elizabeth, Sigismund's daughter. The phenomenon of a captain being the holder of the castle was typical for the castles of Lupča, Víglaš, Šášov, and Revište. Usually, knights of foreign origin held the title of Captain and Holder (*capitaneus et possessor castri*). However, none of them received their castles as a hereditary property. On the other hand,

¹⁷ The title [*Burcrabius*] is partially readable on the fold of the charter. MNL OL-DL 105 273. With the incorrect dating and inaccurate signature of the charter cf. László Zolnay, "A régi zólyomi ispánság építkezéseinek történetéhez (4. közlemény)", *Ars Hungarica* 7 (1979), No. 1: 50.

¹⁸ Pavol Maliniak, "Jošt z Küssowa a Peter Koler. Vzostupy a pády dvoch kastelánov na kráľovských venných majetkoch", in: *Stredoveké hrady na Slovensku. Život, kultúra, spoločnosť*, ed. Daniela Dvořáková (Bratislava: Veda, 2017), 207-209.

¹⁹ Richárd Horváth, "Felső Részek kapitánysága a Mátyás-korban", *Századok* 137 (2003), No. 4: 931. Contracts on the appointment of castellans with their exact roles are later known from other regions. MNL OL-DL 26 279, 102 307; MNL OL-DF 232 193.

some captains and holders issued donations for their castellans. An example being the aforementioned Jost.

Mentions of stewards appear in the sources from the beginning of Matthias Corvinus' reign. In some cases, the designation coincided with the title of deputy castellan. Zvolen castle is the best example. Here, the same people are repeatedly referred to as stewards and deputy castellans. Their service level corresponds with the designation as well. They pertained to central rather than local administration. Usually, their jobs were economic in nature, and they answered to the castellans. They were often in charge of tax collections in the castle domain.²⁰ People of non-noble origin were especially prevalent in this group of officials. Although most officials were landowners, the steward office often included burghers, even subjects. A noble rank was not a requirement. The research conducted by András Kubinyi on the steward office (*provisoratus*) at Buda castle confirms this. Despite being a central royal castle in Hungary, some stewards were burghers, one was originally a peasant.²¹ On the other hand, stewards also held lesser authority than the other two officials. There is even a known attack on a steward in my region of interest. In 1509, the citizens of Nová Baňa attacked Andrew *Kowach* (Slovak: Kováč, Hungarian: Kovács), steward of Revište castle and servant of Dóczy and Nagylucsei families, while traveling on a public road.²²

There is an interesting regional specific in the terminology here. The literary sources, next to the standard Latin designations of *provisor castri* or *provisor curie castri*, also feature a Slovak vernacular designation “dvorský” (pertaining to a court). Its first user was Jacob, steward at Zvolen castle. At the same time, he was a citizen of Zvolen town. He used the Hungarian surname Bíró, German Tornau, and Slovak Dvorský. The Hungarian Bíró, more specifically Udvarbíró, and the title “dvorský” had the same meaning.²³ It was a translation of the Latin “provisor”, meaning a steward or a court steward. Other stewards in the castle domains also used the surname “Dvorský”.²⁴ In addition, the title has taken on a

²⁰ István Kenyeres, “The Economy of Castle Estates in the Late Medieval Kingdom of Hungary”, in: *The Economy of Medieval Hungary*, eds. József Laszlovszky et al. (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2018), 397-399. For the Zvolen castle see the Appendix 1.

²¹ András Kubinyi, “A budai vár udvarbírói hivatala (1458–1541)”, *Levéltári Közlemények* 35 (1964), Nol. 1: 93-95.

²² MNL OL-DF 205 637, 261 366. The nickname of employee origin was common around the castle. Interestingly, according to a later accusation, the co-owner of Revište castle, Ladislav of Nagylucse, was supposed to have lived in concubinage with Margaret, the wife of the serf George *Kowach* from the village of Horné Hámre. MNL OL-DL 101 587.

²³ See the Appendix 1.

²⁴ In 1497–1498 *Stanislaus Dworczyk provisor* at the Víglaš castle. MNL OL-DF 206 350. Maybe is identical with *Stanko Dworsky*, who in 1512 represented the lords of Dobrá Niva castle in court. ŠA BB-ZŽ, Prot. congreg. I, pag. 11. In 1518 *Gabriel Kys provisor sive dworczyk* at the Zvolen castle. MNL OL-DF 205 781, 206 015, 206 159.

broader meaning. It also referred to other officials, not only stewards. In the 16th century, the *dworszky* and similar designations became a common term in Latin and German texts as well.²⁵

I have mentioned that stewards were subordinate to castellans or that they often acted as deputy castellans. My select sample is fairly small – around 15 stewards from the six castles of interest. Therefore, definite conclusions cannot be made. In those cases where the origin is known, they usually came from the adjacent region. There is no known case of a lowborn steward being promoted into nobility. It is likely they usually remained at the rank of burghers. The ones who were subject to a liege lord may have become freemen (*libertini*). Evidence of promotions into nobility are known only in the castellan category. I have already mentioned John Steck, a Víglaš castle castellan. There is another promotion document similar to his. During the reign of Matthias Corvinus, two brothers served at the Zvolen castle – Veit and Andrew Mühlstein. They came from a burgher family in Buda, likely of Bavarian origin. Veit Mühlstein reached a higher status. He was the Zvolen County head (or deputy count) and the count of the Kremnica Mining Chamber. Additionally, he used the title of Zvolen castle captain. Concurrently, his brother, Andrew Mühlstein, was the Zvolen castle castellan.²⁶ The sources later talk about Veit Mühlstein as an *edel herr* and *egregius*. This would mean he became a noble.²⁷ Most likely because of his activities in the mining business. In the end, he settled down in the nearby town of Banská Bystrica.

A situation like this – two brothers holding office at the same castle at the same time – was not ordinary. It was a result of Veit Mühlstein's special standing and the number of offices he held. Already during the reign of King Sigismund in the castles of his wife Barbara of Cilli, we can see members of the same families as captains or castellans at the same time. For example, members of the family of Necpaly from Turiec (Hungarian: Turóc) County simultaneously served in the castles of Šášov, Lupča and Dobrá Niva. Members of the Agárd family from Zemplín (Hungarian: Zemplén) County were simultaneously active both at Víglaš and Šášov. In the first case they were brothers, in the second distant

²⁵ MNL OL-DF 205 222; Ctibor Matulay, ed., *Mesto Banská Bystrica. Katalóg administratívnych a súdnych písomností (1020) 1255–1536 I* (Bratislava: Archivna správa MV SSR, 1980), 120, nr. 374; Antal Péch, *Alsó Magyarország bányamivelésének története I* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1884), 496, nr. 39; Ján Doruľa, *O slovensko-nemeckom spolunažívaní v 16.–18. storočí* (Bratislava: Slavistický ústav Jána Stanislava SAV, 2014), 56–57.

²⁶ András Kubinyi and Helmut von Haller, “Die Nürnberger Haller in Ofen. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Südosthandels im Spätmittelalter”, *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg* 52 (1963–1964), 86–87; Marián Skladaný, “Zápas o banskobystričku med v polovici 15. storočia”, *Historica. Zborník Filozofickej fakulty Univerzity Komenského* 27 (1976), 204–207.

²⁷ No later than 1469. Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum Budapest, Régészeti tár, sign. 61.54.C Gobil-kodex, fol. 26r; MNL OL-DF 235 345.

cousins.²⁸ Therefore, specific kinship ties were important. The aforementioned families were prominent members of the *familiaritas* in the service of the Queen. None of the castles of interest feature an inheritance of office. There is no known case of a son taking over the office of his father.

If I had to look for an example of nepotism, there is only one controversial application of this modern category to the medieval period. At the end of the 15th century, Paul Horvat, commonly referred to as Pavlič (*Paulycz*), was the castellan of the Dobrá Niva castle. It seems he was of Croatian origin, just like the holders of the Dobrá Niva domain at the time, the Frankopan family. Pavlič the castellan became the owner of the village of Breznica on the northern rim of the castle domain. Accordingly, as a castellan, he assumed the nobiliary predicate Pavlič of Breznica. The village of Breznica had belonged to the Dobrá Niva domain before. Pavlič could have been given the property, or he could have bought it from the domain holders. The Frankopan family had the castle domain only in pledge, so the prerequisite for this change was the royal consent. A charter from 1499 talks about John (*Jane* in vernacular), his son and his deputy castellan. Pavlič had been in office for ten years at the time.²⁹ It is unclear whether a castellan could have appointed a deputy castellan. The decision could have been up to the castle holders. In any case, a castellan's son holding office was not common. The termination of Pavlič's service is also out of the ordinary. The Zvolen County head took over Pavlič's personal properties in 1503. The reason – Pavlič and his Dobrá Niva servants were accused of various robberies, burglaries, and arson in the Zvolen County. He was therefore accused of infidelity to the King. The investigation mentions that Bernard Frankopan, the holder of Dobrá Niva, had appointed Pavlič into the castellan office. Pavlič was stripped of this office. In the following years, there was a quick succession of castellans at Dobrá Niva. They changed every three years on average.³⁰ This may have been natural fluctuation but the more likely explanation is that the castellans were being rotated deliberately. The holders could have taken this precaution against further abuse of the office.

It seems fitting to talk about the length of time each office was usually held at least briefly. Captains – pledge holders were usually in office the longest. Castellans and stewards with ties to the local region did not fall too far behind. These officials sometimes held their office repeatedly, after a specific gap in their service. It is also characteristic that in this circle of persons we see the formation of mutual

²⁸ Ladislav (in 1426, 1432) and Demeter (1429) of Necpaly. Peter Tőke (1435–1436) and John (before 1441) of Agárd. MNL OL-DL 94 464, 63 132, MNL OL-DF 249 911, 237 119; Slovenský národný archív Bratislava (hereafter: SNA) – pracovisko Slovenský banský archív – fund Hlavný komorskogrófský úrad – Dominalia, box nr. 6040, inv. nr. 88, fol. 341v; Engel, *Középkori magyar genealógia*, entry Necpáli, entry Agárdi-rokonság 1. tábla: Agárdi.

²⁹ See the Appendix 2.

³⁰ MNL OL-DF 244 198; Maliniak, “Dobrá Niva”, 286.

kinship ties.³¹ Considering the insufficient source materials, it is problematic to say for sure whether such officials experienced any career growth. It seems more likely that a longer service built a base for stable financial gains and a growing social network. Several noble families are specifically interesting in this regard. They lived in the villages of Selce, Dúbravica, and Zolná in the Zvolen County in the Late Middle Ages. Members of families of Selecký, Dúbravický, Steck or Zolnay served as castellans at the nearby castles for several generations. But not by inheritance. They belonged to the small group of local officials. Nevertheless, they contributed to a stable and continuous castle administration. Thanks to their social standings, they helped the region grow in social, economic, and cultural terms.³² It was the group of officials, who, in addition to the administration of the estates, were often directed to the administration of the counties. They connected the castles with their background. These outwardly isolated settlements thus formed an organic part of contemporary society.

³¹ See the Appendices 1 and 2. See also Šimůnek, *Správní systém šlechtického dominia*, s. 484-485.

³² Nicholas Dúbravický endowed the church in Poniky and the chapel in Dúbravica in his will. Peter Litteratus of Zolná endowed the church in Radvaň in his will. Gregory Selecký established a foundation in his will to support the school in Selce. MNL OL-DF 244 222; ŠA-BB, ZŽ, Prot. congreg. I, pag. 149, 152; Radoslav Ragač, "Stoličná šľachta a školský mecenát. Niekoľko príkladov zo Zvolenskej stolice", in: *Zemianstvo na Slovensku v novoveku. Časť II. Duchovná a hmotná kultúra*, eds. Miloš Kovačka, Eva Augustínová and Maroš Mačuha (Martin: Slovenská národná knižnica, 2009), 40-41.

APPENDIX

The list of officials of local origin

Abranovič Lawrence, burgher from Zvolen. In 1520 as a *vicecastellanus* at the castle of Víglaš with reference to the origin from Zvolen (*Laurencius Abranowycz de Veterizolyo*). More likely he was a steward. Two castellans and another vice-castellan, all at Víglaš, appear in the same source. MNL OL-DF 205 222, 205 639, 205 725, 206 397, 206 454, 266 587. Tax registers in the town of Zvolen in 1496 and 1498 list the paternal surname *Abran*. In 1499 he was already registered as *Abranowczy*. In 1501 *Abranowsky*. In 1502 *Abranowskczy*. In 1509–1510 *Abranowicz*. In 1511–1518 again *Abran*. ŠA BB-pracovisko Archív Zvolen (hereafter: p. AZv) – fund Magistrát mesta Zvolen (hereafter: MMZv), Lib. civ. I, fol. 41r, 82r, 87v, 4r, Liber civitatis II, fol. 4v, 10v, 16v, 22v, 29v, 35v, 41v, 48r, 54v, 61r.

Bíró (Dvorský, Tornau) Jacob, burgher from Zvolen. In the years 1485, 1492, 1493, 1494, 1496, 1500 and 1501 alternately as a *provisor curie*, *vicecomes*, *underspan*, *vicem tenens* at the Zvolen castle. Distinguished as a *providus* and *inhabitor civitatis Zoliensis, in civitate Zoliensi commorans*. Nicknames *Byro*, *Dworzky*, *Tornaw*, in 1500 duplicated and garbled as a *Tornay Worz[k]ii*. MNL OL-DL 63 305, 63 365, 63 388, 63 389, 84 737; MNL OL-DF 280 652, pag. 90, 268 979, 268 980; Tóth et al., *Magyarország világi archontológiája II*, 384, 389. In the tax register in the Zvolen town in 1496 (?), 1499 – 1501 alternately as *Dworsky* and *Tornaw*. His son John inherited the nickname Dvorský. ŠA-BB p. AZv, MMZv, Lib. civ. I, fol. 38r, 85r, 90r, 2v; ŠA BB, ZŽ, Prot. congreg. I, pag. 119.

Čuberník Ambrosius, apparently a non-noble servant from Ladomer (nowadays part of the village of Ladomerská Vieska). According to other officials, he was castellan at Šášov castle from 1515 to 1522 (*Ambrosius Chwbernick de Ladomyr, castellanus de Saaskew*). More likely he was a steward. ŠA BB, pracovisko Archív Banská Štiavnica, fund Magistrát mesta Banská Štiavnica, box nr. 147, sign. MMBŠ-N 147/5. In 1516–1517 *Ambrosius Czwbemny* acted as *procurator* and *officialis* of Lupča castle. The castles of Šášov and Lupča had at that time the same holders from the family of Nagylucse. ŠA BB-ZŽ, Prot. congreg. I, pag. 50, 63, 70. The lower social status may indicate the occurrence of the same surname among miners in the area of Banská Štiavnica. Peter Ratkoš, ed., *Dokumenty k baníckemu povstaniu na Slovensku (1525–1526)* (Bratislava: Slovenská akadémia vied, 1957), 437, nr. 14.

Deák (*Litteratus*) Peter of Zolná, nobleman from Zvolen County. In 1507 castellan at Zvolen castle. According to his nickname, he was an educated school graduate. Peter's wife was Helene, daughter of John Steck, former castellan at Víglaš. László Zolnay, "A zólyomvármegyei Zolnay-család", *Turul* 52 (1938), No. 1-2: 28-29; ŠA BB-ZŽ, Prot. congreg. I, pag. 19.

Dúbravický George, nobleman from Zvolen County. Around 1506 *castellanus* at Dobrá Niva castle. He lived to an old age, so he gave testimonies during court investigations in the region. ŠA BB-ZŽ, Prot. congreg. I, pag. 1; Ratkoš, *Dokumenty k baníckemu povstaniu*, 127, nr. 72/c; MNL OL-DF 235 523.

Dúbravický Nicholas, nobleman from Zvolen County. Between 1502–1503 *castellanus* at Víglaš castle. His brother George was a castellan at Dobrá Niva castle. Co-owner of the village of Dúbravica. In his will of 1510, Nicholas entrusted his family to the protection of Blasius Ráskay, the holder of the castle estate of Víglaš. MNL OL-DF 234 872, 235 573, 244 222; Benkó, “A Dubraviczai Dubraviczky-család”, 147; Tomáš Janura, Lubica Fillová and Michal Šimkovic, *Vidiecke šľachtické sídla v Zvolenskej stolici* (Liptovský Mikuláš: Spoločnosť Kolomana Sokola, 2016) 74.

John of Peťová, nobleman from Zvolen County. In 1464 – 1465 as a *provisor curie* at the Zvolen castle. In 1464 Matthias Corvinus allowed John and his brother George to build a mill on the royal property by the Hron river. The king gave them a place called *Merthehaza* for this purpose. It was a deserted settlement on the right bank of the Hron river in the vicinity of the village of Iliaš (nowadays part of the city Banská Bystrica). MNL OL-DL 84 719, 84 720. After his father John used the surname Eliáš, later as a noble surname Eliáš or Illés. Pavol Maliniak, “K interpretáciám najstarších písomných dokladov o osídlení Zvolenskej kotliny”, *Acta historica Neosoliensia* 10 (2007): 64, 69.

Ottmar of Lupča, burgher from Slovenská Lupča. In 1517 as a *provisor curie* at Lupča castle. In 1514–1516 he acted as a representative (*procurator*) of Lupča castle at the court of the Zvolen County. In court records Ottmar was also referred as *civis Lypczensis*. MNL OL-DL 30 877; ŠA BB-ZŽ, Prot. congreg. I, pag. 36, 47, 63, 74.

Peter of Mičiná, nobleman from Zvolen County. In 1469 as a *burgrabius* at the Zvolen castle. ŠA BB-p. AZv-MMZv, box nr. 11, Lib. civ. I, fol. 77v. In the edition of the town book its official function is absent. Cf. Ferencz V. Sasinek, “Zólyom város számadásaiból”, *Történelmi Tár* 16 (1893): 368. A member of Mičinský family from Mičiná, probably a relative of Nicholas Dúbravický. Peter's daughter Barbara was married to George (Horvat), a nobleman from Požega. MNL OL-DF 244 184; Mária Ďurková, “Rod Mičinských z Mičinej”, *Historický zborník* 12 (2002), No. 1-2: 31-32.

Selectý Gregory, nobleman from Zvolen County. In 1500 as *officialis et castellanus* at the castle of Lupča. Since 1501 generally as a noble *familiaris* of the lords of Lupča castle. The connection with Gregory Dvorský of Selce, a non-noble official of Lupča castle, is problematic. It is therefore difficult to distinguish officials with the name Gregory of Selce. MNL OL-DL 25 404, 21 245, 21 444, 21 295; MNL OL-DF 259 368, 206 378, 206 390, 205 697, 206 467, 280 741; ŠA BB-ZŽ, Prot. congreg. I, pag. 23, 71, 84. Gregory was probably a descendant of Matthias, who acquired manor in the village of Selce at the beginning of the 15th century.

An imprecise genealogy of the first generations of the family is given by Márton Szluha, *Felvidéki nemes családok I. Árva, Trencsén, Zólyom* (Budapest: Arcanum, 2007), CD-ROM, section Zólyom vármegye, entry Szeleczyky.

Szobonya Ladislas, nobleman from Tekov County. In 1441 as a *castellanus* at the Revište castle. MNL OL-DL 13 633. A member of the noble family of Ondrejovce with the hereditary nickname Szobonya, with properties in the southern part of the Tekov County. MNL OL-DL 14 854, 72 682; Tomáš Sitár, *Osídlenie Tekovskej stolice v stredoveku* (Krná: Miloš Hric, 2020), 729-730.

Thomas (Tompá) of Beladice, nobleman from Tekov County. In 1427 as a *castellanus* at the Revište castle. Norbert C. Tóth, Bálint Lakatos and Gábor Mikó, eds., *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár XIV* (Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár, 2020), 349, nr. 846. Member of family with the original predicate of Beladice, with properties in the western part of the Tekov County. Frank Stephan Tompa, *Cardinal Thomas de Erdeud and his Clan. A genealogical and historical revision* (Pender Island: Huntpaznan Publishing House, 2001), 124-126; Sitár, *Osídlenie Tekovskej stolice v stredoveku*, 739.

The list of established officials

Hany Matthias, nobleman from Zala County (?). MNL OL-DL 47 196, 71 730, 47 574. In 1513 – 1526 as *castellanus* at the Zvolen castle. From 1513, he received half of the U Dubov (nowadays Tri Duby, part of the city Sliach) noble property for a loan. From 1514 he owned a house in the town of Zvolen. In 1516, Matthias also acquired a church property of Sielnica. In 1521, he acquired a noble property in the village of Bacúrov in the same way. In 1526, for a loan, Matthias also acquired the village of Breznica, which had already been sold by the Pavlić family. Matthias Hany's wife was Barbara of Dúbravický family. They had daughters Anna and Sophia together, so the properties was not inherited by a male heir. SNA – fund Rod Rakovský z Rakova a Liptovskej Štiavnice, fasc. 114, nr. 3311, 3315; SNA – fund Hodnoverné miesto Turčiansky konvent, box nr. 91, Protocollum vetustum, fol. 69; ŠA BB-p. AZv-MMZv, Lib. civ. II, fol. 33v; ŠA BB-ZŽ, Prot. congreg. I, pag. 79, 334-335; MNL OL-DL 25 021.

George (Horvat) of Hotuča (*de Hottothyn* and so on), nobleman from Croatia. Founder of the Dúbravický family. In 1440, 1441, 1445 and 1447, first as a *vicecastellanus*, then as a *castellanus* in the Lupča castle. First he received a small village of Oravce from queen Elizabeth in 1440. In 1445 Gregory of Krbava, the holder of the estate, donated the village of Dúbravica to him. Borislav Grgin and Ivan Botica, “The Counts Kurjaković of Krbava in the Medieval History of Modern-day Slovakia”, in: *Slovakia and Croatia. Historical Parallels and Connections (until 1780)*, eds. Martin Homza, Ján Lukačka and Neven Budak (Bratislava; Zagreb: PostScriptum, 2013), 172; Béla Iványi, “A középkori oklevél-bizottság jelentése :

Liptó vármegye középkori oklevelei : közlevéltárak, családi levéltárak”, *Századok* 43 (1909), No. 10: 895, nr. 22; Imre Nagy, Farkas Deák and Gyula Nagy, eds., *Hazai oklevéltár 1234–1536* (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1879), 409-410, nr. 348; MNL OL-DF 249 795, 244 034, 244 033.

George (Horvat), nobleman from Požega. He worked from 1502 to 1520 as a *castellanus* at the Víglaš castle. MNL OL-DF 234 872, 205 222. In 1507 George together with his wife Barbara, daughter of Peter of Mičiná, acquired from the family of Mičiná property in the village of Vlkanová. Latest he acquired by purchase or donation the property in the town of Slatina on the Víglaš estate. According to the predicates, he could have had residences in both Vlkanová and Zvolenská Slatina. MNL OL-DL 63 983, 63 992; Ratkoš, *Dokumenty k baníckemu povstaniu*, 211, nr. 126, 213, nr. 128, 221, nr. 133; Janura et al., *Vidiecke šľachtické sídla*, 110-111.

Matthew of Zolná, nobleman from Turiec County. Member of a noble family from Lipovec. In 1442 his father received a manor in the village of Zolná. In 1465, in the confirmation of the donation for the property in Zolná, Matthew still appeared with the predicate of Lipovec. He worked as a *castellanus* at the Dobrá Niva castle, which was owned by his relatives, the Turóczy family. In 1467 he was already in office with the predicate of Zolná. MNL OL-DL 107 902, 107 910, 107 911, 107 912, 16 505; MNL OL-DF 254 193, 206 289.

Mühlstein Andrew, burgher from Buda. In 1471 and 1476 as *purgraff*, *castellanus* at the Zvolen castle. In 1473 and 1476 also with the title *comes*, as deputy count in Zvolen. In 1472, without title, he commanded a military garrison. ŠA BB-p. AZv-MMZv, Lib. civ. I, fol. 65r; MNL OL-DF 267 170, 254 197, 206 776; MNL OL-DL 63 263. Unlike his brother Veit, Andrew Mühlstein has not settled down in the workplace. He returned to Buda. Kubinyi, “Die Nürnberger Haller in Ofen”, 91.

Mühlstein Veit, burgher from Buda. He was promoted to a nobleman probably by Matthias Corvinus. Veit was deputy count in Zvolen. In 1472 also as *capitaneus*, in 1479 as *comes castri*. He also worked in the mining administration as *comes camere* in Kremnica. Veit bought properties in Banská Bystrica, where he then settled. MNL OL-DF 280 735, 234 701; Matulay, *Mesto Banská Bystrica*, 90, nr. 280; Skladaný, “Zápas o banskobystričú med”, 204-205; Ferenc Soós, “Mühlstein Vid körmöci kamaraispánsága”, *Az Érem* 53 (1997), No. 2: 1-5.

Paul (Pavlić, Horvat) of Breznica, nobleman from Croatia. From 1491 with the predicate of Breznica or Breznička (nowadays the village of Železná Breznica) in the Zvolen County. At that time he was already a official at the Dobrá Niva castle. As *castellanus* at Dobrá Niva in 1497–1500 and 1502. The village Breznica could have been acquired by Paul from the holders of the Dobrá Niva estate in return for his services. In addition, Paul also owned houses in the town of Zvolen and the nearby village of Bacúrov. MNL OL-DL 63 347, 63 350, 74 544; MNL OL-DF 254 206; ŠA BB-p. AZv-MMZv, Lib. civ. I, fol. 40r, 81r, 86v, 8r, Lib. civ. II, fol. 1v, 4r, 7v, 10r, 16r.

Pavlić John of Breznica, nobleman from Croatia. Son of the aforementioned Paul, after whom he took the surname Pavlić. John is known as *vicecastellanus* at Dobrá Niva castle in 1499. MNL OL-DL 74 544. Around 1506 he complained to count Matthias Frankopan, the holder of Dobrá Niva castle, who had the house of the Pavlić family in Bacúrov plundered. After the death of his father Paul in 1512, John and his brothers in the region paid off their debts. ŠA BB-ZŽ, Prot. congreg. I, pag. 1, 14; ŠA BB-p. AZv-MMZv, Lib. civ. II, fol. 22r, 25v, 42v, 49v; Radoslav Ragač, “Civilnoprávne záznamy v mestských knihách ako prameň k dejinám súdnictva v stredovekom Zvolene”, in: *Kriminalita, bezpečnosť a súdnictvo v minulosti miest a obcí na Slovensku*, edited by Leon Sokolovský (Bratislava: Univerzita Komenského, 2007), 70-71.

Steck John, burgher from Kremnica promoted to nobleman. In the office at the Víglaš castle indirectly with the nickname Burggraf (*Burcrabius*). At the latest in 1464, John Steck received properties in the villages of Zolná and Sebedín for his services from the holder of the Víglaš estate, Jost von Küssow. This was preceded by the granting of a noble title. MNL OL-DL 105 273.

Szunyogi (Szunyog) Peter, nobleman from Pest County (?). Dezső Csánki, *Magyarország történelmi földrajza a Hunyadiak korában I* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1890), 48. By marriage with noblewoman Cecilia, daughter of Clement Czypczter, in 1493 he acquired property in the village of Lieskovec (Zvolen County). Between 1497 and 1498 he was *castellanus* at the nearby castle of Víglaš. MNL OL-DF 268 977, 268 979, 268 980, 206 350. His Hungarian identity is attested by repeated entries in the Zvolen town register in the form *Sonockpeter*. ŠA BB-p. AZv-MMZv, Lib. civ. II, fol. 13r. Then worked in the service of the Archbishop of Esztergom. ŠA BB-ZŽ, Prot. congreg. I, pag. 33; DF 235 439, 267 099.

Vajszka Matthias of Csernova (?), nobleman from Bodrog County (?). In 1402, as a *prefectus* of the Ľupča castle estate, he received a manor in the village of Selce (Zvolen County) from the lord of the estate, Gall of Sečovce. In 1443 Gregory of Krbava, the holder of the estate, donated another property in Selce to the members of the family. According to later collection of documents *Memorabilia de Arce Lyptsensi*, prepared by town notary Samuel Gyurkovits. ŠA BB – fund Magistrát mestečka Slovenská Ľupča, inv. nr. 313, *Memorabilia de Arce Lyptsensi, ejusdem Possessoribus ac de ipso Oppido Zolyo Lyptsensi, Anno 1817*, pag. 1. The location of Csernova in the Bodrog County is unknown. Maybe it is a mistake. Dezső Csánki, *Magyarország történelmi földrajza a Hunyadiak korában II* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1895), 196. In 1402, Gall of Sečovce was indeed the count of the royal estates in the Zvolen County. Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, entry Zólyom. *Memorabilia* further mentions that Matthias had a grandson Thomas, a member of a noble family from Selce. Thomas of Selce, *officialis* at Ľupča castle, is mentioned at the end of the 15th century. MNL OL-DL 25 404.

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Pavol Maliniak*

Dvorac kao žarište uspona regionalnih elita: Primjer Gornje Ugarske u kasnom srednjem vijeku

Sažetak

Članak se bavi odnosom srednjovjekovnog dvorca, njegova društvenog konteksta i karijera njegovih službenika. Temelji se na dosadašnjim arhontološkim istraživanjima, kao i na prozopografskim pristupima. Na primjeru šest dvoraca u regijama Zvolen/Zólyom i Tekov/Bars u kasnom srednjem vijeku moguće je definirati krug službenika višeg i srednjeg stupnja: kapetana, kaštelana i upravitelja. Tijekom razdoblja od 1402. do 1526. godine ovu heterogenu skupinu sačinjavalo je približno 108 osoba. Otprilike četvrtina su bili službenici iz lokalnog vlastelinstva ili županije, a ostali su bili stranog podrijetla, nastanjeni u dotičnom kraju tijekom službovanja. Kod gotovo tri četvrtine službenika nije ustanovljena nikakva povezanost s rodnim krajem. Dužnost kaštelana obnašali su uglavnom siromašni zemljoposjednici, a povremeno i plemeniti građani. Služba upravitelja, za koju se također koristila oznaka *provisor curiae*, nije zahtijevala plemićku titulu i mogli su je obnašati obični podanici. Službenici su se etablirali stjecanjem imovine: oni koji su je imali ili stvarali u određenoj regiji dulje su zadržavali položaj, čak i generacijama. Kod drugih je pak ustanovljena fluktuacija i pomanjkanje veza s mjestom rada.

Ključne riječi: srednjovjekovni dvorci, društvena mobilnost, stvaranje elita, Gornja Ugarska, Slovačka

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