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MEDJIMURJE AND ITS SETTLEMENTS IN THE MIRROR OF THE WRITTEN SOURCES 1861-1872

Izvleček:

Medžimurje in naselja v pisnih virih 1861–1872

Med fondi Arhiva županije Zala je za zgodovino Medžimurja gotovo najbolj pomemben fond Generalne skupščine županije Zala. V njem se nahaja ogromno dokumentov z bogatimi informacijami (npr. dokumenti o ponovni priključitvi k Madžarski leta 1861, korespondenca in poročila v zvezi z razpravami o učnem jeziku in cerkvenem statusu Medžimurja itd.). Ker so bili okrajni glavarji in nižji stolni sodniki kot oblastniki nadrejeni naseljem, so zelo zanimivi tudi njihovi zapisi. Dragoceni so predvsem za raziskovalce družbene zgodovine. Pomembno je tudi gradivo velikega župana in podžupana, katerima so ljudje pisali o svojih vsakodnevnih zadevah. Če med gradivom upravnika policije in okrožnih upravnikov ne najdemo zanimivih dokumentov, jih lahko iščemo tudi med gradivom centralnih organov županije.

Ključne besede:

Medžimurje, arhivsko gradivo, Arhiv županije Zala.

Abstract:

Medjimurje and its Settlements in the Mirror of the Written Sources 1861-1872

From the holdings of the Zala County Archives the fond of the General Assembly of Zala County is the one with the most important record groups concerning the history of Medjimurje. It is very rich in information (e.g. documentation of the re-annexation of 1861, correspondence and reports connected with the discussions about the language of teaching and the ecclesiastic status of Medjimurje etc.). As the chief constable and the district administrators were the immediate superior authorities of the settlements, their records are worth researching, too. They are very valuable especially from the social-historical researches' point of view. With respect to the documents of the central administrative organs of the county, mainly the records of the Lord Lieutenant and the Deputy Lieutenant are remarkable. People applied to these leaders of the county for their several day-to-day affairs. If we do not find anything in the chief constable's archival fonds or the district administrators' offices, we can check among the documents of the central organs of the county.

Key words:

Medjimurje, archives, Zala County Archives.

Medjimurje is a land surrounded by the Mura and Drava rivers and situated in the north-western part of Croatia. It faces the south-western border of Hungary and the north-eastern border of Slovenia. Before 1920 it belonged to the Hungarian Kingdom within it to Zala County and was contiguous with two counties of Croatia (Bjelovar-Križevci and Varaždin) and one of the Austrian provinces, Styria. In 1920 the Trianon peace treaty attached it to the Serbo-Croat-Slovene Kingdom. During the Second World War, after the attack on Yugoslavia, Hungary came into possession of it

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from 1941 to 1945. In 1945 Medjmurje became a part of Yugoslavia again. After its collapse it remained under Croatian supremacy.

The paper offers in its first part a general overview of the more significant changes in the decade from 1861 to 1872 in the life of the people living in Medjmurje, while in the second part it will present the more important record groups kept in the Zala County Archives that may be useful for the researchers interested in this field.

The above-mentioned decade is a short era in the history of Medjmurje but it is a very eventful era. Nevertheless, the periodization will take some explaining.

Concerning the preliminaries, in the course of military operations of 1848, in the last days of December 1848, Medjmurje fell into the Croatian troops' hands who annexed it to Croatia.¹ Complying with the demands of the Croatian nationalists, the Austrian Cabinet approved the annexation on the 4th December 1849,² so Medjmurje belonged to Varaždin County from 1850 to 1861. This was the era of neo-absolutism in the Austrian Empire.

In 1860, after granting the October Diploma that was a short-lived constitution for the Hapsburg Empire, like the other counties also Zala County regained its independence. The officials elected in 1848 took the initiative to revive the public life and public administration in the county. All the steps in the interest of the reorganization of the county were subject to the condition that the territorial integrity of the historical Zala County should be restored, namely, Medjmurje should be attached to Hungary again.³ It took place on the 27th January 1861 when the emperor gave the permission to incorporate it into Hungary.⁴ Soon afterwards, on the 6th February 1861 the county held its first general assembly. The same assembly appointed a committee to take over the official documents, the land registers, public buildings and other constructions.⁵ After some negotiations with Varaždin County it happened by mutual consent by June 1861.⁶

The other important date is 1872 when on the basis of the Act 42 of 1870 on the organizing of the municipal authorities the introduction of the civil public administration was accomplished in Zala County. From 1872 on huge changes came to pass in the county administration. The district of Medjmurje, which was until then a separate district, ceased to exist. Its territory was divided into the Čakovec and Prelog districts.⁷

Concerning the population of Medjmurje, according to Elek Fényes the reputed statistician of the era, in the middle of the 1830s altogether 51229 residents consisting of 49503 Croatians, 1574 Hungarians and 152 Jews were there. They lived in 7 market towns, 115 villages and 13 farmsteads.⁸ These settlements formed a separate administrative district before 1848, the one of the six districts of Zala County. Reviving the autonomy of the county in 1861 the general assembly decided

¹ Molnár, *A Muraköz*, p. 293.

² Deák, "Nemzeti egyenjogúsítás", p. 80.

³ Foki, *Vármegyei ellenállás*, p. 156.

⁴ *Zala Megyei Levéltár (abbr: ZML), IV. 251/a. Zala Vármegye Bizottmányának iratai. Közgyűlési jegyzőkönyvek (abbr: IV. 251/a. ZVB Kj.), 1861.02.06, number 12.*

⁵ *ZML, IV. 251/a. ZVB Kj., 1861.02.06, number 12.*

⁶ *ZML, IV. 251/a. ZVB Kj., 1861.06.03, number 1196.*

⁷ Foki, *Zala megye közigazgatása*, p. 130.

⁸ Fényes, *Magyarországnak, s a hozzá kapcsolt tartományoknak*, pp. 525-532.

to restore the district division existing before 1848.⁹ Zala County had six districts again and the towns and villages of Medjmurje made up one of them. This district was named after the land Medjmurje district. Some archival sources from the beginning of the 1860's mention a population of about a 60000-70000 people in Medjmurje.¹⁰ We can obtain more accurate data from the census of 1869. According to that, Medjmurje had 65145 inhabitants who lived in 9321 houses. It releases data on the distribution by gender and denomination, the literacy, the domestic animals etc. but it does not say anything about the national composition.¹¹ Nevertheless it is certain that it was mostly populated by Croats also at that time because other sources always mention Medjmurje as a territory populated mainly by this nation.

As for its government the chief constable elected by the general assembly of the county was the first official at the head of the district. He was responsible for the direction of the whole public administration in its territory. The entire Medjmurje district was divided into four lands. Their names were as follows: Upper Land, Lower Land, Drava Land and Mura Land. One of them was directed by the chief constable, while the others were supervised by the district administrators. The latter ones were subordinated to the chief constable. It always depended on the chief constable's residence which of the lands was administered by him. He usually chose that land where he lived. The chief constable and the district administrators alike had councillors to help them fulfil their duties.¹² Many times the lands were also named after their governors. For example, in 1865 the Upper Land was directed by the chief constable Imre Gabelics and called at the same time "Upper Land" and "chief constable Imre Gabelics' land". The Lower Land was administered by the district administrator György Terbócz and called at the same time "Lower Land" and "district administrator György Terbócz's land", etc.¹³

The autonomy of the local governments, regained in 1861, only lasted for a year. After the dissolution of the Parliament in August 1861, by the end of the year the elected organs of the municipalities ceased their activities, too. This also happened in Zala County. From 1862 on, a temporary era followed this short period when efforts were being made to come to a compromise between Austria and Hungary in 1867. Like the era of the neo-absolutism, the official posts were provisionally filled by appointments again. The general assembly of the county could gather again in 1865. However, the district division mentioned above remained up to 1872 the introduction of the civil public administration.

The authorities of Zala County were chiefly concerned with two things connected with Medjmurje these years: the ecclesiastic status of the parishes and the matter of the language of teaching. The parishes of Medjmurje belonged to the bishopric of Zagreb from its foundation in 1093.¹⁴ During the Turkish occupation the diocese of Zagreb extended its supremacy over some parishes under the jurisdiction of the diocese of Veszprém. After driving out the Turks, from the 18th century on, the two dioceses carried on the fight for the power over the parishes of the reoccupied territories. Later also secular authorities interfered in the struggle that continued in

⁹ ZML, IV. 251/a. ZVB Kj., 1861.02.06, number 115.

¹⁰ ZML, IV. 259/b. Zala Vármegye Tisztiszkének iratai. Iratok. (abbr: IV. 259/b. ZVT Ir.), 1862, numbers 1225, 3220.

¹¹ Döme, Zala megye 1870, p. 20.

¹² Foki, Zala megye közigazgatása, p. 116.

¹³ ZML, IV. 257. Zala Vármegye Első Alispánjának iratai. (abbr: IV. 257. ZV Első Alisp.), 1865, number 7322.

¹⁴ Archdiocese of Zagreb.

the 19th century, too. After the re-annexation of Medjimurje in 1861, Zala County strongly urged that Medjimurje should be detached from the archdiocese of Zagreb¹⁵ and put under Hungarian ecclesiastic jurisdiction, namely under the diocese of Szombathely. The county was in frequent correspondence with the government and the Hungarian Parliament what is more applied even to the king for the sake of the cause. It tried in this way to prevent the Croats from taking over the political power in Medjimurje, however, it remained unsuccessful.¹⁶

In this decade the General Assembly of Zala County discussed on several occasions the educational affairs of Medjimurje, too. One of the reasons for this was that they wanted to promote the spread of the Hungarian language there. They found it worrying that during the era of the neo-absolutism, Croatian officials and teachers were appointed, who could put the people on the wrong track from the Hungarian point of view. The other reason was that the reports sent to the county authorities anonymously complained about the irregular school attendance of the children in Medjimurje. The reports also stated that most of the children did not understand the Illyrian or new Croatian language taught by the teachers because in their everyday life they used the old Croatian. The chief constable, who mainly made these reports, thought that was one of the causes why the children did not like going to school. The county would have liked to remedy the problem and therefore suggested sending such teachers there who could speak Hungarian and old Croatian alike.¹⁷

As during the reign of the Hungarian Kingdom, Zala County included the territory of Medjimurje, it is natural that the Archives of Zala County have several fonds containing valuable data connected to the history of Medjimurje. These documents may be interesting for the researchers dealing with either the history of the separate villages and market-towns or the region as a whole. Because the villages and market-towns do not have their own archives from this period we can find the primary sources in other record groups.

We have to mention in the first place the archival group of the General Assembly of Zala County. Its material contains remarkable sources concerning Medjimurje. First of all the records regarding the re-annexation in 1861 deserve attention. One of the most interesting among them gives an account of roads, bridges and public buildings found in Medjimurje during the activity of the appointed committee. Among other, we can find detailed information about the road passing through Varaždin and Nedelišće towards Ormož up to the Styrian border, the bridge in Mursko Središće and many data on the buildings of Prelog, for instance on the silk filature.¹⁸ The different registers are also noteworthy, for example those on the mills, schools, etc. There are many exciting reports on conflicts between the inhabitants of Medjimurje and the imperial soldiers.¹⁹ Another document gives an account of the arson fires, which happened eleven times in Sveta Marija in the first half of the 1860's. The residents of the village wanted to burn the arsonists alive. The village mayor saved them from taking the law into his own hands but two of them were so badly injured that they died.²⁰ The archival fond of the general

¹⁵ *The Archdiocese of Zagreb was established in 1853. Lakatos, Kalocsai Főegyházmegyei Levéltár.*

¹⁶ *Fára, Muraköz, pp. 16-21.; Degré, 19. századi, pp. 19-21.*

¹⁷ *ZML, IV. 259/b. ZVT Ir., 1862, numbers 1225, 1333; and 1864, number 842.*

¹⁸ *ZML, IV. 251/b. Zala Vármegye Bizottmányának iratai. Közgyűlési iratok, 1861, number 1196.*

¹⁹ *One example: ZML, IV. 259/a. Zala Vármegye Tisztiszekének iratai. Jegyzőkönyvek, 1862.12.01, number 3828.*

²⁰ *ZML, IV. 252/b. Zala Vármegye Bizottmányának iratai. Közgyűlési iratok, 1866, number 78.*

assembly of the county also includes the documents related to the discussions about the language of teaching and the ecclesiastic status of Medjimurje mentioned above.

As the chief constable and the district administrators were the immediate superior authorities of the settlements of Medjimurje, the records of their offices are worth researching, too. The Zala County Archives has all the documents of Medjimurje district from 1861 to 1872. Because the public administration and the jurisdiction were still unified there are both civil lawsuits and criminal cases among the documents. The officials of the district had to care for the matters of guardianship and the legacies; due to that their archives contain inventories of estate and other conscriptions of property that are very valuable sources from the social-historical researches' point of view. The records are supplied with alphabetical indexes what makes the work of the historians easier.

Besides the archival material of the former Medjimurje district, the record groups of the central administrative organs of the county are also very significant. The importance of the records of the general assembly we have discussed before. In addition to that, we still have to draw attention to the documents of the Lord Lieutenant and the Deputy Lieutenant. The Lord Lieutenant appointed by the king headed the county; all power was concentrated in his hands. He represented the county towards the higher authorities. His administration was exemplary. Therefore, if the documents survived, his archives is the mine of information. Unfortunately, the Zala County Archives only keeps some years. The Deputy Lieutenant was the executive; he managed in practice all the matters of the county. The Zala County Archives holds almost the entire archives of him.

People applied to these leaders of the county for their several day-to-day affairs. But we have to emphasize that they could only do that through the mediation of the chief constable. Therefore, if we do not find anything in the archival fonds of the chief constable's or the district administrators' offices, we can check it among the documents of the central organs of the county. It is worth doing that because there are several sources concerning the history of Medjimurje's settlements also among them. The report on the craftsmen and merchants in the territory of the Medjimurje district from 1864 or on the administrative division of the district from 1865 can be appropriate examples for this checking. We can find out from the former one that for instance in Čakovec five merchants and one craftsman took out a permit to practice a trade in 1864.²¹ The latter one sets out in detail the settlements of Medjimurje district; we can see that the villages or towns to which of the lands belonged within the district in 1865.²² Both documents can be found among the records of the Deputy Lieutenant. But we may cite by way of illustration another document from the records of the Lord Lieutenant from 1862. It contains the list of the settlements of Drava Land within Medjimurje district and informs us on the languages used among the people living there. In Prelog the division of the languages was as follows: 2684 Croatians, 287 Hungarians, 16 Germans and 1 Serbian. The chief constable, who made the list, observed that the dominant language was Croatian but in the larger places especially in market-towns most of the people usually spoke also Hungarian and German besides Croatian.²³

²¹ ZML, IV. 258. *Zala Vármegye Alispánjának iratai, 1867, number 536.*

²² ZML, IV. 257. *ZV Első Alisp., 1865, number 7322.*

²³ ZML, IV. 250. *Zala Vármegye Főispáni Helytartójának iratai, 1862, number 1190.*

In the Zala County Archives there are many other fonds including valuable sources regarding the history of Medjimurje from this era and from other periods alike. Of course, on this occasion we could not discuss all of them since the interesting documents could be listed without end. We could only cite by way of example some of them. Nevertheless, our holdings that are rich in sources of great value are warmly recommended to anyone who wants to learn more about the history of this region.

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