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Social Strategies of the Lutheran Burghers of Pressburg, 1750–1850

This essay is intended to further an understanding of the early stage in the rise of the bourgeoisie in Hungary through a thorough examination of the Pressburg (in Hungarian Pozsony and today Bratislava) Lutheran parish, which was arguably one of the most urbanized and broad-minded communities in terms of social ambitions of the period. After an overview of the historiography of the burghers in the late phase of estate societies, the author describes the demographical and social settings in which the burghers were both able and compelled to make decisions concerning the futures of their children. In the second part the essay analyzes three families that proved especially talented in their endeavor to adapt to the changing circumstances with a diverse family strategy that included the attainment of the status of nobility, family links to the estate elite, academic schooling, emigration to more promising cities, and the creation of super-urban family networks.

While the emergence of the middle class in the modern era has long been a central topic in West European historiography, a number of factors have contributed in some way to the failure of the mainstream Hungarian historical profession to devote noteworthy attention to this social process. One of the chief causes lies in the fact that the middle class—here understood as the bourgeoisie of great industrialists in the tradition of the classical Marxist approach—never attained influence as great as that of their West European counterparts, since the landowning aristocracy retained social pre-eminence even in the so-called bourgeois period (1867–1945). By contrast, leadership of the political movement that aimed to demolish the feudal system and the legal bonds of the estate-based society was undertaken by the enlightened and nationalist élite of the middle ranks within the landowning nobility (from the 1830s onwards). Therefore, a consensus was formed that the main social force in the transformation of nineteenth-century Hungary consisted mainly of these well-educated, well-to-do and liberal gentry families rather than any social segment connected to the urban economy and modern entrepreneurship.

Another reason is that the historical interpretation long remained within a framework defined by the values of the traditional nationalist élite groups. Gyula Szekfű, the influential conservative historian of the interwar period who was

greatly skeptical about the social transformation of the modern era, and later leading researchers in the Communist period agreed that the emerging modern bourgeoisie had no significant antecedents among native-born social elements.¹ They assumed there was a sharp difference in terms of attitudes to business mentality, market competition and relations to the emerging state between the old burghers (*alte Bürgertum*) and the modern bourgeoisie. According to this view, the traditional freemen (master artisans and shopkeepers) of the free royal towns, and their guild organizations, generally preferred to seek protection from the local authorities and the national government when they faced competition from (pre-)capitalist rivals. Town authorities continued to represent guild interests and did their best to keep away potential danger caused by the immigrants pursuing an entrepreneurial style of business.²

This negative view of the old burghers has been challenged somewhat by recent research, particularly by a monograph on early- and mid-nineteenth century great merchants active in Pest (i.e., the greatest mercantile center) by Vera Bácskai.³ Combining statistical method and prosopographical analysis, Bácskai has proven that a significant and increasing proportion of wholesale merchants in the period of the Napoleonic Wars had their roots in Hungary—their percentage grew from 57 percent to some 75 percent during the first half of the century. In addition, one out of three was born or spent his childhood in Pest, whereas those coming from abroad did not exceed 20 percent. She has also refuted the notion that an overwhelming majority of the wholesale grain trade was continuously dominated by Jewish merchants, a thesis long held by mainstream historiography. Instead, the social origin of the most successful early entrepreneurs seems rather heterogeneous, with a number of domestic German Lutheran traders as well as "Greek" (i.e., Orthodox originating from the Ottoman Empire), Roman Catholic and Calvinist wholesalers. In addition, analysis of their business careers and social aspirations has revealed that there

1 Gyula Szekfű, *Három nemzedék és ami utána következik* [Three Generations and What Comes Next] (Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, 1934), 67–8; Péter Hanák, "Polgárosodás és asszimiláció Magyarországon a XIX. században" [Embourgeoisement and Assimilation in Hungary in the Nineteenth Century], *Történelmi Szemle* 17, no. 3–4 (1974): 513–36; Károly Vörös, "A magyarországi társadalom (1790–1848). A polgárság" [Hungarian Society (1790–1848). The Bourgeoisie], in *Magyarország története 1790–1848* [The History of Hungary, 1790–1848], ed. Gyula Mérei, vol. 1 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980), 547–89.

2 For the historiography of the topic: Vera Bácskai, "A régi polgárságról" [On the Old Burghers], in *Zsombékok. Középosztályok és iskoláztatás Magyarországon* [Tussocks. Middle Classes and Schooling in Hungary], ed. György Kövér (Budapest: Századvég, 2006), 15–37.

3 Vera Bácskai, *A vállalkozók előfutárai* [The Forerunners of the Entrepreneurs] (Budapest: Magvető, 1989).

was no remarkable difference among merchants of various origins in terms of the versatility and flexibility in their business strategies, their ambitions to join the élite of society and their decisions concerning their children's future. Her experimental prosopographical analysis has uncovered that the emerging group of early Pest entrepreneurs was comparable to their Western counterparts in terms of their values and social practices. In addition, recent research has demonstrated the highly heterogeneous social background of the early voluntary societies in Pest, and this also underscores the relative strength and self-confidence of the burghers of Pest.⁴

The great merchants of Pest undoubtedly numbered among those burghers in early and mid-nineteenth-century Hungary most likely to be affected by modern attitudes to individualism as well as to actively shaping one's own career. Yet, it is relevant to ask how widely and deeply these notions pervaded contemporary society. What was the social framework in which individuals could and did make their decisions concerning their own lives and those of their children? How large a choice did townsfolk have when they contemplated their sons' futures? How acceptable was it, according to social norms of that time, to let their descendants break the tradition of family trades and have them study at a "higher level"? How far did their social environment tolerate the trespassing of social boundaries? How rigid was in this sense the old border between the estates (*Stände*) of freemen and noblemen (gentry) in the last decades before the legal dissolution of estate-based society in 1848? And how deeply rooted were other sorts of social divisions within urban society, such as belonging to religious denominations (cf. conflicts among Roman Catholics as the "established church" in Hungary, Protestants and Jews) or to ethnic groups? How acceptable was it, for instance, to marry a member of another religious or ethnic group or of a different estate? An analysis of these aspects of social divisions makes it possible to gain a deeper insight into the strategies behind family decisions concerning choices of schooling, vocations and social coalitions.⁵

4 Árpád Tóth, *Önszervező polgárok. A pesti egyesületek társadalomtörténete a reformkorban* [Self-organizing Burghers. The Social History of the Associations of Pest in the Reform Era] (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2005). For an English summary: Árpád Tóth, "Voluntary Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Pest. Urbanisation and the Changing Distribution of Power," in *Who Ran the Cities? City Elites and Urban Power Structures in Europe and North America, 1700–2000*, ed. Robert Beachy and Ralf Roth (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 161–77.

5 I use the term "strategy" following the definition of Giovanni Levi, as a "rationality ... actively engaged in transforming and utilising both the social and the natural world." Giovanni Levi, *Inheriting Power: The Story of an Exorcist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), xv.

My article examines the features typical of social strategies within the German Lutheran community of Pressburg.⁶ A medium-sized town situated along the Danube and the northwestern border of Hungary, Pressburg had long ago become a passage for immigrants arriving from the German Empire as well as a place where the latest cultural influences first reached Hungary. In the period of the Ottoman occupation it became the capital, and even after the liberation it remained the seat of the main governmental institutions until 1783. It became one of the first centers of the Reformation, and the Lutheran parish remained populous and influential even in the age of the Counter Reformation. In the eighteenth century it was undoubtedly the most urban Protestant congregation in Hungary, with a number of merchants, cattle traders, professionals and artisans with crafts supplying high-ranking demands. There is good reason, therefore, to assume that its leading and influential members had both a realistic vision of society and ambitions to maintain or improve their social status through conscious family strategies.⁷

It is not the aim of this article either to compare the case of the Pressburg burghers to other Lutheran communities in the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary or to put it into the wider context of the German Protestant world reaching as far as North America or the southern coast of Russia. An intensive case study of a rather specific social milieu, it does not imply that the German Lutheran urban population was *in general* such an enlightened, assertive and conscious social group.

Demographic Conditions

Among the conditions constituting the framework in which individuals can ponder various alternatives and make their decisions, I will illustrate only two: demographic circumstances and social hierarchy. There are others, such as economic structure and trends, the network of social institutions, or (individual) psychological motives, but we know too little about these components, and even

6 The town, now Bratislava, has had various names in history (Latin: Posonium, Hungarian: Pozsony) but I use the German one since this best fits my context.

7 I am grateful to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences for supporting my research with a János Bolyai Research Grant. The article is based largely on my book: Árpád Tóth, *Polgári stratégiák: Életutak, családi sorsok és társadalmi viszonyok Pozsonyban 1780 és 1848 között* [Bourgeois Strategies: Life Paths, Family Fates and Social Conditions in Pressburg between 1780 and 1848] (Pozsony: Kalligram, 2009).

less about the ways they could contribute to decision-making; limited space restricts our scope, as well.

What makes demographic conditions such a significant factor in our context is the fact that offspring had very limited chances of surviving infancy and reaching adulthood in this period. When planning family strategies (i.e., the ways of transmitting social status across generations), parents must have been aware that all their decisions were subject to the toll taken by various diseases affecting mainly the youngest.

Certainly, it is well known to present-day historians—just as the early-nineteenth-century European population must have been aware—how unfavorable the premodern demographic environment was for raising children. Yet there was considerable variation within this scale according to region, degree of urbanity, position on the social ladder and economic background. Whereas figures on infant mortality rates calculated for England around 1840 show a scale between 70 and 250 with an average of 166 (per thousand),⁸ among the Lutherans of Pressburg the situation was even worse. In the period between 1800 and 1830 the proportion of those not reaching the age of one year ranged between 30–36 percent and 22–30 percent, among male and female population respectively. The proportion of those dying at age 20 or older never exceeded 40 and 45 percent for the two sexes.⁹ If broken down by social groups (merchants, artisans and winemakers), our findings prove that the experience of losing young children in the Pressburg Lutheran community was widespread, if not equal, and we must presume that many burgher families faced permanent concern when trying to sort out descent. In order to gain a deeper insight into this demographic schema, I used statistical analysis as well as a method combining traditional family reconstitution with aspects of social history. I created a database consisting of 250 families to analyze the age at first marriage, the frequency of birth, the prevalence of remarriage after losing a spouse, the age of wives at the last birth, the frequency of infant and child mortality, as well as the number of descendants reaching adulthood and their later careers.

The pattern shown by my data is a general lack of family planning. Most women were 40–42 years old when they bore their youngest children, with

8 Michael Anderson, “The Social Implications of Demographic Change,” in *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750–1950*, ed. F. M. L. Thompson, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 16–7.

9 Tóth, *Polgári stratégiák*, 201–2. Sources: Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (MNL OL) [Hungarian National Archive] Microfilm copies of Church Record Books, X 7770 (records of the Pressburg German Lutheran Church). The rates are calculated for ten-year periods.

very few exceptions (when they were either 44–45, or 30–35). There are some faint signs of a limitation in the number of children in three merchant families in the first decades of the nineteenth century, but even in these cases one cannot be sure whether it was the result of a conscious decision or more a consequence of illness. The usual interval of some 17–20 months between two births as well as the prevalence of remarriage among widows still in their procreative period all had a positive impact on the high rate of fertility. By contrast, the pattern of nuptiality could have an opposite influence on fertility since some 37 percent of women dying between 18 and 40 were single and the rate of unmarried women among those over 40 was nearly 9 percent. This in practical terms means that many women within the Lutheran community were excluded from reproduction. This impact was magnified by the custom whereby Pressburg Lutheran women married relatively late: their average age at their first marriage was 22–23 years. This figure counts as rather high in contemporary Hungarian comparison and is clearly closer to the West European system of marriage patterns than its eastern counterpart.¹⁰ All this means that demographic conditions in general enabled burgher couples to make decisions concerning the future of their children on a wide scale, but they had to keep in mind the constant threat that their offspring would not reach the age to marry or set up their own business.

Social Scale, Social Hierarchy

Once they had given birth to children, parents had to take into account the possible choices among various social positions of urban society. Although Pressburg was one of the biggest towns of Hungary, with a population growing from 28,485 in 1787 to 42,238 in 1850,¹¹ the Lutheran community did not constitute a “complete urban society” of its period. What is most clearly missing, or at least strongly underrepresented, is the non-authorized artisans and all those making a living from casual industrial or commercial work. But even among the self-employed, a Lutheran had differing chances to establish himself in various jobs or guilds. Statistical analysis of the composition of those registered as freemen

10 John Hajnal, “European Marriage Patterns in Perspective,” in *Population in History. Essays in Historical Demography*, ed. D. V. Glass and D. E. C. Eversley (London: Edward Arnold, 1965), 101–43.

11 Although both figures come from census data, it is problematic to compare them since the territory of the town changed just before 1850 due to the incorporation of a neighboring market town (königlicher Schlossgrund, Podhradie).

shows that while the proportion of Roman Catholic and Lutheran population was 70–75 and 25–30 percent respectively, the rate of the various vocations differed greatly for the two denominations. While in traditional crafts producing basic items of clothing (such as tailors, shoemakers, bootmakers) mostly Catholic masters were admitted into the guilds and thereby into the community of freemen, certain specialized trades (e.g., clockmakers) were represented mainly by Lutheran artisans. The custom whereby certain crafts (e.g., skimmers, locksmiths and gingerbread bakers) were reserved for Protestants, whereas others (e.g., chimney sweeps, confectioners, coffeemakers and carpenters) were reserved chiefly for Catholics can only be explained by tradition and by the fact that the majority of the masters in these guilds continuously belonged to these religions. In almost all guilds there was a clear degree of bias in favor of one of the great denominations, although this distortion decreased over time. In addition, cattle traders and ironmongers were almost exclusively Lutherans, while other fields of commerce were more evenly represented within the two Christian denominations.

The most obvious disproportion can be found among winemakers. The vicinity of Pressburg has for centuries been a center for vine cultivation, and burghers of virtually every type had vineyards on the outskirts of town, with merchants owning the largest areas. These vineyards were worked either by wine-producing burghers who cultivated their own estates or non-burgher vine-growers (*Hauer*) who were employed by the landowners. Analysis of the burgher lists shows that some 16 percent of all newly admitted freemen (1802–1849) were winemakers, who made up the single most numerous vocation, but three out of four winemakers were Lutheran. In addition, the church record books of the German Lutheran parish indicate an even wider group of *Hauer*, many of whom would later become freemen but who were probably too poor to apply the title of burghers' right at the time of their wedding. Altogether 30.5 percent of bridegrooms (first marriages only!) and 40.5 percent of parents were either burgher wine producers or *Hauer* between 1780 and 1848, and this high rate clearly indicates the weight of this type of income. Helpful for understanding the close relationship between vine cultivation and membership in the Lutheran Church in Pressburg is the structure of immigration: the bulk of these people came from an area extending south of the town with a number of Lutheran market towns and villages. Many families in this northern part of Moson County (*Wieselburger Gespanschaft*) issued several branches across generations as migrants settling in Pressburg.

Social mobility was rather uneven among various groups in the Lutheran community, however, and it was precisely wine producers who displayed the least sign of “social strategies” in terms of choosing a vocation for a son different from that of his father or brother(s). It is typical to find families with ancestors going back to the early eighteenth century in which the sources characterized all adult males as wine producers across 5–6 generations. In these cases the only deviation from the original social status occurred when certain branches of the family became carters (*Landkutscher*), obviously based on their knowledge of the vicinity around Pressburg. By contrast, there seem to be signs of a conscious diversification of crafts among one group of master artisans, e.g., families tied to the cattle trade tended to be engaged in running inns and working as butchers. This was true even of crafts utilizing various remains of the cattle slaughtered, such as soap makers, tanners or skiners. In addition, little is known about how diversely one earned one’s living. In the 1840s the local newspaper published advertisements of the Pressburg joiners in which they promoted their store with imported furniture.¹² Contemporary tax lists show evidence that a number of shoemakers and bootmakers pursued their trades only half of the year, possibly dividing their time seasonally with the cultivation of the vineyard or field.¹³ On the whole, agriculture, craft and commerce were not nearly as separated from each other as the social status specified in the sources implies.

Planning social strategies did not end with the choice from among various artisan crafts and trades or the decision to abandon the family’s traditional source of income. In a period when the norms characteristic of estate-based societies were decreasing in force, even more choice may have seemed realistic when parents made decisions about their children’s futures. Although not a large-scale path to upward social mobility, ennoblement was a possible career for men of burgher origin, and this happened relatively often in larger towns. In the Pressburg Lutheran community a couple of merchants and cattle traders acquired the gentlemanly title from the ruler in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, though Protestants remained the unfavored subjects of the realm for most of the period. However, a more frequent way of climbing higher on the social ladder, at least in terms of rank and prestige, was to attend higher schools.

12 *Intelligenzblatt für Ungarn*, February 13, 1821, 161.

13 MNL OL, Archivum Palatinae, Conscriptio regnicolaris art. VII. 1827. ordinata, Specialia, N.56; Archív Mesta Bratislavy [Bratislava City Archive], Tax books (3.d.), 1812/13 (No. 185.) and 1845/46 (No. 188.).

Schooling

Established and run originally by church organizations, schools became increasingly important for the state during the period of enlightened absolutism in the Habsburg Empire since in the eighteenth century rulers began to see them as potential political devices through which subjects could be trained to be “useful to the state.” While the entire hierarchy of former Roman Catholic education was taken over by the government, the Protestants’ autonomy resulted in the schools of the Lutheran and Calvinist churches remaining independent of state regulation.¹⁴ In the case of the Lutheran school of Pressburg, it was the congregation that ran and financed its operation. After its reorganization by its director, Mathias Bél (1684–1749), a renowned scholar and polymath, in the 1710s the Lutheran *gymnasium* (later called *lyceum*) started to attract Lutheran youngsters from all over the country, in addition to a number of Calvinist young gentlemen, sons of priests and (from the 1790s onwards) Jewish boys.¹⁵ As was typical of Protestant schools in Hungary, all levels of education, from the basic skills of reading and writing in the mother tongue and rudimentary mathematics to advanced-level studies of theology and law, were organized in the same institution. This meant that the local population had a significant advantage in educating their sons since their children could participate in education as long as they wanted without having to pay for the extra costs of accommodation.

When describing Pressburg society in his *Notitia*, Bél had reproached the town’s burghers because “only few of them join the Muses, even though they are talented and born to cultivate better arts;”¹⁶ an analysis of the enrolling books of the school in fact reveals a remarkable degree of attendance by burgher sons. It is precisely the norms, practice and structure of society’s “use” of school that is closely examined by a relatively new branch of historiography in Hungary, the social history of education; this focuses on the demand side of schooling (i.e., the need for the various functions of education by the students and their families) rather than the supply side (state policy concerning the schooling system and individual institutions). The leading researcher in the field, Csaba

14 Charles W. Ingrao, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1618–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 188–91.

15 Lyceálna knižnica v Bratislave, *Matriculae studiorum* (manuscripts).

16 Máttyás Bél, *Hungariából Magyarország felé* [From Hungaria towards Hungary] (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1984), 245.

Sasfi, has stressed that advanced-level schools had multiple functions, as the local population tended to send their sons there without the aim of completing all their classes.¹⁷ Primarily offering preparation for academic studies, secondary schools became a means for burghers to learn the social norms, lifestyle and behavioral patterns characteristic of the privileged estates of society.

This may explain why a significant number of Pressburg burgher families decided to participate in schooling at the secondary level also, even though its curriculum was based on the classical humanistic erudition, with Latin grammar as the core subject and including the study of ancient Roman poetry and rhetoric. A clear contrast could be seen between the strategies of those families proposing to spend only a few years in the school and of those registering in the academic classes with an eye towards gaining a profession and later pursuing a career as a *bonorator* (professional of non-noble origin), as priests, teachers, lawyers or officials. The latter type amounted to some 50 and more than 100 students in the Lutheran community, in the second half of the eighteenth and in the first half of the nineteenth century, respectively.

As for the former strategy, by the mid-eighteenth century it became usual for the families of merchants and the upper grades of artisans among the Pressburg Lutheran community to send at least one of their sons to these Latin classes of the *gymnasium*. In the subsequent period there seems to be a clear trend of spreading participation in secondary schooling in several respects: first, descending along the social hierarchy, since after the turn of century even a couple of sons of wine producers joined the merchant and artisan boys in the Latin grammar classes of the school. Figure 1 shows the distribution of all boys born in the two sample years of 1797 and 1829. It indicates that 32.3 and 35.7 percent of them died before the age of 10 in these two years respectively, while among the survivors a considerable percentage attended not only the primary classes of the gymnasium but also the secondary and academic classes (at least 17 and 22, respectively). These proportions appear even more remarkable if we take into account that the bulk of the rest either were from one of the neighboring settlements (which belonged to the Pressburg parish but probably did not use its school) or were sons of winemakers (who presumably attended

17 Csaba Sasfi, “Az oktatás társadalomtörténeti megközelítése: négy dunántúli nemesifjú kiművelése a reformkorban” [The Social Historical Approach to Education: the Education of Four Noble Youths of Transdanubia in the Reform Era], *Korall* no. 3–4 (2001): 28–31; Ibid., “A felsőbb iskolázottság térhódítása a magyarországi késő rendi társadalomban” [The Spread of Higher Schooling in Late Estate Society in Hungary], *Történelmi Szemle* 51, no. 2 (2008): 163–94.

one of the two other Pressburg Lutheran schools, which offered only primary-level instruction and were situated in the wine-producing outskirts).

Figure 1. Distribution of boys born in 1797 and 1829 according to the number of classes they attended in the Lutheran gymnasium

		1797	1829
all girls		103	137
all boys		124	154
died	died 0–1	22	39
	died 1–5	15	13
	died 5–10	4	3
died 0–10	<i>altogether</i>	41	55
in school	Prim:2.	6	10
	Prim:3.	8	8
	Latin:1.	11	10
	Latin:2.	6	4
	Latin:3.	?	4
	Acad.	?	4
in school		25	40
	<i>altogether</i>	52	59
from a neighboring settlement		17	25
father: winemaker		23	28
„rest”		12	6

Moreover, the number of brothers within the same family who went on to study in the Latin classes grew as the years progressed. Between 1780 and 1848 we know of at least 17 burgher families with three or more sons that sent *all* their surviving sons to the grammar class. Taking into consideration that plenty of these young men would later follow their father’s burgher vocation (such as merchant, baker, butcher or locksmith), one might judge such an education as unnecessary. This widespread custom of schooling was parodied by Mór Jókai in his autobiographical novel *Mire megvénülünk* (By the Time We Grow Old, 1863): in it a Pressburg master baker urges his son to study Latin, but when he flaunts his own knowledge, it soon turns out that his sentences are grammatically incorrect.¹⁸ Yet the strategy seems rational in its social historical context, since its function lies in the burghers’ prospects of decreasing their social distance from nobility.

18 Mór Jókai, *Mire megvénülünk* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1963), 40–1.

Migration, Immigration, Emigration

One of the reiterated theses in the former historiography about the old burghers in Hungary was that their orientation and concerns typically stopped at the walls of their own town. Since most of their privileges were valid only locally, they had no interest in what happened beyond. According to this view, their aspirations to maintain the economic order were confined to the local market. However, the analysis of the Pressburg Lutheran burghers' relation to their geographical space indicates a rather different picture. While the existence of a constant flow of migrants arriving and settling down in the town is unsurprising, the patterns of migration routes, the decision to leave Pressburg temporarily or permanently and the changes in these patterns throughout the period under scrutiny reveal that migration should rightly be considered a social strategy in this historical context.

Immigration patterns reflect the special situation of the town in terms of the spatially isolated distribution of Lutheran population. Figure 2 shows the proportions of various clusters of the Pressburg congregation according to place of origin and time. I distinguished: 1. Lutheran bridegrooms in all marriages registered in the church record books; 2. those admitted to the freemen of Pressburg; and 3. those elected to the respectable outer council of the town (to which 50 Lutheran members had to be co-opted in every local election). One conclusion drawn from the data is that there was a constant, massive, if somewhat waning, immigration from the German territories as compared to the Hungarian places of origin, and these “foreign” immigrants had a good chance not just to settle in but also fit into the local community. The main zone of emanation within the German Empire was the principalities of Bayreuth and Ansbach (incorporated into Bavaria during the Napoleonic Wars), the environs of Nuremberg and the area of the Vogtland and Southern Saxony; in other words, the Lutheran territories lying closest to Pressburg (even if the migrating distance exceeded 200–300 kilometers). The vocational distribution of these newcomers sheds light on the nature of this migration: the majority of those originating from Bayreuth were either butchers or born into such families and arrived from the direction of the cattle-driving route. By contrast, the most typical occupation of the Saxon and Silesian newcomers was cloth-making, and because this region was considered the pioneer territory of the textile industrial in Central Europe it seems reasonable to interpret this move as economic expansion. Scarce evidence for a chain migration of butcher and cloth-making families across generations

from these directions strengthens this explanation. As for the immigrants from Hungary, the two most numerous groups are the winemakers from the vicinity of Pressburg and the long-distance migrants from the traditional Lutheran burgher areas (such as the mining towns of Schemnitz, Kremnitz and Neusohl in the central region of the Northern Highlands, as well as the merchant towns of the Zips area, including Leutschau and Käsmarkt).¹⁹ The latter group of immigrants included a number of merchants and higher-ranking artisans, probably with the intention of putting down roots in the capital, where economic potential looked better.

Figure 2. The proportions of various clusters of the Pressburg Lutheran parish according to place of origin

		Born in Pressburg		other places in Hungary	hereditary lands	German Empire	other	altogether
		freemen's son	rest					
1768–1785	freemen	33.1	13.6	37.6	0.0	14.4	1.4	487
1787–1801	outer council	45.0	0.0	25.0	0.0	27.5	2.5	40
1790–1801	bridegrooms	43.8	21.0	18.4	1.0	15.2	0.6	315
1802–1815	bridegrooms	50.9	20.4	10.1	0.5	17.0	1.1	436
	freemen	43.3	15.3	17.9	1.3	21.0	1.3	386
	outer council	30.8	3.8	53.8	0.0	11.5	0.0	26
1816–1830	bridegrooms	42.9	17.6	14.3	1.3	21.7	2.1	608
	freemen	50.6	4.8	16.1	3.6	22.9	2.1	336
	outer council	46.4	0.0	35.7	0.0	17.9	0.0	28
1831–1849	bridegrooms	42.4	24.0	14.2	1.1	12.6	5.7	824
	freemen	64.1	5.2	13.7	0.8	16.0	0.3	387
	outer council	46.9	0.0	25.0	0.0	28.1	0.0	32

Yet, church record books also uncover cases of migration in the opposite direction, at least in certain towns.²⁰ Kaschau (Kassa, Košice) seems a preferred destination in this respect, with a number of merchants leaving Pressburg in favor of establishing a business in this provincial capital of the Eastern part of Northern Hungary. Other major towns with Lutheran populations also experienced immigrants of Pressburg origin. The *Patent of Tolerance of 1781*,

19 Banská Štiavnica, Kremnica, Banská Bystrica, Levoča and Kežmarok respectively.

20 Árpád Tóth, “Az evangélikus polgárság házassági piacának alakulása a Kelet-Felvidéken 1750 és 1850 között” [Trends in the Marriage Market of the Lutheran Burghers in the Eastern Highlands between 1750 and 1850], in *Piacok a társadalomban és a történelemben* [Markets in Society and History], ed. Károly Halmos (forthcoming).

which made it possible to found Protestant congregations practically everywhere in the country if the community financed its operation, greatly widened the opportunities of Lutheran burghers to find subsistence outside their place of birth. An outstanding case was Pest, the rising mercantile center and future capital, where the size of the Lutheran Church reached 1,338 by 1831 and 3,457 by 1847,²¹ and where the most common place of origin among the newcomers was Pressburg.

It is not only the appearance of Pressburg-born burghers in other places that calls attention to this emigration. There seems to be a clear transformation in the social composition of the Pressburg Lutheran community, with a growing proportion of wine producers²² and a parallel decrease in the number of merchants and artisans. In addition, the number of the families with no male descendants living in Pressburg constantly increased in the early and mid-nineteenth century. Rather than explaining this tendency in a demographic context, it is reasonable to interpret it as a symptom of a social strategy, which in turn seems to reflect the weakening attraction of Pressburg within the urban hierarchy.

There are various patterns of emigration, however. One type is when families with a number of descendants aim to put down roots in major urban centers to create an interurban family network, such as in the case of the Spielmann family of ironmongers, who had merchant houses in Pressburg and Kaschau simultaneously.²³ The cloth-making and cloth-trading Köttritsch family of Pressburg, who founded a branch in the nearby town of Tyrnau (Nagyszombat, Trnava) at the beginning of the nineteenth century, also exemplifies the structure. After the death of the head of family in Pressburg in 1821, his oldest son (who had previously settled down in Tyrnau) returned and took over the family business while his former place was taken over by another family member. In these cases spatial expansion may have resulted in constant communication and economic cooperation among the branches of the family. By contrast, there are a growing number of examples when establishing roots in a new place went hand in hand

21 Lajos Nagy, “Budapest története 1790–1848” [The History of Budapest 1790–1848], in *Budapest története a török kiűzésétől a márciusi forradalomig* [The History of Budapest from the Expulsion of the Turks to the March Revolution], ed. Domokos Kosáry (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1975), 397.

22 The proportion of wine producers among the fathers of baptized children: 9.5 percent in 1763–65, 14.3 percent in 1783–85, 28.8 percent in 1803–1805, 31 percent in 1823–1825, and 33.8 percent in 1843–45.

23 A son of an ironmonger from Pressburg, Joseph Samuel Spielmann married and set up his own trade as a merchant in Kaschau in 1824 while his elder brother Karl Gottlieb remained in his native town and took over his father’s business after his death. <https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.3.1/TH-1942-22646-13273-59?cc=1554443&wc=M9MJ-V3Y:663924448>, accessed December 17, 2012.

with leaving Pressburg for good. These cases probably reflect the fact that these burgher families assessed their economic chances rather pessimistically and saw little sense in staying. Dozens of leading or middle-ranking Lutheran families left Pressburg in the course of a few decades, and such an act seems to be convincing evidence of a pronounced willingness to take risks.

Social Strategies Examined at the Level of Families

In the previous section of the article I concentrated on the Lutheran parish of Pressburg and examined the burghers' social horizons on the community level. Now I shall shift my focus to the family-level in order to show how the practice of social strategies worked in this seminal social unit. I take the cases of three burgher families to show the dimensions and scale of decisions as determinants of strategies *in change*. Obviously, this manner of depicting burghers' strategies highly distorts and oversimplifies the complexity since it sheds light only on spectacular cases. Therefore, it is important to stress that the following analyses of a few highly mobile and conscious families should be contrasted with equal weight to the immobile and passive majority of Pressburg Lutheran townsfolk.

One of the most fabulous cases of constant and active adaptation to the changing social environment is the history of the Tekusch family. The man who founded this highly successful family was Johann Georg Tekusch (1702?–1748), a master furrier born in the mining town Schemnitz (Selmecebánya, Banská Štiavnica) who arrived and settled in Pressburg in 1725. At that time this move meant that he had left a provincial town to migrate to the emerging capital of the country. It should be added, however, that migration to a more favorable place was a tradition within his family, since his father, Mathias Tekusch, was also a newcomer – he himself had left the nearby mining town of Kremnitz in order to set up business in the center of the reviving gold mining in Hungary. The marriage of Johann Georg to the daughter of a leading butcher implies his respectable social status, which was reinforced by his election to the prestigious, if not influential, outer council of the town. When he died, his funeral was conducted according to the richest custom, usually reserved only for town elders, priests and the urban resident gentry.

In the history of his family, we can detect vocational diversification starting from his children's generation. His eldest son, Georg Gottlieb (1737–1814), also became a furrier but married the daughter of a leading merchant in 1762. His

younger twin brothers, Johann Georg (1744–1794) and Andreas Paul (1744–1825), were trained in the soapmaker and the furrier trades respectively. Their sister married a master furrier (born into the family of a soapmaker in a nearby town), so it may be concluded that they all married spouses of equal rank from the upper level of burgher society. Like his father, Georg Gottlieb became a member of outer council and Johann Georg's election to a respectable civic office also reflected their prestige within the burgher community.

In the next generation we can observe three major changes. The spatial horizon of their social strategies widened greatly, as a fur-trader descendant (one of the younger Johann Georg's sons) moved into England.²⁴ Although we have no data referring to this branch of the family, the English painter Margaret Tekusch (1845–1899) may have been related to them.²⁵ Another important target of expansion became Pest and Buda, as the emergence of two centers seems to have stimulated Georg Gottlieb Tekusch to send three of his sons to settle there. Wilhelm Christian (born in 1776) became first a freeman as a merchant in Buda (in 1806) but later moved to the opposite bank of the Danube to set up his trade, which included the tenancy of a major inn and the job of catering to the newly founded, gentry-based debating society (*Nemzeti Casino*). Of his two elder brothers, Johann Gottfried (born in 1770) put down roots as a furrier in Pest, where he was registered as the first Pressburg-born Protestant freeman and later became the treasurer of the Lutheran congregation, while Karl Valentin (born in 1772) founded a mercantile business.

It is striking that none of the seven male descendants of Georg Gottlieb pursued their traditional family business in Pressburg. The eldest son, Georg Gottlieb, Jr. (1763–1834), became a baker while his son and grandson, both also named Georg Gottliebs (1789–1833 and 1818–? respectively), were granted the title of freemen as master millers. It should be noted that commerce in grain became a highly profitable business in the mercantile towns along the Danube in the period of the French Wars, and the Tekusch may have participated in this trade. At the same time, the profitability of the furrier trade comparatively decreased as reflected in the tax sums imposed on the various artisan crafts.²⁶

24 The testament written by the unmarried Rosina Tekusch (1770–1836) alludes to her brother Samuel “denmalen zu Neugatte Strud in England wohnhaft.” Archív Mesta Bratislavy, Testaments (4. n.), vol. 16.

25 See her painting *Hearts are Trumps*, a copy of the original painted by Sir John Everett Millais, http://www.christies.com/LotFinder/lot_details.aspx?intObjectID=4524420, accessed December 17, 2012.

26 Furriers belonged to the medium cluster within artisans in 1812. While 19 furriers worked in Pressburg in this year, their number fell to 3 by 1846.

The baker Georg Gottlieb was elected to a significant civic office in charge of attending to the fortunes of the orphaned burgher offspring. However, it seems that the decline in the family's fortunes started with his generation. Of his three children, only his son reached adulthood and after his wife's death he did not remarry. All the marriages in this branch of the family that we have knowledge of from 1814 onwards were linked to recently immigrating baker families, a sharp contrast to the pattern of family relations in the mid-eighteenth century.

Among the other sons of Georg Gottlieb Tekusch, the eldest, Johann Samuel (born in 1768), became a freeman in Pressburg as a merchant in 1792, but he may have left the town since we have no further evidence for his life or death. Two other brothers left the social conditions of the burgher families. Johann Michael (1764–1813) attended even the highest classes of the Lutheran school and then continued his studies at the highly prestigious University of Göttingen, later becoming a professor of the Pressburg *lyceum* and finally (from 1803 on) the Lutheran priest of Brünn, the center of predominantly Roman Catholic Moravia. His social rank is well reflected in his marriage to the daughter of a central figure of the Pressburg Lutheran community, Gottfried Habermayer. His younger brother, Johann Ehrenreich (1778–1840), followed another path to social ascendance: he became a cavalry officer and died as a retired lieutenant colonel.

On the whole, the seven generations of the Tekusch family show an outstanding example of the burghers' need to perceive and react to the changing circumstances around them. Moving to flourishing or promising towns, making decisions concerning their sons' futures on a wide scale of burgher vocations and preferring also gentlemanly or professional careers all reflect a conscious contemplation of social aspirations and chances.

Although also a highly mobile family, the Birnstingels followed a completely different geographical route to Pressburg. The son of a bootmaker in Rust, a very small town on the Austrian border, the founder, Johann Georg Birnstingel (1746?–1831), took a considerably greater step than Jeohann Georg Tekusch when he decided to set up business in the capital. We have no data about his training and see only the result: he became a merchant trading in "Norimberg products," that is, various sorts of highly sophisticated industrial goods such as musical, drawing and mathematical instruments. The young man of provincial origin first settled in the Schlossgrund in 1775, when he married the daughter of a local merchant, Johann Georg Rudolph. Through his marriage he entered

a network of burghers with family ties to Ödenburg (Sopron) and Raab (Győr). His ancestors probably had their roots in this territory also, since there is evidence for a certain Lorenz Birnstingel (born in Rust) acquiring the freemen's right in Ödenburg in 1633, and other Birnstingels also lived in this town up to the early eighteenth century pursuing the trades of butcher and bootmaker.²⁷ However, scanty evidence makes it impossible to link them to the Pressburg merchant Johann Georg Birnstingel.

From the time of his settlement onwards, he spent a decade in the market town of Schlossgrund, where the local economy was heavily focused on the demands of the high-ranking inhabitants of the royal castle (converted in the 1760s into a modern royal residence for the governor of Hungary). Then, in 1785 Birnstingel moved to the free royal town of Pressburg, where he became an influential personality: he was elected to the outer council as early as 1789 and several merchant families asked him to be the godfather of their children. Unlike his contemporary Georg Gottlieb Tekusch, he may have found his own business lucrative enough not just to train their sons for this vocation but to make (at least a few of) them stay in Pressburg. Although his eldest son, Samuel Michael Birnstingel (born in 1777), left for Pest, where he became a dealer of Norimberg products (“Zur Stadt Nürnberg”) and a freeman (in 1809), later on, after his father's retirement, he returned to Pressburg and took over the family business. First he was admitted, together with his brother Mathias Christoph (born in 1782), into the merchants' guild in 1825, which might have indicated the reorganization of the family company into a joint business, though both became freemen only in January 1832, i.e., a few months after their father's death. There is no evidence for Mathias Christoph's status before this time and therefore one may guess he worked for his father's business. Another brother, Johann Georg Birnstingel (born in 1780), set up his merchant house in Pest also at a relatively late age (in 1814), but he probably stayed there.

The decisions linking the Pressburg and Pest branches to each other imply that the elder Birnstingel sought to create a family network of traders in Norimberg products. Moreover, there were even more merchants among their relatives. In Pressburg, Johann Márkus (a burgher born in Rosenau and a son-in-law of the elder Johann Georg Birnstingel), belonged to this circle; he became an incorporated merchant in Pressburg in 1833 and also dealt in this type of

27 Jenő Házi, *Soproni polgár családok 1535–1848* [Burgher Families in Sopron, 1535–1848], vol. 1 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1982), 125.

goods. The two owners of a Pest haberdashery, a Pressburg-born merchant Karl Freyburg and his partner, Samuel Raitsch (originally from Raab), also married Birnstingel's daughters. Given this wide network of merchants, it is surprising that we have no information for any Birnstingel interests in either town after the bankruptcy of the Pressburg firm in 1842. One can only assume that their business must have failed and, as a consequence, they either left these towns or changed their way of subsistence.

The short history of the Birnstingels showed further similarities to that of the Tekusch in terms of their orientation to non-burgher society. Unlike the first three sons of the founder of the Pressburg merchant house, his youngest son, Johann Karl (1786–1821), became an officer. Further research should uncover the reasons why he became a “retired lieutenant” at the time of his (early) death. His brother-in-law, the lawyer Gábor Nagy, represented another example of gentlemanly occupation within the Birnstingel family's pattern of social diversification. Another dimension of leaving the traditional social position can be traced in marriages to non-Lutheran people: both Samuel Michael and Mathias Christoph married Catholic brides.

While both the Tekusch and the Birnstingel families decided to orient themselves towards Pest-Buda when they perceived the decline of Pressburg, another respectable Pressburg Lutheran family ignored the future Hungarian capital city in its strategies and preferred Vienna as their destination. The last family coming under closer scrutiny in this article is the Habermayer, who owed their financial and social success to the cattle trade. Although the first Habermayer settled in Pressburg only in 1762, by that time the family had become one of the largest cattle-oxen companies in the Moson region, through which the main route of cattle export to Vienna and the southern part of the German Empire led. In the first half of the eighteenth century a couple of marriages were contracted in Pressburg by sons or daughters of butchers called Habermayer living in Nickelsdorf, but the main branch of the family arrived in the town from Raab. It was in 1770 when the Empress Maria Theresa commissioned the Habermayer brothers of Raab to manage the beef supply of Vienna during a critical era caused by high meat prices.²⁸ Although their venture went bankrupt as early as 1772, it is striking that a Lutheran burgher family of Hungary was

28 István N. Kiss, Bécs húselátásának válsága (1770–1773). Marhaexport, politika és profit. [The Crisis of Beef Supply in Vienna (1770–1773). Cattle Export, Politics and Profit], in: *A Magyar Mezőgazdasági Múzeum Közleményei* [The Transactions of the Hungarian Museum of Agriculture], vol. 1975–1977. ed. Imre Takács, (Budapest: Magyar Mezőgazdasági Múzeum, 1978), 397–418.

chosen for this duty of such high importance by the Catholic court. By that time the Habermayers had already been ennobled (in 1760) by the queen, presumably a reflection of their wealth and social recognition.

The establishment of close relations in Pressburg seems to have been an important goal of the family. With his marriage in 1750 to the daughter of one of the most respectable Pressburg burghers (Mathias Pauer), the Raab cattle trader, Johann Adam Habermayer, became integrated to the Lutheran core of the town's burgher society. Later two of his younger brothers would go further in putting down roots in Pressburg. Gottfried Habermayer (1730?–1812) set up his ironmonger firm in 1762 and in the same year he married the daughter of Thomas Teutsch, a merchant who formerly served both as the treasurer of the congregation and as an influential civic official in charge of managing the town's treasury (chamberlain). Gottfried was soon elected to the outer council and later also became chamberlain – a position he seemingly “inherited” from his father-in-law. Marrying one of the granddaughters of Johann Georg Tekusch in 1764, his brother, Johann Andreas Habermayer, pursued the trade of his father and elder brother. The high esteem in which the two brothers were held by the Lutheran community is well reflected by the respectable list of town councilors, priests and prestigious burghers who assumed the role of best men at their weddings.

The head of the family, Gottfried Habermayer, may have had an ambitious vision of social ascendance when he made decisions concerning his children's future. Among his ten male descendants (and sixteen children) all three surviving sons studied at the Lutheran gymnasium (in the second Latin class), after which two went on to learn the merchant's trade while Johann Ferdinand (born in 1777) became an officer in the army. The eldest brother, Thomas Christoph (born in 1765), later settled in Wiener Neustadt, where he became an influential member of the Lutheran community – after the great fire that hit the town in 1835 he financed the rebuilding of the church. By contrast, the youngest brother, Franz (born in 1782), remained in Pressburg and became his father's heir in 1813. The family firm had a wide and flexible variety of goods to trade in, as an 1840 source mentions him as a “great- and wine merchant (*Groß- und Weinbändler*).” The social status of his three sons-in-law also indicates a clear effort to diversify family relations: his first daughter married Professor Michael Tekusch, the second her own cousin, Mathias Habermayer, and the third a lawyer born in Raab. As for the next generation, the only son of Franz, Franz Gustav (born in 1818), became a junior accountant of the newly established Pressburg

Savings Bank (1842). In the context of the growing institutionalization of credit accumulation his participation in the modern form of banking can be duly interpreted as a sign of flexibility.

A significant trend in the history of the Habermayer family is their tendency to find various ways of earning income as alternatives to the cattle trade and, from the late eighteenth century on, to give up entirely the traditional type of family business. This is well exemplified in the case of Johann Andreas Habermayer, who made his only son, Andreas Paul, a merchant dealing in grain (born in 1772 and incorporated into the Merchants' Guild in 1803, that is, in the heyday of the commercial boom during the Napoleonic Wars), but since we have no further information about his activities he probably soon disappeared from Pressburg. In fact, Johann Andreas was the last member of the family who earned his living as a cattle trader.

In the last years of the eighteenth century, two additional Habermayers arrived and settled in the town. Johann Daniel (1764?–1812) and Mathias Habermayer (1764–1844) were sons of the abovementioned Raab cattle trader Johann Adam and must have been familiar with the town since they had attended its school for many years. In the first half of the nineteenth century this branch of the family played a major role in the Lutheran community.

The owner of the chemist's shop on the main square of the town, Johann Daniel Habermayer became a freeman of Pressburg as an apothecary in 1789 and was elected to the outer council in 1801. He married the daughter of a Pressburg merchant, Johann Georg Jung, and it is precisely these vocations that appear in the next generation: Johann Daniel's daughter became the wife of an immigrant apothecary (Michael Fiedler), while his son Stephan Karl (born in 1799) set up a mercantile firm in Vienna. His move from Pressburg must have been advised and supported by his uncle Mathias Habermayer, since Karl had become an orphan early on and Mathias was appointed as his guardian.

Mathias Habermayer was a leading figure within the Lutheran community. He was admitted into the Merchants' Guild in 1795 and he married the daughter of Johann Adam Zechmeister (1729?–1803) that same year. Through his marriage he later inherited his father-in-law's monopoly on commerce in the various kinds of ores exploited in the mines of the Northern Hungarian mountains. After his first wife died during childbirth, Mathias married his cousin (a daughter of Gottfried Habermayer). Of the four children born of this incestuous marriage, only one reached adulthood: Karl Rudolf, who completed his mercantile studies

at the Polytechnic School in Vienna, then (in 1840) became his father's partner and later his heir.

Mathias Habermayer's firm had a changing profile. In the period of the French Wars he dealt mainly in grain but he would later widen the range of the goods he sold. According to the 1812 tax book he belonged to the top of the greatest taxpayers though the rate he had to pay was not outstanding. His prestige in the urban community can be measured if we take into consideration that he was elected into the outer council in 1812. This date immediately followed the death of Gottfried and Daniel Habermayer, the implied assumption being that he "inherited" his family's place in this burgher body. He also held the position of the treasurer in the Transdanubian Lutheran superintendentia (the highest level of ecclesiastical organization, extending from Pressburg to the mining towns). His influence within the congregation is best indicated by the location and appearance of his tomb in the Lutheran cemetery: he was buried just in front of the entrance, together with the priests.

Unlike the Tekusch and the Birnstingel families, the Habermayers were held in high prestige by the Lutheran population for a remarkably long time – probably almost a century. The main factors explaining their success might be the flexibility in their social strategies, their high-ranking civic and ecclesiastical offices as well as their noble status. In addition, the various branches of the family seem to have moved frequently, and this enabled them to expand.

Summary

The historical image of the old burghers in Hungary in the late feudal period was long painted in gloomy colors since they were depicted as passive and narrow-minded participants in a period of incipient modern social transformation. A change in scale to micro-historical methods, a focus on social strategies and the use of a wide range of historical sources have resulted in a revision of this old interpretation. Analysis of the various social strategies revealed a widespread use of the local gymnasium by the upper ranks of the Lutheran community of Pressburg for fulfilling social aspirations, and the manifold directions of migration also testified to the conscious decisions of burgher families. In addition, the detailed study of various burgher families indicated a further method of showing the striking diversity of social strategies. On the basis of all these, it seems proper to state that this Protestant and fundamentally German community

bore many similarities to the urban middle classes of the West European type in the nineteenth century. It is not my intention to overgeneralize this conclusion for any of the groups of early- and mid-nineteenth century Hungarian towns, however. An intensive case study into a specific urban community with various unique determinations, such an analysis cannot afford to overstate its results. Instead, it should contribute to a reformulation of questions and suggest new methods to be applied in other historical contexts.

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