

THESES OF A PH.D. DISSERTATION

by András Lichtneckert

History of the Arács Vineyard and its Wine Community



FACULTY OF ARTS , DEBRECEN UNIVERSITY

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I. Even after János Jankó's monumental work, *Ethnography of the Population of Balaton-mellék (A Balaton-melléki lakosság néprajza)* (1902) and Aurél Vajkai's work, it is still worthwhile exploring the history of the wine-growing settlements of Balaton Felvidék because no archival sources were available before 1950. The author of the dissertation wrote his work *History of the Balatonfüred- Csopak wine-growing region (A balatonfüred-csopaki borvidék története)* published in 1990 using over a thousand archival sources. In monographies, histories of settlements and towns (*Alsóörs, Csopak, Balatonfüred-Balatonarács, Balatonalmádi-Vörösberény, and Berhida-Peremarton-Kiskovácsi*), he enriched the history of wine production in Balaton-Felvidék by exploring further sources and published the sources on the functioning of the wine communities dating back to pre-Phylloxera times as well as the vineyard statutes and records selected from the registers of the wine communities. However, the history of the wine-growing region and the monographies offered a more limited potential for deep probing, and the application of the method of micro-historiography, which can be carried out primarily with a piece of research that focuses on the vineyards and the wine community of a single settlement, is based on the exploration of a full range of sources and aims at in-depth description.

II. Writing the history of the small-sized vineyard and wine community of Arács is an archivist's job, since new funds had to be supplied following the destruction of the best sources of the Esterházy Family's Pápa and Devecser manorial archives. This was made possible primarily by the registers of the Veszprém chapter of cathedral, the archives of the Mórocz family, the socage documents of the Zala County Archives,

Tihany Abbey's Archives, and the register of wine community recorded since 1797. All this yielded a total of about 700 archival sources, still, it has to be said that the source material on Arács is poorer than that of, say, the wine-growing settlements of e.g. Csopak, Lovas, and Alsóörs. The missing sources can be partly replaced by knowledge that has come down to us about other vineyards and wine communities in Balaton-Felvidék and is also valid for Arács.

III. The dissertation treats the history of the vineyards, the landlords, the grape growers, vineyard taxation, vineyard trade and grape-growing and wine-making in three chronological parts. In the individual parts it discusses special phenomena such as the changes in the name of the vineyard of the village of Magyare destroyed in the Middle Ages (Úraszó hegye – Sikát-hegy – Istenfia hegye – Kereszt-hegy) and their explanations. In the second part a special chapter is dedicated to the social-economic factors which were instrumental in the development of huge grape-growing regions by the end of the Turkish rule. The third part contains the specific phenomenon of the effect of the nearby Acid-water spa on construction in the vineyards. The fourth part of the dissertation treats the history of the wine community

IV. Because, from the aspect of wine production, the most important factor is production site, the dissertation describes the regional location of the vineyards and grape plantations, which later underwent smaller or greater modifications. The most important of these took place in the first half of the 19th century: vineyards were gaining ground in the lower-lying areas, and, in addition to the hillsides rolling on to Lake Balaton, cleared woodlands in the narrow valley of the brook Koloska were also planted with grapes. The process

Koloska were also planted with grapes. The process which took place on the borders of the settlement was similar in direction to the one that occurred in other settlements of Balaton-Felvidék as well as nationwide, involving the inclusion of Alföld (The Great Hungarian Plane) into grape-growing.

V. Arács had been a church and secular property since the Middle Ages, but from the 16th century onwards it became part of the Devecser manor of the Csoron, Nádasdy, and later Esterházy families. Some of the vineyards paid the gentry families of Arács tax with wine. The 16th century saw changes in ownership: the Ajkai, Arácsi, and Bejci families were replaced by the Darabos, Szilassy, and Mórocza families.

In the middle of the 16th century the vineyard of Arács perished only to be restored a couple of decades later. Data on vineyard owners, and trends in the workforce are important because it is partly with the help of these that we can explain the fluctuation in the size of the grape-growing area and the exceptionally large grape-growing area in the 17th century. According to György Darabos's last will of 1641 tax-paying grape-growing areas had doubled in size on his own land alone. This 17th century boom in grape-growing was, on the one hand, the result of the fact that landowners could not sustain allodial grape farms due to a lack of manpower, and, with a view to increasing their taxes on wine, they urged the plantation of new vineyards. On the other hand, it could be attributed to the fact that a sufficiently high number of extraneous owners, especially valiant warriors from the castle of Veszprém came forward to plant and buy vineyards. The advantageous composition of the owners must have contributed to the fact that, compared with neighbouring settlements (Alsóörs, Csopak, Füred, etc.), the vineyards of the

small area of Arács produced the highest values of the grapes sold.

When tithes ceased to exist in the 17th century, taxation paid after vineyards, called vineyard tax (payable to the manor in wine), and consisted of wine and other gifts took a more favourable turn. However, the fact that the local serfs also had to pay tax in wine levied on their homes and to the Turks, too, was unfavourable.

We have hardly any sources about the methods of grape-growing and wine-making in the Middle Ages and in the days of the Turkish rule because it was primarily legal documents that have come down to us from those times. In the Middle Ages and during the Turkish rule grape shoots were pruned off all but the primary shoot. The harvested grapes were turned into clear must by trampling, which was then used to pay the tax to be paid in wine. Csigere (second wine) was the result of pressing. It is rare to come across any data on vineyards in Arács with cellars to process and store the wine in. The fact that no cellars were built in the vineyards must have been due to the lack of public security.

VI. In the decades following the Rákóczi fight for independence the grape-growing areas were reduced drastically in Arács, along with other settlements in Balaton-Felvidék, as a result of the Black Death, cold weather, and the collapse of the order of valiant warriors of the borders. Grape-growing areas had been restored in the wine-growing regions' settlements by the mid eighteenth hundreds. The same holds for Arács, where an area of 631,5 *hoe* (or *hack*: an area cultivated by one person with a hoe in a day: *kapa*) was under cultivation at the time of socage regulation (1778). This was enlarged by the grape-growing areas of the nobility on their own lands

amounting to 119 hoe (“*kapa*”) in 1796. The areas of hill vineyards and cleared woodlands and lands of the five lands continued to grow until the Phylloxera, reaching their maximum size at around 200 acres.

Even despite the permanent increase in grape-growing areas, we cannot speak of a one-crop system because legal conditions did not favour the process: provincial people were squeezed out of the plantation of new vineyards, and only poorer quality wines could be produced in the new growing areas. Furthermore, it was at this time that the so-called simple peasant method of cultivation evolved.

The grape-growing areas were expanded as a result of the two-fold increase in the population within a century, the demand which emerged during the Napoleonic War and the endeavour to replace the yield lost due to frost-bite.

Plantation of grapes in cold-climate cleared woodlands was an unfavourable development whose consequences were soon to be seen in the quality of the wines and grape prices. Grape-growing and wine-making in Arács ranked last but one, along with that of Füred.

The 18th century saw a restructuring of the composition of Arács’s landowners, with local owners outnumbering extraneous ones. The biggest change was brought about by the change in the number of Veszprém inhabitants, who, from the middle of the 18th century, had made Almádi the most important vineyard of Veszprém. In contrast with this, the leasers, doctors and employees of the nearby Acid-water spa started to purchase grape-growing farms. Arács had become the “lodging house” of Acid-water.

In 1778, 77,4% of taxpaying vineyards were on the lands of the Esterházy Counts, 3,8% were on the lands of

Tihany Abbey and 18,8% on the lands of nobilities, who were paid a total of 87 *akó* of must after the grape yields. Before 1849, only minor changes took place in the taxation of vineyards, however, by the time of the socage regulation, in the majority of the vineyards the area on which the vineyard tax was levied and the actual area were different.

Few archival sources exist about the methods of pre-Phylloxera viticulture since people rarely recorded their everyday activities in writing. Works by János Nagyváthy, Ferenc Schams, Dániel Mórocz, Gábor Pap, Ferenc Entz, József Keöd, and especially János Oláh inform us about traditional grape-growing and wine-making in the era before the 1860s. The section on viticulture of *Fruit tree horticulture (Gyümölcsfa kertészet)* by the latter author provides us with the most comprehensive description of the conventional method of cultivation and pruning in Balaton-Felvidék. Correspondence in 19th century business professional journals can also be of use, among whose authors there were relatively great numbers of Reformed clergymen, teachers, and vineyard owners from Balaton-Felvidék. Relying on these and the little archival sources that have survived the traditional Arács method of grape-growing which can be best characterised by “stocks looking like human arms or animal horns”. Among the traditionally grown grapes the Bavarian (Bajor) kind was harvested separately (pre-harvest). Clear must was extracted from grapes through crushing by trampling while presses made *csigere*. In fact, it is more suitable to treat the issues of pre-Phylloxera grape-growing and wine-making in a larger area, e.g. in a wine-growing region or the entirety of Balaton-Felvidék.

The wine produced was used for the purposes of taxation, own consumption, and trading. The wines of Balaton-

Felvidék were sold to innkeepers and, made by the name Seewein, to merchants of western Hungary and Styria. The beginning of the Reform era saw the appearance of Jewish merchants and by the middle of the 19th century the network of wine agents had evolved. Due to the role of the Jews in wine trade anti-semitism raised its head in this region, too, but it was only during the Phylloxera that it led to political ramifications.

VII. There are no sources available about the pre-1752 activities of the wine community. At that time hill mayors functioned in the wine-growing region's vineyards. The Zala County statutes passed in 1752 were introduced in Arács as well. The dissertation intends to identify the sources of the statutes and the conditions for their development. In the passing of the county vineyard statutes the desire to secure the rights of landowners and noble vineyard owners played an important role. On the basis of the register of Arács recorded as of 1797 on, the picture unfolds of a community which functioned permanently but passed few statutes and imposed few punishing verdicts. Under the control of the Esterházy family and the local gentry, this community functioned mainly as a peasant court in the first part of the 19th century. The dissertation treats as source texts the entire text of the 1780 vineyard articles of Arács complemented by a selection of items from the register of wine community recorded from 1797 on. The administrative data on leaders of the wine community, the mayor's councillors, hill mayors, and the notaries of the mayor enable us to trace the participation of the nobility, the half-nobility, and serfs in the wine community. However, owing to a lack of sources, it is not possible to demonstrate the 18th century history of Arács's vineyard community and its relationship to the settlement's own community.

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