



Klara Doka. *Egyhazi birtokok Magyarországon a 18-19. században.* Budapest: Magyar Egyháztörténeti Enciklopédia Munkaközösség (METEM), 1997. 488 pp. 850 HUF (paper), ISBN 978-963-8472-26-7.

Reviewed by Peter I. Hidas (Dawson College, Montreal)
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The Administration of Church Properties in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hungary

Klara Doka is a senior archivist in Hungary. Since 1986 she has dedicated herself to the assistance of a number of ecclesiastical archives while an employee of the Hungarian National Archives as well as to the writing of church history. Her publications include several guides to the canonical visitation reports held by Hungary's Catholic diocesan archives.[1] The work reviewed here, which is an edited version of the author's doctoral thesis defended in 1995, consists of three parts. In the first segment she focuses on the history of the surveying work on the various church estates and how these measurements mirror the economic changes on these lands. In the second part she presents two centuries of economic development and administrative changes on the estates of the various denominations. In the last part the author describes in detail the estates of a selected group of Catholic bishops, archbishops and chapters. The book concludes with a large scientific apparatus including eighty pages of estate maps.

In both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the churches of Hungary, especially the Roman Catholic church, were major landowners. In 1885 the Kingdom of Hungary, the eastern part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, consisted of 66.2 million acres of which the various churches owned 3.3 million. The Roman Catholic Church possessed 74.10%, the Greek Orthodox owned 12.47%, the Calvinist 6.46%, the Lutherans 2.22%, the Unitarians .48% and the Jews .06% of all ecclesiastical lands at that time. (p.19) The Catholic estates consisted of lands belonging to the primate, the archbishops, the bishops, the chapters and attached seminaries, and the religious orders.

Although much turmoil occurred in Hungary during these centuries occasioned by the reconquest of the land from the Turks, the Rakoczi rising, and the revolution of 1848 followed by the emancipation of the bonded peasantry, the properties of the churches changed little. They were well-managed and adjusted rapidly to the changing times. Forests were converted to arable lands, the channeling of rivers resulted in land reclamation, and the new railway system accelerated the marketing of crops.

The author provides a detailed description of a number of large ecclesiastical estates, for example the one that belonged to the archbishop of Esztergom. His land was covered by huge forests, arable lands and mines. The archbishop was exclusive owner of the villages. The archbishopric collected the tithe for itself and the ninth for the state. The author describes the various estates within the bishopric village by village, listing the number of bonded peasants, and the type of husbandry conducted including the proportion of crops sowed. Following the freeing of the serfs there were many court cases and violence on some of the estates. Nevertheless, the estate managers took more and more land from the peasants to increase their revenues during the wheat boom of the mid-nineteenth century. Commons were expropriated, and pastures and forests were converted into arable lands. In contrast to the gentry estates, the church lands were not rented out. From the 1860s on modern machinery was purchased, and canal and railway companies were encouraged to improve the infrastructure of the estates. The author describes five more large estates in a similar manner.

Doka pays special attention to the history of the surveying of ecclesiastical properties. In the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries this work was done by learned priests. From the early eighteenth century on military and foreign engineers were employed by the Viceroyalty Council. The first cadastral survey of Hungary took place in the 1780s. Whenever the office of bishop became vacant, a survey of the bishopric followed. The emancipation of the peasantry and the following separation of properties required new surveys. The estate and country surveyors were joined by both state, civil and military engineers to carry out the new tasks. Real estate registration began in the 1850s, but registry offices were only established from 1886 on. The surveyors produced maps of significance, essential for the construction of canals, roads, and railways. The maps also showed changes in ownership and types of agricultural usage. These maps survived in large number in church archives and some are reproduced, albeit not always in easily readable form, in the appendix.

It is difficult to determine the genre of this study. One could say that it is a combination of economic and historical geography, administrative and economic history, church history and general history. However, portraits of the persons who cultivated the estates, the managers, the bishops and other heads of individual units are absent. The reader remains unfamiliar with their struggles, dilemmas, achievements and thus the label "history" becomes inapplicable. The author does not compare the ecclesiastical estates to the gentry and the state estates. This could have been done with the judicious use of the statistical tables of Gyula Benda[2] or the various relevant works of two authors, Pal Sandor[3] and Antal Voros.[4] In selecting individual estates as research subjects the criteria seem to be geographical similarities, however the estates outside the boundaries of present day Hungary are ignored. The constant use of Marxist vocabulary, as in the reference to pre-1848 Hungary as a land of feudalism, adds little to our understanding of

Hungarian history. Social conflict, the productivity of the land, styles of management, and the comparison of state and ecclesiastical estates could have been discussed. Extreme positivism culminates here in the almost total absence of analysis.

All in all, Dr. Doka provides us with encyclopedic, well-researched descriptions of the most important eighteenth and nineteenth century Catholic and a few Orthodox estates in the Hungarian part of the Habsburg Empire. Economic, church and local historians will find this book an excellent resource with a goodly amount of statistical tables and an excellent historical-geographical index.

Notes:

[1]. Klara Doka, comp., *Kalocsai foegyhaszmege, Vaci egyhaszmege, Szekesfehervari egyhaszmege, Veszpremi egyhaszmege, and Egri egyhaszmege* (Budapest: Magyar Egyhaztorteneti Enciklopedia Munkakozosseg, 1997-1998). *Egyhazlatogatasi jegyzokonyvek katalogusa*, v. 1-5. Volumes on Pecs and Gyor are forthcoming.

[2]. Gyula Benda, *Statistikai adatok a magyar mezogazdasag tortenetehez 1767-1867* (Budapest, Kozponti Statiztikai Hivatal, 1973).

[3]. See for example Pal Sandor, *A birtokrendezesi periratok* (Budapest: Akademiai Kiado, 1973).

[4]. See for example Antal Voros, "The Age of Preparation: Hungarian Agrarian Conditions between 1848-1914," in Joseph Held, ed., *The Modernization of Agriculture: Rural Transformation in Hungary, 1848-1975* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 21-130.

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