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**Theses of the PhD dissertation**

Issues of political publications  
in 17th century Hungary

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## 1. History of research

The dissertation states three theses:

1. The *Tholdalaghy-letters*, compiled in the 19th century, is a collection of diplomatic letters and ambassadorial posts from the 17th century, which contain numerous previously unpublished texts, among them many political writings.
2. The so called „Nádori emlékirat” („Palatinal Memorandum”) was authored by Miklós Zrínyi – with contributions by István Vitnyédy and is, therefore, not a 19th century piece.
3. The "Oktatás jó elmélkedésre” („Instructions for Good Thinking”) was not Zrínyi’s own work.

These are three separate statements, but the second and the third are connected, in as much as the different styles and the ideas behind the two texts rule out the conclusion that they were authored by the same person; thus, one of them was certainly not the work of Miklós Zrínyi.

The Author of this PhD thesis has started to work first on the periodization problem of the *Nádori emlékirat*, this led him on to investigate the genre of political publications.

Later, the Author also embarked on the analysis of the style and authorship of the other text mentioned above – the „Oktatás jó elmélkedésre” („Instructions for Good Thinking”) –, as well as of similar texts, forming a coherent set of issues, all of which rule out identical authorship with the *Nádori emlékirat*.

The manuscript collection of the *Tholdalaghy-letters*, found in the MS collection of the Hungarian National Library (OSZK) is

a novelty for the research from a different point of view, as it contains some unpublished texts, relevant for the study of diplomatic works and propaganda literatures.

In connection to these three points, the theoretical foundations of the genre of political writings have been surveyed, and István Vitnyédy's important role as an author or mediator has been explored.

The study has dealt with texts, which have raised different problems concerning the genre of political writings in Hungary.

The Author approached the theme of 17th century representational and propaganda literatures by applying analytical and comparative methods – based on studies focusing specifically on the theme.

## 2. Methodology

The research methodologies applied to the three main themes are different, as the themes have raised different problems, which do not connect.

In connection to the *Tholdalaghy-letters* philological observations have been made, and the character of diplomatic exchanges – mostly propaganda writings, and to a lesser extent representational works – have been studied focusing on the most characteristic pieces.

This analysis concerned primarily those letters which were written by two magnates – who were (from a narrative point of view) the protagonists –, i.e. György I Rákóczi, Prince of Transylvania, and István Bethlen (the younger brother of prince Gábor Bethlen), or by people in their circles.

The analysis was focusing on the methods of contemporary propaganda.

In case of the *Nádori emlékirat* stylistic and historical linguistic research – based on a “Zrínyi-dictionary” – demonstrated that the text does not display any sign of 19<sup>th</sup> century authorship. It has been suggested earlier, that this piece, as an important testimony of Zrínyi’s political views and secret plans, is actually a compilation put together by Kálmán Thaly, a 19<sup>th</sup> century historian, or it is entirely his own work.

However, it could be pointed out that by the time when Thaly’s work was published (1868) the author could not have known the Zrínyi-library, discovered only in 1891, thus he could have known about Vittorio Siri’s role either. Yet, in the text

(published by Thaly) there are detailed references on the three Siri volumes found in the library of the Ban of Croatia.

Furthermore, one of the characteristic code names used by István Vitézy could be found in the text (Prince Auersperg was mentioned as the Golden Calf). These points, as well as the vocabulary, grammar, and contextual links with contemporary documents written by Miklós Zrínyi and György II Rákóczi all point to the 17<sup>th</sup> century origin of the text.

In case of the *Oktatás jó elmélkedésre* [Instructions on Good Thinking], the stylistic and historical linguistic analysis has confirmed that the vocabulary is different from that used by Zrínyi. The Croatian ban used certain words in an entirely different way – their rate of occurrence was also different, which demonstrates that the text was not written by him. On the other hand, it could belong to his intellectual circles, shining through the contemporary horizon of dissertation prose with its political clairvoyance and broad intellectual knowledge.

### 3. Results

The analysis of the configuration and mechanisms of public space had a central role in the thesis. Relations between political publications in Hungary and those in foreign countries have been also discussed in the thesis. It has been pointed out that public writings authored by members of the Hungarian nobility had a strong role in shaping communities, and the manuscript format of the texts is not the sign of backwardness, but rather inherent to this type of communication. While analyzing the genre of public writings, the Author has surveyed the common assumptions presented in previous literatures.

The thesis introduces to the readers the unpublished MS collection of the *Tholdalaghy-letters*, contextualizing it with the help of other (already published) primary sources and secondary literatures. The collection preserved 123 letters, most of which are unpublished. From among them, the letters concerning the problems of public debates, power legitimacy and persuasion were in the focus of study. Through their schematic analysis the mechanisms of contemporary propaganda were illuminated.

With regard to the *Nádori emlékirat* [Palatinal Memorandum], the 17<sup>th</sup> century origin of the text was pointed out. It was Miklós Zrínyi's own work, and not a compilation by Kálmán Thaly. István Vitnyédy also contributed to it, and the assumptions of previous literatures concerning the subject still hold true.

Concerning the authorship of the *Oktatás jó elmélkedésre* [Instructions on Good Thinking], one may assume that it was not penned by Zrínyi. Further research is required to identify the author.

By presenting István Vitnyédy, the Author of the thesis wished to draw attention to an important historical figure of the Hungarian nobility, involved in political writings. In contrast to the image as a middle-rank noble, and as a lawyer from Sopron, the Author sees his role – as Zrínyi's secretary – more relevant in accomplishing diplomatic missions than in administrative tasks, and overall, as much more significant (due to his position and private authority) than it has been described in previous literatures.

#### 4. Publications

While working on the dissertation and researching the subject of political/public writings the Author has published his results concerning the “Palatinal Memorandum” (Nádori emlékirat) already in 2003, in a collection of essays (“Tudományos diákköri dolgozatok”), titled “*A Nádori emlékirat keletkezésének és szerzőségének kérdéséhez*” [On the origin and authorship of the “Palatinal Memorandum”].

In 2005, he presented a paper at the conference of the Renaissance and Baroque Research Group, in Gyula. The presentation, titled “On the Authorship of the *Palatinal Memorandum* and the *Ráday Memorandum* (Instructions on Goof Thinking)” discussed the theme of the dissertation more extensively (This paper was published in 2006, on the internet.)

Lastly, the Author has presented a paper at the 2015 conference (Fiatalok Konferenciája), titled *A politikai publicisztika műfaja és nyilvános tere a 17. században Vitnyédy István levelezése tükrében* [The genre of political writings and the problem of public space in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, in the light of the correspondence of István Vitnyédy]. This was published in a conference volume *Szöveg, hordozó, közösség* [Text, intermediary and community] in 2016.

While working on the manuscript of the doctoral dissertation, the Author also worked on editing and formatting it into a coherent form, in preparation of future publication.