

**The Development of Hungarian Political Language and the
Birth of the Ancient Constitution 1790/91**

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I, Philip Barker, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signed,

Abstract

The following study of Hungarian political discourse in the late eighteenth century illuminates some of the key constitutive concepts of Hungarian national identity and their circumstances of origin in the intellectual ferment of the Enlightenment. In addition to the official ideology of Habsburg ‘enlightened monarchism’, the thesis also illuminates how other key discourses of the era (including ‘politeness’, ‘republicanism’, ‘ancient constitutionalism’, and some of their other offshoots) were used and combined in an emerging public sphere and at the 1790/91 Diet. A particular focus is given to the emergence of an early ‘national’ oppositional movement in the lead-up to the Diet, and to its ideology of ‘language’, ‘attire’ and ‘law’ as constituent features of the Hungarian nation. Focusing on this ideology, the study subsequently outlines the changing meaning of the term ‘nation’ in the period’s literature (from a class-based to an ethno-cultural concept), and the rise of ‘linguistic nationalism’ in the 1780s. The discourse of ‘linguistic nationalism’ is accompanied by a second discourse of ‘sartorial nationalism’ which lauds an oriental, military form of ‘national attire’ in opposition to the cosmopolitan fashions of the era. The final watchword, ‘law’, focuses on the rebranding of the country’s customary laws as an ‘ancient constitution’, a concept which stood in opposition to the absolutism of Joseph II, but which also distanced the Hungarian polity from the revolutionary tenets of the American and French constitutions.

The understanding that ‘language’, ‘national attire’, and the ‘ancient constitution’ were central pillars of Hungarian nationhood persisted into the nineteenth, and even twentieth centuries. By examining the above discourses and the rhetorical developments of the era, this thesis will shed light upon the ways in which political actors negotiated the advent of political modernity in the late eighteenth century by re-thinking, rather than merely reaffirming, some of the key categories used to explain Hungarian political thought.

Impact Statement

With its emphasis upon political rhetoric and conceptual change as a distinct form of historical inquiry, the following study draws upon an eclectic mix of logocentric methods in order to rethink the political ‘languages’ or discourses of politics in late eighteenth-century Hungary and their subsequent influence upon nineteenth-century Hungarian nationalism.

Despite this localised focus, however, the study also seeks to remain sensitive to the transnational discursive phenomena of the era, and to the ways in which the concepts and ideologies of the European Enlightenment may be seen to have exerted an influence on the development of Hungarian political thought. This does not mean that I focus on processes of one way ‘transfer’ from an idealized ‘West’ to a country on the ‘periphery’ of Europe. Rather, what I have sought to emphasise is how thinkers used, adapted, and confronted ‘modern’ or ‘foreign’ ideas in order to formulate new ideological programs for domestic application. What follows then necessarily touches upon the resignification of key political vocabularies in the Hungarian vernacular, highlighting the central role of translation in the formation of Hungarian political modernity.

It is through this focus on conceptual change and the transnational flow and mediation of ideas that the following study seeks to break free of the constraints of traditional nationalist historiography, and to contribute to the rethinking of European political history by putting Hungary back onto the ‘map’ of European political thought, while simultaneously noting the rich intricacies of domestic Hungarian conceptual history.

As such, the following study will chiefly be of interest to historians of the eighteenth century and to scholars working in the fields of intellectual history, political thought and rhetoric. However, with the recent revival of the idea of a ‘historical constitution’ (and other, otherwise defunct vocabularies of political thought) by the self-styled ‘nationalist’ and ‘illiberal’ regime of the current Hungarian government, this study will also be of interest to those attempting to understand the application of past political vocabularies and the rhetorical parameters of ‘ancient constitutional’ rhetoric in the present.

Some sections of the following thesis have already been published in a multi-author volume (‘A History of the Hungarian Constitution: Law, Government and Political Culture in Central Europe’ ed. by Ferenc Hörcher and Thomas Lorman, I.B. Tauris, 2018). While this dissertation also points the reader in the direction of new avenues of

research, the findings presented below will be further disseminated and discussed through a series of upcoming conferences and planned publications.

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1.0 Introduction

In his final book, *The House of Austria*, the distinguished historian C.A. Macartney begins his account with a reference to ‘the turning-point of 1790’, when the incoming emperor Leopold II was confronted by widespread unrest throughout his dominions, debilitating external conflicts with the Ottoman Empire and Prussia, and fierce resistance to his predecessor’s centralizing policies from an increasingly rebellious Hungarian nobility.¹ Leopold’s solution was to make peace with the empire’s external enemies and internal malcontents and, in Hungary, to summon the Diet for the first time since 1764 to restore internal harmony. Consequently, the 1790/91 Diet has been endowed with critical importance in Hungarian scholarship, not only because it enacted an unprecedented seventy-four new laws, but also because, with Law X, the crown formally recognized that Hungary was a ‘free Kingdom...possessed of its own Consistence and Constitution’.² 1790 was, therefore, the year when the era of Habsburg enlightened absolutism supposedly ended, and as a recent popular history of Hungary remarked, ‘the era of national awakening’ began.³

As perceptive Hungarian scholars have long recognized, but only recently sought to re-examine,⁴ the importance of this Diet derived not only from the laws that it passed but also from the language that the lawmakers used. Indeed, their resistance to centralization, their formulation of new reform programmes, their bargaining with the crown, and their competing visions of what Hungary was or should be, were all informed by a set of vocabularies and discourses that had emerged and evolved through the latter half of the eighteenth century. To understand fully, therefore, what happened at the 1790/91 Diet, this thesis will explore both the official ideology of Habsburg ‘enlightened monarchism’ and the rival Hungarian discourses (including ‘republicanism’, ‘ancient constitutionalism’, ‘politeness’), as well as the lexical and conceptual innovations that contributed to new forms of political language. In particular, I will examine how a ‘national’ oppositional movement was forged using the above discourses in the lead-up to the 1790/91 Diet, with specific reference to the noble opposition’s ideology of ‘language’, ‘attire’ and ‘law’ as constituent features of the Hungarian nation.

¹ C.A. Macartney, *The House of Austria* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1978), pp. 1-20.

² See Appendix A for the full text.

³ István György Tóth, *A Concise History of Hungary* (Budapest: Corvina/Osiris, 2005), p. 331.

⁴ The most comprehensive account of the 1790/91 Diet is Henrik Marczali, *Az 1790/1. Országgyűlés*, 2 vols (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1907). More recent scholarship will be discussed below.

To achieve this, the following chapters will not only provide an account of the evolving political rhetoric in Hungary in the late eighteenth century, but also scrutinise the changing meaning of the term ‘nation’ in the period’s literature (from a class-based to an ethno-cultural concept), and thereby chart the emergence of the discourse of ‘linguistic nationalism’ in the 1780s. As we shall see, in the rhetoric of the noble opposition—led chiefly by the ideologues of the middle nobility—linguistic nationalism was complemented by two other discourses. The first was a discourse of ‘sartorial nationalism’ which lauded an oriental, military form of ‘national attire’ in opposition to the cosmopolitan fashions of the era. The second was the result of the rebranding of the country’s customary laws, privileges, and institutions as an ‘ancient constitution’. This latter idea would serve as a counter-concept both to Habsburg absolutism, and to the revolutionary tenets of the American and French constitutions.

By focusing on the above themes, this study will engage with a strand of rekindled scholarly interest in the history of political thought in Hungary and the broader Central and Eastern European region. Based on contextualist and logocentric approaches, research in this vein has sought to excavate and reconstruct the various historical ‘languages’ or discourses of politics that contributed to the development of political thought in the region. To this end, an eclectic range of methods has been deployed, notably those developed in the field of intellectual and cultural history by scholars such as J.G.A. Pocock, Quentin Skinner, and other exponents of the so-called ‘Cambridge School’; Reinhart Koselleck and those working in the field of *Begriffsgeschichte* or the ‘history of concepts’; the ‘Annales School’ of French historiography, and many other scholars working across the fields of political science, philosophy and discourse analysis. To date, this approach has seen a variety of attempts to reconstruct historical intellectual phenomena, from small-scale textual analyses, through attempts to re-examine the continuities and discontinuities of Hungarian political thought, to grander-scale international projects that have endeavoured to explore the partly divergent, partly overlapping intellectual cultures of the Central and Eastern European region.⁵

⁵ Particularly relevant in this respect are Balázs Trencsényi, *A politika nyelvei - eszmetörténeti tanulmányok* (Budapest: Argumentum, 2007), pp. 132–169; see also Balázs Trencsényi and Michal Kopeček, eds, *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770-1945) vol I: Late Enlightenment - Emergence of the Modern 'National Idea'* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006), and the second volume by the same editors, *National Romanticism – The Formation of National Movements* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007). These volumes will hereafter be referenced as ‘DCICSE’, with the relevant volume number. The most recent work relevant here is Balázs Trencsényi and others, *A History of Modern Political*

Although eighteenth-century Hungarian history has already been studied across a broad range of disciplinary backgrounds, a common thread running through much of the aforementioned logocentric scholarship is the attempt to transcend 'nation-centred' scholarly frameworks, and thus supplement the already impressive back-catalogue of existing research by addressing some of its recurrent shortcomings. These include what Kovács and Szűcs have termed the 'national(ist) perspective', a mode of historical narrative that works from an essentialist view of 'national' culture, and which tends to construe the 'Hungarian' polity as an internally homogenous group of people. As such, the 'nationalist perspective' in its crudest manifestations homogenizes the diversity of past events and actors along 'national' lines, despite the fact that Hungary was divided in terms of class, ethnicity, language, religious denomination, and various professional and regional identities.⁶ By stepping outside this narrative, this thesis will demonstrate how the dominant nationalist Hungarian narrative of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was forged out of the competing discourses of the later eighteenth century.

A second historiographical problem identified by the above authors concerns Hungary's perceived relationship vis-à-vis 'European cultural centres' and the 'originality' (or not) of Hungarian political discourses. In this respect, historians have often concentrated on notions of 'backwardness' and the dependence on foreign (western) influences to foment change and modernization. This thesis, in contrast, will examine the evolution of a new political language in Hungary on its own terms, revealing both its vibrancy and its complexity, as well as the ways in which 'foreign' ideas (such as those of Rousseau and Montesquieu) were recontextualized and embedded within pre-existing domestic paradigms.

The final problem is the so-called 'Whig interpretation' of history, which represents the past in terms of humanity's inexorable progression towards liberty. This, in Hungarian historiography, has sometimes displayed a myopic concern with notions of 'progress', and is founded upon a selective reading of the rich repository of historical texts, excluding sources that do not comport with the 'progressive' vision of development.⁷ By examining

Thought in East Central Europe: Negotiating Modernity in the 'Long Nineteenth Century' (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁶ Ákos András Kovács and Zoltán Gábor Szűcs, 'Hogyan olvassuk a 18. század magyar politikai irodalmát?', *Korall*, 35 (2009), 147-174 (151).

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 151-152.

the language of the national opposition, I will consider how both progressive and conservative discourses were combined in a nascent form of linguistic nationalism.

Thus, bearing these considerations in mind, the principle aim of the following study is to approach the period's political literature from a fresh perspective that on the one hand examines the discursive tensions between domestic and imported political concepts, and on the other embraces the complexities of political diversity (as opposed to the various fictions of 'national' homogeneity). By doing so, it is hoped that the application of logocentric methods will help transcend some of the ideologically-laden (self-) perceptions of nationalist historiography, and contribute to a more nuanced picture of late eighteenth-century political history.

1.1 Politics and Conceptual Change in Late Eighteenth-Century Hungary

The late eighteenth century is generally seen by historians to constitute a key stage in the development of the modern 'nation state' in Hungary. Straddled between the Enlightenment and early Romanticism, the period constituted a transitional era of political innovation as Enlightenment ideals and news of the American and French revolutions shook pre-existing social norms and challenged traditional frameworks of identification such as 'monarchism', 'Christian universalism', the 'political nation', and 'territorial patriotism'.⁸ The result was a paradigm shift in the meanings and functions of key political and social concepts, similar to that outlined by Reinhart Koselleck in his famous *Sattelzeit* thesis, which marked the period between the mid-eighteenth-century Enlightenment and the 1848/49 revolutions as one of rapid conceptual and structural change. For Koselleck, it was during this period that the political language of modernity emerged in German history.⁹

Koselleck's observations provide a useful heuristic for the analysis of political developments in Hungary, too.¹⁰ As we shall see, the new ideas of the Enlightenment, in combination with a massive programme of socio-political reform directed by the

⁸ Miroslav Hroch, 'Introduction: National Romanticism', in *DCICSE*, II, pp. 4-18.

⁹ See Reinhart Koselleck and Keith Tribe, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, England: MIT Press, 1985).

¹⁰ See István Szijártó 'A kosellecki „nyeregidő” a 18. század végi magyar politikában', in *Padányi Biró Márton emlékezete*, ed. by István Hermann (Veszprém: Megyei Levéltár, 2014), pp. 7-24.

Habsburgs, provided a series of challenges to the traditional feudal order, and created a sense of tension between that which was 'old', and that which was 'new'.

In particular, the tumultuous decade of rule under Joseph II is thought to have contributed to the rise of an early 'national' movement in Hungary. Following a fraught coregency with his mother Maria Theresa, Joseph spent the last decade of his life in a frenetic bid to implement sweeping 'enlightened' reform in the Habsburg monarchy's federated provinces.¹¹ While Joseph's goal was to create a modern, efficient, and unified 'state', his unilateral attempts at reform, often antagonistic towards the dominant feudal and religious elite, stirred significant controversy in Hungary. For example, his 1781 Edict of Toleration angered the Catholic prelaty by granting religious freedoms to Protestant subjects, secularizing church lands, and generally undermining the religious orders and the clergy.¹² The Language Decree of 1784, as we shall see, introduced German as the compulsory language of public office instead of Latin, requiring Hungarian post holders to learn the language within three years or be dismissed. By 1785 he had finalised a plan to destroy the medieval system of county administration and replace sixty-three noble-run county assemblies with thirteen administrative districts (ten in Hungary, three in Transylvania) run by royally-appointed commissioners.¹³ In the same year he issued a patent providing greater freedoms for serfs: while leaving the peasantry's obligations to the nobility intact, he allowed peasants free migration, the freedom to marry, and the freedom to pursue any trade or profession without their lord's consent.¹⁴ A further uncomfortable intrusion was his large-scale land survey and registering of land holdings that took place between 1784-87. The counties protested that the survey undermined the country's laws and noble rights. Indeed, the nobility rightly suspected that Joseph's overall aim was to tax them more effectively and introduce military conscription.¹⁵ Thus, Joseph's reforms struck at the economic privileges of the noble classes and key institutions of governance and the economy, such as the guilds, whose history could be traced back to the medieval period.¹⁶

¹¹ The most detailed contemporary account is Derek Beales, *Joseph II, Against the World, 1780—1790* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

¹² C.A. Macartney, *The Habsburg Empire, 1790-1918* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 2014), pp. 119-133.

¹³ Beales, *Joseph II, 1780-90*, pp. 483-4.

¹⁴ Iván T. Berend, *History Derailed: Central and Eastern Europe in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 106.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 478-479

¹⁶ T.C.W. Blanning, *Joseph II* (London: Longman, 1994), pp. 51-52.

Joseph's moves were thus often seen as an attempt to impose 'German' political and cultural hegemony upon Hungary. But the nobility retaliated. The sentimentalist poet and monk Pál Ányos famously stigmatized Joseph as the 'hatted king' for his refusal to be crowned King of Hungary. Indeed, Joseph II had not only resisted being crowned King of Hungary but had also removed the Holy Crown from Bratislava to Vienna in 1784 (in an expression against superstitious reverence, he had claimed the crown was an object akin to a piece of furniture). Because he had, therefore, avoided swearing the traditional coronation oath that guaranteed the rights and privileges of the nobility, many Hungarian nobles argued that they owed him no allegiance. But it was not just the nobility who were unsettled. Following Joseph's offensive against the Turks in 1787, a large army stationed in the south of Hungary had burdened the peasantry with a flood of demands for recruits and requisitions. With many areas of the country restless, a group of Magyar malcontents solicited Prussia to offer the Hungarian crown to the Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, and to provide a 'guarantee' for Hungary's noble privileges.¹⁷ Soon after, with his famous 'stroke of the pen', Joseph revoked all but three of his reforms on 28 January 1790, weeks before his death on 20 February, and ordered the return of the Holy Crown to Hungary. As the crown was returned, noble *banderia* or militia were formed to escort the venerated artefact on a tour back to Buda,¹⁸ and the months leading up to the 1790/91 Diet saw outpourings of noble solidarity against 'German' influence, often expressed through calls to have Hungarian used as the language of governance, and the donning of extravagant Magyar dress. No doubt such excitement was the result of a combination of factors, including the revolt in the Austrian Netherlands, the war against Turkey and Russia, tense Habsburg-Prussian relations, and last but not least, news of the French Revolution. But the joy felt by many members of the Hungarian nobility at Joseph's downfall soon galvanized into a resolve to cast off the Habsburg yoke, and plans for a feudal revolt began to take shape, chiefly among the *bene possessionati* or middle nobility. This comprised four connected events, including the *banderium* movement, agitation at the Diet, the expression of 'protonationalist' sentiments in Hungarian army regiments, and collusion with the Prussian government.¹⁹ With his empire in turmoil, heir apparent Peter Leopold called the Hungarian Diet into session, the first for twenty-five years, with the

¹⁷ Henrik Marczali, 'Porosz-magyar viszonyok 1789-90-ben', *Századok*, 12 (1878), pp. 305-325 (311).

¹⁸ Ernő Taxner, 'Tudósítások a szent korona 1790-es diadalútjáról', *Magyar Szemle*, 21 (2012), 111-120.

¹⁹ Béla Király, *Hungary in the Late Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 174.

intent of becoming crowned King of Hungary, and re-establishing order in the hereditary lands.²⁰

While this narrative is well-known, what is less clear is the imaginative terrain in which contemporaries discussed the identity, reconstruction, or revival of the Hungarian 'nation' along rhetorical lines, not to mention the potential limits and obstacles they saw to such a project. Also unclear is the way in which the tripartite construction of 'language', 'clothing' and 'law' became central to the construction of a narrative of national identity in the years leading up to the 1790/91 Diet. Indeed, while the emergence of a national movement in the late 1780s is widely accepted in Hungarian scholarship, and while it is often seen as a conservative movement of opposition to the reign of Joseph II,²¹ the precise characterization of that movement has remained a subject of scholarly disagreement. A commonly accepted starting point is the emergence of a new 'one-nation one language' concept in the era's literature. Gyula Szekfű, for example, in his monograph on the institutional development of Hungarian as a state language, traced this idea to the French Enlightenment, and more specifically to Diderot and d'Alembert's famous Encyclopaedia. The 'French' concept, as Szekfű termed it, followed Richelieu's conceptual conflation of the 'state' with one single 'language', and portrayed the nation as 'nothing more than the entirety of people living within the borders of a state under one government; the territory of the state is the primary [element], from which the territory of nation and language are derived. Nation and language only reach as far as the boundaries of the state, and the prepotency of the state is so great that in the unified state the nation even loses its right to differentiate its own language through dialect.'²² Kálmán Benda claims this 'French' concept of nationhood came into play from roughly the 1780s in Hungarian political discourse, signifying a programme for the assimilation of non-Hungarians. Benda also claims this concept was adopted shortly afterwards by the conservative opposition movement of the late 1780s.²³ Literary scholars such as Ferenc Bíró similarly argue that a form of language-based national consciousness begins to appear from roughly the 1780s onwards within the mainstream of Hungarian political discourse, though without detailed

²⁰ Peter F Sugar and others, *A History of Hungary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 175.

²¹ See, for example, István Schlett, *A politikai gondolkodás története magyarországon* (Budapest: Századvég, 2010), pp. 320-321

²² Gyula Szekfű, *Iratok A magyar államnyelv kérdésének történetéhez 1790-1848* (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1926), p. 11.

²³ Kálmán Benda, 'Hungary', in *Nationalism in the Age of the French Revolution* (London: Hambleton Press, 1988), pp. 129-136 (132).

theoretical exposition by contemporaries.²⁴ In much of Bíró's work, however, the 'one nation one language' concept is more closely linked with notions of literary and cultural reform.²⁵

The influence of enlightened French ideas upon the national movement is irrefutable. Nevertheless, other scholars have questioned the significance of the 'French' concept, arguing that forms of language-based 'national' identity could already be found in the Bible, not to mention the writings of Humanist scholars, Bible translators, and religious proselytizers of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation.²⁶ The suggestion is thus that ethno-linguistically-defined forms of identity existed on both sides of the 'Great Transformation' that allegedly led to 'modern' forms of ethnic nationalism following the Industrial and French Revolutions.²⁷ In contrast, historians such as Ambrus Miskolczy have claimed that it was the supra-ethnic and territorial concept of the *natio Hungarica* that prevailed in the era's literature, as opposed to its ethno-linguistically-conceived counterpart, and that the national movement of the late 1780s was in fact based upon this earlier understanding of the political nation.²⁸ Finally, recent logocentric scholarship by József Takáts also takes issue with Bíró's claims, dating the emergence of 'modern' forms of national identity to the early-nineteenth, as opposed to the late-eighteenth century. Although Takáts does not clearly explain his reasoning, his discussion of nineteenth-century nationalism refers to something broader than the 'one language one nation' concept of nationhood mentioned above. Indeed, in discussing what he terms the discourse of 'cultural nationalism', Takáts refers to the prominence of ethnographic *topoi*, the description of the 'nation' as a family, organism, or body that possesses a mystical core of abstract characteristics (often in the Herderian vein), and the appropriation of the vocabularies and logic of the Christian faith: for Takáts, a common assumption of

²⁴ Ferenc Bíró, 'Nemzet, nyelv, irodalom (az 1780-as évek értelmiségének ideológiájához)', *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, 88.5-6 (1984), 558–577.

²⁵ See, for example, Ferenc Bíró, "Nyelv, "Tudományok", "Nemzet", *Holmi*, 2005, 580-594.

²⁶ See, for example, László Marác, 'The Roots of Modern Hungarian Nationalism: A Case Study and a Research Agenda', in *The Roots of Nationalism: National Identity Formation in Early Modern Europe, 1600-1815*, ed. by Manfred Beller (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), pp. 235-250.

²⁷ See Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), and Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 2nd edn (New York: Cornell University Press, 2006).

²⁸ See Ambrus Miskolczy, "'Hungarus Consciousness' in the Age of Early Nationalism', in *Latin at the Crossroads of Identity: The Evolution of Linguistic Nationalism in the Kingdom of Hungary*, ed. by Gábor Almási and Lav Šubarić (Leiden: Brill, 2015) pp. 64-94.

nineteenth-century cultural nationalism is that the relationship of the individual to the *patria* should reflect the relationship between the individual and God.²⁹

Takáts' understanding of what he calls 'cultural nationalism' thus involves a more fully-fledged conceptualization of the 'nation' than he assumes was promoted by eighteenth-century political agents. To be sure, his observations prompt us to remember the contingency of different forms of 'national' identity over time: diachronically, to claim 'continuities' of 'national' identity between different historical epochs in anything other than broad terms tells us little about the distinctions made between competing political, ethnic, linguistic, religious, or other understandings of the 'nation' over time, and the different ends to which 'national' rhetoric is deployed within different contexts. The same may be said from a synchronic perspective: as Attila Debreczeni has argued, confusion over the identity of the 'nation' at any given point may be seen to derive from the very nature of the concept: apart from the fact that national identity is often contested, many different discursive fields will inevitably collide under this overarching label of collective identity.³⁰

Despite these disagreements, it is broadly accepted that the term *nemzet* 'nation' came increasingly to refer to a linguistic community during the last third of the eighteenth century, and not merely to the 'noble' nation, meaning those who were born of noble parentage, and who constituted the political community regardless of language. This shift was spurred by a number of factors. The first was an acceleration in political debate and conceptual innovation that derived from a newly-emerging and increasingly self-conscious 'public sphere'.³¹ Of course, the very notion of who constituted the 'public' was problematic in a hierarchically-organized, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-denominational country where Latin (and to a lesser extent German) was the *de facto* language of law, scholarship, and indeed much of the existing press. Nonetheless, the understanding that a Hungarian-speaking 'public sphere' existed outside that of the traditional realm of politics may be deduced not only from the appearance of the first Hungarian press organs, popular novels and an explosive growth in the writing and

²⁹ József Takáts, 'Politikai beszédmodok a magyar 19. század elején (a keret)', *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, 102.5-6 (1998), 668-686 (679).

³⁰ Attila Debreczeni, *Tudós hazafiak és érzékeny emberek* (Budapest: Universitas Kiadó, 2009), pp. 75-98.

³¹ As Habermas put it, 'the sphere of private people come together as a public' in order to create an alternative commercial and later cultural sphere of power to that of the pre-modern, feudal court. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1989), p. 27.

disseminating of political pamphlets,³² but also from the coinage of a number of new words with the prefix *köz-* (lit. ‘in-between’, but by extension ‘everyday, common, public’), a pattern of linguistic innovation which began roughly in the mid-eighteenth century.³³

A second well-known factor that produced a shift in how the nation was conceived was the rise of the Hungarian *nyelvújítás* ‘language renewal’ or ‘language reform’ movement, which gained increasing momentum from roughly the 1770s onwards, and which drew upon both the earlier vernacular traditions of Humanism, Reformation and Counter-Reformation in Hungary, and upon language reform movements in other European countries, notably France, the German-speaking territories, and neighbouring Austria. The belief that language was a key marker of national identity was then reinforced by Joseph II’s attempt to introduce German as the language of administration in 1784. This would in turn lead to calls to make Hungarian the language of government at the 1790/1 Diet, the passing of the first language laws designed to promote and protect the vernacular, and the use of Hungarian for the first time in the official records of that Diet.³⁴

By the time of the 1790/91 Diet, however, a new form of ‘national’ ideology had appeared in the pamphlets of contemporary authors, one that not only defined the ‘nation’ in terms of ‘language’, but also ‘clothing’, and ‘law’.³⁵ This may not yet be Takáts’ ‘cultural nationalism’, but it was a still far cry from the traditional legal-territorial concept of the *natio Hungarica*, and raises two critical questions that this thesis will consider. First, how can we account for the emergence of this newfound understanding of ‘national’ identity? Second, how does it intersect with the development of linguistic nationalism?

While any answer to these and similar questions, according to Gábor Almási, constitutes ‘probably the most challenging problem in the entire epoch’,³⁶ what follows is an outline of the ideological contours of the late eighteenth-century ‘national’ movement—and the paradoxes between its various components—from the redefinition of the political concept of the ‘nation’ as a linguistic entity at the hands of language reformers, through to the emergence of a more roundly ethnocultural and identitarian understanding

³² See G.F. Cushing, ‘Books and Readers in 18th-Century Hungary’, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 47 (1969), 57-77.

³³ Gyula Herczeg, *A régi magyar próza stílusformái* (Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1985), p. 277.

³⁴ For the most comprehensive account of Hungarian as a language of state see Szekfű, *Iratok*. See also Almási and Šubarić, *Latin at the Crossroads*.

³⁵ Endre Arató, ‘A magyar "nemzeti" ideológia jellemző vonásai a 18. században’, in *Nemzetiség a Feudalizmus Korában*, ed. by György Spira (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1972), pp. 130-181.

³⁶ Gábor Almási, ‘Latin and the Language Question in Hungary (1700–1844). A Survey of Hungarian Secondary Literature (Part 1)’, *Das Achtzehnte Jahrhundert Und Österreich*, 28 (2014), 211-319 (219).

of the nation that drew on discourses of 'national attire' and 'ancient constitutionalism' from the 1780s onwards. Finally, we shall see how this newfound ideology would influence the debates, deal-brokering, and laws enacted by the 1790/91 Diet.

2.0 Enlightened Monarchy

As Franz J Szabo observed, the age of ‘Maria Theresa, Joseph II, and Leopold II was perhaps the greatest era of consistent and committed reform in the four-hundred-year history of the [Habsburg] monarchy’.³⁷ With the introduction of a ‘science of state’ during the reign of Maria Theresa, enlightened reform became a powerful force for change throughout the monarchy, even though Maria Theresa ruled as a pious Catholic empress, and worked within the structures of a paternalistic, baroque absolutism that was largely unsympathetic to the tenets of Enlightenment. After the empress’ death in 1780, the pace of reform increased. The reign of Joseph II was characterized by a frenetic and ideological restlessness that reflected not only the inflexible posture of autocratic absolutism, but also the ruler’s near-fanatical zeal for the utilitarian and rational principles of the Enlightenment. In many ways it might be said that his policies were merely extensions of his mother’s reforms. However, his determination to curtail the privileged status of the nobility, modernize the economy and state institutions, and bring religious institutions under state control while simultaneously introducing religious toleration, brought many of his domains to the brink of revolt.

Historians have long recognized the many influences that bore upon the reform dynamic of the mid-to-late eighteenth-century Habsburg monarchy, and Hungarian scholars, in particular, have expended considerable effort tracing the seeds of enlightenment and reform in Hungary. To properly contextualize the new political vocabularies and ‘constitutional’ debates of the late eighteenth century, it is, however, necessary to briefly sketch the political landscape that evolved following the consolidation of Habsburg rule at the turn of the seventeenth century, and then also outline Maria Theresa’s attempts to build not only a new Austrian state, but also generate a new sense of loyalty to Austrian statehood, partly through providing for the ‘happiness’ of Habsburg subjects, and partly through a broad programme of institutional, educational, and military reform. Thus we will see a number of broad patterns that influenced the framing of political discourse in an era of Habsburg enlightened absolutism which is widely regarded as having ended with the death of Leopold II in 1792.

³⁷ Franz A. J. Szabo, ‘Camerarism, Josephinism, and Enlightenment: The Dynamic of Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1740–92’, *Austrian History Yearbook*, 49 (2018), 1-14 (1).

The larger historical context can be briefly summarised. After the Ottoman Turks had been defeated at the second Siege of Vienna in 1683, the Holy League marched into Hungary and eventually brought an end to almost two centuries of Turkish occupation in 1699. Despite armed resistance from Hungarian rebels led by Imre Thököly (1657-1705), the Habsburg Leopold I (r. 1658–1705) also began to consolidate control over the country in the spirit of the counter-reformation. Amidst continuing strife, the Hungarian estates accepted the Habsburgs' hereditary right to rule in the male line at the 1687 Diet, and renounced Article 31 of Andrew II's Golden Bull of 1222, which granted the estates' the lawful right of resistance (*ius resistendi*) against unruly monarchs who undermined noble privileges. A passage included in Leopold's inaugural diploma, known as the *Revisionsklausel*, further stipulated that although the monarch would preserve the laws of the land and the rights and freedoms of the country's inhabitants, the interpretation of the law would be determined by the king and the estates together (*prout super eorum intellectu, et usu, regio ac communi statuum consensu diaetaliter conventum fuerit*), effectively opening the way to the negotiation of all domestic laws.³⁸ With the economy ruined, grievances festering over religious persecutions, depredations by the imperial military, and the redistribution of recaptured lands to loyalists, a final bid to gain independence was made by anti-Habsburg rebels under Ferenc Rákóczi in 1703-11. However, Rákóczi's freedom fight, fought under the banner *Cum Deo pro Patria et Libertate* ('With God for the Fatherland and Liberty'), was eventually defeated by loyalist Habsburg forces. With the signing of the Treaty of Szatmár (Satu Mare) on 30 April 1711, the prospect of a fully-independent Hungarian kingdom was no longer seen as a realistic alternative to quasi-independence governed under Habsburg suzerainty. Moderate rebels thus opted for compromise, and from then on the affairs of the kingdom were ruled by those Hungarian nobles who accepted the dictates of the Viennese administration.³⁹ They began to speak disparagingly of the factionalism that had led to the outbreak of civil war, while Rákóczi was forced into permanent exile. It would not be until the late 1780s that Rákóczi's legacy would be revived, albeit by a different generation, in a modified form.⁴⁰

³⁸ László Péter, 'The Primacy of Consuetudo in Hungarian Law', in *Custom and Law in Central Europe*, ed. by Martyn Rady (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 101–11 (p. 104).

³⁹ Ferenc Glatz, 'A Rákóczi-felkelésről: egyetemesség, lokalitás, alternatívakutatás', *História*, 124.4 (2011), 3-7 (4).

⁴⁰ Béla Köpeczi, 'A Rákóczi-hagyomány a XVIII. század közgondolkodásában', *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, 77.2-3 (1973), 154-170 (154).

While grudges certainly lingered, especially among Protestants and in the north-eastern counties where Rákóczi's memory would live on in folklore, the Treaty of Szatmár marked the beginning of a century of almost uninterrupted peace in Hungary. It constituted a retreat from Leopold I's uncompromising programme of absolutism and Catholic exclusionism. The Emperor Charles VI (known as Charles III of Hungary, r. 1711–40) permitted *kuruc*⁴¹ nobles to return to their homes and estates insofar as they demonstrated obedience to the Habsburgs within three weeks. The rebellious serfs, too, were allowed home, but not as freemen, unless they had been deemed to have earned noble status through notable military service (Rákóczi offered ignobles their freedom if they took up arms in the rebel cause). Moreover, Charles VI also stipulated that he would rule in accordance with local laws. Significantly, he reconfirmed the rights and privileges of the nobility, renewed limited guarantees of religious freedom, and promised to settle other grievances at the sessions of the next Diet.⁴² In those sessions, continued between 1712-1715, Charles VI further reaffirmed that he would rule in accordance with Hungarian laws, and assured that the *Revisionsklausel* of Leopold I's inaugural diploma would not be used to introduce forms of government applied in other Habsburg lands. In exchange, the estates agreed to support the maintenance of a Hungarian standing army, and permitted the collection of the necessary taxes and subsidies so long as the Diet gave its consent. The burden of these taxes, however, was shifted onto non-nobles, who also provided the bulk of the army's manpower. The nobility maintained their immunity from taxation as sacrosanct on the traditional, but increasingly obsolete grounds that they fulfilled their military obligations by partaking in the noble levy or *insurrectio*.⁴³

Thus, the structure of monarchical dualism was retained, and the estates would enjoy a considerable degree of political participation at the Diet (subsequently held in

⁴¹ The precise origins of the term *kuruc* are contested, although it may be a Turkish loan meaning 'rebel, insurgent'. From the late 1670s onwards, the word became widespread in German, Hungarian, Slovak, Southern Slavic, and Turkish texts, denoting the anti-Habsburg rebels of Royal Hungary and northern Transylvania. For imperial forces, the term was pejorative; the rebel Imre Thököly (1657-1705) prefixed it with *igaz* 'true' to describe his own faithful soldiers. It was, however, less frequently used than later generations believed. Rákóczi eschewed the term, presumably wishing to distance his movement from the pro-Turkish stance of earlier rebellions. The figure of the *kuruc* became a quasi-mythical figure for early-to-mid nineteenth century nationalists. The counter-term which became common after 1678 was *labanc* (from the Hungarian *lobonc*, 'long hair'), thought to be a pejorative reference to the longer hair or wigs of imperial and Austrian soldiers. Popular among the *kuruc* was a Turkish-style top-knot with shaven sides. László Nagy, 'Kurucok és labancok a magyar történelemben', *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*, 2 (1979), 250-274.

⁴² Sándor Gebei, *A Rákóczi-Szabadságharc, 1703-1711* (Budapest: Kossuth, 2009), pp. 104-105.

⁴³ Robert A Kann and Zdenek V David, *The Peoples of the Eastern Habsburg Lands, 1526-1918*, Vol. VI (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), pp. 144-145.

1722-23, 1728-29, 1741, 1751, 1764-65, 1790-91, and 1792).⁴⁴ As well as maintaining significant rights in administration and jurisdiction at the state level, the estates also preserved their monopoly on regional administration through the institution of the counties. Thus, the Szatmár Treaty proved to be a landmark in the stabilization of Hungarian politics. It re-entrenched the political structure of dualism in a composite monarchy with the Crown and the estates situated at two opposing poles of the field of politics. This bipolarity would provide the broad framework for Hungary's political relationship with the Habsburgs until the revolutionary turmoil of 1848.⁴⁵

Following the death of Charles VI in 1740, however, Maria Theresa acceded to the throne, with only the Pragmatic Sanction, a document issued by her father in 1713 to secure female succession, to legitimate her claim. Although Charles VI had laboured to have the sanction accepted by European courts and the Habsburgs' hereditary territories, and although the Hungarian Diet had accepted female inheritance in the Kingdom of Hungary in the separately negotiated Pragmatic Sanction of 1723, Maria Theresa's standing remained precarious. This was partly because a series of wars, including the War of the Polish succession (1733-38) and the ensuing Turkish War (1737-39) had left Austria in a state of military, financial, and political crisis. But it was also because a number of European rulers refused to accept the Pragmatic Sanction, and contested Maria Theresa's claims to Charles VI's lands. This led to the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-48), triggered when Prussian king Frederick II invaded Silesia. Opposed by a formidable alliance of European powers, Maria Theresa famously elicited the support of the Hungarian nobility at her coronation Diet of 1741. There, amidst much rancour, she skilfully appealed to the noblemen's sense of valour to defend the monarchy. Although her foreign detractors argued that Salic law precluded royal inheritance by a female, the Hungarian nobility upheld the terms of the Pragmatic Sanction, and promised to defend her in her hour of need. Perhaps swayed by her donning of Hungarian-style attire and by appeals to their masculine, military virtues, they were moved by her flattery and fragility, and with the famous cry of *vitam nostram et sanguinem consecramus*, they pledged their lives and blood to defend their queen.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ The series of diets from 1796 onwards (1796, 1802, 1805, 1807, and 1811-12) are often thought to belong to a new conservative epoch under the reign of Francis II & I. After the 1812 the Diet was not convoked until 1825 and the beginning of Hungary's 'reform age'.

⁴⁵ Kann and David, *The Peoples*, p. 144.

⁴⁶ R.J.W. Evans, *Austria, Hungary, and the Habsburgs: Central Europe c. 1683-1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 17.

While Austria was neither dismembered nor subjected to other great powers in that war, Maria Theresa would never forgive Frederick II for what was subsequently called the 'rape' of Silesia. Indeed, although senior officials expressed doubt over the monarchy's financial and military resources and its ability to maintain its great power status, Maria Theresa would not resign herself to Silesia's loss. She was determined both to regain the territory, and to improve Austria's standing on the international stage. As a result, the empress began implementing a broad sweep of reforms to strengthen Austria's military and bureaucratic efficiency. The aim was to unify the administrations of the Crown Lands and curtail the monopoly of feudal overlords on local administrations in favour of a centralized bureaucratic machinery controlled from Vienna. This move accompanied a partial retreat from the theological position and practices of the Baroque Counter-Reformation, not to mention a drift towards Jansenism partly shared by Maria Theresa herself, as she sought to subordinate the Church to the authority of the state.⁴⁷

For these reasons, the reign of Maria Theresa has been seen by many historians to exhibit a number of contradictions. On the one hand, the Empress did not wish to overturn entirely the unique and privileged status of the nobility. Rather, she sought to establish that the nobility's proper place was in the service of the crown. While she acknowledged that she had undertaken to preserve 'honourable, ancient customs' in her various coronation oaths, she also believed that her guarantee was only to be extended 'to those ancient customs which are good, not to the bad.'⁴⁸

Moreover, while her policies were intended to subordinate the Church to the authority of the state, Maria Theresa remained motivated by a belief in her divine calling to rule and by her own sense of piety and obligation towards her own subjects, and she remained a conservative in matters of religion to the point of bigotry.⁴⁹ Thus, while her rule undoubtedly engendered a shift from a court-based to a state-based system of governance, it did not fully renounce either the hierarchical ordering of society, or the earlier repertoire of 'baroque' imperial symbols associated with idea of *pietas Austriaca* and the counter-Reformatory zeal of earlier rulers such as Leopold I. As Crankshaw has noted, her reign was marked by a tension between the rigidity of her social and religious

⁴⁷ William J. McGill, 'In Search of a Unicorn: Maria Theresa and the Religion of State', *The Historian*, 42.2 (1980), 304-319.

⁴⁸ C. A. Macartney, *The Habsburg and Hohenzollern Dynasties in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 109.

⁴⁹ McGill, *In Search of a Unicorn*, p. 308.

orthodoxy and the ‘experimental empiricism of her social policies’ which complicated the steady shift towards her son’s emergence as the prime exponent of ‘enlightened absolutism’ later in the century.⁵⁰ Thus, Maria Theresa has often been characterized as a living anachronism, ‘a child of the Baroque living in the age of Enlightenment’ or, more positively, as a ruler whose deference towards the power structures and symbols of the past allowed her to implement a substantive programme of reform without perturbing social stability.⁵¹

Maria Theresa’s reforms were also underpinned by new forms of theoretical legitimation. For example, from the 1740s references were increasingly made to worldly and material notions of ‘the general best’ (*das allgemeine Beste*), ‘general good’ (*allgemeines Wohlsein*) or similar.⁵² These terms evoked the notion of a more uniformly inclusive common weal, and were accompanied by an upsurge in talk of the *Bürger*, *Bürgertum*, and *Volk* as the beneficiaries of policy.⁵³ This ostensibly new emphasis upon a communally-oriented form of ‘citizenship’, ultimately borrowed from the vocabulary of republicanism, blended classical ideals of participatory citizenship, virtue, and patriotism with the conceptual fields related to the monarchical *Untertan* or ‘subject’, and the associated notions of homage, fealty, and living ‘under’ the judgement and authority of an absolute ruler.

Much of the ideological groundwork that accompanied this shift was provided by the theorists of ‘cameralism’, some of whom had already tackled questions of reconstruction, administration and solvency in service to Leopold I (such as Johann Joachim Becher, 1625-1685; Willhelm von Schröder, 1640-1688; and Philipp von Hörnigk, 1638-1712).⁵⁴ Facing the problem of how to reconstruct war-torn territories such as reconquered Hungary, and also of how to compete with Louis XIV’s absolutist France, it is unsurprising that cameralist theories of fiscal reform and welfare found fertile soil in the Habsburg court. Usually viewed as a German-centred variant of mercantilism that developed into a ‘science’ of administration, cameralist thinkers often addressed problems of state building, and emphasised matters of resource management, taxation and the administration of public revenues (*Camera* being the contemporary Austrian term for the

⁵⁰ Edward Crankshaw, *Maria Theresa* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 234.

⁵¹ McGill, *In Search of a Unicorn*, pp. 304-307.

⁵² Evans, *Austria, Hungary, and the Habsburgs*, p. 18.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 61.

⁵⁴ Philipp Wilhelm von Hörnigk and Philipp Roessner, *Austria Supreme (If it so Wishes) (1684): A Strategy for European Economic Supremacy* (London: Anthem Press, 2018), pp. 111-112.

Treasury or Exchequer). However, cameralists were not merely fiscal in orientation. They also looked to issues of social reform and sought to introduce measures that would stimulate agriculture and industry, thus increasing the productivity and well-being of the general population.⁵⁵ As Albion Small has suggested, for cameralists ‘the object of all social theory was to show how the welfare of the state might be secured. They saw in the welfare of the state the source of all other welfare. Their key to the welfare of the state was revenue to supply the needs of the state. The whole social theory radiated from the central task of furnishing the state with ready means.’⁵⁶

Conveniently, for centralizing monarchists, cameralists also argued that economic development was optimal when it occurred in symbiotic relationship with a strong state or prince. However, in the geopolitical landscape of Central Europe under Maria Theresa, cameralism was also tied up with safeguarding the very existence of the state or rather monarchy, which faced repeated threats of territorial erosion, and was frequently required to foot hefty bills to maintain diplomatic alliances, or sustain large armies. In this way, the military issue was embroiled in the question of state development.⁵⁷

The first reforms based upon cameralist ideas were overseen by Count Wilhelm Haugwitz (1702-1765), Supreme Chancellor of the United Court Chancery, and head of the *Directorium in publicis et cameralibus*, which was established in 1749 to oversee matters of ‘international administration and taxation, public safety, social welfare, education, church matters, mining and commerce.’⁵⁸ Haugwitz was a student of Wilhelm von Schröder, and was keen to train a new cadre of professional state servants in order to catalyse his programme of modernization. To this end he approved the appointment of Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi (1717-1771) to teach cameralist sciences (*Kameralistik*) at the newly-established *Theresianum* and the University of Vienna in 1750. Justi, often considered the father of cameralist *Polizeiwissenschaft* (‘domestic policy’),⁵⁹ borrowed

⁵⁵ For a recent treatment of this subject in its pan-European dimensions see Marten Seppel and Keith Tribe, *Cameralism in Practice* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2017).

⁵⁶ Albion W Small, *The Cameralists, The Pioneers of German Social Polity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1909), p. viii.

⁵⁷ Von Hörnigk and Roessner, *Austria Supreme*, p. 70.

⁵⁸ Grete Klingenstein, ‘Between Mercantilism and Physiocracy: Stages, Modes, and Functions of Economic Theory in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1748–63’, in *State and Society in Early Modern Austria*, ed. by Charles Ingrao (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue Research Foundation, 1994), pp. 181-214 (204).

⁵⁹ The German term literally translates as ‘police science’ but possesses a meaning closer to ‘the science of public policy’. Expanding upon the earlier meaning of *Polizei*, with an approximate meaning of ‘legislative administration’, the eighteenth-century term *Polizeiwissenschaft* referred to a comprehensive range of fields overseen by the monarch in order to advance the common good, including ‘moral behaviour, public works,

heavily from the vocabularies of natural law as formulated by thinkers such as Samuel Pufendorf (1632-1694), Christian Thomasius (1655-1728), and Christian Wolff (1679–1754), all of whom explained how sovereignty was best concentrated in the person of the monarch.⁶⁰ Particularly influential in Justi's case, and indeed in the pre-Kantian era of German philosophy, was Wolff, who combined cameralist motives with Aristotelian themes to found a 'perfectionist' ideology of state and law that would develop into the apotheosis of paternalistic government during the Habsburg Enlightenment. Inspired by Leibniz, the central idea for Wolff was that the chief goal of government was to achieve the 'happiness' (*Glückseligkeit*, similar to 'eudaimonia') of its subjects.⁶¹ Wolff asserted that man was obliged by his very nature to act in a way that tends towards perfection and that both familial and feudal institutions had recognized that the contractual formation of a 'civil society' (at an unspecified point in the past) was the best means of achieving perfection and happiness. By doing so, however, the judgement as to what best promoted perfection lay with the government. Wolff expressed this idea using a common patriarchal analogy of the *Hausvater* (head of the household) as *Landesvater* (political ruler), drawn from the genre of *Hausväterliteratur*.⁶²

Governing Persons act towards Subjects as Fathers towards Children. Because Fathers are obliged to procure for their Children all the Means they require to promote the Perfection of their internal and external Condition, and to direct their [i.e. the governing people's] Affairs towards the Perpetuation of this Aim. On the other hand, Children are bound to do and to acquiesce to what is commanded by their Elders, and so the Will of the Elders becomes their will. Authorities or governing Persons are obliged to provide for common Welfare and Security, and therefore to devise all the necessary means whereby the Welfare of Subjects can be promoted most conveniently, and to direct their Affairs in the manner best-suiting this Intention. On the other hand, Subjects are bound to do or acquiesce to what [the governing people] deem best. Thus, it is clear that Authorities or ruling Persons

city sanitation, medicine, public health, and laws for the marketplace'. Patricia Owens, *Economy of Force: Counterinsurgency and the Historical Rise of the Social* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 105.

⁶⁰ Teodora Shek Brnardić, 'Modalities of Enlightened Monarchical Patriotism in the Mid-Eighteenth Century Habsburg Monarchy', in *Whose Love of which Country?*, ed. by Balázs Trencsényi and Márton Zászkaliczky (Boston: Brill, 2010), pp. 631-661 (p. 644).

⁶¹ For contrasting interpretations of *Glückseligkeit* see von Hörnigk and Roessner, *Austria Supreme*, p. 109.

⁶² On the *Hausväterliteratur* see the relevant sections in Keith Tribe, *Strategies of Economic Order: German Economic Discourse, 1750-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

relate to their Subjects in the same way that Fathers relate to their Children: and Subjects, just like Children, should be ready and willing to be Obedient. As a result, Governing People will rightly be hailed as 'Father of the Country' or 'Father of the Fatherland'.⁶³

In effect, the sovereign was granted paternal power over the natural liberty of subjects, and happiness was realized not through individual liberty, but through paternalistic governmental action and 'good policing' (*gute Policey*).⁶⁴ Nevertheless, although the sovereign possessed the right to rule the country, s/he was also bound to develop and protect it, and to raise the wealth and welfare of the community. This vision of a 'developmental dictatorship', with minor modifications, became central to the cameralistic doctrine of state and society in the eighteenth century,⁶⁵ and was prominent in the Habsburg ruling ideology: while the idea of a *Landesvater* was already traditionally associated with male monarchs, Maria Theresa liked to see herself as the benevolent *Landesmutter* or 'mother' of her country,⁶⁶ and it is from the 1780s that students began to sing their loyalties to Joseph II at academic ceremonies using the 'Landesvater' song, composed by August Niemann in 1782.⁶⁷

While Wolff also focused upon increasing state revenues he also promoted a populationist doctrine shared by other cameralist thinkers of the era, which channelled sexual energies into the pious act of procreation in the service of the state.⁶⁸ The idea was that an increase in population led to a larger labour force and an increased level of wealth, conditions that could ultimately underpin the growth of the state's military power and security. This outlook also led to the introduction of health and welfare policies more generally,⁶⁹ and overlapped with a proliferation of paintings and other symbols

⁶³ Wolff, Christian, *Vernünfftige Gedancken von dem Gesellschaftlichen Leben der Menschen* (Halle: Renger, 1721), p. 195.

⁶⁴ Diethelm Klippel, *Politische Freiheit und Freiheitsrechte im Deutschen Naturrecht des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1976), p. 63.

⁶⁵ Ulrich Engelhardt, 'Zum Begriff der Glückseligkeit in der Kameralistischen Staatslehre des 18. Jahrhunderts', *Zeitschrift Für Historische Forschung*, 8 (1981), 37-79 (41, 45, 66); also, Thomas Simon, *Gute Policy* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2004), p. 508.

⁶⁶ Andrew Wheatcroft, *The Habsburgs: Embodying Empire* (London: Penguin, 1996), p. 220.

⁶⁷ Joachim Bauer, 'Student und Nation im Spiegel des »Landesvater«-Liedes', in *Föderative Nation. Deutschlandkonzepte von der Reformation bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. by Dieter Langewiesche (Munich: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2000), pp. 136-155 (p. 146).

⁶⁸ Isabel V Hull, *Sexuality, State, and Civil Society in Germany, 1700-1815* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 180.

⁶⁹ Daniela Sechei, 'The Influence of Cameralism and Enlightenment upon the Sanitary Policy promoted by the Habsburgs on Transylvania (1740-1800)', *Revista Bistriței*, XVII (2003), 159-170 (161-163).

highlighting the profusion of children from the loins of Maria Theresa and other Habsburg families. Maria Theresa's maternalism was not merely a logical prerequisite of state improvement, but also a response to the fact that the Habsburg line had nearly died out with Charles VI. Joseph II, too, spoke to his brother Leopold of how procreation was of service to the state. Parentalism, it seems, was at once central to the health of the kingdom and the hereditary lands, as well as to the living future of the dynasty.⁷⁰

Justi further elaborated the conception of *Glückseligkeit* by promoting the 'circulation' of goods, money, commerce, industry, and property rights. He was convinced that only an enlightened monarch could coordinate economic resources and promote wellbeing. Without central direction, the particular interests of rent seekers would rule and act to the detriment of society.⁷¹ His thinking also contained a contractarian element common to Cameralist thinkers when he asserted that as political communities gradually developed over time (across four stages of development, hunting, pastoral, agricultural, and commercial, as Pufendorf had argued) a tacit contract existed whereby the people had granted the sovereign the right to rule in order to protect them from strife, and bring prosperity and 'common happiness' (*allgemeine Glückseligkeit*).⁷² On thus forming a civil society (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*) the people had renounced their individual interests and combined them to form a *Gesamtwillen* 'collective will', which was harnessed and set in motion as a form of *Gesamtkraft* or 'collective power' by the ruler. For Justi, a modernised monarchy, rather than republicanism, was the form of state best suited to achieving this. By handing the virtuous single ruler the responsibility for achieving collective happiness, the people became 'free', and were able to concentrate on the calmer pursuit of individual happiness. The ruler thus contributed to public happiness as a guarantor of both the security and welfare of his/her subjects, while subjects contributed to the same end by granting their obedience to the ruler.⁷³ The sovereign was, however, constrained by natural law and the *Grundgesetze des Staates*, fundamental laws that the sovereign could not alter. Freedom of conscience was an important precondition of a flourishing economy (even if public restrictions on worship were in place, private worship must be permitted), the moral

⁷⁰ Wheatcroft, *The Habsburgs*, p. 220-222.

⁷¹ Von Hörnigk and Roessner, *Austria Supreme*, p. 108.

⁷² Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi, *Die Natur und das Wesen der Staaten, als die Grundwissenschaft der Staatskunst, der Polizey, und aller Regierungswissenschaften, desgleichen als die Quelle aller Gesetze Abgehandelt* (Berlin: Stettin, 1760), pp. 3–12; 19.

⁷³ Giuseppe Campesi, *A Genealogy of Public Security: The Theory and History of Modern Police Powers* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p. 108.

perfection of the individual was not an object of state intervention (so long as their external conduct remained in accordance with the laws), private property was to be held as inviolable, and the judiciary must remain independent (an idea reflected in the efforts of Maria Theresa and Haugwitz to separate the courts from the administration). Taxation should be moderate, and of paramount importance, government should encourage trade and commerce. Nevertheless, the constitutive power of the people lay dormant—only in extreme cases could the people elect a new ruler or alter the form of government (e.g. if the royal family became extinct, or if the state was in danger of conquest, tyranny, or religious oppression). Otherwise, the people were not entitled to reclaim sovereign power on their own initiative, even if they disliked a particular government.⁷⁴

It is difficult to assess the direct extent of Justi's impact on Habsburg political thought, remembering that he left Vienna almost as soon as he arrived, in 1753. Moreover, his major treatises were all penned after he had left the kingdom, and his own thinking underwent shifts itself. For example, while Justi began with the Wolffian premise that the *telos* of the state coincided with that of its subjects 'happiness', and that state and society were as one, constrained by the dictates of natural law, he later realized that the interests of the state and civil society might be different, especially following debates over Montesquieu's *De l'esprit des lois* (1748).⁷⁵ Nevertheless, his main aim was to ground absolute monarchical power on solid legal, constitutional, and fiscal foundations while providing for the happiness of the people—an ideological stance broadly embraced during the reigns of Maria Theresa, Joseph II, and Leopold II. It is also evident that much of Justi's later work was based upon his lectures at the *Theresianum* in Vienna, and that his later writings reflected considerably his practical experiences and discussions of economic policy in Austria around the mid-century. Indeed, he dedicated his first treatise, *Staatswirtschaft* ('state economy', 1755), to Maria Theresa. Finally, in 1754 he published an outline of his courses on economic and administrative sciences (*Gutachten von dem vernünftigen Zusammenhange und praktischen Vortrage aller ökonomischen und Kameralwissenschaften*), a work used by Joseph von Sonnenfels as a university textbook on his appointment to the newly established chair in *Polizey- und Cameralwissenschaften* in 1763,

⁷⁴ Ulrich Adam, *The Political Economy of J.H.G. Justi* (Oxford: Lang, 2006), pp. 143-150.

⁷⁵ See Ulrich Adam, 'Justi and the Post-Montesquieu French Debate on Commercial Nobility in 1756', in *The Beginnings of Political Economy*, ed. by Jürgen Georg Backhaus (Berlin: Springer, 2009). pp. 75-98.

at least until he published his three volume *Grundsätze der Polizey, Handlung und Finanz* (1769–1776), which shared many of Justi's themes.⁷⁶

Although Joseph II renounced Justi's ideal of free trade in favour of centrally-imposed tariffs, and although Justi's affinity for total oversight of the economy presented an ever-expanding bureaucratic challenge, his broader thinking on economic matters was partly reflected during the reign of Maria Theresa and more fully embraced during Joseph II's later period of reform. Justi was, for example, a keen advocate of a fully trained and professional civil service, and he openly endorsed the monarch's right to tax the estates, seeing hereditary noble privilege as a severe obstacle to economic progress and 'happiness'. Indeed, he felt privilege allowed the nobility to enjoy a unique social standing with little obligation to excel or serve the state. These views were most radically expressed in *Grundriss einer guten Regierung* (1759). There he argued that it was 'in the nature of the nobility to suppress the people and restrict them in their freedom [...] It is undoubted that the immense power of the aristocracy corrupts every form of government, in which it interferes [...] A critical look at history suffices; one will easily find that the nobility always strove to attain the supreme power for themselves and leave the kings with nothing but an empty title; they tried to force the citizens into political serfdom and to make the peasants their personal slaves.'⁷⁷ Justi did not believe in abolishing the nobility *per se*; instead he sought to place nobility on a foundation of individual merit, education, and skill as opposed to land, titles, and birth. In this way, wealth and virtuous initiative, not inherited status, would become constitutive of the categories of the social hierarchy.

Similar ideas were entertained by other prominent figures of the Austrian Enlightenment and cameralism, such as Karl Anton Martini (1726–1800), professor of Natural Law and Public Administration at the University of Vienna between 1754 and 1782, government advisor, and president of several commissions charged with codifying Austrian law. He was the chief representative of Habsburg absolutism in the late eighteenth century, and tutored a number of prominent figures, including Maria Theresa's children (the later Joseph II and Leopold II) and Joseph von Sonnenfels.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Günther Chaloupek, 'J.H.G. Justi in Austria: His Writings in the Context of Economic and Industrial Policies of the Habsburg Empire in the 18th Century', in Adam, *The Beginnings of Political Economy*, pp. 147-156.

⁷⁷ Adam, 'Justi and the Post-Montesquieu French Debate', p. 89.

⁷⁸ Horst Lucke, 'The European Natural Law Codes: The Age of Reason and the Powers of Government', *University of Queensland Law Journal*, 31.1 (2018), 7-38 (24-30).

Martini's theory of natural law, synthesizing elements from Grotius, Hobbes, Leibniz, Thomasiaus, Locke, Huber, Pufendorf and Wolff, was expounded in *De lege naturali positiones* (1767), a mandatory reading within the monarchy and at the university and law academies of Hungary from 1777 until 1848.⁷⁹ The work was translated into German (*Lehrbegriff des Naturrechts*, 1797), and from there partially translated into Hungarian in 1792, representing a significant step in the development of a vernacular-based natural law tradition.⁸⁰ Martini argued that natural law should remain free of theological influence and rather be founded upon philosophical ideas. He was opposed to abuses of power and prejudice, opposed torture, defended the integrity of the lower courts, and argued that the death penalty should only be used in extreme circumstances. Like his fellow Cameralists, he too, saw that security and the public good were the chief objectives of state, and that the ruler should guide all citizens towards virtue, and provide everyone with the opportunity to ensure their livelihood and become useful members of society.⁸¹ Drawing upon the ideas of notable predecessors including Pufendorf and Wolff, Martini constructed a version of the social contract that supported and confirmed the power of rulers as constrained by the tenets of natural law. He opined that in the state of nature families had formed 'anarchical' societies for mutual assistance. However, there was no civil government in the state of nature and, as the idea of anarchy implied, human frailties undermined the attempt to achieve 'perfection'. In order to escape the state of nature then, a civil state was needed. This did not originate from God's grace, but rather from a 'pact of unity' (*pactum unionis*), sealed between family heads who came together in the state of nature. The result was a form of 'civil society', albeit one in which the 'people' chose to appoint a monarch, to whom they subsequently transferred their sovereignty in a 'pact of subjection' (*pactum subjectionis*). Thus, once society had entered into the pact of subjection, the people had renounced all their claims upon government, including the right to revolt.⁸² At the same time, the ruler was bound by a commitment to rule in the name of the

⁷⁹ Imre Szabó, *A burzsoá állam-és jogbölcsélet Magyarországon* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980), p. 43.

⁸⁰ Sámuel Dienes, *T. Martini Báró természet törvényéről való állításainak magyarázatja* (Vienna: n.p., 1792). Little is known about the translator, Dienes; he worked for the Transylvanian Royal Chancellery and joined György Aranka's 'Transylvanian Society for the Cultivation of the Hungarian Language' (1793-1806). Only volume two of Martini's work was published, at Dienes' own expense. József Szabadfalvi, 'A magyar jogbölcséleti gondolkodás kezdetei', *Debreceni Szemle*, 16.4 (2008), 468-480 (476-477).

⁸¹ Ivana Horbec, 'The "Quiet Force": The Role of Legal Education in the Disciplining of the Hungarian and Croatian Nobility in the 1760s', *Povijesni Prilozi*, 53 (2017), 81-107 (91).

⁸² Brnardić, 'Modalities of Enlightened Monarchical Patriotism', pp. 631-662.

common good, and the ‘people’ were allowed to retain certain natural rights to independence, self-preservation, and equality before the law.

Thus, similarly to Wolff, Martini argued that the attainment of perfection was the most important moral principle for mankind, and the reason for which they formed a civil state. However, in Martini’s view it was the king who possessed the *jus perfectum*,⁸³ that is, the exclusive, legally-valid right to determine what actions subjects were permitted to take regarding the final end of attaining perfection (this was ultimately the *potestas* which arose from the social contract).⁸⁴ The ruler was allowed to make laws for subjects, using all necessary means, and to protect those laws through the use of legal sanctions. Moreover, because state laws ultimately derived from the ruler’s right of decision, he was free to change and abolish them, and was thus free from any obligation to uphold the very laws that he had issued. In Martini’s view it was only when power conflicted with the natural rights and permitted actions of the subjects that it became despotic.⁸⁵

Essentially, what this meant was that while individuals retained certain sets of natural rights within the state, those rights could be administered by the sovereign monarch—in accordance with one’s rank and status within society—in order to ensure social order and the wellbeing of the general community. Thus, the ruler’s right to order the good of the community and direct it towards perfection trumped individual liberty.⁸⁶ Ultimately, Martini had argued that the polity vested its natural right to self-help in the sovereign, because only a rational ruler could direct the community towards its own perfection. However, as Rowland suggests, by grounding a hereditary monarch’s authority in his or her capacity to fulfil social needs, Martini and his fellow cameralists ‘transferred the sanctity of rule from the sovereign office to the character and policies of the ruler himself, dismissed traditional in-built limitations on the officeholder, and subjected the

⁸³ The notion of the *jus perfectum* was derived from Martini’s distinction between ‘perfect’ and ‘imperfect’ rights. ‘Perfect’ rights were derived from natural law and included the right to self-preservation, necessary property, security, defence, and the right to assert one’s rights. In contrast, ‘imperfect’ rights obtained from voluntary contracts, and were related to particular relations between men in society. Following from this distinction, men had ‘perfect’ and ‘imperfect’ obligations to respect such rights, the former trumping the latter. In Ivo Cerman’s assessment, this meant that ‘natural law set limits to the power of the state over the citizens,’ because the ‘imperfect obligation to work for the common good’ (which, we may add, ultimately arose from the social contract) was ‘limited by the citizens’ perfect rights.’ Ivo Cerman, ‘Introduction: The Enlightenment in Bohemia’, in *The Enlightenment in Bohemia: Religion, Morality and Multiculturalism*, ed. by Ivo Cerman and others (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2011), pp. 1-36 (24-25).

⁸⁴ Caroli Antonii de Martini, *De Lege Naturali Positiones* (Vienna: Trattner, 1778), p. 36.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 208-209.

⁸⁶ Enrico Pattaro and others, *A Treatise of Legal Philosophy and General Jurisprudence: vol. 9: A History of the Philosophy of Law in the Civil Law World, 1600-1900* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2009), pp. 175-176.

common welfare to the vagaries of the individual ruler'.⁸⁷ As Klassen similarly observed, it appeared that the authority of the enlightened ruler rested 'on his qualities as a human being and citizen, not on kingship as an institution'.⁸⁸

Nevertheless, Martini's influence has been seen to constitute a central role in the political debates of late eighteenth-century Hungary. Sándor Eckhardt suggested that it was Martini's political theories that led Joseph II to see himself as the embodiment of the common will of the people who had come together in a social contract, thus justifying his attack upon Hungary's outdated administrative and legal structure which served only the interests of the nobility.⁸⁹ A similar view was shared by Henry Strakosch:

The common good was the good of all [...] clearly recognizable in the light of reason [and] the state was [its] only possible guardian [...] consequently it was the primary function of government to subject every activity within the social order [...] to the direction of the state. The justification of a fully authoritarian regime was seen in the fact that it did not spring from the will of the sovereign but was in full conformity with reason.⁹⁰

With the *Ratio Educationis* of 1777, Maria Theresa placed Martini's *De lege naturali positiones* on the compulsory reading list at the university and law academies, familiarizing a new class of civil servants and legal professionals with the intellectual framework of enlightened absolutism.⁹¹ During the 1780s, however, and particularly towards the end of Joseph II's reign, debates about royal power and authority became centred upon different interpretations of the social contract, often with reference to Rousseau's *Contrat Social* (1762), a work that similarly drew upon the tenets of natural law and contract theory, and that enjoyed prominence as a weapon of ideological debate among proponents of reform in Hungary.⁹²

⁸⁷ Herbert Rowland, *Matthias Claudius: Language as 'Infamous Funnel' and its Imperatives* (London: Associated University Presses, 1997), p. 240.

⁸⁸ Cited in Otto Brunner, 'Vom Gottesgnadentum zum Monarchischen Prinzip. Der Weg der Europäischen Monarchie Seit dem Hohen Mittelalter', *Vorträge und Forschungen: Das Königtum. Seine Geistigen und Rechtlichen Grundlagen*, 3.2 (1956), 279-305 (298).

⁸⁹ Eckhardt Sándor, *A francia forradalom eszméi Magyarországon* (Budapest: Franklin, 1924), p. 29.

⁹⁰ Henry Strakosch, *State Absolutism and the Rule of Law* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1967), p. 123.

⁹¹ Sándor Pruzsinszky, *Természetjog és politika a XVIII. századi Magyarországon* (Budapest: Napvilág, 2002), p. 11.

⁹² Rousseau's works were banned under Maria Theresa and tolerated under Joseph II. Although not officially permitted during the brief reign of Leopold II, Rousseau's oeuvre was once again banned under the reactionary Francis II, when familiarity with his ideas became seen as evidence of illegal or even treasonous

The final figure discussed here is another important advocate of the Enlightenment in Austria: Joseph von Sonnenfels (1732-1817). A Moravian Jew, Sonnenfels served in the Austrian army and studied at the University of Vienna between 1754-1758, where he would later establish a chair in *Polizei- und Cameralwissenschaft* in 1763. A politician, author, journalist, theatre critic, linguist, jurist, freemason, and counsellor of state, Sonnenfels is credited with establishing 'political science' as a distinct university subject by separating it from 'economics' and 'finance'; for successfully advising Maria Theresa on administrative and legal reforms, and for advocating the abolition of torture in 1776. He also worked on judicial reforms later introduced by Joseph II, promoted and officially censored the theatre (opposing the so-called 'Hanswurst' comedies), and advanced the cause of reading and scholarship in the German vernacular.⁹³ Among his most influential works were his *Grundsätze der Polizey, Handlung und Finanz*, published between 1769-1776, his *Politische Abhandlungen* (1777) and an unfinished, revised version of the *Grundsätze* entitled *Handbuch der inneren Staatsverwaltung* (1798). The title of Sonnenfels' *Grundsätze* encompasses the three main branches of his Cameralist vision, *Polizey* (the general 'ordering function' of the state), *Handlung* ('market relations') and *Finanz* ('taxation'). The four main goals these set out to achieve were 1) to establish and maintain the state's external security, a chief goal of politics (here through 'foreign relations' and the army; 2) to achieve internal security, for which the science of *Polizey* or internal administration was responsible; 3) to secure and improve the food supply through the science of trade and commerce, and 4) to guarantee and stimulate the growth of revenues needed to cover public expenditure through the science of taxation.⁹⁴

As László Kontler has recently argued, the significance of Sonnenfels' works, in particular the *Grundsätze*, was the implied, if not always clearly explicit maxim that the measure of the state's legitimacy rested upon its ability to ensure the *Bequemlichkeit* 'convenience' and *Sicherheit* 'security' of its citizens through law, to the extent that it prompted within them a 'love of the fatherland'. *Bequemlichkeit* was focused upon the provision of basic means of subsistence and foodstuffs. If successful, the multiplication of the means of nourishment would inevitably lead to an increase in population, a benchmark

activity. Monika Baár, 'Echoes of the Social Contract in Central and Eastern Europe, 1770-1825', in *Engaging with Rousseau*, ed. by Avi Lifschitz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 95-113 (96-97).

⁹³ See Karl von Görner, *Der Hans Wurst-Streit in Wien und Joseph von Sonnenfels* (Wien: Konegen, 1884).

⁹⁴ Zsolt Kökényesi, 'Kiváltságosok az állam és a közjó szolgálatában. Joseph von Sonnenfels nemesség koncepciójáról', *Aetas*, 28.3 (2013), 60-91.

of good governance and a chief goal of the enlightened state. *Sicherheit* was concerned with external and internal security, the former provided through military might and the endeavours of *Politik* or foreign policy, and the latter through *Polizey*, which was the guidance or internal ordering of the state with the aim of providing security. *Polizey* was thus separated from *Handlung* and *Finanz*, and assigned functions close to those of a modern ministry of the interior, including provisions for public health. It incorporated the ideas of ‘public safety’, whereby the collective state was protected from private citizens, and ‘private safety’, where private individuals were protected from state authority and other threats to their life, property, and wellbeing.⁹⁵ The idea was not to destroy forms of social organization that aspired to autonomous development, but to prevent sectional interests from gaining ascendancy, and to curb forces that would undermine the power of the state and thus the achievement of the common good. This was the creation of ‘harmony’, a key underlying theme of Sonnenfels’ work (he was a member of the Viennese freemasonic lodge ‘For True Harmony’ *Zur wahren Eintracht*). For Sonnenfels, harmony took precedence over the lives, liberties and estates of the citizens, which were less the *loci* of inalienable, individual rights, but rather objective conditions that were to be managed and secured through state intervention in order to pursue the common good.⁹⁶ Indeed, it was every citizen’s duty to submit to their born position in society; Sonnenfels saw society as a social pyramid, and maintained that people complained unjustly about class inequality (*man beklagt sich unbillig über die Ungleichheit der Stände*). Nevertheless, it was equally every citizen’s right to work towards their own prosperity as understood within the limits of his or her social status, and it was the state’s duty—its *raison d’être*—to assist these ends. In this way, an aristocratic elite and the clergy presided over the order of society, directing its moral ends, resources, and other goals. At the same time, the excessive aspirations of the upper classes were to be curbed so that harmony could be preserved within the monarchy.⁹⁷

Sonnenfels also believed that education was a matter of state and saw that the populace could be educated in the ways of social or political virtue in order to become ‘honourable’ citizens, ‘honour’ here referring to the concordance of one’s actions with the

⁹⁵ László Kontler, ‘Polizey and Patriotism: Joseph Von Sonnenfels and the Legitimacy of Enlightened Monarchy in the Gaze of Eighteenth-Century State Sciences’, in *Monarchism and Absolutism in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Cesare Cuttica and Glen Burgess (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 75-90.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁹⁷ Jonathan Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750-1790* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 286-7.

aims and laws of society. Education was no longer to be a corporate affair, but a systematic and uniform approach to the *Bildung* 'formation, development' of individuals within the state, so that they may at first recognize their rights and duties, and secondly develop bonds of loyalty and obedience by recognizing the services rendered to them by the state.⁹⁸

Sonnenfels popularized these and related ideas through his literary activities, such as the weekly *Der Mann ohne Vorurtheil* ('The Man without Prejudice') in the 1760s, designed to spread good reading habits in German (and unsuccessfully attacked by Cardinal Archbishop Christoph Anton von Migazzi, 1714-1803, as being tolerationist, harmful to the church, and irreligious).⁹⁹ In this publication Sonnenfels argued that the creation of a new man, without prejudice, would allow the state to prosper and its subjects to flourish. The new man was an active citizen, who chose his own allegiances and occupations. He was free, unlike the slave, but voluntarily placed himself in the service of the state, recognizing that his personal freedom could only be secured in a harmoniously ordered society that was maintained in a state of peaceful co-existence. This freedom, however, required the sacrifice of certain individual liberties and privileges, and thus, the common good was prioritized over the personal rights of individual citizens with the aim of maintaining social harmony.¹⁰⁰

In *Über die Liebe des Vaterlandes* (1771), Sonnenfels responded more explicitly to the broader context of debate on patriotism that was taking place following the Seven Years' War (in its narrower context, the pamphlet was published on the occasion of the young Hungarian Count Antal Apponyi's public defence of his studies in political science at the *Theresianum* in Vienna). The debate on patriotism drew heavily on republican *topoi* and the writings of Rousseau, who had demonstrated how great marvels of virtue could be generated through love of the fatherland. Presumably, Sonnenfels' text was designed to promote a concept of state allegiance that would be acceptable to all the different ethnic groups that constituted the Monarchy. He claimed that love for the fatherland was a form of 'self-love' (*Eigenliebe*), because the well-being of the fatherland was directly connected to one's own wellbeing. The fatherland itself comprised a *Land* or country, its laws, an established form of government, its inhabitants, and the various rights they enjoyed. Thus, by making self-love the foundation of patriotism, the entirety of the people (*Volk*) could be

⁹⁸ Kontler, 'Polizey and Patriotism', pp. 86-88.

⁹⁹ Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment*, p. 286.

¹⁰⁰ Iryna Vushko, *The Politics of Cultural Retreat: Imperial Bureaucracy in Austrian Galicia, 1772-1867* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), pp. 27-28.

transformed into patriots who actively engaged in the betterment of the fatherland.¹⁰¹ Indeed, the sub-chapters of Sonnenfels' work explain that everyone can be a patriot within a 'Patriotic Nation,' with 'The Regent as Patriot,' 'The Patriotic Nobility,' 'The Clerk as Patriot,' 'The Soldier as Patriot' and 'The Father as Patriot',¹⁰² the last category again referring to the paternal ideal of the 'father' as the head of the household who prepared his sons to be honourable and obedient to the state. Thus, Sonnenfels made the 'patriot' a synonym for the 'citizen-subject' of the monarchy.

Nevertheless, while this top-down structure suggested that 'patriotism' existed within a hierarchically-ordered polity, Sonnenfels also claimed that citizens must possess a stake in the country in order to be patriotic. Like Rousseau, he referred to the Spartans to provide an example of a people infused with patriotic sentiment, who even preferred domestic poverty over foreign luxury; but he contrasted them with the Helots, a caste of slaves, who were unable to experience patriotism because in their subjugation they 'did not regard Sparta as their fatherland'.¹⁰³

Another factor contributing to the 'love of the fatherland' for Sonnenfels was education. He saw that schools and universities should promote patriotism and be uniformly integrated within an educational programme animated by the spirit of patriotism. Sonnenfels also addressed the issue of language, an obvious point of disunity in a multi-national monarchy. He claimed that the use of one official language was desirable if administrative cohesion was to be maintained. This would contribute to a unified society, further enabling the ends of successful cooperation and harmony. No wonder, then that Joseph II believed it was desirable to implement the use of the German language in public administration, law, and the army at the expense of Latin (in the Hungarian lands) and the other vernaculars.¹⁰⁴ Patriotism, it seemed, could be dislocated from any particular historical, political, or cultural structure by good governance. Yet even Sonnenfels accepted that patriotism was contingent upon a people's identification of happiness with the qualities of a particular country. But which territory was the *Vaterland* in a monarchy that was a patchwork of several independently-standing fatherlands? As Evans remarked: 'Did it include or exclude Hungary; and what implications did the notion

¹⁰¹ Brnardić, 'Modalities of Enlightened Monarchical Patriotism', p. 642.

¹⁰² Marius Turda, 'Joseph von Sonnenfels', in *DCICSE*, I, pp. 127-131 (p. 129).

¹⁰³ Cited in Ritchie Robertson, 'Cosmopolitanism, Patriotism, and Nationalism in the German and Austrian Enlightenment', in *Enlightenment Cosmopolitanism*, ed. by David Adams (Abingdon: MHRA and Routledge, 2011), pp. 12-30 (22).

¹⁰⁴ Turda, 'Joseph von Sonnenfels', p. 130.

carry for the government's backers there? Sonnenfels remained vague, but he seemed to be looking to the *Gesamtmonarchie*, the Habsburg lands as a whole.¹⁰⁵ He certainly never explained how state patriotism could appeal to the Magyar nobility, whose country existed in a condition of 'institutionalized decentralization', as Vermes put it, through the maintenance of the county system of administration.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Evans, *Austria, Hungary and the Habsburgs*, p. 27.

¹⁰⁶ Gábor Vermes, *Hungarian Culture and Politics in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1711-1848* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014), pp. 5; 41.

3.0 The Clash of Old and New

During the 1760s the Habsburgs decided to implement reforms based upon their new state ideology in Hungary. The administrative machinery was in full swing. Maria Theresa's closest aides, including Prince Kaunitz, Baron Egid von Borié, and Sonnenfels were all working on the training of a new generation of bureaucrats in accordance with new methods, and Karl von Zinzendorf was also propagating the ideas of reform in thousands of pages of writing, illustrating how they would benefit the monarchy as a whole.¹⁰⁷ In particular, 1765 would prove to be a turning point, both in the life of the royal family and in Habsburg-Hungarian relations. Emperor Francis died on 18 August of that year, and Joseph was made Holy Roman Emperor and co-regent. Maria Theresa, devastated, temporarily withdrew from court and public life, and often found herself at odds with her son, who never managed to establish rapport with the same entourage of court advisers, even if they did share more in common with Joseph II's philosophy of government than with his mother's.¹⁰⁸ Joseph's brother, Peter Leopold, briefly centre-stage during the tumultuous years after Joseph's death, ascended to the Tuscan throne. There, unlike his brother, he developed a formidable reputation as a competent and enlightened ruler, introducing a broad programme of reform based upon enlightenment ideas, and even entertaining the idea of a constitution.¹⁰⁹

In addition to these changes, the 1764/65 Diet marked a low point in the relationship between the Habsburgs and the Hungarian estates. It had been convoked to discuss the reform of the noble *insurrectio*, which had proven antiquated during the Seven Years' War; to propose the substitution of a cash payment for service in the militia, and to discuss the possibility of creating a standing army. Economic reforms and an increase in the war tax were also to be tabled, albeit in a manner that might include limits on the seigniorial demands made of the peasantry: the levying of extraordinary war taxes at the previous Diet of 1751 had merely seen the tax burden shifted onto the peasantry. However, the Hungarian nobility again proved uncooperative, presenting a list of around 250

¹⁰⁷ Éva H. Balázs, *Hungary and the Habsburgs 1765-1800: An Experiment in Enlightened Absolutism* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1997) pp. 6-8.

¹⁰⁸ Robert A. Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire, 1526-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), p. 157.

¹⁰⁹ Adam Wandruszka, 'Joseph II. und das Verfassungsprojekt Leopolds II.', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 190.1 (1960), 18-30.

grievances, while complaining about the level of war taxes set in 1751, and the tariffs imposed afterwards in 1754.¹¹⁰

Furthermore, the publication of a work by jurist, Imperial-Royal Court Councillor, court librarian, and polymath of Slovak descent Ádám Kollár (1718–1783) saw the Diet grind to a halt. Kollár was an advocate of enlightened court policy, and his *De Originibus et Usu Perpetuo Potestatis Legislatoriae circa Sacra Apostolicorum Regum Hungariae* (1764) caused outrage among the nobility. Using examples from Hungarian history, Kollár had argued that an all-powerful sovereign was permitted to tax church properties unilaterally and enact legislation without recourse to the Diets. He also launched an assault upon Werbőczy's *Tripartitum* (the chief lawbook of the Hungarian nobility, discussed below), claiming that it contained customary laws that suited only the nobility, and that it obstructed the equitable sharing of taxation, as its provisions were used to ensure that the peasantry shouldered the entire tax burden.¹¹¹ Calls were made for both author and pamphlet to be burnt, and a series of pamphlets were quickly written in response, the most inflammatory being the anonymously-published diatribe *Vexatio Dat Intellectum* (1765), attributed to one of the Archbishop of Esztergom's chaplains, György Richwaldszky (1744-1779). The pamphlet argued that malign councillors had attempted to turn the queen against the nobility, and that foreign laws were being introduced in order to abolish the liberty of Hungary. It thus urged the nobility to prevent alterations to the country's old laws, rights, and privileges. It went on to complain that royal prerogative had not been constrained clearly by law, and that legislative measures had been introduced without the consent of the Diet, especially with respect to the church and the peasantry, despite the nobility's disapproval. Therefore, in order to prevent the introduction of foreign laws to the detriment of the *lex patriae*, the members of the Lieutenancy Council should be appointed by the Diet, and thereafter that body should be granted oversight of all royal decrees to ascertain whether or not they vitiated the various laws, customs freedoms, privileges, or ecclesiastical rights of the country. If decrees were deemed to contravene

¹¹⁰ Franz A. J. Szabo, *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism, 1753-1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 320-22. The Diet of 1751 took place amidst much wrangling over the raising of the war tax, and the elevation of four new towns to the status of royal free towns. The result was a moderate increase in the war tax, but no movement upon the issue of noble privilege. In 1754 a tariff barrier was erected between Hungary and the other Habsburg lands as a retaliatory measure, and from then on Vienna adopted an *ad hoc* economic policy with Hungary in the hope of coaxing a greater contribution to the royal treasury. Vermes, *Hungarian Culture*, pp. 78-81.

¹¹¹ István M. Szijártó, *A diéta. A magyar rendek és az országgyűlés, 1708–1792* (Budapest: Osiris, 2005), pp. 249-50.

these laws, then they could be considered as an act of *crimen laesae majestatis*—a crime of ‘injuring majesty’ or high treason. This was because the Majesty (here meaning ‘sovereignty’) of the Holy Crown of Hungary (*Majestas Sacrae Coronae Hungaricae*) was partaken of by both the Monarch *and* the nobility. Thus, any attack upon the nobility was also an attack upon the crown. In such cases the nobility, when assembled at the Diet, had the duty to maintain the integrity of the crown of which they were a constituent part. The pamphlet went on to further limit the royal prerogative. It claimed that the monarch possessed no right of territorial dominium in Hungary and that, as a result, s/he did not possess the right to unilaterally requisition (i.e. tax) the fruits of the land.

The righteousness of these claims was then supported with a historical narrative that derived a form of social contract from the ancient Hungarians’ right of conquest. When the Hungarians had conquered Hungary, the author explained, they could have opted to live without a king, but rather decided to elect one, and agreed among themselves the rights, prerogatives, obligations, and constraints that they would accord his office. Once the king had accepted that office, he had been required to swear an oath to rule in accordance with these established rights, obligations and constraints. Most importantly, the king was bound to maintain the integrity of the kingdom’s territories, as well as the terms of his oath. Thus, even if the king had been granted the *jus jurisdictionis* over public law, the nobility retained the *jus proprietatis*, which constrained the king’s prerogatives over public law. In consequence, the king possessed no right to tax the nobility’s private revenues on the basis of *jus jurisdictionis*, as it was only the Diet that possessed the right to levy taxation. In any case, the nobility had always provided great riches for the king to defend the country, and they had succeeded in protecting their lands in the traditional manner; if required, the necessary war taxes would be levied via the Diet, and not *sine nobis de nobis*. Those who found the contribution of the nobility unsatisfactory should look to Poland to see just how little the king was granted there. Even if the noble insurrection may on occasion have failed in the past, it had only done so due to bad leadership, or because of the use of the musters as cannon fodder. To finish this defence of the noble insurrection, the author further vaunted the martial virtues of his people by proclaiming that the whole of Europe recognized how Austria owed her crown to the heroism of the Hungarians.¹¹²

¹¹² Géza Ballagi, *A politikai irodalom Magyarországon 1825-ig*, (Budapest, Franklin-Társulat, 1888), pp. 81-89; Győző Concha, ‘A "Vexatio Dat Intellectum" c. röpirat 1765-ből’, *Századok*, 14.7 (1880), 590-597.

Copies of Richwaldsky's pamphlet were publicly burnt on Maria Theresa's order. At the same time, Kollár was requested to issue an apology.¹¹³ However, *Vexatio* was republished in 1785, in defiance of Joseph II's absolutism, warning that its ideas could not be destroyed by burning: like the Phoenix, they would rise again from the ashes.

The clashes of the 1764/65 Diet thus highlighted the problems of prompting a sense of enlightened monarchical patriotism in Hungary. The Hungarian nobility clearly had a different understanding of the 'fatherland', or the *haza* as it was often called in Hungarian.¹¹⁴ But it is the word *ország* 'country' that best illustrates the nobility's perceived relationship between themselves and the land in which they resided. Etymologically derived from the elements *uru* 'lord' and *-szág* '-ship', the term carried a meaning similar to that of English 'dominion' in that it denoted a collection of feudal territories held under seignorial direction (cf. German *Herrschaft*, French *seigneurie* etc.).¹¹⁵ Certainly, the nobles at the Diet collectively referred to themselves as the *ország*, in the sense that they were the 'representatives' of the lands of the crown—or indeed that they themselves 'constituted' the country. The Hungarian nobility thus shared the idea with their Austrian counterparts that there was a patrimonial connection between a country's inhabitants and its lands. However, the Hungarian fatherland was not the enlightened *Gesamtstaat* that was the focus of Sonnenfels' patriotism. Rather, it was a traditional (i.e. 'feudal') country where public power was an attribute of landownership.

The idea that many *patriae* could be amalgamated into one single *patria* thus ran aground at the Diet of 1764/65. As T.C.W. Blanning observed, 'The roots of the Magyar nobles' separatism went deep—deep into their history, deep into their self-interest and deep into their institutions.'¹¹⁶ And as Vermes similarly noted, the nobility's chief form of self-justification rested in history. The narrative ran that the nobility were connected to a long line of ancestors who could be traced back to the pagan conquerors of the country, or

¹¹³ Evans, *Hungary and the Habsburgs*, p. 24.

¹¹⁴ A single compound term for 'fatherland' is conspicuously missing from the Hungarian language, although the country was frequently described as a territory with long-standing ancestral connections. The term *haza* 'homeland, Heimat' is a conversion from the adverb *haza* 'homeward', itself a derivative of *ház* 'home, house', an element from the ancient Finno-Ugric lexical stock of Hungarian; the synonymous term *hon* 'homeland' is of less certain origin; it was obsolete by the early eighteenth century but was revived later in the century by language reformers. Loránd Benkő, *A magyar nyelv történeti-etimológiai szótára* [hereafter 'TESz'], 3 vols, (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1967-1976), II, pp. 76; 140-141. This was presumably a self-conscious archaising strategy, one that attempted to suggest an emotional attachment to a lost and ancient past (cf. German *Heimat*), and performatively (re-)inscribe the current generation's timeworn connections to their 'native' homeland.

¹¹⁵ TESz., II, p. 1095. The term was also analogous to German *Land* or *Landschaft*.

¹¹⁶ Blanning, *Joseph II*, p. 115.

at least, back to St Stephen and all the other heroes and kings who had defended the land against foreign invaders.¹¹⁷ The Hungarian nobility may have accepted the terms of the Pragmatic Sanction that proclaimed that Hungary was united *indivisibiliter et inseparabiliter* with the lands of the Austrian provinces, and through the earlier negotiations surrounding the Treaty of Szatmár they may have consented to the establishment of a standing army to which they would contribute. However, they also believed that both Maria Theresa, and her father Charles VI had, in return, undertaken to respect the Hungarian nobility's historically accrued freedoms, privileges, and immunities. No alteration was to be made to this arrangement unless in agreement with the Diet. In this way, the nobility believed that their social position was *de jure* secure vis-à-vis both crown *and* peasantry.¹¹⁸

Thus, the differences between crown and estates, which appeared to be almost irreconcilable, were as much ideological as they were material. On the one hand, the royal court's attempts to propagate a monarchical ideology had combined elements from discourses of natural law, reason of state, and civic humanism.¹¹⁹ The arguments of the court loyalists had foregrounded concepts such as 'public interest', 'general prosperity', 'welfare of the state', 'necessity', and 'equity'. On the other hand, the estates had rigidly adhered to a claimed set of historically enshrined rights and privileges. Their arguments had invoked the nobility's 'forefathers' and their 'sacrifices for the dynasty', 'ancestral' forms of government, and the need to protect privileges from the encroachments of the executive power.¹²⁰ Those close to the court considered these claims 'impertinent', and felt that the estates' adherence to noble privilege was morally abhorrent, even dangerous. Moreover, they saw that the Hungarian nobility were inspired by 'republican' sentiments, and noted that 'It would be [...] desirable if the true *principia status* [i.e. principles of state] could be established for the Hungarian nobility through a well-written *ius publicum universale et particulare Hungariae*, so that the damaging national spirit of a pretended republican freedom would be eradicated.'¹²¹ Egid Borié similarly hoped that the introduction of educational scholarships would help enlighten the nobility so that '...their republican principles will be destroyed, and thus they will see the Light as to how to use

¹¹⁷ Vermes, *Hungarian Culture*, p. 87

¹¹⁸ C.A. Macartney, 'Hungary', in *The European Nobility in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by A. Goodwin (New York: Harper, 1967), pp. 118-136 (120-127).

¹¹⁹ Brnardić, 'Modalities of Enlightened Monarchical Patriotism', p. 660.

¹²⁰ Horbec, *The "Quiet Force"*, p. 86.

¹²¹ Original German in Győző Ember, 'Der Österreichische Staatsrat und die Ungarische Verfassung 1761-1768', *Acta Historiae Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, VII.1-2 (1960), 149-182 (156).

those lands, blessed by God, to their own greater benefit.¹²² In the true spirit of ‘enlightenment’, it would appear that court practitioners were increasingly persuaded that education could help the Hungarian nobility see past their own ignorance. In contrast, as Macartney observed, it would have seemed psychologically absurd to a caste of proud warriors to place slaves and peasants on relatively equal terms with themselves, when doing so would have undermined the economic foundations of their existence.¹²³

The cleavage was thus profound. If the proponents of the court were enamoured of the benefits of a new kind of ‘civil’ freedom based upon legal security, uniformity, and the increased sharing of tax burdens, then the estates—at least in the eyes of the royal court’s councillors—were equally enamoured of a republican conception of ‘freedom’ that confined political rights to a small ruling elite. To enlightened loyalists, these attitudes were tantamount to barbarism. As Sonnenfels would later comment, ‘It is still undecided: whether the hereditary nobility wants justice for their ancestors, or injustice against their contemporaries.’¹²⁴

Because bargaining with the estates over the issue of taxation had proved to be a particularly fruitless endeavour at the 1764/65 Diet, a substantive shift occurred in the approach of the court to the management of political affairs in Hungary. From now on, the Diet would not be convened at all until 1790. Instead, a new emphasis would be placed on education, now considered the most effective means of convincing the estates that the court’s demands were justified. The idea was to develop a new education policy that would generate a circle of reform-minded nobles for public service. While many members of the Hungarian aristocracy were already more closely-bound to the political, administrative, and social structures of the royal court in Vienna, the focus now fell upon the middle and lower nobility. After all, they had greater influence in the Hungarian counties, where resistance to the court was seen to be most vociferous. Royal scholarships had, of course, already been established in order to attract members of these classes to study at suitably reformed schools and at the various academies in Vienna, and Chancellor Kaunitz had already suggested that these awards should be conferred on the basis of ‘fervour for the interests and intentions of the Court’, while noble dissent would mean ‘the path to rewards would forever be closed to them and their children’.¹²⁵ But from the 1770s onwards reforms

¹²² Ibid., p. 167.

¹²³ Macartney, *Hungary*, p. 120.

¹²⁴ Joseph von Sonnenfels, *Ueber die Liebe des Vaterlandes* (Wien, 1771), p. 119.

¹²⁵ Horbec *The “Quiet Force”*, pp. 100-101.

were also aimed at higher schools in Hungary and the University in Trnava, where Martini's students were appointed as teachers, and where the curriculum for legal studies would be adapted to follow the model of the Law Faculty in Vienna.¹²⁶ With the introduction of the *Ratio Educationis* in 1777 this programme was further consolidated. From then on, two-year courses in law were established at all Hungarian academies that focused on matters of public law, imperial law, international law, the state and ecclesial laws of Hungary, common law, history, and of course, the political and cameral sciences. The teachings at these academies were to be based upon the works of Justi, Sonnenfels, and Martini.¹²⁷

In accordance with this approach, Maria Theresa did not convoke the Diet again. She imposed her urbarial reform of 1767 which set out to limit the *corvée* and regulate serf-noble relations by patent, and the *Ratio Educationis* was similarly imposed by decree. This pattern was famously followed by Joseph II: all of the legislation issued during his reign was enacted by fiat.¹²⁸ The next time the Diet would meet would be twenty-five years later in 1790, as Peter Leopold sought lawful coronation and attempted to restore control of his unruly dominions.

¹²⁶ Domokos Kosáry, *Culture and Society in Eighteenth-Century Hungary* (Budapest: Corvina, 1987), pp. 123-124.

¹²⁷ Peter Vajcik, 'Die Ratio Educationis und das Planum Juridicae Facultatis', in *Die Juristische Bildung in der Slowakei und Ungarn bis zum Jahre 1848* (Bratislava: Slovenské Pedagogické Nakl, 1968), pp. 279-285.

¹²⁸ Martyn Rady, 'Nonnisi In Sensu Legum? Decree and Rendelet in Hungary (1790-1914)', *The Hungarian Historical Review*, 5.1 (2016), 5-21 (7).

4.0 Political Languages in Hungary

As we have seen, the representatives of the royal court and the estates appeared to have been speaking different political languages at the 1764/65 Diet. The court's language of 'enlightened monarchism' drew upon the multi-faceted ideas of cameralism, with its characteristic blend of elements from other discourses of *Hausväterliteratur*, social contract theory, natural law, and even republicanism.¹²⁹ But the estates, in the eyes of the court at least, appeared to have been enamoured of a degree of anti-monarchical 'republican' liberty. While it is, of course, a simplification to suggest that these were the only two political idioms spoken by the various parties at the Diet, or indeed to think that the representatives of crown and estates were continuously speaking in two clearly delineated and opposed political idioms, the perceived opposition between 'republican' and historical rights arguments on the one hand, and 'enlightened monarchical' discourses on the other may be seen to illustrate how crown and estates remained largely at variance in their imaginings of past, present, and future.

At the 1790/91 Diet the above two political idioms would again play a significant role in shaping political debate, as we shall see. However, by that time the political languages in use had undergone a number of modifications, and not all of them in response to the tumultuous ten-year rule of Joseph II. This is because new ideas had multiple—and often intersecting—points of dissemination within the Kingdom.¹³⁰ Certainly, the spread of Enlightenment ideas was not merely a top-down phenomenon that emanated from the Royal Court or its institutions of government and education. Rather, innovation was also facilitated by a nascent (albeit multilingual) 'public sphere', as Hungarian nobles engaged with the Enlightenment republic of letters, and encountered new fashions and currents of thought in the journals, newspapers, literary salons, theatres, coffeeshops, and operas of Vienna and the monarchy's other urban centres (this will be discussed in more detail below).

The result was that the new ideas of the enlightenment were exploited to provide legitimation for a broad spectrum of ideological orientations: defenders of the *status quo* appropriated and adapted 'enlightened' ideas just as readily as proponents of reform or

¹²⁹ Brnardić, 'Modalities of Enlightened Monarchical Patriotism', p. 643.

¹³⁰ Balázs Szelényi, *The Failure of the Central European Bourgeoisie* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 88-90.

even revolution, sometimes in a wholly self-contradictory or misleading manner. Indeed, because of the diversity of their origins and occupations, the political and philosophical outlooks of those employing ‘enlightened’ ideas were multi-faceted and varied, and they expressed views that ranged from deism through atheism, from pro-feudalism through civil transformation, and from absolute monarchism through to revolutionary, democratic republicanism.¹³¹ The polarities of power between ‘crown’ and ‘estates’ also complicated the reception of new ideas. Unsurprisingly, the ends to which intellectuals in Vienna and Hungary interpreted the works of Voltaire, Montesquieu, and the *Encyclopédistes* were often radically different or even diametrically opposed. For example, reformist Jansenist Catholics in Vienna and traditionalist Hungarian Protestants could be seen to share an interest in Voltaire and his views on religious toleration in opposition to mainstream Catholicism. But while Voltaire’s ideas on the combination of absolute royal power with enlightened ends also found support among cameralists and monarchical reformers, Maria Theresa herself remained deeply antagonistic towards the writer, and Joseph discountenanced his works for popular consumption within the hereditary lands.¹³² Although Montesquieu’s seminal *De l’esprit des loix* was at first censored in Austria, Pompeo Batoni’s 1769 portrait of Joseph II and his brother Peter Leopold shows a copy of the book resting on the bureau beneath Joseph’s hand. On the one hand, the work would come to legitimise the separation of powers already seen to have taken place within the expanding branches of the Austrian government, while on the other, it was seen to support the Hungarians’ right to governmental autonomy through the county system and Diet.¹³³ The works of Rousseau were banned under the reign of Maria Theresa, but tolerated under Joseph II. Rousseau’s ideas, especially those of the ‘social contract’ were embraced both by Leopold II and the Hungarian nobility at the 1790/91 Diet.¹³⁴ His ideas on shaping ‘national character’ and patriotic zeal would also exert a profound influence in Hungary, as we shall see below.

Notwithstanding the above complications, scholars such as Domokos Kosáry and Kálmán Benda have suggested the emergence of three broad political stances in mid-to-

¹³¹ Kálmán Benda, *A magyar jakobinusok iratai* [hereafter ‘MJJ’], 3 vols. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1952-1957); I, pp. i-xxvii.

¹³² Walter W Davis, *Joseph II: An Imperial Reformer for the Austrian Netherlands* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1974), p. 96. Also, Derek Beales, *Joseph II: In the Shadow of Maria Theresa, 1741-1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 383-384.

¹³³ The work was removed from the Index of prohibited works in 1753, despite opposition from the Jesuit-led censors. Balázs, *Hungary and the Habsburgs*, p. 26

¹³⁴ Monika Baár, ‘Echoes of the Social Contract’, pp. 97; 101-102.

late eighteenth-century Hungary. The first was a strain of Habsburg-centric enlightened absolutism, adopted by supporters of the royal court's 'civilizing' influence contra the 'barbarism' of the traditional nobility, and which was prevalent throughout the reigns of Maria Theresa, Joseph II, and Leopold II. This reformist *thèse royale* stance was adopted by Hungarians as well as non-ethnic Hungarians, and nobles as well as ignobles and burghers, who viewed positively the royal court's attempts to reform the feudal state, improve healthcare and education, and foster trade and scientific achievement. The second political stance was embraced by enlightened groups of the Hungarian nobility, and also focused upon the modernisation of the country, but in a manner that was often more conscious of the traditional, hierarchical structures of the feudal system. This reformist *thèse nobiliaire* was also embraced across different classes, and by Hungarians and non-ethnic Hungarians alike. The third position was represented by a small number of radical noble and ignoble intellectuals who wished to eliminate the feudal order altogether and create an independent republic. After the collapse of Josephinism and the death of Leopold II, the revolutionary Hungarian 'Jacobins' were the chief proponents of this latter set of ideas.¹³⁵

As we shall see, representatives of these three stances could be found at the time of the 1790/91 Diet, although after Joseph's death support for enlightened absolutism had almost entirely evaporated, and many of his previous supporters adopted the ideal of constitutional monarchy. However, while the above categorisation helps illuminate the different trajectories of 'enlightened' thought in the era, it tells us little about more conservative discourses of politics, and even less about the ideological contours of the 'national' movement of opposition that emerged from roughly the 1780s onwards.

Before we turn to the emergence of the 'national' opposition, however, we may examine more recent scholarship on a number of broadly identifiable political 'languages' in the mid-to-late eighteenth century. While not all these languages were initially 'political' in the strict sense of the term, they would increasingly become so, and they may nevertheless help identify the political positions of those who adopted them. Although much relevant research remains scattered and there is no single published monograph on the subject, and although there remains significant potential for new research and even the

¹³⁵ Domokos Kosáry, *Művelődés a XVIII. századi magyarországon* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1983), pp. 266-290.

discovery of new ‘political languages’, what follows is an overview of the dominant modes of political discourse in late eighteenth-century Hungary.

In his pioneering application of ‘Cambridge School’ methods to the context of late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Hungary, József Takáts identified four ‘political languages’ that he saw constituted the bedrock of the discourse of ‘cultural nationalism’ in the nineteenth century. These included the languages of ‘republicanism’, ‘ancient constitutionalism’, ‘enlightened government’, and ‘politeness’.¹³⁶ Since then scholars have attempted to refine Takáts’ broad brushstrokes and supplement the above inventory. Attila Debreczeni, for example, has outlined the discourse of ‘dynastic heroism’, while other scholars, including Borbála Zsuzsanna Török, have described what they call the discourse of ‘patriotic scholarship’. While I will draw upon the findings presented by the above authors, I will not recite their arguments verbatim, but rather use the above inventory of political languages as a starting point and framework for discussion. I will detail in particular the language of ‘ancient constitutionalism’, a prime focus of this thesis, as a central political discourse of the era, even though the term ‘ancient constitution’ was as yet unknown. I will also briefly highlight a political language I have described below as ‘ceremonial monarchism’. Instead of portraying the above languages as static entities or closed systems, I will attempt to show in broad terms how the languages identified can themselves be seen to have been in flux during the late eighteenth century. The political language of the French Revolution (which has been detailed extensively in traditional intellectual histories, but which is peculiarly under-represented in much contemporary scholarship),¹³⁷ and the discourses of language reform, ‘linguistic nationalism’,¹³⁸ and ‘sartorial nationalism’ will be discussed in later chapters.

4.1 Enlightened Government

Despite the debacle of 1764/65 and Maria Theresa’s subsequent disregard for the Diet, the empress’ rule would prove to be broadly popular in Hungary. Indeed, many contemporary Hungarian poets sang their praises of the Habsburg queen, thankful that the

¹³⁶ Takáts, ‘Politikai beszédmodok’, and by the same author, *Modern magyar politikai eszmetörténet* (Budapest: Osiris, 2007).

¹³⁷ For traditional accounts see *MJI*, and Eckhardt, *A francia forradalom eszméi*.

¹³⁸ This question has been dealt with mostly from the perspective of literary history, in particular by scholars such as Ferenc Bíró, whose works will be cited below.

great wars of their times had left Hungary largely unscathed, and recognising that peace had allowed culture and the sciences to flourish in their country.¹³⁹ A by-product of this success was that ideas pertaining to cameralism and ‘enlightened’ monarchical rule found new adherents in Hungary, and the gradual transposition into the Hungarian vernacular of vocabularies underpinning such ideas would be aided not only by Maria Theresa’s educational reforms, but also by the fact that the Habsburgs’ ‘massive programme of state building’ was ‘communicated by printed decree, instruction, exhortation, and earnest Enlightenment treatise, as well as by the beginnings of belletristic engagement on behalf of the government.’¹⁴⁰ As Éva H. Balázs similarly observed, in Hungary ‘an emphasis on the common good was translated from fundamental works on natural law and became a near-ubiquitous platitude in almost every official statement, every government-level negotiation, every memorandum, and [legislative] draft.’¹⁴¹

The result in Hungary was, as Takáts has suggested, a discourse of ‘enlightened government’ that was directly linked to the ideas of ‘enlightened monarchy’ and ‘cameralism’ described above.¹⁴² Central to this discourse was an emphasis on *universal* natural law, with its stipulation that each person acquires natural rights from birth, and that the law of each country must accommodate those natural rights. Because these universal natural rights were clearly distinguishable from selfish interests, it was held that society could be organized along rational lines focusing not upon partisan concerns, but rather the *közjó* ‘common good’ (from *köz-* lit. ‘inbetween’, ‘middle’ but semantically extended to mean ‘common’, ‘public’, and *jó* ‘good’; here it is pertinent to note that *köz-* ‘public-’ refers to *all* the subjects of the state, and not merely to the political class, as it does in the discourse of republicanism, discussed below). With this focus upon the common good, the question of *who* made the laws was secondary to whether or not laws served the public weal. Furthermore, the idea of the ‘social contract’ in enlightened governmental discourse (following the ideas of Martini outlined above) often recognized that the source of law was originally the ‘people’, but that after entering into a contract, the right of legislation was passed on to the ruler. Even so, the legitimacy of the government was not derived from the contract itself, but from the activities of the ruler and government in

¹³⁹ László Ferenczi, *A remény zuhatagja* (Budapest: Kozmosz, 1988), p. 101.

¹⁴⁰ R. J. W. Evans, ‘Communicating Empire: the Habsburgs and their Critics, 1700–1919’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 19 (2009), 117–138 (121).

¹⁴¹ Éva H Balázs, *Bécs és Pest-Buda a régi századvégen* (Budapest: Magvető, 1987), p. 28.

¹⁴² Takáts, *Modern magyar*, p. 17–19.

implementing *közboldogság*¹⁴³ ('common happiness', from *köz-* 'public-' and *boldogság* 'happiness'; this latter term formerly referred to 'happiness' in the religious sense of 'beatitude').¹⁴⁴

In order to bring about happiness, *jó törvények* ('good laws') were required to establish the common good. If a prejudice-free and educated mind could be cultivated through the dictates of rationality, then it would be possible to draft 'good' laws that did not merely attend to momentary circumstances, but rather accurately reflected the laws of nature and the universality of rationality. A further precondition of common happiness was the training of specialists and state officials who—like their enlightened ruler—served the common good. For this reason, one of the most important 'sciences' was held to be the science of government or *igazgatástudomány* ('administrative science', a calque of German *Polizeiwissenschaft*). Thus, a fundamental assumption of enlightened governmental discourse was that socio-political institutions could be improved, and that the goal of all politics was to bring about development. A final tenet of enlightened government followed Sonnenfels' injunction to enlighten the people: prejudicial and superstitious forms of thinking that obstructed progress should be dispelled, and citizens educated to rise above their own self-interests.¹⁴⁵

The best-known proponent of these ideas in late eighteenth-century Hungary was József Hajnóczy (1750-1795), a keen Josephinist who advocated a form of enlightened constitutional monarchy following the collapse of Josephinism, but who turned to the more radical ideas of the Hungarian Jacobins after having become marginalized by his more conservative contemporaries. Hajnóczy had worked under the influential aristocrat Ferenc Széchenyi (1754-1820), and when Széchenyi took up office in Joseph II's reorganized administration, Hajnóczy—a Lutheran ignoble—gained employment as his secretary (Joseph II permitted non-nobles to enter administrative positions on merit, although these posts were usually monopolized by Catholics).¹⁴⁶

However, Joseph II's new framework was seen to upend the system of noble-led county governance, regarded as a pillar of the country's autonomous identity. As the conflict between Joseph II and the Hungarian estates intensified, supporters of

¹⁴³ Takáts, *Politikai beszédmodok*, p. 675.

¹⁴⁴ TESz, I, p. 331.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

¹⁴⁶ Eva Kowalská and Karol Kantek, *Magyarországi rapszódia* (Békéscsaba: Magyarországi Szlovákok Kutatóintézete, 2016), p. 114.

Josephinism such as Hajnóczy also came under attack. His former employer Count Miklós Forgách (c. 1731-1795)¹⁴⁷ accused him of influencing Széchényi to collude with Joseph's absolutist government; those who had accepted office under Joseph were guilty of destroying the country's system of self-government and thus of betraying the nation. Hajnóczy elegantly rebutted these claims, defended Joseph II, and argued that the Hungarian political system was corrupt and in dire need of change. He wrote:

There are 40,000 nobles and five million non-nobles in Hungary. The former have noble legal status, the latter must wait to see what they [the nobility] order them to do. This five million are, according to the law, slaves, who possess no property. Our constitution makes them [the] natural enemies [of the nobility], and vice versa [...]. How can we expect the nobility, in their presently advantageous situation, to accept that the peasant is, by nature, entitled to the same rights as they are?¹⁴⁸

For Hajnóczy, the concept of universal human progress did not necessarily coincide with the aspirations of the domestic nobility. Indeed, he believed the country's political apparatus was manipulated by only ten magnates 'through ties of kinship, honorary posts, money and intimidation', and questioned whether they were 'informed by a spirit that has in mind the common good.'¹⁴⁹ 'I am convinced' he wrote, that 'I can be philanthropic and a good patriot at the same time; but if the two are irreconcilable, I would rather wish to be a *philanthrope* than a patriot'.¹⁵⁰

On 29 April 1790 Szerém County held its first assembly for twelve years, and reinstated the law that banned ignobles and non-Catholics from taking up office. Hajnóczy resigned, and would subsequently travel to the Diet of 1790/91, where he would not only attempt to formulate a written constitution, but also seek to outline a programme of enlightened reform that fused the ideas of 'ancient constitutionalism' (discussed below)

¹⁴⁷ Forgách was sheriff of Nitra County from 1777 and a member of the Hungarian Court Chamber, although he was also one of the court's secret advisors. In 1784-5 he opposed Joseph's census, which was seen as a pretext for introducing military conscription (thus potentially undermining the nobility of their 'ancient' role as defenders of the realm). However, Joseph II removed Forgách from office, replacing him with the trusted József Izdenczy, and declared him a fool. Forgách was fond of the arts and sciences, and considered a patriot by many of his contemporaries, including the language reformers Ferenc Kazinczy and pro-French revolutionary János Batsányi. Unless otherwise indicated, biographical data is derived from the relevant entries in József Szinnyei, *Magyar írók élete és munkái*, 14 vols (Budapest: Hornyánszky, 1891-1914).

¹⁴⁸ Original German in *MJI*, I, p. 47.

¹⁴⁹ Dávid Oláh and Balázs Trencsényi, 'József Hajnóczy: Letter to Miklós Forgách', in *DCICSE*, I, pp. 270-276 (274).

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 276.

with more modern ideas of parliamentary sovereignty and human rights (Hajnóczy observed the formulation of the American and French constitutions with great interest).¹⁵¹ However, Hajnóczy, unable to attend the Diet in person on account of his ignoble status, instead, circulated his ideas in printed brochures (often anonymously), wrote reports of events in France in newspaper articles, and provided advice—both secretly as a freemason, and publicly as an advisor and interested onlooker—to the deputies in attendance.¹⁵² His activities eventually raised the suspicions of the court, which placed him under observation by the secret police. Although following Leopold II's unexpected death Hajnóczy would be employed as secretary to the Hungarian Court Chamber by Francis II, he would also join the ranks of a small group of intellectuals led by Ignác Martinovics (1755-1795), who were disappointed with the court's abandonment of reform. Known as the Hungarian 'Jacobins' and inspired by the ideas of the French Revolution, these intellectuals planned a double revolution, led by two secret societies to transform Hungary into a republic: the first, the 'Society of Reformers', was formed in order to manipulate the feudal nobility into revolting against the Habsburgs. The second, the 'Society of Freedom and Equality' would then instigate revolt in order to eliminate the feudal nobility. Thus, two insurrections were deemed necessary to remove both external and internal obstacles to reform and produce an independent republic with a bicameral parliament, expanded suffrage, press freedoms, peasant emancipation, and free trade that guaranteed equality for all its citizens irrespective of their mother tongue or ethnicity.

Thus, while the Jacobins would later become celebrated as martyrs of the Hungarian national cause, it is often forgotten—due to the legacy of the 'nationalist perspective' in Hungarian historiography—that the Jacobins began as enthusiasts for cameralism and the reformist ambitions of Maria Theresa and Joseph II. Drawing upon the ideas of constitutional federalism after the collapse of Josephinism, they 'enunciated for the first time the idea that territorial autonomy should be granted to the non-Hungarian nationalities', as Kálmán Benda has noted.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Géza Závodszy, 'Az Amerika mótívum és a felvilágosodáskori Magyarország a kezdetektől 1795ig', *Századok*, 3 (1983), 342-384.

¹⁵² Kowalská and Kantek, *Magyarországi rapszódia*, p. 148.

¹⁵³ Benda, 'Hungary', p. 135.

4.2 Republicanism

It is generally acknowledged that ‘republicanism’ or ‘civic humanism’, as it is also known in the literature,¹⁵⁴ is one of the most widely used political idioms in (late) eighteenth-century Hungary. However, it is also one of the most problematic in terms of application. According to Takáts, many of the core tenets of republicanism had become integral to noble politicking at the Hungarian Diets during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, transmitted primarily through humanist education, and the study of rhetorical handbooks and texts, such as Horatius' *Roman Odes*, Cicero's *De Officiis*, Gaius Sallustius Crispus' *Conspiracy of Catiline*, and Tacitus' *Agricola*, which were taught in schools from the mid-sixteenth to the late-eighteenth century. Accordingly, a core republican vocabulary may already be seen in the late eighteenth-century Hungarian vernacular, with texts exhibiting a number of key terms and oppositions familiar to republican discourse.¹⁵⁵

One of the central concepts of republican discourse is that of ‘liberty’ (*szabadság*),¹⁵⁶ although in the republican understanding ‘liberty’ was dependent upon one’s engagement in the political affairs of the community (in contrast to the modern liberal definition which gives more prominent emphasis to the importance of individual autonomy). A striking omission in Takáts’ work is the neglect of the common classical ‘republican’ pattern where liberty is defined in opposition to arbitrary power and slavery (*rabság*)¹⁵⁷ or subjection to a master’s arbitrary will. The opposition between ‘liberty’ and ‘slavery’ was a common *topos*

¹⁵⁴ The literature on republicanism is vast. In brief: the terms ‘republicanism’ and ‘civic humanism’ are sometimes used interchangeably by scholars, although a distinction may be retained between two separate ‘strains’ of republicanism. The first is Pocock’s reconstruction of the ‘civic humanist’ ideal as follows: 1) man was by nature a *zoon politikon* or ‘political animal’; 2) the chief end of human endeavour was to achieve citizenship, and that to achieve this end it was necessary to bear arms for the public cause, and 3) the *polis* was the domain where citizens could best realize their essential social nature through direct and active participation in the community’s political affairs. J. G. A. Pocock, ‘Afterword: The Machiavellian Moment: A Very Short Retrospect and Re-Introduction’, *History of European Ideas*, 43.2 (2017), 215-221. Other scholars such as Quentin Skinner, Philip Pettit, and Maurizio Viroli, have stressed an alternative path of development more clearly linked to Roman, as opposed to Athenian models. While there are overlaps, the latter often emphasizes the rule of law (as determined by self-governing citizens), and a distinctive conception of liberty as ‘non-domination’, that is, defined in opposition to ‘slavery’, or subjection to a master’s arbitrary will. See, for example, Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

¹⁵⁵ Takáts, *Politikai beszédmodok*, p. 669.

¹⁵⁶ We may add here that the term *szabad* ‘free’ is first attested c. 1195 and is a loan from Old Church Slavonic *svoboda* ‘free, unrestrained’. The abstract noun *szabadság* ‘freedom’ first appears c. 1350, while around the same time *szabad* ‘free’ also begins to take on the sense ‘privilege, immunity’. TESz, III, pp. 323-4.

¹⁵⁷ The word *rab*, also from Old Church Slavonic *rabъ*, is first attested c. 1498 with the meanings ‘prisoner, slave, one who is subordinate to or dependent upon someone or something’. This latter term became common during the Turkish occupation and was spread in association with kidnappings and the Ottoman slave trade. *Szolga* ‘servant’, is also from a Slavonic language (cf. Old Church Slavonic *sluga* ‘servant’). Ibid., pp. 641; 778.

of Hungarian political discourse in the period discussed; the idea that the country could be cast into servitude, particularly at the hands of foreign oppressors (e.g. Turks, Habsburgs), was a recurring theme, notably during times of strife.¹⁵⁸

In Takáts' assessment, the now defunct Hungarian term *közönséges társaság* (lit. 'common society'; a translation of Latin *res publica*)¹⁵⁹ did not refer to a specific form or *modus operandi* of government, but rather to the country's political community. This political community, despite often being referred to in Latin as the *populus* 'people', was constituted by the nobility alone and excluded the *misera plebs*, following classical patterns. A central tenet of republican thinking was that participation in the affairs of the political community was seen to be necessary to protect that community's liberty from two main threats: domestic despotism and conquest by a foreign power. In consequence, it was commonly held that citizens should demonstrate selfless virtue and act in the pursuit of the 'common good', which took precedence over individual and family interests. For this reason, terms prefixed with *köz-* ('common', 'public') in Hungarian usually suggested the positive appraisal of a given phenomenon, while those prefixed with *magán-* ('private', 'individual') implied a negative assessment. In addition to performing acts of self-sacrifice in the interests of the community, the good *polgár* (*civis*, 'citizen')¹⁶⁰ was also idealised as practicing simple virtues, including the cultivation of the land, military service, and an adherence to the moral conventions and customs of the people's *ősök* ('ancestors').¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ This dichotomy is also central to much nineteenth-century nationalist rhetoric, including Sándor Petőfi's (1823-1849) *Nemzeti dal* 'National Song' of 1848, which poses the question *Rabok legyünk vagy szabadok?* ('Shall we be slaves or free?') and concludes: *Esküszünk, / Esküszünk, / hogy rabok tovább Nem leszünk!* ('We Swear, / We Swear, / that we shall no longer be slaves!'). 'Slavery' here is equated with both Habsburg domination and the nobility' feudal oppression of the peasantry. The poem is widely considered to be one of the chief statements of Hungarian national identity, ranking alongside the national anthem.

¹⁵⁹ Lit. 'common society'; now unknown, presumably due to the pejoration of 'common'. For *köz-* see above. In modern Hungarian the noun *közönség* means 'audience', while the adjectival form *közönséges* conveys the more pejorative sense of 'common, average' even 'boorish'. A similar historical form also used for *res publica* was *község*, again, from *köz-* with the addition of the abstract nominalizing suffix *-ség*. In today's Hungarian this term means simply 'community, settlement, village'. The noun *társaság* is based upon the root *társ* 'companion' (cf. Latin *societas* from *socius* 'companion, ally'), and meant 'society' in the restricted sense of 'companionship, friendly association with others' and thus 'club, organization, society'. The modern term *társadalom* 'society' which today refers to a macrosocial community sharing the same customs, laws, etc. was coined in 1786, but only with the meaning *collegium*; its modern sense developed in the 1830s. The modern term for 'republic' is the abbreviated *köztársaság*, which was first attested in 1789, but occurs only sporadically in late eighteenth-century pamphlets. TESz, II, pp. 637; 639.

¹⁶⁰ This term, a phonetically adapted loan of German *Bürger*, was also used to refer to townsmen. It will be discussed in more detail below.

¹⁶¹ Another common term in the era's publications was *elők* ('forebears') from *elő* ('that which comes first/before').

In the republican perception the threat to the community's liberty from despotism or conquest was constant and could be exacerbated by the fragmentation of internal 'unity' (*egyesség*, 'state of being united as a whole', from *egy* 'one', cf. Latin *unitatem*, from *unus* 'one') which weakened the political community and prevented it from effectively resisting despots or foreign invasion. Accordingly, standing in conceptual opposition to the republican emphasis on unity were a number of negative descriptors that referred to notions of internal discord or the processes of social fragmentation. Many of the terms used to describe the latter in eighteenth-century Hungarian parlance are now defunct and unusual even by modern Hungarian standards, such as *egyenetlenség* 'disunity,' (from *egy* 'one' + privative suffix [*en*]*etlen* 'unequal, quality of not being whole'; cf. German *Uneinigkeit* 'disunity');¹⁶² *ellenségeskedés* 'enmity' from *ellen* 'opposite' + nominal suffix *-ség* to render *ellenség* 'enemy'); *lárma* 'uproar, racket, riotous noise' and by extension 'riot, rebellion';¹⁶³ *meghasonlás* 'cleavage' (from *meghasonlik* 'become split in two') and the similar *széthúzás* or *széjjelhúzás* 'pulling apart' (from *szét/széjjel* 'apart', and *húz* 'pull'; cf. German *Entzweiung* 'cleavage, division into two' and the Latin derivations of *separare* 'to pull apart', which give rise to forms such as 'separatism' in English); *összeháborodás* 'conflict' (from *össze-* 'together' *háborodik* 'war, battle'; lit. 'warring together'); *viszzavonás* 'secession', 'withdrawal' (from *vissza* 'back' + *von* 'draw, pull', and thus to break up unity), and *viszály* ('strife, feud, controversy, quarrel').¹⁶⁴ Nearly all these forms referred to kinds of factionalism or internal conflict, as groups formed cohesive and contentious minorities that threatened to break up (or break away) from the polity

The above notions of disunity tied in with a recurring theme of republican discourse, that of the rise and fall of great civilizations. The central paradigm in this respect was the history of Rome. Often, as argued by writers such as Sallust and Livy, the fall of Rome could be attributed to the degeneration of ancient virtues and the advancement of individual, private interests before those of the community, which led to internal 'corruption' (often translated as *romlás*, from *rom* 'ruin, rot' and *romlik* 'to fall into ruin, decay, rot'). Another root cause of Rome's collapse was thought to be an overweening

¹⁶² Today the term is used to refer to a state of 'unevenness' or 'unbalancedness'.

¹⁶³ First attested 1631, this is a loan from Bavarian-Austrian *larm*, *larma* in the sense of 'military alert' (cf. literary German *Lärm*) that is in turn thought to derive from Italian *all'arme!* ('to arms!'). TESz, II, p. 725.

¹⁶⁴ These latter terms are also derived from an older meaning of *vissza* in its older meaning of 'opposition, defiance'. TESz, III, p. 1158.

attachment to luxury (Latin *luxus*; Hungarian *fényűzés*, from *fény* 'light' + *űz* 'to pursue').¹⁶⁵ The danger of luxury was that it inspired the people to abandon the simple life, put private interests before the common good, and reject the moral codes, fashions, and customs of their ancestors. These behaviours could lead to pusillanimity and the degradation of the community's virtuous character.¹⁶⁶

A similar paradigm of civilizational collapse provided by classical sources was that of the fall of Greece to the Romans. Nevertheless, the study of these great empires did not merely provide paradigms of civilizational collapse, but also of past achievement. In particular, the Greek model was often seen to be most suited to the Hungarian context, often illustrated through the idealised example of Sparta, with its military egalitarianism and citizen participation in legislation and political decision-making.¹⁶⁷

While Takáts views the above *topoi* mostly from the perspective of nineteenth-century nationalism, the context of their application in the late eighteenth century is riddled with ambiguity and requires further contextualization. On the one hand, in Takáts' account, it remains unclear how republican discourse was deployed within the context of 'foreign' rulership in the Habsburg monarchy (i.e. whether it was used for exclusively anti-monarchical ends or not). On the other hand, Takáts overlooks how the classical republican canon (if it is indeed accurate to talk of such) was itself changing in the eighteenth century, as we shall see below.

With regard to the first problem we may note the following. Despite the fact that Hungary's independence and integrity had been shattered by the Ottomans in 1526, the Hungarian nobility continued to adhere to the fiction that Hungary was an independent kingdom. Although broad swathes of the nobility were of course loyal to the king within this context, a further common view was that the relationship between Hungary and the king was at best that of a personal union.¹⁶⁸ Thus, notwithstanding the undoubtedly anti-monarchical overtones of republican discourse during times of conflict (as witnessed at the 1764/5 Diet), appeals to republican notions of civic virtue, participation in government,

¹⁶⁵ In TESz the term is a linguistic innovation dated to 1793. The Hungarian composition suggests that its creator saw Latin *luxus* to be derived from the noun *lux* 'light', although in Latin there is no etymological connection between the two. However, we may add here that the idea of 'chasing the light', i.e. 'pomp' or that which glitters, occurs in earlier pamphlets, although often in periphrastic verbal constructions rather than a single noun. TESz, I., p. 890.

¹⁶⁶ Takáts, *Politikai beszédmodok*, p. 669.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 677.

¹⁶⁸ Orsolya Szakály, 'Managing a Composite Monarchy: The Hungarian Diet and the Habsburgs in the Eighteenth Century', in *The Eighteenth-Century Composite State*, ed. by D.W. Hayton and others (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 205-219.

rights-bearing citizenship and the rule of law were most commonly deployed to reinforce the nobility's sense of their own class as a privileged community of freemen who represented the country before the king in a *monarchia mixta* (discussed below). Indeed, with its strong emphasis on notions of tradition, permanence, and communally-oriented morality, the language of republicanism provided a model of communitarian patriotism for the nobility, one that transcended religious and other forms of social division among their ranks. Certainly, through schoolbooks and a developing press, the moral and political teachings of Greco-Roman authors proved highly popular in eighteenth-century Hungary, and a focus on classical virtues of wisdom, virtue, harmony, and the good life—even if they were often reinterpreted to coincide with the teachings of Christian morality—provided an alternative vision to the confessional struggles of the previous century.¹⁶⁹

The significance of this communitarian vision and its emphasis upon solidarity was that it allowed the nobility to unite and assert their class interests vis-à-vis the actions of Habsburg monarchs. Thus, with the noble class rallying around republican ideals and jealously guarding their privileges, we may see why scholars have sometimes identified eighteenth-century Hungary as a form of aristocratic 'republic' similar to that found in Poland, Venice, or Belgium.¹⁷⁰

This picture is nevertheless distorted by the fact that 'republican' vocabularies could also be used within pro-monarchical contexts. Concepts of 'citizenship', 'patriotism', and the 'common good' were, as we have seen, also deployed in the discourse of 'enlightened government' which foregrounded the rights of the community not in opposition to, but rather in solidarity with the king. This observation complicates the picture of an entirely coherent 'republican' paradigm in the era. But most importantly, the coherence of 'republican' discourse in the late eighteenth century was complicated by the fact that the classical republican 'canon', as noted above, was itself undergoing a process of renewal during the Enlightenment. Not only were prominent thinkers such as Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Kant re-evaluating classical republican ideas, but through the American and French revolutions, 'new' forms of democratic republicanism were also implemented, resulting in the creation of new, large-scale states based upon 'popular' republican

¹⁶⁹ József Szauder, *Az estve és az álom* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1970), pp. 110-111.

¹⁷⁰ Szijártó, *A diéta*, p. 19.

principles.¹⁷¹ The desirability of ‘older’ republican principles was further questioned by the fate of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (*Rzeczpospolita*). Although in Poland the nobility was believed to possess immense power, as evidenced, for example, by its ability to elect the monarch,¹⁷² the country’s partition at the hands of Russia, Prussia, and the Habsburgs in 1772 suggested the inadequacy of traditional republican virtues when faced with the might of modern absolutist monarchies based upon ‘enlightened’ organizational principles.

Thus, republican ideals existed in a state of flux in the mid-to-late eighteenth century, as both the semantics and the normative appeal of traditional republican vocabularies were undergoing a series of shifts. Not only had monarchists laid claim to certain key concepts (such as those of virtue, the common good, and patriotism), but also newly-emerging ‘democratic’ theorists, who were less in thrall to classical authors, and who proffered more politically-inclusive understandings of republicanism. By the century’s end, new problems of interpretation began to arise in Hungary, particularly as discourses of ‘new’ republicanism drew upon older vocabularies while simultaneously imbuing them with radically new meanings. The result was a series of semantic overlaps in the senses of key republican terms, such as *polgár* (‘civis’, ‘citizen’) and *nép* (‘populus’, ‘people’) which could now refer either to the members of the traditionally exclusive political community, to the ‘citizen subjects’ of an enlightened monarchy, or to the members of new, more democratic forms of ‘republic’. These semantic ambiguities constituted a prominent feature of late eighteenth-century political rhetoric in Hungary—one that was often exploited by political actors to polemical ends. To illustrate, the pro-Habsburg firebrand Leopold Alois Hoffmann (1760-1806) was acutely aware of the noble estates’ weaponization of the terms ‘people’ and ‘nation’ at the time of the 1790/91 Diet:

[...] My readers will surely recognize for themselves that I am here using the word for people or nation in the false sense of the aristocrats; although it may have been said time and time again, it cannot be repeated often enough that it was not the nation, that is the burghers and peasants, that defied Joseph's arrangements, but a

¹⁷¹ Bill Brugger, *Republican Theory in Political Thought* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 1999), p. 49. See also Philip Pettit, *On the People’s Terms: A Republican Theory and Model of Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 14.

¹⁷² Tony Sharp, *Pleasure and Ambition: The Life, Loves and Wars of Augustus the Strong* (London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2001), pp. 131-133.

small part of it, which, however, very unjustly, took it upon themselves to speak in place of the whole. This has been the case in Hungary since time eternal, and why every reasonable attempt at reform has been thwarted; it is also why the people remain in their miserable condition.¹⁷³

Hoffman's example illustrates the way in which appeals to the 'people' as a source of political legitimacy were being made by both Crown and Estates, the former to bring about enlightened change for the benefit of the people, the latter to similarly invoke the egalitarian—and indeed revolutionary—connotations of 'new' vocabularies, while however retaining the traditional, exclusive republican sense of the 'people' as the noble political community. For Hoffman, the claims of the aristocrats to represent the people were 'false' and subversive. Not only were they designed to undermine Joseph II's rule, but they were also irrational, as they possessed no truthful connection to the lived history of the Hungarian 'people' as a whole: the traditional republican understanding of the 'people' was, in his mind, a bogus linguistic fiction being used in the pretence of egalitarianism. For Hungarian nobles, however, their claim to represent the 'people' tallied with their republican ideal of hierarchical governance as well as what they claimed to be ancient custom. This leads us to another commonly-used political language in eighteenth-century Hungary, that of 'ancient constitutionalism'.

4.3 Ancient Constitutionalism

One of the most widely-spoken political languages in eighteenth-century Hungary is the language of the 'ancient constitution'. However, it is important to note that the abstract use of the term *constitutio* and its Hungarian translations to refer to an overarching 'body' of laws (as opposed to individual items of legislation) was itself a rhetorical innovation in late eighteenth-century Hungary. Indeed, as Henrik Marczali observed, in Hungarian law the Latin *constitutio* formerly described individual rulings, rights, and privileges, and in medieval law it was most commonly used with the meaning 'decree' or 'edict'. Marczali further asserts that the Latin term *constitutio* was first used in its 'modern' sense in Bihar (Bihor) County on 4th July 1786 in the phrase *Constitutio politica, pacta et leges fundamentales*

¹⁷³ Leopold Alois Hoffmann, *Grosse Wahrheiten und Beweise in einem kleinen Auszuge aus der ungarischen Geschichte* (Frankfurt und Leipzig, [n. pub.] 1792), p. 23.

‘political constitution, pacts and fundamental laws’.¹⁷⁴ Although he does not provide a clear definition of this ‘modern’ sense, *constitutio politica* here appears to refer to either the ‘political composition’ of the realm, or to a codified collection of laws (as opposed to an individual item of legislation). Again quoting out of context, Marczali also claims that the terms *constitutio* and *fundamentalis constitutio* proliferate in the years leading up to the 1790/91 Diet.¹⁷⁵ He claims the inspiration for this innovation came from two sources. The first was news from revolutionary France, where the National Assembly had called itself a *constituante* assembly and promised not to disperse until a new ‘constitution’ had been established. The second was the whirlwind of political reform during the reign of Joseph II, which led the nobility to see their domestic laws as constituting a ‘whole, a work of creation’; this ‘only became apparent [...] after Joseph had attacked not just individual laws, but all of them in their entirety’.¹⁷⁶

Marczali’s observations are not entirely correct. In response to Joseph II’s hectic reign Hungarian nobles had also looked elsewhere, in particular to England, for ‘constitutional’ ideas. Furthermore, Marczali conflates two distinct abstract meanings of the term ‘constitution’ that were in common currency—both in Hungary and elsewhere—before and after the French revolutionary break.¹⁷⁷ The first, earlier sense derived from the use of the term in a broad, descriptive manner to refer to the overall ‘state’ or ‘condition’ of a country (e.g. as ‘constituted’ by its population, geographical conditions, division of power, and the various ‘cardinal’ or ‘fundamental’ laws that comprised its basic socio-political structure). Rather than being an explicit reference to the laws themselves, this was more akin to a ‘body politic’ metaphor that foregrounded how a polity—much like a

¹⁷⁴ Henrik Marczali, 'Alkotmánytervezetek 1790-ben', *Budapesti szemle*, 125 (1906), p. 396.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 397.

¹⁷⁶ Marczali, *Az 1790/1. Országgyűlés*, I, p. 110.

¹⁷⁷ Marczali’s account of references to the ‘constitution’ is incomplete: *constitutio* appears in the Habsburg criminal code of 1768, the *Constitutio Criminalis Theresiana*, ‘Penal Code of Empress Maria Theresia’ which was cited in Hungarian courts on the grounds of customary application, even if it was not officially enacted in Hungary. Despite designating here a codified ‘body of law’, this ‘constitution’ regulates individual, not governmental behaviour. Zoltán J Tóth, 'A halálbüntetés írottjogi szabályozása Magyarországon a felvilágosodástól a Csemegi-Kódexig', *De iurisprudentia et iure publico*, 3 (2015), 81-101. In addition, *Verfassung* was commonly used to refer to a human’s ‘physical disposition’ and, through analogy, to the orderly ‘organization’ of the state as in *Staatsverfassung*. Following this pattern, the term was used more frequently to describe the broad ‘order’ or ‘condition’ of the political community than a codified charter of law. See Wilhelm Brauner, 'The “First” European Codification of Private Law: The ABGB', *Collected Papers of Zagreb Law Faculty*, 63 (2013), 1019-1026 (1021).

human body—possessed a particular form of socio-political ‘character’ or even ‘physical disposition’.¹⁷⁸

The second sense of the term ‘constitution’ involved a more clearly normative vision of law, one that was associated with the written constitutions of America and later France. In this understanding, the constitution was a comprehensive set of higher legal norms that were specifically designed to establish and regulate public power, and that were conveniently embodied in a single document. Such constitutions did not merely emanate from the whims of a ruler; nor did they originate from custom. Rather they were established by an authority outside and above the political order they established. This authority was the ‘people’, whose ratification was required to legitimate the constitution and bring it into being. Thus, when Thomas Paine stated in *Common Sense* that ‘the law is king’ in America,¹⁷⁹ he was talking of a law that was prior to government, and that constrained the caprices of self-interested rulers. Inspired by thinkers such as Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Voltaire, and Beccaria, the American constitution was for Paine (as was the French constitution for many others), the culmination of ‘a revolution in the principles and practice of government’.¹⁸⁰

Drawing upon the principles of natural law and democratic self-rule, the American and French constitutions exerted a profound influence over politics in Europe, not only as symbols of popular liberation and revolution, but also as radical breaks with the ideals of tradition, custom, and the political realities of the *ancien régime*. But while the above visions of constitutionalism certainly gained adherents in late eighteenth-century Hungary, it is from roughly the 1780-1790s that the Hungarian nobility began to speak not merely of a constitution, but rather of an *ősi alkotmány* (‘ancient constitution’). This leads us to a third understanding of constitutionalism that was also common in Europe and America. Although the term ‘ancient constitution’ may appear *per definitionem* to refer to a form of indigenous law, ancient constitutionalism in its broader European context referred to a constellation of medieval and early modern discourses grounded in imagined histories,

¹⁷⁸ Heinz Mohnhaupt and Dieter Grimm, *Verfassung. Zur Geschichte des Begriffs von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart, Zwei Studien* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1995), pp. 28; 39; 44-48; 102-103; See also, Gerald Stourzh, ‘Constitution: Changing Meanings of the Term from the Early Seventeenth Century to the Late Eighteenth Century’, in *Conceptual Change and the Constitution*, ed. by Terence Ball and J.G.A. Pocock (Lawrence, KS: Univ. Press of Kansas, 1988), pp. 35-54.

¹⁷⁹ Thomas Paine and Bruce Kuklick, *Paine: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 28.

¹⁸⁰ Gordon S. Wood, ‘The American Revolution’, in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought*, ed. by Mark Goldie and Robert Wokler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 601-620 (601).

‘ancient liberties’, and traditional, fundamental laws, often in opposition to royal absolutism and state centralization.¹⁸¹

As with written constitutions, the idea of an ‘ancient’ constitution implied that power was exercised within legally-determined limits, and it also suggested the existence of a body of laws that set out those legal constraints. However, it was precisely with regard to the ‘form’ of the constitution that ancient constitutional thinking proceeded along very different lines to the American and French examples. On the one hand, the idea of the ‘ancient constitution’ looked to the past, rather than to the future; it suggested that the laws of the constitution were historically embedded within the polity, rather than the result of a deliberate exercise of constituent power in the present. Indeed, central to the idea of the ‘ancient constitution’ was the notion that it was the past, rather than the ‘will of the people’ or indeed any other contemporary legislator, that exercised authority over the living.

As such, it was based upon a customary vision of law, one that assumed unwritten custom was a legitimate source of law distinct from statutes, exercises of royal prerogatives, or other written laws.¹⁸² Certainly, the language of ancient constitutionalism often involved the claim that customary law was in fact superior to written legislation or decree: tried and tested over vast periods of time, it embodied a form of enduring, communal wisdom that could not be rivalled by the legal ratiocinations of any single man, legislator, or indeed generation. Elsewhere, such as in England, this understanding of customary, law had developed to incorporate the idea of an unwritten body of law, an ‘ancient constitution’ of indefinite origin, but perceived to have always existed in its current form.¹⁸³

In keeping with this vision, the component elements of ancient constitutions were often claimed to be customary practices that were so long-established that they could be considered not just as part of the ‘ancient constitution’ but also as the very identity or ‘nature’ of a given community. In this respect, the ancient constitutional ‘model’ was a temporalized vision of the early ‘body politic’ concept: local practices established since time immemorial formed the identity of the polity in the same way that one’s evolved

¹⁸¹ Jacob T. Levy, ‘Ancient Constitutionalism’, in *Encyclopedia of Political Theory*, ed. by Mark Bevir (London: Sage, 2010), pp. 44-46.

¹⁸² J.G.A Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 36.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 47-49, 171-173.

physical features made up one's 'constitution'.¹⁸⁴ This customary understanding of the law leads us to some of the key normative—and potentially polemical—features of ancient constitutional argumentation. Because ancient laws derived their authority from sheer antiquity and the presumed wisdom of long-standing conventions, it was often claimed that they constituted a form of authority that was both temporally antecedent and morally superior to the enactments of contemporary claimants to power and right—especially monarchs who claimed the divine right to rule. From this perspective, the idea of the 'ancient constitution' provided a convenient theory of resistance for those who sought to withstand the high-handed or unjust encroachments of absolutist monarchs or other powerful bodies. To be sure, a common move in ancient constitutionalist argumentation was to identify exercises of royal power or decree as artificial and new-fangled 'innovations' that ran contrary to the wisdom of ancient laws and customs.

These 'ancient' rights were not universal in scope; nor were they neatly codified in a single written document. Rather, they were evidenced by a wealth of evolved institutional practices, customs, feudal oaths, as well as written agreements, charters and codes, some of which were described at political assemblies as 'fundamental' or 'cardinal' laws.¹⁸⁵

Thus, while references to the 'ancient constitution' suggested the continued existence of a 'fixed' constitution through time, one that possessed normative weight through its ongoing acceptance and immutability, claims that the 'ancient constitution' and its 'fundamental laws' had been subverted often entailed appeals to quite different laws and institutions, usually in the defence of particularistic privileges enjoyed by various nobles, families, estates, provinces, guilds, municipalities, ecclesiastical groups and so on, many of whom were granted a measure of co-governance with the ruling authority.¹⁸⁶

However, this latter point leads us to a perplexing difficulty of the customarily-conceived 'ancient constitution': because in their idealized form customary rights were enjoyed through the durability of long-standing practices as opposed to the dictates of positive law, they were only rarely, or partially, codified in written legislation. What this

¹⁸⁴ Charles Howard McIlwain, *Constitutionalism, Ancient and Modern* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1947), p. 27.

¹⁸⁵ According to Grimm and Mohnhaupt this practice became widespread in seventeenth century Europe where, particularly following the rise of absolutism, *leges fundamentales* was used to describe legal provisions that fixed settlements over issues such as succession, religion, jurisdiction and the maintenance of privileges, thereby regulating relationships between rulers and estates. Mohnhaupt and Grimm, *Verfassung*, p. 63.

¹⁸⁶ Carol M. Rose, 'The Ancient Constitution vs. The Federalist Empire: Antifederalism from the Attack on "Monarchism" to Modern Localism', *Faculty Scholarship Series*, 1 (1989), 77-78.

meant in practice was that proponents of ‘ancient constitutionalist’ arguments often became engaged in the self-consciously antiquarian study of law in the attempt to either ‘rediscover’ the ancient constitution, or indeed demonstrate the ancient provenance of certain practices or customs. As a result, speculative interpretations of the past were pressed into the service of present concerns, and imagined histories were often skilfully blended with verifiable historical fact in the creation of potent—if highly contestable—medieval and ancient mythologies. Thus, instead of denoting a coherent philosophy, the idea of an ‘ancient constitution’ served up a wealth of *a posteriori* justifications for a wide variety of political positions.

The central pillar of ‘ancient constitutional’ rhetoric in eighteenth century Hungary was István Werbőczy’s *Tripartitum* or ‘The Customary Law of the Renowned Kingdom of Hungary in Three Parts’ (Latin: *Tripartitum opus iuris consuetudinarii inclyti regni Hungariae*), a compendium of medieval Hungarian customary law completed in 1514 that is often referred to as the ‘bible’ of the Hungarian nobility. Although never officially enacted, the *Tripartitum* was included in the *Corpus Juris* in 1628, and was regarded as an authentic source of law.¹⁸⁷ It provided a codification of customary law, and provided guidance in the law on matters pertaining to land rights, judicial practices, and even criminal law. It also summarized the main liberties and privileges of the nobility against the pretensions of the Crown, magnates, and peasantry, whose rebellion against the nobility had been violently suppressed in the very same year that Werbőczy completed his work. As such, the *Tripartitum* came to be seen not only as a compendium of customary law, but also as a symbolic expression of noble liberty, and as safeguard against oppressive rule.¹⁸⁸

However, in outlining his ‘constitutional’ vision, Werbőczy had drawn upon earlier medieval texts, such as the Golden Bull of 1222, and Simon of Kéza’s *Gesta Hunnorum et Hungarorum* (c. 1282), texts which would prove central to understandings of ‘ancient constitutional’ discourse.¹⁸⁹ This was because both of these texts were related, in different ways, to the early stages of Hungarian politogenesis, and both could be seen to affirm

¹⁸⁷ László Kontler, ‘The Lappon, the Scythian and the Hungarian, or Our (Former) Selves as “Others”’: Philosophical History in Eighteenth-Century Hungary’, in *Encountering Otherness: Diversities and Transcultural Experiences in Early Modern European Culture*, ed. by Guido Abbattista (Trieste: Università di Trieste, 2011), pp. 131-145 (134).

¹⁸⁸ See Martyn Rady, *Customary Law in Hungary. Courts Texts and the Tripartitum* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) for the most up-to-date treatment of this work.

¹⁸⁹ Takáts, *Politikai beszédmodok*, pp. 674-675.

principles of liberty that were supposedly recognized and upheld in Hungary from ancient times.

The significance of the Golden Bull was that it gave shape to the emergence of dualism between king and estates in Hungary. Indeed, although medieval Hungary was recognized as a Christian monarchy under the rule of King Stephen (c. 975-1038; pagan name *Vajk*), a new societal model arose in the thirteenth century that conceptually divided the political community between opposing poles of *rex* and *communitas*. Following an unsuccessful crusade, rebellion drove King Andrew II to issue the Golden Bull of 1222, which recognised the status and rights of the *servientes regis* ‘royal servants’ or nobles beneath the highest-ranking royal officials and magnates,¹⁹⁰ and which contained the famous *primae nonus*, otherwise known as the *ius resistendi* or ‘right of resistance’ clause. This last clause of the Golden Bull authorized ‘the bishops as well as the other barons and nobles of the realm, singularly and in common’ to resist the monarch without incurring the charge of high treason if he acted contrary to the provisions of the charter.¹⁹¹ In this way, the Golden Bull’s clear distinction of a body of royal servants from the members of the royal council helped institutionalize a new corporate sense of a *communitas regni* that existed independently of the king in the thirteenth century. This ‘community of the realm’ was seen to possess certain rights beyond those of the king and the royal court—including the right to resist unlawful encroachments—and was entitled to a voice in the affairs of the kingdom through the ‘general congregations’ or political assembly.¹⁹²

The model of political society seen to be entrenched in the Golden Bull was further developed in Simon of Kéza’s *Gesta Hunnorum et Hungarorum* (c. 1282), a mythological rendition of the supposed history of the ‘Scythian’ Huns and the Hungarians that similarly represented the interests of the middle nobility, and that made the *communitas* the central focus of political legitimacy. Seeking to create a legendary past for the Hungarian political community that mirrored the Trojan ancestry of the Franks and the similarly prestigious origins of other peoples claimed at the time, Master Simon genealogically linked the Huns and Hungarians to Hunor and Magor, sons of Nimrod from the Old Testament, and thus affirmed the place of the formerly loathed pagan Magyars within the symbolic world of

¹⁹⁰ See Martyn Rady, ‘Hungary and the Golden Bull of 1222’, *Banatica*, 24.2 (2014), 87–108.

¹⁹¹ Pál Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen: A History of Medieval Hungary, 895-1526* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001), p. 94.

¹⁹² László Kontler and Balázs Trencsényi, ‘Hungary’, in *European Political Thought 1450-1700*, ed. by Howell A. Lloyd and others (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 176-207 (177).

Christendom.¹⁹³ It was the origins and practices of this *vera* 'true' and *pura* 'pure' *natio* that Master Simon subsequently outlined in his work. The narrative ran that the Huns had 'multiplied like the sand' in their conquered homeland of Scythia, and that in order to acquire new lands, they decided it was necessary to 'come together and put themselves under captains', one of whom was Attila. They also appointed a judge, who imposed the law and dispensed punishment. Nevertheless, either of these figures could be removed by the community if they were found to have acted inordinately. This, according to Master Simon, was a custom that constituted a 'strictly-observed law'.¹⁹⁴

Thus, in Master Simon's account it appears that the Huns were 'originally' equal members of a free and fertile *communitas* until necessity dictated that they should appoint a leader and judge. In this way, the pre-political *communitas* appears as the original source of law and power, as only secondarily did it delegate its authority to a ruler. While the members of the community agreed to be ruled, its leaders also agreed to be subject to the community's judgement of their conduct. As such, Master Simon followed a number of theories popular in his time, including those of Azo of Bologna and Accursius, who claimed that despite its transfer to rulers, a degree of political power remained with the community.¹⁹⁵ After Attila's death and the dissolution of his empire, Master Simon claims that the Hun-Hungarians divided into seven tribes with captains to whom 'unanimous obedience was due'.¹⁹⁶ Of these captains it was Árpád who was the richest and most powerful, and who reconquered the lands of Pannonia. The Hungarian 'conquest' was as such rebranded as a 'reclaiming' of land that was originally theirs. The significance to the future of this legendary was not only that it popularised the attractive idea that the Huns and Hungarians shared a common origin and ethnic identity, but also that it outlined an early 'constitutional' theory of politics, one that was based upon the imagined history of the ancient *communitas*.¹⁹⁷

There were, however, further 'constitutional' dimensions to Master Simon's narrative, in particular his historical justification for the division of the population into nobles and peasants. Master Simon claimed that it was the *Vox Dei et populi Hungarici*

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. pp. 25-29.

¹⁹⁵ Jenő Szűcs, *Nemzet és történelem* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1974), pp. 119-120.

¹⁹⁶ László Veszprémy, Frank Schaer, eds., *Simon of Kéza, Gesta Hungarorum. The Deeds of the Hungarians* (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 1999), p. 79.

¹⁹⁷ Jenő Szűcs, 'Theoretical Elements in Master Simon of Kéza's *Gesta Hungarorum* (1282–1285)', in Veszprémy and Schaer, *Simon of Kéza*, pp. xxix–cii.

(‘word of God and the Hungarian people’) that men-in-arms should attend the assemblies of the community to hear their counsel and instructions. Those who defied this ruling without explanation were decreed, by the *lex Scitica* (‘Scythian Law’) to be

[...] cut in half, or exposed to hopeless situations, or degraded to communal enslavement. Thus, it was such offences and excess that separated one Hungarian from another; otherwise, since one father and one mother were the ancestors of all the Hungarians, how could one be termed noble and the other not noble, unless he was judged to be proved so by such blameworthy behaviour?¹⁹⁸

Drawing upon the ideas of Roman Law, but dressing them in Scythian garb, Master Simon thus provided a historical explanation for two basic classes of mankind, those of the freemen and the servile (*liberi—servi*). Indeed, the three modes of punishment prescribed by Master Simon appear to be loosely drawn from the three modes of punishment for common crimes prescribed in Roman Law.¹⁹⁹ However, in Master Simon’s account the state of ignobility was rendered the consequence of a ‘crime’, thus underpinning the conditions of nobility-ignobility with a significant legal and moral argument. The refusal to obey the call to arms and the edicts of the *communitas* was a repudiation of both martial virtue and political loyalty: those who had exercised these virtues thus rose above the peasantry in terms of their moral stature. Another upshot of Master Simon’s narrative was that, with the ‘criminal’ element of the *communitas* having been reduced to servitude, it was only a distinct *communitas* that exercised all the rights of the ‘true’ or ‘pure’ nation of freemen-warriors. The result was a significant *totum pro parte* that was constitutive of Hungarian political discourse from the medieval era through to the 1848/49 Revolution: when the nobility spoke of the *communitas*, *populus*, *natio* etc. they were often not speaking of the community, people, nation etc. at large, but rather referring to their own exclusive, corporate group as a legal person with rights distinct from those of the rest of the population.

¹⁹⁸ Veszprémy and Schaer, *Simon of Kéza*. pp 28-31.

¹⁹⁹ The first being capital punishment or execution by the sword in the case of high treason; the second, rendered by Master Simon as *exponi in causas desperatas*, referring to deportation or banishment with loss of civic rights (here *causas* refers in the technical sense to a variety of deprived legal statuses), and the third the permanent removal of one’s civic rights. József Gerics, ‘Adalékok a kézai krónika problémáinak megoldásához’, *Annales Universitatis Scientiarum Budapestinensis de Rolando Eötvös Nominatae, Sectio Historica*, 1 (1957), 106-134.

With its focus on the *communitas* of the kingdom and indigenization of medieval republican ideas into the Hungarian context, it is unsurprising that scholars such as Takáts suggest (without detailing such claims) that the vocabularies of classical ‘republicanism’ may be seen to overlap with the political language of the ‘ancient constitution’.²⁰⁰ Transplanted into the realm of the distant past, Master Simon localized and particularized his ‘constitutional’ vision of communal rights (adapted from the *Coutumes de Beauvaisis* of Philippe de Beaumanoir, written between 1279 and 1282)²⁰¹ to create the assumption that his ideal was not merely an adapted foreign import, but rather a structure based upon practices of immemorial antiquity, one that was intrinsic and unique to the life and customs of the indomitable Magyar people. Indeed, typical to Master Simon’s approach was his combination of ‘foreign’ legal ideas with ‘autochthonous’ imagined history to create the assumption that the *Gesta*’s ideals constituted a different field of law, one that was unique to the Magyar nation. And in this lay his chief innovation: by making the *natio* the chief vehicle of politics and history, and not kings and their barons, and by making his vision of socio-political organization the product of ancient communal custom rather than a ‘foreign’ import or the work of any single legislator, Master Simon transferred the foundation of his ‘constitutional’ norms and standards from the *political* to the *pre-political* realm. The implication of his theory was that the survival of the ethnic group guaranteed the survival of its customary political ideals and institutions. Thus, Master Simon’s normative vision of ‘constitutional’ identity became synonymous with notions of ethnic identification. For those speaking the political language of custom, it seems the semblance of the native was indispensable to their art.

With its focus on a glorious past of illustrious and free warriors, the lure of Master Simon’s vision undoubtedly lay in its ‘golden age’ rhetoric, one that created an implicit contrast between a virtuous past and a degenerate present, and subsequently engendered a nostalgic sense of longing for a possible return, even if things had changed beyond recognition in the intervening centuries. To be sure, Master Simon’s vision endured across the centuries, providing a mythopoetic foundation for the nobility’s sense of their own illustrious and exclusive status. As János Bak has claimed, it allowed the Magyar nobility ‘to base their claim to hereditary property on the conquests of Attila and the *Landnahme*

²⁰⁰ See, for example, Takáts, *Politikai beszédmodok*, p. 670.

²⁰¹ Szűcs, ‘Theoretical Elements’, pp. lxxviii-lxxix.

(“taking the land”) of the ninth century’,²⁰² and also outlined, *inter alia*, the inseparability of the noble class from their liberties; the self-perception of the nobility as a single class of warriors (who theoretically stood on an equal footing irrespective of *de facto* differences of wealth or status); the historical justification for the division of the population into nobles and peasants; the claim that the origin of all rights was the *populus* (again meaning ‘nobility’), who transferred power to the ruler, but who did not renounce all of their right to power (and who thus retained the right to engage in legislation with the king), and finally, the argument that the nobility alone constituted—indeed embodied—the *natio* ‘nation’, and thus ‘represented’ the rest of the population.²⁰³

These ideas were, according to Bak, ‘incorporated almost *verbatim* into the law-book of the lawyer-politician Stephen Werbőczy [...] justifying the noble status of some and the servile status of many’ until the very end of the *ancien régime*.²⁰⁴ Similar claims are made by Szűcs who argues that, somewhat remarkably, this perception of the noble class’s identity survived from the thirteenth century almost unchanged, through Werbőczy’s mediation, until the Revolution of 1848/9.²⁰⁵

To be sure, Werbőczy similarly drew upon Master Simon’s historical narrative, and affirmed the liberties, exemptions, and immunities of the *populus*, meaning the nobility, against encroachments of the crown.²⁰⁶ He presented the political nation’s right to ‘elect’ the monarch (a claim made since 1301 when the native dynasty died out)²⁰⁷ as the only legitimate method for conferring the right to rule upon a king, a tenet he falsely claimed was rooted in custom, but which was particularly suitable for opposing the Habsburgs’ hereditary claim to the throne.²⁰⁸ Here, ‘election’ did not entail a ‘popular mandate’ to rule in the modern sense, but rather suggested the necessity for monarchs to secure election by (re-)confirming the rights of the noble class in a system of privilege and mutual fidelity. Werbőczy also claimed that Hungary’s rulers had sworn to uphold the Golden Bull, along

²⁰² János M. Bak, ‘Political Uses of Historical Comparisons: Medieval and Modern Hungary’, *Florilegium*, 23.1 (2006), 271 – 279 (274).

²⁰³ Szűcs, *Nemzet és történelem*, pp. 413-515.

²⁰⁴ Bak, *Political Uses of Historical Comparisons*, p. 274.

²⁰⁵ Szűcs, *Nemzet és történelem*, pp. 408-409.

²⁰⁶ These were that (1) noblemen could only be arrested according to due legal process (2) they were only subject to the lawfully-crowned monarch’s authority (3) they were exempted of all taxes and dues but obliged to take up arms in defence of the realm, and (4) they were entitled to resist any monarch who attempted to violate their privileges without incurring the crime of infidelity. László Péter *Hungary’s Long Nineteenth Century: Constitutional and Democratic Traditions in a European Perspective* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), pp. 46-47.

²⁰⁷ Macartney, *The Habsburg Empire*, p.8.

²⁰⁸ Rady, *Customary Law*, pp. 77-78.

with its clause of resistance, and as a result, electoral capitulations (so named as they were arranged under *capitula* or ‘headings’) and inaugural diplomas bore mention of the text after 1526. Other ‘constitutional’ ideas formulated by Werbőczy included his assertion that the nobility were *membra Sacrae Coronae* ‘members of the Holy Crown’, alongside the ruling monarch (meaning that they exercised sovereignty together), and that as a class they shared in ‘one and the same liberty’ (*una eademque libertas*), regardless of discrepancies of wealth, rank or title. However, this did not, as later jurists often claimed, imply the creation of a centralized polity with king and estates at its core.²⁰⁹ It was rather a call for upwards class equality, one similar to Master Simon’s attempt to check the powers of an hereditary aristocracy that enjoyed special status and privileges over members of the common nobility. Finally, Werbőczy also divided the population between ‘lords’ and ‘servants’, claiming as Master Simon had done, that those who had failed to attend early communal gatherings were reduced to the level of ‘perpetual rusticity’ (*perpetua rusticitas*), or servitude.²¹⁰

Thus, Werbőczy’s *Tripartitum* may be seen to have formulated the central principles of a Hungarian *thèse nobiliaire*, one which was drawn from medieval sources, and which outlined the parameters of what was often termed the ‘golden liberty’ (Latin *aurea libertas*, Hungarian *arany szabadság*) of the nobility.²¹¹

Nonetheless, it is easy to forget that the bipolar dynamics of ‘ancient constitutional’ thinking also theoretically enshrined the rights of the monarch, and that a Habsburg *thèse royale* could also be legitimately constructed on the basis of legal precedent. For example, the Diet of 1687 had proclaimed Hungary as a hereditary kingdom and secured hereditary succession in the male Habsburg line. A more controversial development was that from 1687 onwards, following the expulsion of the Turks from Buda and pressure from Leopold I, coronation oaths annulled the resistance clause.²¹² The result was that from the early seventeenth century, the *ius resistendi* became a key conceptual weapon in the struggle for autonomy from absolutist encroachments, and the *primae nonus* became symbolic of the general rights of Hungary, Transylvania, and the Protestants vis-à-vis the crown in a number of rebellions, such as those of István Bocskai, Imre Thököly, and Ferenc

²⁰⁹ Péter, *Hungary's Long Nineteenth Century*, pp. pp. 45-46.

²¹⁰ Rady, *Customary Law*, pp. 73-74.

²¹¹ Rady, *Hungary and the Golden Bull*, p. 103.

²¹² *Ibid.* p. 82.

Rákóczi.²¹³ Even so, following the Treaty of Szatmár, the rights of the Habsburg line were further bolstered by the Pragmatic Sanction of 1723, which ensured that Habsburg hereditary possessions could be inherited by a female. The result was the solidification of composite arrangements that led to a form of constitutional ‘contractarianism’. This was a point on which Hungarian ancient constitutional rhetoric involved a concept that was wholly alien to its sister language of classical republicanism: rule was not by the people alone, but rooted in a fundamental bond of ‘trust’ that existed between the people and a ruler.

The stipulation was that although the monarch was granted sovereignty, s/he was also expected to uphold the autonomous laws of Hungary as described in the provisions of the royal diploma (*diploma inaugurale, királyi hitlevél,*) and the coronation oath (*juramentum, hit* or *eskü* ‘oath’), which established the legal framework of the monarch’s reign. Derived from similar pacts that existed from at least the early Middle Ages, and presumably also from the electoral capitulations (*capitulatio*) of Holy Roman Emperors, the first post-1526 diploma to enter into Hungarian law was that of Ferdinand II in 1622. Soon after, in 1687, the estates recognized hereditary Habsburg succession in the male line as urged by Joseph I, but insisted upon the *diploma* as a prerequisite for coronation, creating a pattern which continued into the eighteenth century.²¹⁴ This was despite complaints from the Hungarian estates over the annulment of the *ius resistendi* clause,²¹⁵ and despite the inclusion of the so-called *revision clause*, which stipulated that the king was only obligated to maintain the rights and privileges of the nobility *after* he had negotiated agreement on the interpretation and application of other legislative proposals.²¹⁶ Nevertheless, each coronation oath and diploma renewed the ancient or fundamental laws, privileges, and rights of the realm, and in this sense, comprised the chief form of ‘constitutional’ guarantee between king and nation.

Thus, in addition to the *communitas*, the other main legal subject of ancient constitutional discourse was the monarch, who was theoretically sworn to protect the noble-nation’s rights, privileges, and immunities—at least according to the *thèse nobiliaire* version of the ancient constitution. The critical point is that the positions of these two

²¹³ Péter, *Hungary's Long Nineteenth Century*, p. 121.

²¹⁴ András Forgó, 'Az egyházi rend a szatmári megegyezés utáni országos politikában', in *Az 1712. évi pozsonyi diéta egy ciszterci szerzetes szemével*, ed. by András Forgó (Pannonhalma–Veszprém: Pannonhalmi Főapátsági Levéltár, 2013), pp. 7-64 (15).

²¹⁵ See Rady, *Hungary and the Golden Bull*, pp. 87–108.

²¹⁶ Szijárho, *A diéta*, pp. 197-203. See also Péter, *Hungary's Long Nineteenth Century*, pp. 138-139.

subjects of right, *rex* and *communitas*, were contested, and continued to be so throughout the eighteenth century. In particular, it was in the latter half of the century that the supposedly ‘ancient’ contractual nature of the relationship between crown and estates was reinterpreted in accordance with the various theories of the ‘social contract’ that were increasingly referenced in the pamphlets of the 1760s and 1790s.²¹⁷ Mediated by German natural law theorists such as Pufendorf and Wolff, the idea of the ‘social contract’ that was favoured among proponents of the *thèse royale* placed absolute authority in the hands of a ruler in a kind of *monarchia limitata* whereby the sovereign was constrained by the dictates of natural law. The popularity of the *monarchia limitata* in continental European political philosophy was due to the powerful influence of Pufendorf, who had judged that the limited monarchy was preferable to both absolute monarchy and the *monarchia mixta*. Indeed, Pufendorf had argued that the *monarchia limitata* was the only ‘regular’ form of polity, and he described it in stark contrast to forms of mixed constitution or *res publica mixta* which were characterized by the division of sovereign power.²¹⁸ The division of sovereignty, he concluded, was a ‘typical faux pas of political Aristotelianism’, which ran against the primacy of the indivisibility of sovereignty, and which exemplified what he denigrated as the *res publica irregularis*.²¹⁹ It was chiefly through Pufendorf that the idea had migrated to the Austrian cameralists, including the chief representative of Habsburg absolutism in the late eighteenth century, Karl Anton von Martini. Following Martini’s lead, from the 1760s onwards leading university jurists in Hungary classified Hungary as a *monarchia limitata*, such as György Zsigmond Lakits, 1739-1814; Martin von Schwartner 1759-1823; Antal Mózes Cziráky 1772-1852, and Stephan Rosenmann—a pseudonym for József Ürményi 1741-1825, who would be the king’s personal representative at the 1790/91 Diet).²²⁰

However, jurists who were known as more prominent ideologues of the county nobility (including, among others, Adalbert Barits, 1742-1813; György Aranka 1737-1817, and later Illés Geörch 1772-1835), rather classified Hungary as a *monarchia mixta*, emphasizing the dual structure of government and the important role of agreements

²¹⁷ Henrik Marczali, *Az 1790/1. Országgyűlés*, I, pp. 89-98, 155.

²¹⁸ Hans Erich Bödeker, ‘Debating the Respublica Mixta: German and Dutch Political Discourses around 1700’, in *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, 2 vols, ed. by Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), I, pp. 219-246 (219, 236).

²¹⁹ Kelly L Grotke and Markus Josef Prutsch, *Constitutionalism, Legitimacy, and Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 97.

²²⁰ Péter, *Hungary's Long Nineteenth Century*, p. 125.

between the crown and the political community. The presumption here was that political sovereignty derived from two legitimate sources: the monarch on the one hand, and the political community on the other.²²¹ This idea often carried a Protestant flavour, particularly as it was common for Hungarian nobles of the period to study at German universities such as Göttingen, where from the Reformation onwards, scholars of law and politics, particularly in Protestant regions, had debated the *forma imperii*, and deployed Aristotelian-Republican concepts in the defence of the rights of the Prince Electors contra the Emperor. Indeed, the idea of the *respublica mixta* was familiar to educated contemporaries from the structures of the Holy Roman Empire. Within that framework, the Emperor was merely *primus inter pares*, and was obliged to respect the obligations towards the Electors that had been laid down in the Golden Bull of 1356 (and from 1519 in the *capitulatio caesarea/Wahlkapitulation* ‘electoral capitulation’ that Prince Electors presented to each future emperor).²²²

The model of the *monarchia mixta* was easily applied to the Hungarian context, not least through the mediation of Montesquieu, who favoured the model precisely because of its distribution of powers, which he believed did not divide governmental sovereignty, but rather maintained the unity of sovereign power, and guaranteed liberty by creating balance between the monarchical, aristocratic, and democratic components of society.²²³ Indeed, Montesquieu further claimed that weakening groups or institutions that provided restraints upon the monarch's power—such as the nobility—did not in fact strengthen the monarchy, but rather transformed it into an unstable and morally abhorrent form of ‘despotism’.²²⁴ This idea certainly suited those sections of the Hungarian nobility who wished to protect their privileges from absolutist encroachments, especially as Montesquieu's idea of divided powers seemed only to justify the separation of king and Diet outlined in the Golden Bull of 1222 and Werbőczy's *Tripartitum*. What is more, following Montesquieu's admiration of the political and juridical balances of the English constitution, the above cornerstones of Hungarian law were soon claimed to parallel ‘balanced’ English constitutional structures, and comparing Hungary to England became

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Sándor Bene, ‘A történeti kommunikációelmélet alkalmazása a Magyar politikai esztörténetben - A kora újkori modell’, *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, 105.3-4 (2001), 285-315; pp. 301-302.

²²³ Ulrike Müßig, ‘Montesquieu's Mixed Monarchy Model and the Indecisiveness of 19th Century European Constitutionalism: Between Monarchical and Popular Sovereignty’, *Historia et ius*, 3 (2013) <http://www.historiaetius.eu/uploads/5/9/4/8/5948821/mussig_finale.pdf> [Accessed 16 July 2019].

²²⁴ Charles de Secondat Montesquieu and Melvin Richter, *The Political Theory of Montesquieu* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 77.

a way of calling the wisdom of Habsburg absolutism into question. All the above, along with Montesquieu's expression of sympathy for the Hungarian nobility in their struggle against Habsburg oppression, inspired the Hungarian estates to cite *De l'esprit des lois* in defence of their noble privileges during the years of Joseph II's reign,²²⁵ even though Montesquieu had also claimed that the country's peasantry existed in a condition of 'slavery'.²²⁶

Certainly, Montesquieu proved a highly popular writer in Hungary, and his *De l'esprit des lois* is thought to have exerted a profound influence on constitutional thought.²²⁷ Although the work was banned in 1748, its circulation was re-permitted in 1752,²²⁸ and the Hungarian political elite are thought to have read the original French, probably with the aid of German translations, while the *lycées* of Bratislava, Žilina, and Kežmarok taught the central tenets of Montesquieu's voluminous work.²²⁹ Despite its popularity, however, it was not fully translated into Hungarian until 1833.²³⁰

However, while jurists and the more theoretically predisposed were concerned with the philosophy of the social contract and the correct categorization of the Hungarian form of government, county officials and deputies at the Diet were more concerned with the *de facto* political pacts sealed between king and estates, which they, too, saw as forms of 'contract', albeit in more practical, *quid pro quo* terms. For them, the conceptual leap between the ideas of the 'mixed monarchy' or the 'social contract' and the normative tenets of the 'ancient constitution' was not a difficult one to make. This became clear at the time of the 1790/91 Diet, when the nobility adopted Rousseau's vocabulary of the 'social contract' and the rights of the 'people' to their own ends. As already suggested above, when referring to the rights of the 'people', the nobility understood the term in the republican or 'ancient constitutional' sense of the 'nobility'. It is for this reason that nineteenth century historian Ferenc Eckhardt claimed that the Hungarian nobility deployed the slogans of the French Revolution to reinforce their own position, 'holding Montesquieu and Rousseau in one hand, and the *Tripartitum* in the other.'²³¹

²²⁵ Béla Köpeczi, 'A francia és magyar felvilágosodás', *Irodalomtörténet*, 1 (1986), 3-26 (11).

²²⁶ Charles de Secondat Montesquieu and others, *The Spirit of the Laws* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 119; p. 254.

²²⁷ See Péter, *Hungary's Long Nineteenth Century*, pp. 152-182, and Balázs, *Hungary and the Habsburgs*, pp. 134-137 for discussions of Montesquieu's influence.

²²⁸ Köpeczi, *A francia és magyar felvilágosodás*, p. 7.

²²⁹ Péter Balázs and Olga Penke, 'Montesquieu műveinek és gondolatainak fogadtatása a 18. század végétől napjainkig Magyarországon', *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, 116 (2012), 3-21. (5-7).

²³⁰ Zoltán Baranyai, 'Első Montesquieu-fordításaink', *Egyetemes Philológiai Közlöny*, 44 (1920), 3-10 (6).

²³¹ Cited in Jenő Szűcs, *Vázlat európa három történeti régiójáról* (Budapest: Magvető Kiadó, 1983), p. 113.

4.4 Dynastic Heroism

As noted above, ancient constitutional rhetoric could be used to support both *thèse nobiliaire* and *thèse royale* positions. Nevertheless, a perennial problem of earlier Hungarian historiography written from the ‘nationalist’ perspective was the tendency to reduce the past to questions of ethnic antagonism between, *inter alia*, the Hungarians and the Habsburgs. So, one may see how the rhetoric of republicanism and ancient constitutionalism may have been interpreted almost exclusively from a *thèse nobiliaire* perspective. But as Lajos Csetri observed in response to such reductionist interpretations of history, ‘there were two kinds of Magyar collective consciousness, and it is not merely the traditions of the *kuruc*- and independence-oriented Magyar historical perspective that can be considered as being [exclusively] ‘Magyar’: noble families had lived in Royal Hungary for centuries, and for Transdanubian families in particular, *labanc*-consciousness was a self-evident tradition; thus, the opposition between *kuruc* and *labanc* was not merely a Magyar-German opposition, but an opposition between Magyar and Magyar, an internal opposition that in times of crisis could even mean civil war.’²³²

Following Csetri’s observations, and in order to flesh out Takáts’ earlier observations, Attila Debreczeni has suggested that one of the most widespread political discourses of late eighteenth-century Hungary was a pro-monarchical discourse that drew heavily upon *topoi* of ‘republicanism’ and ‘ancient constitutionalism’. This he termed the political language of ‘dynastic heroism’.²³³ According to Debreczeni, ‘dynastic heroism’ drew chiefly upon republican ideals of military valour and virtue, and also upon the ‘personality cults’ of past heroes, while simultaneously highlighting the Magyar *natio*’s loyalty to, and protection of, the monarchic dynasty. This discourse can, according to Debreczeni, be traced back at least to the quasi-mythologised episode at the beginning of Maria Theresa’s reign when the young queen appeared at the 1741 Diet dressed in Hungarian-style attire, and made an emotional appeal to the nobility to help defend her possessions.²³⁴

²³² Lajos Csetri, *Nem sokaság hanem lélek* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1986), p. 58.

²³³ Attila Debreczeni, ‘Nemzet és identitás a 18. század második felében’, *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, 5-6 (2001), 513-552 (542-545).

²³⁴ Evans, *Austria, Hungary, and the Habsburgs*, p. 17.

Whatever the realities of this appeal, the myth of the Hungarians' pledge was perpetuated through countless pictorial and literary depictions, often representing the queen with the infant Crown Prince Joseph in her arms to heighten the poignancy of the scene.²³⁵ Similar ideals of noble military virtue were also valorised in connection with the Seven Years' War (1756-1763), the war against the Ottoman Turks (1788-91), the reconquest of Belgrade in 1789, and later in the struggles against Napoleonic France. The names of famous military leaders or 'heroes' and their deeds from the past were often cited or alluded to, such as the Hungarian hussars' capture of Berlin during the Seven Years' War under the leadership of Count András Hadik (1710-1790) and the exploits of Ernst Gideon von Laudon (1717-1790).

We may add to Debreczeni's observations by noting that a key *topos* of dynastic heroism—and indeed republicanism and ancient constitutionalism—derives from the Roman tradition of 'glory'. While classical authors expressed diverging opinions on the contours and desirability of *gloria*, Cicero had concluded in book two of *De officiis* that the practice of virtue largely involved the acquisition and cultivation of fame, and elsewhere explained that virtue looks for no other reward than that of praise and glory.²³⁶ Other writers, such as Tacitus, Sallust, Plutarch and Livy often blamed the collapse of the republic on their contemporaries' perceived lack of virtue, and constructed moralising 'exemplary histories' of idealized, virtuous characters from the past, and appealed to the *mos* or *gloria maiorum*, the 'way' or 'glory of the ancestors'.²³⁷ In the works of Sallust, for example, traditional respect for one's forebears and the pursuit of glory had allowed the senatorial order to govern the republic effectively during the early republic.²³⁸

The *topos* of glory appeared in a similar manner in the Hungarian context. Often translated as *ditsőség* ('praise, glory'), the attainment of glory depended upon the recognition of an individual's (or community's) deeds or achievements, and the drive of great men to immortalise their names in the undying memory of posterity. As such, it was often expressed in conjunction with references to 'eternity' or 'immortality', as well as metaphors of brightness and 'light' (presumably following notions of religious beatitude).

²³⁵ According to contemporary reports the queen addressed the nobility alone. Henrik Marczali, *Mária Terézia* (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1891), p. 90.

²³⁶ Edwin Arthur Judge, *The First Christians in the Roman World* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), p. 62.

²³⁷ Here 'exemplary history' denotes the continuous social reproduction of 'exemplarity' or virtue practiced by the Romans of the late Republic and Empire. Matthew B. Roller, 'Exemplarity in Roman Culture: The Cases of Horatius Cocles and Cloelia', *Classical Philology*, 99.1 (2004), 4-5.

²³⁸ James R Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities at Thessalonica and Rome* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), pp. 209-210.

It was, in many instances, imagined in terms of one's willingness to fight on behalf of one's *patria*: thus, a particularly common emphasis was placed not only upon the heroic deeds of past Hungarians in their defence of the homeland (either the Kingdom of Hungary or the Habsburg Monarchy), but also upon the need of present generations to emulate them.²³⁹

Glory could, however, also be seen in terms of one's commitment to the public good. Indeed, glory and fame could also be secured through the acquisition of high offices, acts of patronage and other communally-oriented accomplishments, such as the creation of new public buildings or institutions or, as we shall see, the propagation of the Hungarian language. Either way, there was a common understanding that the pursuit or attainment of glory often resulted in *irígység* 'envy', and thus the 'enemies' of certain groups (e.g. the Hungarian nation, the clergy, king, 'people' etc.) were often accused of being consumed by a form of resentment and covetousness that was a catalyst of factionalism and an enemy of communal unity. A typical example of rhetoric in this vein would be the *ad hoc* poem written by Ádám Pálóczi Horváth (1760-1820) on the election of a new palatine entitled 'The Widow-Lady, Hungary, Thinks of a Palatine' (1790). In this work 'envy' is personified as the medusa-like murderer of unity and creator of factionalism (*viszszavonás*), who threatens to disunite Hungary (personified by the Virgin Mary). However, when recently-crowned monarch Leopold II's son is elected by the Diet as Palatine, king and country are bonded together 'like body and soul', and in unity their 'glory is exalted to the heavens.'²⁴⁰

Thus, the notion of 'eternal' glory was intimately related to questions of position or status, and it provided the nobility a strong incentive to contribute to the commonweal's longevity beyond their own lifetimes. Indeed, the perpetuation of glory rested upon the very survival of the *patria*, the peoples of which venerated the glorious deeds of their heroes. Returning to Debreczeni's 'dynastic heroism', it is important to note that the *patria* was not necessarily the Kingdom of Hungary. Rather, in this discourse the Hungarian nobility appeared in alliance with the Habsburg throne in a discourse of 'us' versus 'them' in which the *patria* was the Habsburg Monarchy and the 'other' was whomever the alliance

²³⁹ See, for example, the following lines from a poem addressed to writers of military history in 1791: 'Lo, your Sons sacrifice their lives for you / [...] who encounter peril with glorious hearts / Sacrifice their blood in deluges for you / Upon their ashes is built the temple of eternal glory'. György Fehér, 'A' hadi-történetek íróihoz', *Heliconi Virágok*, 1791, pp. 31–35 (33).

²⁴⁰ Ádám Pálóczi Horváth, *Az özvegy asszony, magyar ország, palatinusról gondolkodik* (Pozsony: Wéber Simon Péter, 1790).

was fighting (Prussians, Turks, etc.).²⁴¹ In such rhetoric, the traditional military virtues of the Hungarian nobility are lauded as pillars of the composite monarchy, which in turn appears as the ‘natural homeland’ of the Hungarians, with one head of the Habsburg double eagle representing the Hungarian half of the empire.²⁴²

4.5 Politeness and Manners

One of the political languages that may be seen to stand in opposition to the above languages of republicanism, ancient constitutionalism, and dynastic heroism is the language of *csinosodás* (‘politeness’; from *csinos* ‘handsome’, more commonly ‘pretty, winsome’), a term which echoes French *politesse*, and German *Bildung*.²⁴³ Ideas central to ‘politeness’ included the formation and maintenance of character through education (in the Lockean sense),²⁴⁴ the cultivation of the social arts in order to improve associational and institutional life, and the development of skills and aptitudes in learning, the arts, and the sciences—not only to improve knowledge, but also to further trade and commerce. As such, ‘politeness’ was inextricably linked with the emerging bourgeois public sphere, and it was also predicated upon notions of comportment, material consumption, and artisan production, often within urban spaces. Takáts examines the emergence of politeness discourse between 1788-1811, when he believes it was modelled on English patterns (drawing on sources such as the *Spectator*, and the works of Scottish Enlightenment figures such as William Robertson).²⁴⁵ However, Takáts overlooks the mediation of such ideas via French and German sources, and thus also the importance of related notions of ‘courtliness’ (*Höflichkeit*) and the manners and fashions of Vienna, not to mention the new, top-down emphasis on politeness and refinement pushed by language and cultural reformers, who sought to improve high society as a model for the lower classes, and even

²⁴¹ Debreczeni, *Nemzet és identitás*, p. 543.

²⁴² Lajos Csetri, *Nem sokaság*, p. 58.

²⁴³ Takáts refers to Lawrence Klein’s ‘The Third Earl of Shaftesbury and the Progress of Politeness’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 18 (1984), pp. 186-214. According to Klein, the English noun ‘polite’ was close in meaning to ‘polished’ and was frequently used to describe physical objects until the mid-seventeenth century when it became ‘a vehicle for a kinetic and interactional model of human relation’ and then, in the Earl of Shaftesbury’s conception, the highest formulation of ‘high social and cultural development and its foundation in a matured national character’ (ibid., p. 213).

²⁴⁴ Locke’s *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) was influential and translated into Hungarian in 1771. Katalin Fehér, ‘Az első hazai újságok és folyóiratok a nevelésről’, *Magyar Pedagógia*, 95.3–4 (1995), 279–292 (281).

²⁴⁵ József Takáts, *A megfelelő ötvözet* (Budapest: Osiris, 2014), p. 86.

to set an example to foreigners.²⁴⁶ With its focus upon polite sociability and trade, the target of politeness discourse in late eighteenth-century Hungary was not so much the Royal Court, but the traditionalist nobility, who were often seen as a major obstacle to all kinds of reform.

The vocabularies of politeness in the Hungarian context focused upon notions of social refinement, sophistication and ‘polishedness’ as desirable characteristics, and included a number of now-defunct synonyms such as *csiszolódás* (from *csiszol* ‘to hone, grind’), *pallérozódás* (from *palléroz* ‘to polish’), and *finomodás* (from *finom* ‘delicate, elegant’). A prominent framing device within ‘politeness’ discourse was the ‘stadial’ theory of sociocultural evolution popular during the Enlightenment, which traced the gradual emergence of different peoples from barbarity towards civilization. This narrative revolved around a fundamental dichotomy. On the one hand, wild, ‘barbaric’ peoples were selfish; they lived in isolation, hardly communicated with one another, and were always keen to fight. At the other end of the scale, ‘civilized’ peoples lived in towns or cities, and were open to communication; for them, conversation was like trade, and ‘civilized’ peoples were more socially attuned than violent. The narrative often ran that the advent of Christianity brought about the taming of humanity, and it began a process of cultivation that was later continued through science and education. Thus, whilst *csinos* (‘polite’) peoples are of gentle manners and well-educated, *csinosodás* (the process of ‘becoming polished’) is highly complex: it entails the proliferation of social assemblies, the aesthetic-improvement of the urban landscape, the elevation of handicrafts to the highest level, the use of ‘polite’ language, and the frequent reading of literature. A common metaphor with regard to the ‘stadial’ understanding of history is the *polc* (‘shelf’) metaphor, which describes certain nationalities as being positioned on high or low ‘shelves’ or levels of civilizational achievement. In late eighteenth-century Hungary, a frequent claim was made as to the necessity of raising the ‘backwards’ Hungarian people onto a higher ‘shelf’ or level, usually by following the examples of polite nations. In this respect, ‘politeness’ discourse often stood in opposition to the language of republicanism which, with its focus upon the simple life and stoicism, often framed commerce as an occupation that favoured the pursuit of ‘luxury’, and private over common interests. In contrast, commerce is seen as one of the chief motors of progress in the language of *csinosodás*.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁶ Heather Morrison, ‘Pursuing Enlightenment in Vienna, 1781-1790’ (unpublished PhD, Louisiana State University, 2005), pp. 96-97.

²⁴⁷ Takáts, *Modern magyar*, p. 19.

Politeness also stands apart from republican and ancient constitutional discourse in its normative conception of gender roles. From the ‘polite’ perspective, the masculine military virtues of republicanism appear crass and philistine, as they are seen to belong to the early stages of human development. This difference is best illustrated in the portrayal of idealized roles for women. In republican discourses, it is not only men, but also women who demonstrate republican virtues, as they willingly die for the *patria* and follow their sons and husbands into exile. In contrast, in the language of politeness, women are often portrayed as performing ‘womanly’ roles; at the same time, many tracts written in the language of politeness were published with the aim of refining and educating women. The tension between these two perspectives can be illustrated in a number of pamphlets written at the time of the 1790/91 Diet debating the admittance of women of high rank to observe (although not participate in) proceedings at the Diet from the gallery. One was penned by the author of the first psychological treatise in Hungarian, Péter Bárány (1763–1829), entitled ‘The Humble Requests of Magyar Mothers, Submitted to the Country’s High Dignitaries Gathered at the Diet and to Hungarian Fathers’.²⁴⁸ Two others were published by Ádám Pálóczi Horváth, the first ‘Advocate for Magyar Ladies: To the Orders Assembled in Buda’, and the second ‘The Men’s Response to the Ladies. On the Proposal that it would be Good to Allow Ladies to Enter Common Assemblies’.²⁴⁹

The first pamphlet argued that there was no law stating that noble women did not possess the same noble rights as men. Thus, ‘why would you not allow us, in accordance with our freedom, to appear at the free Diet of a free country, in the sign of true freedom?’²⁵⁰ Excluding women from their right to freedom ran contrary to the ‘spirit of Magyar freedom, and our ancient, rooted laws’.²⁵¹ Bárány argued that women were intelligent enough to judge what was beneficial and detrimental to the country, and that women had governed France in secret for over two-hundred years. However, Bárány also argued in the republican vein that women would take up arms to support their husbands in battle, and that men should not wish to make ‘slaves’ of their free women but rather

²⁴⁸ *A’ magyar anyáknak az ország-gyűlésére egybe-gyűlt ország nagyai, s’ magyar atyák’ elejébe terjesztett alázatos kéréssek’* ([n.p.], [n. pub.], 1790).

²⁴⁹ Published under the titles *A’ magyar asszonyok’ prókátora, a’ Budán öszve gyűlt rendekhez* ([n.p.], [n. pub.], 1790) and *A’ férfiak felelete az asszonyokhoz. Arra a javallásra: hogy jó volna az asszonyokat is a’ közönséges gyűlekezetekbe bécocátani* ([n.p.], [n. pub.], 1790) respectively.

²⁵⁰ The text is reprinted in Péter Hámori, ‘Férfiak és nők „egy nemes politicumi testben”’, *Korall*, 8.27 (2007), 193-204 (196-204).

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

raise them to a higher ‘shelf’ of nobility.²⁵² Instead, he claims that men’s freedom depends upon women, through their quick wits, knowledge of medicine, and provision of domestic comforts. If they were allowed to attend the Diet, then they would be able to serve the homeland by not only aiding the maintenance of ‘ancient freedom’, but also the improvement of its ‘happiness’: noblewomen would equally participate in the work of a ‘scholarly society’ if established by the Diet, and then, through motherhood they could serve the homeland, by educating and ‘refining’ future generations of nobles in the vernacular, especially the boys, who ‘having grown accustomed to rude treatment, remain rude and unpolished, almost for the rest of their lives.’²⁵³

Bárány’s text highlights the importance attached to female influence in the refining and softening of masculine manners in politeness discourse, and how the qualities of tenderness and sociability are similarly often characterized as being more ‘female’ than ‘male’. However, it also illustrates some of the peculiarities of how politeness discourse was conducted in Hungary. It is unknown whether Bárány really did represent ‘Magyar Mothers’ in his pamphlets, whether the appeal succeeded, or why indeed noble ladies felt they needed a man to represent their interests. Ádám Pálóczi Horváth’s first pamphlet argued in a similar manner to Bárány’s *Humble Requests*, particular on the role of women in advancing the vernacular, but was on the whole rather dismissive of female-led education, which he believed engendered pusillanimity. His second, however, was somewhat puzzlingly, an almost complete reversal, asking how many women could indeed understand the ‘orderly’ and ‘deeply profound’ speech of men, and criticizing their ‘inconstancy’, fickleness, and inability to keep secrets. He concludes that women may attend so long as they remain silent, refrain from whispering and frivolous conversation, and do not interfere in the Diet’s proceedings.²⁵⁴

In any case, the period experienced a minor boom in writing on women by men, thought to have been influenced *inter alia* by Rousseau’s *Emile* and the rise of sentimentalism in Hungarian letters. Some prominent works include Pál Ányos’ ‘Baroness Miss Anna Carberi’s Letter to her Darling, in which she Demonstrates that Lady Persons are Human’, (1785), the first Hungarian text written by a man using a female

²⁵² Ibid., p. 200.

²⁵³ Ibid., p. 201.

²⁵⁴ *A’ férjfiak felelete az aszszonyokhoz*, pp. 11, 15-16.

pseudonym;²⁵⁵ András Dugonics's *Etelka* (1788), a pseudo-historical romance telling the story of a young woman during Árpád's conquest of Hungary which is famed for becoming the first Hungarian 'best-seller'; and József Kármán's *Fanni hagyományai* ('The Legacies of Fanny', 1794), a psychologically rich, sentimental story of a young girl born into a wealthy landowning family told through her diary and letters. This tale of romance, the separation of lovers, and lovelorn death is thought to have been influenced by Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774). Literary works such as these are also accompanied by a series of texts highlighting the socio-political significance of women's education due to their role in the raising and schooling of children and thus future generations of the nation, including György Bessenyei's *Anyai oktatás* ('Motherly Education', 1777),²⁵⁶ a number of journalistic articles reporting on contemporary educational achievements throughout Europe,²⁵⁷ and the journals *Mindenek Gyűjtemény* ('Omni-Anthology'), and *Uránia* ('Urania', edited by József Kármán, discussed below), the latter in particular published with the aim of educating and entertaining women in accordance with Enlightenment ideals. Debates on the political role of women are not thought to have resurfaced—at least publicly—until the establishment of the first women's charitable association in 1817 (the *Pesti Jótékony Nőegylet* or 'Pest Charitable Women's Society'), or heated, long-standing debates over the social role of women published in the pages of *Tudományos Gyűjtemény* ('Scientific Anthology') between 1822-1827.²⁵⁸

A key work in the formulation of the Hungarian understanding of politeness is *A nemzet csinosodása* ('The Refinement of the Nation', 1794) by sentimentalist Hungarian author József Kármán (1769-1795) which describes the Magyars as a half-'wild' and semi-'rude' people. Here we may note the use of the term *nemzet* ('nation') in its ethno-linguistic, as opposed to its exclusive, aristocratic conception. The work constitutes a scathing attack on the traditional 'republican' understanding of the nobility's identity.

²⁵⁵ B. Carberi *Anna kis-asszonynak kedvességéhez írt levele. Mellyben meg-mutatja, hogy: az asszonyi személyek emberek* (Pest [n. pub.] 1785). This work was written in response to a satirical pasquinade published in 1783 entitled 'Megmutatás, hogy az asszonyi személyek nem emberek' ('Demonstration that Lady Persons are not Human'), itself a translation of Valens Acidalius' *Dissertatio quod mulieres non sint homines* (Lipsiae, 1595). See István Bartók, 'Emberek-e a nők vagy sem? Egy 16. századi vita és utóélete', *Művelődés-, Tudomány- és Orvostörténeti Folyóirat*, 3.5 (2012), 369-377.

²⁵⁶ Bessenyei argued that the best education children can receive is from their mother, as she raises them 'from the heart'. He also insisted that the role of women is to fulfil duties that are best suited to their 'nature', including the cultivation of higher literacy skills and other crafts. See György Bessenyei, *Bessenyei György, válogatott művei* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó, 1987), p. 43.

²⁵⁷ See Fehér, Katalin, 'Leánynevelésünk és a felvilágosodás kori Magyar sajtó', *Magyar Könyvszemle*, 115 (1995), pp. 231-241.

²⁵⁸ Anna Fábri, *A nő és hivatása* (Budapest: Kortárs Kiadó, 2006), p. 55.

Kármán blamed them for Hungary's backward condition, claiming they wasted time hunting, were half-educated, pompous, prejudiced, superstitious, ignorant, and so consumed with self-adulation that 'A desert of *Emptiness* presides inside such heads'.²⁵⁹ His solution to this problem combined the ideas of language reform with the eighteenth-century fashion for originality, as he explains that 'original works', and not mere words, are needed to lift the nation to a higher stage of development: '*Original Works* expand the Sciences, beautify the Nation, and raise it to the illustrious rank of great Nations'.²⁶⁰ He also called for a new kind of 'national' literature, one rendered in commonly-comprehensible but aesthetically-pleasing language, and which was focused on domestic concerns. This, he believed, would appeal to wider reading publics, thus aiding the dissemination of knowledge and the improvement of trade and commerce. Eventually this would help tame the half-wild Magyars, and bring them into line with the other civilized nations of Europe.

Kármán's emphasis on originality is seen as a turning point in Hungarian literature. As Trencsényi has noted, Kármán's 'Refinement of the Nation' exerted 'a considerable impact, dominating discussion around the question of originality in the first two decades of the nineteenth century', a question which was 'appropriated in the creation of a Romantic discourse of "national creativity"', despite his early death in 1795.²⁶¹

However, while progress in the polite arts and the sciences were often seen as distinct civic achievements, the proliferation of politeness discourse and increases in material consumption—not to mention the demands which sentimental politeness made of men to become 'men of feeling'—would be perceived by many traditionalists as a challenge to traditional 'republican' forms of stoicism and masculine identity. As we shall see, not everyone shared in the idea that increased trade, commerce, and consumption could refine classical virtue, and the modes of behaviour associated with politeness would cause considerable controversy when it came to issues of gender, morality, sincerity and authenticity. Indeed, they would ultimately lead to an 'anti-fashion' stance that was embraced by the traditional-minded nobility, and that would contribute to a more atavistic understanding of national identity at the time of the 1790/91 Diet.

²⁵⁹ Márton Szilágyi, *Első folyóirataink: Uránia* (Debrecen: Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó, 1999), p. 305.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p. 312.

²⁶¹ Balázs Trencsényi, 'József Kármán: The refinement of the nation', in *DCICSE*, I, pp. 231-236 (233).

4.6 Ceremonial Monarchism

Apart from the discourse of ‘French’ republicanism mentioned above, this leaves two discourses unaccounted for in the era’s literature. The first is that of traditional Habsburg monarchism, with its emphasis on divine right, ‘high’-breeding and distinct ancestral lineage, royal patronage and munificence, pomp, pageantry, and ritual, and the promotion of the idea that Habsburg success could be ascribed to their dynastic marriage policy (as illustrated by the well-known saying *Bella gerant alii; tu, felix Austria, nube: Nam quae Mars aliis, dat tibi regna Venus* ‘You, Austria, wed as others wage their wars; And crowns to Venus owe, as they to Mars’). Certainly, the idea that Hungary was bonded to the Habsburg Monarchy through ‘wedlock’²⁶² was an idea that was not only propagated by the Royal Court in Vienna, but also one was common in Hungary, for better or worse, until the end of the Habsburg-Hungarian era. A number of pamphlets were written in this vein in support of Leopold II’s coronation, often depicting the pomp and ceremony of the coronation, the familial benevolence of the ruling elite as protectors of the realm, and the legitimacy of the ‘marriage’ between the Habsburg King and the ‘female’ *Regnum Marianum*.²⁶³

4.7 Patriotic Scholarship

The final discourse evident in later eighteenth-century Hungary was ‘patriotic scholarship’. From roughly the 1770s, the intellectual horizons of the Hungarian nobility associated with Vienna were expanded by the new ideas of ‘Enlightenment’, and the intellectual activities fostered under the guise of cameralism in the imperial capital would eventually prove to be a major catalyst of learned and cultural activity in Hungary. Indeed, it would give rise to the spread of a variety of ‘scientific’ disciplines, such as *Landeskunde*

²⁶² A common noun describing this relationship was *frigy* ‘alliance, covenant’, but also ‘marriage’; the term is a borrowing from a dialectal variant of German *Frieden* (‘peace’ but also ‘treaty, pact’ as in Latin *pax/pactum*). TESz, I, p. 977.

²⁶³ See *A' mostan kegyelmesen uralkodó római császár és apostoli magyar király Második Leopold ő felségének 1790-ik esztendőben, Szent András Havának 15-dik napján Posonyban tartatott szerentsés megkoronáztatásának rövid le-írása* (Pozsony, 1790), which describes the pomp and ceremony of Leopold II’s coronation, and József Kereszturi and Antal Szirmay, *Második Leopold magyar király, Eleuterinek, egy magyar profétának látása szerint* (Pozsony: Wéber Simon, 1790), pp. 42-44, in which Eleuthery (from the Greek adjective ἐλευθερος, *eleutheros* ‘free’) describes Leopold II as marrying the multinational country of Hungary, alluded to as the *Regnum Marianum*, (‘realm of Mary’). See Gábor Tüskés and Éva Knapp, ‘Magyarország—Mária országa. Egy történelmi toposz a 16-18. századi egyházi irodalomban’, *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, 104, 5-6 (2000), 573-602.

(translated into Hungarian as *honismeret* ‘knowledge of the homeland’) and *Statistik* ‘statistics’, with their concern for generating an encyclopaedic knowledge of the social realm, and their increasingly compartmentalized studies of natural science, statistics, history, and other fields of inquiry. Nevertheless, as Borbála Zsuzsanna Török points out, questions relating to how Hungary should be studied, and how new forms of statistical data were to be interpreted were of vital political significance, since they were closely related to the independent or dependent status of the Hungarian lands within the Monarchy, and thus to matters of sovereignty and the preservation or indeed annulment of local rights. Was Hungary to be seen as a province of the Habsburg *Gesamtstaat*? Or was it to be examined as an independent kingdom, one with a medieval past and a surviving set of traditions, customs, and political ideals? What emphasis was to be given to economic or demographic features such as language, ethnicity, or religion?²⁶⁴ Schooling, too, would attract increasing attention, especially since the state declared an interest in having all citizens receive a basic education through Maria Theresa’s *Ratio Educationis* of 1777, which envisaged a single, standardized education for all subjects of the crown, taught in Latin, irrespective of denomination or nationality. Questions of education were thus doubly fraught; on the one hand, the *Ratio Educationis* attempted to wrestle control of education away from religious institutions; on the other, the idea of a uniform curriculum was tightly connected to the normative identity of the country and its place within the Habsburg realms.

With an upsurge in interest in new forms of ‘science’ and knowledge, some pioneered by domestic magnates who sought to bring Enlightened principles to bear on the development of their homeland, some institutionally backed by the Royal Court (such as the establishment of a faculty of medicine at the university in Trnava, which was moved to Buda in 1777, and then Pest in 1784), a flurry of state officials, teachers, county nobles, and many others often described their activities in the vocabulary of patriotism, and claimed that they were rendering services useful to God, the homeland, the nation, or indeed the Habsburg state. These different proclamations of scholarly loyalty were not always incompatible, as Habsburg loyalties were often combined with vested local interests. Nevertheless, the diffuse character of the ‘patriotic scholarship’ discourse enabled it to evolve in an increasingly aggressive and even implicitly anti-Habsburg

²⁶⁴ Borbála Zsuzsanna Török, ‘Patriotic Scholarship: The Adaptation of State Sciences in Late Eighteenth-Century Transylvania’, in Trencsényi, *Whose Love of Which Country?*, pp. 663-688 (664-665).

political language as shown by the growing popularity of one of its off-shoots, ‘language reform’ that, by the 1780s, had developed into ‘linguistic nationalism’.

4.8 Shifting Contexts

Before we move on to discuss the programme of language reform and the development of the ‘national’ opposition movement at the 1790/91 Diet, it is prudent to note in a number of broad brushstrokes some of the main socio-ideological and structural shifts that would further shape the development of political discourse in the last third of the eighteenth century, and which would contribute to the emergence of a new form of ‘national’ ideology, notwithstanding the tumultuous reign of Joseph II.

The first was the gradual side-lining of religious matters in the political debates of the Diet, accompanied by a gradual increase in ‘enlightened’ stances on religion (ranging from more moderate understandings of toleration and deism through to more strident forms of anti-clericalism). It is important to note, in this respect, the ‘political’ significance of religion in Hungarian history, particularly with reference to the counter-reformation, when the expansion of the Catholic Church appeared as part of the advancement of Habsburg rule and when, by the same token, opposition to the Habsburgs became closely bound to, although not identical with, the Protestant denominations. This divide was still palpable even in the late eighteenth century. Nevertheless, the direct persecution of Protestants in Hungary had ended in the reign of Charles VI, although significant restrictions remained: freedom of public worship was limited to the former counties of Royal Hungary (and Transylvania); elsewhere Protestant religious services were limited to private households. Protestants were also forced to observe Catholic holidays and swear on Catholic oaths if they served as lawyers or judges; mixed faith marriages were to be conducted by Catholics, and the children of such marriages were to be raised as Catholics; Protestants were to be taxed by the Catholic Church, buildings that had not been approved for worship could be expropriated, and through a secret clause, the state was banned from hiring Protestant bureaucrats. These measures, introduced through the *Carolina Resolutio* of 1731, remained in effect for half a century, and also inspired the resurgence of old—and introduction of new—Catholic orders.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁵ Nándor F. Dreisziger, *Church and Society in Hungary and in the Hungarian Diaspora* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), p. 72-75.

Nevertheless, the *Carolina Resolutio* also encouraged a degree of cross-confessional cooperation in Hungary. This was because Charles VI also forbade matters of religion to be put before the Diet, and subsequently regulated religious matters solely by imperial rescript.²⁶⁶ As a result, representatives of all denominations were now forced to concentrate on other matters of shared interest, such as preventing increases in the military tax and preserving the rights and privileges of the nobility as a whole.²⁶⁷

This trend was reinforced by Maria Theresa's revival of the title of 'Apostolic Ruler' in 1758 to assert her authority in Church matters.²⁶⁸ Her reorganization of the Catholic dioceses was conducted without the Holy See's approval, and the *Ratio Educationis* created a compulsory system of education that was separate from the Church.²⁶⁹ Of course, Maria Theresa never abandoned the Catholic faith, but the Habsburg attempt to subordinate the church to the *Gesamtstaat* and create a new identity that was no longer grounded in 'baroque' Catholicism represented a shift towards more peaceable notions of religious co-existence.²⁷⁰

A further challenge to the dominance of religious identities arrived through the new ideas of Enlightenment thought. Although Voltaire proved particularly popular in Hungary,²⁷¹ Pope Clement XIII had already warned the Christian states about the menace of Enlightenment literature in *Christianae Reipublicae Salus*, published in 1766, and Maria Theresa responded with several decrees aimed at stemming the tide of Enlightenment polemic, a move followed by several Hungarian bishops who cautioned against the dangers of such works.²⁷² However, new 'enlightened' understandings of religion were received into different intellectual and historical frameworks among Protestants and Catholics. On the one hand, among the predominantly Protestant royal free towns of the east of the country and Transylvania, the question of religious right was inextricably linked to the Protestants' historical grievances vis-à-vis the Habsburg-Catholic alliance. In these areas, where students had been consolidating ties with universities in Holland, Switzerland, and in the German universities of Göttingen and Halle since the beginning

²⁶⁶ Domokos Kosáry, *Culture and Society*, p. 71.

²⁶⁷ Szijarto, *A diéta*, p. 277-280.

²⁶⁸ Evans, *Austria, Hungary, and the Habsburgs*, p. 28.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p. 25.

²⁷⁰ Szijarto, *A diéta*, p. 278.

²⁷¹ Mihály Szegedy-Maszák, 'The Enlightenment and Josephism', in *A Cultural History of Hungary*, ed. by László Kósa (Budapest: Corvina, 2019), pp. 105-106 (p. 101).

²⁷² Emőd Brunner, *A francia felvilágosodás és a magyar katolikus hitvédelem* (Pannonhalma: Eggenberger, 1930), pp. 6-8.

of the century,²⁷³ ‘enlightened’ ideas relating to the freedom of religious conscience, inalienable rights, and the protection of private property fell upon fertile ground among those opposed to the religious intolerance and anti-Protestant ‘tyranny’ of the Habsburg state. From this perspective, it is unsurprising that many Protestant intellectuals welcomed Joseph II’s accession to the throne, especially after his Toleration Edict of 1781, and his lifting of restrictions upon Protestants serving in office.²⁷⁴ In this case, however, older, more conservative forms of ‘faith protecting’ religiosity could be seen to have aligned with the supporters of Enlightenment.

Following on from this last point, it is also evident that Joseph II’s 1781 Patent of Toleration and his dissolution of the monasteries in 1782 (to establish, inter alia, new parishes, open new elementary schools, and create a general seminary in Bratislava) alienated many Catholics, who saw these moves as further infringements of the Church’s historical pre-eminence, and feared that the above institutions would be filled with Jansenists as had happened in Belgium. From this perspective, Catholics and Protestants who opposed the encroachments of the monarchical state upon their traditional spheres of influence found their interests to be partially aligned. Nevertheless, while die-hard members of the Catholic clergy remained vocally opposed to the ideas of the Enlightenment, other preachers sought to appropriate elements of Enlightenment thought that they saw as useful in the improvement of the country, and support for a new form of Enlightened Reform Catholicism, popularized by Antonio Muratori (1672–1750), also began to gain ground.²⁷⁵ This trend continued despite the appearance of an increasing number of pamphlets—particularly after Joseph II’s patent of toleration—that often (but not exclusively) mocked the Catholic faith in a satirical Voltairean style.²⁷⁶

By the time of the 1790/91 Diet, the emphasis upon the value of science in ordering matters of state, and on the role of the ruler in promoting religious tolerance to prevent factionalism became increasingly common in the works of pamphleteers. Opponents of this view, of course, existed, as may be illustrated by one of the era’s most outspoken opponents of the Enlightenment. This was the friar of the Servite order Leó Szaitz (1746–1792), who engaged in almost permanent polemical agitation against the ‘*Aufklärung*-

²⁷³ Evans, *Austria, Hungary, and the Habsburgs*, pp. 39-40.

²⁷⁴ Balázs Szelényi, *The Failure*, pp. 88-90.

²⁷⁵ László N. Szelestei, ‘Lodovico Antonio Muratori művei Magyarországon a 18. század második felében’, *Magyar Könyvszemle*, 116.1 (2000), 27-42.

²⁷⁶ Győző Concha, *A kilencvenes évek reformeszméi és előzményeik* (Gödöllő: Attraktor, 2005), p. 41.

fantasists' as he called them.²⁷⁷ Szaitz had a reputation as a Habsburg loyalist, but he condemned tolerance, praised the Jesuits, railed against Joseph II, and made frequent reference to national traditions, although in his view, as we shall see, the 'nation' was by definition Catholic.²⁷⁸

The reception of enlightenment ideas on religion was thus not a straightforward process in the lands of the Hungarian crown and failed to end the religious disputes. On the contrary, because Joseph II's reforms had been introduced by royal decree (by then, unconstitutionally, as it would be claimed) his toleration policy provoked fierce debates at the 1790/91 Diet that threatening to bring proceedings to a halt. On the one hand, as the Diet opened, the Catholic prelates refused to swear an oath on protecting the laws of the land or 'constitution' as the noble opposition then termed it, suspecting a protestant ruse designed to undermine both the political and religious *status quo*. This delayed work on drafting a new royal diploma, outlining the laws to be maintained by the king.²⁷⁹ Further debates followed over the rights of Protestants, and issues deriving from the *Carolina Resolutio* were revived, especially those concerning questions of apostasy, who possessed the right to settle legal disputes between mixed-faith couples, and who possessed the right to determine the denominational identity of their children.

Nevertheless, while religious disputes once again proved intractable at the Diet, they did not constitute the main political agenda, as it was widely accepted that the king possessed the right to have the final say in the matter.²⁸⁰ Leopold indeed took the opportunity to resolve such matters as he saw fit, resulting in Law XXVI, which confirmed the right of Protestants to freely exercise their religion, and also asserted they would be given equal consideration in candidatures for public office.²⁸¹ The law was considered as one of the most enlightened religious laws of the era.²⁸²

²⁷⁷ On the era's anti-clerical polemics see István Kató, „Tépjétek le a sötétség bilincseit”, *XVIII. századi magyar röpiratok a feudális egyházzól* (Budapest: Hungária Könyvkiadó, 1950).

²⁷⁸ Kornél Pallos, *XVIII. századvégi szerzetesíróink és a felvilágosodás* (Budapest: [n. pub.], [1936?]), pp. 73-76.

²⁷⁹ Mariann Bartucz, "Minek a pap az ország gyűlésében?" *Antiklerikális iratok az 1790/91-es országgyűlésen*, *Egyháztörténeti Szemle*, 11.3 (2010), 11-25.

²⁸⁰ Szijarto, *A diéta*, pp. 297-298.

²⁸¹ The law also guaranteed Calvinist, Lutheran, and Orthodox and Greek Orthodox denominations religious educational authority in Hungary. This meant that the King controlled Catholic schools, high schools and universities (the lieutenancy council could select textbooks and appoint teachers), while Orthodox and Protestant education was controlled by the diocese. Miklós Bényei, *Oktatáspolitikai törekvések a reformkori Magyarországon* (Debrecen: Csokonai, 1994), pp. 53; 83-84; 106.

²⁸² See Robert Townson's translation of Law XXVI of 1790/1 in Ferenc Hörcher and Thomas Lorman (eds.), *A History of the Hungarian Constitution* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2018), pp. 266-272.

The point here is not that religious disputes were extirpated from the sphere of politics in the eighteenth century, but rather that they lost their potential to dominate proceedings at the Diet: religion was no longer a question of decisive political importance, as the king was now widely seen as the ultimate arbiter in religious disputes.²⁸³ Furthermore, although the right to decide in religious matters initially strengthened the position of the monarch vis-à-vis the Hungarian estates, it would in the second half of the century undermine the position of the crown, as it helped to create a broader base of opposition that was based upon the common interests of the estates. From 1790/91 onwards, religious divides would become increasingly marginalized by new supra-confessional political discourses.²⁸⁴

The second structural shift derived from the changing demographics of the country, with a steady increase in the influence of the Lower Table occurring from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. While at the beginning of the century, the leading group representing the *ország* was the aristocracy, by the end of the century it was the *bene possessionati*, the well-to-do middle nobility, who possessed sizeable estates, controlled the county assemblies and dominated the Lower Table of the Diet.²⁸⁵ It was there that the county representatives sat and represented the instructions given to them by the county assemblies (each county had two delegates, regardless of the size of the county). While in the early seventeenth century each delegate had an individual vote, by the late eighteenth century practices had changed, and each county (as well as other legally-recognized territories) possessed a vote. At the same time, ecclesiastical bodies and the royal free towns had a single *collective* vote each, somewhat diminishing their influence in relation to the counties.²⁸⁶

At the 1790/91 Diet this stratum of the nobility had sought to mobilize less-wealthy groups of *bocskoros nemesek* ‘moccasin nobles’ and *taksás nemesek* (‘taxed nobles’), who were in turn divided into *armalis* nobles who possessed no land and worked on plots owned by serfs, and *curialis* nobles who owned small plots.²⁸⁷ These poorer strata of the nobility were

²⁸³ Szijártó, *A diéta*, pp. 297-298

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 407.

²⁸⁵ Ágnes Hajós, ‘Ellenzék vagy lojális szolga? Köznemes főispánok politikai szerepe a felsőtáblán 1790-1812’, in *Politikai elit és politikai kultúra a 18. század végi Magyarországon*, ed. by István Szijártó and Zoltán Gábor Szűcs (Budapest: ELTE Eötvös Kiadó, 2012), pp. 76-98 (77-78).

²⁸⁶ Orsolya Szakály, ‘Managing a Composite Monarchy’, p. 208.

²⁸⁷ According to Joseph II’s census of 1788 there were 197,617 male nobles registered across Hungary, Transylvania, and Croatia-Slavonia, of which 155,519 comprised 4.8% of the total population in Hungary. Their numbers varied from county to county, constituting merely 0.8% of the population in Torontál County (129 nobles), but 16.6% of Máramaros County. Király, *Hungary*, pp. 34-38.

further complemented by the rise of a new class of intellectuals that had been granted employment by the expanding enlightened state, and which included *inter alia*, teachers, lawyers, scholars, engineers, and low-level state functionaries. Although the numbers of the latter were small in comparison to the country's total population (somewhere between 15-20 thousand), their economic, political, and particularly cultural influence was more significant.²⁸⁸ The numerical preponderance of the *bene possessionati* at the Diet contributed to their increased political clout, and resulted in an institutional transformation whereby the *sessiones circulares* 'circular sessions' would from then on become the chief decision-making *fora* at the Diet.²⁸⁹

Thus, through the levelling of religious differences and an increasing sense that the nobility shared a set of common interests in opposition to the crown, the *bene possessionati* were well positioned to exert their influence vis-à-vis the aristocratic upper table and the burghers of the royal free towns. Indeed, although no political parties existed in the modern sense of the term, it was usually the members of the Upper Table, along with the Speaker of the Lower Table, the judges of the Royal Court of Justice, and the delegates of the chapters and royal free towns who were favourably disposed towards the wishes of the Habsburgs.²⁹⁰ As noted above, the Catholic Church was traditionally allied with the royal dynasty, and it was widely believed that the deputies of the religious chapters supported the king in the hope of winning lucrative ecclesiastical offices. The administration and finances of the royal free towns were also carefully monitored by government agencies, and it is perhaps unsurprising that they were also allied to the dynasty.²⁹¹ On the Lower Table, while it was undoubtedly the delegates of the Protestant counties in north-eastern and eastern Hungary that took the lead in providing opposition to the Habsburgs,²⁹² the new rhetoric of nationhood, driven chiefly by the *bene possessionati*, backgrounded religious difference in order to highlight shared opposition to the Royal Court. The question of how the nation would be defined at the 1790/91 Diet now increasingly depended upon the

²⁸⁸ Éva Windisch, 'Az értelmiség létszámának kérdéséhez, 1784–1809', in *Európa vonzásában: emlékkönyv Kosáry Domokos 80. Születésnapjára*, ed. by Ferenc Glatz (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1993), pp. 119–127.

²⁸⁹ The 'circular sessions' were the unofficial working groups of the Lower Table where county delegates were divided up into three groups representing the kingdom's four 'districts', the *tabula comitatum Cis-Danubianorum*; *tabula comitatum Transdanubianorum*, and the *tabula comitatum Cis- et Trans- Tibiscanorum*. See Appendix B and Szijártó, *A diéta*, pp. 342-343.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 407.

²⁹¹ Éva H. Balázs, 'A reformkori nacionalizmus XVIII. századi gyökerei', *Történelmi Szemle*, 3 (1960), 319-322.

²⁹² Szijártó, *A diéta*, p. 131.

political will and wherewithal of the *bene possessionati*, and the gaps that existed between its more progressive and conservative elements.

Related to the above, the third chief structural shift was caused by a series of economic changes in the eighteenth century. By the beginning of the century Hungary had been devastated by decades of protracted warfare. Large swathes of the country were depopulated or abandoned, agricultural lands had been left uncultivated for years, and roads were often impassable, nullifying internal trade. Yet as the century progressed, the country's depleted population was doubled through better living standards and immigration driven by planned colonization by the Habsburgs.²⁹³ What is more, agricultural production and commerce gradually picked up. Thus, the latter half of the century saw 'unprecedented growth [...] and an acceleration in all facets of economic life'.²⁹⁴

Nevertheless, despite improvements, the eighteenth century is still often viewed as the period when Hungary fell behind not only countries in the West, but also many of her neighbours, including Bohemia and Austria's other hereditary lands.²⁹⁵ Historians have sometimes blamed this state of affairs upon the semi-colonial status forced upon the country from Vienna, which imposed high tariffs and effectively cut Hungary off from the rest of the empire. Others have suggested that the responsibility for the country's increasing backwardness lay rather with the Hungarian nobility, who staunchly defended their privileges, especially that of tax exemption: because Hungary did not contribute to the monarchy's common expenses in proportion to her size and resources, the opinion at the royal court in Vienna was that Hungary should be coerced into following the example of other provinces.²⁹⁶ From another perspective, because the nobility passed the brunt of taxation and the extraordinary military tax onto the peasantry (in addition to the traditional dues owed to them as landowners), the eighteenth century can also be seen in terms of a struggle between Vienna and the Hungarian estates to acquire a share of serf

²⁹³ Later called the 'second foundation of the state', the eighteenth century saw the country's depopulated regions resettled both through internal colonization and migration, primarily from the German lands. By the end of the century the Magyar population was just under half of the total population of 8,500,000. Ildikó Szántó, 'Problems of a Declining Hungarian Birth Rate: A Historical Perspective', *Hungarian Cultural Studies*, 7 (2015), 93-109 (94-95).

²⁹⁴ Balogh, Éva, review of *Hungary in the Late Eighteenth Century* by Béla K. Király, *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne Des Slavistes* 12.1 (1970), 86-88 (86).

²⁹⁵ For a description of the country's social and economic standing in the era see Vermes, *Hungarian Culture*, pp. 5-41.

²⁹⁶ See Ferenc Eckhart, *A bécsi udvar gazdaságpolitikája Mária Terézia korában* (Budapest: Budavári Tudományos Társaság, 1922).

production. This would lead to a series of peasant uprisings in Hungary in 1735, 1753, 1755, 1763/1764, 1765/1766, 1784, and 1790. Most were caused by the onerous duties placed upon the lower orders, but some were caused by direct Habsburg intervention, such as the Szekler revolt of 1763/1764, which was caused by Maria Theresa's transformation of the Szekler region into a Military Frontier zone. The 1765/1766 revolt in Transdanubia, caused by the imposition on the peasantry of an extraordinary war tax, would lead to Maria Theresa's *Urbarium* of 1767, which regulated relations between nobles and serfs. Similarly, the bloody 1784 uprising led by Horia and Cloșca in Transylvania spurred Joseph II to extend his Serfdom Patent of 1781 to Hungary in the following year. Despite attempts by some nobles to outmanoeuvre the new system, there was a growing sense that their exploitation of the serfs had limits. For this reason, and to ensure they would continue to receive their share of their serfs' labour, the Hungarian estates began to oppose the overburdening of the serfs by the state.²⁹⁷ Serf insurrection would once more be threatened in 1790, particularly following Joseph's expensive war against the Ottoman Turks (1787-1791) in alliance with Russia. The fate of the serfs, and their place within the 'nation' at the 1790/91 Diet, will be discussed below.

In contrast to the hardship of the peasantry, it was especially for the magnates and those enjoying court patronage that the late eighteenth century appears to have been an era of tremendous opportunity. This was particularly the case during the reign of Maria Theresa. Institutions such as the Oriental Academy and Theresian Academy received Hungarian students and trained statesmen, and the Hungarian Noble Bodyguard offered a rare opportunity for young men (including Protestants) to serve at the heart of the monarchy. A mining academy was established in Banská Štiavnica in the North of Hungary, alongside law schools in Bratislava, Győr, Oradea, and Zagreb. The construction of the royal castle was completed in Buda in 1769, but as the Empress did not reside in it, she allowed the university to operate there, and Hungary's university was transferred from Trnava in the North to Buda in 1777, from where it moved to Pest in 1784. But the era was perhaps signified by the rapid erection of over two hundred noble mansions or palaces in Hungary, the most extravagant being Prince Miklós Esterházy's (1714–1790) palace in Fertőd, sometimes called the 'Hungarian Versailles'.²⁹⁸ By 1780 the Hungarian aristocracy, many resident in Vienna, enjoyed a near monopoly on available

²⁹⁷ Király, *Hungary*, pp. 212-218.

²⁹⁸ Henrik Marczali, *Magyarország története II. József korában*, 3 vols. (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1882-1888), I, p. 160.

administrative positions. They could maintain their position of pre-eminence not only through their huge land holdings, but also through their education and proximity to positions of influence at the court. As Marczali remarked, 'If ever there were "Lords" in Hungary, they were the aristocrats of the eighteenth century.'²⁹⁹

The result was that a social and symbolic cleavage began to emerge between the members of the middle and lesser nobility and their aristocratic counterparts. While the former remained closely tied to their land in Hungary, the latter spent much of their time in Vienna, where they adopted foreign languages and fashions, spoke French, and even adopted the German language and manners of the Habsburg court.³⁰⁰ According to Gyula Szekfű, it was during the reign of Maria Theresa that

The relationship between the royal court and the Hungarian aristocracy became particularly intimate. The magnates, moving to Vienna, there subjected themselves to the demands of the royal court; their culture transformed, and they soon lost all familiarity with the homeland's sod-bound nobility. The latter group, at the end of Maria Theresa's reign, comprised 65,000 families, and by virtue of their numbers alone they must have felt it their calling to bear the development of the feudal nation upon their own shoulders, independently of the aristocrats.³⁰¹

Thus, a sense of estrangement arose between the rococo splendour of the Viennese Court and its cosmopolitan fashions, the magnates who tried to transplant these fashions to Hungarian soil, and the more sod-bound members of the middle nobility, who rather lauded 'ancient' forms of stoic morality, and saw that any deviation from the 'simple' life was an intolerable and dangerous luxury.³⁰² As we shall see, the symbolic opposition of 'luxury' and 'simplicity' would play a prominent role in the discourses of eighteenth century Hungarian national identity.

The final significant structural change in this period was the gradual rise of a vernacular press and the emergence of a vernacular 'public sphere', one that became increasingly active following Joseph's relaxation of censorship laws in 1781 (the edict entered into force in Hungary in 1782). During the latter half of the century in addition to

²⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 166.

³⁰⁰ László Rábel, *Hivatalos nyelvünk* (Sopron: Romwalter, 1914), p. 48.

³⁰¹ Gyula Szekfű, *A magyar állam életrajza* (Budapest: Maecenas, 1988), p. 150.

³⁰² Kosáry, *Culture and Society*, pp. 31-32.

Latin and German press organs, a Hungarian vernacular press began to emerge and reading circles and literary salons sprang up around Hungary.³⁰³ The number of printing presses in Hungary trebled from 17 to 51 between 1760 and 1790, while the number of bookshops also increased in towns, and aristocrats such as Sándor Teleki (1739-1822) and Count Ferenc Széchenyi (1754-1820) established sizeable personal libraries which they later offered to the public. The relaxation of censorship meant that the number of works featuring on the index of banned books dropped from 4,476 to 900 between 1774 and 1784.³⁰⁴ A German theatre was established in Pest in 1774 and Buda in 1787, followed by similar attempts to create a Hungarian theatre.³⁰⁵ Although religious institutions were often marked by more outdated ideas, Antonio Muratori's ideal of Enlightened Reform Catholicism also began to gain ground, as noted above,³⁰⁶ and advocates of enlightened reform emerged from the Protestant royal free towns of the Northeast, Transylvania, and the eastern plains (students from these regions had been consolidating ties with universities in Holland, Switzerland, and in the German universities of Göttingen and Halle since the beginning of the century).³⁰⁷

A more clandestine, but catalytic agent of change that contributed to the reshaping of attitudes towards religious tolerance and other proto-liberal ideas was Freemasonry. A number of lodges had sprung up around the country in the late eighteenth century, with members drawn from both the noble and ignoble intellectual elite. Their members discussed the new political ideas of the age, some embracing notions of Voltairean anticlericalism, religious tolerance, and the universal brotherhood of man. Others, however, debated such ideas with reservation. The activities of the lodges were thus mixed. Some propagated ideas of social, religious, and political reform, while others proved more effective in diffusing the spirit of noble dissent and opposition to Habsburg absolutism.³⁰⁸

Of course, any notion of a shared 'public' space enthused by a single vernacular discourse conflicts with the decentralized, multilingual and multid denominational character of Hungary. Nevertheless, the vernacular movement would gain in political

³⁰³ See G. F. Cushing, 'Books and Readers', pp. 57-77.

³⁰⁴ Szegedy-Maszák, 'The Enlightenment', pp. 105-106.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

³⁰⁶ Szelestei, 'Lodovico Antonio Muratori', pp. 27-42.

³⁰⁷ Evans, *Austria, Hungary, and the Habsburgs*, pp. 39-40.

³⁰⁸ George Bárány, 'Hoping against Hope: The Enlightened Age in Hungary', *The American Historical Review*, 76.2 (1971), 319-357 (331-332).

importance in Hungary, particularly following Joseph II's language decree of 1784, until it eventually became a central pillar of Hungarian national identity amidst calls to support the 'national' language at the 1790/91 Diet. But what kinds of ideas were being articulated with regard to the properties of this 'national' language?

As we shall see, ideas about language and the emerging discourse of 'linguistic nationalism' would be shaped by two seemingly contradictory ideologies. On the one hand, in an age of rising international economic competition, proponents of change saw that it was insufficient for the nobility to merely defend the *patria* with their swords. Rather, it was felt that scientific advancement and commerce were needed for the 'nation' to keep pace with the times. But those who wished for the country's modernization in the above manner then faced the conundrum of how to achieve the growth of trade and commerce in a 'backwards' country, and how to transform a largely agricultural society into an expanding manufacturing economy. For a small group of reform-minded nobles, this conundrum led to a search for a new form of noble identity that would allow them to retain the privileges of their class, but still contribute to the country's progress in a virtuous manner. In their view, the most viable solution for the introduction of change was language reform. The aim of this programme, which would eventually become known as *nyelvújítás* 'language renewal' in Hungarian, was to create a new vernacular reading public, one that existed beyond or alongside the domains of German (the native language of the Habsburgs), and Latin (the *lingua franca* of government officials, lawyers, theologians, and the narrow circles of the educated elite). While vernacularism was not a distinctly new phenomenon in itself,³⁰⁹ this eighteenth-century movement brought about a series of new emphases, upon language as a medium of general philosophical and scientific enquiry, and as a vehicle of secular 'happiness'. The standardization and improvement of the vernacular could bring about a new and expanded reading public, one that would be versed in the latest philosophical and literary ideas, and that would then go on to improve the country's standing. Speakers of other languages, it was sometimes claimed, would either voluntarily learn this new language, or be forced to do so. As such, implicit within this ideology was a new, monolingual understanding of the 'nation', one that contrasted with the older concept of the politically, but linguistically neutral *natio Hungarica*. In this respect, the eighteenth-century programme of language reform was inherently new, one that

³⁰⁹ Although Latin was the language of officialdom and science, programmes of vernacular translation constituted an increasingly important part of Hungarian printed culture from the early modern era onwards. See Hanna Orsolya Vincze, 'A magyar fordításkultúra kezdetei', *Korunk*, 19.5 (2008), 90–96.

embraced a utilitarian view of language that was oriented towards the building of a utopian future.

In short then, the reform of the vernacular was seen to constitute a comprehensive programme of social engineering. Yet at almost the same time that the language programme received programmatic formulation, a more backwards-looking, identitarian understanding of the vernacular also came to the fore, one that drew more heavily on the political ideology of the ancient constitution, and that was concerned more with the preservation of the nation's 'Scythian' characteristics. Somewhat paradoxically, by the time of the 1790/91 Diet, forward-looking, 'instrumentalist' ideas about language would become combined with the latter more identitarian and traditionally-oriented understandings of language to create an often-contradictory understanding of linguistic 'national' identity.

5.0 The Bessenyei Programme

There is a hint of irony in the fact that the eighteenth-century Hungarian language reform movement—which would become central to the ‘national’ opposition movement of the 1780s and 1790s and beyond—first began to gestate in imperial Vienna. Indeed, the movement to assert the primacy of the Magyar vernacular over other languages in administration, education, and public life occurred simultaneously with the Habsburg attempt to consolidate a multilingual *Gesamtstaat* through the promotion of German as the official language of the rational and increasingly centralized state

From roughly the middle of the century onwards, members of the Hungarian nobility close to the royal court in Vienna had encountered new ideas through Maria Theresa’s new educational and military institutions. However, the Hungarian vernacular movement is commonly considered to have emerged through her noble Hungarian Bodyguard, founded in 1760 to establish closer ties with Hungary. The bodyguard was captained by the ostentatious magnate Prince Miklós Esterházy (1714-1790), and was open to provincial nobles, including Protestants. A number of its members, including György Bessenyei (1747-1811), Ábrahám Barcsay (1742-1806), and Sándor Báróczi (1735-1809) would form the vanguard of a new literary movement aimed at cultivating the vernacular.³¹⁰ In particular, it is the 1772 publication of Bessenyei’s vernacular dramas *Hunyadi László tragédiája* ‘The Tragedy of László Hunyadi’ and *Ágis tragédiája* ‘The Tragedy of Agis’, and his translation of Alexander Pope’s *Essay on Man* that is seen to mark the onset of the Enlightenment itself in Hungarian letters.³¹¹

Bessenyei joined the Royal Bodyguards in 1765, leaving the rural county of Szabolcs for the cosmopolitan imperial capital. There he began to educate himself, developing a voracious appetite for proponents of English rationalism and French Enlightenment (especially Pope, Locke, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Holbach).³¹² Although a Calvinist, Bessenyei became a proponent of moderate theological views. In Vienna he came into contact with Pope’s moderate Catholicism and Hume’s scepticism and deism,

³¹⁰ Evans, *Austria, Hungary, and the Habsburgs*, p. 29-31.

³¹¹ The standardisation of this view is attributed to Ferenc Toldy, one of the earliest grand scholars of Hungarian literature in the ‘national’ tradition. See Ferenc Toldy, *A magyar nemzeti irodalom története a legrégebb időktől a jelenkorig*, 2 vols, 3rd edn (Pest: Athenaeum, 1888), I, pp. 113-115.

³¹² Bessenyei was also familiar with the works of censored writers such as Hume through his friend Ádám Kollár, mentioned above. Pál Ács, ‘“Ignoramus”: David Hume’s Ideas in the Hungarian Enlightenment’, in *The Reception of David Hume in Europe*, ed. by Peter Jones (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), pp. 253-267 (p. 257).

and his later compendium of works entitled *Tolerantia* ('Tolerance', 1778) drew heavily on Marmontel's *Les Incas* and argued against aggressive religious proselytism.³¹³ Indeed, in the manner of many enlightened writers, Bessenyei stood opposed to convictions arising from religious belief and what he considered the superstitions of revealed religious dogma. Increasingly interested in letters, he resigned from the bodyguard in 1773 with a pension, but also became a representative for the Protestant Churches in Vienna. However, through the *Ratio Educationis*, state authority was extended to schools of all denominations, including those of the Protestants. Thus, Bessenyei faced a dilemma: the Protestants could either accept state supervision of schools and try to carve out a more favourable position for themselves within the system, or reject the *Ratio's* innovations and take refuge in their traditional autonomy. Bessenyei favoured the former path, while the majority of the Protestants, under the leadership of Calvinist figurehead Count József Teleki (1738-1796), chose the latter.³¹⁴ Bessenyei found himself opposed to Teleki, himself a Crown Guard and writer who was well-versed in the works of the Enlightenment (he had met Voltaire and Rousseau personally), but who used logical argument to support belief in mysteries, miracles, salvation and resurrection.³¹⁵ Following a series of struggles with Teleki, Bessenyei's relations with the Protestants deteriorated, and he lost his post and a valuable source of income in 1778. Disappointed in his former backers, he even converted to Catholicism in 1779, an act which scandalized the Protestants, but which earned him a sinecure from Maria Theresa of honorary court librarian.³¹⁶ From then on, Bessenyei devoted himself to letters. However, Joseph II withdrew his pension in 1782, forcing him to return to Hungary. He continued to write, but focused on managing his estates, and became increasingly isolated from his peers.³¹⁷

As the emblematic figure of the Hungarian Enlightenment Bessenyei's oeuvre is traditionally linked to the English and French writers from whom he undoubtedly drew inspiration. Yet it is often overlooked how his thinking was also heavily indebted to the intellectual milieu of Vienna and the ideals of 'enlightened government' that he encountered in the imperial capital. Certainly, Bessenyei was no mere mouthpiece for

³¹³ Penke, Olga, *Műfaji kísérletek Bessenyei György prózájában* (Debrecen: Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó, 2018), pp. 70-71.

³¹⁴ Kosáry, *Culture and Society*, p. 97.

³¹⁵ Pál Ács, 'Ignoramus', pp. 261-262.

³¹⁶ Jenő Pintér, *Magyar irodalomtörténete*, 8 vols. (Budapest: Magyar Irodalomtörténeti Társaság, 1930-1941), IV, pp. 344-346

³¹⁷ Albert Tezla, *Hungarian Authors: A Bibliographical Handbook* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 90-97.

‘foreign’ ideas, and neither was he an uncritical translator of received enlightenment thought. His translation of Pope’s *Essay on Man* departed from the Englishman’s well-known optimism: rendered as *Az ember próbája*, the title reads rather as ‘the trial of man’, and the work closed with the pessimistic claim that ‘only ignorance buzzes in the heads of men’.³¹⁸ Furthermore, Bessenyei reinterpreted Pope’s famous maxims that ‘The great directing MIND of ALL ordains’ and that ‘whatever IS, is RIGHT’ to conform with ideals that were similar to those found in contemporary discourses of enlightened government. Commenting on Pope’s famous words, he wrote that ‘In my view, whatever is, is right concerning All. But I have a special condition in the midst of All. When there is stone [...] in one’s kidney, which inflicts terrible pain, one would find it hard to say that stone in the kidney is a good thing’.³¹⁹ Similarly to the cameralists, Bessenyei saw that new forms of knowledge must be directed towards the *allgemeine Beste*, and the health and welfare of the people at large.

It is also commonly forgotten that Bessenyei, the best-known figure of the early Hungarian language reform movement, wrote a number of foreign language works, including *Die Amerikaner* (1774), and *Die Geschäfte der Einsamkeit* (1777), and that his inspiration to focus on the vernacular was undoubtedly influenced by Joseph von Sonnenfels’ idea of a standard language (meaning a supra-dialectal language of culture, enlightenment, and commerce), as well as his ideal of a morally-elevating theatre (which contributed to Joseph II’s transformation of the *Burgtheater* into the ‘Court and National Theatre’ in 1776). Certainly, Bessenyei was inspired by Sonnenfels’ activities in the fields of theatre and popular literacy (Bessenyei even edited *Der Mann ohne Vorurtheil* in 1781). Following Sonnenfels’ injunctions in *Briefe über die wienerische Schaubühne* (‘Letters on the Viennese Stage’, 1768) to compose serious drama that was intended to educate and instil virtue in the ‘nation’ (i.e. not in the popular, but parochial tradition of the era’s *Hanswurst* productions),³²⁰ it seems Bessenyei was keen to follow suit, and he set about composing his first works in his own native language.³²¹

³¹⁸ Richard Aczél, ‘Hungarian Romanticism: Reimagining (Literary) History’, in *The Oxford Handbook of European Romanticism*, ed., by Paul Hamilton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 357-376 (360).

³¹⁹ Aladár Sarbu, ‘Closing the Cultural Divide: Hungarian Literary Nationalism and English Authors of the Eighteenth Century’, *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies*, 13.1/2 (2007), 23-34 (27-28).

³²⁰ According to Sonnenfels, ‘The most pleasant, most instructive, innocent amusement for the citizens of a state is indisputably a well-regulated theatre. If this theatre is national, it will make the prevailing vices and follies worthy of scorn and laughable: thus these amusements will be raised still further, and even the lowest citizen comes to know the true Good and Beautiful; good taste spreads throughout the entire nation’. Katherine Arens, *Vienna’s Dreams of Europe* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), p. 55.

³²¹ György Bessenyei and Béla Lázár, *Bessenyei György Agis Tragédiája* (Budapest: Franklin, 1899), pp. 11-12.

While an extensive treatment of Bessenyei's oeuvre is not possible here, we may note how the political views expressed in his early dramas dealt with themes that were typical of the age. In particular, his three early tragedies (*Ágis tragédiája* 'The Tragedy of Agis' and *Hunyadi László tragédiája* 'The Tragedy of László Hunyadi' penned in 1772, and *Buda tragédiája* 'The Tragedy of Buda', in 1773), revolved around the ways in which relationships between 'good rulers' and 'virtuous heroes' were obstructed by *ál-ortzás* 'masked' courtiers and cynical plotters, leading ultimately to the protagonists' tragic fates.³²² The most famous of these dramas, *The Tragedy of Agis*, was itself an adaptation of Johann Christoph Gottsched's *Agis, König zu Sparta* (1745), a rendition of Plutarch's 'Life of Agis' that would prove to be one of Gottsched's less popular works. Gottsched's play focuses upon the doomed king Agis' attempt to introduce economic reform on the basis of Lycurgus' old laws. Agis' idea is to have the rich cancel all debts owed to them, and divide their possessions equally among the Spartan people. However, Agis is betrayed by his uncle Agesilaus, who goes along with the reform proposals, but then counsels the king to move slowly (ultimately to protect his own real estate). The result is that the poor turn against Agis for not introducing Lycurgus' laws while claiming to do so. He is eventually deposed and killed by his co-ruler Leonidas, the product of an immoral and luxurious upbringing.³²³ Gottsched's work thus gave expression to the classical 'republican' ideal that riches and luxury undermine virtue, albeit in a monarchical setting, and the tragedy ensues as corruption overcomes kingly virtue.

Bessenyei's drama similarly drew upon Plutarch and focused upon comparable themes, though with some significant differences. In Bessenyei's *Agis*, Leonidas is the king of a country that has fallen in to ruin after his abandonment of Lycurgus' laws, with corrupt counsellors using the law to extract ever more wealth from the people and drive them into debt and poverty. The play's co-heroes, Agis and Cleombrotus, bemoan the kingdom's impoverishment and seek to reinstate the laws of Lycurgus. They achieve partial success, with the help of a populist riot, but King Leonidas is angered by this transgression of his 'majesty' or royal authority.

Eventually, Leonidas abolishes all debt in order to create equality and placate the people. Agis and Cleombrotus finally hail Leonidas as an enlightened monarch who acts in the best interests of the people, and declare their loyalty to the good king. Unfortunately,

³²² Ferenc Bíró, *A felvilágosodás korának magyar irodalma* (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2013), p. 233.

³²³ Robert Richard Heitner, *German Tragedy in the Age of Enlightenment* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1963), pp. 76-80.

as the progression of the play reveals, Leonidas might be capable of enlightened acts and occasional musings on the mortality of kings, but he is also preoccupied with the divine right of absolute royal authority, and lacks the astuteness, or indeed the will, to become decisively aware of the injustice of excessive wealth, and to see through the corruption of the officials who surround him. The drama concludes with Leonidas seeking to reaffirm his royal authority by offering clemency to Agis and Cleombrotus only if they admit they were wrong to rebel against the Crown. In the heroes' view, their rebellion was justified because it was conducted in the interests of *all* the people. They adhere to the Spartan code, *Aki ok nélkül sértheti a a Királyát, Nem érdemelheti az Spártából fáját* ('who harms the king for no just need, deserves no place 'twixt Sparta's creed'),³²⁴ refuse to admit culpability, and thus doom themselves.

Bessenyei's play thus deals with a number of themes common to the politics of the era. In part, it tragically highlights the conflicting bonds of duty and fidelity (between king and country, counsellor and king, lord and peasant, and so on). But it also illustrates how the pursuit of wealth, luxury, and selfish interest by the royal court descends into oligarchy, leading to despotism (through the corruption of royal virtue), and to usury, debt, and ultimately discord among the people. Certainly, a key motif of the work is the way in which it contrasts selfish interest (through the problems of bribery, usury, and the poverty and 'slavery' caused by oligarchic structures) with the egalitarian ideals of Spartan simplicity embraced by the play's heroes.

However, the main axis of opposition upon which the tragedy hinges is between the rebels, who embrace the cause of the people, and Leonidas, who wishes to guarantee the inviolability of his power, and who believes that his subjects must accept his divine right to rule. Leonidas' tragedy derives from the fact that he loses sight of the people's plight as he seeks to consolidate his power. Indeed, it is the very distance between Leonidas and his people that is exploited in the play by corrupt, oligarchic courtiers. The result is that when confronting the agitators, Leonidas cannot distinguish between the treachery of his courtiers and the honest virtues of Agis and Cleombrotus. Even though the king eventually recognizes the error of his ways and reinstates Lycurgus' laws, he stands fast by the divine and unimpeachable nature of kingly sovereignty (despite his doubts), and cannot allow his sense of majesty to be besmirched by conceding that he has erred, or that Agis and Cleombrotus have acted in the name of a just cause. The tragedy

³²⁴ György Bessenyei, *Ágis tragédiája, öt játékban* (Bétsben: Kaliwoda Leopold, 1772), p. 111.

of Agis and Cleombrotus similarly arises because they, too, feel their honour cannot be compromised: they had merely fulfilled their duty to the people at large, and thus could not admit fault where there was none.

Ultimately, then, the tears of the mourning wives and the regret of the king at the end of the play are geared towards moving the audience to sympathise with the benevolent moral values of Agis and Cleombrotus. Perhaps surprisingly, however, it is precisely the rebels who represent the monarchical programme of Bessenyei's era: by speaking out against a fictitious, retrograde and unenlightened absolutist ruler in the name of the 'people', the tragic heroes tacitly express their agreement with the programme of enlightened government embraced by Maria Theresa (to whom the play was addressed). The laws of Lycurgus were not the laws of Werbőczy; if anything, the references to reducing the burden of poverty on the people at large was a nod to Maria Theresa's *Urbarium* of 1767, which regulated the feudal obligations of peasant farmers to their lords.³²⁵

Bessenyei was not alone in expressing his concerns about moral corruption fuelled by economic inequality. For example, the works of fellow bodyguard Ábrahám Barcsay (1742–1806), and friend of the bodyguard Count Lőrinc Orczy (1718-1789), a loyal general who served Maria Theresa in the Seven Years' War, drew upon the vocabularies of classical stoicism to similar effect. Adopting the pose of wise Magyar soothsayers who saw the future by understanding the past, they reiterated the republican ideal that empires collapsed when their citizens turned away from the virtues of stoical simplicity in favour of the pursuit of luxury. In Barcsay's poem *Hívság látásakor gerjedett jámbor érzés* ('Pious Sentiments Goaded on Seeing Vanity'), Vienna, just like 'wealthy London' and 'vain Paris', was on the path to ruin, and would fall, just as Corinth, Athens, and Rome had done. 'Sit, look not here for Cato or Seneca / Wish not to see here Virgin Lucretia / Look rather for Lucullus, and send greetings to Aspasia / Those who have signalled the decline of empires.'³²⁶ For Barcsay, Vienna was a city where your eyes feasted on what they saw, but the heart remained in suspension. The wisdom of Cato or Seneca was not to be found there, only the immorality and decadence of Aspasia and Lucullus.³²⁷ The more

³²⁵ Bíró, *A felvilágosodás*, p. 231.

³²⁶ Ábrahám Barcsay and László Vajthó, *Barcsay Ábrahám költeményei* (Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, 1933), p. 35.

³²⁷ For a brief discussion see Ferenc Bíró, "'Hívság látásakor...'" (Bessenyei indulása II.), *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, 75.4 (1971), 426-442 (430-431).

conservative Orczy responded in a similar fashion to the immorality of urban centres and the new thinking of the Enlightenment. He often lauded the rustic simplicity of the peasantry in his poems—from the traditional, patriarchal perspective of the noble landlord—and in contrast associated urban modes of living with the spread of luxury and immorality. Indeed, Orczy is widely held to be the first author to write a sentimental poem on the Hungarian rural *csárda* or rustic ‘inn’ (*A bugaci csárda tiszteletére* ‘In Honour of the Czarda of Bugac’, 1772), the idealized image of which would become a prominent feature of later romantic nationalist imagery.³²⁸ Although he was open to reading the works of foreign enlightenment authors such as Pope, Voltaire, Racine, and Boileau, he believed that an overemphasis on philosophy and science was detrimental in its effects, and constituted a form of *lelki veszedelem* (‘spiritual peril’). For Orczy, virtue was to be found in learning only enough that was demanded by the challenges of everyday life. It was this knowledge of a more practical kind that Orczy valued most and referred to as *bölcsesség* or ‘wisdom’. Indeed, in Orczy’s view, too much ‘knowledge’ led people to disrespect authority, and the new sciences, in attempting to bring about prosperity, were simultaneously providing the foundations for pusillanimity and moral decrepitude. In a later poem, for example, addressed to Bessenyei and entitled *Szivbéli sóhajtás a Bölcsesség után* (‘A heartfelt sigh for Wisdom’, 1787), Orczy continued to decry the danger of philosophy, ancient and modern, and called for a return to simplistic, stoical modes of existence: ‘Epicurus, Seneca, Plato’s knowledge / Wolff, d’Argens, Malebranche, Newton’s inventions / They help not, as their [mental] nourishment is bad / Be you, great Wisdom, the rudder of my mind!’³²⁹

However, a series of contradictions began to arise, even in the works of these and other traditionalists. As Richard Aczél has noted, it is almost entirely forgotten that Orczy’s poetry of the 1760s was characterized by a Voltairean *apologie de luxe* that was ostensibly at odds with the stoic ‘Spartanism’ of his poetry after 1772. In poems such as *A magyar szépekhez* (‘To the Magyar Beauties’, 1760) he reworked elements of Voltaire’s *Le Mondain* and provided a series of economic justifications for forms of worldly epicureanism.³³⁰ While Orczy would later return to his stoical stance, especially following the first Partition of Poland in 1772, which he ascribed to the excessive luxury, vanity, and

³²⁸ István Sötér, *A magyar irodalom története*, 6 vols (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1964), III, pp. 103-4.

³²⁹ Márta Mezei and Lajos Szuromi, *Szöveggyűjtemény a felvilágosodás korának irodalmából*, 2. vols. (Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1982), I, p. 208.

³³⁰ Aczél, ‘Hungarian Romanticism’, p. 368.

liberty of the Polish nobility, his enthusiasm for trade and worldly pleasures was a prominent feature of his earlier poetry, and it rubbed off on some of the younger ‘traditional’ poets, who also enthused about the prospects of greater enrichment. Even Barcsay, whose well-known poem *A kávéra* (‘To Coffee’) criticized the *Fösvény Anglus* ‘Miserly English’ for exploiting colonial slaves in order to fill their chests with gold, would write in a morally unapologetic fashion about how he envied the opportunities of colonial powers. One example is his poem *Egy jó barát beteg barátjának* (‘A Good Friend to a Sick Friend’), where he laments the lack of opportunities granted to the landlocked and ‘river-bound’ Magyars, and looks longingly to the pomp of wealthier seafaring nations.³³¹ Even the sentimentalist poet and socially conservative Pauline monk Pál Ányós (1756–1784), the first poet thought to pen anti-Habsburg verse and laud the traditional clothing and stoical morality of the ancient Hungarians, as we shall see below, would address poems to Barcsay which praised the pleasures of the new ‘cosmopolitan’ enlightenment.³³² Thus, despite often extolling the virtues of stoicism and simple rusticity, many of the era’s poets were increasingly beginning to covet exactly the kind of lifestyle that they chastised in Vienna for its immorality.

The poetry of Bessenyei’s contemporaries thus suggested a crisis of legitimacy, or at least, a degree of doubt as to the desirability of traditional stoic values. Indeed, while luxury was formerly seen as a source of pusillanimity and danger, now it was becoming apparent that the very lack of luxury—or at least the relative lack of wealth, trade, and commercial enterprise in Hungarian society—was indicative of Hungary’s backward condition *vis-à-vis* other nations. If increased wealth and trade was becoming a fact of life in other nations of Europe, and indeed it seemed to be benefiting the development of those nations, then how might Hungary, a landlocked country with a largely agrarian economy, keep pace? Furthermore, how might commercial success be implemented while retaining traditional forms of virtue?

Bessenyei’s solution to this problem was much in accord with the ideas circulating around imperial Vienna, particularly those associated with vernacular reform. An opportunity arose with the *Ratio Educationis* of 1777, which sought to implement modern

³³¹ Barcsay describes cane sugar as the *Rab szerecsen véres veriték-gyümölcse* ‘Bloody sweat-fruit of enslaved Saracens’, the latter term referring to slave labourers. On coffee, he writes ‘The wise man is horrified on seeing that when from the cup / he sips, he, too, shares in the sins of Englishmen.’ Mezei and Szuromi, *Szöveggyűjtemény*, p. 213.

³³² Bíró, *Nemzet, nyelv, irodalom*, p. 559.

and ‘enlightened’ ideals in the field of education. Elsewhere in Europe, during the seventeenth century, a gradual shift had occurred away from the traditions of Christian humanist education (which, exemplified by the Jesuit *Ratio studiorum*, focused mainly on classical literary culture through the mediation of Latin), and towards more ‘utilitarian’ or practical forms of edification, particularly in the German Lutheran context. Through the mediation of thinkers such as John Amos Comenius (1592-1670), this utilitarian focus had resulted in the so-called *Realschulen*, with their emphasis on practical subjects (e.g. botany, geography, natural science) rather than grammar and rhetoric. Similar ideas were also aired in Catholic countries as well, notably by thinkers such as Abbe Claude Fleury (1640–1723), who also embraced more utilitarian, vocational goals as the chief end of education. However, it was following the expulsion of the Jesuits from France in 1762 that these utilitarian goals came to be more openly embraced by French Enlightenment thinkers such as Louis-René de Caradeuc de La Chalotais (1701–1785), a Jansenist and jurist who lambasted the futility of the Jesuit programme of study, and who openly called for a state-run system of education. La Chalotais, unlike the Jesuits, gave priority to the vernacular, and in his *Essai d’éducation nationale* (1763) advocated the ‘nationalisation’ of education, with an emphasis on developing patriotism and political virtue under the aegis of the state.³³³ A radical implication of this educational ideal was that it involved the advancement of linguistic uniformity. This was a principle already formulated by the likes of Francis Bacon and John Locke in England, and later to be promoted more forcefully around the time of the French revolution, when legislators considered imposing a common standardized language upon a linguistically diverse population. This regulation of language and the creation of uniformity was in many ways a project typical of Enlightenment thought: not only was it desirable to regulate the oft-perceived semantic instability of the spoken and written word, but also to bring about patriotism and ‘national’ unity—and in the later French revolutionary case even create ‘equality’ among citizens: if politics was the concern of the citizenry as a whole, then it was felt it should be conducted in a common language.³³⁴

³³³ Teodora Shek Brnardić, ‘The Enlightenment’s Choice of Latin: The Ratio Educationis of 1777 in the Kingdom of Hungary’, in Almási and Šubarić, *Latin at the Crossroads*, pp. 119–151 (124-125).

³³⁴ On the emergence of the European monolingual ideal in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries more broadly see Richard Bauman and Charles L Briggs, *Voices of Modernity: Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). On the development of linguistic imperialism in France see Stewart McCain, *The Language Question under Napoleon, 1799-1814* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), also William Safran, ‘Language, Ideology, and State-Building: A Comparison of Policies in France, Israel, and the Soviet Union’, *International Political Science Review*, 13.4 (1992), 397-414 (399).

La Chalotais' idea of 'national education' was disseminated in the Habsburg Monarchy, too, primarily through the activities of Sonnenfels in the 1760s, and particularly during the reform period that followed the suppression of the Society of Jesus in 1773. However, in the multilingual and multi-confessional territories of the monarchy, although it was deemed desirable to promote a single *Monarchie-Sprache* ('language of the monarchy'), the 'nationalisation' of education did not result in the imposition of linguistic homogeneity, especially not in the Hungarian lands. Rather, the *Ratio Educationis*, drafted by a team of scholars under the stewardship of József Ürményi (discussed below) paid attention to the country's linguistic pluralism. On the one hand, it listed the larger 'nations' in Hungary (Hungarians, Germans, Slovaks, Croats, Ruthenians, Illyrians, and Romanians), and prescribed the teaching of these 'vernaculars' (*linguae vernaculae*) or 'languages of the fatherland' (*linguae patriae*) in elementary schools. However, Latin was to remain as the medium of secondary and higher education, while German, also listed as *lingua patria*, was to receive new prominence in elementary education. In this way, by remaining within the bounds of the country's multilingual makeup, the *Ratio Educationis* was designed to ensure that no living language had supremacy over others, to maintain the universalism of Latin, and to simultaneously promote German, which would eventually allow the state to communicate directly with its citizens, and thus improve its overall efficiency. In order to promote German as a *Monarchie-Sprache*, bilingual textbooks were printed, with German texts on the right and their vernacular translations on the left pages.³³⁵

Bessenyei was quick to see the opportunity that the *Ratio Educationis* offered, but rather embraced a programme of vernacular reform over the *Ratio's* multilingualism. On learning that the Jesuit college of Trnava was to be reorganized as a new university in Buda, he wrote in *Magyarság* ('Magyardom' 1778, here referring to the Hungarian language; presumably through analogy with German *Deutschheit*):

Why should it not be possible for the great university of Buda to link to itself those Hungarians who know the language of their country? It would be a good plan to

³³⁵ The Ratio explained the significance of Latin in a passage entitled *De necessitate linguae Latinae pro variis ditionum Hungaricarum incolis* ('On the necessity of the Latin language for the various inhabitants of Hungarian territories') by arguing it was the main language of a) Hungarian law; b) communication between Habsburg and Hungarian institutions; c) the Hungarian Court Chamber and Parliament, and d) education and domestic communication as a *lingua franca*. Shek Brnardić, 'The Enlightenment's Choice of Latin', pp. 128-130; 139.

make a new dictionary, in which new Hungarian words might be defined. The university might also undertake the examination of good Hungarian books.³³⁶

Thus, already linking language to the Magyars' axiomatically-conceived 'ownership' of the kingdom's territories, Bessenyei went beyond the stipulations of the *Ratio Educationis*. The focus, however, was one of reform. In the same publication he argued that the cultivation and dissemination of knowledge among the broader 'public' would be unimaginable if the nation did not polish and carefully standardise its language:

Remember this great truth, that never on the globe of this earth has a single Nation made wisdom and profundity its own before it has absorbed the sciences [*tudományok*]³³⁷ into its own Mother tongue. Every Nation that has become knowledgeable has done so in its own language, and never in a foreign one.³³⁸

Although Bessenyei conceded that Latin had been favoured by the Hungarian nobility since the foundation of the kingdom, he also argued that it constituted an obstacle to refined behaviour and the development of knowledge:

Ever since St Stephen the nation has written in Latin, but what good was that for Knowledge? If you so wish, many people can recite [the facts of] Hebrew and Greek *Grammar* while scarcely looking at a book, and they can write Latin like *Cicero*; but they may also be so deeply idiotic, barbarous, and cloddish that you dare not converse with them, as despite their best intentions, their utterances are of such vulgarity that you end up blushing in their stead.³³⁹

Bessenyei further expanded upon these ideas in a series of other publications, including *Holmi* ('Miscellanea', 1779), in which he further argued that the use of Latin as the language of law and government was outdated, as it obstructed clear communication:

³³⁶ George F. Cushing, 'The Birth of National Literature in Hungary', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 38.91 (1960), 459-475 (460-461).

³³⁷ Here *tudományok* is broader than our modern understanding of 'science', as it embraces literature, philosophy, and all forms of written knowledge in general, and is rather a shorthand for the Humanist conception of *bonae litterae* (literally 'good letters'). Ferenc Bíró, 'Magyarság. Bessenyei György programjáról', *Irodalomtörténet*, 35.85 (2004), 230–254 (232).

³³⁸ György Bessenyei, *Magyarság* (Béts.: n.p., 1778), p. 6.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

‘While the law of the land is written in Latin, and while people litigate and pass judgement in that language, the Magyar nation will know neither foreign languages, nor the Magyar tongue.’³⁴⁰ Furthermore,

[...] if our Mother tongue remains in the dust then how are we to expect that we can raise our Nation via foreign tongues to [embrace] the sciences? At the very least, we may observe that no single Nation on this earth has been able to raise itself to [any level of] wisdom or scientific knowledge [*tudomány*] by using only a *foreign tongue*.³⁴¹

Bessenyei expressed similar ideas in his *Magyar néző* (‘Magyar Spectator’, 1779, named after the English ‘Spectator’, a popular source of inspiration for ideas related to ‘politeness’). In that publication Bessenyei highlighted the importance of developing the nation’s ‘mother tongue’ in order to achieve the ‘public good’ and ‘public happiness’. Happiness was best achieved through knowledge, and knowledge was best disseminated through the mother tongue. In this way, drawing on the vocabularies of ‘enlightened government’, Bessenyei connected the vernacular tongue with an explicit programme of social reform. The key concepts in this programme were *közjó* ‘public good’, *tudományok* ‘sciences, fields of knowledge’ (from *tud* ‘to know’ and ‘to be able [to do sg]’), and *nyelv* ‘tongue, language’, not to mention *nemzet* ‘nation’, and the eudaemonist *közboldogság* ‘public happiness’.³⁴²

In order to propagate this understanding of language, and also to regulate the language itself, Bessenyei saw it was necessary to establish a language society to standardise and cultivate the Hungarian language. To this end, Bessenyei lobbied his fellow noblemen in a manuscript entitled *Egy magyar társaság iránt való jámbor szándék* (‘A Humble Proposal for a Hungarian Society’ 1781/1790). It was first circulated in 1781, but later used by Miklós Révai, a prominent linguist of the age who petitioned Joseph II in 1784 and published Bessenyei’s work in 1790 to promote the establishment of a Hungarian language academy at the 1790/91 Diet.³⁴³

³⁴⁰ György Bessenyei, *A holmi* (Béts: n.p., 1779), p. 241.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

³⁴² Bíró, ‘Magyarság. Bessenyei György programjáról’, p. 231.

³⁴³ The pamphlet primarily found support among the middle nobility at the Diet. Furthermore, members of the Catholic clergy were often suspicious of the language reform movement as many of its members (although not all) were Protestants. The fate of the proposal will be discussed below. Réka Lengyel and

Appealing to his compatriots in the language of enlightened government, Bessenyei argued that the noblest human endeavour is to achieve the ‘common good’. This was best achieved by disseminating knowledge among the public through the advancement of the vernacular: ‘One of the chief Instruments of the Country’s happiness is Knowledge. The more widespread it is among the [country’s] inhabitants, the happier the Country’.³⁴⁴ Furthermore, ‘The Key to Knowledge is Language, and with regard to the more numerous part [of the population], who have no means of learning multiple Languages, this means the born [i.e. ‘native’] Language of every Country’.³⁴⁵

As inspiration, Bessenyei pointed to the establishment of the Academy in France in 1629 and its royal patronage by Louis XIII in 1635, insisting that there is ‘no science or handicraft of which there is no account in French’, and that a similar Academy could be set up in Hungary.³⁴⁶ It would, in the spirit of tolerance, be open to members of all faiths, and staffed by representatives of each dialect spoken in Hungary and Transylvania, alongside experts on the various branches of the sciences. The society’s main task would be to ‘lead and guide the talents of the nation in speech and writing’, and to set about standardising and codifying Hungarian vocabulary and grammar, while also writing book reviews and publishing notable works. The main benefit would be that through the advancement of the language ‘science too will be extended to the inhabitants of the country’ of whatever class. But while Bessenyei’s ideas certainly chimed with the ideas of cameralism and Habsburg enlightened government, he rejected their enthusiasm for population growth, insisting ‘what use are numbers if the great majority are poor and ignorant?’ Critically, Bessenyei was also convinced that education would only be effective if people could learn in their own native tongue.

In this way, language reform was not merely key to communal advancement, but also to civic engagement and the furthering of the common good. Indeed, Bessenyei’s plan rested upon a utopian vision of the future that could only be achieved through language: it would allow the rich seam of the lower classes’ talents to be mined and refined, ensure Hungary kept pace with competitors, and would even foster meritocracy among the

Gábor Tüskés, *Learned Societies, Freemasonry, Sciences and Literature in 18th-Century Hungary* (Budapest: MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont, 2017), p. 80.

³⁴⁴ György Bessenyei, *Egy magyar társaság iránt való jámbor szándék* (Bétsben: Hummel János Dávid, 1790), p. 17.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Unless otherwise indicated, the following quotations are taken from a partial translation of Bessenyei’s *Humble Proposal* by Bernard Adams in Lengyel and Tüskés, *Learned Societies*, pp. 81-89.

nobility by ensuring that ‘many useless eaters of bread’³⁴⁷ would devote themselves to the public good through competition. Linguistic ability then, was for Bessenyei a direct and transparent measure of intellectual talent. Moreover, concluding his proposal, Bessenyei argued that the use of the vernacular was central to upholding the law. Indeed, if the laws were translated into Hungarian, then the population at large would come to understand more clearly the procedures and meanings of law, erasing their suspicion of the legal system. Although he acknowledged that Werbőczy’s *Tripartitum* had already been translated into the vernacular (and that a summary even existed in verse),³⁴⁸ he argued that these achievements constituted but a small part of the law, and that *all* statutes and enactments of the Diet, as well as legal proceedings, should be promulgated in Hungarian.

In this way, Bessenyei created a metaphorical distinction between notions of linguistic ‘opacity’ versus ‘transparency’, mostly through metaphors of ‘light’ and ‘darkness’. Latin was often dark and ‘opaque’ where Bessenyei’s idealized vernacular was usually light and ‘transparent’. In discussing language then, Bessenyei resorted to the key metaphor of the enlightenment itself, that of ‘light’; his proposed appeal to the king for funding was to establish a Hungarian Society in order ‘to drive away not only the gloom that covers Hungary but also to make it a luminary in the eyes of other nations.’³⁴⁹

There is, however, a peculiar tinge of linguistic determinism to Bessenyei’s argument. Here at least, the importance of education is entirely absent, and he rather seems to suggest that enlightened behaviour will ensue from the mere use of a reformed language. Indeed, it is almost as if Bessenyei believes that the refinement of grammatical structures and semantic distinctions within the Hungarian language will be enough to engender rational thought within an entire population. Once the language is stewarded, so too will the population be guided towards enlightened ends, we are led to believe, and although not all will become men of learning, even the knowledge of the simpler ranks will be improved.

This may be explained by the fact that Bessenyei drew heavily upon Voltaire’s *Philosophie de l’Histoire* (1765) in his *Magyar Spectator*, in which he gives an account of the successive ‘stages’ of history, and illustrates how the rude manners of different peoples, including the Hungarians, may be mitigated by passing through stages of development

³⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 85.

³⁴⁸ The *Tripartitum* was translated into Hungarian in 1571 by Gáspár Heltai, although the work was inconsistent in its use of terminology and often unclear.

³⁴⁹ Lengyel and Tüskés, *Learned Societies*, p. 89.

based upon religion, military glory, learning, and polite letters.³⁵⁰ Thus, Bessenyei's thinking about language was inspired by the common Enlightenment idea of the stadial progress of different nations throughout history, associated with European writers such as Pufendorf, Turgot, Vico, and representatives of the Scottish Enlightenment.³⁵¹ The message was clear: the vernacular could be used as a medium of advancement, and without language reform, Hungary would remain a backwards, unenlightened, even 'primitive' country. For this reason, in the opening lines of his pamphlet *Magyardom*, he expressed surprise that his 'great nation' had 'forgotten' to cultivate its mother tongue, when in other respects it had remained vigilant in maintaining its other 'possessions'.³⁵²

Bessenyei's thinking was thus in many ways typical of the comparative thought of the Enlightenment and its increasingly international gaze. Not only was the era one of global exploration, but also one of increased competition, conversation, and emulation between different forms of imperialism. As Sophis Reinert has suggested, 'To keep up with one's competitors was an existential imperative for most political communities'.³⁵³ Just as the Habsburgs had come to feel they were lagging behind during Maria Theresa's reign, so too did reform-minded members of the Hungarian nobility such as Bessenyei see that their own country was less advanced than its competitors on the imagined geopolitical 'map' of Europe. Indeed, it is in Bessenyei's positioning of the Hungarian nation along this stadial ladder of progress (often as a semi-rude nation) that we may also recognize a *topos* of Hungarian political thought that was common not only to his own era, but also to the following centuries, right up to the present day. This *topos* centres upon a perceived temporal asymmetry or civilizational 'lag' that exists between the 'model' states of the West and their overlapping counterparts in the 'East'.³⁵⁴ Certainly, it often seems to Hungarians that, ever since the Turkish occupation, their country has been endeavouring to 'catch-up' with its more advanced Western neighbours.

³⁵⁰ Ferenc Biró, *A fiatal Bessenyei és íróbarátai* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1976), pp. 312–337.

³⁵¹ Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 159. Martin Fitzpatrick and others, *Enlightenment World* (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 208–210.

³⁵² Bessenyei, *Magyarság*, p. 3.

³⁵³ Sophus Reinert, *Translating Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 3.

³⁵⁴ Trencsényi and others, *A History*, I, pp. 4–5. As the authors point out, 'West' and 'East' are here broadly symbolic designations. While 'Western' sources were often indexically linked with notions of cultural (political, scientific, literary etc.) achievement, early Enlightenment explorations of Northern and Eastern cultures and their languages (e.g. Finno-Ugric, Slavic, and those of other Eastern and Turkic peoples) also began to play an important role in the understanding of the Hungarian people's place in the world from a grammatical and linguistic point of view. Gábor Tolcsvai Nagy, *Alkotás és befogadás a Magyar nyelv 18. század utáni történetében* (Budapest: Áron Kiadó, 2004), p. 14.

5.1 Language and Nation

Despite his faith in the power of the Hungarian language, Bessenyei never developed a clear set of guidelines about how it could be made into a suitable language for the dissemination of science and culture. It is clear he did not believe in inventing new Hungarian words for the sake of it, and that where no Hungarian word existed, he was content with using foreign or Latinate expressions that were in common currency abroad (such as the internationalisms *Filozofia*, *Teologia*, and *Fifika*). Bessenyei was thus no purist. Rather, his aims were pragmatic. In broad terms he valued clarity over poetic allusion (although he was certainly aware of the power of poetry) and favoured the usage of words that were commonly understood. At the same time, he believed that a general *szókönyv* ('dictionary', lit. 'word book')³⁵⁵ should be compiled so that the meanings of words and expressions could be standardized and disseminated among the population.³⁵⁶

Nevertheless, it is one of Bessenyei's own lexical innovations that contributed to a far-reaching conceptual shift in the era's political discourse. This was his redefinition, or perhaps re-emphasis, of the term *nemzet* 'nation' (from *nem* 'kind, genus', and *nemz-* 'to beget') to refer to a monolingual entity. On the surface, this amounts to little more than saying that those who speak Hungarian are Hungarians. But it is the apparent banality of the 'one language one nation' paradigm that belies its radical implications in a multilingual and hierarchically-ordered society. Moreover, when writing of the 'entire nation' *egész nemzet* in his pamphlets, Bessenyei was not merely referring to the entirety of Hungarian speakers as a communicative entity, or as a biblical 'nation'. Rather, he was referring to a community in which noble and peasant alike spoke one language that committed them to the ideas of common 'happiness' and the attainment of the 'common good'. This was a significant departure from the traditional, more widespread definition of the *natio Hungarica* as an elite political 'class' that stood apart from the *misera plebs*, and that was defined more in terms of title, privilege, and the possession of 'golden liberty' than it was by the use of any particular language. Furthermore, Bessenyei's monolingual ideal also challenged the traditional grounds of patriotism and membership in a multilingual kingdom: if one's civic fulfilment and full legal integration within the community was predicated upon the use of vernacular Hungarian, then what was to

³⁵⁵ The modern word for dictionary, *szótár* lit. 'word repository' was coined in 1767, but was still marginal, and would be used with the meaning 'vocabulary' around 1790. TESz, vol. 3, p. 789.

³⁵⁶ On these last points see Bíró, *Magyarság*, pp. 235-238.

become of non-Hungarian speakers? The following two sections will deal with Bessenyei's understanding of these issues.

5.2 The Vernacular and the Nobility

From the perspective of class, Bessenyei's ideas challenged the ingrained linguistic habits of the nobility and contested their traditional reliance on Latin—one of the key sources of noble privilege, erudition, and legal authority. But while Bessenyei's programme may seem egalitarian, even quasi-democratic in the sense that he extended the concept of the 'nation' to include the Hungarian-speakers in the lower strata of society, his vision of linguistic reform did not involve the abolition of the traditional society of 'orders and estates'. Like cameralists such as Sonnenfels, Bessenyei rather believed that the hierarchical order of society was to be preserved, albeit in a way that mobility between those orders was made possible according to merit. In this way, language connected the different orders of society and suggested solidarity in the shared pursuit of the common good, but it did not obliterate the legally-instantiated distinction between nobles and ignobles.

Certainly, in his other pamphlets, notably *A Törvénynek Útja* 'The Way of the Law' (1778), Bessenyei followed a more traditional, 'ancient constitutionalist' line with regard to the concept of the 'nation', and claimed that the land-tilling peasantry had forfeited their freedom, either by submitting themselves to the nobility for protection, or by committing crimes against the nobility and being subjected to punishment (here of course evoking the foundational myth of Master Simon's *Gesta*). In this work, Bessenyei holds fast to the notion of the *natio Hungarica*: there is no mention of language, and the 'nation' here is clearly identified with the nobility, not the broader population.³⁵⁷

Thus, Bessenyei possessed two distinct conceptions of nationhood within his oeuvre: one the 'linguistic nation', the other the more traditional 'noble nation'. However, in works such as *A magyar nemzetnek szokásairul, erköltseirül, uralkodásának modjairul, törvényeirül, és nevezetesb viselt dolgairul* ('On the Customs, Morals, Modes of Government, Laws and Notable Affairs of the Hungarian Nation', 1778), he reconciled these two visions of the nation. In that work, the word 'nation' again refers to the nobility, and Bessenyei

³⁵⁷ György Bessenyei and Péter Kulcsár, *Társadalombölcseleti írások. 1771-1778* (Budapest: Argumentum Kiadó, 1992), p. 177.

again outlines a 'stadial' history of the Hungarian nobility from their origins as nomadic warriors to his own era. From the very outset, however, he claims that there were two ways to achieve ennoblement:

Two things struck out from the pandemonium of our world—one was the weapon, the other the pen. If someone wanted to lift himself from the gloom of lower society and from the fate of being a slave, then he had to pull at the oars with either a weapon, or with a pen.³⁵⁸

While the nobility traditionally derived their status from their military exploits in the service of the homeland, Bessenyei claims that *vera nobilitas* could also be attained from the wielding of a pen. This did not mean that the inherited privileges of the nobility in the present should be taken away, even if many members of that class were no longer deserving of their title. Rather, members of society would have to wait 'until through their own or others' mistakes they do make themselves into peasants'.³⁵⁹ Bessenyei thus allowed for a form of social mobility through the use of the pen. Ignobles could become ennobled through military valour *or* proficiency in letters, while unworthy members of the nobility would eventually fall from their position of privilege through indolence or lack of merit. In this way, embedded within Bessenyei's linear and 'stadial' account of Hungarian history was a cyclical history of regeneration among the different social orders, driven by both valour and knowledge, the weapon and the pen:

You peasant people, poor tax-paying folk, why do you suffer so, when it is seen that the noble estate issues you commands? For they all originate from among you; you are all the sons of the same father. You are the parents and eternal garners of nobility, pryncedom, kingship, and high priesthood; you are the fathers, and we all remain as your sons. How many descendants of great lords have once again become peasants among you, and how many of your peasant companions will become lords? You have to stay where you are, so that your sons can be taken back among you at their journey's end [...]. Such is your shared destiny, 'tis like

³⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 91.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 93.

that of the sea, to where all waters return, and from whence all waters branch out. Your estate is everything on this earth; for you are indeed the parents, feeders, and fosterers of every estate.³⁶⁰

One of the subtleties of Bessenyei's argument was the way in which he defended the patriarchal order by switching the metaphorical roles of the different classes: it was not the nobility who were the patriarchal 'fathers' of the peasantry, but the peasantry who were the 'fathers' of the entire social order. Their role was not, however, to give orders, but rather to function as the procreators of the entire social organism. Hence Bessenyei's comparison of the peasantry to the sea: they were both the source from which the nobility was regenerated, and the place of retreat for those who had fallen from loftier positions. They were water, the great giver of life, and a teaming, bottomless, oceanic reservoir from which the ruling elite emerged. By paying taxes and performing other duties, they supported those who rose above them and who, to invoke a commonly-used metaphor in the era's literature, occupied a place commanding the 'ship' of state. Finally, as rivers flowed back to their original source, they accepted those who inevitably 'fell' back into their world. In this way, Bessenyei's conceptualisation of the peasantry as the paternal source, givers of sustenance, and final point of 'return' of the nobility was a marked departure from the metaphorical paternalism of the ruling class. Sometimes couched in different metaphors (e.g. with the peasantry as 'mother', 'wet-nurse', and 'graveyard') this 'bottom-up' vision of paternal kinship was a recurring theme throughout his work.³⁶¹

The text above illustrates some of the meritocratic principles of Bessenyei's thinking, even though it focuses upon the traditional understanding of 'nobility' as deriving from military prowess. However, Bessenyei applied the same principles in his musings on language reform arguing, as we have seen, that ennoblement could be gained through one's effective wielding of the pen, as well as through more traditional displays of military virtue. A key tenet of his *Humble Proposal*, for example, was that language reform constituted a doubly noble goal. Not only did one serve the common good by improving and regulating the language, but by disseminating knowledge, one also enabled the worthy to rise and occupy positions of influence within society. Through language reform, those

³⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 95.

³⁶¹ For similar examples see Bíró, *Magyarság*, pp. 243-244.

with natural ability would be granted an opportunity to improve their standing. By the same token, those unworthy would soon fall.

Thus, in Bessenyei's understanding, there are normatively *two* paths to ennoblement. And with the endless cycle of change and mobility between the different strata of society preventing class ossification, what Bessenyei suggests is that those who choose to live by the pen must, just like those who choose to live by the sword, 'fight' for their position, as they would inevitably face a series of challenges from those aspiring to take their place. Bessenyei saw this kind of intellectual struggle as a healthy form of competition that would allow social progress. To illustrate, in a passage of *Miscellanea* entitled *Penna Tsata* 'Battle of the Pen[s]', Bessenyei defended his own position based upon literary merit and not title:

Ah, if only I could gain solace in the fact that ten, or twenty offended Magyar Writers were about to attack me! 'Tis at the moment when Writers begin challenging one another in print before the entire nation that fine ratiocination is immediately set in motion [...] the nation would be amused by us, and would laugh when we spoke among ourselves in anger before them, but knowledge [*tudomány*] and Magyardom [*magyarság*] would be enhanced.³⁶²

Thus, Bessenyei reframed the traditional martial virtues of the nobility within a context of agonistic public debate. The resulting 'eristic metaphor', as G.W. Pigman termed it, was, however, nothing new, as it was a common feature of classical texts that portrayed writing as a form of 'emulation' or imitation. Often invoking themes of competition with violent overtones, this metaphor of intellectual 'combat' was used to describe how writers sought fame as they reworked classical themes and attempted to surpass their authorial rivals, past and present.³⁶³ However, while this metaphor was indeed ancient, scholars of literary history have marked this as a turning point in the development of Hungarian literature, and it is widely-held that Bessenyei's call for a form of public engagement in letters marks the birth of the monolingual *républicains des lettres* in the Hungarian Enlightenment.³⁶⁴ Certainly, from the 1780s onwards, increasing numbers of the new 'literary nobility' would

³⁶² Bessenyei, *A holmi*, p. 325.

³⁶³ G. W. Pigman, 'Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 33.1 (1980), 1-32.

³⁶⁴ Olga Penke, *Műfaji kísérletek*, p. 18.

take up this role, often writing with a sense of ambition, self-assurance, and even arrogance, safe in the knowledge that they were contributing to the common good.³⁶⁵

Thus, neither Bessenyei's conception of the common good, nor his extension of the title of 'nation' to the lower orders, went as far as to suggest that noble privilege was to be abolished. Although the nobility's traditional place in the social hierarchy was increasingly being challenged by social and political developments such as the introduction of professional standing armies, Bessenyei looked not so much to eliminate distinctions of class as to introduce a new set of roles and values that could justify the very hierarchical structure of society. Indeed, despite his claims of historical consanguinity with the peasantry, and despite his foregrounding of how they constituted a single 'nation' on linguistic grounds, his insistence that *vera nobilitas* could now be achieved through forms of literary achievement *and* military distinction was not intended to abolish estatist distinctions; rather, by allowing movement between the orders, it in fact overlapped with, and buttressed, the traditional hierarchical order of Hungarian society.

It is in this reconceptualization of society that it would seem Bessenyei shared much in common with the Austrian cameralists. Indeed, he placed a similar emphasis on the pursuit of the common good of *all* society, on the achievement of public happiness, and on the importance of learned endeavour and merit—as opposed to mere hereditary title—as a mark of distinction. Thus, like many proponents of cameralism, Bessenyei did not wish to do away with the hierarchical order, but rather take steps towards replacing the hierarchy of hereditary titles with a hierarchy of merit.³⁶⁶ For these reasons, Bessenyei can be seen as a prominent representative of the moderate enlightened Hungarian class that sought to introduce gradual reform while maintaining the traditional feudal order. Furthermore, he may also be seen as a proponent of what historians have called the 'conservative enlightenment', a loose agglomeration of thinkers who, notwithstanding the inevitable contradictions of any such definition, sought to preserve civilisation against the resurgence of religious and other forms of extremism, and whose scepticism towards

³⁶⁵ Bíró, *Magyarság*, p. 246.

³⁶⁶ In a similar fashion, Sonnenfels had tried to introduce the students of the Savoyard noble Academy in Vienna to a new value concept of their estate in his 1767 speech 'Das Bild des Adels'. He, too, suggested that 'everyone stems from the same father', and urged the nobles not to rely on family glory, but rather engage in virtuous behaviour that was directed towards the public good. Horbec, *The "Quiet Force"*, p. 93. Also, Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment*, pp. 286-288.

man's ability to entirely reinvent the social order often led them to see conservation and modernisation as part of one and the same thing.³⁶⁷

There was, however, a significant difference between Bessenyei and the court's proponents of enlightened governance in Hungary, and one that would prove more radical with regard to notions of inter-ethnic, as opposed to inter-class identity. This was his promotion of vernacular monolingualism in a multilingual kingdom.

5.3 Monolingualism in a Multilingual Kingdom

According to Jenő Szűcs, at least three different macro-concepts of *communitas* existed in Hungary prior to the nineteenth century that were associated with the exonym *Hungaria* and the endonym *Magyar*. To add to the confusion, the labels for these concepts could be used interchangeably, even though the three concepts themselves evoked very different visions of communal belonging.

The first concept referred to all those living within the borders of the Kingdom of Hungary (*regnum Hungariae*), irrespective of their religious or linguistic-ethnic identity. From the medieval period onwards, the great mass of the realm's subjects or the 'people' of Hungary appeared in charters, decrees, legends and chronicles as simply *gens regis* or *populus regni*. However, a further term that appeared in the thirteenth century and survived through to the eighteenth century was *Hungarus*—a derivative of *regnum Hungariae*—which referred to someone who was born in the country and who was thus a subject of the king.³⁶⁸

The second concept referred to peoples who were bound together within a particular linguistic and cultural group (*lingua et moribus*), thus resembling the notion of an ethnic group (such as a biblical 'nation' or a modern mono-ethnically conceived 'nation'), who were thought to share some kind of common genealogy or ancestry, and who were thought to be united by commonly-held cultural, linguistic, or religious practices.

The third concept referred to the most privileged class of those living within the kingdom, the *natio Hungarica* or nobility of Hungary.³⁶⁹ With regard to this latter category, the picture becomes yet more complicated if we consider that, as noted above, the nobility

³⁶⁷ Here I loosely follow J.G.A. Pocock's account in 'Conservative Enlightenment and Democratic Revolutions: The American and French Cases in British Perspective', *Government and Opposition*, 24.01 (1989), 81-105.

³⁶⁸ Szűcs, 'Theoretical Elements', p. lix.

³⁶⁹ Jenő Szűcs, *A magyar nemzeti tudat kialakulása* (Buda: Balassi Kiadó-JATE-Osiris, 1997), p. 337.

conceived of their own class identity along lines of common ethnic ancestry and the genealogical myth of their shared, Hunnic-Scythian ethnic origins. Nevertheless, membership within the *natio Hungarica* did not require one to speak Hungarian, and the nobility themselves did not constitute a linguistically or ethnically homogenous 'Magyar' ethnic group. Furthermore, in the early modern era, linguistic differences were bridged via Latin, a language of scripture, law, politics, and classical scholarship that allowed the nobility to reinforce their sense of cultural superiority and exclusiveness as a social class. If anything then, Latin was the language of nobility, and the idea of the noble class outlined by Werbőczy mostly took precedence over ethnic considerations, especially seeing that the noble caste included gradually-assimilated ennobled members of all of the kingdom's various *nationes* (including Germans, Wallachians, Slavonic peoples, and the Jassic and Cumanian tribes), as well as naturalised foreign nobles who received *indigenatus* status.³⁷⁰ Presumably, the myth of the Scythian past was distant enough to allow differences of language and ethnicity to co-exist alongside the claims of an exotic, 'Scythian' lineage. As such, the early modern concept of the *natio Hungarica* possessed, at least from an ethnolinguistic perspective, relatively permeable boundaries, allowing all its members, regardless of ethnicity or mother tongue, to partake of the social customs, historical traditions, and political ethos that influenced the behaviour of the 'Magyar' political nation.³⁷¹

In the eighteenth century, prior to the rise of ethnolinguistic nationalism, perhaps the most widespread and influential form of 'patriotism' was *Hungarus* identity. Particularly prominent in areas of multi-ethnic exchange, and especially among German and Slovak Evangelical intellectuals, *Hungarus* consciousness (as it is often termed in the scholarly literature) was a supra-ethnic and legalistic vision of political attachment that identified one's belonging to the Kingdom of Hungary within the hierarchical framework of pre-modern feudalism. It was, according to Andor Tárnai, particularly prominent in the period between 1690-1770, and became associated with an old Latin adage about the lands of Pannonia which was used to laud the Kingdom of Hungary as a unique and inimitable land: *Extra Hungariam non est vita. Si est vita, non est ita* ('there is no life outside of Hungary.

³⁷⁰ Benedek Varga, 'Political Humanism and the Corporate Theory of State', in Trencsényi, *Whose Love of Which Country?*, pp. 285-314 (293-4).

³⁷¹ László Deme, 'Writers and Essayists and the Rise of Magyar Nationalism in the 1820s and 1830s', *Slavic Review*, 43.4 (1984), 624-640 (624).

If there is life, it is not the same’).³⁷² In the eighteenth century the phrase was popularized, *inter alia*, by Lutheran pastor and polymath Matthias Bél (1684-1749), also known as the ‘Great Ornament of Hungary’, who was born the son of a wealthy Slovak ignoble and Hungarian noblewoman in Ocsova (today Očová, Slovakia). Bél, who held himself to be *lingua slavus, natione hungarus, eruditione germanus* (‘by language a Slav, by nation a Hungarus, by erudition a German’),³⁷³ was proud of his Slavic-Hungarian roots and ‘German’ learning, and his works were steeped in the *Hungarus* patriotism of his age. He wrote extolments of Hungarian history and the Magyar tongue, composing a Hungarian grammar book for Germans (*Der ungarische Sprachmeister*, 1729), and even endeavoured to prove the existence of an ancient Hunnic-Scythian runic alphabet (*De vetera literatura hunnoscythica exercitatio*, 1718). In his *Compendium Hungariae geographicum* of 1753 he wrote:

Hungary is the most beautiful country in Europe. This is because in the amenability and fecundity of its location it verily excels [others]. That is why it is second to no other kingdom on earth or in heaven. This is the basis of the Hungarian proverb: There is no life outside Hungary, but if there is life, it is unlike it.³⁷⁴

The *Hungari*’s primary source of attachment was the inimitably-conceived kingdom of Hungary, of which they were subjects, and within which different ethnic and linguistic identities could co-exist simultaneously. Certainly, Bél’s ethnic origins did not preclude his fascination and identification with the ancient Hungarian and supposedly ‘Scythian’ past. One of Bél’s students, the polymath Dániel Cornides (1732-1787), who would later become a lecturer of diplomatic and heraldry at the Royal University in 1784, further explained the *Hungarus* concept in 1778:

³⁷² First attested in the sixteen-volume philological encyclopaedia *Antiquarum lectionum libri* (1516) by the Humanist author Ludovicus Caelius Rhodiginus (Italian Ludovico Ricchieri, 1469-1525), this aphorism of national particularity was recontextualized in a variety of historical contexts by writers and historians alike, who interpreted it as—*inter alia*—evidence of the eighteenth-century nobility’s smug parochialism, or the existence of a past national utopia. However, in its original context, it was used to describe pre-Magyar conquest Pannonia and its inhabitants (as strong-bodied, ready to fight, rebellious in temperament, but slow-witted and easily deceived). According to Tarnai, the phrase was first used by Hungarian students studying in Italy who missed their native cuisine, who then brought the dictum back to Hungary, where it became more broadly popularized. Andor Tarnai, *Extra Hungariam non est vita...* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1969), pp. 4-7; 48.

³⁷³ Evans, *Austria, Hungary, and the Habsburgs*, pp. 139-140.

³⁷⁴ Latin original in Tarnai, *Extra Hungariam*, p. 24.

Briefly, on the Hungari and the Magyars, whom I distinguish in the following way: while I hold all Magyars to be Hungari, the opposite is not true: not all Hungari are Magyars. *Hungarus* constitutes a genus, *Magyar* a species.³⁷⁵

The label *Hungarus* thus placed territorial identity above ethno-linguistic allegiance, and as such it could also accommodate identification with the kingdom's dynastic or imperial identity, which similarly eschewed forms of ethnic 'national' allegiance in favour of 'state' patriotism and loyalty to the crown.

Bél and Cornides were prime examples of *Hungarus* intellectuals whose patriotic allegiance to the Kingdom of Hungary and devotion to scholarship and the sciences may be seen to illustrate the discourse of 'patriotic scholarship' in the eighteenth century. Similarly to Bessenyei, these scholars engaged in the pursuit of knowledge as a noble endeavour. Nevertheless, Bessenyei's vision of the 'nation' as a primarily linguistically-bound entity stood entirely at odds with the political-territorial patriotism of the *Hungari*. Certainly, his utopian vision ran contrary to the more pragmatic tenets of the *Ratio Educationis*, which had legislated firmly in favour of retaining Latin as a *lingua franca*, precisely with regard to preserving the balance of the kingdom's multilingual make-up. More significantly, it also suggested a new boundary of exclusion for those who spoke languages other than Hungarian. Even if Hungarian was, as Bessenyei often claimed, the 'born language' of the Kingdom (a fact that Bessenyei presumably derived from the Magyars' relative numerical majority and their historical right of conquest over the country, as did many contemporaries), Hungarian speakers constituted under half of the overall population. Was Bessenyei aware of this fact? The answer can be found in *A Humble Proposal*:

[...] we should turn the Germans and Slovaks living among us into Magyars. For this blessed Homeland deserves that those foreign Nations, whom it suckles upon

³⁷⁵ Latin original in Moritz Csáky, 'Die *Hungarus*-Konzeption. Eine "realpolitische Variante zur Magyarischen Nationalstaatsidee"', in *Ungarn und Österreich unter Maria Theresia und Joseph II*, ed. by Anna-Maria Drabek and Richard Plaschka (Wien: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1982), pp. 71-89 (80).

its breast, should adopt its Language and customs, [especially] when they are not loathe to live with its [material] goods and freedoms.³⁷⁶

Through the metaphor of motherhood, Bessenyei thus argues that the maternal *haza* ‘homeland’ provides freedoms and material goods to foreign inhabitants, and that foreigners are thus obliged to learn the language and rules of the implied maternal ‘household’ that nurtures, protects, and feeds them. He further explains that he is not opposed to foreign languages, as he, too, has learned much from the pens of foreign writers. Nevertheless, he employs a similarly paternalistic argument when he explains how he expects serfs who reside within the country to act as they had done in the past, when they followed the example of ‘graceful and wise’ kings, who donned Magyar clothes, ‘deigned to speak in our born language’, and displayed affection to the country.³⁷⁷ In a dig at *Hungarus* scholars such as Bél, he argues that translators, scholars, and grammarians who work in or on the Hungarian language should be native speakers, as even those who claim they had been raised in two or three languages (and who could thus claim to speak two or three ‘born languages’) could not actually speak all those languages to the same level.³⁷⁸

Linguistic diversity, for Bessenyei, was thus both a threat to the unity of the body politic, and an obstacle to scientific progress. And it is in this respect that we may mark Bessenyei’s ideas as being those of ‘linguistic nationalism’, rather than merely ‘patriotic scholarship’. On the one hand, Bessenyei equates the ‘nation’ with the vernacular language as a vehicle for progress and for thus increasing the nation’s standing and self-esteem. But he also ties language through emotivised, paternalistic ties to the land itself. By speaking frequently of the ‘mother tongue’, the ‘born language’ of the kingdom or its peoples, and also speaking of the kingdom itself as a ‘suckling mother’ as we have seen above, Bessenyei transposes the idea of the vernacular as a ‘maternal’ language (that is inherited from birth and tied to one’s ‘home’) to the level of the community, so that it is tied to the ‘nation’ (as a community of ‘birth’) and its ‘homeland’.

Thus, through the maternal metaphor, the Hungarian vernacular is linked to notions of motherly affection, nurturing, and care. But what is also created—and what is typical of the political language of linguistic nationalism—is a circular relationship, a

³⁷⁶ Bessenyei, *Egy magyar társaság*, p. 20.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

notion of mutual belonging between ‘language’, ‘nation’, and the territory that is dubbed the ‘homeland’ (*haza* in Hungarian is gender neutral, unlike Latin *patria*). From this perspective, Bessenyei’s linguistic nationalism was not just about strengthening group bonds between people by regulating their medium of communication; nor was it merely an instrument for the furthering of knowledge, education, and by extension handicrafts and trade. Rather, it was also about establishing the ‘nation’ as a unique human group that spoke a single language, and that belonged to a specific and unique territory, claimed as the *haza* or *hon* ‘homeland’. Bessenyei thus utilised this metaphor of maternal belonging to legitimise a) his programme of language reform, and b) the Magyar nation’s linguistic hegemony over the territory, by intimating that it was ‘natural’ for the nation to do so, through ties of ‘birth’ and ‘familial’ belonging to the land. In this way, while his primary focus was to bind the concept of ‘nation’ to vernacular Hungarian, the emergence of the linguistic ‘nation’ in his thinking was almost axiomatically paired with the idea of one language one ‘state’ (here ‘kingdom’) territoriality, and the desire of one ethnic group, namely the Magyars, to establish centralised control over the territory, and thus the people and resources of the Kingdom of Hungary.

In many ways Bessenyei’s ideals may be seen to foreshadow the narrower forms of ethno-nationalist chauvinism that would later prove so problematic in the politics of East and Central Europe. The complications of his vision arose from the way in which the boundaries of linguistically-defined demographic groups did not coincide with either regional, institutional, or even state boundaries. Indeed, any sorting of the population into linguistically-defined national ‘communities’ would prove inherently problematic in the hierarchically-ordered, multilingual, multi-ethnic, and pluri-religious Kingdom of Hungary. First, Latin had been the language of law, governance, and the registering of hereditary right since the kingdom’s very foundation, and as a *lingua franca* it not only allowed communication between ethnically-differentiated nobles, but between the Magyar political nation and the ‘German’ Habsburg court; second, no ‘standard’ variety of Hungarian existed, and this required the refinement and the standardization of diverse dialects (Bessenyei, of course, believed his own dialect to provide the best foundation for any future standard; other speakers of other dialects naturally disagreed); third, more than half of the population spoke a language other than Hungarian, and as noted above, the boundaries of linguistically-defined groups did not clearly coincide with contemporary state or class boundaries. Bessenyei’s reimagining of the ‘nation’ along linguistic lines,

therefore, provided a series of implicit but radical challenges to *status quo* arrangements, and his enthusiasm for the Hungarian vernacular almost immediately came to overlap with claims made about the political identity, legitimacy, and power relationships between different ethnic groups within the kingdom.

Certainly, Bessenyei's understanding of the relationship between 'nation', 'language' and 'territory' placed him among a number of thinkers who saw that 'patriotism' was not to be founded upon a 'cosmopolitan' community of interest whose members were citizens of different backgrounds, but rather upon a community in which love was directed towards those of the same ethnolinguistic identity. Nevertheless, it may be that for Bessenyei there was no necessary contradiction between Enlightenment understandings of 'cosmopolitanism' and 'patriotism'. One could nurture a unique form of affection for one's own country while simultaneously showing concern for humanity at large. On occasion at least, it appears that Bessenyei could see beyond parochial and ethno-national boundaries to suggest that individuals owed responsibility to the largest possible public, that of humankind. To illustrate, in his *Humble Proposal*, Bessenyei spoke of a general sense of obligation towards 'human society':

...it is not my intention that, per person, every Patriot should be a scholar, but that persons of the simplest status and [lowliest] lot should also [be able to] turn their own mental capacities to the benefit of Human Society.³⁷⁹

Such language suggests that Bessenyei was promoting welfare according to 'universal' laws, despite his attraction to 'national' particularism. Certainly, scholars such as József Szauder have often assumed that Bessenyei was more concerned with linking language to the 'nation' and cultural reform than he was to any 'state' or particular territory, and that the political-territorial dimensions of his vision remained largely underdeveloped.³⁸⁰

Nevertheless, implicit within Bessenyei's oeuvre was a preoccupation with the unity of the 'nation', irrespective of religious, regional, inter-ethnic, or existing political borders. Indeed, it appears that by seeking to create a supra-dialectal standard language, he was also imagining a form of supra-parochial ethnic-linguistic unity—one that united *all* Hungarians, regardless of state boundaries, class differences, or denominational

³⁷⁹ Bessenyei, *Egy magyar társaság*, p. 36.

³⁸⁰ József Szauder, *Bessenyei* (Budapest: Művelt Nép Könyvkiadó, 1953), p. 69.

affiliations. To be sure, by re-imagining the ‘nation’ in this way, Catholics could be united with Protestants, and Hungarians could be united with Transylvanians—who lived in the ‘second’ Magyar patria. To illustrate, in the introduction to his comedy *A philosophus* (‘The Philosopher’, 1777), Bessenyei explained that he was not writing the play for one denomination, but for ‘all the youths of the homeland, towards whom I act with equal affection, loyalty, friendship, and Magyar consanguinity’.³⁸¹ Furthermore, in his introduction to ‘Miscellania’ he wrote:

Anyone working for the advancement of our Magyardom undoubtedly serves all who are true Hungarians, so who could say that when he writes in Hungarian, he does not speak also to Transylvania? As far as the Hungarian language and sciences are concerned, there is no Transylvania, but only one Magyar homeland [...] Let us not distinguish between equal things, indeed, let us strive to unite ourselves where there appear to be differences among us.³⁸²

Thus, language and knowledge were intended to reunite a fragmented nation and its fragmented territory, a single homeland that should be treated as ‘one’. Language could act as a countervailing force to the deleterious effects of history that had shattered the nation’s unity and the country’s erstwhile integrity.³⁸³ Within Bessenyei’s thinking then were the seeds of an all-Magyar nationalism, one that was predicated upon the awakening of linguistic-national consciousness and the struggle for equality, if not between the classes, then between the semi-rude Magyars and the other, more polished nations of Europe.

Even so, Szauder was correct to note that Bessenyei was preoccupied less with explicitly territorial or political concerns, and more with his utopian vision of reform. The result was that Bessenyei’s view of language was mainly instrumentalist: language was a

³⁸¹ Lajos Némedi, ‘Bessenyei György és a magyar nyelv’, in *Az Egri Pedagógiai Főiskola évkönyve*, ed. by József Bakos (Eger: n. pub., 1956), pp. 332-376 (346).

³⁸² Bessenyei, *A holmi*, n. pag.

³⁸³ Transylvania had been a voivodeship in the Kingdom of Hungary until 1526. Its princes retained autonomy under the Ottoman Empire, but recognized the suzerainty of Leopold I in 1687 following the Battle of Vienna. While the Habsburgs recognized Transylvania as one of the lands of the Holy Crown, it was administrated separately under the aegis of the emperor. Joseph II united the Hungarian and Transylvanian court chancelleries in 1782, but despite calls at the 1790/91 Diet to unite the two territories, Leopold II stood firm, and on 25 February 1791 decreed that the united chancelleries should once again be separated. See Béla Köpeczi and others, *History of Transylvania*, 3. vols. (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs, 2002), II, pp. 720-741.

tool, a surface feature of ethnicity that could be moulded according to the dictates of rationality, and that could be utilized to help the ‘nation’ succeed socio-economically in a changing world. Furthermore, it was a tool that enabled social advancement, but not political equality: although Bessenyei extended the concept of ‘nation’ to include both lower and higher classes within a speech community, his understanding of political rights was limited to the ‘ancient constitutional’ vision of the *natio Hungarica* (there is certainly no trace of the Rousseauian idea that the ‘people’ or ‘nation’ as a whole possessed any exclusive right to sovereignty). Finally, despite calling for the Magyarization of non-Hungarian speakers, Bessenyei could not have known that the preoccupation with promoting the unity of the nation and its language would become one of the most ideologically-charged expressions of cultural conflict in the coming century.

Nevertheless, it was not long before Bessenyei formulated his ideas for a Hungarian language academy that another, more explicitly identitarian understanding of language also came to the fore in Hungarian public discourse, one that saw language not as an instrument, but rather as a marker of ‘in-group’ or ‘out-group’ identity, and even as a quasi-racial feature that was intrinsic to the identity of the ‘nation’. In this view, language was more closely linked to notions of historical continuity, and the linkages between a primordial past and a vicarious present. The term *nyelv* (‘tongue, language’) in this discourse did not refer to ‘language’ as an embodiment of science and erudition, but rather birth, lineage, and a set of virtues that were genealogically transmitted down the ages.

There were similar traces of thinking in Bessenyei’s oeuvre, as he, too, recognized the function of language as a marker of identity. In *Magyardom*, for example, he notes the role of language in distinguishing and constituting the ‘nation’:

Every nation is known mostly from its own language—how would you name a nation that had no mother tongue? Not at all...³⁸⁴

However, while language here marks nations apart, it is still not an innate characteristic of each nation, but rather a possession, or even a mark of status. Indeed, Bessenyei goes on to liken a ‘languageless’ nation to a disgraced and abandoned individual who dodges ashamedly between the ‘houses’ of other peoples who possess mother tongues, and who cry out ‘What are you? Where did you come from? Who are you?’ Concluding this train

³⁸⁴ Bessenyei, *Magyarság*, p. 7.

of thought, he argues that if a nation lacks its own ‘mother tongue’, then it will inevitably only be seen as a servant, or even a ‘slave’. Metaphorically speaking, Bessenyei argues that a nation without a mother tongue is similar to an orphan or vagabond, who ‘belongs’ nowhere, does not possess a ‘house’ (‘territory’), does not possess means of subsistence, and thus cannot be clearly identified as a free person of standing or integrity.

Elsewhere, Bessenyei also claimed that the vernacular could ‘die’:

The Hungarian language will die out in our Homeland when Magyar peasant Ladies learn Latin, Greek, French or German, and stop speaking in Hungarian.³⁸⁵

While this appears to link language to the ‘life’ of the nation, there is, however, no quasi-Herderian claim here that the ‘nation’ itself would perish if the language was to die. Rather, Bessenyei continues to explain that the Hungarian vernacular was a shared medium of communication which the different classes were obliged to use in their interactions. As such, ‘If we are forced to keep our language, let us at least purify it and work upon our own progression.’³⁸⁶ Once again, language appeared in utilitarian terms as a surface feature of ethnicity that could be kept or abandoned, even if to the detriment of the nation.

Thus, although Bessenyei linked the vernacular to motherhood and notions of homeliness, the idea that the vernacular was somehow intrinsic to the very existence or ‘life’ of the nation was an altogether different proposition. This latter idea would become increasingly prevalent towards the end of Joseph II’s reign, when language became a chief means of reaffirming the separate identity of the Hungarian nation *vis-à-vis* the Habsburg body politic. While the idea of the ‘death’ of the nation is usually connected with the influence of Herder, similar ideas had appeared in Hungarian scholarly discourse before the German author’s *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* in 1791, in which he famously predicted the disappearance of the Hungarians and their language in a ‘sea’ of Slavs.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ On Herder’s later impact see Dümmerth, Dezső, ‘Herder jóslata és forrásai’, *Filológiai Közöny*, XI (1963), 181-183; also, Hermán, János, ‘Herder életműve és magyarországi hatása’, *Zempléni Múza*, 4 (2004), 5-33.

While it is difficult to ascertain the precise path through which this identitarian vision of language transformation took hold, a number of factors seem to have been involved. On the one hand, antiquarians had begun to publish medieval chronicles such as Anonymus' *Gesta Hungarorum* (in 1746) and Simon of Kéza's *Gesta Hunnorum et Hungarorum* (1781), broadly popularizing the idea of the Hungarian nobility's Hunnish–Scythian roots, and reaffirming the myth of the corporate paradigm.³⁸⁸ Furthermore, the works of Jesuit historians such as György Pray (1723-1801) and István Katona (1732-1811) also provided narratives of the primordial origins of the ethnic Magyars, and propagated the idea of the conquest of the Carpathian Basin by the 'House of Árpád', until the line was replaced by mixed foreign royal dynasties, and eventually the Austrian Habsburgs.³⁸⁹ On the other hand, despite these historical initiatives, an alternative theory on the origins of the Magyar language had arisen through the scientific works of scholars who had noted the similarities between the Hungarian, Finnish, and Lappic languages. The first such account was penned by Hamburg scholar Martin Fogel (1634-1675), who had observed shared etymologies among these languages in his *De lingua indole Finica Observationes* (1669). From then on the idea was explored by a number of other European and Hungarian scholars, such as the Swede Philipp Johann von Strahlenberg (1676–1747), who compared the basic vocabularies of these languages (e.g. numerals, body parts, tools and actions), the well-known Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz (1646-1716), and the Hungarian Dávid Czvittinger (1675?-1743), the first domestic scholar to embrace the Finno-Ugrian theory of linguistic origins in his *Specimen Hungariae Litteratae* (1711). Even Matthias Bél had noticed similarities, despite setting out to discover the ancient Hungarian-Scythian alphabet. The works of Johann Eberhard Fischer (1697-1771), in particular, his two-volume *Sibirische Geschichte von der Entdeckung Sibiriens bis auf die Eroberung dieses Landes durch die Russische Waffen* further evidenced the claim of his earlier

³⁸⁸ Gábor Klaniczay, 'The Myth of Scythian Origin and the Cult of Attila in the Nineteenth Century', in *Multiple Antiquities, Multiple Modernities: Ancient Histories in Nineteenth-Century European Cultures*, ed. by Gábor Klaniczay and Katalin Nagy (Frankfurt, 2011), pp. 183–210 (196–7).

³⁸⁹ See Szabados György: *A magyar történelem kezdeteiről. Az előidő-szemlélet hangsúlyváltásai a XV–XVIII. században*. Budapest, 2006. Pray's five volume *Annales regum Hungariae* (1768-1770) covered Hungarian history from 977 to 1564, periodized according to the reigns of kings; Katona's forty-two volume *Historia critica regum Hungariae* (1779-1817) extended his chronology to include the Habsburg era; both works legitimized Habsburg hereditary rule and the eternal truths of the Catholic church. Katona, for example, created a developmental teleology between the Hunnish King Attila and the first Christian Hungarian King St Stephen: 'The former was the whip of God, the latter the apostle of Christ; the former built on the power of arms that could be subverted, the latter on the cast-iron cliff of faith that proves unshakeable.' Zsigmond Pal Pach, 'Old and New Syntheses of Hungarian History', *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 34.2/3 (1988), 291-306 (292-3).

De origine Ungrorum (1756, published 1770) that the Hungarians were a Finno-Ugrian people. Based upon extensive fieldwork, the work soon became a standard point of reference in German academia. Only one domestic linguist György Kalmár (1726–1782) claimed the more familiar-sounding linguistic relationship between the Hungarians and the Scythian Huns in his *Prodromus idiomatis Schytico-Mogorico-Chuno-(seu Hunno-) Avarici, sive adparatus criticus ad linguam Hungaricam* (1770).

These theories remained largely uncontroversial until the last third of the eighteenth century. But after an exploratory expedition to the northern climes of Europe by the Imperial and Royal Astronomer Maximilian Hell (1720–1792) and his associate János Sajnovics (1733–1785), an uproar was to erupt over the supposed origins of the Magyar language. The work that caused the controversy was Sajnovics's *Demonstratio Idioma Ungarorum et Lapponum idem esse* (1770). This was a rigorously-conducted treatise on the Finno-Ugrian theory of Magyar linguistic origin. Today acknowledged as a landmark in Finno-Ugrian studies, Sajnovics had examined the grammatical (as opposed to the mere lexical) similarities between the Lappic and Hungarian languages, and clearly demonstrated their linguistic 'kinship'.³⁹⁰ However, while the thesis of this work was uncontroversial for most scholars working in the field, it was after the controversial Diet of 1764/65 that Sajnovics's work was received amidst tensions between the Royal Court and the Hungarian estates. As noted above, Kollár—another ethnic Slav associated with the Royal Court—had been suspected of attacking the Hungarians' noble identity. What is more, before the Diet in 1763 Kollár had edited and published a work by the sixteenth-century humanist and former Archbishop of Esztergom Miklós Oláh (Nicolaus Olahus, 1493–1568). In his annotations on the work, entitled *Hungaria et Attila sive de originibus gentis regni Hungariae*, Kollár referred to the fact that Hungarians constituted a numerical minority among the population of the kingdom, and he saw that in time the Hungarian language—and thus the Hungarian nation itself—would gradually disappear. From then onwards the idea took off in European letters, especially after being quoted by Schlözer in his *Allgemeine Nordische Geschichte*, the work which in turn inspired Herder's famous 'prophecy' of 1791.³⁹¹

³⁹⁰ The above is based on the accounts given by László Kontler in 'Politicians, Patriots and Plotters: Unlikely Debates Occasioned by Maximilian Hell's Venus Transit Expedition of 1769', *The Journal of Astronomical Data*, 19 (2013), 83-96, and 'The Lappon, The Scythian', pp. 131-145.

³⁹¹ Kontler, 'Politicians, Patriots and Plotters', pp. 87-88.

Against this background the idea that the warlike Magyars were related to more sedentary 'Lappish' peoples was squarely perceived as an attack on the noble class' martial ethos and the myth of their warrior pedigree. This was of course, a misconception, based upon the primordialist assumption that the vernacular tongue, much like the quasi-racial characteristics of the ancient Scythians, was an immutable characteristic of the nation that was transferred across the generations.

Nevertheless, Bessenyei and his compatriots reacted vehemently against the claims. Barcsay asserted that the Hungarians were the 'valiant grandsons of Scythians', and his poetry frequently included rebuttals to Sajnovics's ideas, which he perceived as an affront and threat to ancient Hungarian liberties. Orczy, too, refuted the 'errors' of these two 'stargazers', and could not believe that the descendants of Alexander the Great's valiant enemies could be related to 'fish-eating' Lapps; he called upon Sajnovics to return to his 'kind relatives', sniping at Sajnovics's Slavic background, and suggesting that the genealogical links rather existed between the Slavs and the Lapps.

Some thirty years later Bessenyei also reacted to Sajnovics's ideas in his three volume *Magyarországnek törvényes állása* ('Legal Status of Hungary', 1804), in which he suggested that morals and manners of a people were to be investigated, not just words, in establishing the 'character' of a nation. Once again then, it seems that Bessenyei rejected the idea that there was any inherent connection between language and national character. But by then both sides of the debate appeared to have seen their opponents as engaging in a kind of quasi-racialist 'othering'. Bessenyei was no exception. He, too, adopted the 'ancient constitutional' line, and claimed that the descendants of Attila were characterized by their 'thirst for triumph, valour and glory', as well as the 'sagacity required for domination'. At the same time, 'the Lapp' was a base creature, characterized by 'ugliness of form' and moral decrepitude: 'vile and fearful, it is a subterranean mole of a Nation, which loathes the fight, and never wages war'.³⁹² Despite his fondness for empirical rationalism, it appears Bessenyei could not agree with the empirical findings of linguists, especially if they could be seen to challenge the supposedly inherent virtues of the nation.

Two distinct discourses of linguistic identity thus emerged in the mid-to-late eighteenth century, one progressive, based upon the rational ideals of the Enlightenment and the promulgation of secular 'happiness', the other more backwards looking, focusing on notions of genealogical-transfer and the 'ancient constitutional' idea that the

³⁹² Translation in Kontler, 'The Lappon, The Scythian', p. 144.

Hungarians were descendants of the mighty Scythians. These ideas would again arise at the time of the 1790/91 Diet. But how would the many contradictions between these two understandings of language play out?

6.0 The Language Decree of 1784

It is well known that the politicisation of the language question was squarely connected to Joseph II's language decree of 1784 and his assault on the traditional system of county administration. Perhaps ironically, the justifications Joseph gave for the introduction of German as a language of government in the preamble to his decree mirrored some of Bessenyei's own concerns:

The use of a dead language, such as Latin, in all affairs is most certainly a discredit to the enlightenment of any nation as it tacitly proves that the nation has either no proper mother tongue or no one is able to use it for writing and reading, that only the learned men, devoted to Latin studies, can express their ideas on paper, and that justice is administered and the nation is governed in a language that it does not even understand. The evidence is clear, since all cultured nations in Europe have already banned the Latin language from public affairs, and it retains its position only in Hungary and Poland.³⁹³

What Bessenyei and Joseph II shared in common was their desire to replace Latin as a 'dead language' in the interests of progress and unity. But while Bessenyei targeted the 'nation' with his language reform, Joseph II rather targeted the country's governmental institutions. Influenced by the ideas of Kaunitz (who had similarly attempted to introduce German as a language of state under Maria Theresa, but failed), he simply introduced his reform by decree on 18 May 1784.³⁹⁴

Almost simultaneously with the issuing of the decree, the era's most prominent Hungarian language scholar Miklós Révai (1750-1807) had requested a private audience with Joseph in Vienna with the aim of establishing a Hungarian literary society.³⁹⁵ Following Bessenyei's lead, Révai drafted a proposal in which he claimed it was the unanimous desire of his compatriots to create a literary society. Its aim was twofold: to

³⁹³ Translation from Almási and Šubarić, *Latin at the Crossroads*, p. 8.

³⁹⁴ István Soós, 'II. József német nyelvrendelete és a "hivatalos" Magyarország', in *Tanulmányok a magyar nyelv ügyének 18. századi történetéből*, ed., by Ferenc Bíró (Budapest: Argumentum, 2005), pp. 261–301 (263).

³⁹⁵ A Piarist monk, Révai was a prominent polymath who had studied and taught theology, philology, grammar, and even drawing and architecture throughout his career. He supported the Hungarian language movement throughout his life. See Márta Szombathelyi Konczosné, 'Tudósportré Révai Miklósról (1750-1807)', *Modern Filológiai Közlemények*, VI.1 (2004), 96-102.

enhance the ‘dignity’ of the nation (in the face of scurrilous claims made by foreigners that the vernacular was neither comprehensible nor suitable for learning), and to bring about the ‘happiness’ of the country by disseminating scientific knowledge. Révai further recommended the publication of a standardized grammar and spelling book, and the ‘polishing’ of the language to create standardized terminologies for the fields of metaphysics, physics, mathematics, natural history, medicine, *Statistik* (i.e. the cameralist science of government and law), and politics (here meaning ‘public governance’), in addition to the fine arts. He also recommended the study of oriental languages (in part to ascertain the origins of Hungarian) and Europe’s major languages, including Latin and Greek. Révai even detailed the society’s proposed institutional structure, which included positions for an in-house librarian, a typographical inspector, and an inspector of the language standards employed in the theatre. Appointments for these and the institution’s other posts, he noted, should be made upon merit and without any consideration of religion. Finally, Révai even attached a detailed budget and finance plan for the society. Despite his enthusiasm, his plea fell upon deaf ears; Joseph gave diversionary answers, and Révai was dismissed having achieved nothing.³⁹⁶

This rejection should not have been surprising. In effect, Joseph’s decree meant that those working within the administration, law courts, and counties would have to switch to German within a few years, and that promotions and posts in public service even in Hungary would be conditional on the knowledge of German not Hungarian. When Count Ferenc Esterházy (1715–1785) of the Hungarian Royal Chancellery expressed his misgivings, Joseph II replied that he had issued his decree merely with the aim of improving the efficiency of public administration, and that he neither wished to ban the use of Hungarian or any other mother tongue (*Muttersprache*), nor force millions into changing their language.³⁹⁷ Joseph was motivated by his vision of a unified, efficient, and patriotic *Gesamtstaat*. Following Gottsched, Sonnenfels, and others, he believed German was a polished and modern language suitable for the administration of that state. By learning German, Hungarians would have one less foreign language to contend with—Latin—and new positions in the hierarchy of state would become available to them.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁶ László N. Szelestei, ‘Révai Miklós magyar tudós társaság-tervezetének egykorú magyar nyelvű szövege’, *Magyar Könyvszemle*, 114.4 (1998), 397-407.

³⁹⁷ Szekfű, *Iratok*, p. 9.

³⁹⁸ Soós, ‘II. József német nyelvrendelete’, p. 265.

Protest was almost unanimous. The counties immediately referred to the fact that Joseph had avoided coronation, and ignored his promise made on 30 November 1780 to uphold the country's centuries-old privileges and laws as inviolable.³⁹⁹ While many members of the nobility feared they might lose their administrative posts, others saw in this move the court's attempt to remove the counties' control and introduce foreign rule (and this before Joseph's complete overhaul of the county system in 1785). Indeed, after the promulgation of the decree, rumours were spread that Joseph II wished to replace local experts with 'German' administrators, and the counties established committees of experts (lawyers, scholars, sheriffs, teachers etc.) to argue that the decree ran contrary to the history of the nation and the country's autonomous status among the Habsburg territories.⁴⁰⁰ Thus, where language matters were previously the concern of smaller groups of scholars, philosophers, and educators, now a broader swathe of the nobility took interest, regarding the language as linked to the question of their own political autonomy.

Although Joseph's decree had undoubtedly united the nobility in opposition, a rift began to emerge over which official language should be used if German was rejected. On the one hand, the majority of counties demanded the restoration of the *nationalis Hungarica lingua* or 'Hungarian national language.' However, they were referring to Latin, widely considered to be the country's *patria lingua* or 'father tongue'.⁴⁰¹ On the other hand, a second group of county representatives, some influenced by the ideals of language reform, argued that if Latin had to go—because the ruler clearly wanted a 'living' language (*lingua vivens*) instead of a 'dead' one—then Hungarian, the 'mother tongue' (*lingua materna*; also *lingua nativa*) might be used instead. Thus, paradoxically, although there was broad agreement in opposition to German, the language question had begun to divide the Hungarian nobility between a traditionalist camp who favoured the reinstatement of Latin, and a vernacularist camp who campaigned for the use of Hungarian. The division would eventually resolve into a clash between the old understanding of the *natio Hungarica*, which spoke Latin as the language of law and erudition to transcend linguistic particularisms, and the new linguistically-defined nation, which saw the vernacular as the most suitable tongue for socio-political improvement, internal integration, and external separation from Habsburg interference.

³⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 270.

⁴⁰⁰ Balázs, *Bécs és Pest-Buda*, p. 227.

⁴⁰¹ Szekfű, *Iratok*, p. 32.

This division is made clear by Soós who noted that the counties' *repraesentationes* submitted to the king comprised four main streams of reasoning: a) legal and practical arguments demonstrating the unjust and detrimental character of the decree; b) demonstrations that German was unfit for purpose as a language of law and administration; c) legal and practical defences of the nobility's right to continue using Latin, the *patria lingua* and d) arguments to promote the use of Hungarian, the *lingua materna*.⁴⁰²

Thirty-seven counties, a majority, favoured the reinstatement of Latin, and called for the matter to be resolved at the Diet.⁴⁰³ Nevertheless, they also added a series of moral, practical, and legal arguments to oppose the decree. Bars County, for example, argued that Latin—the language of the Holy Roman Empire—should be retained alongside Hungarian, because new languages took centuries to become customary. Bratislava County argued that the decree was inequitable, as the Austrian Hereditary Lands had not been forced to use the foreign Latin or Hungarian tongues in their communications. Zagreb argued that the introduction of German was a greater injustice than the removal of the Holy Crown, and that Latin was desirable because it was not the native tongue of any one particular people, and thus did not privilege any one group over another. The Croats also cited the admonitions of St Stephen in opposition to the idea, 'Nam unius linguae uniusque moris regnum, imhecille et fragile est' ('a realm with one language and one [set of] custom[s] is weak and feeble'). Thus, in keeping with the old idea of the *natio Hungarica*, Latin was the most practical language for administration in the kingdom.⁴⁰⁴

This was a potent 'ancient constitutional' argument in favour of Latin—that it was not only a *lingua franca* of ancient provenance within the Kingdom, but also the customary and *de facto* language of law since the foundation of the *regnum* by the Holy King St Stephen. Latin was not merely a 'second' language, but the country's 'own and national language' (*proprium ac nationale idioma / lingua nationalis et vernacula / lingua domestica* etc.), having become so through customary use.⁴⁰⁵ The implication here was that if Latin were to be removed then the kingdom would descend into anarchy and the nation itself might disappear, along with all its titles, laws, and customs. Thus, the very historical existence

⁴⁰² Soós, 'II. József német nyelvrendelete', p. 275.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., p. 295.

⁴⁰⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, the following summaries of the counties' remonstrations are based on Henrik Marczali, *Magyarország története II. József korában*, 3 vols (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1882-1888), II, pp. 384–405.

⁴⁰⁵ Soós, 'II. József német nyelvrendelete', pp. 288-289.

of the kingdom was claimed to reside in the Latin language. However, Joseph, advised by Martini and Karl von Hatzfeld (1718-1793), continued to insist that only those who spoke German would be employed in the administration.⁴⁰⁶

A minority of counties, however—twenty in total—called for the introduction of Hungarian.⁴⁰⁷ Oddly, as Marczali noted, the pro-vernacular opposition was not composed of those counties where the overwhelming majority of the population spoke Hungarian, but rather of those where the nobility were predominantly of Hungarian origin.⁴⁰⁸ Many of these counties were predictably from areas with large Protestant populations, such as the rebellious north-eastern counties, where the histories of Thököly and Rákóczi lived on in the popular oral tradition, or Transylvania, where the nobility had already spoken Hungarian as a language of law and administration since the mid-sixteenth century.⁴⁰⁹ Nevertheless, although the vernacular cause has often been linked with Protestantism in Hungary, the overwhelmingly Catholic counties of north-west Hungary also called for Hungarian to become the new language of the administration.⁴¹⁰ In reality, it was not confessional differences that inspired enthusiasm for the vernacular but, per Marczali's observation, the influence of the evolving 'ancient constitutional' discourse which, entwined with the new language of 'linguistic nationalism' now emphasized the class rights of the 'Magyar' nation, not only vis-à-vis the king, but also vis-à-vis nobles and ignobles of other nationalities and proponents of languages other than Hungarian.

To illustrate, it was Nyitra County, in the north west, that took the lead in considering the introduction of the vernacular. The county representatives argued that if it were not for the fact that Latin was the language of law, then Hungarian ought to be introduced as the 'national' language, because only a minority of nobles did not speak Hungarian. Trencsén County, also in the north west, was more forceful. Its officials argued that civilized European countries had demonstrated the necessity of cultivating 'national' (meaning vernacular) languages, and that Hungarians should follow their example. Because the language was dominant at the Diet (meaning in discussions on the Lower

⁴⁰⁶ Marczali, *Magyarország története II. József korában*, II, p. 389.

⁴⁰⁷ Soós, 'II. József német nyelvrendelete', pp. 295-296.

⁴⁰⁸ Marczali, *Magyarország története II. József korában*, II, p. 392.

⁴⁰⁹ Béla Köpeczi (ed.), *Erdély története*, 3 vols (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1986), I, p. 519.

⁴¹⁰ Albeit inaccurately, as the Catholic Church had also played a major role in promoting the vernacular from the Reformation onwards, providing, *inter alia*, the first Bible translations into the vernacular. However, with the country divided between denominations, different rhetorical and orthographic conventions were used by Catholics and Protestants until the eventual standardization of the language by Kazinczy and others, largely on the basis of Protestant conventions. See Géza Balázs, 'A reformáció hatása a magyar nyelvi művelődésre', *Honismeret*, 45.6 (2017), 38-44.

Table) it could also gain currency as the language of government. Trencsén also pointed out that ‘pure’ (i.e. linguistically homogenous) kingdoms did not exist anywhere, and as a result it was only fitting that serfs followed the examples set by their lords (perhaps an analogy of the *cuius regio, eius religio* argument). Finally, Trencsén’s officials argued that there existed no ‘true Patriot who did not wish for the introduction of Hungarian as an official language insofar as it was to be further cultivated’.⁴¹¹

Szabolcs County, in the north east, submitted a complaint that was yet more assertive. While praising Joseph II as an example of godly virtue, the county officials turned the philosopher king’s enlightened ideology against him, arguing that the Prince existed to serve the people, and not the other way around. They then proceeded to argue that the Hungarian language, like other European tongues, could be polished and perfected, and German, Illyrian and Romanian speakers could thus be inspired to learn the Magyar tongue. It was asserted that Hungarians wished to live in friendship with German speaking territories. However, this could not be achieved through the uniformity of language use. Rather, mutual respect must be demonstrated for each nation’s laws and customs. Finally, if the Hungarian language were to disappear, then the nation would cease to exist as a distinct body, and its very memory would also be expunged.⁴¹² The rescript penned by Antal Szirmay (1747-1812), chief notary of Zemplén County also in the north east, provided a particularly popular point of reference for his contemporaries. He claimed that not only would the entire cadre of state officials cease to exist, as none spoke German, but also that such a purge ran contrary to the law (as some positions were hereditary, for example) Furthermore, the lower orders did not trust the Germans, and immigrants desired to become Hungarians. Following on from this opening assault Szirmay then turned to the language of dynastic heroism, suggesting that the Habsburgs should be grateful for the support of the Hungarians, as they had fought of their own free will against the unfree Prussians. The implication here was that the ‘free’ Hungarians had served the king of their own volition, and that the king stood to lose the support of his loyal supporters.⁴¹³ Szirmay then employed numerical arguments, insisting that those in his county who did not speak Hungarian were merely unfree serfs and supported his case

⁴¹¹ Cited in Marczali, *Magyarország története II. József korában*, II, p. 392

⁴¹² Ibid. pp 392-393.

⁴¹³ Nógrád County similarly argued that Hungary deserved respect as a ‘bastion of Christianity’ against the Turks, and Szepes, Bratislava, and Zemplén also reminded Joseph of the nobility’s sacrifices to Maria Theresa. Soós, ‘II. József német nyelvrendelete’, p, 276.

by noting that the German language was not an exclusive vehicle of sophistication, as refinement arose from a knowledge of science and good morals which could also be expressed through the Hungarian language. Finally, Szirmay attacked Joseph's claim to unite his realms through one single language, claiming that 'the use of a unified language would only obscure the dignity of the empire' while the promotion of Hungarian would allow Hungary to rise up to the level of other nations. The greatest (*maximus*) king would be the one who brought this to pass, and Joseph should claim this glory for himself, by cultivating the Hungarian language, and living on in the eternal memory of the Hungarians.⁴¹⁴

The county of Esztergom, the centre of Catholicism in Hungary, also criticized the decree for spreading confusion. Referring to the idea of unity, the officials recognized that one language, one way of thinking, and one moral code might be beneficial. Nevertheless, differences (between nations) were natural and originated from God, and nothing was more glorious for each nation than to govern, unify, and cultivate its country and the peoples therein using its own language.⁴¹⁵ A number of counties proffered similar arguments, claiming that the unity of the empire *unitas imperii* could not be equated with linguistic unity (*unitas linguae, uniformitas linguae*), and that linguistic pluralism was part of the divine order. Csongrád county, for example, argued that linguistic diversity originated from the time of Babel, and Szepes County similarly argued that no man had the right to arbitrarily alter this diversity, as it was natural, and originated from the creator of the natural order, God.⁴¹⁶

Esztergom county also protested that it was unjust that a foreign language should be introduced in the Kingdom of Hungary when the Habsburgs allowed the vernaculars to be used in their Italian and Belgian lands. Even most foreigners spoke Hungarian, as it had been taught in schools since the reign of Maria Theresa.⁴¹⁷

Szepes County also saw the decree as an affront to justice. Its officials claimed that three years was not enough to implement the decree and learn German. By illegally introducing the decree (i.e. without the approval of the Diet) his majesty could no longer be considered king: he would merely be seen as another German. Szepes officials further expressed their astonishment that Joseph II thought he could create a closer union with

⁴¹⁴ Marczali, *Magyarország története II. József korában*, II, p. 394.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 395.

⁴¹⁶ Soós, 'II. József német nyelvrendelete', p. 279.

⁴¹⁷ Marczali, *Magyarország története II. József korában*, II, p. 395

other provinces by contravening their rights. If a change was to be made, then Hungarian should be introduced. In many localities it was already the language of justice, and it was a sufficient vehicle for the expression of thought. Those who could not speak the language could easily learn it.⁴¹⁸

Finally, Hont County lamented the fate of the country, where Hungarians were in danger of disappearing. Latin was not a dead language: it was what distinguished the nation from the plebs, and men from women (here revealing the gendered nature of language stratification in the public sphere). But if Latin was to be abolished, then why was it not being replaced with Hungarian? An attempt should be made to introduce the vernacular, as German was not the language of the empire in any case. Furthermore, it was not even the sole language of the dynasty, which was of mixed German, French, and Hungarian blood. Hungarians did not speak German, and the law forbade foreigners from entering into office, and Hungarian would disappear if German were made the dominant language; as the domestic tongue, there was no better choice as the language of the kingdom, and the king could only alter the law with the agreement of the estates.⁴¹⁹

The counties thus deployed a veritable barrage of arguments against Joseph's decree. They drew upon almost every form of rhetorical disputation at their disposal to register their dissatisfaction with the idea. These included, *inter alia*, numerical arguments based upon population ratios—albeit often overstated or skewed—and historical arguments about the more widespread and thus 'autochthonous' nature of Hungarian within the Kingdom as opposed to German; arguments from the discourse of 'enlightened government' (e.g. concerning the role of the king); from the discourse of 'dynastic heroism' (e.g. claiming the infringement of the political community's freedoms after they had sacrificed their lives for Maria Theresa and other rulers); from discourses of divine, natural, and customary 'ancient constitutional' law (e.g. the Tower of Babel argument for linguistic diversity or the ancient status of Latin as a language of law within the kingdom), and from the political discourse of 'politeness' and its associated discourse of language reform (e.g. concerning the relative adequacy of Hungarian or inadequacy of German as a 'medium' of communication, knowledge and enlightenment; the relative status of these languages on the 'ladder' of civilizational achievement, and so on).

⁴¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 396-397.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., p. 397.

All of these *topoi* were now being fed into an emerging discourse of linguistic rights. This discourse touched not only on the unjust ‘imposition’ of the decree, but also on the claimed moral or legal entitlements of certain parties to speak a particular language, or indeed impose a secondary language on other speakers. Within this discourse of rights, a key *topos* was the gendered personification of language through familial metaphors, with Latin as the ‘father tongue’ and thus language of the public and political spheres, and Hungarian as the ‘mother tongue’, the native language of the ‘domestic’ sphere, both literally and in the metaphorical sense of being the native and secondary language of the homeland. What this suggests, however, is not merely that the estates were claiming the rightful indigeneity of Latin or Hungarian through metaphors of the home and familial belonging. Rather, it also indicates that their understanding of language rights was based not upon rational, universal criteria, but upon the hierarchical conceptual framework of feudal paternalism. Common to many of the remonstrations, whether they were in favour of Latin or Hungarian, were a series of ‘ancient constitutional’ arguments, many iterating the claim that the king could not legislate without the approval of the Diet, and that Hungary was by law not to be governed as other provinces (‘non ad normam aliarum provinciarum gubernabimur’),⁴²⁰ a turn of phrase that would later reappear at the 1790/91 Diet. Indeed, a prominent theme was that the king had forgotten that he could govern the country only on the basis of existing *pacta conventa* ‘pacts of agreement’ with the *populus* (meaning the estates), and that if he broke the terms of this bilateral pact or governed in contravention of the country’s age-old laws and customs, then the people reserved the right to protest. Even if Joseph II had attempted to bring about the common good and the country’s happiness, it was argued that his decree was arbitrary, as it had not been drafted or introduced with the involvement or approval of the estates. A number of counties argued in this manner, including Temes, Hont, Bars, Liptó, and Somogy counties. Liptó and Bars specifically evoked Werbőczy’s *Tripartitum*, claiming that the estates were ‘members of the Holy Crown’, and that one of the country’s chief customs was the holding of Diets, noting that it would be an excellent time for the king to convene the Diet, be lawfully crowned, and swear to uphold the laws of the land.⁴²¹

Drawing upon the related discourse of republicanism, a number of counties invoked the contradistinction between republican liberty and the servitude of the

⁴²⁰ Soós, ‘II. József német nyelvrendelete’, p. 276.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 278.

vanquished. Hont county, for example, complained that not even peoples defeated in battle were required to adopt the language or customs of their conquerors. Torna and Szepes argued similarly, referring to the example of Alexander the Great, who did not force Greek onto those he defeated, and Augustus, who had ruled likewise, and been venerated by his subjects. Máramaros and Zemplén counties repeated these arguments with reference to the Persian and Mongolian rulers Ahasuerus and Tamerlane.⁴²² Nyitra County argued that the Magyars by nature were not born to be subjugated to foreign rule. Zólyom similarly protested that the Magyars had conquered the country through blood and martial virtue, and Csongrád pointed out the Magyars were not a subjugated people, but had placed their laws, customs, and privileges under the protection of the Habsburgs voluntarily and in good faith. Torna County argued that the nation had always been free, and thus retained its own liberties, customs, governmental institutions, and language. The nobility of Ung County evoked the example of King Matthias, who had conquered Vienna, but who did not force the Austrians to speak Hungarian.⁴²³

However, in contrast to such claims of the indomitable Magyar spirit, many counties (sometimes even alongside such arguments) also deployed vocabularies of displacement or placelessness similar to those used by Bessenyei. The nobility of Somogy and Trencsén counties, for example, argued that the nation would become ‘exiled’ within its own homeland, or forced into vagrancy. Others presented a yet more dramatic scenario and referred more explicitly to the extinction or disappearance of the nation. As noted above, Hont County complained that if the decree were to be implemented then it would not be long before Magyars disappeared from the country. Abaúj County similarly lamented that the nation had been condemned to perish along with its customs and language, while Bihar, Satu Mare, and Zemplén argued that the ‘spirit’ and customs of the nation would be irredeemably altered; Zemplén also reported that its elders ‘feel like they are exiled in their own homeland and are forced as they go to their graves to watch their nation gradually perish and the young generation become moulded into foreigners.’⁴²⁴ The nobles of Somogy, Baranya, Ung, Torna, Hont, and Borsod counties all expressed fears that the removal of Latin would result in the loss of the nation’s centuries-old privileges, laws, and customs, that the nation would be displaced by foreigners, and that both the *patria* and the very memory of the nation would be extinguished. To underline this thesis,

⁴²² Balázs, *Bécs és Pest-Buda*, p. 228.

⁴²³ Soós, ‘II. József német nyelvrendelete’, pp. 280-281

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 273-274.

Liptó County hyperbolically referred to Rome's conquest of the Etruscan City of Veii, and that the Veientes' memory had been all but erased from the annals of history.⁴²⁵

Of course, in talking of the demise of the nation, the nobility were speaking primarily of their own noble nation. Presumably this is why Joseph II remained unmoved, and maybe even saw the county's remonstrations as a smokescreen. Certainly, he had little patience for the county system and the noble opposition, as he saw them as the chief obstacles to his programme of reform. Indignant, he told his ministers that he was not willing to compromise on a single point of the decree, and that anyone who disagreed—from the chancellery to the counties—would find the door open for them to leave.⁴²⁶ In a letter of January 1785 he further explained to a disgruntled nobleman that the Hungarians' complaints could not be justified against the dictates of rationality, and that:

The German language is the universal language of my empire, why would I allow laws and public affairs to be discussed in the national language of one individual province? I am Emperor of the German Reich; as a result, the other states that I own are provinces, and along with the whole of the state, they form together a body of which I am the head. If the Kingdom of Hungary were the most important and first of my possessions, I would make its language the principal language of my countries; but this is not the way things stand.⁴²⁷

What then are we to make of the claims of linguistic-national 'death' from the perspective of the present? On the one hand, the claims of national 'death' may certainly appear hyperbolic to the modern reader. On the other, they cannot be entirely distanced from Joseph II's hard-headed and often dismissive approach to his opponents. Undoubtedly, it is difficult to disentangle the sincerity or perfidy of such claims from the historical contingencies of their time. For some, the metaphors of language 'life' and 'death' may have seemed almost transparently apt within their context of application, perhaps to the extent that the prognosis of linguistic-national 'death' even seemed real enough to not qualify as a metaphor. In certain cases the rhetoric of displacement and death was perhaps indicative of the plight felt by dispossessed county officials: the nobles of Somogy, Krassó,

⁴²⁵ Ibid., p. 274.

⁴²⁶ Marczali, *Magyarország története II. József korában*, II, p. 403.

⁴²⁷ Johann Baptist Grossing, *Briefe von Joseph dem Zweyten, als charakteristische Beiträge zur Lebens- und Staatsgeschichte dieses unvergesslichen Selbstherrschers* (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1822), pp. 76-77.

and Békés counties in particular lamented how they, as loyal servants of the king, would ultimately become impoverished, reduced to beggary, or even sent to an early grave.⁴²⁸ In a more broad sense, however, Joseph's attempt to introduce German as a language of administration was commonly seen as an attempt to wrestle control away from the local nobility and 'Germanize', that is impose the social, cultural, and political values of the imperial centre upon the country's government. In a strictly linguistic sense, the fear was that the introduced language—German—would gain in prestige and status, while the 'indigenous' Latin and Hungarian languages would lose their utility and prestige, no longer be learned as first or second languages, and thus face 'extinction'. From a political, that is noble-republican perspective, unable to speak the language of government, the nobility could no longer function as active citizens: they would lose their ability to participate in the life of the *polis*, and thus lose the means to secure their liberty. In these ways, language usage was not merely symbolic, but rather directly connected to the practices of political power and influence: if the language of the nobility was displaced, then the Hungarian nobility would be similarly removed from their position of influence within the government of their own 'home' or ancestral territory. It thus followed that the 'nation', otherwise known as the *ország* or *communitas regni*, would be reduced to a state of dependence, and cease to exist as a distinct body of freemen within the *polis*.

A further consideration is that census statistics would soon reveal how Hungarians constituted only a relative majority in the country, supporting the thesis of Hungarian national disappearance touted by Kollár, Schlözer, and later Herder. The *repraesentatio* of Hont County certainly expressed fears that ethnic Hungarians were becoming increasingly scarce within the country. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the nobility's claims of national 'death' were also the result of organized dissent. Furthermore, we may note in hindsight that linguistic-national death never took place in Hungary, and that both Latin and Hungarian had co-existed with other 'foreign' languages within the country for centuries without fear of dying out. Yet the script of national death and the idea that the language, and by extension the 'nation', faced an existential threat was to become an increasingly common feature of the period's literature through to the nineteenth century. It seems then that what we are witnessing is the genesis of a political myth, a reasoned

⁴²⁸ Soós, 'II. József német nyelvrendelete', p. 282.

illusion whereby the idea of national death was being used to cast the sequence of political events into dramatic form with its own protagonists, while also serving a practical end.⁴²⁹

The political significance of the *topos* of national death lay in its rhetorical framing of 'national' discourse. On the one hand, the idea entailed a modification of the republican/ancient constitutional concept of time. Now it was not merely ancient virtue or constitutional structures that maintained the political community through time, but *language*. Indeed, language was now central to the particular form of life embodied within the political community: as we have seen, a number of counties had argued that the introduction of a foreign language would entail the introduction of foreign customs and practices, and thus involve the abandonment of the country's own traditions. In this way, language was now the chief repository of the nation's morals, virtues, traditions, and identity. Without its own language (whether Latin, Hungarian or both), the 'nation', i.e. the political community, 'died' or ceased to be a recognizable entity.

Another salient property of the metaphorical schema of linguistic-national 'death' and its creation of mythical 'dramatic form' was the way in which it evoked an emotively-charged symbolic world of protagonists based upon a triadic pattern of conceptual roles. The first of course was the linguistically-conceived nation as a metaphorical 'organism' that was suffering and/or threatened on the brink of annihilation; the second comprised the various 'persecutors' or other malign agencies that posed the threat(s) to the nation, while the third consisted of those who sought to 'save' the nation from its demise, and who could thus be pictured as virtuous 'saviours' or 'heroes'. This triad of metaphorical roles would become a prominent framing device in the development of Hungarian (vernacular-based) national consciousness, which often saw discourses of (in)security and linguistic-dissolution deployed as rallying calls for the nationalist project. It would receive further affirmation in 1791 through Herder's *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, as noted above, and be further buttressed by emerging statistical data on the country's demographics, which would increase fears of linguistically-defined 'national' death that stemmed from pan-Germanic and pan-Slavic pressures, not to mention the

⁴²⁹ My understanding of political myth as 'dramatic form' is based on Henry Tudor, *Political Myth* (London: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 16-17, and also Flood's definition of political myth as 'an ideologically marked narrative which purports to give a true account of a set of past, present, or predicted political events and which is accepted as valid in its essentials by a social group. Christopher Flood, *Political Myth* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 44.

erosive influence of other, smaller non-Magyar-speaking nationalities, and the ‘Germanizing’ efforts of the Habsburg Royal Court.

If we take the arguments of the pro-vernacular counties into consideration, then already we see the seeds of three major ideological trends that would characterize the development of Hungarian nationalism in the coming century. The first was the attempt to develop the Magyar vernacular in order to replace Latin as the official language. The second was opposition to ‘Germanization’, a trend which not only involved the rejection of foreign customs, but which would also see a concerted effort by the middle nobility to ‘Magyarize’ the public sphere, revive Magyar traditions, and even re-Magyarize the ‘aulic’ aristocracy. The third was the attempt to assimilate Hungary's non-Magyar populations through the use of the Magyar language.⁴³⁰ Crucial to all three was an increasing belief that a reformed vernacular could not only bring about improvement through the dissemination of knowledge, but also create a homogeneous national speech community and culturally-coherent body politic within the multi-ethnic kingdom.⁴³¹ The often paradoxical result was that ideas concerning language ‘death’ often alternated with the promising lure of a reformed vernacular and the gift of progress; in this way, paradigms of endangerment sat along paradigms of enlightenment, often obscuring the power politics involved in promoting the Hungarian language in a country characterized by ethnic plurality. Certainly, later narratives of national identity would similarly alternate between poles of bombastic Magyar superiority and fear of annihilation by an all-powerful ‘other’.

6.1 The Emergence of the ‘National Language’

Over the following few years, the metaphors of language death, endangerment, and extinction would come to serve as key *topoi* in the motivational vocabulary of the Hungarian ‘national’ movement, framing and influencing actions and interventions, and prompting a new sense of urgency among both linguistic scholars and other strata of the nobility. Of course, the metaphorical frame did not have to be applied *verbatim*, and it could also be extended in different directions. In particular, the metaphor of ‘death’ gave rise to a new arch metaphor of ‘revival’ or indeed ‘resuscitation’ that would also become

⁴³⁰ László Deme, ‘Writers and Essayists’, p. 632.

⁴³¹ László Kürti, ‘Liberty, Equality, and Nationality: National Liberalism, Modernization, and Empire in Hungary in the Nineteenth Century’, in *Liberal Imperialism in Europe*, ed. by Matthew Fitzpatrick (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2012), pp. 91-114.

widespread as a slogan of the vernacular movement. This idea of ‘revival’ can be illustrated by the 5 July article in the *Magyar Hírmondó* (‘Magyar Herald’) of Bratislava, which provided a vernacular translation of Joseph’s language decree.⁴³² The paper explained that the measure had been introduced because:

[...] our Hungarian language of birth was left neglected, unpolished, and was not made common in our Lands; our ancient forebears, Kings of Magyar Blood, if they had but followed the example of other Countries, and instead of introducing foreign Languages in their Lands, had instead cultivated their own tongue, and made the language common in the running of the Country’s affairs, then we, too, could take pride in our sweet Language of birth, like other Nations, and it would be inferior to none of the most beautiful and flourishing European Languages, and maybe it would even be more cherished and common than French or Italian among the Lords and Ladies of each Nation; for this, it is, alas, too late, but we may still hope that our Dear Descendants will [one day] make our abandoned sweet Language flourishing and common.⁴³³

Here the vernacular, ‘abandoned’ by its own ruling classes (a snipe at those favouring Latin), had fallen into a state of near irreparable decline. The author, however, does not dwell upon potential ‘death’, but rather paints a utopian image of what might have been, and thus what might still be. The text thus provides an alternative history of the past, and imaginatively muses on how language reform might have led to a different present, one full of promise and international renown. In this account then, the vernacular cause was not ‘dead’, but only temporarily obstructed, and the vernacular cause was framed within the rhetoric of hope, a forward-looking utopian idealism that could be embraced, if not by the current generation, then perhaps by the next.

⁴³² The Herald (1780-1788) was Hungary’s first vernacular newspaper, established by Mátyás Rát (1749-1810). In 1784 the paper was edited by the zealous Hungarian teacher, translator and language reformer Dávid Barcafalvi Szabó (1752-1828) and Sándor Szacsvay (1752-1815). Szabó is often seen as the first systematic instigator of language reform, collecting folk songs and coining dozens of new terms, for which he was heavily criticized by his contemporaries, including Kazinczy. Approximately fifty of his coinages stood the test of time. Szacsvay, an adherent of Josephinism who was interested in ‘English liberty’ and the developments of the French Revolution, is often considered Hungary’s first vernacular political affairs journalist. See Andrea Seidler, ‘The Long Road of Hungarian Media to Multilingualism: On the Replacement of Latin in the Kingdom of Hungary in the Course of the Eighteenth Century’, in Almási and Šubarić, *Latin at the Crossroads*, pp. 152-165.

⁴³³ *Magyar Hírmondó*, ‘Magyar Hazánkat Illető Dolgok’, 1784, p. 349.

As it happens, language reformers would not have to wait for the next generation to take up their cause. Attempts were already under way to prove the suitability of the Hungarian language as a medium of poetic expression, particularly at the hands of the so-called ‘Classicist Triad’ of poets (József Rájnis, 1741–1812; Dávid Baróti Szabó, 1739–1819, and Miklós Révai 1750-1807), who were experimenting with Hungarian prosody and metrics in the attempt to transplant classical metres into Hungarian poetry for the first time. Furthermore, new enlightened concepts of sociability and communicative refinement were transforming the understanding of *emberi társaság* ‘human society’ (from *ember* ‘man, human’ and *társaság* ‘society/association’, itself from *társ* ‘companion’; cf. Latin *societas*, from *socius* ‘companion, ally’). While *társaság* previously referred to smaller forms of association, union, or organization, it was now being used among the increasingly ubiquitous vocabularies of *politesse* and refinement to express the importance of communicative sociability in uniting mankind. Indeed, the root *társ* provided a series of derivatives that were becoming increasingly popular, such as *társalkodik* ‘to repeatedly associate, converse, be companionable’, and the derived nouns *társalkodás* ‘socializing, conversing’, and *társalkodó* ‘converser, conversationalist’.⁴³⁴ As the deputy sheriff of Gömör-Kis-Hont County, Miklós Szathmáry Király (1744-1818) claimed in his *True Moral Science of the Maintenance of Civil Order that Pertains to Persons of Noble Birth* (1780), ‘There is no more progressive thing in this worldly association than possessing the skill by which others may be made fond of us’.⁴³⁵

The Habsburgs’ relaxing of censorship laws and restrictions on Protestants working in the public sphere also created a new niche for the growth of a vernacular press. That niche was often filled by Magyarophile Lutherans, such as Matthias Rát, editor of the *Magyar Herald*, who later Magyarized his first name to ‘Mátyás’.⁴³⁶ The *Magyar Herald*, a firm supporter of the vernacular cause, would soon be joined by a number of other vernacular periodicals, including the *Magyar Kurír* (‘Magyar Courier’), founded in Vienna in 1786 by Rát’s former colleague and fellow Lutheran Sándor Szacs vay, and the newspaper *Hadi és más nevezetes történetek* (‘Military and Other Notable Events’), launched

⁴³⁴ See Gyula Kristó, ‘A «társadalom» fogalmának magyar nyelvi kifejezései’, *Acta Universitatis Szegediniensis, Acta Iuvenum: Sectio Philologia et Historica*, 2 (1962), 89-108

⁴³⁵ Miklós Szathmáry Király, *A’ nemes születésű személyekre tartozó polgári rendtartás-nak igaz erköltsi tudománya, melyet francziából magyarra fordított ifjabb Szathmáry Király Miklós tekintetes nemes Gömör- és több Vármegyék törvényes székeinek bírása* (Bratislava, [n. pub], 1780), p. 38.

⁴³⁶ Géza Buzinkay, *A magyar sajtó és újságírás története a kezdetektől a rendszerváltásig* (Budapest: Wolters Kluwer, 2016), pp. 37-38.

in 1789 by the Lutheran Demeter Görög (1760-1833) and the Calvinist Sámuel Kerekes (c. 1757-1800). The latter journal, which was originally intended to report on the war against the Ottomans, also enthusiastically supported the vernacular cause and other cultural endeavours, and frequently cited the ‘rebirth’ or ‘revival’ of the vernacular. Although Görög recognized that Vienna was the centre of contemporary Hungarian literature, he was also aware that vernacular authors were scattered and isolated in far-flung parts of the country, unable to access each other's works. To overcome this problem, Görög oversaw the nationwide distribution of his Hungarian-language newspaper, which sought to educate the Hungarian people in the vernacular and publish the works of contemporary Hungarian writers and poets. The paper would seek to raise patronage for the writing of vernacular dictionaries and grammars, and would also republish Bessenyei's *Humble Proposal* and play other roles in promoting the vernacular at the time of the 1790/91 Diet, as we shall see below. In 1792, the paper changed its name after the Turkish war had ended. Seeing that the original *Magyar Herald* had folded in 1788, the editors adopted the title for their own paper published in Vienna until 1803.⁴³⁷

One measure of the vernacular's success for language reformers was its application as a medium of literary expression. The *Magyar Herald*, the main mouthpiece for the language reform movement, reported rising opportunities and the achievements of writers in the field of literature, and publicized the works of Bessenyei, Batsányi, and others. In particular, they observed the success of experiments in the field of poetic metrics, and in January 1786 the paper proclaimed that Hungarian poesy would soon be able to rival, if not surpass French poetics over the course of the next twenty or thirty years.⁴³⁸ Soon after, a number of periodicals with an exclusively literary focus were established. For example, the *Magyar Herald* launched the *Pozsonyi Magyar Musa* (‘Magyar Muse of Bratislava’) in 1787, and in the same year the *Magyar Courier* published its own literary supplement in Vienna, similarly entitled *Magyar Musa* (‘Magyar Muse’). The first independent literary journal, *Magyar Muzeum* was established in Košice (published 1789-1793) by the founders of the first literary society in Hungary, the *Kassai Magyar Társaság* (‘Magyar Society of Kosice’). These included Ferenc Kazinczy, Dávid Baróti Szabó and János Batsányi.⁴³⁹

⁴³⁷ See József Molnár, *Görög Demeter (1760-1833)* (Debrecen: Hajdú-Bihar Megyei Múzeumok, 1975).

⁴³⁸ Seidler, ‘The Long Road of Hungarian Media’, p. 162.

⁴³⁹ Batsányi (1763-1845) was one of Hungary's leading writers and poets during the late eighteenth century who wrote numerous patriotic poems and essays on language and translation. Born of an ignoble family, Batsányi originally sided with the noble resistance against Joseph II, although he later became an ardent supporter of the French Revolution and turned against the social institution of the nobility. When the French

Due to political differences with Batsányi, who was associated with a proto-liberal group of the noble-led opposition, Kazinczy, himself a Josephinist, left *Magyar Muzeum*, and launched the literary periodical *Orpheus* (1789-1792) in the same year.⁴⁴⁰

While the above may seem to point to an upsurge in the vernacular's popularity, publication in Hungarian was fraught with difficulty, especially as German, and to a lesser extent, Latin, were still the choice languages of scholarship, journalism, and education in the public sphere. In traditional historiography it is customary to attribute the struggles of the nascent Hungarian press to censorship. However, the censor also operated in Vienna, where the press flourished.⁴⁴¹ The problem in Hungary was more due to its restricted market and lack of readers. Even at its peak, Szacs vay's *Magyar Courier* only attracted around 1200 subscribers, usually when attention was drawn to his reports on the American and French revolutions, and *Military and Other Notable Events* similarly attracted around 1300 followers.⁴⁴² The fate of literary and other journals was, however, less promising, as the number of subscribers was much lower, and even those who signed up often omitted to pay their subscription fees.⁴⁴³ As the natural historian and grammarian János Földi (1755-1801) wrote to Kazinczy in February 1789, the Hungarian nation had plenty of 'writers, especially at this moment in time, but there are no buyers for their books'.⁴⁴⁴

Perhaps surprisingly then, it was towards the end of Joseph II's reign that the vernacular was increasingly claimed as *the* language of the 'nation'. This may seem unusual, because interest in the vernacular press was at best nascent, at worst sporadic.

seized Vienna in 1809, he translated Napoleon's proclamation to the Hungarians, which called upon the Hungarian nation to take up arms against the Habsburgs. Batsányi then fled to Paris, where he was eventually seized by the Austrians in 1815 following Napoleon's fall. Batsányi was subsequently interned in the Austrian city of Linz, from whence he was forbidden to set foot on Hungarian soil for the remaining thirty years of his life.

⁴⁴⁰ For a comprehensive treatment of the era's press organs see György Kókay, ed., *A Magyar sajtó története 1705-1848*, vol. 1 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1979).

⁴⁴¹ Géza Ballagi claims that the entrusting of Hungarian censorship duties in 1745 to the Royal Lieutenancy Council in Bratislava was a rather muddled affair, as officials attempted, willy-nilly, to ban the works listed in the *catalogus librorum prohibitorum*. For example, the censors banned a work by Sonnenfels that opposed the use of torture to obtain confession, even though such practices had already been illegalized; they also banned, somewhat puzzlingly, books such as the 1771 *Hausapothecke sowohl zur menschlichen Gesundheit, als auch für Pferde, Rind, Schwein und Schaafvich*. Similar attempts to clamp down upon unwanted publications by imposing travel restrictions or searching soldiers had little influence upon the influx of foreign works. Ballagi, *A politikai irodalom*, pp. 59-60; 63.

⁴⁴² Szacs vay was, nevertheless, a skilled polemicist. He outmanoeuvred the censor by having the 'dead' speak in an imagined future about past political issues. The idea was borrowed from the popular German periodical *Politische Gespräche der Todten* 'Political Talks of the Dead', and became a popular method among contemporaries. Buzinkay, *A magyar sajtó*, p. 42-44.

⁴⁴³ Ibid. pp. 48-49.

⁴⁴⁴ Ferenc Kazinczy and János Váczy, *Kazinczy Ferencz levelezése*, vol. 2, 1790-1802 (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1892), p. 265.

However, the idea that the nation was bound to the vernacular was being registered through the arrival of a new phrase in Hungarian, that of the *nemzeti nyelv* ‘national language’. The emergence of this term was in turn enabled through the appearance of an often-overlooked word in the study of Hungarian vernacular nationalism. This was the adjective *nemzeti* ‘national’, derived, of course, from *nemzet* ‘nation’, which was only registered from the late 1770s onwards in the Hungarian language.⁴⁴⁵

From a technical perspective, the introduction of a new adjective suggests that the existing conceptual fields associated with the term ‘nation’ were expanding, or at the very least, changing. It implies that there was an increasing need to assert—or re-affirm—the extent to which certain concrete or abstract phenomena belonged to, or were part of, the semantic field associated with the ‘nation’, especially in light of new understandings or claims as to the meaning of that word. The use of the term *nemzeti* thus undoubtedly involved performative acts of naming or ‘branding’, as we might say today; as such, it entailed the contested politics of description and re-description, as speakers contested or reaffirmed the older meanings of the noun *nemzet*. From a broader, macro-social perspective, the rise of the term *nemzeti* suggests that the idea of the ‘nation’ as a community was becoming an increasingly common topic of debate.

In the early life of this term, between 1777 and 1785, the only context in which *nemzeti* occurs is in references to a ‘national school’. It appears to have been coined by the language reformer Miklós Révai as a translation of the phrases *schola nationalis* and *National-Schule* ‘national school’ (Hungarian: *nemzeti iskola*) in the *Ratio Educationis*. Révai, a trusted authority on language, had been appointed to translate the German primers written for use in the national schools.⁴⁴⁶ However, from 1786 increasing mention is made of *nemzeti ruha* ‘national clothes’, and *nemzeti katonák* ‘national soldiers’. By the end of the decade, in the pamphlets of the late 1780s and those published at the time of the 1790/91 Diet, there is a sudden upsurge in the use of the adjective, now also in references to the *nemzeti nyelv* ‘national language’, and other related phenomena such as the *nemzeti theátrum* ‘national theatre’.⁴⁴⁷

The surge in the use of the term from 1789 onwards bore the unmistakable stamp of French Revolutionary political rhetoric with its clarion calls to the ‘nation’ as the highest

⁴⁴⁵ Antal Nyíri, ‘A nemzeti melléknév keletkezése’, *Acta Universitatis Szegediensis: Sectio Ethnographica et Linguistica = Néprajz és Nyelvtudomány*, 11 (1967), 55-62 (56-57).

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 56; 58.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

object of allegiance. With newspapers reporting events as they unfolded in France, and speakers keenly following the struggles of the French patriots against the king, a new political vocabulary began to emerge in Hungarian public discourse. References could now be found to a variety of ‘French’ concepts, such as *nemzeti gyülekezet / nemzeti öszve gyűlés* (French ‘Assemblée nationale’); *nemzeti testőrző* (‘garde national’); *nemzeti kokárda* (‘cocarde nationale’), and talk of what was happening *a' Nemzeti zenebonában* (‘in the French gallithump [revolution]’).⁴⁴⁸ Of particular importance was the part-translation, part-summary of an early draft of the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* of 1791, which appeared on the pages of the Vienna-based Hungarian newspaper *Magyar Courier* on 22 August 1789.⁴⁴⁹ Indeed, events in France were keenly reported in the press (in particular by the *Magyar Courier*) despite the censor, and additional news was transmitted through a variety of French and German publications. For example, the French *Moniteur* was only banned during the terror, and the works of Paine and Rousseau were available and popular in translation, not to mention the reports of adventurers such as Friedrich von der Trenck.⁴⁵⁰ Enthusiasm for the revolution would fade as events turned violent, but the significance of the ‘French vocabulary’ of politics was that it would provide a number of new senses for pre-existing terms, including those of ‘nation’, ‘citizen’ and ‘society’, as well as a formulaic expression of how a new concept of ‘liberty’ was to become associated with the idea of the ‘republic’. Drawing *inter alia* upon the ideas of Montesquieu and Rousseau, the text described how all governmental institutions were to make the ‘common happiness of the People’ (*Népnek közönséges boldogsága*) their goal. Government was to be established for the good of the governed, and not merely those governing. All supremacy (*felsőség*) and power (*hatalom*) was derived from the nation (*Nemzet*) that had come to form a society (*Társaság*). It noted that all men are, ‘according to nature, free, and subjected to equal laws’,⁴⁵¹ and that primacy may only be attained through common election (*közönséges választás*).

The translation continued by explaining that individuals were free to do anything which did not harm others, and that the law only had the right to forbid actions harmful

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid. pp. 60-61.

⁴⁴⁹ Magyar Kurir, ‘Frantzia-Ország’, 1789, pp. 930-939.

⁴⁵⁰ Eckhardt, *A francia forradalom eszméi*, pp. 100-102. Trenck served in the Austrian army but agitated against the clergy at the 1790/91 Diet. He was also rumoured to have been a Prussian spy collaborating with the Hungarian rebels. However, it is more likely that Leopold II employed him to polemicize at the diet in order to divide the Hungarian nobility. Borbála Wix Györgyné, ‘Trenk Frigyes 1790. évi politikai röpirata’, in *Széchenyi Könyvtár Évkönyve, 1976–1977*, ed. by Mária Németh (Budapest: OSZK, 1979), pp. 121–163.

⁴⁵¹ Magyar Kurir, ‘Frantzia-Ország’, p. 935.

to society. Furthermore, government was required to protect public law and rights, such as personal freedom, the security of person and property, and the free expression of thought. Although the translation omitted any mention of the 'general will', it did report that 'inhabitants are only subjected to those laws which either they themselves, or those persons appointed as their representatives have approved of and found to be good'.⁴⁵² Furthermore, 'All that is not forbidden by one of these Laws is permitted [lit. 'free'], while nobody may be forced [to do anything] that these Laws do not command'.⁴⁵³

In order to prevent 'Despotism' (*Despotismus*), there was to be a separation of legislative, executive, and judiciary functions. Everyone possessed the right to resist illegal violence, and nobody could be arrested other than in cases determined by law. Law was to be administered without consideration of rank or class, and nobody could be punished arbitrarily, only in accordance with previously-established law. The translation did not outline the concept of 'active citizenship', but did note that all those who acquired 'status' must contribute financially to the maintenance of the 'Society' (*Társaság*). Nobody could be persecuted for their religious convictions (so long as they did not violate respect for common religious institutions), and everyone possessed the right to leave their home country (*Haza*) and renounce their civil rights (*Polgári juf*). Freedom of the press was one of the strongest guarantees of public freedom, and only those who incited revolt or wrote slanderous publications could be punished.

The translation did explain that France remained a monarchy, but that the king could only rule in accordance with the law. The assembly of the Nation constituted the legislative power, shared with the King, and while the King possessed the executive power, he was not allowed to exercise Judicial power. Judges were obliged to remain in employment for the duration of their office, and no financial matters could be decided without the approval of the nation. All agents of government were subject to the dictates of law, and could be punished if they broke the law. Even though the declaration did not explicitly revoke the institution of slavery, the translators wrote that slavery had no place in France, a free country, and explained that slaves were freed upon reaching French soil. All *polgárok* 'citizens' were freed from class restrictions and could enter into any office or occupation on merit.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵² Ibid., p. 936.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid. pp. 936-939.

Thus, while a number of these ideas may already have been known to contemporaries, a new blueprint for society and the 'nation' now existed that outlined the radical restructuring of monarchical government and the dismantling of the feudal system. Privileged classes were to be abolished, and a representative body of people established who were to exercise sovereignty. This understanding of liberty was a radical break with the past. It pointed unambiguously to a path beyond the bounds of absolutism and the old system of estates-led rule, and envisioned a 'modern' form of representative 'constitution'. Now a third understanding of the 'nation' had come into play, one that highlighted notions of universal citizenship and natural rights, and a polity based less upon historical reality than it was upon the voluntary adherence of its members.

As we shall see below, political debates at the 1790/91 Diet also drew upon the 'French' vocabulary of politics, although in a complex manner that may be seen to hybridize the traditional with the new. While continuing to employ earlier discourses, Hungarian critics of Habsburg centralization infused these with the new language of 'linguistic nationalism' and the re-thinking of the nation that emphasized the three pillars of 'language', 'clothing' and 'law'.

7.0 The Political Slogans of the Noble Opposition

7.1 Language

As noted above, the term *nemzeti nyelv* ‘national language’ was a lexical innovation of the late 1780s. It is first registered in a correspondence of polymath and grammarian János Földi (1755–1801) in 1789, who wrote of *a’ Nemzeti Nyelv ügye* (‘the cause of the National Language’). From then on the idea of the ‘national’ language was detailed in a flood of pamphlets that suggested that the vernacular was the only medium of expression compatible with the political freedoms of the ‘national’ community.⁴⁵⁵ To give a few examples, József Péczeli (1750-1792), a protestant pastor and poet from Komárno, formulated the idea in the following short sentence: *Egy a nyelv, egy a nemzet* (‘One is the language, one is the nation’, i.e. ‘there should be one language and one nation’). Another Protestant minister and language reformer, István Gáti (discussed below) similarly wrote that *A’ nyelv nélkül a’ Nemzet, mint Nemzet fenn nem állhat* (‘Without language the Nation cannot stand upright as a Nation’).⁴⁵⁶ Finally, Révai, the man who had lobbied Joseph II in person to create a scholarly society, and who had coined the term ‘national’ in Hungarian, gave a public account of how he felt the Habsburgs’ ‘national school’ had subverted the ‘national’ language. In a poem entitled *A magyar öltözet és a nyelv állandó fennmaradásért való ohajtozása egy buzgó hazafinak* (‘The Yearnings of a Zealous Patriot for the Permanent Endurance of Magyar Attire and Language’; 1790) Révai claimed that the so-called ‘national school’ had been designed by the Habsburgs to further their own programme of Germanization: ‘National School! The cause of great alarm! / Damned invention, tree of so much harm! / Twill turn all Magyars into Germans / That merciless nation swallowing our Homeland.’⁴⁵⁷

With the political commotion of Joseph II’s reign coming to an end, interest in the vernacular peaked at the turn of the 1780s-1790s, resulting in a flood of pamphlets written in Hungarian. To illustrate, on May 21 1790, a young Ferenc Kazinczy, after having accompanied the Holy Crown on its return to Hungary, offered his latest work, a translation of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, to the city of Buda, and noted that ‘Our Country’s

⁴⁵⁵ Nyíri, ‘A nemzeti melléknév’, p. 59.

⁴⁵⁶ Cited in Bíró, *A felvilágosodás*, p. 121.

⁴⁵⁷ Cited in Nyíri, *A nemzeti melléknév*, p. 56.

Literature, after having been spurred to win the competition against the spread of the German language, has in a short time and without any help, risen to heights that would have otherwise taken half a century to reach.⁴⁵⁸ Indeed, almost immediately after Joseph II withdrew his reforms, the number of pamphlets soared. According to Géza Ballagí, between 1790 and 1795 around 600 were published, and of those around 500 were released before censorship was tightened in 1792. Between then and the discovery of the Jacobin conspiracy in 1794, around 100 more pamphlets appeared. In the year 1790 alone around 300 pamphlets were published, many of them released as the Diet opened. Early in 1791, the Latin journal *Ephemerides Budenses* summed up the events of the previous year and noted that Hungarians had never displayed such a passion for writing as they had in Buda and Pest the previous year. Likewise, István Katona's pamphlet *Larva Pseudo-Catholico detracta* of 1791 noted that more pamphlets had come to light at the time of the Diet than entire generations had succeeded in publishing beforehand.⁴⁵⁹

Of course, not all of the publications were written in the vernacular, as a substantial number were written in Latin and German. Nevertheless, in many pamphlets the vernacular cause was associated with 'true patriotism' (*Igaz-Hazafiútság*). To illustrate, the pro-French revolutionary Batsányi wrote the following in a public letter to Count Miklós Forgách, published in *Magyar Museum*, 'now is the time [...] to restore the dignity of our homeland's language, and to make firm the foundation stone of our homeland's eternal happiness.'⁴⁶⁰ At the Diet, too, the use of the vernacular was associated with the nation's dignity, as we shall see below.

Despite increased enthusiasm for the vernacular cause, however, there was a sense of ambiguity surrounding the very idea of the national language and the tensions that arose between two competing visions of its character. The first was the 'ancient constitutionalist' vision of the vernacular, which saw language chiefly in identitarian terms of 'national character' (i.e. as a stamp of differentiation and traditional noble virtue), while the second was the language reformers' more utilitarian vision of the vernacular as the key medium

⁴⁵⁸ József Waldapfel, *Ötven év Buda és Pest irodalmi életéből 1780-1830* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1935), p. 66.

⁴⁵⁹ The Diet opened in Buda, but was wound up in Bratislava, but *Ephemerides* reported that by then the number of publications released in Bratislava had decreased significantly. Waldapfel claims that more pamphlets were published in 1790 than during the 1848 revolution. It is more likely, however, that fewer authors took to publishing pamphlets in 1848 due to the more widespread availability of mass press organs. *Ibid.*, pp. 66-68.

⁴⁶⁰ Cited in Mihály Szajbély, 'Az anyanyelv helye a 18. századi magyar felvilágosodás haszonelvű világszemléletében', *Acta Universitatis Szegediensis: Acta Historiae Litterarum Hungaricarum*, 25 (1988), 39-56 (45).

of enlightenment sociability and science. In order to explore or indeed reconcile these two competing visions, the journal *Military and other Notable Events* ran an essay competition and requested answers to the following three questions, '1) What power does the mother tongue have to maintain the nation's natural characteristics or 'National Character'? 2) To what extent does the cultivation of the mother tongue contribute to the Nation's true happiness, and 3) To what extent is knowledge of Latin necessary for the Magyar Nation?' In a pamphlet entitled 'Musings Discussing the Necessity of the Magyar Tongue in the Magyar Homeland' Protestant minister and language reformer István Gáti (1749–1843) and geometric engineer István Vedres (1765-1830) jointly published their response.⁴⁶¹

Gáti wrote that each nation possessed a 'national character' which distinguished it from other nations, and which was shaped by climate, the natural environment, specific forms of sociability and child rearing, and various other determinants, which constituted a unique kind of national disposition or 'nature'. He asserted that each national character may be divided into separate 'bodily' attributes (forms of physical stature, attire, food, language, and manners of speaking); 'spiritual' attributes (specific intellectual characteristics and a form of 'will' or proclivity towards certain morals), and 'emotive' attributes (here referring to a nation's 'temperament'). However, language, although a 'physical' characteristic, could be polished, and as a medium of education that began from breastfeeding, possessed the greatest power to shape and give direction to all the other characteristics of individual people (including their physical attributes), and thus collectively shape the character of nations. The use of the vernacular engendered national unity and, because it was spoken by all social classes, was the best means of disseminating knowledge and achieving the nation's happiness: it was visibly obvious that the 'happiness' and 'polishing' of different nations had depended upon their achievements in polishing the vernacular (Gáti gives a number of examples, such as contemporary England, France, and Germany, as well as ancient Greece, and the ancient Hungarians under Attila, although the latter two had suffered after abandoning the development of their native tongues). Insofar as Latin documents remained in use within officialdom, Latin could continue to be studied by those in government or the church. Gáti then explained, however, that Latin cannot provide an 'eternal foundation' for the nation's future, as old Latin manuscripts would disappear in around three hundred years, due to rot, bookworms, fires, war, and

⁴⁶¹ István Gáti and István Vedres, *A' magyar nyelvnek a' magyar hazában szükséges voltát tárgyazó elmékedések* (Béts: Hummel Dávid, 1790). The pamphlet also contains the details of the essay competition.

other causes. Gáti thus combined the quasi-racial, identitarian vision of language with the utilitarian view through the metaphor of ‘physical’ development: although language was quasi-innately bound to the body, it could, like the body, be developed through what today we would call ‘exercise’. Gáti also gave a list of reasons given by those who were opposed to the vernacular cause and wished to retain Latin: the clergy (albeit mostly Catholics), who saw Latin as the vehicle of scripture and sacred tradition; the ‘envious’ (*Irigyek*), who wished to maintain their status through Latin and create a divide between the educated and the common man; those who argued that the vernacular would not allow for the effective keeping of state secrets from other nations; those who saw Hungarian as insufficiently developed to communicate new scientific ideas, and those who claimed the sanctity of Latin on the basis of its customary use since the foundation of the state. Rejecting these arguments in accordance with the ideas of communal politeness, solidarity, and the idea that the vernacular could be reformed while simultaneously creating an effective barrier of understanding between rival nations (thus helping to prevent espionage), he concludes with the hope that the nation would ‘awaken from its deep dream’ and focus all its energies on following the examples of other polished nations, and elevate the nation to its highest possible level of achievement.⁴⁶²

In the second response, István Vedres provided some more familiar arguments. He blamed Hungary’s backwardness on the use of Latin as the official language since the country’s very foundation. Both Athens and Rome had become great using their vernaculars, while in more recent times European countries had looked to England to learn new knowledge. The Germans had followed the English example and raised their vernacular to a high level, and thus it was now time for Hungary, lagging behind the Italians, English, French and Germans, to do the same and make the ‘national language’ the ‘common language’. Vedres also endorsed the common idea that people are favourably disposed to speaking their native tongue as they had learnt it with little effort from birth. Furthermore, although language divided mankind into different nations and countries, those nations could achieve ‘perfection’ and ‘glory’ if their vernacular tongues flourished. He claimed a great Hungarian patriot (who remains nameless in the text) once said (in a distinctly Herderian vein) that every nation has a unique ‘genius’ and ‘nature’ which is lost when it alters its language. Building on this idea, Vedres lamented the fact that many Hungarians living in Vienna—while not losing their individual ‘genius’ or ‘nature’ he

⁴⁶² Ibid. pp. 3-38.

adds—had by forgetting their native tongue dispossessed themselves of ‘everything that makes Magyars *Magyars*’.⁴⁶³ Thus, for Vedres, language built upon one’s innate talents and characteristics, but shaped the individual into the member of a recognizable community, with its own customs, traditions, and virtues. Indeed, he continues by invoking Montesquieu’s reflections on the way that music had supposedly altered the political character of the Greeks.⁴⁶⁴ Vedres claims the same is true of language, and that to change the language would change the ‘nature’ of the nation. He argued that if German had been introduced (following Joseph II’s decree), then the Hungarians would have all but forgotten King Andrew II’s charter of ‘Golden Liberty’.⁴⁶⁵ Vedres here overlooks the fact that this charter was issued in Latin, and he goes on to claim that if Latin were renounced and Hungarian reinstated to its ‘natural place’, then it would be possible for the Hungarians to return to the ‘natural but noble Characteristics of the Magyar nation that it possessed before the Conversion from our Pagan Religion made the Latin Tongue necessary in our dear Homeland.’ This would make the Hungarian nation truly ‘happy’, as it could then enjoy the possessions born of ‘sober-minded Magyar Liberty’. Ultimately, Latin was a ‘foreign’ imposition for Vedres, and the use of the vernacular would return the Magyars to a state of primordial virtue. Indeed, he goes on to argue that the reintroduction of the Magyar tongue would return the nation to ‘the condition that God and Nature ordained for the Magyars’. Without Magyar language, clothing, liberty, ancient Customs, and ‘Magyar nature’, Vedres claims, the nation would soon fall by the wayside, as had so many nations over the centuries.⁴⁶⁶ In this primordial, ‘ancient constitutional’ view then, the group identity of the Magyars was a given, an idealized condition that had been corrupted over time through foreign influence. Certainly, Vedres insisted that although Latin was useful for preserving ancient laws and rights and for communicating with foreign peoples, it had become too dominant over the past fifty years. This, and the increased number of foreign languages in the country (a reference to the increased numbers of migrants in the eighteenth century), had contributed to the ruin of the country. Multiple languages, he claimed, had contributed to sectionalism and warfare in the past, and only

⁴⁶³ Ibid. p. 50.

⁴⁶⁴ Presumably the sections in book 4 chapter 8 and book 14 chapter 2, both of which suggest that music exerts different effects on different peoples; in the first instance, music is seen to temper the otherwise exclusively warlike education of the Greeks, rendering them more gentle. Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, pp. 41; 233.

⁴⁶⁵ Gáti and Vedres, *A magyar nyelvnek*, p. 52

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 52-53.

in countries where one mother tongue, one style of clothing, and one religion predominated were ‘hearts in harmony’.

Thus, Vedres embedded his linguistic nationalism in the older discourses of ancient constitutionalism and republicanism. In his view, linguistic uniformity was the key to peace and the maintenance of internal unity. Furthermore, it was the key to a potential return to the past glories of the ancient Scythian-Huns. However, Vedres’ communal republican patriotism soon descended into ethno-linguistic chauvinism. He denounced Latin, as a *lingua franca*, for having allowed foreigners into governmental posts, while ‘patriots’ had been overlooked. So, language not only created internal unity, but also excluded unwanted outsiders, thus preserving internal integrity. Perhaps to justify his ethnocentric standpoint, Vedres turned to the familiar line of the ‘threat’ to the language. The mother tongue, he claimed, had become so endangered over the past years that it was on the verge of disappearing, or descending to the level of ‘Gypsy tongues’.⁴⁶⁷ This was not merely a xenophobic outburst, however, but also an attempt to illustrate once again through racial othering the idea of placelessness, that the vernacular had been reduced to the status of an itinerant (and thus ‘homeless’) and ignoble people who ranked lowly on the hierarchy of civilization. Returning to a more hopeful tone, Vedres concluded his impassioned, if prejudiced plea for the reintroduction of the vernacular by asserting his confidence in Leopold II, who he claims would support the nation’s endeavours to improve the language, as it engendered ‘happiness’, enhanced knowledge, encouraged reading and the foundation of learned societies, and thus improved crafts and commerce. Vedres insisted that Leopold was aware that ‘by changing the Mother Tongue, the Nation dresses itself in the Nature of the Language that it learns’. Thus, Vedres remained confident that Leopold would restore the Hungarian language, as he had no desire for the Hungarians to lose their ‘Magyar bravery or yearning for Glory.’ By elevating the Hungarian language and receiving it into the Royal Court from the Hungarian Plains, Vedres suggested that Leopold would win over the hearts of the peasantry, and firmly consolidate his rule.⁴⁶⁸

The relationship between language and clothing will be discussed below. For now, however, it is enough to point out how Vedres’ essay illustrates the ways in which the utilitarian and identitarian conceptions of language came to sit side by side in the era’s

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 66.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 69-70.

writings. Language could be an instrument of human perfectibility, but also the vehicle of the nation's primordial, ancient constitutional heritage. What is more, so long as the cultivation of the nation's language did not impinge upon the nobility's ancient virtues, reform could be reconciled with tradition, and could even serve the nation's greater 'glory'. In this way, the 'primordial' characteristics of the nation exerted a normatively 'coercive' role over the utilitarian development of the language; no matter how language was developed, the primordially-conceived 'ancient constitutional' virtues were to remain intact.

Perhaps the most influential and programmatic publication written on the language question, and one that was heavily indebted to the ideas of Bessenyei, was 'Pannonian Phoenix or the Magyar Tongue Resurrected from its Ashes', by the Protestant physician and journalist Sámuel Decsy (1742-1816).⁴⁶⁹ Addressed to the 'two noble Magyar homelands' of Hungary and Transylvania, the work sought to bring about the 'revival' (*meg-elevenítetése*) of the Hungarian language, and the advancement of civil and moral values. The metaphor of the phoenix was an obvious *topos* of national revival in the era: Decsy likened the dead bird that rose to life from the ashes to the Magyar tribes who had travelled from northern Asia and spent a number of centuries in Europe until the near death of their language. Indeed, in Decsy's view, his contemporaries had, in leaning towards foreign languages, 'completely departed from the glorious path of our ancestors' to the point that 'true Magyar blood no longer flows in our veins, and we are the authors of the cause of our own current unhappiness'.⁴⁷⁰ Once again, time had caused the corruption of the ancient Magyar bloodline. However, after beginning in a markedly 'ancient constitutional' vein, Decsy starts to incorporate the ideals of language reform and enlightenment sociability into his understanding of the language. For example, he claimed that after long periods of neglect, the language required refinement. At the same time, he also insisted that 'in the whole of Europe there is no more ornate, pleasant, kind-sounding, or suitable language for the expression of inner sensibilities than the Magyar language'.⁴⁷¹ Elaborating on this last point, Decsy explained how language can function as a marker of civilizational achievement. He argued that language distinguished man from 'insensible animals' (*oktalan állatok*), which could communicate simple thoughts but not speak. Indeed, it was only in the possession of man that language became the chief instrument of

⁴⁶⁹ Sámuel Decsy, *Pannóniai féniksz avagy hamvából fel-támadott magyar nyelv* (Béts: János Trattner, 1790).

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. iv.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. xii.

science, crafts, and sociability. Referring to the stadial model of historical progress common to the political language of politeness, Decsy asserted that the level of civilizational achievement attained by a given people may be ascertained by examining their language for identifiable traces of scientific and technological development.⁴⁷²

Continuing in the vein of enlightenment rationalism, Decsy rejected the theory of the Tower of Babel, and instead turned to a Montesquieuan explanation for linguistic diversity. He reasons that different languages arise as people settle in different regions with different climates and geographical conditions. At the same time, while there are many ‘mother tongues’ in the world, migration causes different languages to mix and become ‘daughter tongues’. In some cases, he claims, such as in the case of the French-speaking Asians, the mixed language becomes a ‘bastard’ tongue, incomprehensible even to speakers of the mother tongue.⁴⁷³ In this way, Decsy, a physician, is perhaps the first Hungarian vernacular writer to apply the ideas of climate determinism and racial interbreeding to the concept of language. Believing the Biblical account of linguistic origins inadequate to explain the linguistic diversity found in the world, Decsy instead attempts to align linguistic origins with geography and biology, pointing to the multiple ‘local’ origins of language creation, and also to the existence of a quasi-racial hierarchy between supposedly ‘pure’ and imperfect or ‘bastard’ tongues. Decsy’s musings on linguistic origins are thus unique among the period’s vernacular pamphlets in the way in which he combines polygenetic and climatic accounts of language genesis with the stadial theory of human progress to create a racialist theory of language.

Returning to the case of the Hungarian language, Decsy, like Bessenyei and so many of his contemporaries, argued that the best way to achieve happiness and encourage the sciences is to diligently reform the language and make it the country’s language of common use: ‘The foundation of every nation’s happiness is the advancement of its original language. On this depends the enlightenment of the mind, the dissemination of knowledge, the expansion of fine crafts, and the immortality of the nation’s fame’.⁴⁷⁴ He reassures his readers that for the purposes of science ‘our language is no less suitable than the French, German, or English languages’.⁴⁷⁵ At the same time, Decsy proudly exclaimed that ‘There is no other nation under God’s blue sky that can swear more colourfully and

⁴⁷² Similarly to Vedres, Decsy later illustrates this thesis by stating that he knows nothing about the origins of the ‘Gypsy’ language but does know that they are uncultured, ‘like their language’. *Ibid.*, p. 29-30.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

terribly than the Magyar'.⁴⁷⁶ For Decsy, it seems that profanity was a valued element of Hungarian national character.

As with many other writers, the *topos* of 'threat' to the language was also prominent in Decsy's work, leading him away from the ideals of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism, and closer to the ideals of 'national' particularism. Indeed, Decsy claimed that the Hungarian language had to be saved for the benefit of humanity, as it was a 'virgin language', here referring back to his analogy of creole languages as bastard 'mixed tongues', unlike the 'pure' Magyar vernacular. This notion of 'virginal' linguistic purity was, of course, a language myth, born of Decsy's ignorance of the actual properties of the language. Nevertheless, there was additional ideological import to the metaphor, and one that was aimed at inspiring metaphorical 'saviours' to come to the virginal language's rescue. If Hungarian was to disappear, he opines, then there would be one less language on the earth; furthermore, the only place the language could be saved was in Hungary, as it was not spoken anywhere else in the world. For this reason alone, Hungarian had to be made the public language of Hungary, even if to the detriment of Latin, German, or the Slavic languages, as those languages existed outside the country, and could thus not be erased. Thus, adopting an idea that had also been employed by the county assemblies in their protests against Joseph II's language reforms, he too claimed that non-Hungarian speakers must learn Hungarian if they want to 'eat the bread of the homeland'.⁴⁷⁷ He also reiterated Bessenyei and Révai's call to establish a new language academy and a Hungarian dictionary. These steps would also expunge bad usage from the language (in just over a decade) and thus help to preserve the language. In short, Decsy believed that the vernacular language could perform a unifying function, one that transcended religious denominations and fostered good governance.⁴⁷⁸

Thus, a nascent form of 'linguistic-national' consciousness had begun to present new choices of political commitment and anthropological explanation to the reading public. A common assumption was that the promotion of the vernacular should take place in order to achieve the *közjó* or public good.⁴⁷⁹ Such claims were not always made in a chauvinistic manner, as some authors were wholly optimistic about the Hungarian language's appeal as a vehicle of erudition. For example, Révai believed that with the help

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 48.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 171.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 171.

⁴⁷⁹ Ferenc Bíró, 'Magyarosítási szándékok 1790 körül', *Széphalom*, 19 (2009), 3-16.

of education, Serbs, Romanians, Germans and others would all voluntarily become 'adopted Hungarians'.⁴⁸⁰ However, with 'patriotic' emotion at near fever pitch at the time of the 1790 Diet, a number of the pamphleteers were more strident in their demands. For example, in a publication entitled 'The True Patriot, whose Characteristics are here Summarized in Simple Language by a Heart wishing the Best for his Nation and Homeland', the lawyer and translator Zsigmond Oswald (c. 1748-1825) argued that while everybody appeared to be talking about patriotism at the time of the Diet, nobody even knows its 'ABC', that is, its basic concepts. Oswald thus sets about providing a definitive set of facts on the matter.⁴⁸¹ He began by musing upon the country's 'constitution', here squarely discussed in terms of the hierarchical body politic of the *natio Hungarica*, and goes on to describe the desired relationship between Magyars and non-Magyars:

Nothing would be more fitting than for those who love Magyar bread to love and honour our language and thus our Nation! If it is immediately mandatory for us to obey the laws of foreigners the moment they enter into force in our country, then why is it not possible for us to force the inhabitants of our Homeland to learn the language of the land which provides the fat upon which they live? It should already suffice that there are many more Magyars than there are [members of] other Nations in Hungary and Transylvania, and thus it is only fitting that the smaller part should accommodate itself to the majority. The German and Slovakian Counties and the Royal Free Cities could be exempted from this law for a short time, and the Croatians [...] left to speak their born language.⁴⁸²

As we have now seen on multiple occasions, the link between language and bread was a common slogan in the pamphlets of the period. It would survive through to the nineteenth century reform era, and an offshoot even survives today in the proverbial expression *aki magyar kenyeret eszik, az beszéljen magyarul!* ('s/he who eats Hungarian bread must speak Hungarian!').⁴⁸³ Once again, language is linked to the chief source of political power and

⁴⁸⁰ Szekfű, *Iratok*, p. 25.

⁴⁸¹ Zsigmond Oswald, *Az igaz hazafi, kinek tulajdonságait együgyű beszédbe foglalta egy hazája 's nemzete javát óhajtó szív*, (Pest: Trattner Mátyás, 1792), pp. 1-2.

⁴⁸² Oswald, *Az igaz hazafi*, p. 24.

⁴⁸³ For example, in an 1826 literature review in the journal *Tudományos Gyűjtemény* [Scientific Anthology], the article claims 'Az Ország' Törvény-hozó Gyülekezetében arra kellene törekednünk: hogy a' Magyar nyelv kenyér nyelvvé legyen' ('In the Country's Legislative Assembly we should strive to turn the Hungarian

legitimacy in the eighteenth century: land. Those who enjoyed the fruits of agricultural labour should speak the language of the native majority. Indeed, Oswald also referred to the majority-minority dynamic, not by evoking the Hungarians' minority status on the international stage as Decsy had done, but rather by appealing to their majority status within the kingdom. In this case, he argued that the 'smaller part accommodates to the larger one'. Thus, the German and Slovakian-speaking counties and Royal Towns must gradually assimilate, although the Croats may be left with their language of birth, as they possess independent territorial status within the kingdom.

Even the later figurehead of the Hungarian literary and language reform movement, Ferenc Kazinczy, wrote in early 1790 that if Hungarian were to be introduced as the country's language then:

...our nation will become a unique nation, and an everlasting wall will be erected between Hungarian and non-Hungarian, and foreigners will either become Magyars among us or die of hunger; we will visibly progress in learning when our babes are given Hungarian tutors, and then in the crafts and sciences we will embark upon a fortunate and flourishing path, just like the Germans did after they parted with the dead Roman and foreign French tongues, and started to write books in their own tongue. To achieve this goal it is imperative and above all else desirable that youths in schools be taught in the Hungarian language.⁴⁸⁴

Kazinczy acknowledged that there are three or four counties in the Slovakian mountains where the nobility and the local notaries are unable to speak Hungarian. Then, similarly to Oswald, he suggested that young Hungarian nobles move to these areas and marry locals. Furthermore, the counties should communicate with each other in Hungarian and not Latin, and most importantly, non-Magyar children must study Hungarian at school. By adopting these measures, Kazinczy hoped that Hungarian would become the first (*első*) and common (*közönséges*) language in the country.⁴⁸⁵

What we may discern from all of these examples published around the time of the 1790/91 Diet is the evolution of the language question into a more rounded form of

language into a bread language'). András Thaisa, 'A hazai irodalom', *Tudományos Gyűjtemény*, XI (1826), 109-124 (120).

⁴⁸⁴ Szekfű, *Iratok*, p. 25-26.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.* p. 27.

linguistic nationalism. In particular, we may see the way in which elements from the discourses of language reform and politeness became intertwined with the ideas of the ‘ancient constitution’. Indeed, many of the texts alternated between or combined two concepts of ‘nation’, the first the ancient constitutional understanding of the *natio Hungarica*, and the second the linguistically-defined nation, and in many cases, the idea of the traditional *natio Hungarica* was subsumed within the linguistic understanding of the nation. In this way, the above texts may be seen to combine two core visions of proto-‘conservative’ and proto-‘liberal’ vernacular national identity that would continue to shape the contours of Hungarian cultural nationalism in the coming century.

The first, based upon a now linguistically-ethnically conceived ancient constitution, was an evolving form of ‘ethnic’ nationalism that foregrounded how individuals were deeply embedded in a pre-existing context, and that normatively embraced time-tested traditions and practices. Put simply, this vision of national identity predicated socio-political roles in the present upon pre-political, primordial modes of being (for example, Vedres claims that the adoption of Latin took place *after* the ‘original’, mythical age of the Huns, and that to use the vernacular was to return not only to an idealized linguistic, but also political past).

The second vision was a form of ‘cultural’ nationalism that shared many similarities with the former, but that downplayed the genealogical elements of shared descent, and rather highlighted the importance of language and the sciences, thus allowing ‘outsiders’ to join and demonstrate their loyalty to the nation. This latter attitude may be illustrated by the analogy of ‘clothing’ that appeared in many of the era’s texts (to be discussed in the following chapter)—the ‘national’ language may be donned (i.e. learned), just as one dons a specific form of attire to indicate one’s membership in a group. In this way, if one is not born Magyar, one could still adopt a particular national language as an expression of one’s voluntary commitment to that nation. Nevertheless, and as Vedres’s example may again illustrate, languages possessed a certain kind of ‘nature’ or inherent character, and thus to adopt a particular language was also to adopt the particular set of features that constituted its nature. What this implied was that the ‘nature’ of a given language was determined by the specific culture from which it originated. In turn, when one ‘donned’ a particular language, one also adopted the communal, cultural forms of behaviour of which that language was an expression. The way you behaved culturally was, in this view, determined by the language you spoke.

Another prominent feature of late eighteenth century linguistic nationalism is the way in which the articulation of nationhood through language was at once linked to questions of territorial possession. The fear of Habsburg-led 'Germanization' and national 'death' or displacement fuelled by Joseph II's language decree was now transforming into a more commonly-held fear of national (in Decsy's view, even racial) displacement. The metaphorical threat of national 'death' through vernacular language loss was twofold. On the one hand, linguistic 'death' entailed the nation's loss of a distinct form of cultural identity or 'character'. On the other hand, however, language loss was also linked to the nation's political displacement and loss of dominion over a particular 'home' or territory.

In the pamphlets of vernacular language reformers, the two positions became almost inextricably intertwined. On the one hand, it was often claimed that the vernacular language bound people together into a distinct nation. In this way, language was bound to a particular human community. On the other hand, however, the vernacular language was, through that community, bound to a distinct land. This was achieved by claiming that the vernacular language was part of the 'national character'. The corollary of this assertion is that early Hungarian linguistic nationalism was as much land-centred as it was language-centred, as the nation's members viewed their language as a repository of cultural memories and knowledge that was attached to a specific terrain. This terrain, and not the polity or language itself, was the principle focus of the nation's belonging, constituting its natural 'home'. It provided its occupants not only with sustenance, but also self-recognition and certainty of purpose. Hence the frequent equation of language loss to notions of 'homelessness' and 'vagrancy', and hence also the frequent references to 'bread'. If 'foreigners' (as they were now conceived) wished to eat, metaphorically speaking, from the table of the nation's homeland, then they too must respect the rules, customs, and of course language spoken within that home.

As noted above, what this 'grounding' of the nation often entailed was the right of the now linguistically-conceived Magyars to collectively exert dominance over those peoples of the Holy Crown who did not speak Hungarian, and who did not have a history of legally-sanctioned territorial autonomy with the Kingdom. To illustrate, in a pamphlet campaigning for vernacular reform and the establishment of a chair in Hungarian at the University of Pest, the physician József Kiss (1765-1830) argued the following in a chapter entitled 'All men who seek or possess Magyar titles and Magyar freedom are obliged to learn Hungarian':

It is a thing of amazement that the Slovaks and Croatians are so opposed to the establishment of the Hungarian language, and that they do not consider that the Country is not Slovakia, or Croatia, but *Hungary*; and Hungary is named after the Hungarian nation, and the living language of the Hungarian nation is not Slovakian or Croatian, but Hungarian.⁴⁸⁶

Only a few pages earlier, however, Kiss had argued that the polishing of the language was imperative because 'There is no better means for Despotism than the ignorance of Nations', as ignorance reduced people into servility.⁴⁸⁷ Thus, identitarian and instrumental perspectives, rather than functioning as mutually-inconsistent, polar opposites, often became co-constitutive values of national identity in the texts of late eighteenth-century language reformers. The national language was at once to function as an instrument of rationality, of trans-local unity and progress, *and* as a marker of historical-national identity and territorial belonging.

Of course, not everyone shared the same vision of 'national' progress or identity or redrew the boundaries of collective identity in accordance with exclusively ethnolinguistic criteria. Leó Szaitz, for example, a fierce opponent of the Enlightenment and Josephinism, agreed with language reformers that the political status of the Hungarian language should indeed be improved. However, the introduction of Hungarian as a common language, he argued, should be conditional upon three criteria. The first was that it should not involve the extension of political rights to the lower classes which concurred with other language reformers such as Bessenyei. The second was that only Catholics could be true Hungarians and members of the national community, an assertion he evidenced with the folk-etymological argument that the ethnonym 'Magyar' and the name *Mária* ('[Virgin] Mary') were historically one and the same word. Finally, and with similarly haughty condescension, Szaitz insisted that non-Hungarian speakers may be tolerated within the country, although they could never constitute part of the Hungarian nation.⁴⁸⁸ Thus, in Szaitz's view, the vernacular was bound not only to the soil through the people that both

⁴⁸⁶ *A' nemes magyar nemzethez rövid emlékeztető beszéd, mellyben meg-mutattatik, hogy Magyar-országban lehet, 's kell-is a' magyar nyelvet, és a' magyar tanításokat fel-állítani, és hogy az universitásnak Pest leg-jobb hely* (s.l.: s.n., 1790), p. 13. The pamphlet was published anonymously. On the probability of Kiss's authorship see Lajos Némedi, 'Egy 1790-es röpiratunk szerzősége', *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, 67.5 (1963), 596-598.

⁴⁸⁷ *A' nemes magyar nemzethez*, p. 3.

⁴⁸⁸ Leó Szaitz, *Micsoda vallású volt Szent István király?* ([n.p.], [n. pub.], 1790).

spoke it and who held dominion over the land, but also to the Catholic church, which also possessed historical and spiritual ties to the realm.

Other differences of opinion existed over the ways in which the activities of writers and language reformers might be seen to benefit the nation. For example, the writers Count Pál Ráday (1768-1827) and László Kelemen (1762-1814) approached Leopold II and the governing council at the time of the Diet with the aim of establishing a Hungarian-language theatre. Ráday proposed a 'moral theatre' along Sonnenfelsian lines, while Kelemen canvassed for a 'patriotic' theatre which would stage plays focusing on Hungarian history.⁴⁸⁹ Leopold II, however, did not back the cause of a 'patriotic' theatre, and so the writers turned instead to the Hungarian nobility to support their idea of a 'national theatre'. However, Kelemen's presentation of the idea to the Diet was met with prevailing prejudices against the theatre as a den of affectation and foppery. Outraged traditionalists initially accused him of 'treason' and 'madness' for suggesting that Hungarians should become 'acrobats and comedians'. Others claimed that the Hungarian language was too precious an instrument to be used as a vehicle for undignified theatrical purposes. But when Kelemen explained that the theatre was to be used as an institution for the establishment of 'good moral values' and the cultivation of the Hungarian language, he was roundly cheered and lauded as a true patriot, even as a 'saviour of the Hungarian language'. Eventually, the writers succeeded in creating the 'National Players' Society' (*Nemzeti Játzó Társaság*), the first Hungarian-language theatrical society in Buda. The venture would, however, prove short-lived, as the theatre company shut down in 1796 following financial difficulties and creative differences among its members.⁴⁹⁰

Finally, it is important to remember that many members of the nobility remained opposed to the introduction of the vernacular in many spheres of public life, as the anonymously published pamphlet 'The Protected Magyar Tongue, or a Dialogue on the Necessity of Latin' (1790) written by Bessenyei's fellow Royal Bodyguard, alchemist, and translator of French literature, Sándor Báróczi (1735-1809) reveals.⁴⁹¹ At the outset of the work, Báróczi states his position in support of the Hungarian language. However, he also lists a number of objections that we may suppose were presented by those opposed to the

⁴⁸⁹ Ferenc Kerényi, *Magyar Színháztörténet* (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1990), p. 61.

⁴⁹⁰ Krisztina Lajosi, *Staging the Nation: Opera and Nationalism in 19th-Century Hungary* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), p. 38.

⁴⁹¹ *A' védelmezett magyar nyelv, vagyis a' deákság mennyire szükséges voltáról való kettős-beszélgetés* (Béts: Hummel, 1790).

plan. The first argument was the richness of available literature in Latin, while the second was that the Hungarian nation was Christian, and that the holy scriptures were taught by the Catholic church in Latin. A third reason was that the best philosophical and rhetorical works were also written in Latin. For these reasons, it was argued that Latin lent itself better to reason and argumentation. Báróczi indeed proclaimed ‘that he who does not know Latin will never become a complete man!’⁴⁹² What is more, he conceded that the Hungarian nation had used Latin as the language of law since the country’s conversion to Christianity, and that documents pertaining to legal disputes, matters of property ownership, royal donations and so on, were all written in Latin. Indeed, the very liberties (here in the plural referring to noble liberties and privileges) of the Hungarian homeland were penned in Latin. And when Latin was recently threatened by German, it appeared to many that those liberties would disappear along with the Latin language. Would not the same danger arise following a switch to Hungarian? Surely that too would result in the upturning of the existing constitutional order! Báróczi continues to explain the concerns of his contemporaries. A further important consideration was that Hungary was a multinational country. What would become of the Croats, Dalmatians, and Slavonians? What of the Poles, Galicians, Lodomerians, and those from Bukovina? At present, Báróczi claimed, they wish to live under Hungarian law, but if a switch to Hungarian was made they would only lose their offices and revert to their own native languages. Would the union between, for example, the Croats and the Hungarians remain?⁴⁹³

Reading between the lines, it would seem that more linguistically conservative speakers were aware of the problems with renouncing Latin. They saw it was a chief component of *Hungarus* consciousness that bound different peoples to the laws of the kingdom. Perhaps, as Mihály Szajbély argued, the Hungarian language reformers of the late eighteenth-century reformers did not fully understand the weight of these problems.⁴⁹⁴ Even Báróczi, in providing answers to some of the questions he lists, could only respond with a utopian vision for the future. He argued that, on realising the benefits of implementing a reformed Hungarian language, members of other nations would gladly spend a few years learning the language, especially when they lived in a country that helped them achieve greater happiness than elsewhere. To prevent the eradication of other

⁴⁹² Ibid., p. 14.

⁴⁹³ Ibid. pp. 11-16.

⁴⁹⁴ Szajbély, *Az anyanyelv helye*, p. 50.

languages, he argues, children could be swapped between different families, so that all the kingdom's languages could enter into common usage.⁴⁹⁵

Thus, the clarion calls to support the 'national language' in the leadup to the 1790/91 Diet concealed a number of internal divisions over what exactly was to be understood by the term. With so many different understandings, how would the issue be resolved at the Diet?

7.1.1 The Language Question at the 1790/91 Diet

Amidst the hullabaloo surrounding the Diet, Miklós Révai once again saw an opportunity to promote his idea for a literary society. He republished Bessenyei's *Humble Proposal* to coincide with the opening of the Diet, and with the support of the bishop of Győr, he travelled to Buda, where he intended to promote the establishment of a literary society. On 6 June 1790, the Diet was opened, and in an unprecedented fashion, Cardinal József Batthyány, Primate of Hungary and head of the Upper Table, and the King's *personalis* József Ürményi, presiding over the Lower Table, gave their opening speeches in Hungarian.

The language question was first raised at the second session of the Diet on 11 June. Then, at the Lower Table, the nobility pushed for the use of the 'Magyar Mother Tongue', not only in the Diet's official records, but in general, as the language of deliberation at the Diet and more broadly, in public affairs. Opponents argued that it would alienate other nationalities, and hinder the 'reincorporation' of Galicia and Lodomeria, where nobody spoke Hungarian.⁴⁹⁶ The Croatian delegates stated that they had allied with a Hungarian kingdom in which all public affairs were conducted and laws decreed in the 'language of scholars, Latin'. If Latin were to be abolished, then the Croats would be deprived of their right to voice their opinions.⁴⁹⁷

However, the Lower Table, noting the successes of other countries in using the vernacular (which had led to the 'flourishing' of their languages, as well as increased 'unity' and 'patriotic zeal'), decided that it was unavoidable to begin introducing the

⁴⁹⁵ *A védelmeztetett magyar nyelv*, p. 41.

⁴⁹⁶ Established as a crownland of the Habsburg Monarchy in 1772 after the first partition of Poland, but claimed by the Hungarian nobility as one of their own crownlands

⁴⁹⁷ Imre Mikó, *A magyar államnyelv kérdése az országgyűlés előtt 1790-1825* (Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, 1943), p. 21.

vernacular. The decision was thus made to use Hungarian at the Lower Table, while proposing its introduction in public offices, and having it taught in primary schools in all the lands of the Holy Crown. Those who did not speak Hungarian at the Diet were allowed to use Latin.⁴⁹⁸ It was also decided to write the Diet's official records in Hungarian for the first time, with a Latin translation prepared by a Royal Judge and representatives of the country's four 'districts' or county agglomerations⁴⁹⁹ for non-Hungarians.

In the third session the Croats once again objected that they would be excluded from deliberations, and requested that they and other non-Hungarian-speaking delegates should be allowed to continue using Latin. They also protested against teaching Hungarian in their schools as there were no Hungarian speakers there. Finally, they expressed concerns over the accuracy of translated materials in the records. If the diary was written in both Hungarian and Latin, they claimed 'it would be difficult to hope for their perfect concordance of meaning'. Although it had been established that the 'dignity of the Magyar Mother tongue desires that the daily records originally be written in Hungarian', the solution proposed was to have a member of the King's Bench translate the text into Hungarian and then have the translation proof-read by a select group. The resulting translation would be published with the official endorsement *Authentica Verfio Diarii Hungarici, Auctoritate Comitiorum Regni procurata* in the colophon. With the records of 1790-91 the first to be printed in their entirety, a further question arose as to whether the Latin translation should also be published. The answer was affirmative, as it was feared that fake texts could be promulgated without the official seal of approval.⁵⁰⁰

As the details of the language law were further discussed at the Diet, the Croats faced increasing pressure to modify their stance. However, the Ban of Croatia, János Erdődy (1733-1806) backed up their protestations more forcefully in a petition drafted in August 1790 and subsequently submitted to the Diet.⁵⁰¹ Drawing upon ancient constitutional ideas, he stated that the conquering Hungarians did not populate the Carpathian Basin alone but brought colonists into the country and allowed them to

⁴⁹⁸ From the official records. The version used is: *Naponként-való jegyzései az 1790dik esztendőben felséges Ildik Leopold tsászár, és magyar országi király által, szabad királyi várossába Budára, Szent Jakab Havának 6dik napjára rendelt, 's Szent András Havának 3dik napjára Posony királyi várossába által-téetett, 's ugyan ott, következő 1791dik esztendőben, Bőjt-Más Havának 13dik napján bé-fejezett magyar ország gyűlésének* (Buda: Királyi Akademia, 1791), hereafter 'NVJ, 1790/91', p. 20.

⁴⁹⁹ See Appendix B.

⁵⁰⁰ NVJ 1790/91, pp. 30-31.

⁵⁰¹ The petition was entitled 'Declaratio ex parte Nunciorum regni Croatiae, quoad introducendam Hungaricam linguam'. Hrvoje Jurčić, 'Das ungarisch-kroatische Verhältnis im Spiegel des Sprachenstreites 1790—1848', *Ungarn-Jahrbuch*, 3 (1971), 69-87 (72).

maintain their own language and institutions as ordained by the laws of St Stephen. Thus, the language of rule was not Hungarian, but Latin. It could not be hoped that the king would be able to learn Hungarian any time soon and it would not be in the public interest if the king did not understand the rescripts sent to him. However, the overwhelming reason cited against the motion by Erdődy, and one that was somewhat overstated, was that only one third of the population spoke Hungarian in the country. Not counting the peasantry, he argued that more people could read and write in Latin than in Hungarian in the Royal Free Towns. For these reasons Erdődy provocatively asserted it would be easier to introduce French or Italian than Hungarian—these were at least literary languages, while Hungarian literature consisted only of translations. Next, Erdődy evoked the idea of the social contract that was common to much of the era's political discourse, and argued that the Croatian alliance with Hungary was based upon the common use of Latin, and that this arrangement could only be changed with the consent of both parties. The following arguments made by the Ban foreshadowed the many problems of the nineteenth-century programmes of Magyarization. Even if Croatia was allowed to continue using Latin, he pointed out that the country's representatives would then be excluded from debating common issues at the Diet. Furthermore, the Croats argued that they could not be forced to learn Hungarian because it would be a sign of servitude; this at a time when the Hungarians themselves were protesting against the forced introduction of the German language. Finally, it was not only Croatia, but Bulgaria,⁵⁰² Bosnia, Wallachia, Galicia, and Lodomeria that had allied with Hungary on the basis of their Slavic and Latin heritage, and provinces that had been lost through conquest could not be regained if Hungarian were introduced as the language of government. Finally, Erdődy argued that the introduction of Hungarian as a uniform language of governance could only be ordained with the unanimous decision of the Hungarian Royal Free Towns and counties, and even their opinions were divided. For these reasons, the introduction of Hungarian was neither useful nor expedient for the country as a whole.⁵⁰³

It is important to note here that Erdődy's objections were not born of ethnonational sentiment. Indeed, the Croatian delegates had arrived at the Diet with the express intention of creating a close connection with Hungary. At a recent Zagreb county assembly, Count Nikola Skerlec (1731-1797), a proponent of the Austrian cameralist

⁵⁰² Due to the Ottoman wars, large communities of Bulgarians had settled in Hungary, many in the Banat.

⁵⁰³ See also Marczali, *Az 1790/1. Országgyűlés*. I, pp. 373-376, and Mikó, *A magyar államnyelv*, pp. 9-10.

school and a prominent expert on the country's laws,⁵⁰⁴ had given a well-publicized speech in which he argued that 'We have to connect with Hungary through an indissoluble bond' so that 'the executive power will not be able to overstep its boundaries'.⁵⁰⁵ Although the Croats had retained the right to decide upon the taxes to be paid by the kingdoms of Croatia and Slavonia, their experiences under the rule of Joseph II led them to fear that they would not be able to offer effective resistance to the Vienna court without the support of the Hungarian estates. Therefore, out of self-interest, they renounced the Kingdom of Croatia's centuries-old right to decide on their country's taxation levels. The instructions given to the Croatian delegates ordered them instead to push for all matters of taxation to be discussed at the 'common' Diet, and nowhere else.⁵⁰⁶ A further express directive given to the delegates by the Croatian Sabor was that the 'unlawful' patent of Joseph II on the liberation of peasants must be withdrawn, because otherwise the nobility 'cannot live'.⁵⁰⁷

With regard to the language question, the Croats were able to achieve partial success (with the support of the Royal Court), since the final bill concluded that the official records were to be taken both in Hungarian and in Latin, and that those who did not speak Hungarian were allowed to use Latin at the Diet. Nevertheless, following the Diet, the Croatian Estates also introduced the Hungarian language as an optional subject in Croatian colleges and secondary schools. The first teacher of Hungarian arrived in Zagreb in 1791, and a grammar of the Hungarian language was written for Croatian students.⁵⁰⁸

Moreover, the strength of the 'linguistic nationalism' discourse in the Diet was underscored by the reform proposals put forward, during the debates with the Royal Court over the *diploma inaugurale*, by the Trans-Tisza county agglomeration. Not only did it compel the king to swear to preserve the Hungarian language and refrain from importing any foreign language into the country, but it also required the heir to the throne and the royal princes to learn Hungarian. With the exception of criminal laws, it stated that all other laws should be enacted in Hungarian, and that the Hungarian language would be used by all political, as well as judicial, financial, and military institutions. Only the Croatian and Slovakian counties were allowed to retain the use of Latin as they pleased.

⁵⁰⁴ Also a Croatian delegate at the Diet of 1790/91, Skerlec himself had been broadly sympathetic to Joseph II's reforms, although from 1784 became dissatisfied with Joseph's attempts to curtail the rights of the estates. See Trencsényi and others, *A History*, p. 51.

⁵⁰⁵ Jurčić, 'Das ungarisch-kroatische Verhältnis', p. 70.

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

The proposals from the Trans-Danubian and Cis-Danubian districts were much more moderate, but also demanded the introduction of the Hungarian language in the administration. In the end, it was the radical Trans-Tiszan proposal that was adopted by the Diet's mixed commission and submitted to the king almost word for word, although a paragraph was added demanding the teaching of the Hungarian language in secondary schools and the teaching of 'official writing' at the university.⁵⁰⁹

The proposal was flatly rejected by Leopold II, who stood his ground by accepting only the diploma used by Maria Theresa (discussed below). Nevertheless, the language issue was further discussed in the lower house, and once again Erdődy, along with the Bishop of Zagreb, opposed the Hungarian demands. The Hungarian nobility argued that they did not wish to impose a language law upon Croatia, but that the Croats could not wish for the Hungarians to miss an opportunity to further their own 'glory' and 'utility'.⁵¹⁰

Despite Leopold's rejection of the Hungarian estates' proposal, he signalled that he was open to negotiate well-grounded complaints. Sándor Pászthory (1749-1798) an advisor to the Hungarian Royal Court Chancellery, toned down the estates' demands in a rescript for the king, but omitted the Croats' protestations to present the illusion of a united front to Leopold. The rescript did suggest that Latin would remain the language of governmental institutions for the time being (*nunc adhuc*), but essentially paved the way for the introduction of the vernacular as the estates had demanded. Nevertheless, the estates protested, and their inflexibility gave opponents of the plan time to prepare their response. József Izdenczy (1724-1811),⁵¹¹ a state minister at the Hungarian Royal Court Chancellery, and nemesis of the noble opposition, repeatedly pointed out to the estates' representatives that if the wishes of the Hungarian Diet were to be fulfilled, then the German ministry would be forced to renounce all influence over Hungarian affairs. Furthermore, non-Hungarians, who Izdenczy claimed outnumbered Hungarians three to one, would also be excluded from public office. Of course, Izdenczy and his associates were less concerned with the rights of the 'nationalities' of Hungary, and more with the unity of the Habsburg monarchy which, if not German, then at least Latin could help sustain. Izdenczy similarly used ancient constitutional arguments against the Hungarian

⁵⁰⁹ Mikó, *A magyar államnyelv*, pp. 10-11.

⁵¹⁰ NVJ 1790/91, p. 155.

⁵¹¹ Born in Zborov (now Slovakia) Izdenczy was educated in Eger, and then made secretary to Archbishop of Esztergom Ferenc Barkóczy (1710-1765). He worked his way up through the administration, and in 1776 was appointed state advisor on Hungarian affairs at the Hungarian Royal Court Chancellery by Joseph II.

estates, citing the familiar Admonitions of St Stephen, which claimed that monolingual realms were weak and feeble. According to Izdenczy, the first Hungarian king realized that the country could only be governed successfully in Latin, and thus, the introduction of the Hungarian vernacular ran contrary to the traditions of the ancient constitution. Izdenczy, recognizing the divisive potential of the language issue, played non-Hungarians against the Hungarian estates' newfound linguistic-nationalist ethos. He was not the only court loyalist who opposed the estates. Count Ferenc Balassa (1736–1807), former Ban of Croatia and now head of the Illyrian Court Chancellery, similarly explained in a petition to the king that the introduction of the Hungarian language would not only undermine royal authority, but also sink the country back into medieval barbarism, deterring German colonists from settling in the country.⁵¹²

Eventually, Leopold compromised with the estates over a watered-down version of their initial demand, which gave rise to Law XVI of 1791.⁵¹³ There was no mention of the King, the heir to the throne or the Archdukes having to learn Hungarian, no demand for the laws to be made in Hungarian, and no call for local governmental institutions to correspond in the vernacular with the central authorities. However, the law also omitted any mention of the rights of Croatian, Slovakian, or any other nationalities to use their own languages which left a lacuna in the law that would prove ominous with regard to the future of the language question in Hungary.

In addition to the first language law, a new practice arose that would prove significant for future generations. This was the compilation—and in 1791 for the first time the printed publication—of the *diarium*, the official record of the proceedings of the lower house, which also contained vital information upon the *gravamina* and *postulata* submitted for review by the upper house, and eventually forwarded for endorsement, modification, or rejection, by the king. As the range of materials compiled was broad, the diaries—alongside the compendium of documents submitted for use at the Diet known as *Dolgok és Munkák* ('Items and Works')⁵¹⁴—could serve as reference works for later generations, as they not only recorded the resolutions of legal disputes, but also provided detailed accounts of coronations, oaths, and other matters pertaining to ceremonial protocol. From

⁵¹² Mikó, *A magyar államnyelv*, p. 12; Szekfű, *Iratok*, p. 47.

⁵¹³ See Appendix A.

⁵¹⁴ The edition referred to here is *Az 1790-dik esztendőben Budán tartott ország gyűlésének alkalmatosságával írásba bé-nyújtott s köz tanátskozás alá vett dolgok és munkák, mellyek azon ország gyűlésének naponként-való jegyzéseihez tartoznak* (Vienna: Hummel János Dávid, 1791). Hereafter 'Dolgok és munkák'.

a linguistic point of view, the Diet's official diaries contain thousands of pages of material written in Hungarian, and they thus played a significant role in establishing and maintaining 'conventional' forms of the written language, a fact overlooked by many later analysts.⁵¹⁵

However, despite the nobility's achievements in the above fields, no centralized literary society for the cultivation of Hungarian was established. Once again, on 18 November 1790, the indefatigable Révai had petitioned the king, submitting a revamped version of his earlier proposal in Latin to the young Archduke Joseph, Leopold's seventh son and future palatine of Hungary.⁵¹⁶ The following year he also printed a list of recommended candidates for official discussion.⁵¹⁷ As was the case with many proposals made at the 1790/91 Diet, however, Révai's plan was handed over to the regular committees, which were established by law LXVII of 1791, and whose job it was to prepare reform bills for subsequent discussion. It was with them that his plan remained buried until 1825.⁵¹⁸

7.2 National Attire: The Language of 'Sartorial Nationalism'

The second chief slogan of the nobility in the lead-up to the Diet was that of *nemzeti ruha* 'national attire'. While the idea of clothing or attire may at first seem somewhat far removed from the conceptualizations of 'language' described above, there was a much closer connection between the understandings of language and clothing in the eighteenth century than one might expect. Indeed, in the words of Terry Castle, 'The eighteenth century perceived a deep correspondence between the two: not only was language the "dress" of thought—that lucid covering in which the mind decorously clothed its ideas—but clothing was in turn a kind of discourse.'⁵¹⁹ Clothing, like language, was a system of signs and a means of symbolic communication. And as with language, the meanings read

⁵¹⁵ Péter Király, *Az országgyűlési nyelv 1790-1827* (Szombathely: Berzsenyi Dániel Főiskola, 2000), pp. 132-133.

⁵¹⁶ Miklós Révai, *Planum erigendae eruditae societatis hungaricae alterum elaboratius* (Viennae: Johannis Davidis Hummel, 1790).

⁵¹⁷ Miklós Révai, *Candidati erigendae eruditae societatis hungaricae et ratio facti in ea promovenda progressus* (Jaurini: Josephi Streibig, 1791).

⁵¹⁸ György Aranka submitted a similar plan to the Transylvanian Diet in 1791 and succeeded in establishing the *Erdélyi Magyar Nyelvmívelő Társaság* 'Transylvanian Society for the Cultivation of the Hungarian Language' in 1793 in Târgu Mures. Despite the founders' intentions, with limited funds and no library, the Society collapsed in 1801. Pintér, *Magyar irodalomtörténete*, IV, pp. 107-109.

⁵¹⁹ Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), p. 55.

into clothes were based upon convention, that is to say they were based upon cultural, rather than ‘natural’ or non-artificial forms of inscription. In the more socially static world of the eighteenth century, dress played an important social role, signalling information about an individual’s social status, occupation, religious or ethnic affiliation within the various hierarchically-ascribed levels of society. As such, dress symbolized rank, and signified the hierarchical order among humankind, as well as one’s functional role in society. But clothing was not merely a symbol of outward differentiation and distinction. Indeed, it was also seen to be indicative of an individual’s moral character. In this way, specific sartorial practices became anchored to certain sets of moral values, as one’s dress was seen to ‘speak’ of the human underneath. In this way, the social conventions of dress led to a kind ‘sartorial social contract—an implicit agreement that individuals in society will wear revelatory, “communicative” garments.’⁵²⁰ This presupposition, that individuals wore such ‘communicative’ forms of attire, led to the myth of the ‘legible body’, the idea that clothes reaffirmed, and did not obfuscate or mask the lineaments of the self.⁵²¹

However, during times of social change or turmoil, the established meanings of sartorial convention could be stripped of their referential functions. What is more, clothing could become a focal point of political antagonism, even resulting in more-or-less coherent forms of sartorial ‘ideology’. This often happened, as Gábor Klaniczay has observed, when representatives of a particular programme introduced new forms of dress, or attached uncustomary forms of emphasis to previously-existing meanings of attire.⁵²² In other words, sartorial codes could be challenged, exploited, manipulated, and even ‘violated’ by people of different political persuasions; clothing could be used to serve non-referential functions, to disguise, provoke, or subvert, creating a crisis of representation and a plurality of narrative ‘truths’ as to the identity ‘revealed’ by one’s appearance, each reflecting a different political position vis-à-vis pre-existing norms. Sartorial codes could thus be used to a variety of ends, to reaffirm or rebel against tradition, to tighten or relax social boundaries, and to emphasize notions of individual variability or collective uniformity. In this way, as Maxwell has observed, the symbolism of attire and the discourses accompanying clothing often reflect the diversity of political opinion at a given time in society. Furthermore, where notions of ‘national’ costume are involved, they may

⁵²⁰ Ibid., p. 56.

⁵²¹ Ibid., pp. 56-57.

⁵²² Gábor Klaniczay, ‘Öltözködés és ideológia a középkorban’, in *Divatszociológia*. 2 vols, ed. by Gábor Klaniczay and Katalin Nagy (Budapest: Tömegkommunikációs Kutatóközpont, 1982), II, pp. 7-35 (9).

reveal a wealth of detail about a variety of normative issues on topics such as social hierarchy, gender differences, and even the internal and external boundaries of the 'nation'.⁵²³

The ideology of 'national' clothing that emerged from roughly the 1780s onwards in Hungary may be seen to illustrate many of the above observations. On the one hand, 'traditional' forms of eighteenth-century Hungarian noble attire were believed to reflect the 'ancient constitutional', that is Scythian-Hunnic, martial virtues of the Hungarian ruling class.⁵²⁴ But 'national' attire of this sort had always sat uneasily alongside the Habsburg's monarchical ideology, and the vagaries of this relationship were reflected in the fortunes of 'national' forms of dress in the royal presence. For example, following the Rákóczi rebellion, 'Hungarian' styles of dress had been banned from the Royal court. However, this dynamic took a significant turn when, as noted above, Maria Theresa skilfully made political use of Hungarian garb in her appeal for military aid in 1741. Later, the uniforms of her Hungarian Guardsmen even became fashionable in Vienna in the 1760s.⁵²⁵

However, the rise of commercialism, trade, and handicrafts in Europe in the eighteenth century had seen a marked increase in the manufacture, marketing and consumption of fashionable goods, spurred on by the industrial revolution in Britain, and also the sartorial splendour of Louis XIV's court at Versailles, which launched a tide of emulation throughout the courts of Europe.⁵²⁶ In the Habsburg Empire, the appeal of French rather than Spanish forms of attire was further stimulated by the marriage of Maria Theresa's youngest daughter Marie-Antoinette to Louis-Auguste, heir to the French throne. Thus, it was during the years of peace and relative economic prosperity of Maria Theresa's rule that new *à la mode* 'fashions' also began to appear in Hungary, particularly via the mediation of the cosmopolitan imperial capital. In the seventies and eighties French and English fashions became especially *en vogue* in the monarchy, with affluent

⁵²³ Alexander Maxwell, *Patriots against Fashion* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 3.

⁵²⁴ While deriving elements from Italian, English, and other European styles of clothing, the oriental features of the Magyars' national clothing were, in most probability, derived from earlier contacts with the Ottoman Turks, much as in the case of the Polish 'Sarmatians', who developed a similar sense of eastern national identity, partly on the basis of exotic clothing. The fashion for oriental and 'Turkish' forms of attire was also popular in eighteenth-century Europe, including the Habsburg Empire. See János Szendrei, *A magyar viselet történeti fejlődése* (Budapest: MTA, 1905), p. 12.

⁵²⁵ Rózsa Nagy, *Magyar viselet a XVIII. századvégén és a XIX. század elején* (Budapest: Neuwald Könyvnyomda, 1912), pp. 5-6.

⁵²⁶ See W. H. Sewell, 'The Empire of Fashion and the Rise of Capitalism in Eighteenth-Century France', *Past & Present*, 206.1 (2010), 81-120.

noble ladies spending lavishly on elaborate dresses and haircuts, and well-to-do men wearing powdered wigs, triangular hats, and buckled English shoes, sometimes even flaunting two watches to demonstrate their wealth.⁵²⁷

In Hungary, as elsewhere, the rise of *à la mode* 'fashions' provoked a series of debates on the new luxury consumption. Some criticized it as a sign of decadence and effeminacy, while others saw it as a sign of progress, comfort and prosperity. Thus, the scene was set for a clash between the nobility's traditional emphasis on republican virtues of simplicity, the simple life, and martial virtue, and the increased pomp and luxury associated not only with the royal court, but also the increasingly exuberant lifestyles of society's upper echelons. The clash between the two styles was noted by the French essayist and member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences August de Gérando, who observed in 1848:

It is curious [...] to see, in the castles of Hungary, the galleries of family portraits. The further we go back in time, they are originally only grave-looking oriental characters. The men bear a heroic countenance, as one would imagine those hardy cavalymen, who invariably ended up being killed in action against the Turks; the women are as austere and sad as indeed they probably would have been.

From Maria Theresa onwards, there is a complete change in the physiognomy and expression of these characters. It is fairly obvious that these people have attended the Viennese Court, and have learned good manners. The contrast is striking in the portrait of a magnate who first married a German girl. The Hungarian, standing alone, occupies a corner of the canvas. He stands there, dignified, his left hand curved over the handle of his sabre; his right hand holding a mace. Magnificent spurs are nailed to his yellow boots. He wears a long, braided dolman, and hussar's breeches embroidered with gold. Over his shoulder is a rich pelisse or tiger skin. His black moustache hangs like that of a Turk, and his long hair falls down in loops about his neck. There is something of the barbarian in this man. His wife, sitting in courtly dress, is in the middle of the picture. She rules and she dominates. Close to her chair stand the children, who already have blue eyes and Austrian lips. The children are by her, and her alone. They are powdered like

⁵²⁷ Nagy, *Magyar viselet*, pp. 5-6.

her, look like her, surround her, and they speak to her. Naturally, they speak German.⁵²⁸

Gérando's description reveals much about how different conceptions of noble identity were both internalized, understood, and gendered during the era. On the one hand, the image of the eastern, sabre-wielding Hungarian nobleman may help us to visualize how the 'republican' virtues of military prowess were represented through the cultivation of an exotic and quasi-Turkic 'Scythian' identity. At the same time, it helps us to see how a stereotypically 'eastern' form of Magyar noble identity stood in stark contrast to the *belles manières* of the Viennese royal court. But the theme de Gérando appears to have touched upon was not merely that the militaristic 'eastern' Magyars were being successfully paired through marriage with the ladies of Viennese high society. Rather, it was that Viennese hegemony was prevailing through the domination of the domestic sphere, and the 'Germanization' of the nation's children. In this way, 'manly' virtue stood in almost diametric opposition to the 'feminine' qualities of politeness, manners, and of course the domestic sphere, all of which by extension represented the influence of the female-led royal court. Certainly, Maria Theresa was careful to cultivate an image of herself as a caring mother and loving wife, in addition to a political iconography as a powerful ruler. Gender thus played an important role in her self-representation, and she often ascribed both 'motherly' female and 'heroic' male qualities to her persona, blending the two. Her official Hungarian title, *Domina et Rex noster*, perhaps represented this dual nature of her representation: she was to be seen as both monarch *and* mother to her subjects.⁵²⁹

The real and symbolic distance between the monarchical centre and the rural Hungarian nobility would have a series of knock-on effects during the reign of Joseph II. As noted above, a social cleavage began to emerge between the middle and lesser nobility, who remained closely tied to their land in Hungary, and their aristocratic counterparts, who enjoyed positions of influence close to the royal court, and who often resided in

⁵²⁸ Auguste de Gérando, *De l'Esprit Public en Hongrie depuis la Révolution Française* (Paris: Imprimeurs-Unis, 1848), pp. 17-18

⁵²⁹ As a contemporary pamphlet claimed: 'Our glorious reigning monarch shows the whole living world, to the credit of the female sex, that the greatest art of all arts, the art of governing countries, is not too difficult for women. She is a woman and a mother of her country, in the same way as a sovereign can be a man and a father of his land.' Anne-Marie Metzger, 'The Reigning Woman as a Heroic Monarch? Maria Theresa Traced as Sovereign, Wife, and Mother', in *Tracing the Heroic Through Gender*, ed. by Carolin Hauck and others (Würzburg: Ergon, 2018), pp. 177-200, (pp. 182; 188).

Vienna, where they adopted foreign languages and fashions, spoke French, and even adopted the German language and manners of the Habsburg court.⁵³⁰

It was thus within a context of increasing novelty and social fragmentation, both political and sartorial, that a polarized and politicized opposition began to emerge between understandings of 'traditional' Hungarian and 'foreign' forms of novel attire. Just as language had become a symbol of 'national character', and thus of difference and autonomy from 'German' and other foreign influences in the 1780s, so too did the donning of 'national' dress come to serve as a means of creating symbolic boundaries between the autochthonous, 'patriotic' body politic, and the 'foreign', whether that was defined as the Habsburg monarchy, or the unfamiliar fashions of the largely urban elite. And just as the identitarian vision of the 'national' language mostly revolved around the nobility's self-conception of their own Scythian origins, so too did 'national' forms of dress become associated with the warrior myths of the ancient Magyars.

A number of poets (such as Ábrahám Barcsay and Lőrinc Orczy) had begun to write about the emerging polarities between notions of luxury and traditional stoicism in the 1770s, often contrasting the pomp of wealth of Vienna with the ancient noble-national virtues. But perhaps the earliest poetic innovator to combine the idea of attire with the warrior myths of the noble *communitas regni* was Pál Ányos (1756-1784), the sentimentalist poet and monk of the Pauline Fathers who famously dubbed Joseph as the 'hatted king' for avoiding coronation. Well-known as one of the first vernacular poets to start writing anti-Habsburg verse, Ányos, like the Jesuits Ferenc Faludi (1704-1779) and Dávid Baróti Szabó (1739-1819), was opposed to Joseph's ecclesiastical reforms, even though many Protestant writers were impressed by Joseph's stance on toleration.⁵³¹ Before the university moved to Buda in 1777, Ányos had begun studying theology in Trnava, although he frequently attended the mathematics lectures of András Dugonics (1740-1818), a purist language reformer and later author of the first Hungarian best-seller, *Etelka* (1788), a historical romance reaching back to Árpád's conquest of Hungary that included a thinly-veiled, anti-German critique of Joseph II. Dugonics was well-known for his chaotic style of teaching, controversially holding many of his classes in Hungarian, and often suddenly switching to tales of Greek mythology and the similarly mythical history of the Hungarian conquest. Inspired by the national origin myths of his forebears, Ányos took a dim view

⁵³⁰ Rábel, *Hivatalos nyelviújk*, p. 48.

⁵³¹ Ferenczi, *A remény zuhatagja*, p. 118.

of his fellow students' preoccupation with foreign dress. In a poem entitled *A' régi magyar viseletről* ('On Old Hungarian Attire') he urged his fellow students, the 'noble youth' of Trnava, to adhere to the sartorial traditions of their ancestors.⁵³² Combining classical allusion (often in the republican vein) with ancient constitutional *topoi*, Ányos implored his male compatriots to reject the 'aping' of foreign fashions, and to pay credence to 'Scythian blood' by wearing 'true Hungarian attire', donning shakos, and plaiting their hair. Alluding to the myth of Scythian ferocity and martial domination, he professed 'I hate the lion in the meek fleece of the sheep / The Tiger, in foxes' dens, has no place to seek.'⁵³³ Even when in the 'temple of Pallas', he argued, his compatriots should wear Hungarian clothing. Ányos thus urged for scholarship to be practised with 'patriotic' aims in mind, an ideal also apparently shared by his favoured tutor, Dugonics.

Turning to the military egalitarianism of the Spartans as an exemplar, Ányos explains that they never wore the clothes of foreign nations. Indeed, in a footnote that would in hindsight prove portentous, Ányos explained that the Spartans had even passed laws to protect their national forms of attire: 'Lycurgus' sixth law decrees that craftsmen who make foreign clothes should be banned from Sparta. What a useful law!⁵³⁴ Drawing further upon Spartan *topoi*, he urged his young male compatriots to emulate the ancestral piety and morality of their own 'elders' (here 'wise old men'), who were characterized by their simple, straight-cut attire, temperance, humility, and lack of arrogance.

However, his critique of foreign dress was not only levelled at his male compatriots. Indeed, he also urged young ladies to reject the morally impure 'vanity' that fostered their attachment to foreign attire and that brought their purity and pudency into question. Ányos suggests to his male readers that they should run from these dubious 'virgins', who are but 'wearers of masks'. In the case of women then, foreign fashion transformed young ladies from chaste and fidelitous patriots into deceptive and dangerous seductresses. He concludes his poem by offering his blessings to those who pay homage to 'our Scythian blood' and 'glorious nation'.⁵³⁵

Thus, in Ányos's account, attire became an important criterion in judging who properly accounted as a member of the 'nation'. Significantly, by projecting an idealized

⁵³² Pál Ányos, *Ányos Pál összes költeménye* (Szentendre: Mercator, 2006), pp. 56-58.

⁵³³ *Ibid.*, p. 57

⁵³⁴ Ágoston Nagy, 'Republikanizmus és csinosodás között: a nemzeti viselet és a politikai nyelvek 1790 körül', *Korall*, 55 (2014), 22-45 (29).

⁵³⁵ Ányos, *Összes költeménye*, p. 58.

form of dress back into the ancient past and associating it with the ‘original’ *communitas regni*, Ányos created a normative template for the present. In Ányos’s reckoning, ‘true’ nobility was not merely a question of lineage and ancestry, but volitional allegiance, whereby the individual demonstrated ancestral forms of piety and stoicism by donning autochthonous forms of dress. But in constructing this image, Ányos did more than just delineate the contours of his idealized in-group. Indeed, he also defined the criteria of ‘foreignness’ in opposition to his Scythian-Hunnic model. Now ‘foreign’ clothing was an emblem of social destabilization. On the one hand, it constituted an attachment to luxury, vanity, and the pursuit of private interest. But it was also a ‘mask’, and thus a symbol of deception, inauthenticity, and even sexual danger. Thus, notions of autochthonous and foreign clothing came to operate as binary counter-concepts, with the foreign being deprived of the essential traits that constituted membership within the political in-group. For Ányos, the ‘correct’ form of attire was not just an indicator of common origin, noble class, and political-social unity, but also of an individual’s moral qualities and political allegiance. Clothes now contributed to a conceptual system of ‘political enemies’ and ‘political friends’.

Similar themes were picked up by other writers of the era, particularly towards the end of Joseph II’s reign. But perhaps the most infamous expositions on clothing in the era were penned by Count József Gvadányi (1725-1821), an aristocrat of Italian origin who hailed from the county of Szatmár and, unlike Ányos, was a steadfast loyalist with a family history of service to the monarchy. Nevertheless, he too, was a traditionalist, and his works similarly owed much to the influence of the republican and ancient constitutionalist modes of thinking that were typical of the country nobility.

In particular it was the satire *Egy falusi nótáriusnak budai utazása* (‘A Village Notary’s Journey to Buda’, penned 1787, published 1790) that typified Gvadányi’s stance on attire. Indeed, in the preface to the work, he explains that he penned it as a ‘mirror’ for ‘all the homeland’s worthy Cavaliers and Dames, of every order’, to put on their dresser, so that they may consider how ‘modish’ fashion was corrupting them. Drawing upon the genre of the ‘mirror for princes’, Gvadányi provides an alternative ‘mirror’ for patriots so that they may see themselves—not through the glass of some ‘expensive Venetian crystal

mirror’—but as they really are. This, he claims, will help them to develop ‘healthy minds’, and banish forms of ‘modish’ idolatry from their thinking.⁵³⁶

The story tells of a village notary who also hails from Gvadányi’s home county, and who travels to see first-hand the system of government in Buda. After a series of rustic adventures on his journey (such as being chased by a bull), the notary reaches Buda, only to be disappointed to find his compatriots wearing strange forms of attire, and not the clothes of ‘ancient Hungarians’, and speaking foreign languages, not Hungarian. Travelling around town, the notary crosses a pontoon bridge over the Danube where he begins to mock his compatriots’ foreign fashions and strange habits of speech. Eventually, satisfied with his patriotic revenge, he rushes home on hearing news of the Turkish war, and the good people of his village welcome him back amidst great celebration.

The Village Notary draws heavily upon the republican ideals of venerating the community’s ancestors, and the military ideal of the noble nation. But in doing so, Gvadányi also provides a satirical rejection of encroaching foreign ideas and customs, and a powerful critique of luxury as seen in the lavish clothing and dissolute lifestyles of his contemporaries. Gvadányi’s satire is thus chiefly an ‘anti-fashion’ statement that reflects a traditionalist, provincial view of urban life. Indeed, throughout the work Gvadányi idolizes notions of rustic simplicity and the ideals of noble traditionalism, contrasting them at every given opportunity with what he sees as the foppish and, as we shall see, ‘transitory’ fashions of the townsfolk. As such, his account is also heavily gendered, as he often lauds the martial virtues and temperate morality of the nation’s ancestors in contrast to the effeminate, often ‘clownish’ appearance and lavish lifestyles of those he mocks.

To be sure, the village notary continuously mocks the wigs and garish French and English clothing of the townspeople, wondering whether they are ‘fools’, and in other places he likens theatregoers to circus acrobats or clowns.⁵³⁷ This comparison constitutes a staple of Gvadányi’s assault on what he considers to be foppish libertinism. But in its dimension of moral condescension it also resembled Ányos’s distrust of those wearing foreign fashions as living behind a ‘mask’. Indeed, Gvadányi similarly saw foreign fashion as a form of ‘masquerade’, a mixture of foreign excess, domestic inauthenticity, and as such, mental derangement. Lampooning one young nobleman on the bridge, for example, the notary observes how his sword resembles a foreign cook’s knife or *kutó* (‘couteau’) that

⁵³⁶ József Gvadányi, *Egy falusi nótáriusnak budai utazása* (Pozsonban és Komáromban: Wéber Simon Péter, 1790).

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

was only suitable for use upon frogs. The notary continues, comparing the youth to someone who ‘jumps up and down on strings, and walks along wires in the Theatre’. However, to the notary’s surprise and chagrin, it transpires that the nobleman is in fact a young count, who reproaches him for his insolence. Even so, the dispute continues, with the notary critiquing the nobleman’s adoption of foreign attire as unpatriotic ‘madness’ (‘if he who wears English clothes is not English then who is he? Merely a fool of the world [*világ bolondja*]?) Finally, the notary claims that the nobleman should be locked in a Viennese mental asylum, because the ‘nation of our homeland has always shone bright, its fame sparkled as a diamond’. His parting shot is to remind ‘his Lordship’ that he, too, should follow the example of his ancestors, and if not, be ‘struck down by lightning’.⁵³⁸

The eschewal of traditional dress codes was then, a sin to be punished through divine intervention. Traditional clothing had lost, in the notary’s view, its pride of place, and the adoption of foreign attire signalled both the nobleman’s lack of patriotic sentiment and his sense of cosmopolitan confusion concerning his own ‘true’ identity. Thus, similarly to Ányos, Gvadányi saw that foreign clothing challenged the traditional, ‘patriotic’ symbolic order: on the one hand, it symbolized vanity and the pursuit of luxury; on the other, it constituted a ‘mask’, a symbol of inauthenticity and subversion, a form of ‘homeless’ cosmopolitanism that was unbound to the land. But through his exploration of ‘clownish’ appearances, Gvadányi was more explicit than his compatriot on the ways in which he saw ‘fashion’ to possess almost chimerical powers of fusion. Indeed, in his traditionalist view, fashion mixed things together that were meant to remain apart. While for Ányos fashion certainly mixed the foreign with the domestic, for Gvadányi, it also mixed traditional gender roles, dangerously confusing the realms of female and male influence. At one point, for example, he describes fashionistas and party-goers as ‘hermaphrodites’, who swagger as they walk, speak like women, carry fans, and wear ribbons in their hair.⁵³⁹

There are many similar descriptions in Gvadányi’s satire. This is because the main thrust of his satire is to point out how the pursuit of ‘foreign’ luxury was resulting in the effeminacy and moral dissolution of the nobility. Juxtaposing clownish and effeminate attributes with the masculine, warrior-hero appearance of the traditional nobility, Gvadányi lambasts his contemporaries for abandoning the mores of the community’s

⁵³⁸ Ibid., pp. 50-54.

⁵³⁹ Ibid., p. 111.

ancestors, and for preferring private goods and dissolution to the well-being of the *res publica*.

There were, however, many paradoxes inherent to this mode of argumentation. The most prominent was that Gvadányi's idealization of ancient Hungarian attire belied a taste just as opulent and expensive as that of the townsfolk he parodied. Indeed, the notary frequently waxes lyrical about the expensive and rare materials of his great heroes, whom he typically imagines as having worn tiger or panther skins on their backs, with egret feathers in their caps, large maces or adzes in their hands, and hefty swords sheathed by their sides.⁵⁴⁰ Thus, although Gvadányi's anti-'modish', anti-fashion rhetoric was embedded in the rejection of expensive, foreign garments, his idealized vision of clothing was also paradoxically underpinned by a predilection for costly, unique, and as such socially- and politically distinctive forms of attire. How then, did Gvadányi's notary resolve this apparent contradiction?

In conversation with a noblewoman who had 'succumbed' to the lure of foreign fashion, the notary squares the circle by first equating the possession and retention of expensive clothes with thriftiness, and then by contrasting that thrift with the 'profligacy' of spending on fashionable luxuries. Although he admits that the attire of many traditional noblewomen is opulent, he also asserts that fine clothing is entirely befitting of a noblewoman's high status, and that although it may be expensive, it is not a sign of profligate spending. This is because traditional noblewomen, he claims, pass their fine garments down across the generations and, like many eastern noblewomen (from, for example, Turkey, India, Persia, and China), they exhibit no shame over the fact that such hand-me-downs are 'old'. By acting thus, traditionalist noblewomen were actually retaining their wealth, and their expensive garments were in fact not signs of lavish spending, but rather of their *gazdaság* ('economy') in matters of dress. In Gvadányi's vocabulary then, 'economy' was a virtue that encompassed the prudence of retaining valuable possessions across generations, and aside from its materialistic dimensions, it also alluded to the continuity of a noble lineage, and to a sense of fraternity with one's familial antecedents through time. As such, it stood in stark contrast to the profligacy of spending on short-lived fripperies, and to the spontaneity and whimsicality of selfish interest that the notary claimed was born of fashion. Indeed, 'economy', as so defined, stood at the

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 42. The English natural historian and mineralogist Robert Townson (1762–1827) similarly noted the exorbitant cost of the nobility's attire in his travels only a few years later. Robert Townson, *Travels in Hungary, with a Short Account of Vienna in the Year 1793* (London: G.G. and J. Robinson, 1797), pp. 89-90.

centre of the traditionalist notary's sense of dignity: because those who followed ancestral tradition were not drawn to 'apish modes', their practices were virtuous, he argues, characterized not by 'the froth of water', but *állandóság* 'constancy' (lit. 'permanency').⁵⁴¹

Peculiarly then, Gvadányi's satire provided both a calumny and defence of different forms of 'luxury', the former achieved through the gendering of luxury as effeminate, clownish, and ephemeral 'fashion', the latter through the rhetorical re-description of wealth and luxury as a sign of 'economy'. Thus, for Gvadányi (and, as we shall see, for many of his contemporaries) sartorial wealth, although itself sumptuous, was acceptable insofar as it displayed *conformity with tradition*. The cost of clothing was irrelevant inasmuch as it demonstrated respect for ancestral lineage, class solidarity, and thus communally-sanctioned (not to mention traditionally-gendered) virtue in the face of the incoherent anomalies of 'fashion' that supposedly threatened the very stability and cohesion of the noble community.

This binary opposition between transient 'fashion' and 'economy' as the accrual of permanent, cross-generational wealth is a recurrent motif throughout the work, and it leads us to a temporal dimension of Gvadányi's work that may be seen to reveal 'republican' influences. In particular, it is the notary's repeated laudation of noble 'constancy' as opposed, for example, to the transient 'froth' of water, that evokes the republican concept of time in which the political community fought the cyclical tendency of all things to grow, decline, and die. Indeed, central to republican thinking was the recognition that the body politic was a particular entity that 'existed in time, not eternity,' and that it was 'transitory and doomed to impermanence.'⁵⁴² In order to bring about any form of longevity, it was necessary for the polity to instil the right kinds of virtue in its citizens, so that its particular form of existence could be sustained through time against the corrosive influences of luxury, vice, and moral decline. Because then the locus of virtue was the political community itself, the republican understanding of 'stability' and 'permanence' thus involved the regulation and transformation of human nature, so that citizens might adopt communally-oriented virtues that were conducive to the persistence of the republic through time. If justice, stability, and the union of the *civitas* was to be maintained, it was through the moral *constantia* (steadiness, firmness, constancy) and the

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 96-97.

⁵⁴² J.G.A Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 53.

fides of the citizen in the public spaces of the community.⁵⁴³ In contrast, unvirtuous forms of behaviour and the abandonment of the community's virtues constituted deleterious forms of change and instability that threatened the 'corruption' of the political community and its ultimate collapse. As Pocock has argued, 'By the institutionalization of civic virtue, the republic or polis maintains its own stability in time and develops the human raw material composing it toward that political life which is the end of man.'⁵⁴⁴ By actively participating in government, imposing restraint on private appetites and the expansion of the private realm, and by adhering to the martial virtues of the community's ancestors, the virtuous polity could achieve the very suspension of history.

For Gvadányi, a monarchist, the body that best embodied the virtues of constancy and achieved the suspension of history was the noble-military *rend* ('order'; sometimes also 'estate'). As his protagonist explains, 'the military order affects all orders; maintaining the other orders as orders [...] if there was no military order, monarchs would pass, thrones, stone castles, and churches would collapse, and countries would burn from the fire of barbarism.'⁵⁴⁵ The noble-led military, as he describes it, was a 'handsome' and virtuous order, which allured many 'Princes' and 'Counts', and which was merry when its members were healthy and sound. However, to the notary's dismay, even the hussars, the pride of the military order, were falling into corruption by wearing foreign clothes, actually berating one hussar for wearing the wrong kind of attire.⁵⁴⁶ Gvadányi thus borrows from the ideals of dynastic heroism, appealing to the fame of the Hungarian military to protect the traditional garb of the warrior class from the threat of 'foreign' corruption. Although the confrontation appears fraught with danger, the Hussar tears off his cape and slices it in two, thanking the notary, and vowing never to besmirch the reputation of the hussars again.

The binary opposition of permanency and transience appears in a variety of guises throughout the work. For example, on meeting the wife of a prominent judge, Gvadányi's notary goes through the usual routine of mocking her appearance as a carnival clown. Amused, she excuses herself by arguing 'in this new world [...] modish clothing has entered into custom'. The notary provides, however, a telling reproach:

⁵⁴³ Peter Murphy, *Civic Justice: From Greek Antiquity to the Modern World* (New York: Humanity Books, 2001), p. 108.

⁵⁴⁴ Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, pp. 183-184.

⁵⁴⁵ Gvadányi, *Egy falusi nótárius*, p. 64.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

Honourable Countess! The Lord Almighty did
But create the world here, wherein we live,
That there could be one newer, 'tis impossible,
This word, *new world*, to me, is inscrutable.⁵⁴⁷

The notary continues to explain that there is no new Moses, no new book of creation and that new clothes do not make a new world. He then asserts that everything that is 'modish' is weak; modish attire tears asunder upon merely walking, so that one must then purchase new clothes in order to attend the next ball.⁵⁴⁸ Here then, the notary alludes to the Ciceronian notion that history was life's teacher (*historia magistra vitae*). Time was not the source of instability, but the benchmark against which one could discern the world's universal, eternal truths; measured against those historical verities, the 'novelty' of the new world was but transient and immoral to boot. The fashions of the age were deficient because they emerged from vanity and the pursuit of luxury, and private interest dictated that fashion should not be made to last purely for reasons of selfish profit. Thus, for Gvadányi, modern 'fashion' and luxury symbolized all that was immoral, fleeting, and infirm within the 'timeless' realities of a transcendent and unchanging world.

The question of 'attire' thus provides some unique insights into the diverse but interrelated issues of commercialism, gender, status, and political virtue in late eighteenth-century Hungary. Against a backdrop of increasing wealth and 'luxury' associated with the cosmopolitanism of the country's urban centres—and by extension the fashions of Vienna and the royal court—the idea of 'national' attire may be seen to have arisen in part as a backlash to the metaphorically feminine and cosmopolitan world of foreign 'modish' fashion, with its unchaste 'masked' women (at least, in Ányos's appraisal); foppish 'clowns' in the place of traditionally gendered identities; displacement of 'constancy' by fickle trends and whimsicality, and the morally suspect pursuit of luxury. Thus, because clothes constituted a primal interface between the individual and society in the eighteenth century, debates over the 'correct' forms of attire were not merely based upon aesthetic differences, but rather upon different assumptions concerning the individual's overall social and moral disposition, their stance towards tradition, gender, and the 'common

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 94

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 94-95.

good', and thus ultimately, their sense of political virtue. Both the works discussed above to some extent lashed out at the rise of aristocratic commodity culture, the behavioural modes and manners that exemplified 'feminine' gentility, 'politeness' and urbane sociability, and the supposed 'corruption' of traditional gender roles. In this sense, the works registered a clash between the 'old' and the 'new' and reflected a polarity of debate that would in time become increasingly central to the rise of 'modernity'.

Even though both authors were ostensibly 'traditionalists', there were, however, differences between the two. Ányos, although exhibiting a more pronounced taste for simple, 'Spartan' forms of attire, was not an unequivocal proponent of Rousseauian simplicity, as in other poems he often lauded the necessity of 'polishing', educating, and civilizing the nation, especially through theatre, the arts, and sciences.⁵⁴⁹ On the other hand, Gvadányi, the cavalry captain, responded more explicitly to the new forms of 'mis-gendered' citizenry and the marketing of faddish artifice that he saw emerging. This, he believed, not only undermined traditional masculine virtue, but also brought ridicule to the nation. However, despite castigating profligacy, Gvadányi exonerated the nobility's predilection for 'sumptuous' forms of clothing, and in doing so drew an important distinction between traditional noble understandings of sartorial elegance and the extravagant pursuit of *les modes*. These writers were obviously not alone in observing the co-existence of very different forms of dress in the late eighteenth century. But how did this nascent ideology of 'national attire' play out at the 1790/91 Diet?

It appears that attention to 'national' forms of clothing reached almost obsessive levels towards the end of Joseph II's reign. On the one hand, the martial character of the nobility received increased emphasis due to the outbreak of war against the Turks in 1787.⁵⁵⁰ On the other, the idea of 'national' attire came to serve, like language, as a focus of collective differentiation from, and mobilisation against, the 'German' absolutist politics of Joseph II.

The diary of the protestant minister József Keresztesi gives some rare and fascinating insights into how early in 1790 the nobility of Bihar County began to stage and 'perform' through clothing and language in order to 'foreground' differences between the

⁵⁴⁹ Gyula Laczházi, 'Az érzelmek megjelenítése Ányos Pál költészetében', *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, 121.3 (2017), 355-371.

⁵⁵⁰ See Ágoston Nagy, '„Rómát, Athenát, Spártát Álmodtam..." Spárta toposza a 18–19. század fordulójának magyar politikai irodalmában', in *„Politica Philosophiai Okoskodás": Politikai nyelvek és történeti kontextusok a középkortól a 20. századig*, ed. by Gergely Tamás Fazakas and others (Debrecen: Debreceni Egyetem, 2013), pp. 193-208 (p. 195).

noble nation and the Habsburgs. Keresztesi described how Joseph's refusal to hear the complaints of the nobility, combined with widespread disgruntlement over the cost of the war against the Turks, had united the counties against the monarch. At first, the counties corresponded in secrecy, but then they began to express their vexation more openly, fomenting discord to the point of rebellion:

In the first place, patriotism arose with the wearing of national Magyar vestments; this was all the more beautiful and wonderful, as hardly anybody had been seen wearing them before, and everywhere German vestments had surged [in popularity] like floodwater. And then, suddenly, the truest of Magyar tabards sprang out of nowhere. Every county chose their own unique uniform; the uniform in Bihar County was: a red calpac, green pelisse, red dolman, red breeches, black chalvar, yellow boots; golden embellishments over the clothes, endlessly-long passements; and because supplies of these were exhausted in the homeland, people went abroad to buy them. In many places they tossed their hats away, or burned them, and wore busbies or shakos atop their heads instead.

Those found to be wearing German clothes, being themselves Magyars, had them torn off; in [polite] company and at balls no attire other than Magyar attire was tolerated. The female order also tossed away their crinolines, bouffants, filigree brooches, spider-web-like lace hairnets, and thousands of other modish, ugly, apish vestments, and instead dressed in the Magyar [style]; as for those who did not want to follow suit, they tore [their vestments] from their heads and stamped on them, even in public, and played all manner of foul tricks upon them. Young men and lords, instead of swaying the customary *peniculus*, instead fastened broad Magyar swords to their sides, bought fine steeds, and galloped around on them. The German residents lay low, or wore vestments themselves, as otherwise they had little security. Magyar zealotry thus went as far as to mock and burn the German vestments worn by half of Europe. What went hand in hand with this was that everyone spoke Hungarian; those who could not speak the language learnt it, even though only a few months beforehand, especially at large gatherings, you could not find a single speaker uttering a word in Hungarian. Even the lords had been ashamed to speak in Hungarian, and many, especially those of the great families, did not even know how to, and so Magyar children had begun to speak

German. It was thus a fortunate stroke of fate that Magyar vestments and language gained respectability among [members of] its own nation so suddenly. In any case, vestments and language transform the nation into a unique nation.⁵⁵¹

The text gives a rare insight into the unfolding of a ‘schismogenetic’ process of negative reciprocity, whereby the members of the ‘national’ in-group (here the nobility) began to exaggerate their differences from the out-group (Habsburgs) in order to reinforce boundaries of difference and thus eschew narratives of ‘shared’ or cooperative identity.⁵⁵² What this illustrates then is how the ‘revival’ of interest in the language, just like the revival of Magyar clothing, (not to mention the resuscitation of anti-Habsburg *kuruc* songs from the Rákóczi War of Independence in 1703–11),⁵⁵³ constituted a sudden shift towards a form of reactionary *identity politics* at the turn of the 1780s-1790s. It shows how the nobility began to mobilize by ‘projecting’ themselves into historicized concepts of ‘national’ identity that until recently had been eschewed by large numbers of their class. Certainly, the buying of clothing and the sudden shift in linguistic practices illustrate the *performance*, and thus the contingent as opposed to ‘universal’ existence of ‘national’ differences, and this in turn demonstrates the political instrumentalization of ‘national’ identity *topoi* as symbolic resources in the struggle for political recognition. By elevating differences of identity (drawn from the supposedly primordial ‘givens’ of the historical national community) and valorising them as forms of ‘authentic’ national self-expression, the nobility recognized and acted upon lines of social identity that foregrounded the cultural and political divides between the Hungarians and the Habsburgs. However, although the focus was often upon ‘tradition’ and forms of primordially-conceived virtue, two new elements had been added to the ‘primordial’ mix: ‘language’ and ‘clothing’ had not been the focus of political interest before. But now, associated with other *topoi* of ‘Scythian’ identity, both of these social phenomena functioned as political rallying calls for the traditionalist nobility. The result was a form of particularistic hostility towards the supposedly universalistic outlook of the monarchical Habsburg *Gesamtstaat*. ‘Authentic’

⁵⁵¹ József Keresztesi, *Krónika magyarország polgári és egyházi közéletéből a XVIII-dik század végén, egykorú eredeti naplója* (Pest: Ráth Mór, 1868), pp. 183-184.

⁵⁵² The concept of ‘schismogenesis’ (a fusion of ‘schism’ and ‘genesis’) was developed by anthropologist Gregory Bateson to describe processes of tit-for-tat conflict generation and social differentiation. For a discussion see Charles W. Nuckolls, ‘The Misplaced Legacy of Gregory Bateson: Toward a Cultural Dialectic of Knowledge and Desire’, *Cultural Anthropology*, 10.3 (1995), 367-394 (372-374).

⁵⁵³ Marczali, *Az 1790/1. Országgyűlés*. I, p. 43.

and autochthonous identities, inherited from a long line of ancestors, trumped any abstract attachment to the rational project of Josephinian absolutism. Furthermore, language and clothing came not only to function as symbols of outward political identification, but also as vehicles for claims of political right. Indeed, the right to introduce the vernacular as the language of politics was mirrored by a similar attempt to introduce ‘national’ forms of clothing, and thus stress the political agency of the ‘nation’ in organizing its own affairs at the Diet.

It was amidst the celebrations marking the return of the Holy Crown to Hungary following Joseph II’s renunciation of his earlier policies, that public discourse on ‘national’ attire reached its peak. Then, the crown procession, accompanied by different county *banderia* along the stages of its journey, set off from Vienna on 18 February 1790 and travelled through Bratislava, Kittsee, Győr, Komárno, Esztergom, and Szentendre, until it reached Buda Castle on 21 February 1790. There it was placed on public display for three days, guarded by county *banderia* members until the coronation of Leopold in Bratislava on 15 November.⁵⁵⁴

The crown was obviously a focal point of interest. Scholars, writers, and poets celebrated and scrutinized the object’s quasi-mystical origins, while also hailing the diadem’s return as a symbol of restoration to the pre-Josephinian order, as well as *concordia* or social harmony within the realm.⁵⁵⁵ The crown thus remained the focal point of the kingdom’s feudal integrity. Nevertheless, amidst the many pageants and celebrations organized to mark the crown’s journey across the country, the ‘foreign’ or ‘national’ appearance of clothes, moustaches, and haircuts also became a topic of intense speculation. As writers discussed ‘national’ attire in their works, they turned to the familiar *topoi* of republicanism, dynastic heroism, and ancient constitutionalism, often amidst debates on the question of ‘national character’.⁵⁵⁶ Most commonly, ‘national’ costume became linked with the idealized self-image of noble martial virtue, and the uniforms of the *banderia* guarding the crown were celebrated as the revival of the Magyars’ ancient Hunnic-Scythian traditions. As a letter circulated by Nyitra County in preparation for the Diet argued:

⁵⁵⁴ György Ságvári, ‘Gárdák, díszbandériumok Budavárban’, *Tanulmányok Budapest múltjából*, 29 (2001), 185–204.

⁵⁵⁵ Tibor Porkoláb and Ágoston Nagy, ‘„Ősi ruhát, ígét, szívet meg tartotok”: A nemzeti viselet és a koronaőrző bandériumok a 18. század végi politikai diskurzusokban’, in *Docendo Discimus*, ed. by Tímea Huszti (Miskolc: University of Miskolc, 2013), pp. 30–39 (34).

⁵⁵⁶ Ágoston Nagy, ‘Republikánizmus és csinosodás’ p. 25.

The strict lifestyle and child-rearing methods of the Scythians once terrified Europe. But this power fades when the nation apes the attire and morals of foreign peoples; when they pay attention only to theatre, music, and the principles of discourse, they forget about freedom and the laws [...] Thus, abandoning this pusillanimous lifestyle, let us return to the ancient; let us practice virtue, and become men who, at the forthcoming Diet, deserve not only to be heard, but also to have their wishes fulfilled; we shall be the defensive pillars of the homeland and the new prince.⁵⁵⁷

Poems, news articles, and *ad hoc* pamphlets adopted similar themes, often drawing upon the idealized military community of the Spartans and comparing it to the ancient Scythian warrior nation. Even Kazinczy, the language reformer and theoretician of style who often looked to foreign patterns for inspiration argued within the ‘Spartan’ republican framework, squarely attributing the nation’s ‘decline’ during the Josephinian era to ‘effeminized, pusillanimous’ people walking around ‘under parasols, with doffed caps, hair in towers, and wearing garish stockings.’⁵⁵⁸ He further claimed that:

[...] disunity, rivalry, foreign Ladies, attire, and customs, and the abandonment of Spartan moderation—why Spartan?—*Magyar* moderation has swept our Homeland so close to its ultimate destruction that it could justifiably have been terrified of having its name erased.⁵⁵⁹

Although threatened with extinction, it now appeared that the traditionalist noble nation was asserting its own sense of dominance through a grandiloquent display of ‘Scythian’ sartorial nationalism. For example, in a laudatory verse celebrating the pomp of the guardsmen, the Piarist monk and grammarian Ferenc Rosenbacher (1758-1822) hailed the arrival of Bratislava County’s *banderium*, and praised how the nation’s ‘Dowry Chest’ (the chest carrying the crown, the symbol of ‘wedlock’ between king and country) had arrived in Buda as opulently decorated as if it were ‘one of the world’s seven wonders’. He likened the noble guards to the warriors of Sparta and Rome, and idolized them as a ‘pearlescent

⁵⁵⁷ Quoted in Mihály Horváth, *Magyarország történelme*, 8 Vols. (Pest: Ipolyi Arnold, 1875), VIII, pp. 9-10.

⁵⁵⁸ Kazinczy and Váczy, *Kazinczy Ferencz levelezése*, p. 81.

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p. 84.

Nation, famed for its Sword, Wit, and Heart / Led by the right hand of Minerva and Mars'.⁵⁶⁰ He described the guardsmen's attire in similarly flattering terms:

Fine red calpacs on heads so wise,
Gen'rous officers in sky-coloured guise,
On steeds festooned, saddles tasselled so fair,
You'd think as if riding among your forebears,
Noble in gaze, Scyth' blood boils in their veins,
Within them the Magyars' nature remains.⁵⁶¹

Rosenbacher continued to speak of how these 'great noble warriors', the descendants of similarly 'great houses', had earned all their 'treasures' at the cost of spilling their blood, and he also described how they had since accustomed their minds to the 'golden liberty' of the nobility after having left the 'manacles' of servitude behind in Asia. Although he gave no further historical details of this 'servitude', the thrust of Rosenbacher's argument is to remind the guardsmen of why they enjoyed such privilege and adulation: because of their duty to spill their blood for the *patria*. And just as their forebears had gone into battle to defend the liberty of the homeland, now, too, the guardsmen must support the 'golden laws' of the noble cause at the Diet, albeit now *without* the spilling of blood.⁵⁶²

In an atmosphere of tension and uncertainty, it may be that Rosenbacher's call for a peaceful resolution of political struggle was a reminder to the guardsmen to maintain standards of civility at the Diet. Among more rebellious elements, the political symbolism of Hungarian and German attire had proven to be of a more incendiary nature: in some counties German clothes and hats had been burnt alongside documents from Joseph's attempted land register.⁵⁶³ Elsewhere (and as Keresztesi similarly noted) ennobled and naturalized Germans had cast off their traditional clothes and grown moustaches in order to avoid harassment. In Bratislava a gang of lawyers even ran out to the market and tore

⁵⁶⁰ Ferenc Rosenbacher, *Örvendetes lantotska mellyel a' tekéntetes nemes Posony vármegye' gyöngy képét viselő nagy lelki, meltsóságos nemes, és nemzetes korona-örző vitézséget* (Pest: Trattner Mátyás, 1790), p. 3.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 6; 15-16.

⁵⁶³ Marczali, *Az 1790/1. Országgyűlés*. I, 47-48.

German clothes off the backs of German stallholders.⁵⁶⁴ From this perspective, much of the rhetoric of building ‘walls’ between different linguistically- or ethnically-conceived nations seems to point towards an outbreak of ethno-nationalist fervour. In Pest, for example, many balls and social events were organized to which ‘even [someone wearing] a foreign collar was not admitted’.⁵⁶⁵ According to the 1 January 1790 edition of the *Magyar Courier*, even the County governors, who mostly relied on Latin in their official business, were now returning to the *valóságos Nemzeti Nyelv* (‘true national language’).⁵⁶⁶

But despite the outbursts of anti-German chauvinism, and despite the rhetoric that the ‘nation’ possessed a common ethnic ancestry, common language, and common clothing, the celebrations did not focus upon a ‘modern’ understanding of nationhood whereby *all* the people were included within the nation on either an ethnic or a civic basis. Among the bannermen at least, the main emphasis was on *restitutio in integrum*, and while the donning of the ‘national’ costume and talk of introducing a ‘national’ language had become parts of everyday protest and solidarity building, the crown and its symbolic regalia remained at the centre of the celebrations, symbolizing both the territorial integrity of the kingdom and the highly-differentiated and stratified feudal community of the *natio hungarica*. Even ‘national’ attire was not ‘national’ in the modern sense that one uniform or set of colours might be seen to represent *all* the nation’s inhabitants. Indeed, despite the fact that the language of ‘national’ clothing often appeared to refer to a homogenous ‘nation’ which was closed to outside influence, and ‘threatened’ or tainted by ‘alien’ foreign fashions, the *banderia* members wore not a single ‘national’ uniform, but rather the colours and uniforms of their respective counties. Furthermore, aristocrats and representatives of religious orders also wore their own distinct forms of attire, as *did* burghers, members of guilds, town militiamen, and the lower classes, while the gypsy musicians who often accompanied the *banderia*, played both songs from the Rákóczi era, and tunes of ‘Turkish’ provenance as well.⁵⁶⁷ And while anti-German chauvinism undoubtedly accompanied many public manifestations of ‘national’ belonging organized on the crown’s return, not all ‘anti-German’ sentiment was conducted in bad faith. When the crown arrived in Buda, Court Judge and acting Palatine Count Károly Zichy (1753-

⁵⁶⁴ György Rettegi and Zsigmond Jakó, *Emlékezetre méltó dolgok 1718–1784* (Bukarest: Kriterion, 1970), p. 425.

⁵⁶⁵ Marczali, *Az 1790/1. Országgyűlés*. II, p. 356.

⁵⁶⁶ Taxner, ‘Tudósítások’, p. 113.

⁵⁶⁷ Keresztesi, *Krónika*, p. 213.

1826) had tried to open the chest containing the crown but failed. He then asked for another key in German, to which a noble bystander remarked, ‘Your Excellency, it is not a German crown, it cannot speak in German; try, your Excellency, in Hungarian, and it will open’, eliciting laughter among those present.⁵⁶⁸

For these reasons, ‘National’ attire, as Ambrus Miskolczy has observed, ‘was rather a *Hungarus* costume, which expressed the solidarity of the nobility—whether Croatian, Hungarian or Slovak’—against the anti-feudal reforms of Joseph II.⁵⁶⁹ Like the idealised vision of the ancient Scythian warrior class, the vision of ‘national attire’ was based upon traditional notions of virtue, wealth, prestige, and ‘golden liberty’; it served as a symbol of noble pedigree, and thus as a model for emulation: in Pest, for example, a certain noble by the name of Boldizsár Inkey ‘bought an army of old Hungarian mitre caps [*süveg*], called his serfs together, and removed the hats from the heads of those wearing them, giving them each a mitre cap at his own expense.’⁵⁷⁰ But was this not to suggest that the peasants were included within the nation? For the most part, no. ‘National’ symbols remained tied to the aspirational ideals of the *natio Hungarica*.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the period following Joseph II’s death was an interregnum, both in the literal and the Gramscian sense of being an ‘in-between’ period of temporal liminality between one political order and another, as the ‘old’ lay ‘dying’ while ‘the new’ could not yet be born.⁵⁷¹ Certainly, in awaiting the Diet and negotiations with an incoming claimant to the throne, this liminal period was marked by a sense of ambiguity and potentiality. Because the authority and values of the ruling elite were temporarily suspended, the potentiality arose for different social classes to become detached from their traditional allegiances, especially if they felt their interests were no longer represented. Those defending the *status quo* were preparing to overcome changing structural conditions, while those who sought to replace or challenge the *status quo* were similarly mobilizing to promote their own agenda. In this state of liminality then, there was an intensification of what Gramsci termed the ‘war of position’, the hidden conflict whereby opposing forces sought to gain influence and power, and to win popular consent in order to determine the hegemony of the coming period.⁵⁷²

⁵⁶⁸ Marczali, *Az 1790/1. Országgyűlés*. II, p. 65.

⁵⁶⁹ Miskolczy, “‘*Hungarus* Consciousness”, p. 77.

⁵⁷⁰ Marczali, *Az 1790/1. Országgyűlés*. II, p. 356.

⁵⁷¹ Antonio Gramsci and others, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, 11th edn (New York: International Publishers, 1992), pp. 275-276.

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 206-207.

Within this socially diverse environment, and in the celebratory atmosphere surrounding the Holy Crown, the criteria of socio-political inclusion and exclusion were temporarily in flux. With the ideas of religious tolerance, language reform, and even the French Revolution being discussed during the interregnum, it appeared to some that the feudal understanding of national character could be altered. Batsányi, a representative of the more rebellious liberal strata of the nobility, had urged his compatriots to ‘cast their watchful eyes upon Paris’, and claimed that natural law demanded the blood of the traditional nobility.⁵⁷³ Other writers, such as Decsy (who was opposed to the French Revolution) were nevertheless calling for new forms of ‘press freedom’ and freedom of thought:

Free [*szabados*] thinking, writing, printing [...] where there are not these three things, it is fruitless to try and find either man or knowledge. Free thinking is such a natural characteristic of the soul, that without it the soul is no longer a soul, but rather something resembling a mere machine [...] there is no greater tyrant in this world than s/he who seeks to strangle the freedom of thought in man.⁵⁷⁴

As noted above, the adjective ‘national’ was being used increasingly to delimit the new or existing bounds of the ‘nation’, to create a ‘national’ theatre, ‘national’ language, and even to nationalize the posts of officers in the army. However, an overarching theme was the creation of a ‘unitary’ or at least more unified ‘nation’. For language reformers, the vernacular could be the key to creating a more perfect union. As Hajnóczy wrote after the Diet opened, ‘If we make the domestic language the official language, all classes of people—as in other countries—will have access to higher culture, the spirit of freedom will permeate all walks of life, and civic unity (*unio civilis*) will be stronger and—because it will be increasingly difficult for foreigners to rule us—increasingly safe.’⁵⁷⁵ Perhaps unsurprisingly then, it was amidst similar talk of ‘unity’ that a number of calls emerged for the introduction of laws to impose a ‘national’ uniform. For example, in a propaganda

⁵⁷³ For a translation of Batsányi’s revolutionary poem ‘On the Changes in France’ (1789) see Lóránt Czigány, *The Oxford History of Hungarian Literature from the Earliest Times to the Present* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 93.

⁵⁷⁴ Decsy, *Pannóniai féniksz*, pp. 190-191.

⁵⁷⁵ Translation from Miskolczy, “‘Hungarus Consciousness’”, p. 77.

piece published anonymously by the legal scholar Jakab Ferdinánd Miller (1749-1823), a fictitious German lady argued for the introduction of clothing laws:

Although I am not a born Hungarian lady, but only fortunate enough to be the wife of a righteous and charming Hungarian nobleman [...] at least to me it seems more decent that a lady whose spouse is a born Hungarian should wear Hungarian national attire, even if she cannot speak Hungarian, in the same way that until now born Hungarian women ape all German fashions without understanding a word of German.⁵⁷⁶

Drawing upon the example of the Swiss republican city-state of Bern, the lady argued that laws should be passed by the Diet to preserve Hungarian clothing in coming centuries. She asserts that if the Hungarians were to introduce a national costume, then religion, the constitution, and the country's customs would become imbued with the spirit of patriotism, just as they had among the ancient Greeks and Romans.⁵⁷⁷ Miller, similarly to Gvadányi, spoke through his protagonist as a loyalist, combining the political languages of dynastic patriotism and ancient constitutionalism. But by speaking through a German lady who was loyal to both 'German' king and 'Magyar' country, Miller presumably wished to demonstrate to Leopold that it was both the *duty* and the *desire* of German nobles to follow domestic tradition. Similar calls for laws on national attire were voiced by other authors, too. In another satire published at the time of the Diet, entitled 'A Satirical Critical Description of the Current Country's Assembly', Gvadányi similarly called upon the nation to legislate on the matter of clothing: 'My Nation, I bid thee make a Law on attire'.⁵⁷⁸

Had he lived to see the Diet, Ányos would perhaps have been overjoyed, as the idea was taken up by a number of county representatives. Even so, the contradiction between the normative vision of republican simplicity that Ányos embraced and the opulent forms of noble sartorial elegance that Gvadányi had been at pains to justify started to become apparent to a number of contemporaries. Some of the counties, such as Borsod

⁵⁷⁶ Jakab Ferdinánd Miller, *Gedanken über die Nazionaltracht der Frauenzimmer in Ungarn und einige andere Gegenstände wider das berüchtigte Buch Ninive*, ([n.p.], [n.pub.], 1790), pp. 7-8.

⁵⁷⁷ Nagy, 'Republikanizmus és csinosodás között', p. 33.

⁵⁷⁸ József Gvadányi, *A' mostan folyó ország gyűlésének satyrico critice való leírása* (Lipsia: Wéber Simon Péter, 1791), p. 288.

and Trencsén, wanted the introduction of a national ‘uniform’, arguing (in a manner of thinking common to the discourse of clothing) that one’s exterior (clothes) shaped one’s interior (patriotic virtue), and that this would be beneficial to the country. However, they also argued that the national uniform should be inexpensive and simple, as otherwise it could become a symbol of inequity and cause discord.⁵⁷⁹ The poet and Protestant minister József Péczeli (1750-1792) expressed similar concerns in the pages of *Mindenes Gyűjtemény*, (‘Omni-Anthology’) of which he was the editor. He wrote of the indescribable pomp surrounding the *banderia* guarding the crown, but questioned whether the ‘hundreds of thousands’ spent on attire, horses, and carriages had not merely enriched foreign tradesmen and impoverished the nation. Would it not have been preferable to spend even a tenth or a third of that amount on achieving the homeland’s ‘eternal glory’ by establishing a society (based on the French model) for the promulgation of the language?⁵⁸⁰ Sámuel Decsy, author of the Pannonian Phoenix, in a deistic treatise desacralizing the origins of the Holy Crown, claimed that ‘there was a difference so striking between the Banderia of yore and the noble armies ordered to guard the crown as the difference between the colours black and white’.⁵⁸¹ If the crown had been guarded for three or four years, he argues, many of the county’s wealthy families would have been reduced to penury. One of the most scathing critiques of the *banderia*’s profligacy, however, was penned by Keresztesi. He noted how the bannermen of Satu Mare County were a handsome crop, dressed in dark blue clothes, all with panther skins on their backs (on closer inspection, dyed calf skins cut to shape).⁵⁸² He also noted that the ‘cardinals, bishops, and counts’ were dressed in radiant clothing of gold, pearls, and precious stones, while the county delegates, each in their county colours, wore extravagant calpacs and shakos. ‘Here one could see the unhappy Magyar nation’s libidinousness in clothing, surpassing that of other nations. One could have imagined that all nature’s treasures had been piled up in a heap in Buda, and that India had sent all her pearls here.’⁵⁸³ There were, he claimed, around six thousand lords and ladies, not counting the *banderia* nobles, all indescribably opulent, decked out in gold, silver, pearls, and precious stones. This was all paid for through the sweat of the poor tax-paying peasantry. Meanwhile, Viennese

⁵⁷⁹ Marczali, *Az 1790/1. Országgyűlés*. II, p. 356.

⁵⁸⁰ ‘A’ koronát őrző bandériák’, *Mindenes Gyűjtemény*, 1790, IV, pp. 104-106.

⁵⁸¹ Sámuel Decsy, *A’ magyar szent koronának és az ahhoz tartozó tárgyaknak története* (Béts: Ignácz & Szabados, 1792), p. 294.

⁵⁸² Keresztesi, *Krónika*, p. 258

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.* pp. 253-254.

tradesmen boasted that they had sold six million gulden's worth of material to the Hungarians. 'This is not how wise nations patch the wrecked ship of their freedom!' he exclaims.⁵⁸⁴ Nevertheless, there were also plenty of commentaries in the *Magyar Courier* that praised the 'sons of Mars and Bellona', and described in minute and implicitly complimentary detail the cut and colour of their sumptuous attire. In this way, the paper encouraged the very same vanity that it otherwise condemned.⁵⁸⁵

Eventually, a proposal to enact legislation that would bind Hungarian noblemen and women to wear 'national' dress in public was raised at the Diet. According to the journal *Military and Other Events*, it would not be until late 1790 that legislation was discussed to ensure that nobles of both sexes—but especially government officials—wore national attire.⁵⁸⁶ The matter was indeed discussed at the Diet on 27 November, but opposition was raised to the introduction of any such law considered to impinge upon noble liberty. However, the majority of nobles complained that with because Hungarian clothing had almost been 'exiled' from the country, 'foreign morals and customs can take root more easily in the hearts of Nations' through the wearing of foreign clothes.⁵⁸⁷ In discussions with heir-to-the-throne Prince Francis (later Francis II), the plan was again rejected on the grounds that 'it is not clothing that makes a man, but virtue', and the chancellery similarly stated that nobody could be forced to don or doff clothes against their will.⁵⁸⁸ Nevertheless, Leopold wore Hungarian clothing at his coronation, as on other occasions, encouraging the hope that the estates could avoid legislation on the matter as 'good examples' would produce 'exemplary customs'.⁵⁸⁹

Thus, the question faded. Even so, the fashion of adopting an 'historically original' and inimitable style of clothing spread into the nineteenth century as an expression of Hungarian nationalism. It was often seen as a form of symbolic resistance to appear in public, for example, at aristocratic gatherings, wearing 'traditional Hungarian dress', in visible protest against the fashions of the Austrian court. For the moment it appeared that 'national' disaster had been averted by the virtuous bannermen. As Dávid Baróti Szabó

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid. pp. 259-260.

⁵⁸⁵ Marczali, *Az 1790/1. Országgyűlés*. II, p. 356.

⁵⁸⁶ Nagy, 'Republikanizmus és csinosodás között', p. 33.

⁵⁸⁷ NVJ 1790/91, p. 265.

⁵⁸⁸ Henrik Marczali, *Magyarország története a szatmári békétől a bécsi congressusig, 1711 – 1815* (Budapest, 1898), p. 532

⁵⁸⁹ NVJ 1790/91, p. 342.

wrote in an epigram addressed to László Orczy (1750-1807), the Sheriff of Abaúj County and captain of its *banderium*:

Law, Attire, and Language are the stamps of the Nation.
Our Ancient Laws LEOPOLD 'n' HOMELAND hath put back,
And in our Homeland you hath led in Magyar Clothes, Great Orczy;
And Language, too, it awaits you, merciful Orczy; help!
To bring our inner, outer décor to glorious light,
And say: the Magyar lay dying: Through me it lives on.⁵⁹⁰

7.3 Law

The nobility's call for 'law' was perhaps the most ambiguous of the three watchwords of the national opposition movement. It appeared alongside the revolutionary watchwords of *szabadság* 'freedom', *népfelség* 'sovereignty of the people', and *hazafiság* 'patriotism', and was also being associated with talk of a 'constitution' for the first time. All these slogans appeared to allude to the political ideals of the French Revolution. However, the idea of the 'nation' expressed in the Hungarian noble opposition movement had little to do with abstract notions of citizenship intended to guarantee one's natural rights, or the recognition of universal rights rather than particular principles. Rather, the 'nation' of the noble opposition movement was derived from ancient history. It was emotionally tied to a homeland rich in memories and familiar associations. It possessed a 'character' that was not determined by rational institutions, but by a primordial ethnicity reflected in the community's language, clothing, and ancient laws. This was not then, the abstract 'nation' of the French Revolution, which sought to turn people into citizens, rather than make them 'French'. It was rather akin to the conservative conception of the 'nation' as described in Rousseau's *Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne* (1771).

Rousseau's influence was one of resonance than direct reference. Indeed, little is known about the reception of the above work in late eighteenth-century Hungary.⁵⁹¹ There

⁵⁹⁰ This epigram was penned in 1791 but published later in 1792. Dávid Baróti Szabó, 'Nagy-Mélt. B. Orczy Lászlóhoz', *Magyar Museum*, 2.3 (1792), 256.

⁵⁹¹ According to Miskolczy, it was chiefly Ferenc Kazinczy who responded to the work. He published an excerpt in his journal *Orpheus* in 1790, and took up Rousseau's indictment that patriotism could be created

are, however, many overlaps with the contours of the national movement and Rousseau's emphasis on the necessity of developing 'national character' and strong cultural institutions in order to resist greater powers.⁵⁹² Rousseau recommended the necessity of creating political and cultural cohesion to the Poles to prevent Russification, urging them to love only those modes of life that originated from Poland. 'See to it that every Pole is incapable of becoming a Russian, and I answer for it that Russia will never subjugate Poland'.⁵⁹³ He argued that they should create a constitution that would 'hold sway over the hearts of the citizens'⁵⁹⁴ and that they should shape 'minds and hearts in a national pattern that will set them apart from other peoples, that will keep them from being absorbed by other peoples'.⁵⁹⁵ He noted the Poles' distinctive mode of dress, and instructed the Poles to ensure that 'your king, your senators, everyone in public life, never wear anything but distinctively Polish clothing'.⁵⁹⁶ Furthermore, through national education, the Polish student should imbue himself with knowledge of the homeland, and read 'literature written in his own country'.⁵⁹⁷ Finally, emotional attachments to the nation's past were to be collectively affirmed by embracing ceremonies and festivals that infused political life with an emotional commitment to the homeland.⁵⁹⁸

The pomp and ceremony of the Holy Crown celebrations certainly seemed to revolve around the creation of 'national' coherence in the face of Joseph II's 'Germanizing' policies. 'Patriotism' was becoming associated with deliberate attempts to conserve 'national' tradition, of 'reviving' it where weak, and even refining or manufacturing it through programmes of language engineering, propaganda, and ritual. This was a turning point in the development of Hungarian national identity on the path to 'cultural', as opposed to civic nationalism; at least, among the members of the noble opposition, it appears that there was less concern with notions of individual freedom, and more emphasis on the need of individuals to identify themselves with the group to which they purportedly 'belonged'.

through education. Ambrus Miskolczy, 'Kazinczy Ferenc eredetiségéről: Rousseau, Herder, Kant vonzásában', *Valóság*, 51.11 (2008), 62-82.

⁵⁹² 'I repeat: *national* institutions. That is what gives form to the genius, the character, the tastes, and the customs of a people; what causes it to be itself rather than some other people; what arouses in it that ardent love of the fatherland that is founded upon habits of mind impossible to uproot...'. Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Willmoore Kendall, *The Government of Poland* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1985), p. 11.

⁵⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁵⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 13-15.

However, the question remained as to what kind of 'national' institutions the nobility might be able to establish at the 1790/91 Diet. Could a 'national' constitution be written in an ethnically diverse kingdom? How was the idea of the 'constitution' discussed in the vernacular? What kinds of vocabulary were used to register the idea?

8.0 Conceptualizing the Constitution at the 1790/91 Diet

8.1 The Vocabulary of the Constitution

The 1790/91 Diet witnessed, for the first time, discussion of Hungary's 'constitution' in the vernacular. The term most commonly used to translate Latin *constitutio* in Hungarian was a pre-existing term, *alkotmány*, first attested in the Gyöngyösi Latin-Hungarian Dictionary (c. 1560) with the meaning 'creation', 'handiwork'.⁵⁹⁹ Composed from a combination of the transitive verb *alkot* 'construct, create' and the deverbal nominal suffix *-mány*, the term referred to 'something created', a 'construction', or even a 'creation'.⁶⁰⁰ On the one hand, this term was commonly used to refer to various man-made contraptions or edifices in the era's literature. However, texts from the era reveal some additional meanings of *alkotmány* outside those found in contemporary dictionary definitions. These additional senses appear to be in keeping with broader European uses of constitution terms to refer to 'natural' bodily states or dispositions. For example, János Laczkovics, in a translation of a polemical tract written by Ignác Martinovics, uses the plural *alkotmányok* as a translation of Latin *entia* when criticizing the nobility for attempting to distinguish themselves from the rest of society as higher 'beings', and he also uses the term to claim that the physical 'constitution' of nobles is on average no different from that of ignobles.⁶⁰¹ József Gvadányi similarly uses the term in a 1791 parliamentary satire to portray dissident nobles as 'constitutions [i.e. 'creatures'] with drooping wings' (*le-függő szárnyú alkotmányok*) after their collusion with the King of Prussia had been exposed.⁶⁰² In *Magyar Múzeum*, the term appears with the meaning 'natural form', and is used to describe natural phenomena that may be seen as a 'work of divine creation as found in nature'.⁶⁰³ Similar associations with divinity are found in other pamphlets, with the root *alkot* used in *Alkotó* '[the] Creator'

⁵⁹⁹ TESz, I, p. 134.

⁶⁰⁰ However, a twin form, *alkotvány* existed parallel to *alkotmány*, presumably due to the lack of a recognized literary standard. This almost identical calque is based on the same root, but with a different nominalizing suffix *-vány*, and it is first attested in 1548 with the similar definition of 'structure', 'edifice'. Only in the mid-nineteenth century, with the rise of standardization, did *alkotmány* become the favoured form, as *-vány* became the preferred suffix for non-transitive verbs. Ibid.

⁶⁰¹ Ignác Martinovics, trans. János Laczkovics, *A' Magyar-Ország' gyűlésiben egyben-gyűltt méltóságos és tekintetes nemes 1790-dik eztendőben tartatott beszéd* ([n.p.]: [n. pub.], 1791), p. 29; 129.

⁶⁰² Gvadányi, *A' mostan folyó*, p. 21. A parallel to this usage can be found in Late Latin *creatura* 'thing created', which provided the root for English 'creature'.

⁶⁰³ Ferenc Verseghy, 'A' szép mesterségekről', *Magyar Múzeum*, 2 (1790), pp. 168-170.

and *alkotmány* used to refer to God's 'creations'.⁶⁰⁴ Thus, similarly to its German and Latin counterparts, *alkotmány* could not only be used to refer to the man-made 'arrangement', or 'structure' of a given entity, but also to the natural 'bodily disposition' of human beings and organisms; in some cases, it could even be used to express notions of 'divine order' or 'creation'.

In the language of politics, *alkotmány* is first thought to have been used in a translation for *Constitutiones Regni* in the early 1770s by the Piarist Bernát Benyát, a legal scholar and early Hungarian language reformer. The form appears as the head of a compound noun in *Az Ország Törvény-Alkotmányai* 'The Law-Constitutions of the Country' (a synonymous translation, *Sarkalatos Szerződések* 'Cardinal Contracts' or 'Cardinal Constitutions', is also given for the Latin term).⁶⁰⁵

However, Benyát uses the term as a countable noun in the plural to refer to individual items of legislation. It is not until a private correspondence between István Vay and Count Sámuel Teleki dated 18th February 1790 that *alkotmány* is attested denoting not singular laws, but the broad legal 'order' or 'disposition' of the political community: 'De hová ragad engem hazámhoz és annak törvényes alkotmányához való buzgóságom' ('to where is my enthusiasm for my homeland and its lawful constitution sweeping me?'). It is next found in a petition of Kolozs (Cluj) County (23rd March), and then in its most institutionally significant setting, in the speeches of József Ürményi and others at the 1790/91 Diet.⁶⁰⁶

In the records of the Diet, references to individual items of legislation, 'ancient laws', and 'constitutions' appear alongside abundant references to 'the constitution' as a non-count noun, referring to the way in which the 'structure' or 'make-up' of the entire realm was composed by a set of usually *hajdani* 'erstwhile' or *öfi* 'ancient' laws. A word count shows that the term *alkotmány* occurs in the official records thirty-six times in inflected singular forms (usually in references to *a Haza / Ország [törvényes] Alkotmánnya* ('the [lawful] Constitution of the Homeland/Country'), while the plural *alkotmányok* occurs only four times, referring to quantities of individual laws.

⁶⁰⁴ *Meg-hamisított mértéke az emberi polgárságban található valóságos elsőségnek* ([n.p.], [n. pub.], 1790), p. 9. The term 'Alkotó' is also used in the 1794 edition of *Uránia* to refer to the 'creator' (Kármán, József, 'Bé-Vezetés', *Uránia*, [n.p.], 1794, p. 4.). This form is now defunct; the modern form is *Teremtő*, from *terem-* 'bring into existence'. TESz, III, p. 897.

⁶⁰⁵ Sándor Takáts, 'Egy el-feledett nyelvújító: Benyák Bernát', *Magyar Nyelvőr*, 30 (1901), 421-426; 471-476 (p. 471).

⁶⁰⁶ Marczali, *Az 1790/1-diki országgyűlés*, I, p. 110.

Thus, by the time of the 1790/91 Diet, it appears that a new term was being registered in the vernacular, expressing the idea that the country's laws constituted a 'body'. The implication was that the laws described existed in interdependence with each other, forming an apparently seamless unity of ordered relationships. The term *alkotmány*, in accordance with its contemporary uses, could suggest that the body of laws was either man-made, naturally evolved, or perhaps even the result of a divine act of 'creation'. For these reasons, *alkotmány* was well-suited to pass into common currency as a term of political art, as speakers of different political persuasions could read a variety of different meanings into the word.

However, it was in combination with the adjective *ős* that the understanding of the constitution took a new direction. This is because the adjective is derived from the term *ős* 'ancestor'. The adjective *ős* thus renders 'ancestral', and by extension something that is 'ancient'. This was no accident; the choice of *ős* not only evoked the distant past, but also the semantic field of noble ancestry and lineage, blood ties, and continuity with the past. The constitution was thus not just 'old', but an object of inheritance passed down through the patrimony of ancestral lineage. As such, it evoked Burke's vision of the social contract in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) as a 'partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born'.⁶⁰⁷ More prosaically, it linked the constitution to landholding rights understood through the institution of *aviticitas*, the customary provision whereby 'the nobleman held his land conjointly with his relatives, and indeed with all those kinsmen who were descended from the original beneficiary' of royal land donation. That original beneficiary was technically a single *avus*, a 'grandfather', or rather 'ancestor'.⁶⁰⁸

In keeping with European patterns, the component elements of the 'ancient constitution' were described at the 1790/91 Diet as *gyökéres törvények* ('rooted laws', sometimes, *leges fundamentales*),⁶⁰⁹ but more commonly *sarkallatos törvények* ('pivotal laws' or *leges cardinales*)⁶¹⁰ of timeworn provenance, high-level legal pacts that emerged—

⁶⁰⁷ Edmund Burke, Frank Turner and Darrin McMahon, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 82.

⁶⁰⁸ Rady, *Customary Law in Hungary*, p. 85.

⁶⁰⁹ The Hungarian is from *gyökér* 'root' (with the meaning 'genuine, authentic, autochthonous').

⁶¹⁰ This term is sometimes contracted to *Sarkas Törvények*, NVJ, 1790/91, p. 27. The Hungarian adjective is derived from the verb *sarkallik*, 'to pivot upon sg', and thus, similarly to its Latin counterpart, describes an object that can swivel (such as a door, window, lid etc.). Through metaphorical extension, the adjective signifies that the constitution is of 'pivotal' importance in the sense that it acts as a 'fulcrum' upon which other elements depend.

sometimes even forcibly—through negotiations between monarchs and estates in the bipolar, dualist system of rule. Also prevalent were references to *veszedelmes Ujítások* ‘dangerous innovations’, usually in oblique reference to Joseph II’s impositions.

When marked out for positive appraisal, however, ‘ancient’ laws—and indeed the constitution itself—were often described using organic metaphors. For example, in the records of the Diet we see references to a number of organic metaphors describing fundamental laws as *gyökeres törvények* ‘rooted laws’, references to the various ‘branches’ of the law, and also to the *tősgyökeres alkotmány* (lit. the ‘trunk-rooted constitution’). These organic metaphors, commonly used to describe the law in the era’s literature, rendered the constitution in terms of a ‘living’ organic body, such as a ‘plant’ or ‘tree’. The rhetorical framing was significant: on the one hand, the concept of ‘roots’ foregrounded the constitution’s ‘indigeneity’ by highlighting the organism’s inseparable ties with the land, and the law’s natural emergence from the ‘soil’ of the Hungarian realm. In this way, and in keeping with the tenets of customary law—the organic metaphor backgrounded the effects of human agency in the development of the constitutional ‘organism’. It portrayed socially generated law as natural, rather than artificial, emerging harmoniously from the fixed and undisputable laws of nature. But in doing so, the organic metaphor further implied the undesirability of sudden change: the impulsive truncation of the organism or the despoliation of its habitat could result in irreparable damage, ‘ill-health’ or even ‘death’. A further organic metaphor that complemented this vision was that of the nobility’s *sérelmek* (literally ‘injuries’, translated from Latin *gravamina*, this term is usually rendered as ‘grievances’ in English); this underpinned the restitutive character of legal negotiations at the Diet by suggesting that an external agency had caused damage to an individual or corporative ‘body’, and that the situation was to be remedially addressed through negotiation with the king.

Thus, the notion of rooted immovability did not only suggest indigeneity. Indeed, the organic metaphor also evoked a normative vision of legal change through time. It emphasised the desirability of creeping, ‘natural’ growth as opposed to the ‘unnatural’ and ‘sudden’ impositions of artificial intervention. At the same time, the metaphor suggested that the constitution was not static (like a codified document), but dynamic. The idea was that the law could ‘grow’ to remain relevant to the needs of a changing society, while retaining the organism’s core identity. In this way, the notion of gradual, organic development also included a distinctly conservative bias in that it sanctified notions of

traditional development through ideas of precedent, cross-generational continuity, and the dominant influence of past acts over the present. A further set of conservative implications were generated by the suggestion that the political community was a 'natural' entity which possessed 'naturally' occurring internal hierarchies and divisions: certainly, by highlighting the perfect integration of the constitution's component entities, the organic metaphor suggested that the whole is more important than the sum of its parts, and that all must collaborate within the 'natural order' in order to ensure the survival of the organism, without questioning their assigned roles and functions.

It was precisely the conservative implications of the organic metaphor that reformers sometimes challenged, as they saw that the customary laws of the kingdom were hampering the development of the country. For example, one of the later Jacobins who would escape the executioner's axe, Ferenc Verseggy (1757-1822), dismissed them as little more than 'weeds' that strangled the development of the nation.⁶¹¹ Nonetheless, the majority view in the pamphlets of the time was that 'rooted' laws should not be uprooted, as Leó Szaitz argued in response to anti-clericalists who argued the prelacy had no place at the Diet, 'one would have no more right to deprive the Church of its trunk-rooted liberties [...], than one would have to deprive the nobility of theirs'.⁶¹² Certainly, Catholic writers such as Szaitz would often claim the church's 'ancient constitutional' rights on the grounds that their faith had been tied to the very foundation of the Kingdom by St Stephen.

While it is difficult to ascertain the precise origins of these organic legal metaphors, the understanding of the ideal 'constitution' as being one that was 'organically' linked to the land surely owed much to both the parallel discourse of 'linguistic nationalism', which was riddled with organic metaphors, as well as the theories of Montesquieu, whose *De l'esprit des lois* provided the culminating statement of 'ancient constitutional' theory.⁶¹³ Certainly, Montesquieu had made similar use of organic metaphor in *De l'esprit* to describe feudal laws:

⁶¹¹ Cited in *MJI*, I, pp. 173.

⁶¹² Leó Szaitz, *Magyar és Erdély-Országnak rövid isméréte melly e' két országnak mind világi mind egyházi állapottyát szem eleibe állítja* (Pest: Lindauer, 1791), p. 108.

⁶¹³ Rebecca Kingston, *Montesquieu and his Legacy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009), p. 118.

The spectacle of the feudal laws is a fine one. An old oak tree stands; from afar the eye sees its leaves; coming closer it sees the trunk, but it does not perceive the roots; to find them the ground must be dug up.⁶¹⁴

Prominent within Montesquieu's political philosophy was his conceptualization of social structures, which—similarly to the use of organic metaphor discussed above—underscored the relations of parts to wholes, and delineated the way in which factors such as geography and climate interacted with the mores and customs of a country's inhabitants to produce the 'spirit' of a people. Thus, a country's 'constitution' was not a foundational 'act' recorded in text, but a broad concept, referring both to a country's overall climate, physical conditions, peoples, customs, religion, and its specific forms of political organization. Each country already possessed, or rather was 'in' an idiosyncratic constitution to which, Montesquieu suggested, legislation could be cautiously adapted.⁶¹⁵ In Hungary, the emphasis upon the unique character of traditional ways of life and the virtues of hereditary aristocracies provided the Hungarian noble opposition numerous arguments against the 'foreign' laws and 'innovative' centralizing ambitions of the Habsburgs, who had themselves conceived of their lands as *indivisibiliter ac inseparabiliter* 'indivisible and inseparable' in the Pragmatic Sanction of 1713.⁶¹⁶

In particular, the influence of Montesquieu enabled the idea of an 'ancient constitution' to serve as a legitimizing argument for the restoration of the pre-Josephist *status quo*. If the Josephinian *Staat* was, as its Hungarian critics claimed, an absolutist princely state ruled by unilateral decree and acts of 'individual' will, then the ancient constitution was its exact opposite; a product of communal, social evolution, and not the product of any one legislator. If Joseph's rule was characterised by abstract, purportedly 'universal' rationality and the 'dangerous innovations' of 'modern' Enlightenment, then the Hungarian constitution was 'ancient', 'living', and tried and tested through history. While Joseph sought to undermine the feudal system and create a unified *Gesamtstaat*, the ancient constitution was 'rooted' in the lands of St Stephen, and provided recognition of ancient corporate rights and privileges. Finally, while Josephinian rule was a foreign import, the ancient constitution was an organic product of 'natural' autochthonous growth. Thus, the idea of the 'ancient constitution' defined the Hungarian nobility's

⁶¹⁴ Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, p. 619.

⁶¹⁵ See Mohnhaupt and Grimm, *Verfassung*, pp. 42-43; also Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, p. xliv.

⁶¹⁶ Jean Bérenger, *A History of the Habsburg Empire* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 34-35.

counterposition to Habsburg absolutism by using conceptual criteria that automatically contradicted the Habsburg's absolutist stance.

Proponents of enlightened absolutism, however, did not fail to proffer their own interpretation of the 'ancient constitution'. Franz Rudolf Grossing (1751-1830), for example, an ex-Jesuit, confidence trickster, and later propagandist for Leopold II, wrote in *Ungarisches allgemeines Staats- und Regiments-Recht* (1786) that Hungary had been a hereditary monarchy from the times of King Álmos⁶¹⁷ to Maria Theresa. He argued that kings had always ruled without conferring with the nobility, and that it was only during the reigns of weak kings that the Hungarian nobility had managed to convene a Diet. King Andrew had been forced to issue the Golden Bull of 1222 under duress, coronations were little more than ceremonies, and the signing of the *diploma inaugurale* bound rulers to nothing. Thus, viewed historically, Grossing claimed that Joseph's absolutist rule was lawful, because King Álmos had conferred the right to rule upon his descendants, and had ruled out the possibility of freely electing kings in the future.⁶¹⁸

It was precisely the idealization of custom in ancient constitutional thinking that often enabled this form of polemical argumentation. Indeed, in their idealized form, 'ancient' laws were claimed as customary rights, enjoyed through the durability of long-standing practices, as opposed to the dictates of positive law. The problem was that while some of the 'ancient' laws and customs that campaigners referred to were indeed archaic, others were more recent innovations, and none of the so-called 'fundamental laws' were anywhere definitively listed or codified.⁶¹⁹ Thus, speculation over the past provided a degree of wiggle room for lawyers and political activists to sift through the *Corpus Juris* and other legal compendiums to select, interpret, and retroactively designate various customs and cardinal or fundamental laws as central elements of the 'constitution', in line with their particular politico-legal outlooks.

⁶¹⁷ Álmos appears in the medieval chronicles as the first duke of Hungary. In Anonymus' *Gesta Hungarorum* he is described as a direct descendant of Attila the Hun and as the elected leader of the seven tribal chieftains of the Hungarian tribal confederation, who sealed a 'blood oath' to ratify Álmos' kingship. Following election, the basic principles of rule confirmed by this pact also granted Álmos' offspring the hereditary right to his office; at the same time, the descendants of his electors were also granted the right to a seat in the prince's council. Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, p. 19.

⁶¹⁸ Annamaria Bíró, 'A történelem mint politikai provokáció a 1790-as évek röpiratirodalmában', *Nyelv- és Irodalomtudományi Közlemények*, 55.1 (2011), 3-28, p. 4.

⁶¹⁹ Szijárto, *A diéta*, p. 203

8.2 Draft Constitutions

As preparations were made for the Diet, divided loyalties, disagreements over political reform, and fears of popular revolution saw three broad political groupings emerge amongst the Hungarian nobility, the first favouring moderate reform over radical change, the second seeking to reaffirm noble liberties and privileges, and a third more marginalized group of radical intellectuals.⁶²⁰ These groupings are thought to be reflected by three quasi-constitutional manuscripts that were circulated amongst members of the nobility.

8.2.1 Ferenc Széchenyi

The first text was Count Ferenc Széchenyi's *Unpartheyische Gedanken über den 1790. abzuhaltenden Landtag*, an unpublished manuscript that was circulated amongst the magnates.⁶²¹ Széchenyi claimed that the 'noble opposition' movement were hot-headed and rash; their attempt to demand a new constitution while Leopold was embroiled in foreign politics was both opportunistic and dangerous. He claimed a lack of satisfaction where centuries-old constitutions had been toppled, and questioned the utility and philosophical principles of new constitutionalism. He felt that any radical transformation of the relation between ruler and estates would lead to bloodshed—the peasants, he opined, were incapable of composing a new constitution. Thus, overall, it was preferable to restore the old laws.

However, Széchenyi did outline some cases for constitutional renewal. He begrudgingly admitted that Joseph had revealed the path to reform, although he had instrumentalized the various 'imperfections' of the Hungarian constitution—regarding religion, the peasantry, and Protestant freedoms—in order to undermine the nobility's privileges.⁶²² He believed equality should be ensured between the religious denominations and, significantly, between the aristocracy and rebellious middle nobility. Deep divisions between these groups, he claimed, had provided easy sources of leverage for the royal court. If the nobility could be united, the peasantry would remain loyal. But to prevent them allying with the royal court, a 'sacrifice' was required: the nobility must shoulder

⁶²⁰ Schlett, 'Elszalasztott lehetőség vagy zsákutca?', *Politikatudományi Szemle*, 5 (1996), 7-42 (23).

⁶²¹ For a partial Hungarian translation see Gábor Pajkóssy, *Magyarország története a 19. században. Szöveggyűjtemény* (Budapest: Osiris, 2006), pp. 34-38; for a commentary see Schlett, *Elszalasztott Lehetőség*, pp. 23-25. The following account is based on these sources.

⁶²² Pajkóssy, *Magyarország története*, p. 34.

part or all of the military tax, to reduce the burden on the peasantry, and to deflect criticisms that the nobility contributed nothing to the ‘common good’. Széchenyi recommended that the Diet should convene every two years, with or without the king’s consent, and recommended that tax rates should be fixed for a two-year period only, with noble checks upon the taxation system. With the aid of scientific advances, linguistic reform, and committees working to reform public law, Széchenyi believed a new constitution could be introduced in under ten years.⁶²³

8.2.2 Péter Balogh

The second, anonymously-written text is thought to be the work of Péter Balogh of Ócsa (1748-1818), deputy for Nográd County, and the chief ideologue of the more dissident-minded middle nobility. Highly influential in the county assemblies, Balogh’s ideas provided the backbone of ideological resistance to the crown, especially through the introduction of the *filum interruptum* argument described below. His stipulations were central to arguments of the estates during the drafting of the *diploma inaugurale*.⁶²⁴

With Leopold preoccupied with general unrest, Balogh suggested the nobility seize the opportunity to reinforce the ‘ancient constitutional laws’. He claimed that the constitution’s stability and the country’s freedoms were essential considerations if arbitrary rule and ‘servitude’ were to be avoided. He believed the Habsburgs had continually subverted the nobility’s freedoms, especially since the Peace of Vienna (1606) and the Treaty of Linz (1645),⁶²⁵ and that this had led to ‘despotism’ and oppression. Thus, a constitutional relationship between prince and people must be established, impossible to undo by ruse or violence. Most important: not one part of the ancient constitution, ‘tested throughout centuries of practice’ must be changed in any way, unless its security or expansion demands otherwise. If change to a fundamental element of the constitution is foreseeable, then this must be pre-empted by stating that the constitution, ‘that is, the

⁶²³ Marczali, *Az 1790/1. Országgyűlés*, I, pp. 83-88.

⁶²⁴ The text was identified by Henrik Marczali (*Az 1790/91 Országgyűlés*, I, pp 89-100). For a recent Hungarian translation see Pajkossy, *Magyarország története*, pp. 38-50. The following summary is based on these accounts.

⁶²⁵ The Treaty of Vienna was concluded between István Bocskai and Archduke Matthias on behalf of Emperor Rudolph II. Armed resistance by the former led to the treaty, and the granting of religious freedoms to Lutherans and Calvinists in Royal Hungary and Transylvania. In the closing stages of the Thirty Years’ War, the Treaty of Linz reaffirmed religious liberties and concluded peace between Ferdinand III and György Rákóczi of Transylvania. Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire*, pp. 42-44.

fundamental laws, pacts, and contracts between the ruler and the people' can only be changed with the full agreement of the contracting parties.

If the royal court refuses to rectify existing constitutional imbalances, then it must be claimed that the constitution is a 'contract' between prince and *populus* 'people' that cannot be altered unilaterally, and that the Habsburgs have forfeited the right of hereditary succession by endangering the true goals of the state. Thus, transplanting Rousseau's *Contrat Social* into the framework of the 'ancient constitution', Balogh outlines the rhetorical direction for the nobility at the Diet. However, he also introduces one of the opposition's most important rhetorical arguments: with the line of succession broken, it must be argued that sovereignty has been granted back to the 'people', and that the Hungarian *natio* thus has the right to enter into a new 'contract' with the king. Balogh's key instruction is that this principle of *filium successionis interruptum* must be made a general point of discussion and agreement amongst the county deputies.

Whilst Balogh's instructions appear to give primacy to notions of popular 'freedom' as opposed to 'arbitrary rule' and 'servitude', his main concerns, following ancient constitutional patterns, are to reinforce the nobility's sovereignty and protect 'cardinal laws' from crown intrusion. For example, he argues that county deputies must accept no changes to the cardinal laws without authorization from the *natio*, and claims that a broad variety of legislative and executive powers should be granted to the *populus* 'people'. The monarch's veto on legislation may itself be overruled by a vote at the Diet, and the *natio* has the right to supervise the executive. A Diet must be held every three years to remedy any *gravamina*, and the 'people' must exercise control over taxation, the *subsidiium*,⁶²⁶ and military recruitment (matters which comprised key points of contention between the monarch and the estates in the eighteenth century). They must also have a say in matters of foreign policy, as the right to declare war and peace is central to the 'security' of the constitution. A senate, elected by the four districts of Hungary, must replace the Royal Lieutenancy Council, with a president who can be removed by the Diet.

Balogh also argued that 'despotism' arose from illegal attempts to integrate the independent kingdom of Hungary within the lands of Habsburg inheritance. For this reason, the *diploma* must state clearly that all Hungary's administration must be separate from that of other lands, unless those lands assert their right to enjoy the same freedoms

⁶²⁶ The *subsidiia* were extraordinary levies on the serfs, for wedding presents and public 'gifts' at other ceremonial events, and even for paying ransoms for nobles if they were captured in battle. Király, *Hungary*, p. 262. A coronation gift was to be paid to Leopold on his coronation.

as the Hungarians (i.e., they are territorially annexed).⁶²⁷ For the king, a yearly civil list is to be established. Regarding the military, all personnel must swear an oath to king and country. Foreign troops may only enter the country on agreement, and must immediately take an oath, or not receive food. Foreign officers should be employed in German regiments, while only Hungarian officers must command Hungarian regiments. Regarding religion, Balogh (himself a Lutheran) emphasizes the religious rights of non-Catholics: as bilateral contracts, the Treaty of Vienna and the Treaty of Linz must be recognized. It would appear then that Balogh saw these two objects of positive law to be compatible with the idea of a Protestant ‘ancient constitution’. The Greek Catholic church must also be accepted. Union must be declared with Transylvania and other territories belonging to the Hungarian crown.

Despite multiple references to the ‘people’, this ‘constitutional’ plan barely addresses groups outside the middle nobility: Balogh suggested matters concerning cities and tax payers (i.e. the *misera plebs contribuens*) should be entrusted to a committee which must complete its work by the next diet. Balogh’s overall plan was thus clear. County deputies must do nothing to oppose the country’s freedoms, and everything to secure them. Until the king’s agreement is secured (*capitulatio*) nothing must be negotiated except for the restoration of ancient rights and the establishment of ‘guarantees’. Only then can the coronation take place. Matters concerning ‘regular’ laws must be postponed until the next diet: there must be no innovation, only restitution.

8.2.3 József Hajnóczy

The final text was *Gedanken eines ungarischen Patrioten über einige zum Landtag gehörige Gegenstände*, published anonymously in March in Vienna, and penned by Széchenyi’s secretary, József Hajnóczy.⁶²⁸ A protestant of ignoble origin, Hajnóczy was the most radical of the three authors (his support for the Jacobin movement eventually led to his execution in 1795). Still, this early pamphlet is more cautious than his later works.⁶²⁹ Hajnóczy, for example, insisted that the maintenance of the current ‘state constitution’ was a priority (‘Dass so viel als nur immer Menschen möglich, die jetzige Staatsverfassung

⁶²⁷ Marczali, *Az 1790/91. Országgyűlés*, I. p. 95.

⁶²⁸ For the full text see *MJI*, I, pp. 50-60.

⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

in Ungarn aufrecht erhalten werde').⁶³⁰ Nevertheless, calling himself *Der Träumer* 'the dreamer', he did call for ignoble landowners to be able to run for office and proposed that lower offices could be held by those who own no land, so long as they are born Hungarians. He also demanded that all the country's inhabitants should have the right to a hearing in the royal courts and that the tithe and ninth should be abolished.

In all the above texts we may see different conceptions of the 'constitution'. Széchenyi makes a distinction between 'new' forms of constitutionalism, of which he disapproves, and 'old' laws, which he believes are best-suited to maintain 'security', despite some 'imperfections'. However, he does claim that a new constitution could (eventually) be introduced through the work of specialized committees. Széchenyi then was a proponent of moderate reform, believing that carefully-considered change could be brought about. Hajnóczy, too, makes a conceptual distinction between old and new laws, prescribing the preservation of the existing *Staatsverfassung*, but subsequently suggesting multiple reforms and the extension of noble rights to non-nobles. Yet it is Hajnóczy's self-definition as a 'dreamer' that suggests his marginalized position in the political sphere. Sentimental in outlook, the trope of the anonymous dreamer-narrator not only suggests an emotional aversion to present reality, but also raises questions of agency and responsibility, chiefly by positioning the author/dreamer as an idealistic, but lonesome, figure of desired transition.

That was an accurate self-assessment. Most members of the Hungarian nobility only displayed an appetite for reform and the ideas of the French Revolution insofar as they undermined the authority of King and the Catholic Clergy. Thus, few of Hajnóczy's liberal proposals were realized at the Diets of 1790/91 and 1792, apart from the granting of rights to Greek Catholic (1791) and Orthodox (1792) church representatives to participate and vote at the Diet.⁶³¹

In contrast to the above authors, Balogh is the 'ancient constitutionalist' *par excellence*, with the constitution equated almost solely with noble rights that must be 'secured' or 'restored', and notions of 'innovation' viewed negatively unless they 'reinforce' the feudal constitution. Indeed, a key facet of Balogh's rhetoric is his use of the term *constitutio*. While it may be claimed that the *de facto* constitution is, in Balogh's view, the *diploma inaugurale*, the final form of constitutional 'pact' or 'guarantee' between ruler

⁶³⁰ Ibid., p. 51.

⁶³¹ András Forgó, 'Görög szertartású püspökök a 18. század végi magyar országgyűlésen', *Egyháztörténelmi Szemle*, 11 (2010), pp. 26–47.

and estates, Balogh is careful not to conflate the two concepts. Since the *diploma* was yet to be agreed upon, it represented a potential source of legal change. Thus, Balogh instead considered the ‘constitution’ to consist of *previously enacted* ‘cardinal laws’, pacts or ‘contracts’ that formed the basis for political union between the king and the ‘people’ which could not be altered without the nobility’s consent.⁶³² Based upon past precedent, these bilateral ‘contracts’ *could not* be altered without the nobility’s consent. It was to similar effect that Balogh called for a distinction between ‘public’ and ‘constitutional’ law: while individual counties may seek to alter the status of the nobility’s privileges over the lower orders, such decisions would have no ‘constitutional’ standing, and therefore would not alter the dictates of the Magyar constitution.⁶³³ In this way, Balogh claimed that ‘constitutional’ law concerned little more than constraining the rights of the king to interfere with ancient privileges; what the nobility themselves decided to do with those privileges was another, entirely non-constitutional matter. Thus, although referring to terms such as ‘constitution’ and ‘contract’, Balogh’s conceptualizations suggest the garbing of traditional feudal relations between the king, nobility, and peasantry in revolutionary vocabulary, partly to threaten the royal court with ‘revolutionary’ insurrection, partly to legitimize the political position of the estates by using *en vogue* political vocabularies of the Enlightenment.

Another striking facet of Balogh’s rhetoric is his metaphorization of the constitution. Rather than attempting to settle upon a comprehensive legal programme at the diet, Balogh’s idea was to operate within more *ad hoc* guidelines which would provide ‘if not for the perfect completion of the building, then at least for the laying of certain foundations, which [our] descendants, defending their own interests, will be able to build upon in later times.’⁶³⁴ By transferring ideas of componential relations in man-made physical structures to abstract legal-constitutional claims, the metaphor operates on a number of levels. It suggests the existence of different ‘levels’ of law, and encourages the view that the ancient laws are constituted of basic, essential, and ‘solid’, that is normatively ‘unshakeable’ or undeniable principles. It also suggests that these laws are of long-standing validity to the extent that they will ‘lie beneath’ future laws: the future walls *must* be modelled on the pre-existing foundational pattern, presupposing their subsequent suitability and utility. Here we may see how the foundation metaphor provides an implicit

⁶³² Pajkossy, *Magyarország története*, p. 43.

⁶³³ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

methodology for debate at the diet: it both directs attention to the legal 'basis' of legislative proposals, and whether or not they support the normative assumptions of the ancient laws; it also discourages other kinds of legal, moral, and utilitarian claim that do not comport with these 'basic' normative tenets.

On another level, the metaphorical conception of the constitution's future 'building' suggests notions of 'security' for those it houses, and 'resistance' against those 'outside' its walls. These structures will eventually serve as a defensive boundary against the incursions of the king or other opponents, who can only remove the edifice through violent acts of destruction.

Finally, the edifice metaphor clearly suggests human agency in the development of the law. In this conception, the nobility are both 'preservers' of the ancient, and 'architects' of the future constitution. This notion of purposive human action stood in stark contrast to the organic understanding of 'living' customary law, which suggested that legislation was co-extensive with customary development and the 'natural' emergence of legal norms through timeworn normative practice. There were, however, other ways around the 'organic' conception of legal development, as the speech by József Ürményi can be seen to illustrate.

9.0 The Diet: József Ürményi's Opening Speech

It is the opening speech given by the king's *personalis*, József Ürményi, which provided the earliest available exposition of the 'ancient constitution' recorded in Hungarian.⁶³⁵ A prominent figure during the reign of Joseph II, Ürményi sought to negotiate the middle ground between the various factions of the Hungarian nobility and the king, and presented a scenario in which constitutional dialogue becomes a bulwark against, rather than a force for, radical change. The speech thus provides a crucial framing function in that it attempts to set parameters for both the subject matter and the manner of political contestation at the diet.

In his speech Ürményi expressed delight that 'divine providence' has, after twenty-five years, brought the assembly together to freely exercise its 'ancient and centuries-old legislative power'. He also explained that the 'trunk and roots' of the constitution was originally formed by the nobility's 'glorious elders and forebears', who entered into a 'civil society', and sealed an indissoluble pact with the Prince. This pact included both the sovereign rights of the Prince *and* the nobility's freedoms, and it also provided for the 'happiness' of the people at large.⁶³⁶

Ürményi thus conceptualizes the constitution as a foundational contract that brought the political community into existence in ancient times. But because his understanding of the social contract respected both the hereditary right of the king *and* the rights of the nobility (including their right to partake in legislation at the Diet), it stood in contrast to the absolutist theories of Joseph von Sonnenfels and Carl Anton von Martini, who used similarly historical-contractual arguments to place absolute legislative right in the hands of the monarch.

In this way Ürményi uses the idea of the social contract to reject the theoretical underpinnings of absolutist rule embraced during the reign of Joseph II. Indeed, he appears to allude to the injurious rule of Joseph by claiming that the 'rooted Constitution' had fallen into decline, and in recent times, near 'ruin'. However, Ürményi continues, claiming that ever since the very enactment of the 'constitution', the passing of time had seen discordant and selfish individuals act for 'personal gain'. Thus, Ürményi made time the chief source of constitutional 'erosion' as opposed to legitimacy, and if we follow through

⁶³⁵ The full text of the speech can be found in NVJ 1790/91 pp. 2-11.

⁶³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

with his frequent use of organic metaphor, it would appear that he intended the ancient laws to be ‘weeded’ at the Diet. But how could the ancient constitution be altered without undermining the very authority of ancient custom and the old definitions of law?

Ürményi then explained how legal precedents may be evaluated and, if necessary, discarded at the Diet. First, he declared that the chief purpose of the law is to provide public security. But security could not be safeguarded unless ‘trust’ was established between the prince and the estates, and so long as the public felt ‘affection’ towards the ‘legislative’ and ‘executive’ powers. Thus, the separation of powers must be cemented with mutual goodwill, and legislation must be oriented towards the good of all the people. To achieve the trust of the king and the affection of the people, Ürményi explained that the nobility must first carefully consider the ‘origins and foundations’ of the ancient laws, and then think of their ‘natural progression’ and ‘utility’ for each member of ‘civil society’ (here referring to the political elite). Then, once the nobility have established the causes of their *sérelmek* (‘grievances’, lit. ‘injuries’), they must adhere to ‘remedial’ and ‘reparative’ means in their negotiations, without the ‘pursuit of private interest’. Thus, the first phase of negotiations is to focus upon the grievances of the nobility and their reparation. But by opening up the ‘rooted’ laws to scrutiny, Ürményi claims the nobility can expunge the many ‘improper customs’ that have ‘slipped into use’, customs that are contrary to the ‘true sense’ (*igaz értelme*) of the ‘rooted’ laws.

Ürményi thus provided three benchmarks against which legislation is to be assessed and deleterious customs expunged: history, community, and utility. But what did Ürményi mean by the ‘true sense’ of the law? The law’s true essence appears in Ürményi’s speech as something abstract and external to human activity, as part of a set of timeless, immutable truths that transcend mere temporary arrangements or prior written laws. ‘Rooted’ in the fabric of time-worn inheritance and tradition, Ürményi leads his audience to infer that the ‘true sense’ of the law is an unwritten truth, one that is derived from the immemorial authority of customary law and from what Ürményi calls—in typically Montesquieuan vocabulary—the ‘spirit’ of the constitution. By thus describing the law, Ürményi urged those assembled to see that they were ‘discovering’ the law, rather than engaging in its creation.

But while Ürményi explained that the Diet’s primary function was to address noble ‘grievances’ and thus create ‘trust’ between king and nobility, he also raised a more contentious set of issues regarding the ‘spirit’ of the constitution. The Diet’s second task,

he reiterated, was to engender the ‘affection’ and ‘confidence’ of the country’s lower orders. Drawing on the vocabulary of enlightened government, he insisted that this can only be achieved by making them ‘happy’, by eradicating all trace of lawless rule, guaranteeing that they and their possessions are safe, that justice is administered promptly, and that services to their lords and contributions to the ‘public burden’ (*Köz-teher*) are justly divided. In this way crafts and trade will flourish, and ‘industriousness’ (*Szorgalmatoskodás*) will spread. These principles, he claimed, in addition to religious and class tolerance, comprise the very ‘marrow and soul’ (*veleje és Lelke*) of the laws, and if adhered to, they would create that very special and unique form of security that ‘was always rooted in the chief constitution of our laws’. Indeed, if the nobility ensure that this ‘true sense’ of the rooted laws is not misinterpreted then they

...will surely enjoy the trust and affection of our king, as well as the gratitude of our fellow compatriots and descendants, and rightly boast of an eternal constitution (*örökös Alkotmány*) that serves as a memorial to the homeland’s perpetuity.⁶³⁷

Despite Ürményi’s grandiose conclusion, his conception of the ‘ancient constitution’ was, to the fury of much of his audience, combined with elements of Joseph’s eudaemonistic programme of enlightened government. Furthermore, the rebellious middle nobility had no wish to hear about the authority of the king when they wished, through the *filium successionis interruptum* argument, to elect a new monarch. The opening ceremony was thus followed by an uproar.

Members of the Lower Table called for both Ürményi and Court Judge⁶³⁸ Count Károly Zichy, who presided over the Upper Table, to be removed from their posts, because they had been appointed during the reign of Joseph II. The magnates of the upper table stood firm by Zichy, but the decision over Ürményi’s post was postponed until later, as he appealed to the nobility’s ancient right to be judged by due process of law.⁶³⁹

A further sign of the *bene possessionati*’s increased confidence—in addition to the bellicosity at the opening of the Diet and the clamour of calls for the introduction of

⁶³⁷ NVJ 1790/91, p. 7.

⁶³⁸ Latin *Iudex Curiae Regiae*, Hungarian *Országbíró*. The Court Judge administered the king’s court in association with the members of the royal council, and acted in the capacity of the ‘royal presence’ in the absence of the king. Rady, *Customary Law*, p. 52.

⁶³⁹ Henrik Marczali, *Magyarország története a szatmári békétől a bécsi congressusig 1711-1815* (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1898), p. 492.

Hungarian as the language of government—was that members of the lower table quickly demanded that the upper table be renamed from ‘supreme table’ (*Felsőleges Tábla*) to ‘respectable first table’ (*Tekintetes Első-Tábla*).⁶⁴⁰ This was of course an attempt to enforce the Werbőczian notion of *una eademque libertas*. Yet more strident, however, were calls to force those in attendance to swear an oath to protect the country’s constitution. Members of the prelacy refused, suspecting a ruse, but their loyalties to the ‘nation’ were quickly called into question. Because in France *lèse-nation* was replacing *lèse-majesté* as the most heinous form of treason, the middle nobility now similarly called for treason against royal majesty *crimen laesae majestatis* to be extended to include *crimen laesae nationis* ‘treason against the nation’. The reason given was born of ancient constitutional reasoning. Because legislative right, and thus ‘majesty’ (‘sovereignty’), was divided between the lawfully-crowned king and the *natio* (i.e. as ‘members’ of the Holy Crown) it followed that those who injured the majesty of the nation should be punished just as those who injured the majesty of the king. This was a threat to those who had worked for Joseph and who were seen to have undermined the nation’s fundamental rights.⁶⁴¹

With the royal court hampered by its reliance on the Hungarian army in any potential conflict with the Prussians (imperial Hungarian troops were stationed both in the south as a buffer against the Turks and in the north as a precaution against Prussian invasion), the middle nobility pushed their agenda at the so-called ‘circular sessions’. Here the counties were organized into regional conglomerations to draft proposals for Leopold’s inaugural diploma and oath, and the noble opposition, led by Balogh and his associates on the lower table, gained the ascendancy.

In the early stages it was the joint proposal of the eastern Trans- and Cis-Tiszan regions, heavily influenced by Balogh’s manuscript, which prevailed. It maintained, *inter alia*, that the line of succession had been broken, that Joseph and Maria Theresa had transgressed the country’s fundamental laws, and that the nobility had the right to renegotiate the right of succession. It stated that although Hungary had accepted Habsburg rule under the Pragmatic Sanction, Hungary was a free and independent kingdom not to be ruled in the manner of other kingdoms or peoples. Hungary had a distinct constitution, and possessed the right to autonomous decision in matters of war and peace. The

⁶⁴⁰ NVJ 1790/91, p. 11.

⁶⁴¹ Attila Barna, ‘Törekvések a politikai bűncselekmények rendezésére Magyarországon a 18. század végén’, *Jog-Állam-Politika*, 2.2 (2010), 73-98 (84-85).

Habsburgs, who could only rule if lawfully crowned, were to recognize the illegality of Joseph's rule, swear to preserve the nobility's privileges, and also reinstate the *primae nonus*. The Lieutenancy Council was to be abolished and replaced with a Senate established to check the Diet's legislation, with members appointed by the Diet. Also to be erected was an Office for the Palatine (appointed by the Diet, who would provide instructions for the Senate). An independent defence ministry was also to be established, run by Hungarians (or nativized foreigners). Fiscal authority would also be granted to the Diet, with oversight of mines, and an independent treasury was to be established, while internal tariffs were to be abolished. The Treaties of Vienna and Linz were to be recognized, educational rights returned to the Churches, and press freedoms guaranteed. The Hungarian language was to be used in government, but Latin for the drafting of laws. The military frontiers were to be reincorporated, as was Transylvania.⁶⁴²

This was hardly an 'ancient constitution'. It was rather a constitution enshrining 'national' sovereignty. The document did state that the legislative power would be divided between King and Diet, but all legislative power really resided with the *bene possessionati*, who dominated the Diet, and who appointed staff to all other branches of government. Although religious disputes hampered proceedings, and although loyalists opposed the inclusion of any reference to the *filum interruptum* argument, the noble opposition were keen to push their vision onto the rest of the Diet before they received news of Leopold's dealings with the Prussians (it was widely believed that negotiations would fail, thus strengthening the Diet's position).

Meanwhile the nobility continued to exert pressure. On 15 July György Festetics, János Laczkovics and other Hungarian officers of the Graeven Hussar Regiment submitted a petition to the Diet requesting what amounted to a 'national' army, with the establishment of a training school for Hungarian officers, the abolition of corporal punishment, and the introduction of the vernacular as the command language in Hungarian regiments; but more controversially it demanded that Hungarian officers should command Hungarian regiments, and that those regiments should be stationed in Hungary. In response, applying the principle of *divide et impera*, Leopold played on tensions between national minorities, in particular the Serbs in the south.⁶⁴³ He permitted the convening of a Serbian Congress on 10 July, allowing members of the nobility as well

⁶⁴² Marczali, *Az 1790/1. Országgyűlés*, pp. 19-33.

⁶⁴³ Bérenger, *The Habsburg Empire*, p. 116.

as church representatives to attend, signalling that the convention was no mere religious convention.⁶⁴⁴ This was a deft attempt to undermine the Hungarian position in a manner similar to how the opposition movement had used the threat of separatism to forge an anti-Habsburg coalition. On 15 July military tribunal proceedings were launched against the signatories to the Graeven Hussars' petition. The nobility responded on 17 July proposing to send a peace delegation to Prussia on behalf of the Diet.⁶⁴⁵ Even so, the opposition were so certain of success that they were already nominating members of their ranks for positions within the soon-to-be established Senate.

On 20 July 1790, with the Prussian negotiations faring well, Leopold stamped his authority on proceedings at the Diet. He informed the Hungarians that he was only willing to accept a *diploma* on the basis of the Pragmatic Sanction. This meant that he was not willing to call his right of inheritance into doubt, and was certainly not willing to allow any innovations in the military that would undermine discipline. In a stern but conciliatory tone, he stated that he was not afraid to exercise his royal prerogatives and executive power through the law, and that he would not agree to any changes that contravened the laws of the kingdom.⁶⁴⁶

Leopold concluded peace with the Prussians at Reichenbach on 27 July 1790, crushing any hope of outside support for a Hungarian rebellion. On 3 August Primate Batthyány informed the Diet. The news was slow to spread, partly due to the nobility's disbelief.⁶⁴⁷ On 15 August further reports arrived that eleven imperial regiments were *en-route* to Hungary.⁶⁴⁸ Leopold re-stationed troops from the Silesian border into Hungary, although allegedly as a precaution against a peasant *Jacquerie*.⁶⁴⁹ By mid-August separatists were forced to reconcile themselves to the acceptance of a hereditary Habsburg monarch. Later, demonstrating his willingness to compromise, Leopold allowed a Hungarian

⁶⁴⁴ Marczali, *Magyarország története*, p. 506.

⁶⁴⁵ This may have been a ruse concocted with the Prussians. If the estates sent their own delegate, they would be *de facto* declaring the independent sovereignty of the Diet. Surprisingly, it was precisely the proponents of the *filium interruptum* argument who insisted upon writing to the king for permission, thus undermining their own position. It is unknown whether the Diet sent a delegation, although the matter was again raised at the session on 19 July 1790. The Viennese authorities were afraid of such a move and tightened their grip on border controls. Marczali, *Az 1790/1. Országgyűlés*, II, p. 57-59; 147.

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 502-503.

⁶⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

⁶⁴⁸ Király, *Hungary*, p. 190.

⁶⁴⁹ Ernst Wangermann, *From Joseph II to the Jacobin Trials* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 84-85.

delegate, the loyalist Count Ferenc Eszterházy, to participate in the peace negotiations with the Turks at Sistova in August 1791.⁶⁵⁰

Although peace at Reichenbach had substantially altered the tone of negotiations, Leopold was yet to seal a compromise with the estates, and the nobility were still keen to force Leopold into accepting limitations on royal power. Leopold enlisted the professor of German at the University of Pest, Leopold Alois Hoffmann, noted above, to mobilize the German burghers of the royal free towns in order to counterbalance the momentum of the *banderium* movement. Indeed, the burghers had begun to realize after the summer of 1790 that a noble-led republic would not be in their best interests, but they had been generally quiescent and slow to organise themselves.⁶⁵¹ An appeal was delivered 8 August 1790 voicing the burghers' concerns that they must not be marginalised at the Diet, and Hoffman himself delivered the document to Vienna. Despite an attempt by the nobility to find the authors of the appeal that 'scandalously expressed contempt for the nobility, putting the whole fourth estate to shame', Hoffmann urged his acquaintances in other towns to send similar appeals, and wrote pamphlets encouraging the burghers to defend their interests. The first, entitled *Babel*, was published on 23 August.⁶⁵²

The pamphlet likened the Diet to the well-known tower and the confusion of tongues, criticizing the demagoguery of the nobility, and claiming their desire to make the burghers their servants and the serfs their slaves.⁶⁵³ However, events at the Diet, which included a plan to exclude commoners from high offices and army commissions, appeared to illustrate these claims better than Hoffmann's pamphlets, and young burghers further protested against these proposals.⁶⁵⁴ Inspired, Hoffmann later published *Ninive* in September 1790, which criticized the estates' *alte Landesverfassung* and published details of the final draft diploma agreed upon by the estates in an attempt to expose their self-serving motives.⁶⁵⁵

⁶⁵⁰ Bálint Hóman and Gyula Szekfű, *Magyar Történet*, 5. vols. (Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetem, 1936), V., p. 73.

⁶⁵¹ Király, *Hungary*, p. 199.

⁶⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 207.

⁶⁵³ Director of the Censorship Commission Gottfried van Swieten ordered the pamphlet to be banned, unaware of Leopold's involvement; although Leopold could not reveal his own involvement, he ordered his son Francis to cancel Van Swieten's ban. Király *Hungary*, p. 207. Hoffmann's texts inspired a wave of responses from the nobility in German, Latin, and Hungarian counter pamphlets. Ballagi, *A politikai irodalom*, pp. 387-395.

⁶⁵⁴ Király, *Hungary*, p. 202.

⁶⁵⁵ Wangermann, *From Joseph II*, p. 86.

Other pamphlets criticizing the estates were also in widespread circulation. Some five thousand copies of Martinovics' *Oratio ad nobiles regni Hungariae* were published,⁶⁵⁶ and it was translated into Hungarian by his fellow radical János Laczkovics. The drive of Martinovics' work, printed in collusion with the court, was to undermine aristocratic privilege and the 'busy guardians of ancient laws, customs and ceremonies' whose support of archaic forms of governance only benefited the few.⁶⁵⁷ In addition, rumours spread that thirty thousand peasants were ready to revolt in the Trans-Tiszan region.⁶⁵⁸ Indeed, a number of pamphlets emerged threatening the nobility with revolt if they reneged upon the improvements granted to them by Joseph II.⁶⁵⁹

9.1 Drafting the Inaugural Diploma

The Diet's first joint draft diploma was near completion in early August, with proceedings dominated by Balogh and his associates. But for a few minor alterations, the text was still largely based upon the Trans-Tiszan proposal, although a motion to remove references to the *filum interruptum* argument was won by a single vote.⁶⁶⁰

Nevertheless, the tone of the document remained defiant. It maintained that Joseph ruled without coronation, oath, or Diet, and that his illegitimate rule warranted the estates' requests for further guarantees of their liberties, in addition to those 'favourable conditions already established by the kingdom's ancient constitution' (*per idoneas avitae Regni constitutioni innixis conditiones constabilita*).⁶⁶¹ In a striking metaphor of power as a possessed object, the text described how the king (whose rights were of course claimed as hereditary), received the crown 'from the hands of the Estates and Orders of the Kingdom' (*Coronam e manibus Statuum et Ordinum Regni susciperemus*), thus emphasizing the transferral, as opposed to automatic reception, of sovereign right. The first section of the document then expressed some familiar claims; that Hungary was possessed of her own laws and customs, and was to be ruled independently of other hereditary domains, and that rule by patent be ended. It still claimed that the Golden Bull's *primae nonus* be restored, with the caveat that

⁶⁵⁶ Bérenger, *The Habsburg Empire*, p. 114.

⁶⁵⁷ Martinovics attacked in particular the prelaty, who he saw wished to protect the country's 'ancient laws, decrees, and customs' in order to maintain their status. Martinovics and Laczkovics, *A' Magyar-Ország' Gyűlésiben*, pp. 85-86; 107.

⁶⁵⁸ Marczali, *Magyarország története*, p. 509.

⁶⁵⁹ For details see Király, *Hungary*, pp. 212-239.

⁶⁶⁰ Marczali, *Az 1790/1. Országgyűlés*, II, p. 69.

⁶⁶¹ *Dolgok és munkák*, p. 108.

the right could not be exercised by private individuals under a lawful king.⁶⁶² It also cemented noble rights and privileges, including exemption from tax. With regard to religion, it included a more general offer of protection for both Protestant and Catholic religions (the Tisza District document had only considered the rights of Protestants), and ignoring Joseph's Edict of Tolerance, demanded the Treaties of Vienna and Linz be recognized as fundamental laws. Returning to the question of sovereignty, it demanded that a Diet be held triennially, and that if the king failed to convene one, then the counties would call upon the Palatine or Court Judge to do so. Harking back to more medieval notions of kingship, it reiterated calls made in the Tiszan proposal for the king to spend the best part of the year residing in Hungary, with only Hungarian barons working under him there; these officials were not to be replaced by high-ranking foreigners. However, the precise duration of the king's residence in the country was thus left vague, and it was not demanded (as it was earlier) that the king live in Buda. The document further stipulated that all government offices were to be situated within the country and their staff nominated by the Diet, and that they could not be transferred elsewhere without the consent of the estates.⁶⁶³ This was aimed at removing the *Cancellaria Aulica Hungarica* or Hungarian Royal Court Chancellery from Vienna. Continuing in this vein, the proposal once again appealed to the ancient fundamental laws, and demanded that Hungarians should conduct the affairs of the Hungarian kingdom; this was best achieved through the establishment of a Royal Hungarian National Council (here toned down to *Consilium Regium Nationale Hungaricum*, as opposed to *Nationalis Senatus* 'National Senate' as it was called in the Trans-Tiszan draft), that was independent of all other government ministries and subordinate only to the Diet and the king. However, the king's powers were still to be substantially constrained. The diploma reiterated the Trans-Tiszan proposal's idea of the division of legislative power between the lawfully crowned king and the Diet, and similarly rebutted any attempt to rule through patent or decree. Internal matters concerning the relations with the hereditary lands must be discussed through negotiation at the Diet (*diaetalis tractatus*) as should seigniorial rights, which should not be altered through patent. The king could still veto an act proposed by the Diet but for only three successive Diets. If the nobility persisted, the king would have to accept their will. Further demands included the appointment of all judges without discrimination on religious grounds; that the right

⁶⁶² Ibid., p. 150.

⁶⁶³ Ibid., p. 111.

to grant mercy, confiscate property and inflict capital punishment was reserved by the estates; that the king was not allowed to call an *insurrectio*, i.e. to order the nobility to muster troops, and the Diet was to oversee the *contributio* or war tax; that the price of salt and the value of the currency could not be altered without the nobility's consent; that publicly held funds and the issuing of credit was to be overseen by the nobility; that all forms of gambling, including monopolies, lotteries, and the 'pot of luck' (*olla fortunae*) should be banned; that no business privileges could be granted that would damage private interests or push down the price of Hungarian goods; that all postal offices and mines would from now on be overseen by the nobility; that religious orders abolished by Joseph had to be restored; that only Hungarians (and wherever possible the landed nobility) were to be employed in a new military high command independent of the Viennese military council, although subordinate to the king; that only Hungarian officers may be appointed to all cavalry and infantry regiments, swear an approved oath on the constitution each year, and regiments could not be taken out of the country without the consent of the Diet; that military personnel committing non-military offences were to face a civil court (as in England); that all military frontiers and Transylvania should no longer be treated as a separate jurisdiction; that matters of war and peace could only be decided in consultation with the nobility; and that because the wellbeing of the country or 'republic' (*Salus Reipublicae*) depended upon the education of the young, the Diet would not in any circumstances submit the curriculum for education to any royal authority or committee, while the Hungarian language was to be used in government offices, schools, academies, and the University. According to Marczali, this was the first mention at the Diet of 'national' education,⁶⁶⁴ or a *generalia Principia Nationalis Educationis*, as it was referred to in the text.⁶⁶⁵

The proposal thus attempted to establish a form of 'constitutional monarchy', or 'personal union' between the Habsburgs and a quasi-'independent' national republic. It not only drew upon the *Corpus Juris*, but other European concepts of law, including Montesquieuan notions of separated power, the notion of a national 'constitution', the idea that the 'nation' possessed the right to negotiate terms of war and peace, with its own separate Governmental Council (or 'Senate', as it was also called). The nation also

⁶⁶⁴ Marczali, *Az 1790/1. Országgyűlés*, II. p. 74.

⁶⁶⁵ *Dolgok és munkák*, p. 164.

possessed its own military force that answered to domestic institutions, and spoke its own separate language.

The royal prerogative was thus significantly constrained, and the symbolism of the king receiving the crown from the ‘hands’ of the nobility highlighted the king’s passive role in the transfer of power. As noted above, power resided chiefly with the *bene possessionati*; little mention was made of the Royal Free Towns, and less so of the peasantry.

However, such an attempt to codify noble supremacy within the diploma was hugely problematic with regard to the *de facto* conditions that existed within both the monarchy and the kingdom of Hungary itself. Opponents of the proposal remarked that it was unlikely to ever receive serious consideration. Széchenyi, for example, wrote that the draft diploma would mean that ‘the judge of Debrecen would have greater powers than the king of the Hungarians; not even the judge would accept such terms’. Moreover, he claimed the document’s authors were fools: ‘not a single one of their points will stand according to the dictates of common sense’.⁶⁶⁶ Indeed, aside from the strict ‘legality’ of the *filium interruptum* argument and the power imbalance between Hungary and the Habsburg Imperial lands, Hungary itself was a divided realm. Disputes over the inclusion of religious rights had nearly brought the Diet to a standstill, and deep-seated animosities between Catholics and Protestants would surely have played a role in obstructing any kind of smooth transition to a ‘national’ republic. And even if the *bene possessionati* had succeeded in creating a ‘national’ republic, there was the yet thornier question of how other nationalities would have responded in a kingdom where the Hungarians only constituted a relative majority. While the rhetoric of a nascent Magyar ethno-nationalism certainly played a significant role at the 1790/91 Diet, not all were committed to the ethnic conception of state, as older ideas of ‘Hungarus’ patriotism, still prevailed (the Croats, who were largely allied with the Hungarians, still referred to themselves as ‘true Hungarians’ at the Diet).⁶⁶⁷ Furthermore, while the watchwords of revolutionary and emancipatory constitutionalism were flying around the Diet, the planned ‘constitution’ hardly transcended the feudal mindset: it was quite apparent during the drafting of the diploma that the majority of nobles were loath to extend rights to lower social strata. References to the sovereignty of the ‘people’ in the Werbőczian sense of ‘nobility’ were

⁶⁶⁶ Marczali, *Az 1790/1. Országgyűlés*, II, pp. 43-44.

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 135-136.

particularly problematic, especially with the threat of a peasant *jacquerie* looming from below.

9.2 Reception in Vienna

In accordance with custom, the Diet requested Leopold to hear the proposals of the nobility on 20 August in Vienna. But Leopold once again insisted in a *resolutio* penned to the Chancellery that he was not willing to accept any diploma other than that of Charles VI (Charles III of Hungary) or Maria Theresa. The Theresian diploma, adding the right of female inheritance to her predecessor's diploma, comprised five points: first, to preserve the ancient rights and privileges of the nobility except the *ius resistendi*; second, to preserve the Holy Crown and entrust it to the safekeeping of delegates elected by the estates; third, to annex recovered territories to the kingdom; fourth, to reinstate the estates' right to elect a monarch should the Habsburg line die out; and fifth, that subsequent monarchs must issue a diploma accepted by the Diet and swear to uphold it on oath.⁶⁶⁸ Leopold was resolute that he would not compromise, and awaited a statement from the nobility on the matter. The content of the statement would determine whether he would open the Diet and be crowned as king before his coronation as the Holy Roman Emperor, or whether he would resort to other legal means to guarantee his hereditary right. It was clear that the king would not budge. This was particularly evident in the *resolutio*'s references to Law VII of 1655 and XI of 1723, the first accepting the authority of the *Hofkriegsrat* in Hungary with a Hungarian advisor, the second stipulating how the law dealt with traitors.⁶⁶⁹ The following day, on 21 August, Leopold issued an order to the Chancellery to uncover the identities of those who had colluded with the Prussians, investigate the circumstances of their crimes, and charge them. Further rumours were spread that the Prussians had revealed the identity of the conspirators. Although the threat fizzled out and the list of names never materialized,⁶⁷⁰ Leopold's scare tactic ultimately succeeded.⁶⁷¹

⁶⁶⁸ Henrik Marczali, *Hungary in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), pp. 350-351.

⁶⁶⁹ A Latin translation is in *Dolgok és munkák*, p. 104.

⁶⁷⁰ Marczali, *Az 1790/1. országgyűlés*, II, pp. 214-215.

⁶⁷¹ Several rebellious leaders, including the mastermind of the feudal revolt Péter Balogh of Ócsa, later had a turn of heart and became outwardly loyal to the Habsburg cause. Mályusz, Elemér, *Sándor Lipót főherceg nádor iratai 1790–1795* (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1926), p. 5.

With Leopold in close collaboration with the *Staatsrat*, the court had been well prepared to oppose the acceptance of the new diploma. Earlier on 6 June, József Izdenczy of the *Staatsrat*, the nemesis of the ‘nationalist independent’ movement, had cast his eye over the propositions of the counties. In providing a series of rebuttals to the nobility’s claims, Izdenczy’s counterarguments neatly illustrated the way in which the historicizing claims of ancient constitutionalism could ultimately provide the seed of their own dissolution. As noted above, by referring to the validity of past laws in the dualist system of rule it was impossible to limit the conception of the law to a merely ‘national’ dimension. This was because historical laws also incorporated the rights and decrees of monarchs. And Izdenczy was just as able to find support for his ideological convictions in the Hungarian ‘ancient constitution’ as the Hungarian nobility were. Familiar with its bilateral tenets, he knew it contained a number of contractual elements that were in fact very conducive to the entrenchment of royal power. In Izdenczy’s view, the estates had only referred to historical laws insofar as it allowed them to draw up an entirely different system of government, overturn the *de facto* form of state, and unilaterally transfer sovereignty to the nobility.⁶⁷²

Thus, turning many of the estates’ arguments on their heads, Izdenczy insisted that the king should not issue any *diploma* other than that of Maria Theresa, as her pact had been guaranteed by other European powers. What is more, the laws of the Pragmatic Sanction could not be altered unilaterally by the Diet without the consent of *both* parties concerned, meaning king and estates. He claimed the *filium successionis interruptum* argument should not have passed through the Regency Council and Chancellery unopposed, as there was nothing in the *Corpus Juris* to suggest that hereditary rights had been lost after Joseph had refused to be crowned.⁶⁷³ Indeed, Law II of the 1723 Pragmatic Sanction stipulated the exact opposite. It read (Article 2 Paragraph 11):

And only after the complete extinction of the said Line do the Estates and Orders reserve their inherited & ancient, approved, & received Custom and Prerogative with regard to the Election & Coronation of their Kings.⁶⁷⁴

⁶⁷² Marczalli, *Az 1790/1. Országgyűlés*, II, p. 154.

⁶⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 152-153.

⁶⁷⁴ *Corpus Juris Ungarici*, vol. II, Buda, MDCCLXXIX, p. 138.

Izdenczy continued by turning the ancient constitutionalist notion of customary right against the estates. The nobles' claims that the king had no right to unilaterally declare war or peace, he pointed out, ran completely contrary to the practices of the last century. And the Diet's complaints about the unfairness of unilateral practices were, he observed, utterly hypocritical for they had been quite happy to unilaterally pass judgement on the question of hereditary succession and the interpretation of the Pragmatic Sanction in the leadup to the Diet.⁶⁷⁵ Similar views were expressed by the highly influential Kaunitz, who wrote:

The coronation oath is a bilateral contract between the king and his subjects. It binds both parties. Neither the king nor the estates may disregard it. Hungary is a continuity of rule. New capitulations permissible in an elective monarchy are never to be allowed in a hereditary kingdom. Hungary must be satisfied with the Diploma Carolinum. The king should make only minor alterations or additions to that document. The Diploma Carolinum must satisfy the Hungarian estates, as it reconfirms all the stipulations of the old Hungarian constitutions, including all the existing laws as well as the privileges of the estates. The draft presented by the estates differs fundamentally from the stipulations of the Diploma Carolinum; consequently it is unacceptable.⁶⁷⁶

9.3 Second Draft Diploma

The Viennese delegation returned to report to the Diet, where the nobility had been happily debating the *antecoronationalis* laws, making preparations for the new senate, and planning to make the learning of Hungarian mandatory for the king and his descendants. News of the king's resolution was met with silence. Eventually, work began to adapt the diploma.⁶⁷⁷

The second modified draft was completed at the sessions between the first and fifth of September, and a delegation was selected to forward it to Vienna.⁶⁷⁸ The text, now toned down, expressed the nobility's desire to crown Leopold king as the legal hereditary

⁶⁷⁵ Marczali, *Az 1790/1. Országgyűlés*, II, p. 153.

⁶⁷⁶ Translated in Király, *Hungary*, p. 236.

⁶⁷⁷ Marczali, *Az 1790/1. Országgyűlés*, p. 212.

⁶⁷⁸ NVJ 1790/91, pp. 151-160.

monarch, and entreated the king to maintain the laws regulating the relations between king and estates. It no longer claimed the right to stipulate new terms, but referred more meekly to bilateral agreements. The reference to the Golden Bull and right of resistance was omitted in accordance with Law 4 of 1687. References to how the king's right of inheritance was bound to the close observation of the law were also removed. The second article retained the expression of Hungary's independence; however, subsequent references to law 8 of 1715 conceded the inadequacy of the noble *insurrectio*, and reaffirmed the crown's right to decide upon military taxes with the Diet's consent. The third article focused on religious freedoms and granted rights to the Greek Catholic Church. The call for the Diet to be held triennially remained. It could be convened without the king, although the king promised to remedy the grievances of the nobility. The diploma reserved the Diet's right to pass, repeal, and interpret laws in concert with the king, and stuck to the principle that rule by patent was unacceptable, but dropped any mention of the king's veto. References to the effect that Law 8 of 1748 was to remain unchanged were also omitted. While the status of the peasantry was still to be discussed at the diet, mention was now made of their *conservatio*. The earlier articles on the dispensation of justice, the *subsidium*, and *contributio* were included within the same article, but references were merely made to a Hungarian, as opposed to permanent standing army. The demand for a Hungarian Council remained, and included a call for it to be established under the duration of the present Diet and the king was urged to allow a Hungarian legate to attend negotiations with the Ottoman Porte. Transylvania was still claimed as an 'inseparable' part of the kingdom, and the king and his family were requested to spend the best part of the year (*bonam partem*) in Hungary; the clause on the Hungarian royal retinue remained. The most significant addition was, however, made in article 12, which included the clause from earlier diplomas on Hungary's right to elect a monarch in the event (*quem Deus procul avertere velit*) that the Habsburg line was extinguished.

The diploma was thus substantially toned down, omitting, for example, references to customs and trade, the regulation of the price of salt, and a Hungarian treasury. There was similarly no mention of the post office, monopolies, or mines. Perhaps most significantly, there was no mention of the education, the press, or the Hungarian language.⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷⁹ Marczali, *Az 1790/1. Országgyűlés*, II., p. 299-302.

Even when a deputation arrived in Vienna with this revised diploma on 5 September, they faced a court resolutely opposed to any coronation oath other than that of Charles VI or Maria Theresa.⁶⁸⁰ The deputation, however, was determined to have the diploma accepted, and its members consulted with members of the court in Leopold's absence.⁶⁸¹ But their pleas fell largely upon deaf ears, and even when Leopold returned from Naples on September 16 and granted them audience, his answer remained the same. Negotiations ground to a halt. The court was not willing to budge on the issue of the diploma, especially seeing that the international situation now stood in their favour.

In the end, Zichy and Ürményi, representing the Diet, accepted the old diploma but persuaded Leopold to consider entering the rejected points of their draft into regular law as *antecoronationalis* articles. While in formal terms the court had succeeded in maintaining their demands over the diploma, Zichy and Ürményi had found a way to smuggle the constitutional 'guarantees' of their draft diploma, toned down where necessary, into the *Corpus Juris*. On 20 September Leopold ordered the Hungarian Chancellery to work through the points of the draft diploma and formulate opinions on how the various proposals could be entered into civil law. To this end they drafted a *resolutio* to inform the diet of the proposed modifications. On 23 September Leopold signed the *resolutio* without comment.⁶⁸² Thus, through a legal technicality and the compliance of a monarch who favoured compromise, the path was open to negotiation.

However, the mood was gloomy at the Diet when the king's refusal to accept the revised diploma was reported. The Lower Table complained that, 'in the newly drafted Diploma the Country (*Ország*) in truth wanted nothing more than Justice; Justice in which there was no innovation, and which was entirely rooted in the Homeland's Ancient living Laws'.⁶⁸³ Thus, in accordance with ancient constitutional rhetoric, the Diet claimed that nothing 'innovatory' was in their revised draft, despite its manifestly novel contents.⁶⁸⁴ Arguing that the older diplomas preserved their freedoms, Ürményi nevertheless attempted to persuade the Lower Table to accept the king's will, especially seeing that many of their other claims could be inserted into law, if not into the diploma itself. Recalcitrant, the nobility drafted a *repraesentatio*, sent on 5 October, in which the Diet

⁶⁸⁰ Mályusz, *Sándor Lipót*, p. 32.

⁶⁸¹ Leopold was visiting the King of Naples, NVJ 1790/91 p. 160.

⁶⁸² Mályusz, *Sándor Lipót*, pp. 33-35.

⁶⁸³ NVJ 1790/91, p. 163.

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

expressed its dismay that Leopold had rejected the draft diploma.⁶⁸⁵ The letter followed a similar line of ancient constitutional rhetoric, framing what was ‘new’ as something that was in fact quite old. In particular, they were keen to emphasize that the draft diploma was not a ‘new’ constitutional deal imposing any novel conditions upon the sovereign’s right to exercise power:

[...] the diploma is nothing more than a guarantee that arises from the observance of the Kingdom’s constitution, one that is secured in the presence of the King; in nature & essence it is nothing more than a summary—made as a guarantee—of the Constitution that is rooted in previously established Pacts of Succession.⁶⁸⁶

Once again we may observe the use of natural metaphors and the reiteration of the fact that the diploma was nothing more than the textual formalisation of the pre-existing constitution. The letter continued thus:

Accordingly, the new Capitulation does not contain anything that is not already maintained within the hereditary Royal laws; the Capitulation is itself [identical with] the Pacts of Agreement and the fundamental Laws of the Kingdom, by which the mutual connection between the King’s Rights & the Estates is defined; to this extent the Diploma only contains the means by which the ancient Constitution, that which was secured by earlier Pacts and fundamental Laws, is to be conserved.⁶⁸⁷

Here we may also note the introduction of the word *capitulatio*, a term from the vocabulary of elective monarchy, whereby the nobility ‘elected’ a king upon a set of conditions that both protected corporative interests and stipulated how the sovereign was allowed to exercise his power. This was a subtle move, but it appears that the nobility wished to remind Leopold that Hungary was formerly (i.e. before Habsburg rule) an elective monarchy, and as such, retained the historical right to negotiate royal prerogatives before coronation. Indeed, the letter continues its argument upon these lines in an attempt to assuage Leopold’s doubts.

⁶⁸⁵ *Dolgok és munkák* p. 260. The full text can be found on pp. 256-265.

⁶⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 263-264.

These new Conditions do not represent any kind of danger, as any propositions for the alteration of the Regime and step-by-step diminution of Regal Rights will be laid out before Your Serene followers. [The diploma] is only for the security of the Constitution, and not the transformation of the same; it is an object of diplomatic Insurance: it rests upon the King's Rights, and the Successive Pacts of the Realm, which in the integrity of their parts are unaltered; what is more, in its most essential part, this is despite Article 8 of 1741, which is not to be enumerated among the subjects of negotiation at the diet [*Diaetalium Tractatum*].⁶⁸⁸

Thus, the ancient constitutionalist argument is reiterated: the diploma is conservatory, rather than reformatory in scope, and changes nothing; it merely constitutes a bilateral 'guarantee'. Leopold was also reminded of his legal obligation, affirmed in Article 8 of 1741, to secure the rights and privileges of the nobility, including their immunity from all forms of taxation, as non-negotiable at the diet, and perpetually irrevocable.⁶⁸⁹

Despite such pleas, the deal had already been brokered by Zichy and Ürményi in Vienna. Gradually, the house began to accept the inevitable, and sensing the futility of their efforts, resistance buckled under pressure from the king to enact the coronation. Ürményi directed the Lower Table's attentions to the drafting of legal proposals for those articles that had not entered the diploma, the collection of the estates' *gravamina*, and the establishment of deputations to settle legal disputes and legal matters, lest the Diet should be dissolved having achieved nothing. The organization of irregular commissions for the dispensation of justice, education, and other 'common, perchance even unique matters'⁶⁹⁰ was postponed until a later date. On 21 October Leopold confirmed that the coronation, which had now been moved to Bratislava, was to go ahead as planned, and six members of the *banderium* from Pest were to guard the crown jewels on their journey there. Leopold also promised to return the crown to Buda. The nobility conceded, and made arrangements for their journey.⁶⁹¹ Bratislava was soon packed with visitors, spectators, the king's retinue, troops, *banderia* members, the nobility, and many others.

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 264.

⁶⁸⁹ See, on this article, C.A. Macartney, *The Habsburg and Hohenzollern Dynasties*, pp. 132-134.

⁶⁹⁰ NVJ 1790/91, p. 170.

⁶⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 179-180.

On 10 November the Hungarian nobility received the king's legislative proposals. They stipulated that abuses of the Diet and county assemblies must be halted and balance restored among the nobility so that common matters could be taken seriously and resolved calmly. They also wished to continue with the improvement of the lot of the peasantry, abolish unpaid labour, ban the corporal punishment of serfs by their landowners, and allow the lower orders to dispose freely of their earnings, without affecting the rights of landlords. The tax of 1764 introduced for the maintenance of the military was to be retained; the *domestica*, the tax imposed upon the peasantry for the maintenance of the counties, regulated; the laws reinstated after Joseph II's reign to prevent the employment of non-nobles in official positions abolished (Leopold was partially blocked on this issue by the Chancellery), and trading restrictions removed from the towns. Criminal law was to be reformed, and legal services provided at fairer prices. Leopold granted *armális* nobles exemption from taxation, but only insofar as it did not increase the burden upon the peasantry. The nobility listened in amazement as the propositions were read out, many surprised that he wished to continue with the enlightened programme of his brother Joseph II.⁶⁹² But the division between king and estates was now less prominent, and the nobility were reassured that Leopold wished to work through consultation with the Diet. Attention turned to the naming of Palatine, and soon after Leopold was crowned king amidst great pomp and ceremony on 15 November 1790, with his son Alexander Leopold elected as the first Habsburg Palatine of Hungary, a post that was thereafter filled by a Habsburg Archduke until 1848.

Eventually, a number of 'new' laws did emerge from the 1790/91 Diet, although they were certainly not conceptualized as innovations. Many of them were later seen to provide 'constitutional' precedent for further reforms and even independent Hungarian statehood.⁶⁹³ They included the delaying of monarchical prerogatives until the king's lawful coronation and oath, which was to take place within six months (Article III); the right to elect a Palatine (Article V); the housing of the Holy Crown in Buda (Article VI); the constitutional status of Hungary as an independent kingdom (Article X); with reference to the division of executive and legislative powers, the shared right to compose, annul and interpret the laws with the king, and the exclusion of rule by decree or patent (Article XII); the use of Hungarian in public institutions, and the appointment of grammar

⁶⁹² Marczali, *Az 1790/1. Országgyűlés*, II, pp. 350-352.

⁶⁹³ R. W. Seton-Watson, 'The Era of Reform in Hungary', *The Slavonic and East European Review*. American Series, 2 (1943), 145-166 (148)

teachers in gymnasia and the establishment of the University of Pest (article XVI); enhanced religious freedom (Articles XXVI-XXVII), including the right of Protestants to own property and take up official posts; the free movement of serfs (Article XXXV); the right of Jews to relocate to all areas of Hungary (apart from mining towns) from where they had been expelled (Article XXXVIII); the banning of torture (Article XLII); and the right of non-nobles to appeal against capital punishment or other serious sentences (Article XLIII).

However, while many of these laws were 'enlightened' in scope, the dominant influence of the nobility at the Diet left the feudal system largely intact.⁶⁹⁴ Many progressive 'reforms' were relics of Joseph II's earlier patents, and the peasantry were granted little more than the confirmation of Maria Theresa's *Urbarium* and the right to change their domicile. Additionally, these provisions, and the granting of religious freedom, were prevailed upon the Diet by the court.⁶⁹⁵

Even so, a degree of change appears to have suited the nobility. Leopold's promise to rule in conjunction with the Diet meant that the laws of 1790/91 marked a significant retreat from the programme of enlightened absolutism. Although religious matters had been settled by the court, Protestants and moderates were satisfied with the reaffirmation of their religious liberties.

Of the greatest long-term significance was Law X of 1791 which became a foundation stone for later calls for 'national' independence. The law, derived from the draft diplomas, decreed that Hungary was a 'free and independent kingdom' that 'submitted to no other kingdom or people'. Thus, Hungary was no mere province, a lesser entity that could be incorporated into the Habsburg state. The law also laid claim to Hungary's 'constitutional' status, especially as Article XII reaffirmed the sharing of powers between Crown and Estates. Clearly, however, Law X's declaration that Hungary was 'possessed of her own consistence and constitution' was informed by an older understanding of the term 'constitution'. This was no revolutionary rupture with the past, and it did not entail the recognition of a separate and unassailable body of 'national' laws that, for example, contradicted the royal *diploma*, or that stood as a codified document of laws symbolising the foundation of an independent 'national' state. Rather, the *diploma* stated that Hungary was to be ruled in accordance with her own laws and customs by

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 148.

⁶⁹⁵ Wangermann, *From Joseph II*, p. 88.

hereditary monarchs. As such, Law X was more a reaffirmation of Hungary's pre-existing legal identity, as a 'constitutionally' ruled, but organic political entity that retained administrative autonomy under Habsburg direction. Nevertheless, for later generations, this law was seen as a preliminary step on the path to full national independence. Even if no written constitution arose from the 1790/91 Diet, the late eighteenth century marks a period of transition in which a new narrative began to unfold: this was the story of the Hungarian ethnic nation's 'ancient constitution'.

10.0 Conclusions

This thesis has sought to clarify the ways in which the main political discourses of late eighteenth-century Hungary evolved into a new vocabulary of politics that would redefine Hungarian ‘national’ identity. In particular, the dissertation has attempted to delineate the national ‘ideology’ of the noble-led opposition, driven by sloganized demands for a ‘national’ language and similarly ‘national’ forms of ‘attire’ and ‘law’ at the 1790/91 Diet.

In order to contextualize this new political programme I have expanded upon preliminary inventories of the ‘political languages’ thought to be prevalent in the era (in particular those of ‘republicanism’, ‘ancient constitutionalism’, ‘enlightened government’, and ‘politeness’, but also those of ‘dynastic heroism’ and ‘patriotic scholarship’), and also highlighted a new political language, that of ‘ceremonial monarchism’, that may indicate avenues for further research. Rather than viewing these discourses as static entities (as they appear in earlier research),⁶⁹⁶ I have shown how these languages may be seen to have been in flux, particularly during the last third of the eighteenth century, in response to changing domestic conditions and the innovative philosophies of the Enlightenment.

While an exhaustive examination of the political languages of the late eighteenth century cannot be conducted in a study of this size, what we have seen is that—in addition to the dramatic decade of rule that followed Maria Theresa’s death in 1780—a series of social, demographic, and political transformations were already underway during the mid-to-late eighteenth century that not only challenged the traditional hierarchy of feudal society in Hungary, but also brought about new polarities of allegiance between the Royal Court and the kingdom’s inhabitants. On the one hand, it was through the state-led pursuit of ‘happiness’ that royal power began to extend into unprecedented areas of influence. With its programme of social welfare, education, and ideology of anthropocentric progress, the Habsburg monarchical state aligned itself with a vision of ‘enlightenment’ which embraced the novel offerings of the sciences, arts, and literature, and which challenged the desirability of traditional estates-based structures through new understandings of ‘citizenship’. On the other hand, the increasing relegation of religious matters to the side of ‘society’ in opposition to the crown, and the state’s perceived assault on the seigneurial system of rights and privileges put more conservatively-oriented

⁶⁹⁶ This criticism has also been raised in Ágoston Nagy and Tibor Bognár-Király, ‘Egy Különös Eszmetörténeti Kiméra’, *Politikatudományi Szemle*, 4 (2008), pp. 183–191 (p. 188).

members of Hungarian society on the defensive as they attempted to preserve their privileges and perpetuate the feudal spirit.

The result was a process of polarization between particularist visions of provincial loyalty and non-particularist, but monarchically-led, progress. The tension between traditional and modern worldviews would become increasingly polarized during the tumultuous reign of Joseph II. Certainly, as István Schlett has argued, it seems that the Habsburgs' eudaemonistic ideology—with its increased emphasis upon the sharing of tax burdens among all the strata of society—would almost inevitably clash with the more traditional understandings of noble tax exemption and legal dominion prevalent within the Kingdom of Hungary.⁶⁹⁷ Clearly, the nobility, utilizing the vocabularies of classical republicanism and customary law, had already retaliated at the 1764/1765 Diet, as we have seen above. Yet although 'republican' and customary ideals drawn *inter alia* from Master Simon's *Gesta Hungarorum* and Werbőczy's *Tripartitum* served the nobility well in their struggles against Habsburg encroachments, traditional values of republican stoicism and political exclusivity were coming under increasing pressure from other perceived changes, not least from egalitarian developments in Enlightenment political thought (and later practice), but also from the rise of trade and commerce that was increasingly seen to be the hallmark of successful European statecraft. Regarding the latter, a key problem was that commercial success was—in keeping with republican thinking—almost automatically associated with vanity, self-interest, and the pursuit of 'luxury', and the ideas of sociable virtue and 'politeness' that accompanied the luxuries of urbane society seemed only to stand in direct opposition to the stoical warrior ethos of the feudal nobility. As we have seen, for diehard traditionalists, the fashions and affectations of polite society were associated with artifice, foppery, and the effeminization of the polity—traits that might lead to the 'fall' of the noble republic, as in neighbouring Poland.

For those who wished to embark upon reform, however, the historical pressures of commercialization posed a different challenge: how to modernise a largely agrarian and traditionalist economy. It was within this context that language reformers such as Bessenyei presented a programme of language reform as a mediating concept between the ideals of commercial polite society and the traditional republican (and by extension, 'ancient constitutional') concept of virtue. At least, in Bessenyei's programme, language reform could be seen as a means to satisfy two ends. First, it enabled the education and

⁶⁹⁷ Schlett, *A politikai gondolkodás*, p. 294.

unification of the masses, and by allowing the free flow of knowledge, it also enabled the development of trade and commerce. Second, it provided the nobility with an alternative means of ennoblement. Now the pen stood alongside the sword, endowing the nobility with two powerful ‘weapons’ which nevertheless required great mastery and virtue to wield. One was an instrument of ‘martial’ honour, the other of an equally patriotic virtue, that of ‘politeness’ and erudition.

Bessenyei himself was less concerned with the supposedly feminising trends of cosmopolitan society. He wrote in his *Magyar Spectator* that the Magyars had once plaited their hair while now they wear powdered wigs, and that some expressed their dissatisfaction with such practices. He, however, saw it as a minor form of frippery, and noted that

[...] wild morals kill and destroy [...] you say that such vanity and eccentricity will cause the nation to disappear! Hey, my friend, does not fighting make it disappear more? Rome always spilt blood, killed, and still it fell. We are created for peace, and those nations that live in peace need entertaining with some games and trifling trivialities. But they read, too, and become gentle. But do not believe that a tame and knowledgeable nation—even if its youths wrap bedsheets around their necks, and even if their ladies bathe in scented waters—cannot be warriors, too!⁶⁹⁸

Nevertheless, Bessenyei’s attempts to reconcile the pen with the sword were not universally embraced; even if the vernacular language movement was gathering pace, the *Ratio Educationis* of 1777 affirmed that Latin was the officially-endorsed *lingua franca* of law and politics, binding the multilingual populace into a single legal and political entity under the symbol of the Holy Crown.

It was Joseph II’s 1784 language decree that propelled the language question—and with it the ideas of vernacular reform—to the forefront of Hungarian politics. Yet while the counties rallied behind the slogan of the *nationalis Hungarica lingua* in opposition to Joseph II’s ambitions, opinion was divided over which language should indeed be considered as the nation’s main language: Latin, the ‘father tongue’, or Hungarian, the ‘mother tongue’ of the nation. Citing the achievements of language reform and even the ‘ancient constitutional’ status of the vernacular, a number of counties argued to introduce

⁶⁹⁸ György Bessenyei, *A magyar néző* ([n.p.]: [n. pub.], 1779), p. 19.

Hungarian in the place of German and Latin. But in doing so the radical, potentially divisive nature of the monolingual vernacular paradigm became evident, and the county petitions already demonstrated some of the ideological tendencies that would become characteristic of later nineteenth-century Hungarian nationalism. These included the linking of language to both the 'life' and 'death' of the nation, and an inclination towards Magyarization, either asserting that a reformed Hungarian vernacular would entice non-Magyars to speak it in the hope of becoming refined and 'polished' themselves, or citing the Magyars' historical right of dominion over the lower classes who lived in Hungary, and who were therefore obliged to learn the Hungarian language. Thus, the discourse of vernacular linguistic nationalism was born in the Kingdom of Hungary as a combination of arguments from the political languages of politeness, language reform, and ancient constitutionalism. This combination of discursive ideas would endure, appealing to both liberal and conservative: in the nineteenth century, the vernacular language would come to be seen both as a vehicle of 'national' advancement, autonomy, and progress vis-à-vis the 'foreign' Habsburgs, as a symbol of the Magyars' historically-conceived 'national character', and as a sign of their superior standing on the historical ladder of progress vis-à-vis the non-Magyar peoples of the Carpathian Basin.⁶⁹⁹

Already, by the end of Joseph's reign, language had become one of the clarion calls of the noble-led 'national' opposition movement, which emphasized the role of the vernacular as a marker of 'national' identity, as well as reform, while simultaneously calling for Hungarian to be instituted as the 'national' language of government. These calls were accompanied by similar demands for 'national' forms of 'attire' and 'law' to be introduced by the Diet.

There was a degree of ambiguity surrounding these and many of the era's other key political concepts. Indeed, as I have illustrated above, a marked feature of the era's political discourse was a sense of terminological ambivalence deriving both from the contestation of key political concepts and the overlapping of vocabularies from 'new' and 'old' discourses of republicanism, ancient constitutionalism, enlightened monarchism, and the French vocabulary of politics. The often ambiguous, inconsistent, utopian, and contradictory uses of the term 'nation' in the period's literature are no exception, and in many ways reflect the vagaries of language use in an era of political transition.

⁶⁹⁹ Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, 'Contrasting Ethnic Nationalisms: Eastern Central Europe', in *Language and Nationalism in Europe*, ed. by Stephen Barber and Cathie Carmichael (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 183-220 (p. 188).

However, what I have also shown is that, despite the explosion of French revolutionary vocabularies at the Diet, the Hungarian national movement was less inspired by the radical democratic Rousseau of the *Contract Social*, and perhaps rather more by the cautious and conservative Rousseau of the *Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne*. Indeed, it appears that the Hungarian nobility followed Rousseau's injunction to the Poles to set the 'minds and hearts' of their people 'in a national pattern that will set them apart from other peoples'⁷⁰⁰ in order to help foster patriotism and preserve autonomy.

In a similar fashion, the Hungarian nobility sought to generate distinctive symbols of national identity that they believed reflected the best customs and morals of the 'people'—the people here of course being modelled on the 'ancient constitutional' ideals of Master Simon and Werbóczy. That is why language reformers drew inspiration from the political languages of politeness, republicanism and ancient constitutionalism in pamphlets calling for the introduction of the vernacular. The combination of these discourses presumably arose as language reformers sided with traditionalists in the 'national' movement and presented their ideal of reform in a manner that did not threaten the traditional privileges of the nobility. The result was that the vernacular was portrayed as both a vehicle of national advancement and politeness, and as a badge or marker of national identity along ancient constitutional lines. In this way, it was argued that economic and cultural reform could be combined with political conservatism.

This leads to the second chief pillar of the noble opposition movement. Just as language was commonly claimed as a distinctive mark of the Magyars' 'national character', one that not only bound them together as a moral community, but also separated them from other peoples, the nobility turned to another symbol of outwards identity, that of 'attire'. Again appearing to adapt Rousseau's instruction to the Poles to wear distinctively Polish clothing, the nobility revived traditional forms of 'national' regalia and contrived a discourse of 'sartorial nationalism' that combined ancient constitutional ideals with an anti-fashion, anti-cosmopolitan stance in order to shape the very appearance of the 'noble nation' as brave hussars descended from an idealized 'Scythian-Hunnic' lineage. Thus, the language of 'sartorial nationalism' reaffirmed a similarly conservative social agenda, emphasizing the gendered, masculine perception of the nation and its oriental Scythian roots, and, so, the politically exclusive ideals of 'ancient constitutional' thinking. This ideal, too, would last: throughout the nineteenth

⁷⁰⁰ Rousseau and Kendall, *The Government of Poland*, p. 12.

century, the donning of ‘Magyar’ clothes would be closely associated with the various re-vampings, both conservative and liberal, of national identity, until in the twentieth century it appeared (particularly to foreigners) that the Magyars were a hidebound nation, clinging nostalgically to feudal memories. Certainly, in the interwar years, conservatives continued to venerate the ‘ancient constitution’, and took pride in donning the *díszmagyar* (‘decorative Magyar’) ceremonial dress of the aristocracy, replete with pelisse, braided jacket, sword, boots, and hats with egret feathers.⁷⁰¹

This leads us to the final pillar of the noble opposition movement, that of ‘law’. It was associated, in broad terms, with talk of a ‘constitution’ in the abstract singular. This conceptual innovation could be seen to serve radical ends, alluding to the American break with monarchical rule and to the similar rupture that appeared to be occurring in France. Certainly, the idea of a ‘constitutional’ enactment taking place at the 1790/91 Diet suggested a direct challenge to the Habsburg right of inheritance, as it gave expression to notions of autonomy—even independence—and the legitimate right of the ‘people’ to curb monarchical power. Thus, references to the ‘constitution’, alongside Rousseauian appeals to the rights of the ‘people’ and the ‘social contract’, were effective political weapons vis-à-vis the royal court because of the revolutionary implications of those concepts.

Nevertheless, what pamphlets were published in the name of emancipatory reform remained peripheral in the political sphere, and although revolutionary watchwords added piquancy to the Diet’s proceedings, the emancipatory ambitions of reformers such as Hajnóczy did not find widespread support among the contemporary nobility.⁷⁰² It thus appears that foreign vocabularies were not invoked as road maps, but rather as repositories of rhetorical ammunition in the more familiar, bipolar discourse of the dualist system.

This leads us to a second stream of inherently conservative constitutional vocabulary at the 1790/91 Diet. This has been illustrated by the rebranding, *inter alia*, of Werbőczy’s *Tripartitum* and the kingdom’s customary laws as an ‘ancient constitution’. What we have seen is that references to an ‘ancient constitution’ in the abstract singular presupposed the existence of a ‘body’ of laws constraining royal power. However, if there was a constitutional ‘enactment’ in this case, it had occurred in the distant past, and rested upon the ancient, ‘foundational’ laws of feudal right and obligation described by Master Simon. Sanctified by custom, this body of laws was received rather than manufactured,

⁷⁰¹ László Marácz, ‘Hungarians’, in *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 174-176 (176).

⁷⁰² János Barta, ‘Felvilágosodás és nemzetkép Magyarországon’, *Irodalomtörténet*, 68 (1980), 338-356 (p. 356).

and looked to the past rather than the present for its ultimate source of legitimacy. As such, it acted as a counter-concept to radical change, either monarchical, or democratic.

The emphasis upon organic continuity in a divided kingdom and the conceptual innovation of the ‘ancient constitution’ in the singular led, however, to a new problem—that of consistency with collective historical definition. This was because ‘ancient’ social and political structures accepted regional and social variety among the bodies into which the populace was divided. Furthermore, they did not accept local forms of corporate power over the authority of the king. Indeed, the entire frame of political life pitted the sovereignty of the royal court and its bureaucracy against local forms of social and corporate autonomy. Even though the nobility referred to themselves collectively as the *ország* (‘country’) at the Diet, the kingdom was not a linguistically, politically, or religiously uniform ‘body’ that could effectively assert its sovereignty against the sovereign ‘head’ of the king. It is with respect to this facet of social reality that we may observe multiple different streams of ancient constitutionalism in the late eighteenth century, with some pamphleteers supporting monarchical, some noble, religious, and other forms of corporate right. Indeed, outside the broad parameters of the rights of the *communitas* legitimized by Master Simon and Werbőczy, political agents were anything but united on the overall conception of the ancient constitution, and some were adept at exploiting the indeterminacy of the concept to their own polemical ends. Both supporters and opponents of the king, different religious representatives, and even proponents of Latin or the vernacular Hungarian language reform movement could invoke a variety of historical arguments to justify their respective claims, each voicing different ideas concerning the past and present ‘constitution’ or historical make-up of the realm. Catholics could draw upon a partisan conception of Hungary as the *Regnum Marianum* (‘Realm of Mary’), a territory which enjoyed the Virgin Mother’s patronage, in order to exclude the rights of Protestants. In response, Protestants looked to historical treaties such as the Treaties of Vienna and Linz as ‘fundamental laws’ that secured religious liberties. Other, more disinterested onlookers such as Gvadányi deployed the *cuius regio, eius religio* argument, claiming that these treaties were forceful impositions never ratified by the Diet, and that it was both the king’s right and obligation to put an end to the bloodshed of religious disputes through peaceful means.⁷⁰³

⁷⁰³ Gvadányi, *A’ mostan folyó*, p. 12.

We have also seen that Ürményi's opening speech at the Diet presented a vision of the ancient constitution that resembled a form of enlightened constitutional monarchy based on feudal tenets, while the members of the *bene possessionati* mixed elements of ancient constitutionalism with the 'French lexicon' of politics, a set of labels for new ideas and institutions that included national sovereignty, a national army, and the sovereign right to negotiate matters of war and peace.⁷⁰⁴ Sometimes members of the opposition mixed ancient constitutional argumentation with other kinds of republican vocabulary. For example, in campaigning for the establishment of a national 'senate' (*senatus regni nationalis*) and the abolition of the Lieutenancy Council, the nobility referred to the laws of St Stephen and Law X of 1608. This was a politically motivated anachronism: these 'ancient' laws in fact referred to a royal council.⁷⁰⁵ 'Were they not familiar with the *Corpus Juris*?', asked Marczali, who claimed the separatist movement had misled the Hungarian nation with its 'petty legal ruses'.⁷⁰⁶ It rather appears that the *bene possessionati* were deploying 'ancient constitutional' rhetoric to radical ends in order to legitimize the 'new' through reference to the 'old'.

Thus, notwithstanding the conceptual emphasis on continuity rather than change, the idea of the 'ancient constitution' could be deployed in the interests of change. Certainly, it appears that the nobility did not wish to turn back the clock entirely, as the many new laws of 1790/91 may illustrate. However, innovation to the law was to be severely hampered. As the debates over the royal diploma were concluded, a more detailed elaboration of Hungarian law was entrusted to nine committees, the *deputationes regnicolares*, which were charged with providing a comprehensive legal framework for the entire country.⁷⁰⁷ The idea resembled Széchenyi's proposal to press the ideas of the Enlightenment into the creating of a new 'constitution' along gradualist lines. However, Leopold's reign was short-lived, and politics took a reactionary turn following the accession of Francis II in 1792. As the French revolution descended into bloody anarchy, those who championed reform, including those employed during the Josephine era, were dismissed. The Royal Court in Vienna introduced strict policing and censorship, and

⁷⁰⁴ Marczali, *Magyarország története a szatmári békétől*, p. 475.

⁷⁰⁵ Marczali, *Az 1790/1. Országgyűlés*, II. p. 11.

⁷⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

⁷⁰⁷ The committees were to redraft criminal, civil, commercial and procedural codes of law, and also provide blueprints for legislation concerning the economy, taxation, mining, peasant obligations, public administration, ecclesiastical matters, education and culture, and the various complaints of the diet. Rady, *Customary Law*, p. 217.

declared war on France. Neither move clashed with the priorities of the more conservative members of the Hungarian nobility, as they, too, feared the outbreak of popular revolution in Hungary. Unsurprisingly, the ideas of the *deputationes regnicolares* were shelved and did not resurface until the Reform Age.⁷⁰⁸ A further blow to the reformist intelligentsia came as the Hungarian Jacobins were arrested by Francis II's spies, and their leaders tried and executed. Those who had colluded were imprisoned or hounded out of office, and political programmes for democratic reform and economic liberalisation stifled. Among those arrested was Kazinczy, whose imprisonment constituted a setback to those exponents of language reform who wished to model the vernacular on the basis of foreign models (at least until he resumed activities following his release in 1801). Fearing further reprisals, many prominent intellectuals withdrew to the private sphere.⁷⁰⁹

For the time being, as the French Revolution became a reign of terror, 'preservation' became preferable to 'innovation'. With the nobility's position entrenched, and political negotiation continuing within the bounds of dualism for decades to come, the 'ancient constitutional' vision of national identity was guaranteed longevity and venerability, until its feudal tenets were eventually challenged in the nineteenth century by a new generation of reformers.

As noted above, this vision was not yet the more fully-fledged 'secular religion' of nineteenth-century nationalism as described by Takáts and others.⁷¹⁰ Indeed, there were as yet few cultural institutions to develop the national project, and few writers embarking upon the project of creating a 'national literature', as Kármán had lamented in his *Refinement of the Nation*. The Romanticized *Völkisch* ideals of Herder and Fichte were absent at this stage of political discourse, and there was little inclination to suggest that the cultural nation was to extend political rights to the lower orders: these manifestations of national culture were yet to come.

Nevertheless, the late eighteenth-century national opposition movement, with its focus on outward symbols of national identity, was a demonstration of culturalism that foreshadowed the romantic and collectivist rhetoric of the coming century. It lauded the unique and inimitable values of the indigenous, while often decrying corrupting foreign

⁷⁰⁸ Mária Homoki-Nagy, 'A magyar magánjog kodifikációja a 19. században', *Jogtörténeti Szemle*, 2004, 4-7 (4-5).

⁷⁰⁹ Deme, 'Writers and Essayists', p. 626.

⁷¹⁰ For a recent treatment of the 'secular religion' of nineteenth-century Hungarian nationalist politics see András Gerő, *Imagined History: Chapters from Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Hungarian Symbolic Politics* (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 2006).

influences and social change. Even if the ‘nation’ was still mostly conceived as the hierarchical ancient constitutionalist ‘political nation’, in the minds of many the idea of the nation was already beginning a process of transformation into that of a linguistically and culturally-conceived unit. The result would be the eventual disappearance of the concept of the *Natio Hungarica* in the nineteenth century, while a new term would emerge, that of the *Magyar nemzet* (‘Magyar nation’). This latter term could refer both to the inhabitants of the kingdom, regardless of language, and to the ethno-linguistic body politic of Hungarians. There was no clear distinction between the two concepts, thus revealing a dualism in the understanding of the term ‘nation’ by the Hungarian political classes.⁷¹¹

There were, of course, other late eighteenth-century developments that would contribute to the shape of Hungarian national identity in coming decades. These included new fashions of music and dance (including tunes from the Rákóczi era, and the *verbunkos* or military recruitment songs, often adapted by Gypsy musicians),⁷¹² and developments in cuisine that would contribute to later understandings of national eating habits, such as the arrival of the potato (a controversial vegetable that would in the nineteenth century challenge the dominance of wheat),⁷¹³ and the increased use of paprika, both as a medicine taken with brandy, and as a cheap spice. Of course, discussions of the above were not prominent features of political discourse. Nevertheless, from the latter half of the eighteenth century onwards, interest in ‘authentic’ forms of domestic cuisine, dance, music, in addition to the historical understandings of ‘language’, ‘attire’, and ‘law’, saw the re-evaluation of not only the political, but also the cultural sphere through a new kind of defining discourse. Utilizing new adjectives such as *nemzeti* ‘national’, and the similarly fashionable adjectives *magyaros* (‘magyar-style’) and *magyartalan* (‘un-Magyar’), speakers attempted to outline the normative and aesthetic dimensions of Hungarian ‘national character’, often in opposition to the modish fashions, habits, and even eating habits of foreign nations.⁷¹⁴

Thus, it was in the late eighteenth century that many of the ‘modern’ stereotypes of Hungarian national identity began to take shape. Paradoxically, however, modernity was often expressed by looking to the past, particularly as writers sought to discover,

⁷¹¹ Törnquist-Plewa, ‘Contrasting Ethnic Nationalisms’, p. 187.

⁷¹² Bertalan Fabó, *A magyar népdal zenei fejlődése*, 2 vols (Budapest: A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Kiadása, 1908), I, pp. 264-268.

⁷¹³ László Kósa, ‘A magyar burgonyakultúra történetének és néprajzának kutatása’, *Népi Kultúra—Népi Társadalom*, 1 (1968), 93-126.

⁷¹⁴ Lóránt Czigány, ‘Az úgynevezett „magyarosság”’, *Új Látóhatár*, 26.1 (1975), 1-16.(7; 11-12).

following ‘ancient constitutional’ patterns, the ethnic nation’s origins and its supposedly distinctive worldview. As this dissertation has, therefore, made clear, the 1790/91 Diet marks a threshold at which an abstract concept of ‘nation’ first stakes a claim to sovereignty. The significance of the middle nobility’s claim to represent the ‘people’ and thus the ‘nation’—contentious and contradictory as that claim may have been—was that it was founded upon a proto-nationalist strain of ancient constitutionalist argumentation. The nation was now not merely seen as a historical class concept, but as one with more pronounced ethnic and linguistic features that could similarly be traced back to the ancient past.

Hungary was a separate country, they claimed, named after the ancient Hungarians, whose right of ownership derived from ancient conquest. However, the middle nobility represented the ‘people’ of Hungary, not merely because they were noble patriots, but also because they were—following Rousseau’s injunctions—demonstrably the most ‘Hungarian’ element of the population, free from German and other kinds of cosmopolitan influence. This represented a significant conceptual switch. While the old concept of the *natio* foregrounded the idea of a supra-ethnic class that possessed multiple, historically- and territorially-held corporate rights vis-à-vis the king, the new ethno-national concept shifted the emphasis. It, too, sought to protect its rights from the king. But now the focus was turning to the primacy of one single ethno-national group in the history of a territory over which sovereignty was claimed. Now, the narrative of the Hungarian nation was not merely the ‘narrative history’ of a class, but rather of an ethnically and culturally conceived ‘national’ community, one with its own unique form of ‘national character’, appearance, and organically-developed laws.

Appendix A: Selected Laws of 1790/91 in English Translation

Article X of 1790/91

On the Independence of the Kingdom of Hungary and of the Parts Thereto Annexed On the humble proposal of the Estates and Orders of the Realm, His most Sacred Majesty has deigned to recognize that although the Succession of the Female Line of the Austrian House—established in Hungary and the Parts thereto annexed by Laws I and II of 1723—belongs according to the fixed Order of Succession, in indivisible and inseparable possession, to the same Prince to whom it belongs in the other kingdoms and hereditary domains situated inside or outside Germany; nevertheless, Hungary and the Parts thereto Annexed is a free Kingdom, and with regard to its entire lawful form of administration independent (including therein every branch of its Dicasteria [i.e. counties and municipalities]), that is, it is not subject to any other Kingdom or people, but possessed of its own Consistence and Constitution; therefore it must be ruled and governed by its hereditary and lawfully Crowned kings, consequently by His most Sacred Majesty too, and by his Successors, according to its own Laws and Customs, and not after the example of other Provinces, as is stipulated by Law III of 1715 and Laws VIII and XI of 1741.

Article XII of 1790/1

On the Exercise of Legislative and Executive Power That the Right to the enactment, abolition and interpretation of the laws in Hungary and her annexed Parts, without violation of law VIII of 1741, is jointly shared by the lawfully crowned Prince and the lawfully assembled Orders and Estates at the Diet, and that [this right] cannot be exercised with its [the Diet's] exclusion: His Sacred Majesty voluntarily acknowledges and gracefully declares that He shall uphold this right of the Orders as inviolate, and just as He has received it from his Divine Forebears, so too will He transmit this right to his August Successors unimpaired, thus assuring the Orders and Estates of the Realm that he shall never govern the Kingdom and its Annexed Parts through Edicts or so-called Patents, which in any case are never to be accepted by the Realm's Courts of Law; the issuing of Patents is reserved only for Matters whereby their Publication is the sole effective means of accomplishing a necessary end that is in any case concordant with the Law. Furthermore: The form of the judicatures as they have already been, or are to be, established by law, shall not be altered by Royal Authority; neither shall the execution of lawful sentences be obstructed by edict, nor shall their obstruction by others be permitted; nor shall the lawful sentences of the Law Courts be overruled, nor revised by the Crown, or indeed by any political office of government; instead, judges who are to be appointed without distinction of religion are to hold courts of law in accordance with the existing laws and accepted customs of the country, or [in accordance with] those [laws] that are to be adopted; executive power is to be exercised by Royal Authority in accordance with the laws.

Article XVI of 1790/91

That Public Affairs shall not be conducted in Foreign Languages and that the Hungarian Language shall be Conserved His Holy Majesty assures the faithful Orders and Estates that no foreign language will be introduced for any matter; and in order that the native Hungarian language may spread and become more polished, a special teacher will be

appointed to teach Hungarian language and composition in the gymnasiums, academies, and at the Hungarian university, so that those who do not know and wish to learn this language, and those who already know the language but who wish to perfect their knowledge, may gain the opportunity to fulfil their desires in accordance with the aforesaid goals; matters of government will for the time being be negotiated in Latin.

Appendix B: The Four County Districts of Hungary at the 1790/91 Diet

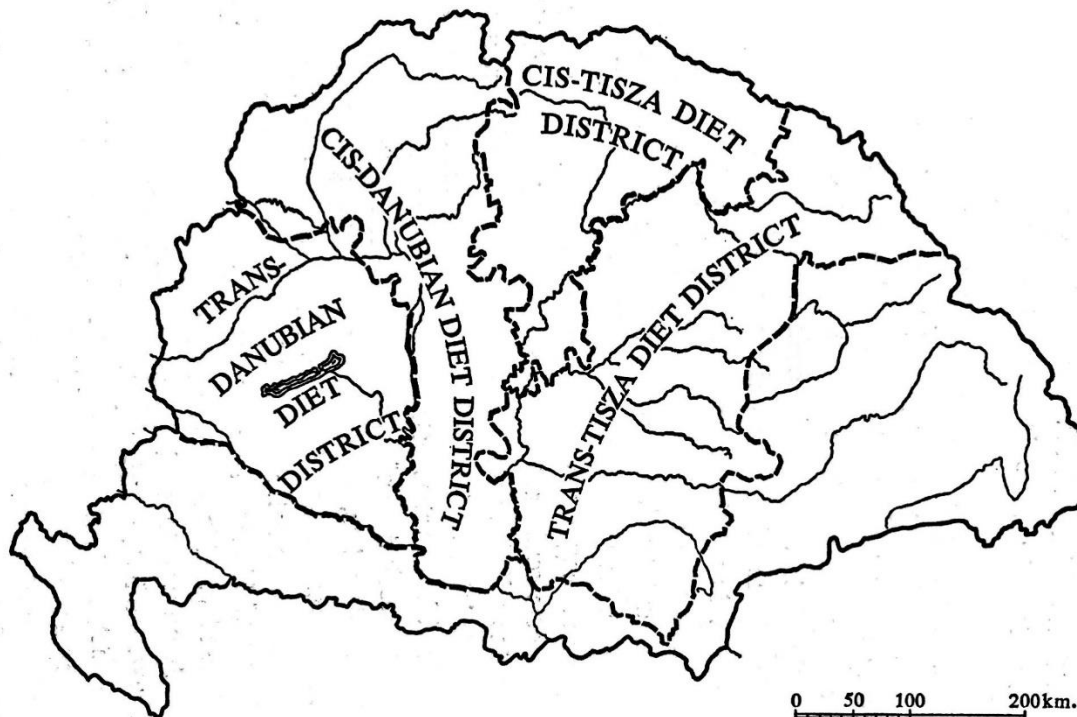


Fig. 1. The four 'districts' of Hungary at the Diet of 1790/91. These were four blocks of counties that were roughly demarcated in terms of their geographical relation to the Danube and Tisza rivers.⁷¹⁵

⁷¹⁵ Image from Béla K Király, *Hungary in the Late Eighteenth Century: The Decline of Enlightened Despotism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 85.

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- A' magyar anyáknak az ország-gyűlésére egybe-gyűlt ország nagyai', s' magyar atyák' elejébe terjesztett alázatos kérések'* ([n.p.], [n. pub.], 1790).
- A' magyar asszonyok' prókátora, a' Budán öszve gyűlt rendekhez* ([n.p.], [n. pub.], 1790)
- A' mostan kegyelmesen uralkodó római császár és apostoli magyar király Második Leopold ő felségének 1790-ik esztendőben, Szent András Havának 15-dik napján Posonyban tartatott szerentsés megkoronáztatásánk rövid le-írása* (Pozsony, [n. pub.], 1790)
- A' nemes magyar nemzethez rövid emlékeztető beszéd, mellyben meg-mutatattik, hogy Magyarországbán lehet, 's kell-is a' magyar nyelvet, és a' magyar tanításokat fel-állítani, és hogy az universitásnak Pest leg-jobb hely* (n.p.), [n. pub.], 1790)
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