Câteva afaceri funciare pe cursul sinuos al Târnavei Mari în veacul al XVIII-lea / A Few Land Bargains along the Winding Flow of Târnava Mare River in the Eighteenth Century

Abstract:

The winding history both of the River Târnava Mare (Große Kokel, Nagy Küküllö) and its settlements are explored in this article through the lens of a unique moment, namely a visit by Emperor Joseph II on 1-2 June 1773. The area, the local people and the imperial visit are described at full length by Michael Conrad von Heydendorff Senior, a notarius in Mediaş (Mediasch). From his memoirs, we chose for the present article a few of the numerous variations on the theme of corruption in eighteenth century Transylvania: 1) litigation between the Armenians from the town of Dumbrăveni (Elisabetopolis, Elisabethstadt, Erzsébetváros) and the Saxons of Şaroş village (Scharosch, Sáros), in the Heveş (Heves) lawsuit (1773-1790), characterised by dishonest methods and bribery attempts; 2) the pretences advanced by the Bethlen family to the inheritance of the extinct Apafi family in Dumbrăveni and Mălâncrav (Almakerek), as well as the Bethlens' defraudations during a long trial against the Austrian Fiscus and the Saxons; 3) extortion from serfs in the county of Târnava (Küküllö vármegye, Kokelburger Komitat) by the families Bánffi, Haller and, again, Bethlen; and 4) land sales and purchase in the same county practiced by aristocratic landowners who were guilty of spoliation, conflicts of interest, venality, cheating the Austrian state, forgery and the use of false (mercantile) matrimonies among other transgressions. These kinds of practices eventually led to the anger of Emperor Joseph II and his general aversion towards the Hungarian nobility, against whom he adopted firm measures.

Keywords: *Târnava Mare River, eighteenth century, Emperor Joseph II, land bargains, corruption.*