

Continuity and Discontinuity in the Administrative Elite of the Szekler Seats between 1840-1876*

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Article history: Received 30.10.2020; Revised 10.02.2021;

Accepted 10.05.2021; Available online 03.02.2022.

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Abstract. This study analyzes to what extent the frequent regime changes from the middle of the 19th century had an effect on the continuity, respectively the discontinuity of the officer corps of the Szekler seats, from the period before the Revolution of 1848 until the abolition of the Szekler seats following the administrative-territorial reform of 1876. While before 1848 we have strong continuity, the main feature of the two decades after the Revolution of 1848 was discontinuity. Beginning with the Revolution, the next two decades were marked by frequent changes and total rupture from the previous regime. The most radical break occurred in the age of neo-absolutism, when a lot of new and literally foreign people flowed into the Szeklerland administration. The next big elite change in the administration took place after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise. After the Compromise the situation stabilized again; and we find representatives of much of the same families who held the majority of offices during the pre-1848 period. This shows a high degree of stability of the county elite.

Keywords: administrative elite, elite change, Szekler seats, 19th century, Transylvania, continuity, discontinuity.

Rezumat: Continuitate și discontinuitate în elita scaunelor secuiești între 1840-1876. Studiul analizează în ce măsură au influențat schimbările dese de regim de la mijlocul secolului al XIX-lea continuitatea, respectiv discontinuitatea corpului funcționarilor scaunelor secuiești. Analiza începe în perioada de dinaintea Revoluției de la 1848 și merge până la reforma administrativ-teritorială din anul 1876. Dacă înainte de 1848 avem un grad

* This study was supported by the project K 134378 Parliamentarism in the era of Dualism from a regional perspective, funded by Hungarian National Research, Development and Innovation Fund (NKFI).

considerabil de continuitate, cele două decenii de după Revoluție se caracterizează prin discontinuitate pronunțată. Ruptura cea mai radicală s-a produs în timpul neoabsolutismului, când o mulțime de oameni noi și străini de regiune au pătruns în administrație. Următoarea schimbare a elitei administrative s-a produs în urma Compromisului austro-ungar. În perioada următoare situația s-a stabilizat din nou; și în administrație găsim în mare parte reprezentanții aceluiași familii care au deținut funcțiile cele mai importante și înainte de 1848, ceea ce denotă un grad înalt al stabilității elitei locale.

Cuvinte cheie: elită administrative, schimbarea elitelor, scaunele secuiești, Transilvania, secolul al XIX-lea, continuitate, discontinuitate.

Reading the political history of Transylvania from the middle of the 19th century – and considering both Romanian and Hungarian historiography –, we are facing a rather turbulent period, with revolution, civil war, and frequent changes in the political regime and the administrative system. The question, however, is whether each change of regime also meant a total break with the past. Was there a total change of local elites during the neo-absolutist period, or after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise? The present study tries to analyse the extent to which the frequent regime changes from the middle of the 19th century had an effect on the continuity, respectively the discontinuity of the officer corps of the Szekler seats¹, from the period before the Revolution of 1848 until the abolition of the Szekler seats following the administrative-territorial reform of 1876, when, apart from Csík, the other seats were complemented with smaller or larger parts of the former counties. The study also follows the consequences of this reform on the composition of the body of officials.

I have included in the analysis only the administrative elites of the seats, i.e., the following positions: the chief royal judge (*főkirálybíró*), the royal vice-judge (*alkirálybíró*), the protonotary (*főjegyző*), the vice-notaries (*aljegyző*), the tax collectors (*pénztárnok*, before 1848), and, within the limits of the data, the sheriffs (their name in Hungarian in the Szekler

¹ The territorial-administrative division of Transylvania before 1848 followed the medieval and early modern traditions, and was based on the system of the three 'nations of estates': the Hungarian nobility (counties), the Saxons (*Fundus Regius, Königsboden*) and the Szeklers. There were five seats in the Szeklerland, some of which included several co-seats: Csík, Gyergyó, and Kászsónszék; Háromszék (Sepsi, Kézdi, Orbai, and Miklósvárszék); Marosszék and Udvarhelyszék formed a contiguous area in the eastern part of Transylvania, while the small Aranyosszék was wedged between Torda and Alsó-Fehér counties.

seats was *dulló* and not *szolgabíró* as in the counties), as well as, for the period of Dualism, the county attorney (*tiszti ügyész*), and the president of the orphanage (*árvaszéki elnök*); but I also collected data on other positions. From the period of neo-absolutism, more precisely from the year 1855/56, I considered all the officials from the district and circle offices. The comparison was hampered by the frequent administrative-territorial reorganizations, the changes in the number of the smaller administrative units called districts (*járás*), the chaotic situation during the years of the Revolution, and the incomplete data, resulting from the lack or inaccessibility of the sources.² The main sources are the lists of officials published in the almanacs (calendars) of the time³, respectively, for the end of the period, the Directory of Hungarian Officials⁴, as well as the press of the time, completed with archival sources. I have also used different genealogical and biographical collections to identify people⁵.

The administration of the seats and the officer corps

Prior to 1848, the seats had both administrative and legal responsibilities, and their functioning did not differ significantly from that of the counties⁶. After the death of Emperor Joseph II, Law no. XII of 1790⁷ once again regulated the election of county and seat officials. The officials were elected by the county/seat assembly, but in the end, there

² The study was written during the pandemic, so I did not have access to the archives. The data come from my previous researches, respectively the sources accessible online.

³ *Mentor. Erdélyi Népkönyv. Közhasznú ismeretek tára*, ed. by Nagy Ferenc, Kolozsvár, 1842; *Közhasznú Honi Vezér. Gazdasági, házi és tiszti kalendárium*, 1843; *Uj és ó naptár Kriszt. urunk szület. után 1848 366 napból álló szökő évre. Erdélyi nagyfejedelemség s hozzá kapcsolt részek használatára*, Kolozsvár, 1848; *Hof- und Staatshandbuch des Kaiserthumes Österreich für das Jahr 1856*. Wien, 1856; *Kolozsvári naptár 1863-dik közönséges évre*. II. Kolozsvár; *Erdélyi képes naptár 1864-dik szökő esztendőre*, vol. 5. Kolozsvár; *Kolozsvári nagy naptár 1866-dik évre*, ed. by K. Papp Miklós, vol. II. Kolozsvár; *Megbővítettett közhasznú nemzeti Kalendárium, az 1868-diki szökő évre*, vol. LIV, ed. by Red. Bucsánszky Alajos, Pesten.

⁴ *Magyarország tiszti cím- és névtára*, vol. I, Budapest, Athenaeum, 1874; vol. II, 1875, vol. III, 1879; vol. IV, 1884, vol. V, 1886.

⁵ Iván Nagy, *Magyarország családai czimerekkel és nemzedékrendi táblákkal*, vol. I-XII. Pest, 1857-1868; Béla Kempelen, *Magyar nemes családok*, vol. I-XI. Budapest, 1911-1932; József Pálmay, *Udvarhely vármegye nemes családjai*. Székely-Udvarhely, Betegh Pál, 1900; idem, *Háromszék vármegye nemes családjai*. Sepsiszent-Györgyön, Jókai Nyomda, 1901; idem, *Marostorda vármegye nemes családjai*, Maros-Vásárhely, Adi Árpád, 1904.

⁶ Sándor Pál-Antal, *Székely önkormányzat-történet*, Marosvásárhely, Mentor, 2002, p. 167-177. See also the chapters of Anton E. Dörner in the volume: Ioan Aurel Pop, Thomas Nägler, András Magyarai (eds.), *Istoria Transilvaniei*, vol. III (de la 1711 până la 1918) (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2008), 19-46.

⁷ Law no. XII from 1791, § 4. <https://net.jogtar.hu/ezer-ev-torveny?docid=79100012.TVT&searchUrl=/ezer-ev-torvenyei%3Fpagenum%3D52> (6.2.2021)

were two notable differences from the county: the elections took place freely, i.e., without the chief royal judge – the equivalent of the Lord Lieutenant of the counties – appointing three candidates for each position in advance, taking into account – where appropriate – the representation of each recognized religion. This latter aspect was also respected in the case of the seat elections. Another difference was that the chief royal judge was also elected, while the Lord Lieutenants were appointed by the Monarch. In fact, in the case of the chief royal judge and the more important administrative functions⁸, the names of the three candidates who received the most votes were sent through the Gubernium (the Government of Transylvania) to Vienna, and of these the Monarch usually appointed the one who gathered the most votes. The right to free election in the Szekler seats was also confirmed by the decree of 12 September, 1815⁹.

The officer corps was less numerous than in the counties. The seat officials were the chief royal judge, the royal vice-judges (who were at the head of the subsidiary seats or districts), the proto-notary and the vice-notaries, the tax collectors, the archivists, the doctors, the lawyers for the poor, the orphanage judges, various inspectors, and the auxiliary staff. At the head of the districts, we find the sheriffs, in addition to which notaries and tax collectors also worked from case to case¹⁰.

The Revolution of 1848 did not bring about notable changes in the administrative system. Law no. I of 1848, approved by the Transylvanian Diet gathered in Cluj, stipulated that the system of administration and justice will remain unchanged for the time being. The Szeklers also received assurances from Lajos Kossuth that the elections will continue according to the old custom¹¹. However, the situation became increasingly opaque and there was a lot of temporary uncertainty in the designation, competences, and composition of the various bodies. This exacerbated the already rather chaotic situation, the consequences of which were also suffered by the population. A contemporary source described the situation as follows: “Our people have a commander on every corner. [...] The people don’t even know where to turn between so many powers. There have never been so many masters over the people as there are now in this democratic age...”¹²

⁸ The royal vice-judges, the notaries, and the tax collectors.

⁹ Pál-Antal, *Székely*, 170-174.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 183.

¹¹ Jenő Zepezsaner, *Udvarhelyszék közigazgatása és közéleté 1848–49-ben*, in Gusztáv Mihály Hermann, Jenő Zepezsaner, Tibor Elekes, *Udvarhelyszék. A közigazgatás és közélet története* (Csíkszereda: Pro-Print, 2016), 359.

¹² *Ibid.*, 362.

During the period of neo-absolutism, the old system was upset and uprooted. The counties, seats, and districts were dissolved. Transylvania was first divided into six, and, from 1851, into five large circles (*Kreis, District*), subdivided into 36 districts (*Bezirk*). Within the so-called “definitive” reorganization of the administration, in 1854, a new administrative-territorial division was introduced, when the province was divided into ten circles and 79 districts, and the Szekler seats were divided between four circles¹³.

Following the October Diploma (October 20, 1860), the internal autonomy of the provinces was restored, and the old administrative-territorial system was reintroduced. The following year, elections were held again for the positions within the public administration. However, the compromise period was short-lived. A large part of the newly elected officials from Hungary and Transylvania – here, especially the Hungarians – resigned as early as 1861, and there was a partial return to a centralized and absolutist system. Following the negotiations that led to the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, the signs of change began to become visible in 1865. As a first step, in most counties and seats, the Monarch again appointed the Lord Lieutenants and chief royal judges from 1861. Despite repeated calls from the Hungarian political elite, no general elections were held. Thus, the Lord Lieutenants and supreme judges had to work with the officials appointed during the so-called “Provisorium”¹⁴. Elections were held only after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, but these elections in the summer of 1867 were also the last to be held in the Szekler seats according to the old custom, i.e., without the prior appointment of candidates by the chief royal judge. This was the end of an era, and later, following the standardization of the administration, regulated by Law no. XLII of 1870 and other laws and decrees, the seats have lost all traces of their particularity¹⁵.

¹³ Ágnes Deák, Birodalmi centralizáció és bürokratikus modernizáció szorításában, in Ákos Egyed, Gusztáv Mihály Hermann, Teréz Oborni (eds.), *Székelyföld története*, vol. II (Székelyudvarhely: EME, 2016), 628–635.

¹⁴ The period between the end of 1861 and 1865, when the strongman of the Austrian government was Anton von Schmerling, Minister of the Interior (*Staatsminister*), and in Hungary the constitution was again suspended.

¹⁵ See Judit Pál, “Problema modernizării administrației și justiției în Transilvania la mijlocul secolului al XIX-lea”, in Ioan Bolovan, Sorina Paula Bolovan (eds.), *Schimbare și devenire în istoria României* (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2008), 103–116; eadem, “Schimbările sistemului administrativ de nivel mediu din Transilvania epocii dualiste, în lumina legislației (1867-1918)”, in Judit Pál, Szilárd Ferenczi (eds.), *Cadrul legislativ al administrației din Transilvania în epoca dualistă (1867-1918)* (Cluj-Napoca, Mega, 2020), 13-69.

The issue of the territorial regulation of the legislative authorities has been raised several times in Transylvania. Comprehensive regulation was finally introduced by Law no. XXXIII of 1876, which abolished the Szekler and Saxon seats, and created counties instead. But at the time of the abolition of the seats and the administrative-territorial standardization of 1876, the Szekler seats no longer differed from the counties in any significant respect, apart from their names¹⁶.

Changes in the administrative elite between 1840 and 1867

The officer corps from before 1848 are characterized by a high degree of stability. Between 1842 and 1848, except for a few minor changes, we find the same officials. Three quarters (73.2%) of them did not change, and almost two thirds (57.1%) held the same position as before. A career as an official could last for decades. In December 1847, József Baló, royal vice-judge of seat Gyergyó, retired after a 41-year career – of which he was royal vice-judge for 36 years –, citing his old age. This also meant that many officials remained stuck in the same position. For example, in seat Udvarhely, József Szombatfalvi was notary between 1834 and 1848. Most of the changes can be found between 1842 and 1848 in seats Maros and Udvarhely. As much as half of the occupants of the examined positions were exchanged in the case of the latter seat.

Following the outbreak of the Revolution, significant changes took place in the Szeklerland as well¹⁷. After the Transylvanian Law no. I of 1848 provided that the “personnel structure” of public administration and justice would remain the same until the further decree of the Hungarian National Assembly, the government initially did not want to complicate the situation with personnel exchanges. Nevertheless, partial exchanges have taken place on several occasions. However, the sources are incomplete, and it is difficult to establish from the tangled data who the officials in decision-making positions were at various times. Due to this plasticity of the seats’ officer corps, I will refrain from quantifying the changes. The situation was further complicated by the civil war situation and the temporary occupation of most of the seats; the administrative power has fallen into the hands of government commissioners anyway.

The decade after the Revolution was marked by experimentation, during which the administrative system was reformed several times. If in the initial period both local people and border guards’ officers were used

¹⁶ For the new administrative-territorial division, see Judit Pál, *A Székelyföld metamorfózisa*, in Nándor Bárdi, Judit Pál (eds.), *A Székelyföld története*, vol. III. 1867–1990 (Székelyudvarhely: EME, 2016), 45-52.

¹⁷ See Ákos Egyed, *Erdély 1848–1849*, vol. I (Csíkszereda: Pallas-Akadémia, 1999), 69-94.

in the administration, after the so-called “definitive organization” of 1854, a complete elite change took place (with a few rare exceptions); the influx of officials from other provinces of the Monarchy, especially Galicia and Bucovina, also began here. The main consideration was to create “an officer corps unconditionally committed to the all-imperial program”¹⁸. In Hungary, the proportion of non-Hungarian-born officials in county and district offices was at about 23%; 22.9% of county governors and 41.9% of commissioners came from Transleithania¹⁹.

If we look at the officials of the circles (*Kreis*) and districts (*Bezirk*) organized in the territory of the former Szeklerland in 1856²⁰, then we can see – no matter how much the myth of passive resistance has been questioned in recent decades²¹ – that a large number of officials are foreigners, a significant part of them is comprised of Transylvanian Saxons, and many came from outside the province. Several have previously served in the army, such as Ferdinand Hössler, circle commissioner of Braşov, Wilhelm Greszkowitz, chief district officer of Sfântu Gheorghe, or Gusztáv Lukács, of Miercurea Ciuc²². Hössler, who fought on the imperial side as lieutenant from 1848 to 1849, was subsequently disarmed²³, and we find him in various positions in civil administration in the 1850s. Despite repeated attacks due to his past, his is one example of an unbroken career as a civil servant after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise. He was the Lord Lieutenant first of Zaránd (Zărând) county, then – from 1876 until his death in 1883 – of Beszterce-Naszód (Bistriţa-Năsăud) county.

There are almost no familiar names among the circle and district chiefs and their deputies, the commissioners. It is only at the head of the Udvarhely circle that we can find the former the chief royal judge of Háromszék seat, Albert Petrichevich-Horváth. At the head of the Maros circle was József Rácz, previously a county commissioner in Hungary,

¹⁸ Deák, *Birodalmi centralizáció*, 632.

¹⁹ Gábor Benedek, A bürokratizáció történetéhez: az 1853–54. évi definitív rendezés személyi következményei, in György Kövér (ed.), *Zsombékok. Középosztályok és iskoláztatás Magyarországon a 19. század elejétől a 20. század közepéig*, Budapest, Osiris, 2006, p. 237–239. Most of them came from Czechia and Moravia. *Ibid.*, 245.

²⁰ I did not examine the Kolozsvár district, which also included the former Aranyos seat.

²¹ Benedek, A bürokratizáció, p. 235–254. For a historiographical overview, see: József Pap, *Magyarország vármegyei tisztikara a reformkor végétől a kiegyezésig* (Szeged: Belvedere, 2003), 9–37.

²² *Militär-Schematismus des österreichischen Kaiserthumes*, Wien, 1851, 649; 1842, 316.

²³ Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (ÖStA), Kriegsarchiv. KA GBBL IR 31 Abg. Kl. II. 1841–1850 5/17; KA CL IR 31 1849 Karton 107. I want to express my gratitude for the support of József Solymosi, Head of the Vienna Branch of the Hungarian Military History Institute and Museum Military History Archives.

and in Braşov we find, from 1854 to 1861, Ignaz Grüner as circle chief, who held office in the Czechia from 1837. Upon his return, he was a member of the Czech Provincial Assembly and the Austrian Parliament, then the deputy governor of Czechia from 1876 to 1881²⁴. Among the 28 people at the head of the districts, with the exception of five Hungarian, one Romanian and one Polish-sounding name, the others are all Germans. At least half are certainly Transylvanian Saxons, but it is possible that their proportion is even higher. The only Romanian, Ioan Pipoş, participated at the Romanian National Assembly in Blaj during the Revolution of 1848, and he was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Zaránd county in 1861.

The “definitive” reorganization of 1854 represented such a complete caesura that it would be superfluous to represent the entire replacement of the officials on a diagram, since only two of the 107 examined officials were on the list of the officer corps of the Szeklerland before 1849. However, in order to rule out with complete certainty that the former officials of the Szekler seats did not hold any office, on the one hand, the whole period should be examined – also using the archival sources²⁵ –, and on the other hand, the other circles and districts of Transylvania should also be included in the analysis. One also finds familiar-sounding family names among the lower-level staff, such as the penmen, so family continuity is not broken now either.

It was not just contemporaries who rejected the violent modernization coming from above and those serving the regime, but they dropped out of historical memory as well or their names have acquired negative connotations. Although passive resistance was by no means as general as it was later purported, officials were held in widespread contempt. János Pálffy, a representative and secretary of state from 1848-49 described them in his memoir as follows: “These people are also morally real rubbish, and foreign officials are generally acknowledged to be much more honest. Moreover, what is amazing is that they are much more Hungarian-spirited than these Austro-Hungarians. After all, it is an old truth that there is nothing worse than a renegade.”²⁶ After the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, it was especially the opposition that agitated

²⁴ <https://www.parlament.gv.at/WWER/PARL/J1848/Gruner.shtml> (14.2.2021). The short biographies on the website of the Austrian Parliament are based on the research of Franz Adlgasser.

²⁵ Because of the epidemic, I was not able to conduct any research in the archives of Vienna and Budapest. Thus, unfortunately, I could not make use of their excellent and very detailed sources on the neo-absolutist era.

²⁶ János Pálffy, *Magyarországi és erdélyi urak. Pálffy János emlékezései*, ed. by Attila Szabó T., Samu Benkő (Budapest: Nap, 2008), 42.

against the officials of the old regime. As a result of the stigmatization, many tried to hide this episode of their lives, cosmeticize their biographies, or somehow explain away their tenure of office. This “collective amnesia” also makes it difficult to reconstruct the lives of the officials²⁷.

Most of the officials from other provinces left Transylvania after 1860. Some of them, however, decided to stay. In addition to the aforementioned Ferdinand Hössler, we can mention the name of Matthias Orel, who in 1855 was the commissioner of the Gyergyó mixed district office, and from 1862 a judge in the same district²⁸. He later settled in Gheorgheni as a lawyer. At his death in 1906, he was remembered as a “straight and pure-minded man”. His merits were praised in the field of pomiculture and as the founding president of the association for the help of poor students²⁹.

We find the names of almost a quarter of the 107 examined officials (23.3%) among the later officials of the Szekler seats, but only four of them (3.7%) were identified among the members of the post-Compromise officers. The vast majority held office during the Provisorium, most of them in Háromszék (10) and Csík (7). Several bureaucrats have been able to find employment in the judiciary system, but further investigation is needed to establish accurate figures.

In the wake of foreign policy failures and domestic political problems, the Emperor Francis Joseph was forced to change course in 1860. The October Diploma restored the autonomy of the countries and provinces of the Habsburg Monarchy. Transylvania also returned to the pre-1848 administrative set-up. First, the Lord Lieutenants/chief royal judges were appointed, and in the spring of 1861, elections were held in the counties and seats. Three of the chief royal judges have had their careers dating back to the Age of Reforms (1830–1848). Count Ferenc Toldalagi (Maros seat) was a deputy royal judge before 1848, and chief royal judge in 1848, Count Dénes Kálnoky (Háromszék) was a royal vice-judge, and Antal Mikó (Csík) was a treasurer. Before 1848, Gábor Daniel (Udvarhely) worked for a short time at the Transylvanian Court Chancellery. After his return, he took on a smaller role during the Revolution of 1848, then also held office for a short time, but subsequently retired to his estate. The most interesting career was that of

²⁷ The phenomenon was also studied by Gábor Benedek, see: *Kollektív amnézia: honvédtiszti hivatalvállalás a Bach-korszakban*, in István Dobrossy (ed.), *Mikrotörténelem: Vívományok és korlátok* (Rendi társadalom – polgári társadalom, 12), Miskolc, Hajnal István Kör, 2003, 394–413.

²⁸ Miklós Endes, *Csík-, Gyergyó-, Kászón-Székek (Csík megye) földjének és népének története 1918-ig*, Budapest, Akadémiai, 1994 (first ed. 1938), 324, 326

²⁹ “Csíki Lapok” XVIII, 1906, no. 15, 11 April, p. 2.

Gergely Béldi (Aranyos seat). Before the Revolution, he was an interpreter of oriental languages in Petrovaradin (now in Serbia), and then took on the role of mediator in the Revolution of 1848. In the age of neo-absolutism, he was first a cadastral director and then, from 1852, the head of the Kolozsvár circle³⁰.

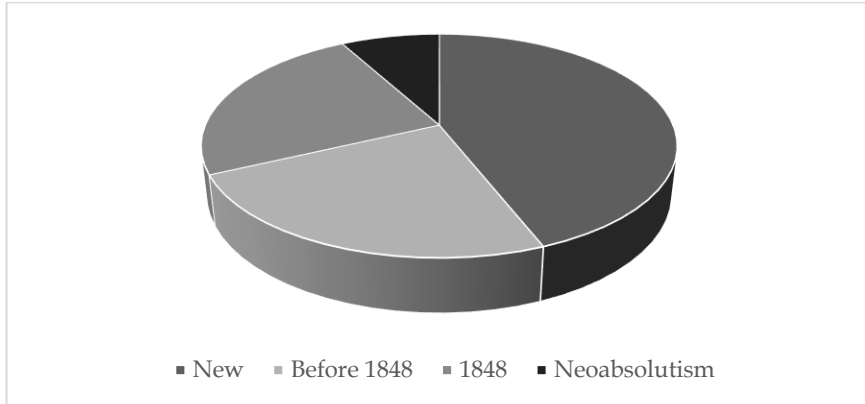


Diagram no. 1. The entry into office of the 1861 officers

The above diagram shows the composition and career development of the chief officers – chief royal judges and royal vice-judges, as well as, where available, the notaries³¹. It is clearly visible that almost half of the leadership in the Szeklerland consisted of new people, and a quarter of them had also held office before 1848. Another quarter of the group first held office in the seats in 1848-49, but more than half (56%) of the top officials took an active role during the Revolution and took part in the Hungarian War of Independence. Several were identifiable officers of the Hungarian Honvéd Army. Thus, the most striking features of the 1861 reorganization were the rewarding of the participation in the events of 1848 and the distancing from the previous era.

The officer corps elected in 1861 were short-lived. A few months later, as a protest against the situation, most of the officials – in Transylvania mainly the Hungarians – resigned. Thus, began the period of the so-called “Schmerling-Provisorium”³². The vast majority of officials

³⁰ See Judit Pál, “The Transylvanian Lord-Lieutenants after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise”, in Victor Karády, Borbála Zsuzsanna Török (eds.), *Cultural Dimensions of Elite Formation in Transylvania (1770–1950)* (Cluj-Napoca: Ethnocultural Diversity Resource Center, 2008), 138-158.

³¹ From the officer corps of 1861, only the identities of the chief royal judge and the royal vice-judge were revealed, and those of the notaries of several seats, but data on the sheriffs are missing everywhere.

³² I cannot comment here, for reasons of length alone, on the protests of the legislative authorities and the unfolding contradictions, i.e., the background of the resignation of the officers.

elected in 1861 retired for the time being, but after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, the possibilities that opened up to them were much wider than before. This is well illustrated by the careers of the three royal vice-judges of Maros seat in 1861. Samu Nagy was appointed royal fiscal director (a position equivalent to that of Attorney-General) and in 1871 became judge at the Royal Court of Justice of Târgu Mureş, the former supreme court of Transylvania³³. Albert Filep first became a judge at the municipal court, and was then appointed school inspector of Torda county, as well as Aranyos and Maros seats. He retired after eleven years, but remained active in politics. In 1906, at the age of 80, Filep was elected as a representative, but committed suicide the following year. Dániel Dózsa was elected as a representative in the Pest parliament in 1866, but resigned two years later because he was also appointed judge at the Royal Court of Justice³⁴. He died in September 1889 as a judge at the Royal Curia, the supreme court of Hungary.

Due to the mass resignations, it was necessary to reactivate the officials in non-active status. In the new officer corps, we thus find a large number of bureaucrats from the age of neo-absolutism. The chief royal judges – appointed for the time being as deputies – were all from their ranks. Gusztáv Lukács, the administrator of Udvarhely seat, was previously the chief district official in Miercurea Ciuc. Ádám Szabó, former head of the Barót district, was appointed head of Csík seat, and József Dindár, former head of the district of Torda, was appointed head of Aranyos seat. Albert Petrichevich-Horváth was now moved to Maros seat. Before 1848, he was the chief royal judge of Háromszék, and during the neo-absolutist period, the head of Háromszék, from 1851. Then, from 1854 to April 1861, he was the head of the circle of Udvarhely. His son-in-law, landowner Imre Daniel, was appointed to the head of Háromszék. In 1849, Daniel served as commissioner to support the imperial army and took part in the retaliations against the Hungarian revolutionaries. He was later transferred to the governorate of Sibiu. In 1863, he was appointed special councillor of the Gubernium³⁵ and was replaced by Ferdinand Hössler. In the case of the chief royal judges, the practice of the

³³ György Böződi, *Egy 1852-es székely összeesküvés. Egy kortárs emlékirata*, "A Hét", 13, 1982, nr. 12, 19 March, 8.

³⁴ József Szinnyi, *Magyar írók élete és munkái*, vol. II, Budapest, Hornyánszky Viktor, 1893, 1031-1034.

³⁵ He was definitively retired after the Compromise. Gábor Daniel (ed.), *A Vargyasi Daniel család közpályán és a magánéletben* (Budapest: Franklin, 1894), 699.

neo-absolutist period was continued, consisting in the “rotation” of officials. In this way, they sought, on the one hand, to avoid local entanglements, while on the other hand, the persons concerned could, in principle, have started with a clean slate at the head of the new municipalities, if circumstances had allowed it at all.

A detailed account of the end of the period (1866-67) has been preserved, taking into account the officials’ previous careers. This account does not detail the various career positions occupied over time, but only indicates how many years the official has been in the position and what position he occupied immediately before that³⁶.

This shows another significant change: only 16% of those who began their careers in 1861 took up further service. Compared to the state of 1861, the proportion of those who held office before 1848 decreased significantly, and the proportion of those who had assumed office during the neo-absolutist period increased. More than a third (37%) of the officer corps of the Szekler seats consisted of officials left over from the age of neo-absolutism, and another good third (35%) was made up of people who had taken office during the Provisorium. The remaining less than a third was divided between those who had taken office before 1848 (9%), in 1848 (3%) and 1861 (16%), as shown in the diagram below. Thus, the period of the Provisorium constituted a significant caesura compared to 1848 and 1861, respectively, while the continuity with the age of neo-absolutism is significant, as also shown by the researches of József Pap on the counties of Hungary; although, in the case of the latter – unlike in the Szekler seats –, the officer corps of some counties during the Provisorium was largely built on the antecedents of 1861³⁷.

Significant differences can be observed between the individual seats – as shown in the diagram below –, in which both the administrators at the head of the seats and the local conditions probably played a role. Csík and Háromszék shows very similar proportions: half of the officers were “inherited” from the age of neo-absolutism, while the proportion of those with roots in the pre-revolutionary period is very low, and the percentage of those with a past of 1861 is also quite reduced. In contrast, the composition is more varied in Udvarhely and Maros seats.

³⁶ MNL OL (Hungarian National Archives, State Archive, Budapest) K 148 Belügyminisztérium (Department of the Interior). Elnöki iratok (Presidential documents), no. 1867-III-1240.

³⁷ Pap, *Magyarország*, 278.

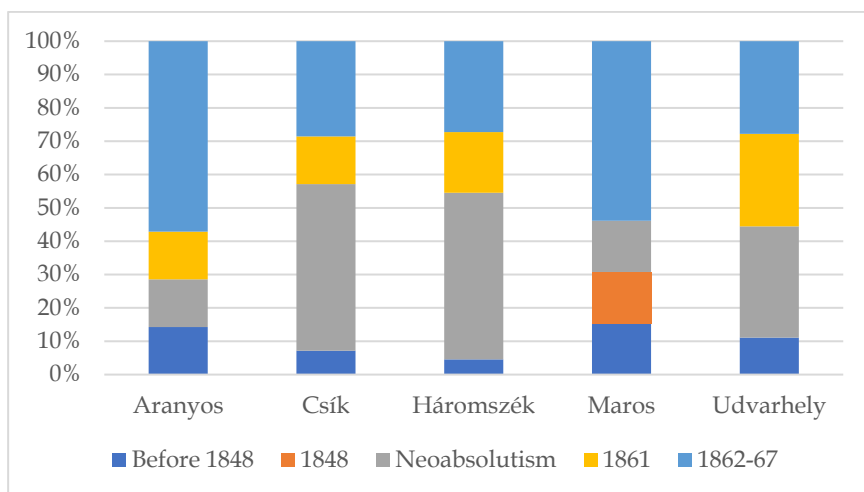


Diagram no. 2. The composition of the officer corps in 1866-67

There are significant differences not only between the seats but also among specific categories. Two thirds of the sheriffs (63.4%) had also held office during the age of neo-absolutism, but there were significant differences between the seats also in this respect. In Háromszék, more than half of the sheriffs were district penmen during the 1850s. Thus, there they practically took over most of the staff of the district offices, more precisely, with one exception, the Hungarians. The vast majority of those from other provinces of the Monarchy probably left Transylvania. The others – as a significant part of them were Transylvanian Saxons – looked for employment in the *Fundus Regius* territory and elsewhere. In Udvarhely seat, however, half of the sheriffs were formerly village or district clerks.

The effects of the Compromise and the 1876 territorial-administrative reform on the officer corps

After the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, a radical exchange of the elites took place again. As the negotiations for the Compromise progressed, there was a change at the head of the seats first in 1865. Everywhere except in Maros seat, the chief royal judges appointed in 1861 were reinstated. For the time being, Albert Petrichevich-Horváth remained in place in Maros. Not only is his person interesting due to his long service, but he is also made special by the fact that he served in no less than three seats and under all the regimes. In 1859, he received the Knight's Commander Cross of the Order of Saint Stephen and the rank of baron for his service under neo-absolutism. Following the compromise, Royal Commissioner Emanuel (Manó) Péchy initiated his dismissal on

the grounds that he did not enjoy the trust of the seat.³⁸ Mihály Mikó, a former deputy judge from Csík seat, who was a member of the Hungarian Parliament at the time, was appointed in his place. Mikó's career also began before the Revolution. In 1848-49, he represented the seat in the Hungarian National Assembly. He was also appointed government commissioner during the Revolution, and was later imprisoned for four years for his role. Mikó was again elected royal vice-judge in 1861, but soon he resigned as well. In 1865, however, he was elected first to the Diet of Cluj and then to the Parliament in Pest.³⁹

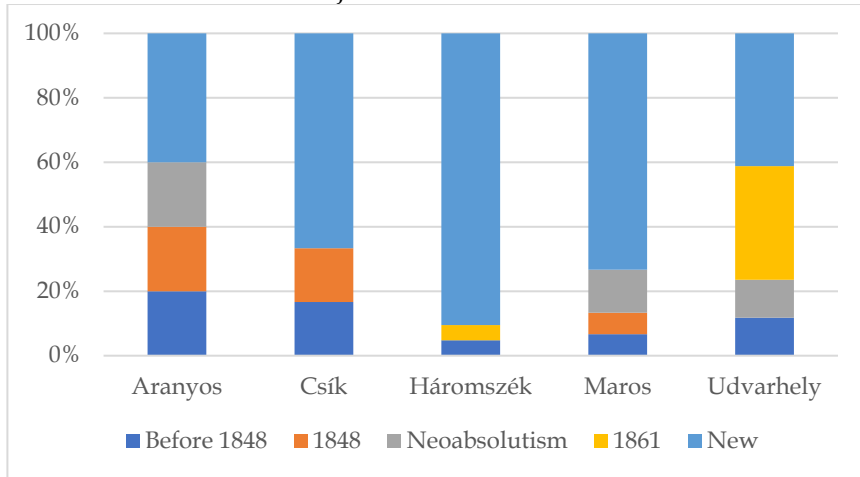


Diagram no. 3. The composition of the officer corps in 1868

Following the summer of 1867, the officer corps were radically transformed everywhere. Three-quarters (74%) of them were filled up with new people, and a good third of the remaining ones were moved into other positions. There were differences between the seats this time as well. The most radical break with the previous era took place in Csík and Háromszék. In the former, only two of the 14 senior officials (12.5%), in the latter, three out of 22 (13.6%) remained from the officer corps of the Provisorium. In contrast, in Udvarhely seat, more than a third of the officials (38.8%) also served under the previous regime, and three of these seven managed to keep their position. Especially in the former border region – in Csík and Háromszék –, where a similar development can be observed, but also in Maros seat, several members of the post-Compromise officer corps took part in the Revolution of 1848. The role in the events of 1848-49 noticeably increased their prestige after the Compromise.

³⁸ MNL OL, F 270 Királyi Biztosság (Royal Commission). Elnöki iratok (Presidential documents), 1867/37.

³⁹ See Pál, *The Transylvanian Lord-Lieutenants*.

While there is little difference between the seats, in terms of the discontinuity of 1867, we will find some (slight) differences in the dynamics of the change later on. Although the electoral system lasted until the end of the era, the administration meant a long-term career project and a source of livelihood for many. Some of the members of the officer corps elected at the time of conclusion of the Compromise have taken root and appear to have survived in a much more definite way than the other groups. They formed the “hard core” of the initial period, later emerging as key officials.

The changes were much smaller later than in 1867. As a result of the uniformization of public administration, a system of advance nomination for the election of officials was also introduced in the Szekler seats. This gave great power to the chief royal judge/Lord Lieutenant and made it more difficult for opposition candidates to prevail. The comparison with previous periods is complicated by the fact that there was also a change in the organizational chart of the officer corps. Law no. XLII of 1870 unified the administration. After this law was passed, we find, for example, county commissioners everywhere, instead of the 3-4 royal vice-judges. The number of districts also decreased significantly, and, with it, the number of sheriffs. In Háromszék, for example, in 1872, we find only six districts compared to 13 from five years earlier. Comparing the situation in 1867 and five years later, in general, about two-thirds of the officer corps in 1872 consisted of the same people (the lowest rate is 61.5% in Udvarhely, the highest is 69.2% in Maros seat), even if not everyone held the same position.

Most of the changes took place in Udvarhely seat, where only three officials remained in place, while five are found in other positions, and two former officials re-entered the officer corps, which was “reformed” with only three new men. The case of one former as well as current official, county attorney Adolf Gerich, exemplifies that, although a radical change took place in 1867, a return was also possible for officials of the previous regime. Gerich had an interesting career. His father was an officer of the imperial army. He was born in Háromszék and leaned towards a military career. In 1849, he achieved the rank of a captain in the Honvéd army.⁴⁰ In the age of neo-absolutism, he was assigned to the Udvarhely district office. During the Provisorium, he was a judge at the court in Odorheiu Secuiesc. In 1867, his name was not included among

⁴⁰ See the database based on Gábor Bona' volumes: <https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Bona-bona-tabornokok-torzstisztek-1/szazadosok-az-184849-evi-szabadsagharcban-96F2/eletrajzi-adatok-989D/g-9BCA/gerich-adolf-9BFD/?list=eyJmaWx0ZXJzljogeyJNVSI6IFsiTkZP0tPTllfQm9uYV8xIl19LCAicXVlcnkiOiAiZ2VyaWN0IGFkb2xmiIn0> (25.2.2021)

either the administrative officers or the staff of the court. He worked as a lawyer, and was the president of the lawyer's association founded in 1873 in Odorheiu Secuiesc.⁴¹ Later, we encounter his name as a notary (1875-83)⁴² and again as a lawyer between 1884-95. At his death in October 1896, only his role in 1848 Revolution was mentioned in his obituary.⁴³

Following the territorial regulation of the legislative authorities, in 1876, four counties were established in the territory of Szeklerland. Csík (Ciuc), Háromszék (Trei Scaune), and Udvarhely (Odorhei) counties were formed from the former seat, with some additions. The new Maros-Torda (Mureş-Turda) county included, along with Maros seat, the eastern part of the former county of Torda. Aranyosszék formed Torda-Aranyos (Turda-Arieş) county together with the other part of former Torda county, but in fact the county has swallowed the much smaller seat.

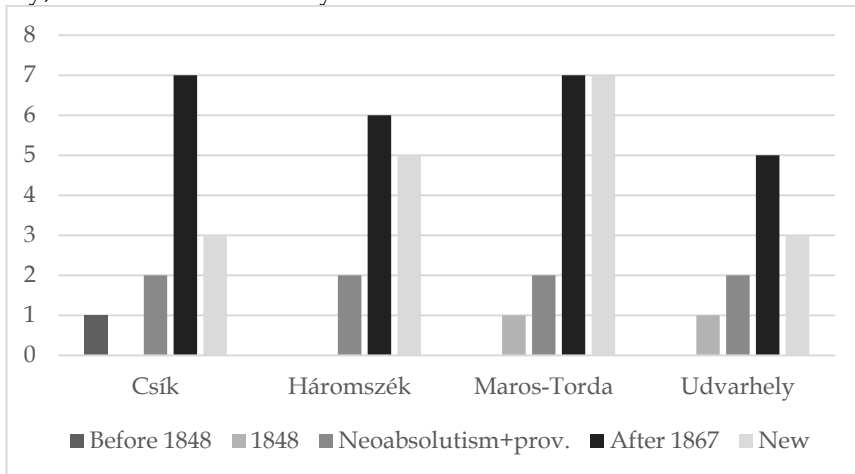


Diagram 4. The composition of the officer corps in 1879

Unsurprisingly, the biggest change is found in the case of Aranyos seat. In the officer corps of the county of Torda-Aranyos, we find only two former officials of Aranyos seat in 1879, and even they held different positions than before. In contrast, in Csík county, where there was virtually no territorial change, more than two-thirds of the officials remained in place. If we do not look at the changes in position, the proportion of former officials is also around two-thirds in Háromszék and Udvarhely county. In Maros-Torda county, not only the officials of the former seat, but also the officials of the county have to be taken into account in the renewal of the officer corps. The proportion of former

⁴¹ "Nemere", 3 1873, no. 18 (4 March): 71.

⁴² "Budapesti Közlöny", 9, 1875, no. 188 (18 August): 1.

⁴³ "Pesti Hírlap", 18, 1896, no. 270 (1 October): 10.

officials is just over half (52.9%) of the officer corps, and nearly half of them are also found in other positions than before. If we compare it with the officer corps of 1872, we find only one person from the county of Torda, while the most important positions in the new county were occupied by former officials from Maros seat. The Lord Lieutenant, Gergely Béldi, was also previously at the head of the seat.

Summary: changes in the administrative elite in the Szekler seats

While before 1848 we have strong continuity, the main feature of the two decades after the Revolution of 1848 was discontinuity. Beginning with the Revolution, the next two decades were marked by frequent changes and a total rupture from the previous regime. Officials change every 5-6 years, sometimes even more often: we have such caesura in 1849, 1854, 1861, 1862, and even, although not a complete one, in 1867. However, the phenomenon is more complicated; if we compare it not only to the immediately preceding period, then the discontinuity is not as radical, as it can also be seen on Diagram no. 5.

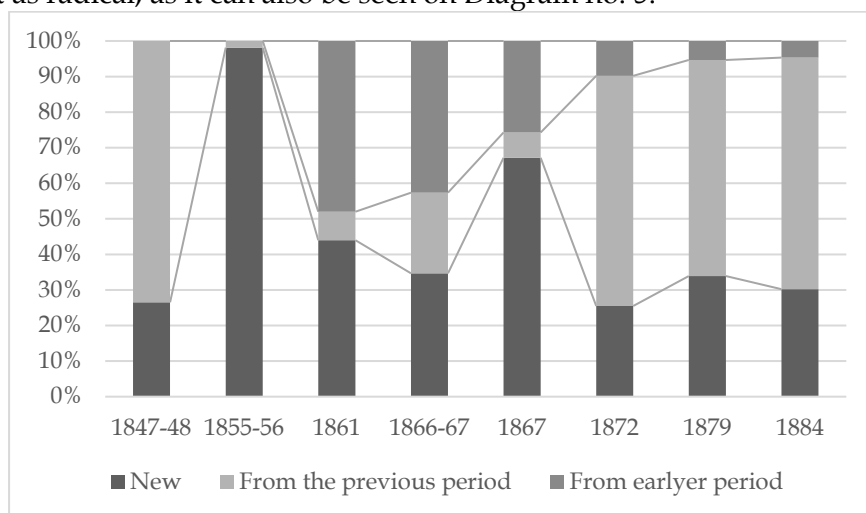


Diagram no. 5. Changes in the administrative elite in the Szekler seats

The most radical break occurred in the age of neo-absolutism, or more specifically, following the so-called “definitive” settlement in 1854, when a lot of new and literally foreign people flowed into the Szeklerland administration. By 1861, the regime had already partially reached back to the pre-1848 and 1848 officer corps. During the Provisorium, the officials who had been put in reserve in the neo-absolutist period were reactivated, and – although to a smaller extent – officials of the constitutional periods also took office. The Compromise meant another

rupture compared to the Provisorium, but officials from constitutional periods returned – even if not in too large a number.

If we compare the above results with the development of the officer corps of the Hungarian counties, then we find many similarities and some differences, although there were also significant differences between the counties there. The great turn took place in Hungary in 1854 as well: with the appearance of foreign officials, there was a significant elite change. This is also shown by Gábor Benedek's comprehensive research⁴⁴, but we find significant differences between both individual hierarchical levels and counties. While one-fifth of the officials came from other provinces, the majority, especially at the lower levels, were Hungarians. They were officials from other counties, i.e., "domestic strangers"⁴⁵. Another trend can be observed as well, which is not typical for the period before 1848: the high geographical mobility for nationals as well⁴⁶. This is only partially the case in the Szekler seats. Although there is a large number of ethnic Hungarians and even local people among the penman, very few were placed in higher positions. There were many strangers, but here too, "domestic strangers" predominated. The largest group seems to have been the Transylvanian Saxons. The tendency to appoint more prominent people from the given region, preferably of noble origin, to head the districts, can also be observed in the Szekler seats. According to József Pap, in Hungary we can talk about continuity at the national level and radical elite change at the local level⁴⁷. In the Szeklerland, we see only the radical elite change. However, the entire administrative and judicial institutional system of the province would have to be examined in order to determine whether this is also true for Transylvania.

1861 also brought a radical change of elite in the Szekler seats, as it did in some Hungarian counties⁴⁸. Here, too, what can be observed is that most of the foreign officials left the Szeklerland. However, the return of officials from 1848 was very limited. The members of the officer corps from before 1848 have returned in a greater proportion, but most of the chief officials took on some role during the Revolution. Both the exceptional significance of the Revolution of 1848 in collective memory and the importance of the roles assumed by officials in 1848, especially

⁴⁴ During the "definitive" reorganization in Hungary, about 60% of former officials lost their jobs. Benedek, *A bürokratizáció*, 243.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 239-240; Pap, *Magyarország*, 275-276.

⁴⁶ Benedek, *A bürokratizáció*, 249. Of the ministerial drafters, nearly two-thirds of the officials were transferred to another county.

⁴⁷ Pap, *Magyarország*, 276.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 277. More than 80% of the officials were sent in reserve in Benedek, *A bürokratizáció*, 236-237.

during the 1861 and 1867 elections, are clear. This is also shown by the fact that biographies and obituaries always highlight this role – sometimes even embellishing the events –, but are generally silent about their taking office in the neo-absolutist period⁴⁹. This “collective amnesia” in the case of Hungarian officials is typical of the whole era⁵⁰. If it was a disadvantage in the previous period, the situation was reversed in 1861 and 1867, and the participation in the Revolution of 1848, especially armed support, turned into a factor that positively influenced careers. Some concrete examples also show that the pre-1854 taking of office was overlooked more easily than the post-1861 one. During the Provisorium, the new elite exchange in the Szeklerland developed similarly to that in Hungary: the officer corps of 1861 resigned and were largely replaced by officials of the neo-absolutist era⁵¹.

The next big elite change in the administration took place after the Compromise. This was a rather radical change in the Szekler seats compared to the previous period, but the later picture is more nuanced⁵². Even if personnel continuity was interrupted for a time in 1867, and those who took office during the neo-absolutist period or the Provisorium were “punished”, they were not left out entirely of the new officer corps and even later had the opportunity to return sporadically. From the perspective of continuity, it would also be important to monitor the judiciary staff, since the two sectors had previously been intertwined, and fluctuation was particularly great at the beginning of the age of Dualism. A safe assumption would be that many of them took offices in the courts or at other institutions where expertise was required, since the officer corps of the neo-absolutist period – and partly of the Provisorium – was more highly qualified than the traditional one⁵³. The courts provided a more favourable opportunity, as the Austrian legal system introduced in

⁴⁹ A typical example is Ignác Bruszt, the district commissioner of Sfântu Gheorghe and later prosecutor from Dej. The news of his death on May 17, 1892, states only that he was a lieutenant general in 1848-49.

⁵⁰ See Benedek, *Kollektív amnézia*. This is also why it is so difficult to reconstruct this biographical stage without primary resources. For example, Gábor Bona’s collection of biographies on military officers from 1848 lacks their taking office in the 1850s in half of the cases. *Ibid.*, 404.

⁵¹ Regarding the measures, there were also large differences between the individual counties in Hungary, but the officer corps of the Provisorium was, in some counties, largely built on the antecedents of 1861. Pap, *Magyarország*, 278.

⁵² In Hungary, there were again big differences between the counties. In some places, more than half of the staff remained in place, elsewhere there was virtually a complete replacement. Although the 1860-61 generation partially returned, no county had a majority of officers from this generation. *Ibid.*, 278-279.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 276-277.

the era of neo-absolutism remained in force in Transylvania even after the Compromise, and unification has dragged on for decades. It can be assumed that several people sought to earn their living there, while others probably remained stuck in the penman status or at other lower positions. In order to get an accurate picture of what happened to the others who were not retired and about the degree of continuity or discontinuity, the officer and support staff of all Transylvanian municipalities should be reviewed (including orphanage sees, county treasuries, and auxiliary offices), along with all the officials of public institutions (finance directorates, cadastral offices, etc.).

After the Compromise – as also shown on Diagram no. 5 –, the situation stabilized again. At the next election, about two-thirds of the former officials were re-elected – although not necessarily in the same positions. Although some officials also returned sporadically, a quarter to a third of the staff consisted of new people. Most old–new people are found in 1872 (five people), after which former officials barely show up, as they have probably found other employment in the meantime or were retired due to their old age. The territorial-administrative reform of 1876 has not brought about any major change in this area – with the exception of Aranyos and (partially) Maros seats. Although the proportion of new people increased slightly (from 25.4% in 1872 to 35.1% in 1879), the change is hardly significant compared to the radical elite changes of the mid-19th century. In the newly established Maros-Torda county, almost half of the officer corps consisted of new people. However, the former Maros seat elites managed to retain their positions, and we find them in the most important offices.

After the Compromise, we find representatives of much of the same families who held the majority of offices during the pre-1848 period, and even throughout the 18th century. This shows a high degree of stability of the seat/county elite. The continuity of the elite families could be exemplified, among numerous instances, by the case of László Sándor from Maros seat, elected as royal vice-judge in 1867, whose father with the same name was one of the royal vice-judges in 1834, or by Mihály Lázár from Kézdi seat, whose father, Dávid Lázár, has held the same position three decades earlier⁵⁴. It can be said with a little exaggeration that, although political changes had, in many cases, temporarily or permanently blocked administrative careers at the level of individuals, there is continuity at the level of families as opposed to this individual discontinuity. However, the extent of this phenomenon

⁵⁴ *A magyar Házi-barát. Egy közhasznú házi s gazdasági kalendárium 1834 közönséges évre*, Kassán, 180.

requires further investigation. The next radical change occurred at the end of the First World War. The transfer of power and state succession in Transylvania also meant an elite change⁵⁵. Although the officer corps of the age of Dualism were more characterized by continuity and stability, it would be important to examine the subject across eras.

⁵⁵ See e.g., Judit Pál, Vlad Popovici, The Transformation of the Mid-Level Civil Servants' Corps in Transylvania in the Aftermath of the First World War: The High Sheriffs between 1918 and 1925, in Peter Becker et alii (eds.), *Hofratsdämmerung? Verwaltung und ihr Personal in den Nachfolgestaaten der Habsburgermonarchie 1918 bis 1920* (Wien: Böhlau, 2020), 155-178.

