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Born or Brought Up a Hungarian Aristocrat? Count Antal Károlyi Educates his Son József

“With great joy and delight, I announce that I have successfully passed my examination, which required so much diligence, effort and energy, in order to give some solace to Your Excellency and my instructors”,¹ – reported the thirteen-year old Count József Károlyi (1768-1803) on 28 January 1781 to his father. An offspring of a powerful Hungarian aristocratic family, the boy was in his fourth year in a noble college in Waitzen (Hungarian name: Vác) that bore the name of the empress (*Collegium nobilium Theresianum Vaciense*). He read Cornelius Nepos and Julius Caesar, learned philosophy and mathematics, and wrote letters in the Hungarian, Latin, German, French and Italian languages. He passionately rode horses, played music, invited the college’s patron, Cardinal-Archbishop Christof Migazzi, to luncheon, and prayed together with his professors for the wellbeing of his father, a generous sponsor of the Piarist Order. József’s solicitous tutor², Chaplain Vince Henyey, took care to ensure the boy’s progress in arts and sciences, his good health and cheerful mood, and appropriate behaviour. Having spent seven years in Waitzen, József moved in 1785 to Vienna where he was privately tutored in law and history by university professors. A small *grand tour* to Bohemia and Saxony in 1787 seemed to crown, as we shall see, almost ten years of József Károlyi’s education.

Historians no longer question the early modern aristocracy’s desire for an education, but rather are concerned with reconstructing the particular forms and distinct purposes of acquiring knowledge, competences and skills.³ For the eighteenth-century Austrian Monarchy, Grete Klingenstein’s monograph on the ascent of the Kaunitz family examined the education given to the future State Chancellor Wenzel Anton against the background of the broader contemporary nobility. She has shown how the reforms of education, conceived and implemented on the initiative of and with the active participation of the court, influenced and in the long

¹ Magyar Országos Levéltár, Budapest [Hungarian National Archives, hereinafter MOL] P 398, Károlyi család levéltára, Missiles [The Károlyi family archive, Correspondence (hereinafter P 398)], no. 35056, József Károlyi to Antal Károlyi, 28 January 1781.

² In the given context, “tutor” refers to the private instructor of a young noble. In Latin such a tutor was called *praefectus*, in German *Hofmeister*, and in French *gouverneur*.

³ Jerzy LUKOWSKI, *The European Nobility in the Eighteenth Century* (Basingstoke 2003) 57.

run reshaped the Estate of the nobility. She proved how the nobility in its turn flexibly adjusted to the new requirements of demonstrating erudition and competence in order to reinforce its aspiration to dominate society.⁴ This thesis is plausible in the case of the Károlyis' ascent as well: realizing that the political influence and social weight of the family would decrease unless maintained by appropriate learning moved each generation to educate its children in yet more refined and sophisticated ways.

Studies of the elites in other European lands might help us to understand what differentiated aristocrats attending public schools from lesser nobles who did not. Marc Motley convincingly argued that it was the transmission of “a common public culture of social distinction based on the codified behaviour of civility, etiquette, and control of demeanour and gestures” that elevated the aristocracy to unreachable heights above the rest of the noble Estate.⁵ In his recent comparative study on European nobilities, Ronald Asch has pointed out that the aristocracy in all parts of Europe strove to preserve its “cultural hegemony”:⁶ the goal was to remain a model to be admired, imitated and envied. In the present study, we shall see how József Károlyi's father looked for an appropriate way of coupling knowledge with markers of social exclusivity, of guaranteeing cultural hegemony by making his offspring's superiority (self)-evident.

In the case of early modern Hungary, however, few (case)-studies of educational strategies exist. It is hard to say to what extent the education of Count József Károlyi might have represented a dominant, a typical, or an exceptional pattern. Peregrinations of students from Hungary and Transylvania as well as the institutional history of Hungarian universities, colleges, and academies are subjects that have long been extensively explored by Hungarian historiography. Yet, as the Hungarian historian Csaba Sasfi has recently stated: “It is surprising that the authors of comprehensive studies on the ‘history of education’ are less and less concerned with the interaction of schools and society, as well as with the social predisposition of education and its consequences”.⁷ What was the average duration of schooling for a young Hungarian aristocrat? How did aristocratic families choose a college or university? To what extent were young aristocrats, or rather

⁴ Grete KLINGENSTEIN, *Der Aufstieg des Hauses Kaunitz. Studien zur Herkunft und Bildung des Staatskanzlers Wenzel Anton* (Göttingen 1975). 112–253. Cf.: IDEM, *Vorstufen der thesesianischen Studienreformen in der Regierungszeit Karls VI.*, in: *MIÖG* 76 (1968) 327–377, here 354; IDEM, *Bildungskrise: Gymnasien und Universitäten im Spannungsfeld thesesianischer Aufklärung*, in: Walter KOSCHATZKY (ed.), *Maria Theresia und ihre Zeit. Zur 200. Wiederkehr des Todestages* (Vienna 1980) 213–221.

⁵ Marc MOTLEY, *Becoming a French Aristocrat: The Education of the Court Nobility 1580–1715* (Princeton 1990) 10, 13.

⁶ Ronald G. ASCH, *Europäischer Adel in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Köln–Weimar–Wien 2008) 156.

⁷ Csaba SASFI, *Az oktatás társadalomtörténeti megközelítése: négy dunántúli nemesifjú kiművelése a reformkorban* [The socio-historical approach to the history of education: the upbringing of four trans-Danubian noble youth in the Age of Reform], in: *Korall* 3/4 (2001) 20–52.

their parents, conscious about forms, content, functions and goals of education? How did upbringing in the parents' house correlate to public schooling? What distinguished the education of the nobility, especially the aristocracy, from that of commoners? Was it only the degree of comfort in accommodation or the financial ability to be accompanied by private tutors and have pocket money? Was it looser attendance at university lectures and passionate preoccupation with traditional noble pastimes? Or was it, after all, the awareness that knowledge, competence, and behavioural practices would soon be needed in royal or county service, at Court, in interacting with fellow nobles, and for bringing up their own posterity in a more conscious way? This article is an attempt to reconstruct the schooling of one particular Hungarian aristocrat against the background of the Viennese Court's cultural policies and the nobility's endeavours to make public education for the privileged Estate both socially distinct and superior in quality.

Count József Károlyi was born to a family that had played a crucial role in the history of Hungary.⁸ Since 1622 the barons Károlyi had filled (almost uninterruptedly) the position of high-sheriff (*főispán*, *Obergespan*) in the remote, but strategically important county (*vármegye*, *Komitat*) of Szatmár (most of its territory, including the administrative capital Satu Mare, is now in Romania) in eastern Hungary. József's great-grandfather, Sándor Károlyi (1669–1743), was the rebellious general in Prince Ferenc Rákóczi's (1676–1735) army, but contributed to bringing about the political compromise with the dynasty known as the peace of Szatmár of 1711. The Hungarian Estates then renounced their armed fight for the full autonomy of the kingdom, and the Habsburgs abandoned their harsher methods of incorporating Hungary into their Hereditary Lands.⁹ That same year Károlyi was elevated to the rank of count; in 1723 he became a privy councillor; in 1741 Maria Theresa recognised his contribution to the victories of the Austrian armies by awarding him the field-marshal's (*tábornagy*, *Feldmarschall*) baton.

The Károlyis' matrimonial strategies had also increased their wealth and influence. József's grandfather Ferenc had married Countess Krisztina Csáky, the daughter of an ancient, powerful, and dynastically loyal Hungarian aristocratic family, closely linked to the rest of the magnate Estate and the Austrian-Bohemian aristocracy. Their son Antal married the Austrian Baroness Józsefa Harrucker, whose grandfather (an ennobled army supplier) had accumulated enormous wealth, purchased domains in southern Hungary and been admitted to the ranks of the

⁸ Gábor ÉBLE, *A nagykárolyi gróf Károlyi család leszármazása a leányági ivadékok feltüntetésével* [The origins of the Károlyi of Nagy Károly family, including the female-line posterity] (Budapest 1913).

⁹ Ágnes KOVÁCS, *Károlyi Sándor a magyar történetírásban* [Sándor Károlyi in Hungarian historiography], in: István RÁCZ (ed.), *Politikai gondolkodás – műveltségi áramlatok. Tanulmányok Irinyi Károly professzor születésének 60. évfordulója tiszteletére* [Political thought – cultural trends. Studies for the sixtieth birthday of Professor Károly Irinyi] (Debrecen 1992) 59–71.

kingdom's magnates. Compared to Antal's sister's husband, Count Joseph Starhemberg, the Harruckers by no means belonged to the narrowly defined circle of the Viennese Court aristocracy. Yet, within three generations and due to their dynastic loyalty, militant Catholicism and marital policies, the Károlyis became by and large almost equal to the old Hungarian aristocracy and had made a good start at joining the composite elite at Court.

József's father, Antal (1732–1791), inherited the family's wealth, influence, and credentials in Vienna. At the age of nine, he was introduced to the empress at Preßburg (today Bratislava in Slovakia) on the occasion of the Hungarian Diet. The boy reported to his father: "On 3 July I was lucky to be favoured by Her Majesty the Queen [...] and have won her most high benevolence not only for myself, but also for our outstanding family, yet first and foremost for Your Excellency".¹⁰ Indeed, Maria Theresa's goodwill was important for his future career. Antal Károlyi received the chamberlain's key at the age of nineteen, by which time he was already a major in his father's cavalry regiment. After Ferenc Károlyi's death in 1758, Antal inherited the dignity of high-sheriff in the county of Szatmár. His military service in the Seven Years' War brought the young colonel the Order of Maria Theresa in 1759. At the age of 28, Antal became (as his late father had been) an assessor at the so-called *Septemviral* Court of Justice. At the age of 31, General Károlyi owned an infantry regiment. Two years later, he received the rank of privy councillor. The year 1775 saw Count Károlyi awarded the symbolically important title of Royal Grand Steward. When the Court was looking for appropriate candidates to manage the nine newly-created school districts in the Kingdom of Hungary, Károlyi was entrusted with the directorship of two of them in eastern Hungary. One of the last dignities he received was the Captaincy of the Hungarian Noble Guard in 1787. As a generous sign of recognition for his long, loyal and zealous service, Count Károlyi was decorated in 1790, less than a year before his death, with the coveted Order of the Golden Fleece.

Modern historians describe Antal Károlyi as an ordinary personality and a mediocre political figure.¹¹ Yet his manifold activities and responsibilities made him not only a careful patron of his own numerous clientele,¹² which stretched far beyond the borders of his county, but an influential figure in the kingdom and at Court. As proprietor of an infantry regiment, he had the opportunity of giving

¹⁰ MOL P 398, no. 32706, Antal Károlyi to Ferenc Károlyi, 2 August 1741.

¹¹ Judit PÁL, Karrier a "tudatlanság földén". Egy főúri kliens a 18. század közepén Kelet-Magyarországon [A career in the „land of ignorance”. An aristocrats' client in mid-eighteenth-century eastern Hungary], in: Századok 141/6 (2007) 1415.

¹² On Antal Károlyi's patronage of the lesser noble family Klobusiczky see: Olga KHAVANOVA, Zaslugi otsov i talanty synovei: vengerskie dvoriane v uchebnykh zavedeniiakh monarkhii Gabsburgov [Fathers' merits and sons' talents: Hungarian nobles in schools of the Habsburg Monarchy] (St Petersburg 2006) 353–366. On the family of Zanathy see: PÁL, Karrier, 1419–1428.

to dozens of ambitious young men a good start to a military career either in his own regiment or in others. As the Piarists' generous patron and (later) a royal school-district director, he could assist parents through protection as well as administrative and, quite often, financial assistance in the education of their children. As Captain of the Hungarian Guard, he was responsible for selecting young nobles who would be entrusted with protecting the sovereign and would represent the Hungarian nobility at Court. The various aspects of Count Károlyi's life need to be reconstructed in detail and properly investigated in order to know his behind-the-scenes contribution to the social and cultural profile of the officer corps, county and royal administration, and the noble Estate as a whole. The facts known so far indicate that he possessed a clear understanding that appropriate education laid the foundation of a successful career.

With the growth of their wealth and influence, the Károlyis' educational needs and strategies gradually changed. The representative of the "older" generation, Sándor Károlyi, himself had no good command of German. For that reason, he wanted his children to speak foreign languages fluently and learn sciences appropriate for gentlemen.¹³ Yet his son Ferenc (1705–1758) was given no special schooling apart from the Piarist institution in Nagykaroly (today Carei in Romania), founded and sustained by the family, and the gymnasium in Pest. His grandson Antal attended a Jesuit college in Tyrnau (in Hungarian called Nagyszombat, now Trnava in Slovakia). Closely incorporated into the university, the noble colleges of Tyrnau gave the best possible education to Catholic youth in the whole kingdom. Whether drilled by his professors or through his own volition, Antal approached school-routine with a sense of full responsibility. In a letter to his father, the boy wrote: "In accordance with your fatherly instruction I promise – both in religious devotion, and in arts and sciences – to keep my generous father happy, and to serve as a mirror and moral example to those around me".¹⁴ An academic year (1750/1751) at the University of Vienna¹⁵ put the finishing touches on his erudition, language-proficiency, and socialisation in the imperial capital. His own rank and intellectual horizons led him to arrange for his first-born (and eventually only) son, József, an education that facilitated acquisition of knowledge and competencies indispensable to the kingdom's first dignitaries and that transmitted the appropriate status-values and pride in family and homeland.

As were many other aristocrats, the little József was first instructed at home under the supervision of private teachers. The role of tutors in aristocratic households can hardly be overestimated. Living in the family under the supervision and control of the parents and accompanying the boy to a college, university, or on

¹³ István BERKESZI, *A gróf Haller fiúk iskolázatása a XVIII. század első felében* [Education of the young Counts Haller in the first half of the eighteenth century] (Budapest 1883) 12–13.

¹⁴ MOL P 398, no. 32702, Antal Károlyi to Ferenc Károlyi, 26 March 1741.

¹⁵ József Mihály KISS, *Magyarországi diákok a bécsi egyetemen, 1715–1789* [Hungarian students at the University of Vienna, 1715–1789] (Budapest 2000) 52.

grand tour; they were supposed to be competent enough to assist in the mastering of the prescribed curricula, pedagogically skilled enough to bring up a morally mature individual and, last but not least, empathetic enough with their young charges to provide whatever human warmth might otherwise have been lacking.¹⁶ Members of the ecclesiastical teaching orders, Jesuits and Piarists, were – due to their pedagogical proficiencies – among the most desired candidates for such functions. Inasmuch as the Károlyi family had traditionally supported the latter, the educational path of the little József was guided by the members of that order.

Count Pepi's first tutor was Ágoston Kázmér (†1776), of whom little is known.¹⁷ Most likely he instructed the boy at home (whether in Vienna, Pest, or Nagykároly), preparing him to enter one of the Piarists' colleges. Unusual testimony of this schooling is a brochure published in 1776 in Vienna. It contains questions from different brunches of knowledge with which the eight-year old József had to be familiar: Christian doctrine, Biblical history, chronology, Latin, geography and the Hungarian political system (*consuetudines patriae*). The questions ranged from "how does it come about that we sometimes do not get what we have been praying for" to "which part of the earth is nowadays the most noteworthy" to "is the Latin language necessary for Christian faith" to "which freedoms differentiate [Hungarian] magnates from nobles".¹⁸ It is hard to say to what extent the boy was able to interpret complex issues of the Christian faith or comment on the judicial norms of his homeland. The publication was possibly a product of the elder Károlyi's pride in his son. There were few ways in an age that knew no obligatory school-leaving certificates to report on academic progress. Aristocratic parents chose this spectacular way to manifest the fact that their child was being instructed in preparation for the political functions predetermined by the right of birth.¹⁹

¹⁶ Cf.: Elisabeth GARMS-CORNIDES, Hofmeister auf Grand Tour, in: Rainer BABEL, Werner PARAVICINI (eds.), *Grand Tour: Adelige Reisen und europäische Kultur vom 14. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert*. Akten der internationalen Kolloquien in der Villa Vigoni 1999 und im deutschen historischen Institut in Paris 2000 (Ostfildern 2005) 255–274. Cf.: Dóra CSANAK, *Nevelők és titkárok, Adalékok az értelmiség pályakezdéséhez a 18. században* [Tutors and secretaries. Concerning literati careers in the eighteenth century], in: János BUZA (ed.), *Gazdaságtörténet – könyvtártörténet. Emlékkönyv Berlász Jenő 90. születésnapjára* [Economic history – history of libraries. Studies for the ninetieth birthday of Jenő Berlász] (Budapest 2001) 69–78.

¹⁷ Only two short letters exist: MOL P 398, no. 37840, of Ágoston Kázmér to Antal Károlyi, 9 May 1775; no. 37841, Ágoston Kázmér to Antal Károlyi, sine dato.

¹⁸ *AUSGEMACHTE FRAGEN AUS JENEN WISSENSCHAFTEN, welche Graf József Károlyi von Nagy Károly im 8ten Jahre seines Alters erlernt hat* (Vienna 1776).

¹⁹ The first examinations in Waitzen (1777) were commemorated with a brochure similar to that of the previous year. The publication contained more elaborate interpretations of Christian doctrine, supplemented with the principles of chronology, the physical and political geography of the kingdom of Hungary, elements of its legal system and explanations of heroic deeds from Cornelius Nepos. Cf.: *AUSGEMACHTE FRAGEN AUS JENEN WISSENSCHAFTEN, welche Graf Joseph Károlyi von Nagy Károly im 9ten Jahre seines Alters erlernt hat* (Waitzen 1777).

After the untimely death of Kázmér, the parents faced the task of finding another tutor. The head of the Hungarian Piarists, Zsigmond Orosz, wrote them in the summer 1776: “I consider it to be my most important obligation to provide you with a new tutor who will satisfy Your Excellencies not only regarding the pious, honest behaviour becoming to a monk, but also with respect to constant care for Count Pepi and – together with such care – the proper instruction in the necessary sciences”. He inclined to recommend the 29-year old Josef Jáger, son of well-to-do inhabitants of Preßburg, who had already gained experience as a tutor in the Piarists’ colleges: “I can praise him in all possible ways and foresee only one complication: he can hardly speak any Hungarian, but he would do his utmost to be of use to Your Excellency as quickly as possible in this respect as well”.²⁰ Count Károlyi made a different choice, hiring the chaplain Vince László Henyey (1740–?), a mathematics professor in Waitzen, who set to work in 1776.

The history of the Theresan College in Waitzen is less known and its significance unfairly underestimated. After the Theresianum in Vienna was founded 1746 as the first noble academy in the Habsburg lands, the noble college in this Hungarian town on the Danube was refashioned by Cardinal Migazzi on the Viennese model, becoming in 1767 the second such school allowed to bear the empress’ name. The Hungarian historian and member of the Piarist Order, János Kisparti, reconstructed its institutional history, yet he failed to find the register of students, lost after the dissolution of the college together with other privileged schools of the Monarchy in 1784.²¹ As did many contemporary noble colleges, the Theresianum in Waitzen both admitted paying pupils and provided scholarships for those whose families needed financial assistance in educating their children. Impoverished nobles, admitted for philanthropic reasons, were able to study together with the sons of meritorious royal servants and aristocrats. Among the latter, Count Pepi enjoyed the public-school infrastructure and facilities for socialisation, while strict distinctions of rank were maintained.

The stay of the little count in Waitzen is documented in his own letters and those of his tutor to Count Antal Károlyi. The obvious discrepancy between Henyey’s circumstantial reports about health, academic progress, noteworthy events and so forth are counterbalanced by the little Pepi’s messages. These are at the same time naive and confident, written in accordance with the strict requirements of the genre and checked by his teachers. More than one hundred years ago, the American historian Charles Haskins noted with respect to letter-writing manuals that medieval students, familiar with the epistolary norms of their age, wrote letters free of any touch of their own feelings and emotions.²² The same is true for

²⁰ MOL P 398, no. 54150, Zsigmond Orosz to Antal Károlyi, 22 June 1776.

²¹ JÁNOS KISPARTI, *A Váci Theresianum története* [History of the Theresianum at Waitzen] (Budapest 1913).

²² Charles HASKINS, *The Life of Medieval Students as Illustrated by Their Letters*, in: *The American Historical Review*, 3/2 (1898) 228.

most of the eighteenth century before the spread of sentimentalism demanded sincerity and unembellished naturalness. In this regard, letters of a less inhibited pupil with more limited and superficial knowledge of letter-writing might have been more informative²³ than those of the self-disciplined and diligent little József Károlyi. Though many important details of his stay in Waitzen are omitted, his letters nevertheless give unique insight into a young aristocrat's schooling and leisure-time in a noble college.

József's membership in the Károlyi family gave him obvious privileges, but obliged him to meet higher demands. His father donated generous sums to the Order, covered at his own expense the education in Piarist schools of his lesser-noble clients, received professors in Nagykároly, and donated equipment to the college²⁴. Later, as a royal school-district director, he helped Cardinal Migazzi's protégés get royal scholarships. Consequently, Pepi enjoyed an extraordinarily warm reception and was surrounded by signs of respect. Unlike other pupils, especially those whose costs were covered by the college, he shared his bedroom with only one other classmate (later he probably lived alone) and was watched over by his own tutor and provided with his own servant(s). The college curator, Cardinal Migazzi, received the boy in his episcopal residence (the so-called *Migazziburg*) in Waitzen, invited him to lunch and attended his examinations. Henyey mentions the cardinal's pleasure at József's performance in a comedy: "Good, Count Károlyi, very good, very good indeed!"²⁵ The little Pepi sweetly referred to Migazzi as "my vice-papa".²⁶ The latter received his letters, praised his personal qualities and expressed special fondness for his family: "Let God give you many years, the rest you will attain from examples at home, in [this] glorious institution and at the bottom of your wonderful heart".²⁷

By the same token, the boy possibly felt lonely and uncertain, being separated for the first time from his beloved parents' home. The German historian Heiko Droste, who considers letter-writing a form of symbolic communication, rightly stresses that a letter was a tool to make a physically absent addressee symbolically present.²⁸ In this context, Pepi's usual references to kissing his father's hands should be understood both as a conventional expression of filial

²³ On the letters of an ill-disciplined pupil, see: Olga KHAVANOVA, Egy magyar úrfi a bécsi Tereziánumban. Dessewffy István szellemi világa és mindennapi gondjai [A Hungarian noblman in the Vienna Theresianum: the intellectual horizons and everyday concerns of István Dessewffy], in: Lilla KRÁSZ, Teréz OBORNI (eds.), *Redite ad cor. Tanulmányok Sahin-Tóth Péter emlékére* [Redite ad cor. Studies in memory of Péter Sahin-Tóth] (Budapest 2008) 387–394.

²⁴ MOL P 398, no. 35088, József Károlyi to Antal Károlyi, 28 January 1784.

²⁵ MOL P 398, no. 26942, Vince Henyey to Antal Károlyi, 1 June 1778.

²⁶ MOL P 398, no. 35044, József Károlyi to Antal Károlyi, 17 November 1777.

²⁷ MOL P 398, no. 47702, Christof Migazzi to József Károlyi, 27 December 1778.

²⁸ Heiko DROSTE, Briefe als Medium symbolischer Kommunikation, in: Marian FÜSSEL, Thomas WELLER (eds.), *Ordnung und Distinktion. Praktiken sozialer Repräsentation in der ständischen Gesellschaft* (Münster 2005) 239–256, here 245.

obedience, and an attempt to stay in physical contact with his loved ones. In May 1780, the boy desperately confessed: “I cannot feel really happy until I kiss the hands of Your Excellency, whom I can embrace only in my thoughts”.²⁹ Moreover, the little count lived permanently under the pressure to be the best and to prove by an outstanding performance his right to be the son of the college’s Maecenas and the cardinal’s preferred boy. He once wrote to his father (in many ways, these lines resemble Antal’s letter to Sándor Károlyi already cited above): „I know too well that everything I have I owe to the paternal munificence of Your Excellency and, for this reason, I am obliged to strive to bring you genuine delight and solace”.³⁰ The tutor regularly reported about József’s praiseworthy answers at public examinations, and his diligence and high motivation for learning. A half-year after arriving in Waitzen, the tutor proudly announced: “In writing, only Antal Almásy [the son of General Ignáz Almásy of the Károlyi infantry regiment] can contend with our little count for primacy, others dare not emulate him either in answers or script”.³¹

Inasmuch as no testimony exists other than Piarist letters to Antal Károlyi, it is hard to judge the extent to which the boy deserved the praise heaped on him. Typical was Zsigmond Orosz’ report about the public examination in 1778: “All the listeners admired the presence of mind in the answers to numerous and different questions, solved with an apt combination of the facts and materials learned, especially concerning his reflexions on history, insofar as he by no means could have known the topics in advance”.³² Other such commendations, such as his characterization as “a hope for the homeland and admirable son of such a father”, accompanied József’s stay in Waitzen. There is no confirmable justification for such statements other than the Piarists’ desire to substantiate their reputation as excellent educators with strict requirements for their pupils, whether impoverished petty nobles or magnificent counts. As Henyey wrote about Countess Károlyi’s visit: “She will tell Your Excellency everything [...] about the progress one can expect from the little count in the future, [she] being moved not by love, as other solicitous mothers tend to be, but is an unbiased judge and chronicler”.³³

By and large, neither Pepi’s nor the tutor’s letters were regular and detailed enough to give good insight into the teaching process in the college. All together, József spent seven years in Waitzen, absolving the entire course of study: three grammar classes, two years of *humaniora*, and two years of philosophy. From the first months, the stress was on reading and writing Latin proficiently. Quite apart from the crucial role that Latin played in the political life of early modern Hungary, familiarity with the legacy of antiquity was in its own way indispensable to

²⁹ MOL P 398, no. 35050, József Károlyi to Antal Károlyi, 15 November 1780.

³⁰ MOL P 398, no. 35077, József Károlyi to Antal Károlyi, 26 May 1783.

³¹ MOL P 398, no. 26935, Vince Henyey to Antal Károlyi, 22 January 1778.

³² MOL P 398, no. 54154, Zsigmond Orosz to Antal Károlyi, 27 July 1778.

³³ MOL P 398, no. 27018, Vince Henyey to Antal Károlyi, 2 December 1783.

aristocrats at the time. As leaders of society, they were expected from their earliest years to think and behave in the most perfect way, and from the Middle Ages, there were no better moral and political examples to follow than those of the ancient Greeks and Romans.³⁴ The favourite author in all parts of early modern Europe was Cornelius Nepos, whose works were appropriate both for acquiring a good command of grammar and moulding virtues and merits similar to those of ancient heroes.³⁵ Caesar, Cicero, Titus Livius and Seneca also made popular reading in this respect.

Modern languages were also extensively taught to Pepi in Waitzen. His letters testify that he made good progress in German, French, and Italian.³⁶ His language-teachers sent his father drafts of French and Italian letters with grammatical and stylistic corrections³⁷ to make both progress and inevitable mistakes more evident. In the last months of the young man's stay in the college, the tutor reported on one occasion: "With a special joy and diligence, the little count has dedicated the last three days to letter-writing: he has composed twelve epistles without any assistance, so that the French teacher slightly corrected the orthography; otherwise they are created by the little count himself".³⁸

Among other subjects, mathematics and physics, geography and architecture, philosophy and history are referred to in the boy's letters and tutor's reports. As in other noble colleges, classes, homework, and exercises began early in the morning and lasted, with short breaks for meals and recreation, until late in the evening. With each passing year, the questions at the disputations and examinations became more sophisticated: phenomena of gravitation, inertia, and terrestrial attraction; the nature and origin of the human mind; freedom and the nature of the human soul; forms of divine providence; evidence of Leibniz' cosmological theses; etc. On 23 June 1783 the proud pupil wrote: "Yesterday I passed an examination on cosmology in a long discussion with Father Marcellus on miracles and the perfection of this world".³⁹

It was by no means accidental that Antal Károlyi had chosen a Hungarian native-speaker as tutor to his only son. Although often depicted as traitors to the Hungarian national cause, the Károlyis – as newcomers in the ranks of the aristocracy and still loosely integrated into Court society – were among those who in

³⁴ Gerrit WALTHER, Adel und Antike, Zur politischen Bedeutung gelehrter Kultur für die Führungselite der Frühen Neuzeit, in: *Historische Zeitschrift* vol. 266, no. 2 (1998) 359–386

³⁵ Gabriele BOCKISCH, Joachim KŁOWSKI, Cornelius Nepos. Attische Staatsmänner aus römischer Sicht – Themistokles, Alkibiades, Trasybul (Bamberg 2006) 7–9.

³⁶ For example, a letter describing the boy's deep sorrow at the news of the death of Empress Maria Theresa was written in an elegant and emotional Italian, see: MOL P 398, no. 35054, József Károlyi to Antal Károlyi, 6 December 1780.

³⁷ Cf.: MOL P 398, no. 35073, József Károlyi to Anton Károlyi, 14 November 1783.

³⁸ MOL P 398, no. 27026, Vince Henyey to Antal Károlyi, 26 March 1784.

³⁹ MOL P 398, no. 35081, József Károlyi to Antal Károlyi, 23 June 1783.

their private life spoke and preferred to write primarily in Hungarian. Count Antal was probably the first generation of the family that acquired good command not only in indispensable Latin, but also in German and French. Educating his own son, he and his wife took care to have Pepi instructed in Europe's most spoken languages. Yet good command of written Hungarian, acquaintance with the kingdom's history, geography, and political system, as well as patriotic sentiments for the homeland were regarded as essential for the young aristocrat's spiritual maturation. Having seen him with his little son József in 1778 in the magnificent gala dress (later famously known as *diszmagyar*), the Hungarian poet Pál Ányos (a member of the Piarist Order linked to the Károlyis) dedicated to Antal the poem "Igaz hazafi" ("True patriot").⁴⁰ Quoting Pepi, Henyey described, following a lesson in which a German-speaking pupil found answering a question difficult, why foreigners studying in the Waitzen Theresianum should learn the Hungarian language. According to the tutor, the little Pepi said aloud: "For they partake of the bread out of the mercy of Our Queen Maria Theresa".⁴¹ To please his father, the young man diligently translated Cornelius Nepos into Hungarian and – "with delight and on his own initiative" – took into his hands the volume *De origine Hungarorum* by the Hungarian historian György Pray.⁴² Coupled with an early introduction to the political and judicial system of the kingdom of Hungary and with private lessons in Hungarian law, this constituted deliberate preparation for joining the Hungarian political elite and becoming its prominent spokesman at Court.

The extent to which traditional noble accomplishments were taught in Waitzen is little known. Count Pepi's daily routine, as described by Henyey in 1784, included music and riding.⁴³ The latter deserves special mention, inasmuch as this Hungarian nobleman, the son, grandson and great-grandson of army generals, was obliged to be a skilful horseman.⁴⁴ Scattered references to horses let us conclude that the little count already rode at the age of nine. At thirteen, he possessed several horses, most likely kept in the cardinal's stables. He enjoyed the supervision of the cardinal's equerry and was instructed by General Almásy, a regular guest in Waitzen. Even the clergyman Henyey, who usually wrote emotionally balanced, reasoned reports in Latin, switched to Hungarian in an extensive letter in praise of a new gift by the loving father: a wonderful Transylvanian horse more thoroughbred and gorgeous than the one once bought from Prince Kaunitz's stable.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Pál ÁNYOS, *Válogatott művei* [Select poems] (Budapest 1984) 39–42.

⁴¹ MOL P 398, no. 26935, Vince Henyey to Antal Károlyi, 22 January 1778.

⁴² MOL P 398, no. 27007, Vince Henyey to Antal Károlyi, 9 June 1783.

⁴³ MOL P 398, no. 27016, Vince Henyey to Antal Károlyi, 9 November 1783.

⁴⁴ On the role of horseback riding in early modern noble culture, see Treva J. TUCKER, Early modern French noble identity and the equestrian "airs above the ground", in: Karen RABER, Treva J. TUCKER (eds.), *The culture of the horse: status, discipline and identity in the early modern world* (Basingstoke 2005) 273–309.

⁴⁵ MOL P 398, no. 27010, Vince Henyey to Antal Károlyi, 30 June 1783.

Riding made the youngster forget about everything, including his ill-health. In April 1781, having recovered from a disease that had worried his tutor and parents, he was riding full of joy and energy.

If there was anything more important to the parents than the youngster's progress in arts and sciences and the perfection of his morals, it was his good health. Whether a stomach-colic, a catarrh, a tooth-extraction, or a tumour resembling a hernia,⁴⁶ József was nursed by the caring tutor and thoroughly examined by the college's doctor. Their detailed accounts were meant to calm the parents' concerns and assure them that Pepi was out of danger: "As the little count was feverish, he was sleepy and, having woken up, complained about weakness, fainting and headache; on Friday he tried to eat, but had no appetite; at 9 p.m. he took antispasmodic powder and herbal decoction, but they provoked sickness. [...] Yesterday he spent the whole day reading; he had no fever, looked better than the day before; the fainting and headaches were gone".⁴⁷ There are no letters by József preserved from this episode, but a similar indisposition some years earlier was summed up in the following words: "Till the 15th of this month I was in a pretty good health, but on that day my condition changed for the worse and I got sick, not seriously though, with sore throat and cough. Thank God, now I am all right".⁴⁸ This could be evidence of the discipline demanded by the culture of letter-writing, or perhaps the boy was not a hypochondriac.⁴⁹

Anyway, feeling well, or being seek, József demonstrated praiseworthy self-control indispensably expected from a young aristocrat. The officer of his father's regiment Captain János Fegyveres once reported to Antal Károlyi: "On my march here, to Szeged, I had the honour to be at the little count's disposal in Waitzen, where 48 hours long I had to wait for a favourable wind. His Excellence suffered from slight cough, yet was on his sure way to recovery. I appreciate the fortuity, to get this opportunity, even higher, inasmuch as I could evidently notice the good stand of the little count. He, in his turn, was kind to express his courteousness to me in all possible ways".⁵⁰ This and similar visitations were keeping the parents informed about the child's wellbeing, helped the boy to practice the behavioural norms of his circle and, the last but not the least, were strengthening ties between the future head of the family and their devoted clients.

The end of his studies in Waitzen was marked by a seven-week journey through Lower and Upper Hungary. It was practically oriented and coloured with overtones of local patriotism. Although Henyey mentioned that the young count diligently kept a diary, now apparently lost, we can rely on detailed accounts by

⁴⁶ Cf.: MOL P 398, no. 33, Abdon to Antal Károlyi, 30 April 1781.

⁴⁷ MOL P 398, no. 27000, Vince Henyey to Antal Károlyi, 25 April 1783.

⁴⁸ MOL P 398, no. 35088, József Károlyi to Antal Károlyi, 24 April 1780.

⁴⁹ Cf. regular complains on all sorts of minor sicknesses in the letters of István Dessewffy from the Vienna Theresianum: KHAVANOVA, *Egy magyar úrfi* 391.

⁵⁰ MOL P 398, no. 17550, János Fegyveres to Antal Károlyi, 12 May 1780.

the tutor and much shorter letters by József himself to his father. At each station of this journey, József met with a warm reception by high officials. He spent a week in Schemnitz (in Hungarian called Selmecebánya, now Banská Štiavnica in Slovakia) and Neusohl (in Hungarian called Besztercebánya, now Banská Bystrica in Slovakia) in the company of the head of the Lower Hungarian mining administration, Count Joseph Colloredo⁵¹ and his wife (née Countess Serényi from Hungary). The host showed the young count the mining academy and introduced him to details of the mining industry. In the Zips region (in Hungarian called Szepes, now Spiš in Slovakia), the travellers were guests of a Károlyi relative, Count János Csáky, head of the Hungarian Chamber administration in Zips (*Szepe-si Kamara, Kameral-Administation zu Kaschau*). The Károlyi family's devoted client, Antal Klobusiczky, administrator of the sixteen Zips towns, also looked after the guests during their stay in the region. Moving west to east, the travellers reached the borders of the county of Szatmár and moved across it into the cis-Carpathian counties of Bereg and Ugocsa (now predominantly in the Ukraine). They finished their journey in Nagykároly. For the young man who would one day inherit the office of high-sheriff in Szatmár, the trip was an excellent opportunity to become acquainted with leading figures of the area.

Inasmuch as there was no course of jurisprudence in Waitzen, it was decided that József would study law in Vienna. In July 1785, he arrived in the imperial capital accompanied by his tutor. The young count's mother and grandmother took care to introduce him to Viennese grandees. He spent most of the time on horseback in the imperial riding school and chose horses for purchase from Prince Kaunitz's stable. Meanwhile the tutor arranged a meeting with the famous professor of law and State Councillor Karl Anton Martini (1726–1800), who advised concerning teachers to be employed, disciplines to be chosen and useful contacts to be cultivated. The tutor then began diligently attending university lectures to form his own opinion about the professors of law, their rhetorical skill, competence in jurisprudence and, last but not least, knowledge of Catholic doctrine. The decision was made to entrust the young professor Franz Anton Zeiller (1751–1828) – the future author of the Austrian General Civil Code – with teaching natural law (*jus naturae*), the universal law of nations (*jus universale gentium*) and the institutions of civil law (*institutiones juris civilis*).⁵² Universal history was taught daily by Professor Leopold Plech. The *abbé* Brumati from Gradisca – “who is well-known in Vienna among numerous dames and cavaliers, and other ladies and gentlemen whom he had instructed” – was to give the young count language-

⁵¹ A summary of Count Joseph Colloredo's services to the Hungarian crown are in the royal patent admitting him in 1791 to the Hungarian nobility, see: MOL A 57, Magyar Kancelláriai Levéltár [Archives of the Hungarian Court Chancellery], Libri regii, vol. 56, 253–262.

⁵² MOL P 398, no. 27041, Vince Henyey to Antal Károlyi, 27 July 1785.

lessons.⁵³ Music and riding balanced out this otherwise purely academic curriculum.

Councillor Martini arranged a meeting for Henyey with Professor Joseph Sonnenfels (1732–1817),⁵⁴ whose simple and elegant spoken German made an excellent impression on the Piarist. The famous reformer suggested stressing juridical studies in German, which – together with his instruction in written bureaucratic style – would serve the following year as a good basis for learning political science (“*politiae principia*”). There is no evidence for how much Sonnenfels earned from these lessons. According to Henyey’s information, a similar course had cost Prince Liechtenstein 1000 florins.⁵⁵ This was a large sum: a secretary at the Bohemian-Austrian Chancellery earned 2000 florins a year. A house on the Viennese square *am Hof* with six rooms, a stable and a store of wood, which Henyey had found for the young count, was to be had for 560 florins. This circumstance sheds new light on the role Sonnenfels played in preparing new generations of Viennese aristocrats for higher office. Unwilling to attend public lectures at the university and memorise the catechism-like textbooks, they were prepared to pay large amounts of money for exclusive private lessons. If they had not done so, they might not have been considered competent leaders of their social inferiors who – to be in tune with new requirements – had attended Sonnenfels’ university lectures.⁵⁶ In his turn, the professor probably wanted to compensate for the “material losses” he suffered in disseminating his knowledge gratis at the university. In reference to József, Henyey hinted at the large outlay made by aristocratic parents in preparing their sons for public service: “God blessed him with a love of reading! I hope that the care, solicitude and large amount of money invested in his education produce some favourable effects”.⁵⁷

It is hard to say how long József’s education in Vienna lasted. His tutor’s last letter from there is dated 27 January 1786. The final stage of the young count’s

⁵³ MOL P 398, no. 35095, József Károlyi to Antal Károlyi, 17 July 1785.

⁵⁴ Karl H. OSTERLOH, *Joseph von Sonnenfels und die österreichische Reformbewegung im Zeitalter des aufgeklärten Absolutismus* (Lübeck–Hamburg 1970); Grete KLINGENSTEIN, *Akademikerüberschuß als soziales Problem im aufgeklärten Absolutismus, Bemerkungen über eine Rede Joseph von Sonnenfels’ aus dem Jahre 1771*, in: Grete KLINGENSTEIN, Heinrich LUTZ, Gerald STOURZH (eds.), *Bildung, Politik und Gesellschaft. Studien zur Geschichte des europäischen Bildungswesen vom 16. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Wiener Beiträge zur Geschichte der Neuzeit 5, Wien 1978) 165–204; Grete KLINGENSTEIN, *Professor Sonnenfels darf nicht reisen: Beobachtungen zu den Anfängen der Wirtschafts-, Sozial- und Politikwissenschaften in Österreich*, in: Hedwig KOPETZ (ed.), *Soziokultureller Wandel im Verfassungsstaat. Phänomene politischer Transformation* (Vienna–Cologne–Graz 2004) 829–842.

⁵⁵ MOL P 398, no. 27038, Vince Henyey to Antal Károlyi, 17 July 1785.

⁵⁶ Waltraud Heindl was among the first to draw attention to the great popularity of Sonnenfels’ public lectures (given early in the morning before office-hours) among Viennese bureaucrats. See: Waltraud HEINDL, *Gehorsame Rebellen. Bürokratie und Beamte in Österreich 1780 bis 1848* (Vienna–Cologne–Graz 1991) 107.

⁵⁷ MOL P 398, no. 27045, Vince Henyey to Antal Károlyi, 10 August 1785.

education, though, is documented in his own hand. From 20 August to 25 September 1787 he travelled to Bohemia, Saxony and Moravia in the company of Henyey and two servants and summarised his observations and impressions in a diary dedicated to his father.⁵⁸ Unlike the classical early modern *grand tour*, which implied longer stays at foreign courts and (usually random) attendance of foreign universities⁵⁹, this trip was rather a *petit tour*. Main stops on this itinerary were Prague, Dresden, Leipzig, Lausen, Olmütz and Brünn. As with most such contemporary journeys with didactic aims, it combined acquaintance with natural landscapes, industry and agriculture, fortifications, universities, libraries, and museums with socialisation in the aristocratic milieu. Devoutly Catholic, József attended services in the cathedral of Prague, in Catholic and Protestant churches in Leipzig, and in the Franciscan church in Brünn. He admired the treasures of the picture gallery at Dresden. As a loving son, the young count paid special tribute to battlefields of the Seven Years' War, where his father had fought for the House of Austria and been wounded. Another destination was the village of Herrnhut with its factories run by the Moravian Brethren. Károlyi's aunt, Countess Siskovics, introduced him to her circle of friends in Prague, while the Austrian resident in Dresden, Count Dillon O'Kelly, received the young man. His reports to State Chancellor Kaunitz do not mention József Károlyi's stay in the Saxon capital, though one learns that some weeks earlier Professor Sonnenfels had been in the area, visiting the Dresden picture gallery and travelling to the industrial centres of Chemnitz and Annaberg as well as to Dessau, where in 1774 the philanthropic institute of Johann Basedow was organised.⁶⁰ The fact, that the professor and his erstwhile pupil visited the same city around the same time might be more than mere coincidence.

By 1788, the young count's public education and private schooling, meant to prepare him for his hereditary dignities and make him confident and successful both on the Hungarian political stage and at Court in Vienna, were over. The following year he married the young Countess Elisabeth Waldstein-Wartenberg, thus integrating his family even more closely into the Bohemian-Austrian aristocracy. Like many of his aristocratic peers⁶¹, he entered public service. In 1790, he became a clerk (*concipist*), then in 1791 a secretary at the Lieutenancy Council (*Helytartótanács, Statthaltere*) of the Kingdom of Hungary. This gave him much-needed practical experience in Hungarian legislation as well as admission to the

⁵⁸ MOL P 1503, Károlyi család levéltára [The Károlyi family archives], Károlyi Antal, 1. cs., Tagebuch meiner im Jahre 1787 nach Böhmen und Sachsen unternommenen Reise.

⁵⁹ Cf.: Gernot HEISS, Bildungs- und Reiseziele österreichischer Adelliger in der Frühen Neuzeit, in: BABEL, PARAVICINI (eds.), *Grand Tour*, 217–235.

⁶⁰ Haus-, Hof und Staatsarchiv, Vienna, Staatskanzlei, Diplomatische Korrespondenz, Sachsen. Berichte, fasc. 27, no. 54, 19 July 1787.

⁶¹ Győző EMBER, A M. Kir. Helytartótanács ügyintézésének története, 1724–1848 [The history of the Hungarian Lieutenancy Council, 1724–1848] (Budapest 1940).

administrative elite. The death of his father in 1791 placed József at the head of the family. He inherited the dignity of high-sheriff in Szatmár and, around the same time, was awarded the chamberlain's golden key. To assess his role in the political and intellectual life of the early reign of Francis II (1792–1835) goes beyond the scope of the present study and would require the analysis of further evidence. For instance, verification is still needed of Éva Balázs' assumption that Károlyi belonged to the informal circle organised by young reform-minded officials at the Lieutenantcy Council (including József Podmaniczky and Gergery Berzeviczy) and that his own solemn inauguration as high-sheriff in 1794, which these brilliant minds attended, was a forum for discussing the reform agenda of the 1790s.⁶² The thoroughly conceived and consistently implemented program of education of the young Count Károlyi must have contributed at least to a sensibility to the spirit of the age. It was only his untimely death in 1803 in a duel that interrupted József Károlyi's promising career.

In the funeral speech on 23 May 1803, the canon of Kalocsa, Péter Klobusiczky (younger brother of the above-mentioned Antal), asked: "What can I say about his education? Was there any other house of magnates in our land in which the parents brought up their offspring with more energy and expense than these parents did our dear József?"⁶³ To what extent was the priest correct? There is no doubt that Count Antal Károlyi considered education, both as a sum of knowledge and as appropriate socialisation, an indispensable part of becoming a Hungarian aristocrat. He did his best to reinforce the quality of instruction with a sense of exclusivity and to give it an intimate, familiar atmosphere even in a public school. The caring father gradually prepared his son to take his place both in the Hungarian aristocracy and among the Monarchy's elites. He succeeded in reconciling the pride and consciousness of being Hungarian with loyalty to the Habsburg ruler. This education was far from being the most spectacular within the Monarchy, but it was no doubt typically aristocratic. Further micro-historical case-studies might help to contextualise it.

⁶² Éva H. BALÁZS, *Berzeviczy Gergely – a reformpolitikus (1763–1795)* [Berzeviczy Gergely – a reformist politician (1763–1795)] (Budapest 1967) 205.

⁶³ Péter KLOBUSICZKY, *Halottas beszéd* [Funeral speech] (Vienna 1803) 8.