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**The seal material of the noble families
of Ciuc-Giurgeu-Casin Seat (16th–19th cent.)**

Doctoral Thesis Résumé

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KEY WORDS: sigillography, heraldry, genealogy, Szekler nobility, coat of arms, emblem, seal, seal matrix, iconography, Ciuc Seat.

RÉSUMÉ

Seals, which are both written and visual sources at the same time, despite their insignificant size are of great source value, and, if not taken out of context, they can be accurately dated due to the document on which they were used (with authentication or simply closing function), feature unequalled among image sources.¹ Owing to the fact that, from the 12th century, seal use spread in an increasingly wide circle not only in Western Europe but also in Hungary, it affected all geographical regions and all social classes; therefore, the usability of seals is also manifold.

Sigillography – although it is an old discipline – has not succeeded to this day in imposing a set of unanimously accepted critical rules. The results of sigillography research are only known in a small circle, and due to the fact that it is cultivated by merely a few specialists, the vocabulary used is inaccurate, while the classification methods applied are empirical.² The seal material from the modern era is rich; yet, this wealth is not explored and researched enough, the results obtained are not even known by the guild of historians. This relatively rich seal material allows complex processing based on the use of various methods, not only qualitative, comparative and of analysis but quantitative, statistical ones as well.

The research of the noble society of Ciuc-Giurgeu-Casin Seat from the premodern and modern periods, identifying the structure and the composition of this local elite, delineating the property relations among them, analysing the formation of the local intellectuals and the way they got involved in taking some seat positions, in the social and cultural life of the local community are all potential research topics, which would be worth exploring by local history specialists. Basic research was begun by the genealogists of the beginning of the last century, two of whom (Imre Sándor of Mihăileni Ciuc and Miklós Endes of Sânsimion) were directly affected, both of them coming from local noble families; yet, their works were only partly published.

The history of the majority of the noble families of Ciuc Seat has not been reconstituted ever since, not even in few-page articles; that is why it is indispensable to carry out detailed fundamental research. It is well known that in the decades of socialism, these subjects, being considered reactionary and retrograde, were deeply marginalised, therefore – at least in the case of Ciuc Seat – no important publication appeared in the fields of genealogy, heraldry or sigillography. It was precisely for this reason that I chose the analysis

¹ PASTOUREAU 1981. 7; BAUDIN 2012.

² PASTOUREAU 1981. 7.

of the symbols used by the social elite of the former Ciuc as subject of my doctoral research, subject that lies at the interference of the three scientific domains mentioned above.

Due to the given deadlines and length constraints, within the framework of the present project I undertook to process 1,375 seals, 1,358 of which are seal impressions and 17 pieces of ink drawings made after seals (these latter ones were only used in exceptional cases where I did not have the original impressions at my disposal), all of them were personally identified and collected, the images rendered are also own reproductions. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to process seal matrices as well. Family and personal seal matrices – according to my knowledge at least – have not been preserved, where as the few known official (episcopal) seal matrices are not available to researchers.

The first volume of the Paper consists of a few studies that, on the one hand, summarise the antecedents of the present research project, reviewing the main publications related to the research area, while, on the other hand, analyse the circumstances in which the seals processed were made and render the results of the analyses carried out on the seal material. In the first chapter – given the complex nature of the subject – I synthesised the main results of the three scientific fields: sigillography, genealogy and heraldry relating to the history, symbols and seal material of the noble families of Ciuc Seat. Given the fact that specialised literature on my research subject is rather incomplete, the presentation was placed in a larger context, which also includes recent research results relating to the history and seals of the noble families in Transylvania and Hungary. I tried to outline the most typical categories of primary sources and their places of preservation, presenting in detail the loyalty oath records of Ciuc Seat (from the years 1741, 1781, 1791, 1792, 1838), as well as their signatories and seal impressions. After reviewing the latest and most defining monographs, studies and specialised articles in the field, within the framework of a case study I referred to the first systematic collection of seals of the Empire (and implicitly of Transylvania), which took place in 1819, and which focused precisely on the noble seal material. The reports prepared on this occasion, preserved even till now, contain relevant information relating to the seals of the Ciuc Seat nobles.

In the second chapter, I tried to present the medium that produced the seal material analysed. I attempted to provide a schematic representation of the noble society of Ciuc Seat, following the evolution and transformation, in the course of the 16th–19th centuries, of some basic concepts (such as primor, primipil, Szekler noble, armalist), evoking the importance of the year 1562 and outlining the basic ideas of the Szekler policy of Transylvanian princes, then analysing the consequences of the impairment of the Szekler privileges following the

year 1711, as well as the attempts of the local elite to restore their autonomy. From the military censuses and loyalty oath records I attempted to extract at least approximate data related to the number of the seat nobility in order to be able to correlate the number of the analysed seals with the number of the families with noble status of the seat. In a subchapter, I tried to review the donations and rises in rank conferred upon some people of Ciuc Seat by kings and princes (raising to the rank of primipil, ennoblements, coat of arms donations); in another subchapter, I addressed the issue of the "sui iuris" use of coat of arms, that is, their use on own initiative, without the consent of the sovereign, but perfectly legal, these noble symbols giving the majority of the motifs of the seals analysed. I tried to accomplish amore in-depth treatment of this issue of the donated coat of arms, respectively the ones used on own initiative, in the framework of a comparative study, in which I confronted the seal use of two noble families of Ciuc Seat: Lázár of Toplița Ciuc and Sándor of Mihăileni Ciuc.

Within the third chapter, I attempted the reconstruction of the seal use of the noble families of Ciuc Seat, based on the seal material at my disposal. First, I clarified some basic notions that, compared to the special terminology, are used with different meanings in the spoken language (e.g. seal, seal matrix, stamp), these differences often leading to misunderstandings. At the same time, I tried to present the main types of seals and synthesise the seal functions, thus laying the foundations of a typological analysis of the seal material. After an overview of the evolution of Transylvanian seal use of almost a millennium, I tried to identify some specific features, tendencies and "fashion" trends in seal use, which appear to be characteristic of some historical epochs, such as the fashion of seals with emblems, monograms, portraits, scenes or coat of arms.

In the analysis of the seals with coat of arms – in the few cases where I had a great enough number of eloquent impressions at disposal – I tried to identify versions of the same family coat of arms, respectively, to sketch evolution models of coat of arms (e.g. in the case of the families Baló of Bățanii Mari, Gáborffi of Valea Strâmbă and László of Joseni). I also dealt with the issue of coat of arms versions in more detail within the framework of a case study through which I presented the seal use of one single person: the chief royal judge of Ciuc Seat, Mihály Sándor of Sândominic. In his case, uniquely, I had the opportunity to analyse eight impressions of various seal matrices, all representing the coat of arms of the Sándor family, imprints used over six decades, period in which their owner held various positions in the seat.

Within the fourth chapter, using quantitative methods, I classified the 1,375 seals, I attempted to establish their typology, to give percentage breakdowns of the seal material

based on various criteria, to present the main conclusions of the analyses carried out through graphics and diagrams, and finally, I made the iconographic classification of the seal impressions. I analysed the chronological dispersion of the material, the characteristic methods of seal making as well as the division of seal makers according to their social roles. The iconographic classification of the seal motifs required the use of the most complex procedure, during which I took into account the classification methods used by the working group led by Éva Gyulai (members: Katalin Deme and Anna Magyar), respectively, László Szegedi's classification method. The motifs of the analysed seal material were grouped in a few large categories such as *human, animal, plant, object*, which, in turn, were divided into several sub-categories. The analysis of the seals was completed with a general characterisation of the condition of the seal material according to archival preservation and conservation criteria. The first volume ends with the synthesis of conclusions, followed by the archival sources and literature used.

The second volume of the Thesis consists, on the one hand, of a *Sigillography album* (Appendix 1) containing the 1,375 reproductions, which, for a better technical execution, were arranged in colour plates, the pictures being numbered from 1 to 1,375. On the other hand, the volume also contains a *Sigillography cadastre* (Appendix 2), which is in fact a table summarising the identification data and all the important characteristics of the 1,375 seals, in alphabetical order. As the number of the last column of the table indicates the position of the seal in the Description of the seals and the Sigillography album, the cadastre can also be used as an index of the seals.

The third volume of the paper consists exclusively of the *Description of the seals* (Appendix 3), that is, of the detailed presentation of the 1,375 pieces. It is the most voluminous structural part and the richest in historical information, of the following structure:

1. Seals of landowners and officials residing in Ciuc Seat (1,024 pieces, representing a proportion of 74.5% of the total number of the analysed seals);
2. Seals of "foreign" landowners residing outside the Seat but owning properties in Ciuc as well (150 pieces, representing 10.9% of the total number);
3. Seals of Ciuc nobles who settled down in other jurisdictions, but continued to own property on the territory of Ciuc Seat as well (42 pieces, that is, 3.0% of the analysed seal material);
4. Seals of nobles of Ciuc origin no longer living in the Seat, who kept the tradition of their Ciuc origin only through their names or the noble predicate (79 pieces, meaning a proportion of 5.7%);
5. Unidentified seals (this last category consists of 80 pieces, meaning a proportion of 5.8%; all of these impressions come from documents with several seals, the identification of the seal maker not being possible).

In describing the seals I pursued two major objectives: on the one hand, I focused on the visual information and the physical characteristics of the seals; on the other hand, I attempted a reconstruction as complete as possible of the context in which the seal impression was made. In every case, I tried to establish the type of the document from which the seal was collected, and whether it had an authentication or closing function. At the same time, I tried – according to the possibilities given by the physical condition of the impressions – to describe the seal picture as detailed as possible (coat of arms, emblem, scene, monogram etc.).

In my opinion, a seal impression cannot be analysed in itself, without knowing the context in which it was made, and this context has to mean not only the circumstances of making the document, the content, date and the addressee of the document on which the seal was applied to authenticate or close it, but also the career of the owner/ maker of the seal. That is why, in every case, the description of the seal impression is preceded by a short presentation of the life and career of the seal owner/ maker, this way reconstructing about 860 short biographies. In every case, I tracked the same moments of life: origin, studies, positions held, apparition in noble conscripts, data referring to the financial situation. I considered these last pieces of information important to be able to place the seal owner/ maker in the noble hierarchy of the seat and also to be able to see if the seal matrix used represents the social status and financial position indeed, as the seal matrices are not only tools of authentication, but also representative objects of use at the same time, ”on the basis of which the culture, demandingness but also the wealth of the owner can be stated.”³

³T. ORGONA 2004. 124.