

State Description without State

On the Antecedents of the Statistical Gaze in Hungary

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Abstract. This study examines the reception of the state sciences in eighteenth-century Hungary. It argues that the genres of historical topography and political geography had a substantial role both in the adaptation of state description (*Staatsbeschreibung*) and in initiating the conflict between various state visions, based on the reappraisal of historical, legal arguments of the dualist political structure on the one hand, and the natural law-based conceptualisation of composite state (*Gesamtstaat*) and good administration (*Gute Polizey*), on the other. The essay claims that this opposing conceptualizations of state also contributed to laying the intellectual foundations for diverse Catholic and Protestant interpretations, developed throughout the eighteenth century. The article comes to the conclusion that until the late eighteenth century the two main competitive lines of state description fundamentally shaped the sociocultural contexts of knowledge of state. In the approach and method, however, these interpretations had different answers to the challenge represented by statistical knowledge. While Catholic history of state appeared less effective against statistical account, statisticians found fierce competitors in the protagonists of political geography.

Keywords: state description, statistics, political geography, state, history of knowledge

Introduction

“I intended to write a history of Hungary, which is called statistics, though I have had to face that, in the end, what I had done was something different. Only in the course of the undertaking did I observe that things were still missing, and that there was a shortage of relevant, proper publications.”¹

The principal aim of this paper² is to explore the intellectual and sociocultural initiatives that motivated the development of Enlightenment-era state descriptions in

1 Georgii Pray, *Historia Regum Hungariae, Ad Lectorem*. (Here and throughout this paper, translations into English are mine, unless otherwise indicated.)

2 This study was supported by an OeAD Ernst Mach Grant – Worldwide (Project Number: 72764).

Hungary. As already noted in the literature, the eighteenth-century history of the genre can be divided into at least two periods. The first was associated with the rise of the genre, which, due to the vivid intellectual climate of German universities, such as Halle (an der Saale), Jena, and Frankfurt an der Oder, offered significant stimuli for the cultural transfers of the 1710–1730s, when Protestant (mostly Lutheran) prominents tried to implement state description as a form of patriotic scholarship into the college curricula of Upper Hungary (today's Slovakia).³ Apart from these first diffuse attempts to domesticate the practice of state description and its vernacular variants in Hungarian scholarly culture, the second period, more closely connected to the High Enlightenment and the Habsburg education reforms of the 1770s, has attracted more attention in historical scholarship. Between the periods of prematurity and institutionalization, however, historiography paid less attention to mid-century developments—in particular, to the contributions of the auxiliary fields of geography and cartography. This historiographical shortcoming is largely due to the teleological perspective of the history of science, which applied a presentist scope and kept producing parallel but fragmented interpretations of eighteenth-century statistics. To avoid this anachronism, in what follows, two arguments should be taken into consideration.

First, instead of focusing on the semantics of statistics (*Statistik, Staatenkunde, Staatskunde, statistica*), it is recommended to distinguish between its various scholarly conceptualizations. In this respect, eighteenth-century statistical studies should be taken as an emerging field of knowledge whose malleable borders were still defined and negotiated by the concurrent approaches of political geography and historical topography. In the paper, special attention will be paid to how these competitive conceptualizations shaped the cultural and political context in which statistical studies became instrumental for the new political administration. Second, in general terms, 'state description' (*notitia rerumpublicarum, Staatsbeschreibung*) is also to be taken as a melting-pot of heterodox approaches and practical knowledge, which in the sense of Enlightenment encyclopedism, aimed at measuring and classifying the spatial, economic, political, legal, and historical reality of the state.

Before addressing how historical understanding can benefit from the investigation of Enlightenment state description, it should also be emphasized that the entangled picture of this genre was fundamentally shaped by the clash of Catholic and Protestant conceptualizations evolving alongside each other for most of the

3 As István Mészáros noted, the early statistical compendia of Otto Everhard were regularly included in the lectures of János Tsétsi (1650–1708) and István Vétsei Pataki (?–1743) between 1713 and 1737 at the Reformed College of Sárospatak: Mészáros, "Statisztika – oktatás," 88–89.

eighteenth century.⁴ In the paper, the literature of state description will be illustrated with printed treatises, textbooks, and manuscripts of Catholic and Protestant advocates published between the Treaty of Karlowitz (1699) and the 1790s. Within this period, the paper takes the entangled relation between the concepts of *Gesamtstaat* and composite monarchy as an essential phenomenon that encouraged the improvement of this literature in both cultural *milieux*.⁵ By stressing this paradox in the title as ‘state description without state’, the paper rather aims to question the modernist narration of the history of statistics and to put the emphasis on both the synchronisms and the parallels that existed between cultural transfers and the local knowledge centers that reinforced the decisively practical (or cameralist) character of the adaptation of political knowledge in the Habsburg Monarchy.⁶

The competitive vocabularies of statehood

By the early eighteenth century, conceptualizing statehood became the political project of the intellectual and cultural elites, evolving in legal-cameral (political), geographical, and historical inquiries almost independent of each other. As the political counselor Leibniz remarked in his early proposal to Ernst August, Prince of Braunschweig and Lüneburg (1680), the collection and classification of especially those pieces of information which while unable to make up a whole *encyclopedia* but still relate to the art of administration (*Regierungs-Kunst*) is especially useful for the government.⁷ From the perspective of later advancements, Leibniz’s statement appeared parochial, although it perfectly captured the direction that early modern political knowledge and statecraft was following in the eighteenth century in order to establish a more comprehensive account of state affairs. Leibniz’s proposal was

4 In the Early Enlightenment, state description in many respects was a product of the Catholic and Protestant confessional knowledge cultures. See the concept of confessional knowledge in Brilkman, “Confessional Knowledge,” 30–32, 35–37.

5 Despite their similar connotations, *Gesamtstaat* was to present the Habsburg Monarchy as a unity and the distinguished inheritor of the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation, while the composite monarchy usually referred to a specific governmental practice and to the territorial and constitutional multiplicity of the state. For this valuable comment and his sharp-eyed criticism, I am especially indebted to László Kontler.

6 Compared to the compelling impact of Protestant Aristotelianism in German university culture, in their adaptation of political studies, the Austrian cameralists preferred the practical and utilitarian (*Polizeiwissenschaft*) to the theoretical approach (*Staatsklugheit*). See Dreitzel, “Reason of state and the crisis of political Aristotelianism,” 163–87; Ottmann, “Protestantische Schulphilosophie in Deutschland,” 218–31. On the Sonnenfelsian system of political studies, see Osterloh, *Joseph von Sonnenfels*, 35–45.

7 Leibniz, *Entwurf gewisser Staatstafeln*, 342.

still aimed at the framework of the political administration of the princely state (*Fürstenstaat*). What his descendants were concerned with, however, was reconciling the old dynastic perspective of statehood with the holistic and, in the terms of the Enlightenment, scientific vision offered by state descriptions. As has been recognized by the literature, although this challenge on the level of the state of the art and political counselling may have appeared to be part of practical politics (*politische Praxis*), in the republic of letters by the mid-eighteenth century it led to the establishment of a new field of knowledge. In due course, by providing an increasing amount of accurate and credible data, information and figures, statistical studies revealed new developments in the ongoing competition of European empires, including the internal strengths and weaknesses of states. The perspective from which the new science of state gazed on its subject was based on the political vocabulary of the composite monarchy. Regarding the German context of statistics, this shared framework of European composite monarchies was fundamentally impacted by the theory of good administration (*Gute Polizey*), and by the legal-political concepts of the state (*Staat*) and the realm (*Reich*), thereby playing a distinguished role in upholding the idea of *Gesamtstaat*. In this respect, statistics represented not only a new variant of the state sciences of the Enlightenment, but by using the concept of *Gesamtstaat* it aimed to redescribe the received semantics of the composite monarchy, causing latent epistemic turmoil among the various scholarly approaches and disciplines of political knowledge.

The intellectual impact of state description on the conceptualization of statehood seems to be among the few seemingly evident issues that have remained almost unaddressed in the scholarship of intellectual history and the history of science. Looking at the sporadic but more significant hints in the literature, it should be noted that attempts to apply the concept of practical Enlightenment (*praktische Aufklärung*)⁸ had exclusively practical, administrative, and economic implications in terms of seeking the real effect of statistical figures and data on political decision-making.⁹ This narrow and internalistic interest of research, therefore, failed to address the other side of the coin and reconsider the fact that producing statistical books, tables, and data in the eighteenth century was as much a political as a scientific and intellectual venture. In what follows, attention will be paid to the rival descriptive approaches of statistical studies, with special regard to historical topographies

8 Schindler and Bonß, "Praktische Aufklärung," 255–63; Lowood, *Profit and the Promotion of Science in the German Enlightenment*, 291–366; Bödeker, "Economic Societies in Germany," 181–211; Wakefield, "The Practical Enlightenment," 149–65; Stuber and Wyss, *Useful Natural History*, 891–920.

9 See more recently Török, "Measuring the Strength of State," 235–61; Török, "The Intellectual Resources of Modern Governance," 183–200; Behrisch, *Berechnung der Glückseligkeit*, 17–23.

and political geographies. Regarding the monocausal interpretations of the history of statistics, it must be stated that the practice of eighteenth-century state description was many before it became one. To ascertain how these alternatives were connected to the competitive vocabularies of statehood, we should turn to the views of contemporaries who had first-hand experience of this phenomenon.

In this regard, Martin Schwartzner's commentaries on contemporary Catholic counterparts gives especially valuable insight into the conflicting accounts in relation to which the new statistical approach had to identify itself. In the first edition of his volume on the statistics of the Kingdom of Hungary: *Statistik des Königreichs Ungern* (1798); the Lutheran historian, gave concise but vitriolic criticism of the ex-Jesuit interpretation of state description, declaring that its old-fashioned dedication to history, geography, and public law were obsolete.¹⁰ In tracing the Hungarian antecedents of statistical studies, Schwartzner paid special attention to the work of Mihály Horváth, which he saw as the first statistical textbook to attempt to make a comprehensible account of Hungary.¹¹ In Schwartzner's judgement, however, Horváth's perspective resembled the old Hungarian public law much more than modern descriptive statistics.¹² The verdict of the Lutheran historian was to some extent still nurtured by the confessional bias against the Catholic tradition of state description. This aspect of his approach becomes more apparent when compared to the author's opinion of his Protestant predecessors. As expected, here Schwartzner tended to emphasize the continuity between his own efforts and the historical and geographical works of Matthias Bel and Johann Matthias Korabinsky—even if neither Bel nor Korabinsky had ever dealt with statistics or intended to call themselves statisticians.¹³

Despite Schwartzner's preoccupation with Catholic history and state description, his appraisal was correct in pointing out a rival conceptualization of statehood, which could by no means be compared to the approach of the *Universitätsstatistik* lectures he attended during his peregrination in Göttingen (from October 1779 to October 1782).¹⁴ In the second edition of his book, Schwartzner presented two further examples from ex-Jesuit scholars to provide evidence of how statistics was becoming confused with the history of the state (*Staatengeschichte*). The first reference was Schwartzner's close friend, colleague, and former professor of statistics in the Legal

10 Schwartzner, *Statistik des Königreichs Ungern*, 27–33.

11 Horváth, "Statistices regni Hungariae supplementa." Horváth's textbooks were in use after the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, too. See his other contributions: [Horváth], "Introductio ad Historiam Ungariae critico-politicam"; Horváth, "Statistica regni Hungariae."

12 Schwartzner, *Statistik des Königreichs Ungern*, 32.

13 Schwartzner, *Statistik des Königreichs Ungern*, 17–20.

14 Futaky, *Göttinga*, 63–64.

Academy of Nagyvárad (Großwardein, Oradea), Jacob Ferdinand Miller, who in his *Praecognita Statistica* (1792) claimed that political science (*Polizeiwissenschaft*) was part of statistics. In Schwartzner's view, the second example represented a more obvious case of the same misconception. Therein, the famous royal historian György Pray, in the preface of his three-volume work on the history of the state of Hungary (*Historia Regum Hungariae, cum notitiis praevis ad cognoscendum veterem regni statum*) made a self-critical account of his mistake in writing a proper history of statistics (see the citation above). In Schwartzner's understanding, Pray's naive confession (*naives Geständnis*), however, unequivocally proved that, by the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, statistics had become a distinct approach within the field of state sciences (*Staatsgelertheit*).¹⁵ As Paul Streidl has already noted in his monograph on Gottfried Achenwall, affected by eighteenth-century politicization (*Politisierung*), the European Enlightenment witnessed the improvement of two moderate types of state science. According to the first, state science was to be founded on legal-historical knowledge, illustrating the interest of local political elites and estates. Conversely but simultaneously, the second alternative in the frame of absolutism was congruent with promoting enlightened natural (state) law and the new political science (*Polizeiwissenschaft*).¹⁶ In the case of the Habsburg Monarchy, the second type of state science played an admittedly substantial role in constituting and upholding the idea of *Gesamtstaat* during the eighteenth century. As far as the first alternative is concerned, its intellectual impact on Habsburg state-building needs further explanation.

Concentrating on the short but eventful period from the Siege of Vienna (1683) to the Treaty of Passarowitz (1718), two initiatives should be taken into consideration. In political terms, apart from the rebellion and military campaign Prince of Transylvania Ferenc Rákóczi II launched against Austria between 1703 and 1711, there was no credible alternative to Habsburg state-building.¹⁷ Thus, the evolving concept of *Gesamtstaat* framed both the intellectual and constitutional context in which enacting the matrilineal succession of the Habsburg House (Pragmatic Sanction) in 1723, i.e., the connection of the Hungarian nobility and Austria, could be understood. The consequences of this political reconciliation, however, were as ambiguous as unpredictable. On the surface, while the ancient constitution and the primacy of fundamental laws was restored, this left the political power of the counties and local authorities

15 Schwartzner, *Statistik des Königreichs Ungern* (1809), 5–6.

16 Streidl, *Naturrecht, Staatswissenschaften und Politisierung*, 10–13.

17 On Rákóczi's concept of state, see Várkonyi, *Rákóczi tanulmányok*, 61–74; Tóth, "L'idée de la justice et la guerre d'indépendance," 145–58; Pálffy, "Egy elbukott, mégis sikeres függetlenségi mozgalom," 15–30.

untouched,¹⁸ and the legal-historical knowledge set applied to constitute the composite monarchy in the traditional way tended to lose its exclusive position. In other words, although in the eyes of its Hungarian counterpart, the old dualism between the king and estates (with its legal-historical foundations) seemed to have been restored, this frame still needed to be adjusted to the political-legal measures of the Habsburg *Gesamtstaat*. In response to this political transition, the description of the state and its constitutive elements (counties, *vármegyék*)—including their physical, cultural, and political conditions—made the descriptive scholarly practice conflicted and impeded by the obstructive behavior of the Hungarian nobility. In this context, the Habsburg re-evaluation of the Hungarian past and present faced two main obstacles.

The first obstacle concerned the missing historical material, raising the need for establishing systematic collections on which critical inquiry into historical documents and diplomas could proceed. Affected by the Catholic history of the Church and the critical methodological premises of Bolland and Mabillon, the first project that aimed at collecting historical sources was run by Jesuit prominents like Gábor Hevenesi, István Kaprinai, and Sámuel Timon from the 1680s onwards. Although Hevenesi's collection still attempted to develop the history of the Jesuit Order, the historical material he and his followers accumulated over the eighteenth century also laid the ground for the significant history of state projects, such as those of Károly Palma's, István Katona's, and György Pray's.¹⁹ Coming to the second obstacle, it should be emphasized that after the restoration of the ancient constitution, the bond between Austria and Hungary was conceived within the traditional framework of dualism between the king and the estates (*tractatus dietalis*). Therefore, for Hungarian political elites, statehood once again did not primarily mean the *Gesamtstaat* but the old composite monarchy; the process of political coordination (and harmonization), which secured both the principle of balance of power between the political participants and the rights of the Hungarian nation (*natio Hungarica*) in terms of legislative and executive power.²⁰

Conceptually, this sentiment of Hungarian statehood permeated not only the political vocabulary, but was also present in the lexicons and dictionaries of the

18 The use of the concept of ancient constitutionalism (*avita constitutio*) can be detected no earlier than the end of the century. Szijártó, "The Birth of the Constitution," 46–62. On the significance of public law in public office, see Horbec, "The »Quiet Force«, " 81–108.

19 See Hevenesi's place in historiography and his programmatic declaration in Hóman, "Kishevesi Hevenesi Gábor," 322–25.

20 For further explanation, see Barker, "The Development of Hungarian Political Language"; Szijártó, "The unexpected survival of the dualism," 27–39; Kontler and Trencsényi, "Hungary," 179–80; Zászkaliczky, "Eszmetörténeti szempontok," 14–23; Miru, *Az alkotmányozás politikai nyelve*, 9–114.

1830s. Although these philosophical, legal, and official wordbooks were published between 1826 and 1843, their compilers still heavily relied on the alphabetical collections of the 1780–1790s. The incorporation of these word lists into the lexicon entries provides a good opportunity to capture the interplay between the competitive vocabularies of *Gesamtstaat* and the composite monarchy. Without featuring an abstract meaning of the state, the entries covered two distinct semantic layers. The first layer usually brought together the general and the specific meaning of the state. According to this, *statehood* (álladalom) was equivalent to a particular *condition* (állapot), *real status* (mibenlétel), and the more specific *statistics* (statistica).²¹ Under the concept of *state* (állam), the entries generally listed three or four alternatives. The most common meaning was the particular *condition* (állapot), the *real status* (mibenlétel), and *state* (állapot), *ordines* (kar), *estate* (rend), and *realm* (ország).²² Apart from the general meaning, the lexicon entries clearly referred to the Latin concept of *estates and ordines* (status et ordines) and *realm* (regnum), providing further explanations of the other specific meanings.²³ Using the political vocabulary of composite monarchy, the lexicon entries articulated a sharp distinction between central and local administration. In effect, this strategy made the *Gesamtstaat* less visible to the reader. The vocabulary of *Gesamtstaat* was thus limited to the particular concepts of *administration* (administratio, Regierung), *politics* (politia, Polizey), and *imperium* (empire, Reich), the latter representing both the imperial government and absolute rule.²⁴ As is visible, in these lexicon entries the polarization of the semantic fields of the narrow and the broader concept of state was prevalent. ‘State’ in a narrow sense primarily meant the actors and participants thereby represented,

21 See Puky, *Honni törvény-szótár*, 207; Puky, *Honni törvény-szótár*, 2nd ed., 188; *Philosophiai műszótár*, 185; *Törvénytudományi műszótár*, 394.

22 Still, the early dictionaries of Károly Pauly and Ferenc Verseggy listed only three meanings. Pauly, *Magyar Tiszti Írásmód*, 159; [Verseggy], *Lexicon Terminorum Technicorum*, 427. However, the later editions of the legal and philosophical dictionaries published by Károly Puky and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences gave four alternatives for the concept of state. Puky, *Honni törvény-szótár* 2nd ed., 188; *Philosophiai műszótár*, 185; *Törvénytudományi műszótár*, 394.

23 On estates and ordines, see Pauly, *Magyar Tiszti Írásmód*, 139; Puky, *Honni törvény-szótár* 2nd ed., 188; *Törvénytudományi műszótár*, 394. See realm (*regnum*): *Törvénytudományi műszótár*, 356; Verseggy, *Lexicon Terminorum Technicorum*, 389.

24 See administration (*administratio*): Pauly, *Magyar Tiszti Írásmód*, 7; *Philosophiai műszótár*, 5; Puky, *Honni törvény-szótár* 2nd ed., 12; *Törvénytudományi műszótár*, 12–13; Verseggy, *Lexicon Terminorum Technicorum*, 11–12. See empire (*imperium*): Pauly, *Magyar Tiszti Írásmód*, 70; *Philosophiai műszótár*, 86; Puky, *Honni törvény-szótár II*, 102; *Törvénytudományi műszótár*, 179; Verseggy, *Lexicon Terminorum Technicorum*, 227. See politics (*politia*): Pauly, *Magyar Tiszti Írásmód*, 108; *Philosophiai műszótár*, 148; Puky, *Honni törvény-szótár* 2nd ed., 155; *Törvénytudományi műszótár*, 299; Verseggy, *Lexicon Terminorum Technicorum*, 349. On the historical semantics of the concept see Knemeyer, “Polizei,” 875–97.

and constituted the political power of dualist statehood (estates and ordines, king, etc.). Consequently, each aspect that did not fit this narrow understanding had to be implemented into the broader concept of the state. The distinction between the narrow and broad conceptualizations of statehood resonated with the slow transformation of political vocabulary over the eighteenth century, expressing the strong self-identification of the nobility with the old customs of which they were constitutive parts and upholders, but not subjects and improvers of state.

Traditional sentiment about Hungarian statehood not only visibly but also conceptually objected to the Habsburg politics of consolidation—primarily at points of decision-making, the fundamental rights of subjects, and local administration. As is well-known, statistics as a *nova scientia* in the name of *Gesamtstaat* provided a descriptive-scientific framework with which to reconcile the composite monarchy with absolute rule and natural law. Before statistics, however, state description was predominantly associated with historical, topographical, and geographical knowledge mostly composed by Jesuit scholars. In the following sections, I will show how the Jesuit vision of state description managed to adjust to changing political expectations and affected the frame within which Hungarian statehood could be understood.

The Catholic alternative: from historical topography to history of state

At the turn of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, historical topography evolved in direct response to changing political circumstances that arose after the liberation of Hungary from Ottoman rule. As far as the political context is concerned, the Turkish wars and the restoration of local administration provided a profound opportunity to fashion historical and geographical knowledge as useful components for two related but intersecting projects: Habsburg state-building, and the restoration of the composite monarchy.²⁵ To make knowledge production effective, both projects were built upon a reappraisal of received and accessible knowledge and the participation of the new professionals and experts (cartographers, travelers, land surveyors, naturalists, military officers, geographers, and historians). Information-gathering and knowledge production in the 1720s, however, had clear limits also in political and practical terms. Since the accessible knowledge of the political administration was not only insufficient and outdated but also confidential, fresh information on the country's veritable natural, cultural, and administrative circumstances

25 For the historiographical implications, see Fillafer, "Die imperiale Dialektik von Staatsbildung," 179–93. On the restoration plans of the Kingdom of Hungary, see Iványi, "Esterházy Pál nádor," 137–61; Kalmár and Varga, "Einrichtungswerk des Königreichs Hungarn"; Kökényesi, "Helyzetértékelés és konszolidációs javaslatok," 487–500.

was in short supply in the publicity of the republic of letters. This restriction on who could access valuable information and when also determined how knowledge-producers (ecclesiastic orders, political administrators, etc.) reacted to the information hunger of the 1720s. On the Catholic side, the most prevalent and comprehensive way to solve this problem was to compose descriptive works on the history, topography, and geography of the Kingdom of Hungary.

After Sebastian Münster's choreographic-cosmographic approach, seventeenth-century historical topography started to present geographical knowledge as a practical and useful asset for political administration. History and geography identified the early modern territorial state by its temporal and spatial conditions, the two realities that were of great significance in seventeenth-century political conflicts. This style of knowledge production which brought together historical material and geographical scope still benefited much, however, from the late sixteenth-century and the early seventeenth-century secularization of universal geography.²⁶ As for the methodology, one of the most influential advocates of the new geographical approach was Philipp Clüver, who in his posthumous work (*Introductio in Universam Geographiam, tam veterem, quam novam*, 1624), expressed the need for a comprehensive account of inquiry using the classical periodization of the old and new ages of the earth. Despite adopting a linear chronology, however, Clüver had no intention of involving historical knowledge into his inquiry.²⁷ Besides Clüver's attempt, the idea that auxiliary fields of geography and history could make good bedfellows had its roots also in the scholastic scholarship and in the popular publications of the Elsevirian Republic.²⁸ Related to these developments, Clüver's essential work maintained the interest of intellectual circles and was subject to further updates and editions during the seventeenth century. For instance, when republishing the 1664 edition of Johannes Buno in 1697, the new editors (Johann Friedrich Heckel and Johannes Reiske) added an amendment to Clüver's work, in which they declared that the value of geography was to be found in its connection to history.²⁹ The adap-

26 Vogel, "Cosmography," 469–96; Fodor, *A magyar földrajztudomány története*, 70.

27 Cluverii, *Introductionis in Universam Geographiam* (1629), 11–45.

28 See Clüver in the early Jesuit geographical textbooks: Shek Brnardić, "Geography in the service of faith," 8. For the popular prints, see Martin Schödel's *Disquisitio historico-politica, de regno Hungariae* (1630). To his work Schödel attached a programmatic plan in which he proposed a comprehensive inquiry into the history of Hungary from the early periods to the present. His plan (*Graphis futurarum causarum et iconographia effigierum*) was based on the principles of scholastic science, while in the geographical part, he relied on Clüver's assessments. Schödel, *Disquisitio historico-politica, de regno Hungariae*, ff Q2–Y2. For the analysis of Schödel's plan, see Tóth, *Szent István, Szent Korona*, 57–64. Schödel's treatise was anonymously republished in an abbreviated form in a series of 'small republics' (*Petites Républiques*) by the Elsevirian Republic, entitled *Respublica et Status regni Hungariae* (Leiden: Elseviria, 1634).

29 Cluverii, *Introductionis in Universam Geographiam* (1697), *Dedicatio*.

tion of Clüver's geography to the needs of historical inquiry made him one of the most inspirational historical geographers. From this perspective, it was no surprise that, at the end of the seventeenth century, the 1697 edition of his work returned as a shared reference in the historical topographies of the Hungarian Jesuit fathers.

Apart from Luigi Fernando Marsigli's and Johann Christoph Müller's cartographic project, sponsored by the central government (*Danubius Pannonico-mysicus: observationibus geographicis, astronomicis, hydrographicis, historicis, physicis, perlustratus et in sex tomos digestus*, 1726), the pioneers of historical topographies were usually members of the Jesuit Order.³⁰ Still, the first publication that reopened the geographical discourse before the Treaty of Karlowitz was a compendium of Gábor Hevenesi's, *Parvus Atlas Hungariae* (1689), which appeared as a collection of useful information rather than a systematic investigation. By giving details on the methodological premises of geography, geographical location, the political administration of the country, and city names, Hevenesi's booklet included a dedication to Joseph I and was supposed to serve didactic purposes as well.³¹ Similarly, Gergely Hidi presented in two parts his topographic work on the most illustrious cities of Hungary at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Hidi's contribution, while imperfect, had a strong impact on contemporary Jesuit topographical publications. In Hidi's lifetime, only the first part of the *Celebriorum Hungariae Urbium Celebriora* (1701–1702) came out, which focused exclusively on the ancient history of the cities. The missing modern part was published by another Jesuit scholar, Sámuel Timon, in 1718. While during the eighteenth century Timon's edition of the *Celebriorum Hungariae Urbium Celebriora* went through many reprints by Gábor Szerdahelyi (in 1734, 1754, and 1762), it also inspired Timon's own historical-critical project, the *Imago antiquae & novae Hungariae* (1733–1734).³²

From among the Jesuit topographies, Michael Bonbardi's *Topographia Magni Regni Hungariae* (1718, 1750) excelled in its comprehensiveness. Presenting the official standpoint of the Habsburg dynasty, Bonbardi also relied on Clüver when presenting the history of counties and free royal cities in ancient and modern times. Compared to other Jesuit topographies, Bonbardi wanted to provide a comprehensive picture of the kingdom and involve the history of the Crown provinces (Dalmatia, Croatia, Slavonia, Bosnia, Serbia, Bulgaria, the Banat of Severin, Galicia, and Transylvania) into his investigation. In conceptual terms, Bonbardi's endeavor

30 Reisz, *Magyarország általános térképének elkészítése*, 33–35.

31 Hevenesi, *Parvus Atlas Hungariae*, 5–14, 14–19, 19–50.

32 See Szerdahelyi, "Celebriorum Hungariae urbium & oppidorum Topographia"; Timon, *Imago Novae Hungariae*. See the brief description of Timon's work in Fodor, *A magyar földrajztudomány története*, 24. For Timon's place in historiography and his critical-historical approach, see Benei, *Non tam stylo*, 53–59.

was problematic because due to the lack of fresh information, he had to rely on medieval sources and names.³³ His work also appeared in a second edition, published in 1750 by Johann Baptist Piker. Piker, a professor of natural law in the *Theresianum*, made significant alterations to the original text. Admitting the shortcomings and misconceptions contained in the first edition, in the preface he initiated numerous amendments with special regard to administrative districts, counties, and city authorities. As for the new elements, the old topographic parts were extended to comprise a description of antique Pannonian people, the continuity of the Hun–Avar–Hungarian settlements, and the Christian foundation of the state.³⁴ In addition, the concept of topography was also given a longer explanation, involving the terms *ichnographia* (ichnography), *sciagraphia* (sciagraphy), and *geographia* (geography).³⁵ Similar to Timon’s version, the second edition of *Topographia Magni Regni Hungariae* was supposed to be a textbook dedicated to the young Crown Prince Joseph. In this respect, Piker’s edition joined other representative political and pedagogical material used for training Habsburg crown princes.

As far as this didactic aspect of Catholic descriptive works is concerned, two more important pieces should be mentioned. The textbooks of the later Bishop of Transylvania, Joseph Anton Bajtay, earned their author a notable reputation among the members of republic of letters. While none of the volumes were ever printed, due to the several contemporary copies and excerpts, they were considered popular. According to István Miskolczy’s biography of Bajtay, Maria Theresa commissioned the Piarist scholar to compose the two textbooks for Crown Prince Joseph, one about the history of the state, and the other about the statistics of the Kingdom of Hungary. Although Bajtay managed to fulfil the queen’s request by 1754–1757, due to the heir’s long illness, private lectures could only begin in 1759.³⁶ The two textbooks were closely related, particularly in terms of historical, topographical, political, and legal material. The five volumes of the *Arcana Hungariae Historia* approached their subject from the conventional perspective of the history of kings, offering a continuous narrative from the Hun–Avar–Hungarian (Scythian) origins to the rule of Maria Theresa.³⁷ In order to make the narration more coherent, in the *Arcana Hungariae Historia*, Bajtay dovetailed Enlightenment stage theory with his dynastic loyalty, aiming to reconcile the country’s noble but savage past with the glorious and civilized present. After the age of Joseph I, the early eighteenth-century period of Charles VI was described as a firm step towards the long-awaited consolidation between Austria and Hungary, which then culminated

33 Bonbardi, *Topographia magni regni Hungariae*, 1–40, 41–187.

34 Bonbardi, *Topographia magni regni Hungariae II*, 1–88.

35 Bonbardi, *Topographia magni regni Hungariae II*, Praefatio.

36 Miskolczy, *Bajtay J. Antal*, 16–23.

37 Bajtay, “*Arcana Hungariae Historia*.”

under the rule of Maria Theresa. In contrast to the *Arcana Hungariae Historia*, in the *Statistica Regni Hungariae*, Bajtay strove to describe the cultural, political, and economic circumstances of the kingdom's present. In doing so, he also forged an alternate legal historical explanation to legitimize Habsburg rule over Hungary. Bajtay's strategy comprised two components. First, he recalled the argument in the declaration of 1566 that established the Holy Roman Empire and, by drawing an analogy, he relied on the old legal principle that all lands should be governed by their own laws: "Just as with the provinces of the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation which cannot be alienated or revised, so the autonomy of Hungary is one and constant, therefore not subordinated to any foreign or obnoxious majesty."³⁸ Second, in the fifth book, he chose to recite the principle of natural law when he argued in favor of the king's supremacy over the customs and privileges of the Hungarian nobility in terms of legislative power.³⁹ Compared to other Jesuit topographies, Bajtay's historical and statistical works simply accepted *Gesamtstaat* as a frame for the composite monarchy, and instead of sharpening the tension between these rival vocabularies, he clearly aimed to reinforce the close dynastic ties between the Habsburg House and the Hungarian estates.⁴⁰

Bearing in mind the developments of the second half of the eighteenth century, it is beyond question that the Jesuit historical topographies are considered a significant contribution to establishing the Enlightenment discourse on the history of the state in Hungary. There are two reasons for that.⁴¹ First, since they produced excerpts from historical and geographical data, they also provided a more modern image of the state, in which the temporal and spatial components became inseparable. The philological practice of revising historical and geographical sources set the standard for the producers of historical topographies in terms of providing accurate and reliable information. This asymmetry between accessible and credible information gave an impulse to methodological reconsiderations of state descriptions on both the Catholic and Protestant sides. In the method applied and in practice, historical topographies and historical geographies were heavily dependent upon the knowledge circulation of the *respublica litteraria*, the cosmopolitan model of the knowledge network which, due to the centralization and the institutionalization of the Enlightenment, was to make way for other, more professional social formats of science (scientific and learned societies, academies, universities).⁴² Impacted by this slow transformation of the culture of sci-

38 Bajtay, *Statistica Regni Hungariae*, ff 17.

39 Bajtay, *Statistica Regni Hungariae*, ff 45–48.

40 See Bajtay's statistics in Miskolczy, *Bajtay J. Antal*, 116–19.

41 The interest of Jesuit scholars in empirical knowledge corresponded with their relations with the various tendencies of the Enlightenment. See Rubiés, "The Jesuits and the Enlightenment," 3–4, 28.

42 For the example of the Jesuit astronomer, Maximilian Hell, see Aspaas and Kontler, *Maximilian Hell*, 305–43.

ence, historical topographies kept providing facts and data in a descriptive, empirical style, but without using complicated quantifications or an analytical perspective. This clear methodological limit to topographical literature set the stage for the mid-eighteenth century rise of complex classifications and analytical deductions, frequently advocated by political geographers and statisticians.⁴³

Second, by merging geographical, historical, and topographical perspectives, the Jesuit practice of historical topography proved to provide inspiration in several aspects for other genres of state description.⁴⁴ This effect of Jesuit science was especially visible in the work of political geographers, whose methodological reconsideration reflected the findings of topographical literature. Topographical knowledge, in this undercover way, still played a pivotal role in the statistics of Bajtay, whose geographical component was entirely based on data from Karl Andreas Bel's book.⁴⁵ With the *Compendium Hungaricae geographicum* (1753), the younger Bel aimed to contribute to the most important Pietist-Protestant historical geography project of the age, run and organized by his father, Matthias Bel.⁴⁶ Considering the knowledge exchange between Catholic and Protestant scholars, the following section takes a glance at the other side of the coin, with special regard to how geography emerged and improved from its early days to the High Enlightenment. By highlighting the asynchrony with the Catholic tradition of the history of the state, this section will focus on how the new geography discourse distinguished itself from the subject of history before it became irrevocably equated with the descriptive statistical approach.

The Protestant alternative: political geography in the mid-eighteenth century

The most significant state description project of the Early Enlightenment was successfully run between 1718 and 1749 by the polygraph Pietist minister and historian Matthias Bel. Bel, as a pupil of Hermann Francke, peregrinated to Halle between 1704

43 Bödeker, "On the Origins of the »Statistical« Gaze", 169–95.

44 Jesuit knowledge production had similar results in the other provinces of the Habsburg Monarchy. For the Bohemian political landscape, see Bernard Ferdinand Erdberg's topography *Notitia illustris regni Bohemiae* (1760). For its analysis, see Močičková and Vokurka, *Barokní Čechy pohledem zvnějšku*, 189–208.

45 Mészáros, "Statisztika – oktatás," 99.

46 As for the authorship of the text, it was wrongly identified by István Mészáros: Mészáros, "Statisztika – oktatás," 99. According to Lajos Láng's and Csaba Reisz's findings, Tomka-Szászky was only the editor and publisher, while the text can be attributed to Matthias Bel's son, Karl Andreas Bel. Láng, *A statisztika története*, 40; Reisz, "Magyarország rövid földrajza," 291–318.

and 1707. On returning from the town on the bank of Saale, he immediately embarked on implementing Francke's pedagogical program into the curriculum of the Lutheran lyceum of Pozsony (Preßburg, Bratislava). Beyond the effect of Pietist theology and pedagogy, the literature has recurrently recognized Bel's peregrination as lasting intellectual inspiration for his later state description project, the *Notitia Hungariae novae*.⁴⁷ Despite the obvious connection to Halle, Bel's engagement with adapting German state description earned less notice in contemporary research. As far as his intention is concerned, Bel's early passionate comments expressed deep engagement with patriotic science, marking the misconceptions and prejudices of foreign authors about Hungarians that were perilous to his cause.⁴⁸ On the other hand, Bel's project was not just a *pas seul* but a collective endeavor, encouraged and supported by several contributors. The three most important pillars of his success were firstly, his ownership of historical material (manuscripts, etc.) and well-organized information gathering, secondly, his continuous involvement of other colleagues, pupils, and family members during distinct phases of work and, finally, the official support of the Kaiser and König Charles VI. This way, Bel managed to accumulate the knowledge, cultural credit, and networks needed to make progress with his project.

As for the first condition, in respect of particular data and information, the geographical description of Hungarian counties (*Comitatus Regni Hungariae*, 1702–1705) penned by the Lutheran theologian and minister Christophorus Parschitius was of notable importance in the early phase of Bel's work.⁴⁹ Dedicated to the historical-critical method, Bel came to possess the valuable manuscript in 1718. In due time, he made notes and comments on all historical works he read, but his conclusions drove him further to arrange a plan for a new phase of data collection. As mentioned, this assertion made his project a collective endeavor, with willing co-authors and hired members.⁵⁰ Especially in terms of geographical measures and information gathering, Bel relied on the skills of other colleagues and pupils. The most significant help was probably provided by his assistants, the geographers and cartographers János Matolai and Samuel Mikoviny. Matolai himself visited and described twenty-three counties and the administrative districts of Jász and Kun, while Mikoviny was of great help in creating maps for the *Notitia Hungariae novae*. In managing the

47 On further intellectual initiatives, see Tóth, "Bél Mátyás," 31–37.

48 On the historiographical program of the *Notitia*, see Tóth, "Bél Mátyás," 157–158; Tóth, "Bél Mátyás ismeretlen történeti forráskiadvány-tervezete," 173–92; Tóth, "A magyar történetírás kritikája," 593–617.

49 On Parschitius' career, see Lakatos and Zombori, "Parschitius Kristóf leírása," 221–22. For the archetype of the Lutheran intellectual in Upper Hungary, see Zombori, "Bél Mátyás," 113–20; Tóth, "Az evangélikus polgárság," 96–123. On the work, see Tóth, "Bél Mátyás," 36–37.

50 Tóth, "Bél Mátyás," 65–128.

working phases of the project, it appears that Bel mostly distributed the fieldwork to his assistants, whilst he undertook the critical evaluation and systematization of the findings. Regarding this method, it should be emphasized that, in the final stage, each volume had to pass through the censors' hands before being published. Affected fundamentally by political conditions, Bel's project was given the official support of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI. As a Protestant, this allowed limited access to the Jesuit archives and historical collections. As for other limitations, the Pietist scholar was forbidden to deal with religious matters in his texts.

Bel had completed his first draft by 1718 (*Notitia Hungariae Antiquae, Mediae, Novae in libros tres divisa*), which then he republished five years later in a fundamentally revised form, entitled *Hungariae antiquae et novae Prodromus* (1723). As the *Notitia Hungariae novae historico-geographica* was developing, the project went through several alterations. In building the concept of state description, Bel emphasized historical and geographical aspects, rather than general political description. Consequently, the historical and geographical descriptions were more elaborately explained—in particular in relation to the ancient historical period and the general and special natural historical conditions.⁵¹ For the political description of the counties concerned, Bel would always give the most basic data in a descriptive style, including cultural, moral, and linguistic differences, but he never shared details about the Church and the nobility.⁵² Unlike Bajtay's works, Bel's project sought a balance between the vocabularies of *Gesamtstaat* and composite monarchy. To make his position clear in this matter, significant alterations had to be made to his original plan. Changing political circumstances, on the other hand, imparted flexibility and compatibility to Bel's efforts, laying the ground for the Protestant tradition that made a significant impact on later state description projects in Hungary. Bel's indisputable reputation survived the author, even though (as with many contemporary projects) his publication was imperfect, and after eleven published county descriptions, the remaining thirty-eight remained in manuscript form.⁵³

As for the sociocultural context of Bel's project, this was due to a complex process of cultural socialization that determined the careers of Protestant intellectuals for generations. In geopolitical terms, Bel's activity happened to be located in the

51 Tóth, "Bél Mátyás", 45.

52 Tóth, "Bél Mátyás", 41–53.

53 For the modern critical edition, see: Bel, "Notitia Hungariae novae historico geographica I"; Bel, "Notitia Hungariae novae historico geographica II"; Bel, "Notitia Hungariae novae historico geographica III"; Bel, "Notitia Hungariae novae historico geographica IV"; Bel, "Notitia Hungariae novae historico geographica V"; Bel, "Notitia Hungariae novae historico geographica VI." On the Hungarian translations, see Bél, "Sopron vármegye leírása I"; Bél, "Ung vármegye leírása."

most developed and prosperous region of Upper Hungary (Lower Hungary district), in the neighborhood of the mining cities of Selmecebánya (Banská Štiavnica, Schemnitz), Besztercebánya (Banská Bystrica, Neusohl), and Körmöcbánya (Kremnica, Kremnitz), which generated enormous wealth for the central chamber. In addition, the two capitals (Pozsony and Vienna) were home to a vibrant intellectual climate. Among Bel's students, his close colleague Johann Tomka-Szászky played a major role in bringing Bel's historical project closer to political geography. As a trained geographer, Tomka-Szászky was also the publisher of Bel's posthumous *Compendium* (1753), which covered the geographical parts and maps of the *Notitia*.⁵⁴ After Bel's death, Tomka-Szászky as his successor received the position of rectorate in the Lutheran lyceum of Pozsony. His cultural capital was credited with his peregrination to Jena (from 1717 to 1724) and his engagement with political geography. However, as his later work, the *Conspectus introductionis in notitiam regni Hungariae* (1759) indicates, he remained a devoted improver of historical topography.⁵⁵

Tomka-Szászky's geographical thinking was clearly expressed in a comprehensive work, the *Introductio in orbis hodierni geographiam* (1748), the preface to which was personally written by his former mentor. The *Introductio* not only received significant attention in the contemporary *respublica geographica*, but also included a programmatic statement about the practice of geography. Explained in twenty-two points, Tomka-Szászky distanced his approach from traditional chronology and the type of state description the focus of which was exclusively narrowed down to the specific description of the natural and civil (political) conditions of the provinces. Outlining three potential ways of practicing geography, he identified his work as a 'new geography' that covered all three geographical methods (mathematical, physical, and political), but was interested only in the present circumstances. Making a distinction between geography and historical chronology, the book is divided into two parts.⁵⁶ While the introduction discusses the general concept of geography, the second part places the emphasis on particular state descriptions, presenting them by continent (Europe, Asia, Africa, and America). Moreover, in the appendix, Tomka-Szászky tried to provide additional information about the unknown territories of the Northern Pole, the Eastern continent (Australia), and the Holy Land. As for the intellectual inspiration and the references of the *Introductio*, it compiled the findings of German geographers associated with the geographical renewal of

54 [Tomka-Szászky], "Compendium Hungariae geographicum." The second edition of Szászky's compendia already showed more engagement with the Büschingian method of political geography. See [Tomka-Szászky], *Compendium Hungariae geographicum* (1779), Praefatio, 1–44.

55 Tomka-Szászky, *Conspectus introductionis in notitiam regni Hungariae*, Ad lectorem.

56 Tomka-Szászky, *Introductio in orbis hodierni geographiam*, Ad Studiosos Geographiae.

the 1730s and 1740s, such as Philipp Clüver, Johann David Köhler, Johann Baptist Homann, Christoph(or) Cellarius, Andreas Götz, and Johann Hübner. This way, Tomka-Szászky's treatise joined the circle of authors who claimed the primacy of geographical understanding over the historical approach. From the perspective of the history of science, his view was closely related to the natural historical scope of the Enlightenment, which aimed to comprehend each phenomenon according to its place in nature. In this context, the state as a civil association primarily came under consideration based on its natural capacities, which affected its cultural, financial, administrative, religious, and literary conditions.

Indicating a fundamental shift in the approach of state description, the new political geography anticipated the future rivalry between geographers and statisticians.⁵⁷ Interestingly, this new geography not only challenged but also catalyzed the adaptation of the concept of statistics. As a result, by the 1760s, statistics as a specific, political approach was intermingled with political geography. As a characteristic feature, while these compendia used the concepts of statistics, they neglected the methodological premises of German university lecturers. The conflict between statisticians and geographers entered a new chapter with the *Ratio Educationis* in 1777, when statistical studies were officially implemented into academic and university curricula throughout the Habsburg Monarchy. Despite their dominant position in higher tiers of education, only in the 1790s did the first popular statistical works reach a wider audience. Until then, the distinction between the two emerging fields had earned less notice in the book market, where geographical works had a predominant place.

Habsburg centralization and statistical geographies after the 1750s

The publishing of political geography in the age of statistics may be seen as a profitable business rather than a methodological setback. Eighteenth-century contemporaries looked at the geographer not only as a man of letters, but occasionally also as a statistician. Compared to statistics, geography (with history) was taught as an auxiliary subject in the schools of the Habsburg Monarchy. This status of the subject, however, did not correspond to the heavy demand for it in the book market. Due to its presence in school curricula, the production of geographical knowledge significantly dominated that of the new field of statistics. Intertwined with natural history and economics, geography could easily be separated from new political approaches. This sort of knowledge also had its particular perspective on the state, which it defined according to its physical, fiscal, and cultural resources. Due to the circulation of scientific

57 The same parallelism was spotted by the famous Göttingen statistician August Ludwig Schlözer, who declared statistics to be a sister science (Schwester) of geography; Schlözer, *Theorie der Statistik*, 22–24.

knowledge, information about political geography was included in many outlets and descriptive works of the age, namely in maps, dictionaries, lexicons, travelogues, learned journals, and even in newspapers. The strong demand for political geographies was a consequence of the changing medial framework of the Enlightenment. As the case of Matthias Bel confirms, in the Early Enlightenment the publication of figures and measurements about state affairs required the permission of the organs of censorship. Before the mid-eighteenth century, the policy that secured state and chamber secrecy effectively impeded any public discussion about the veritable stance of the state. The mid-eighteenth century witnessed a notable change in this picture in the form of the popularization of enlightened scientific knowledge. From this time onwards, scholarly reports (including geographical knowledge) tended to become a sought-after type of information. Reflecting on this shift in sentiment, the famous political geographer, Anton Friedrich Büsching remarked the following in the first volume of his famous world geographical series in 1754:

“Not so long ago one had to feel content with a tiny piece of knowledge of the names, the locations and the peculiarities of countries, and their main places: nowadays however one is eager to reveal this sort of knowledge, of the finest assets and natural resources of the state, the number of population, the diligence at manufacturing, the factories, the commerce, the fine arts and sciences, the incomes, the military force, the state of art, and also all the advantages come from the constitution.”⁵⁸

In the Hungarian context, the interest in geography to a large extent corresponded with the increasing interest in counties, which had only a limited effect on reshaping the concept of state description. Therefore, popular publications tended to concentrate on the obvious topics of flora and fauna, paying less attention to classification and methodology. As the case of Tomka-Szászky shows, in the first period the new geography substantially operated through translations to meet the needs of a learned audience. In the second half of the eighteenth century, geographical transfers were strongly determined by two Göttingen prominents, Anton Friedrich Büsching and Johann Christoph Gatterer.⁵⁹ The learned public regarded both scholars as unquestionable authorities, acknowledging their technical skills and scientific expertise. For Hungarian intellectuals, Büsching's name was well-known due to his multiple-volume world geography series (*Büschings Neue Erdbeschreibung*, 1754–1782) and his statistical weekly (*Wöchentliche Nachrichten von neuen Landcharten*,

58 Büsching, *Neue Erdbeschreibung I*, Vorbereitung.

59 For the eighteenth-century education of geography in Europe, see Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment*, 213–33. On the Göttingen School, see Hoffmann, *Anton Friedrich Büsching*, 145–86; Araújo, *Weltgeschichte in Göttingen*, 181–204; Gierl, *Geschichte als präzisierte Wissenschaft*, 57–82.

geographischen, statistischen und historischen Büchern und Schriften, 1773–1787). Diverging at many points from Büsching, Gatterer's reputation as a historian and as a contributor to statistics and geography, however, was much better aligned with the rising popularity of Göttingen scholarship, and his historical textbook: *Einleitung in die synchronistische Universaltheorie* (1771) was used as an official curriculum in numerous universities within the Habsburg Monarchy.

In terms of wider publicity, the prime producers of popular knowledge were journalists and editors of newspapers and thematic journals. Even though the latter were part of an underrated profession, from the 1770s onwards, there was an increased interest in providing geographical knowledge through newspapers and correspondence in Latin, in German, then also in Hungarian.⁶⁰ Karl Gottlieb Windisch, Johann Matthias Korabinsky, Sámuel Decsy, Demeter Görög, András Vályi and Karl Georg Rumi are just a few of those mostly Protestant intellectuals whose publishing activities successfully adapted to the growing interest in modern state description. As editors, Korabinsky and Görög were also known for their cartographic outlets, while Windisch, Decsy, and Görög made significant attempts to implement statistical and geographical knowledge into the popular medium.⁶¹ Beyond processing nationalization and politicization, the Habsburg centralization also affected the statistical-geographical discourse. In geopolitical terms, the centralization policy led to the establishment of a new center for the monarchy in Vienna, where under more liberal censorship, newspaper editors could expect better conditions for their publishing activities. Consequently, centralization and eased media circumstances together impacted the framework in which the statistical gaze first appeared as a supplementary approach to political geography. In the eyes of eighteenth-century contemporaries, however, this distinction between political geography and statistics was rather inconspicuous and at many times less apparent. In what follows, this shift of accent in state description will be demonstrated by the cases of Karl Gottlieb Windisch and Sámuel Decsy.

In Windisch's compendia, the primacy of geography sets limits on statistical accounts. In the preface to his *Politisch-geographisch und historische Beschreibung des Königreichs Hungarn* (1772), Windisch listed the references he relied on in the course of the work. In making distinctions between them, he found Bel's and Pray's

60 On the media historical context, see Kosáry, "Culture and Society in Eighteenth-Century Hungary"; Kókay, "A magyar sajtó története I"; Kókay, "Könyv sajtó és irodalom a felvilágosodás korában." Vaderna, "Language, Media and Politics," 9–17.

61 On the publications of maps, see Reisz, *Magyarország általános térképének elkészítése*, 50–53. Especially for Demeter Görög see Zvara, *Egy tudós hazafi Bécsben*, 52–72, 80–91. For Windisch, see Seidler, "Stolz bin ich auf den Einfall", 67–115; Windisch, "Briefwechsel des Karl Gottlieb Windisch." On Decsy's editorial career, see Bodnár-Király, *Decsy Sámuel*, 25–36, 31–33.

earlier contributions especially useful for the geographical (Chapter 1–4) and historical (Chapter 5–8) parts of his work.⁶² Yet, as he noted, he found Bel's topographical data inaccurate.⁶³ Windisch's concept of state description diverged from that of Bels at two points. First, beyond geographical and historical descriptions, Windisch preferred to share details of the political parts, in particular those relating to constitutional and Church matters.⁶⁴ Second, Windisch attached a new geographical program and maps (the latter with the consent of the Royal Hungarian Council of the Governor General) to the revised and extended edition of his book, entitled the *Geographie des Königreichs Ungarn* (1780), describing his project, using Büsching's term, as an *Erdbeschreibung* (description of Earth).⁶⁵ With the new edition of his geographical text, he aimed to satisfy the taste and interests of his learned audience. In his classification, the author relies on Tomka-Szászky and Büsching and makes a distinction between the geographical, physical, and political parts. Windisch's later publications, however, did not lead to any developments in the concept of geography. The most apparent example of this was the third volume of the *Geographie*, published ten years later (1790), which was to describe the eastern province of Transylvania.⁶⁶

Transcending the topographical tradition of the Early Enlightenment was a project that could have various outcomes. In political geography, the primacy of the natural historical scope made political interpretation secondary to physical and natural circumstances. Political geography in the hands of Hungarian prominents in this way provided a good excuse to neglect the political vocabulary of *Gesamtstaat*.⁶⁷ This was true of Windisch, too, who despite his German mother-tongue had never

62 Windisch, *Geographie des Königreichs Ungarn*, 96–98.

63 Windisch, *Politisch-geographisch und historische Beschreibung*, Vorbericht.

64 Windisch, *Politisch-geographisch und historische Beschreibung*, 15–32.

65 Windisch, *Geographie des Königreichs Ungarn*, Vorbericht.

66 Windisch, "Geographie der Großfürstenthums Siebenbürgen."

67 The implementation of statistics into geographical lexicons faced similar obstacles. As a popular and well-received form of disseminating scientific knowledge, geographical lexicons proved to be less effective in promoting the conceptual framework of statistics and the idea of *Gesamtstaat*. For the case of Johann Matthias Korabinsky, see his explanation in his geographical-historical production lexicon of Hungary, in which he declared that his aim was to create a perfect atlas (*Ideal Atlas*), inspired by the maps of Samuel Mikoviny and Andreas Erich Filtsch. See Korabinsky, *Geographisch-Historisches und Produkten Lexikon*, Vorbericht. Similarly, András Vályi also took inspiration for his three-volume translation from Korabinsky's lexicon, which due to the support of local administration 'could not bring statistical gaze into the historical-geographical descriptions. See Vályi, *Magyar Országának leírása I*, Előbeszéd. Distancing himself from topographical tradition, however, a new approach was present in Karl Georg Rumi's geographical-statistical dictionary of Austrian Empire that—with *Gesamtstaat* in its center—aimed to describe the geographical-political framework of the Habsburg lands. Rumi also used the findings of Korabinsky and Vályi, but his inspiration was much more the new generation of German geographers (Mannert, Ehrmann, Winkopp). See Rumi, *Geographisch-statistisches Wörterbuch*, III–IV.

questioned the legitimacy of the Hungarian composite monarchy. While Windisch favored geographical approach to political description, the case was absolutely different with Sámuel Decsy, for whom the geographical tradition became subordinated to the statistical gaze. Despite his engagement with statistics, however, the Calvinist doctor and philosopher never composed a special description about either Hungary or the Habsburg Monarchy. Decsy's preoccupation with geographical tradition was underlined by his personal connection to Büsching. After studying at the Reformed College of Sárospatak and the Lutheran Lyceum of Pozsony, Decsy became acquainted with Büsching during his peregrination to Frankfurt an der Oder and to Utrecht (1771–1779/1782?), also spending time in Berlin.⁶⁸

Except for the two books on the Hungarian language (1790) and the history of the Holy Crown of Hungary (1792), Decsy dedicated much of his work to the statistical approach, albeit he never explicated his thoughts about the respective method.⁶⁹ In a footnote in his *Pannóniai Fénix* [Pannonian Fenix], he made a remark on statistics, labelling it an academic “science about the internal and external circumstances of European empires and republics” which had been evolved and improved by Nicolaus H. Gundling, Gottfried Achenwall, Johann Jakob Schmauß and Eobald Totzen throughout the eighteenth century.⁷⁰ With his first statistical work *Osmanographia* [Ottomanography] (1788–1789), he intended to join the discussion about the war with the Ottoman Empire. The statistics of the Ottoman Empire (*Osmanographia*) was divided into three volumes, devoted to the topics of natural-moral and civic-military circumstances, and the military history of Hungarian-Turkish wars. The first and second volumes specified physical geography, giving insights into Turkish cities, strongholds, climate, diseases, natural products, commerce, population, typical garments, religion, languages, genders, customs, political and military administration, as well as the legal, economic, and financial circumstances.⁷¹ Compared to Windisch's approach, in *Osmanographia* the author concentrated on the foremost characteristics of the state, describing the Ottoman Empire in ways akin to the received Enlightenment narrative as a decaying despotic regime. As for its approach, Decsy's compendium was a special or particular description

68 Decsy always spoke of Büsching's contributions in high regard. On the death of the German scholar, he published a necrologue in his newspaper. See *Magyar Kurír*, 414–15.

69 On Decsy's publications, see Bodnár-Király, *Koronaeszmé és történelem*, 170–91; Bodnár-Király, *Szent Korona és nemzeti karakter*, 209–19; Bodnár-Király, *Decsy Sámuel és a Pannóniai Fénix*, 17–43; Bodnár-Király, *Kompiláció és rendszerezés*, 473–88. On *Pannonian Phoenix*, see Kornis, *A magyar művelődés eszményei I*, 113–125. On the Holy Crown of Hungary, see Tóth, *Szent István, Szent Korona, államalapítás*, 157–66.

70 Decsy, *Pannóniai Fénix*, 219–20.

71 Decsy, *Osmanographia I*, 180–338, 339–96; Decsy, *Osmanographia II*; Decsy, “*Osmanographia III*.”

that, unlike those of general statistics, omitted a discussion of the European state system.

Decsy's other publications presented statistical knowledge in a more popular format. From this perspective, especially notable was his short-lived but ambitious plan for an almanac series, only published between 1794 and 1796. To disseminate scientific knowledge, Decsy—as the editor of the weekly *Magyar Kurír* [Hungarian Courier]—attempted to publish excerpts on European statistics in his almanac, *Magyar Almanak* [Hungarian Almanac]. After the programmatic statement on the general principles of the publication (1794), however, because of the changing political circumstances (French wars and Jacobine trials), he had to make do with only fragments on the geography of Polynesia (1795), and on the constitution of the Batavian Republic (1796).⁷² The author's last contribution to statistics applied the approach that Schlözer later labelled as 'old statistics' (*Alte Statistik*).⁷³ Diverging from the descriptive style of statistics, in *Egyiptom ország rövid históriája* [The Brief History of Egypt] the author presents a book on the history of the state, revealing the initiatives and dynamics that determined the history of ancient Egypt; i.e., the decisive physical, cultural, and political circumstances that affected commerce, civic administration, and military strength. Unlike most statisticians, Decsy took Egypt as the cradle of sciences and arts and aimed to trace its decline after its once elevated status among ancient civilizations.⁷⁴ In this book, Decsy's understanding of statistics is closely connected to the High Enlightenment moral sentiment that framed the improvement of vernacular language and the preservation of national character as part and parcel of scientific patriotism. As a distinct characteristic, this tradition however involved continuity between geographical and historical knowledge, even if, on the other hand, it was even then applying the modern statistical gaze with special regard to the vocabulary of *Gesamtstaat*.

Conclusion

Emphasizing the prehistory of statistics, eighteenth-century synergies of the state description literature have been discussed—in particular its connection to history and geography. Considering it an entangled discourse, the paper has intended to trace the main trends that laid the ground for the state description of the Enlightenment. In line with these trends, three main intellectual initiatives are identified. The first is

72 Decsy, *Magyar Almanak MDCCXCIV-ik esztendőre*, 33–172; Decsy, *Magyar Almanák MDCCXCV-dik esztendőre*, iii–cxliv; Decsy, *Magyar Almanak MDCCXCVI-ik esztendőre*, ii–lviii; On the works, see Bodnár-Király, *Decsy Sámuel*, 32.

73 Schlözer, *Theorie der Statistik*, 86–87.

74 Decsy, *Egyiptom ország rövid históriája*, v–vi.

that the rise of the historical topographies on the Catholic side involved a significant attempt to reframe the relevant political, historical, and geographical knowledge of the old kingdom in the first half of the eighteenth century. The Catholic tradition of state description played an essential role in disseminating scientific knowledge about the political and administrative borders of the country, while it also paved the way for the genre of the history of the state. The second intellectual stimulus evolved through Protestant knowledge transfers from the mid-century onwards, and in the given period remained closely connected to the purpose of Practical Enlightenment, aiming to fashion and popularize geographical knowledge to a wider reading public. Finally, the third trend has been identified with the implementation of statistical studies, which affected mainly the middle and high levels of education and, from the 1770s onwards, effaced the predominant position of historical topographies and political geographies.

Challenging the parochial interpretation of historiography, the paper views the history of statistics as an entangled process which had its own limitations. As a first argument, the essay proposes the concept of state description (*Staatsbeschreibung, notitia rerumpublicarum*) to help discern the distinct trends and initiatives in their conjunction. The concept of state description, thus, was used not only as an analytical category but was also taken as an analogy for the contemporary practice of knowledge production. In order to exceed the shortcomings of received interpretations of the history-of-science literature, the second argument deals with the spatial implication of Enlightenment political knowledge. In order to break with the naive epistemology that statistics ‘came, saw, and won,’ it is argued that the empirical knowledge production about state affairs was competitive long before the statistical gaze appeared on the intellectual horizon of the Habsburg Monarchy. Taking this implication seriously, it is also asserted that, given the plurality in the state description literature, more attention should be paid to other rival knowledge fields in the history of descriptive statistics. Finally, the conflicted vocabularies of statehood in the state description literature are noted. Called “state description without state” in the title of this paper, the former indicated that the production of state description knowledge for the larger part of the eighteenth century was heavily influenced by these different visions of the state. In conceptual terms, the vocabulary of composite monarchy and the heritage of dualistic statehood represented a significant obstacle to adopting the concept of *Gesamtstaat* to Hungarian political culture. This old vision, however, as new scientific interpretations emerged, intellectually proved to be less and less resistant to the new imperial knowledge of statistics, to the integration policy of Habsburg state-building, and to the idea of *Gesamtstaat*.

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