

# The Estates of General Paul Wesselényi of Hodod in Sălaj Region (?–1694)

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**T**HROUGHOUT THE history of the Transylvanian Principality there had been very few noblemen who owned considerable estates not only in Transylvania but in the Kingdom of Hungary, and who also enjoyed political authority in both countries. Paul Wesselényi, an important figure of the anti-Habsburg (Kuruts) rebellion, was one of them. Due to this outstanding political influence he played an important role in the anti-Habsburg resistance movement, which started in the 1660s in the Kingdom of Hungary and spread to the Transylvanian Principality as well.<sup>1</sup>

Paul Wesselényi's predecessors and his close relatives had held important positions in both the Kingdom of Hungary and Transylvania. The founder of the family's branch of Hodod (Hadad) was Francis Wesselényi the Elder. Due to his considerable estate acquisitions and to his career he secured the rise of his family. Stephen Báthory, prince of Transylvania and king of Poland, rewarded his councilor and treasurer, Francis Wesselényi, with numerous estates in both Transylvania and Poland.

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Francis gained possession of his Transylvanian estates, i.e. the domain belonging to the *oppida* Hodod and Jibou (Zsibó), in the year 1584. Francis' uncle, Nicolas had been the founder of the family's branch of Geaca (Gyeke), and also held the important position of *magister prothonotarius* of Transylvania until his death in 1584. The abovementioned Francis Wesselényi's son Stephen, the *comes* of Middle Solnoc county, succeeded in securing an even higher position: he became a member of the Council of the Transylvanian Principality. However, this important administrative position was not bestowed upon any other future member of the family after his son, Francis Junior, reached the peak of his political career (a countship and the position of palatine) in the Kingdom of Hungary, not in Transylvania. The main figure of this paper, Paul Wesselényi, had slightly less influential forbearers, his grandfather Paul (son of Francis the Elder) having been the *comes* of Middle Solnoc and treasurer of the principality.<sup>2</sup>

When Paul's father, Stephen Wesselényi, passed away in 1656, the three children were still under age. Consequently, their inheritance was managed by the widow, Anne Lónyai, who was the legal guardian of the children. Of the three children (Sigismund, Paul and Barbara), only Paul reached adulthood.<sup>3</sup> Paul's mother was the daughter of Sigismund Lónyai, the *comes* of Crasna (Kraszna) and Bereg counties, Prince Gabriel Bethlen's and Prince George Rákóczi I's trusted man, who was granted the title of baron in 1627. He left a considerable fortune to his daughter, both in Transylvania and in the Kingdom of Hungary. She married Stephen Wesselényi in the year 1642. After her husband passed away in 1659, Anne Lónyai remarried John Kemény, who was appointed prince of Transylvania in 1661. This marriage lasted until the year 1662 when she was again widowed. The second marriage had obviously increased the political authority and prestige of both Anne Lónyai and her family.<sup>4</sup>

Paul Wesselényi also made a good match, marrying Susanna Béldi in the year 1672, the daughter of councilor (1663–1678) Paul Béldi, the most influential figure of the Transylvanian political stage at the time. Paul Béldi held numerous positions: supreme judge of Trei Scaune (Háromszék) Szekler seat (starting with the year 1655), treasurer for a short period, *comes* of Inner Solnoc county (from 1662) and the principality's chief general (1663–1676).<sup>5</sup>

Despite the fact that Paul Wesselényi was one of the great aristocrats of the principality, he did not hold any political positions in Transylvania. His role in state politics had been limited to the position of general in the anti-Habsburg upheaval, which took place outside the boundaries of the country. Between 1673 and 1680 Paul Wesselényi was a leading figure of the rebellion. His actions were thoroughly presented by Zsolt Trócsányi, and for this reason a more detailed account on this subject will not be presented here.<sup>6</sup> His joining the rebellion is not at all surprising, since he enjoyed obvious popularity amongst the organizers of

the rebellion after the Wesselényi plot had been revealed in 1670. It had been led by and named after his father's cousin, the palatine of the Kingdom of Hungary. Furthermore, he possessed a considerable fortune and authority in Transylvania. After the imperial authorities seized the estates of his mother, Anne Lónyai, in the Kingdom of Hungary for high treason in 1670, he was urged to actively engage in the anti-Habsburg movements.<sup>7</sup>

Most of Paul Wesselényi's Transylvanian estates were situated in Sălaj region (Crasna and Middle Solnoc counties). Among these there was the domain inherited from his father, Stephen Wesselényi, the estates belonging to the *oppida* of Hodod and Jibou. He also inherited certain estates from his grandmother, Susanna Gyulaffy, and after 1690 some from his mother, also in Sălaj region. Still, we know very little about the latter estates. Paul had properties in other regions, too: e.g. in Bihor (Bihar), Turda (Torda) and Cluj (Kolozs) counties; in the Kingdom of Hungary, all bequeathed to him by his mother. These, however, will not be dealt with in this paper.

The domain inherited from his father comprised the following estates: the *oppida* (market towns) of Hodod and Jibou, 17 whole estates and 7 parts of estates. The whole estates belonging to Hodod were Ulciug (Völcsök), Ser (Szér), Bogdand (Bogdánd), Nadișu Hododului (Nádasd), Archid (Erked), Corund (Korond), Apáca (a village that later perished), Motiș (Mutos), and the parts of the estates were Coșeiu (Kusaly), Dioșod (Diósad), Mocirla (Mocsolya), Noțiș (Nagyszeg), Jac (Zsákfalva), Someș-Uileac (Szamosújlak). The whole estates belonging to Jibou were: Rona (Róna), Turbuța (Turbóca), Ciglean (Csiglén), Creaca (Karika), Prodănești (Prodánfalva), Mirșid (Nyírsid), Varasitó (a village that later perished as well), Șoimuș (Nagysolymos), Șoimuș (Kissolymos), and there was also a part of an estate in Someș-Odorhei (Udvarhely).<sup>8</sup> The center of the domain and the residence of Paul Wesselényi was Hodod.

Paul's paternal inheritance had remained undivided since 1584. Family founder Francis Wesselényi's estates in Transylvania and Poland had been passed on to his sons, Stephen the Elder and Paul the Elder.<sup>9</sup> On 5 September 1614, they made an agreement before the *loca credibilia* in Oradea (Várad) concerning the division of the abovementioned estates.<sup>10</sup> The lands in Poland were in the possession of Stephen the Elder, and those in Sălaj were handed down to Paul the Elder, the grandfather of the general, on condition that the estates should not end up in foreign hands. Furthermore, if the family were to lose one of the domains, the remaining properties were to be divided.

This agreement had been confirmed in Krakow in the year 1643 by the sons of the abovementioned Stephen the Elder and Paul the Elder, Francis (who moved to the Kingdom of Hungary and later became palatine), and Stephen (who remained in Transylvania).<sup>11</sup> The latter agreed that their descendants

would jointly inherit the estates, but if they did not wish to do so, they would also have the right to divide them. This agreement was later renewed by their sons Ladislaus (Francis' son) and Paul, the general (Stephen's son), in the year 1664. However, in the year 1669 Paul requested from his second cousin Ladislaus the division of the family estate.<sup>12</sup> As a result of this division the domain of Hodod became the property of the family's Transylvanian branch and the other branch living in the Kingdom of Hungary was left with the estates in Poland.

Although the aforementioned agreements forbade the pledge and alienation of the estates, the fragmentary written sources reveal that during the 17<sup>th</sup> century the family could not but pledge them from time to time, as was the case of the partial holding in Someş-Uileac in 1642. From 1688 we have data about the redemption of the entire estates of Mirşid and Varasító. But there are also examples of the enlargement of an estate: in 1683 Bicz (Bikáca) was referred to as a Wesselényi estate pertaining to Hodod.<sup>13</sup>

Paul Wesselényi took possession of his paternal inheritance in the year 1668.<sup>14</sup> A deed dated 11 July 1669 states that his mother had passed on to her son, Paul, the estates belonging to Hodod and Jibou in the year 1668, but the 1669 diploma acknowledging the transfer of the estates provided that that his mother would be allowed to take back any area of the estates that was worth 12,000 forints, especially those of Jibou and Corund, at any time. She also stipulated that her son should not alienate the estates. Anne Lónyai had the right to claim the aforementioned properties worth 12,000 forints because her husband, Stephen Wesselényi, had redeemed the pledged *oppidum* of Jibou for 10,000 forints and the village of Corund for 2,000 forints from her money.<sup>15</sup> Concerning Paul Wesselényi's paternal inheritance, it also turns out that in 1668 Paul objected against his mother's actions over his estates that she had taken without his consent.<sup>16</sup>

His participation in the anti-Habsburg rebellion consumed his financial reserves and he was forced to resort to his wife's parental inheritance. In such cases, namely, when the husband had spent his wife's inheritance, according to the customs of the age, the husband pledged his property to his wife for the needed sum of money. This happened in the case of Paul Wesselényi as well. According to a document dated 19 September 1677, he pledged his estates of Hodod and Jibou to his wife, Susanna Béldi, for 10,000 forints for life.<sup>17</sup> The amount of the pledge also shows that his wealth had increased considerably due to his wife's inheritance.

Paul Wesselényi's estates had also increased thanks to his grandmother, Susanna Gyulaffy, who remarried<sup>18</sup> following the death in 1622 of her first husband, treasurer Paul Wesselényi.<sup>19</sup> Susanna Gyulaffy outlived her son, Stephen Wesselényi who died in 1656, as already indicated. According to her last will and testament drawn up in Bratislava in 1644, she left all her Transylvanian estates to her grandson, Paul Wesselényi. Due to the fact that only a later fragmen-

tary transcript of her testament survived, there is no precise list of these estates.<sup>20</sup> However, a later letter of hypothecation reveals that amongst the possessions inherited from Susanna Gyulaffy there were certain properties in Middle Solnoc county, such as a deserted manor house in Cehu Silvaniei (Szilágycseh) and the partial estates in Cehu Silvaniei, Horoatu Cehului (Oláhhorvát), Arduzel (Ardó), Benesat (Benedekfalva), and Noțig (Nagyszeg).<sup>21</sup>

Paul's properties had increased in number as a result of the inheritance of his mother, Anne Lónyai. Her father, Sigismund, had inherited his Transylvanian estates mostly from his mother, Catherine Szaniszlófi Báthori. In the year 1641, Sigismund Lónyai requested the division of his mother's inheritance between him and his two sisters<sup>22</sup> and handed down a part of these properties, i.e. the ones in Middle Solnoc, Crasna and Turda counties, to her three daughters. In 1642 Sigismund had secured a princely warrant concerning the division of his estates amongst his daughters.<sup>23</sup> However, later data lead to the conclusion that the abovementioned division did not take place until Sigismund's death in 1653. Moreover, other difficulties could have occurred regarding the division of the inheritance, because in December 1653 the three daughters of Sigismund requested the re-division of the estates, namely the separation of Sigismund's properties from those of one his sisters in Crasna and Middle Solnoc counties.<sup>24</sup>

After Sigismund Lónyai's death, his daughters and sons-in-law inherited not only his Transylvanian estates but also those in the Kingdom of Hungary, such as the numerous properties situated in Borsod, Szabolcs, Zemplén, Bereg, Szatmár, Nógrád, Heves, and Abaúj counties. A few years later the elder sister, Susanna, Stephen Bocskai's wife, died and her paternal inheritance from Sätmar (Szatmár) county was divided between Anne and Margaret Lónyai in the year 1656.<sup>25</sup> The division had to be carried out separately in all counties and this is why the deed does not mention the division of the other partial estates in other counties. Yet, it is likely that division of their late sister's estates in Sälaj took place at the same time and half thus became Anne Lónyai's property.

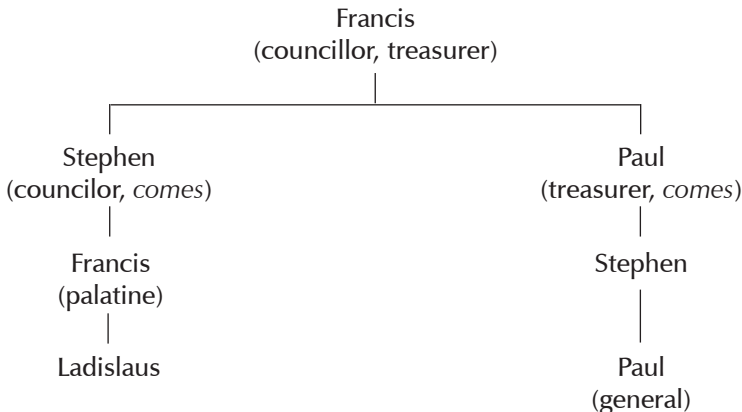
However, the possessions in Crasna and Middle Solnoc counties resulting from Anne Lónyai's paternal inheritance had only partially passed on to Paul. This is due to the fact that Anne Lónyai lost the abovementioned possessions inherited from Catherine Szaniszlófi Báthori in the lawsuit brought by Prince John Kemény's heirs. Since Anne Lónay had bailed out her future husband John Kemény from Tartar captivity (1657–1659) with money from her own inheritance, the husband pledged his own domains, Chieșd (Kövesd) and Luncani (Gerend) to his wife, for 12,000 and 10,000 forints respectively.<sup>26</sup> But in 1683 John Kemény's descendant won these estates back from Anne Lónay through a legal procedure, on account of negligent tenure and because a considerable part had been pawned by Anne. When taking back the estates in Chieșd in 1683, they

also took those estates that constituted Anne Lónyai's paternal inheritance in order to reimburse the Kemény family for their pledged properties in Chieşd.<sup>27</sup>

The fragmentary data lead to the conclusion that, after having lost the suit against the Kemény heirs,<sup>28</sup> Paul Wesselényi inherited only a few estates in Crasna and Middle Solnoc counties from his mother after her death in 1690. Among these partial estates we can list the parts of estates of Pericei (Perecsen), Dobra (Derzsida), Cehei (Somlyócsehi), Bădăcin (Badacsony), Nuşfalău (Nagyfalu), Dumuşlău (Domoszló) and Giurtelecu Şimleului (Győrtelek).<sup>29</sup>

ACCORDING TO the sources it seems that Paul did not make estate acquisitions of his own, all his wealth resulting from inheritance. The main part of his Transylvanian estates was located in Sălaj region. The existing sources mention only the names of Paul's estates and, because of the fragmentary nature of the remaining data, the accurate number of the serfs tenancing his estates cannot be determined. Therefore it would be very difficult to rank him in terms of wealth and determine his position amongst the noblemen of Transylvania. An approximately accurate answer to this question could be given only after examining indirect information on the matter. On the one hand, two of his predecessors had been *comites* of Middle Solnoc county, hence indicating that, given their domain of Hodod, for generations the Wesselényi family was one of the most influential and prestigious families in the region. On the other hand, the significant wealth of the family is also highlighted by the fact that in the year 1687 Paul Wesselényi was regarded as the most important figure amongst the Transylvanian peers, although he did not hold any important office in the principality (even after having resigned from the position of general and retired to his Transylvanian domain), was neither a *comes* nor a councillor.<sup>30</sup>

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## Notes

1. Ștefan Pascu, *A History of Transylvania* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982), passim; Béla Köpeczi, general ed., *History of Transylvania* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), vol. 2, passim: <http://mek.oszk.hu/03400/03407/html/164.html>.
2. Romanian National Archives, Cluj County Branch, the family archive of the Wesselényis of Jibou (Coll. no. 250), nos. 1–7; the family archive of the Wesselényis of Hodod (Coll. no. 460), no. 22; Tamás Fejér, Etelka Rácz, and Anikó Szász, eds., *Az erdélyi fejedelmek Királyi Könyvei (The Libri regii of the Transylvanian princes)*, vol. 1 (1569–1602), *Báthory Zsigmond Királyi Könyvei 1582–1602 (The Libri regii of Sigismund Báthory 1582–1602)*, Erdélyi Történelmi Adatok, no. VII/3 (Cluj-Napoca: Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, 2005; hereafter cited as *Királyi Könyvek*, I/3), nos. 119, 584, 707, 708, 1184, 1251; Zsolt Bogdándi and Emőke Gálfi, eds., *Az erdélyi káptalan jegyzőkönyvei 1222–1599* (Cluj-Napoca: Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, 2006), 212, 227, 228, 247, 355; Tamás Fejér, “Editing and Publishing Historical Sources in the Research Institute of the Transylvanian Museum Society,” in *Institutional Structures and Elites in Sălaj Region and in Transylvania in the 14<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, ed. András W. Kovács, *Transylvanian Review* 21, Supplement no. 2 (2012): 18; Zsolt Trócsányi, *Erdély központi kormányzata 1540–1690*, A Magyar Országos Levéltár kiadványai III: Hatóság és hivataltörténet, no. 6 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980), 36.
3. 17 August 1656. The family archive of the Wesselényis of Jibou, no. 7. (The documents from the boxes are unnumbered and set in chronological order. Thus the documents can be found based on the dates.)
4. The family archive of the Wesselényis of Jibou, nos. 4–6.
5. Trócsányi, *Erdély központi kormányzat*, 26, 79; id., *Téleki Mihály: Erdély és a kurucmozgalom 1690-ig* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1972), 119, 175–181, 186, 205–223; Farkas Deák, *Uzoni Béli Pál (1621–1679)*, Magyar Történelmi Életrajzok (Budapest: Franklin Társulat, 1887), passim.
6. Trócsányi, *Téleki Mihály*, passim.
7. István Wesselényi, *Sanyarú világ: Napló, 1703–1708*, 2 vols., eds. András Magyarai and Lajos Demény (Bucharest: Kriterion, 1983–1985), 9–14; Trócsányi, *Téleki Mihály*, 90.
8. 6 March 1584. The family archive of the Wesselényis of Jibou, no. 1.
9. *Királyi Könyvek*, I/3: 1184.
10. The family archive of the Wesselényis of Jibou, no. 3. This document issued in Oradea was preceded by another one written in Hungarian, dated 11 March 1614 and issued in Krakow containing an agreement between Stephen and Paul. The family archive of the Wesselényis of Jibou, no. 3; Farkas Deák, *A Wesselényi család őseiről*, *Értekezések a történelmi tudományok köréből*, no. VII/8 (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1878), 36–39.
11. 27 March 1643. The family archive of the Wesselényis of Jibou, no. 6.
12. 30 July 1669. The family archive of the Wesselényis of Jibou, no. 8.
13. 11 April 1642. The family archive of the Wesselényis of Jibou, no. 6; 19 July 1683. The family archive of the Wesselényis of Jibou, no. 9; 6 August 1688. The family archive of the Wesselényis of Jibou, no. 10.

14. This was most likely the year when he turned 24. There are different opinions regarding his date of birth, however, in our view the most likely date would be the year 1644 (Trócsányi, *Teleki Mihály*, 16, 129, 152).
15. National Archives of Hungary (Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára), the Archives of the convent at Cluj-Mănăştur, Cista comitatum (F 17), Szolnok Mediocris, fasc. L, nos. 1, 5.
16. 11 October 1668. The family archive of the Wesselényis of Jibou, no. 8.
17. Transcript in a document dated 19 April 1690. The family archive of the Wesselényis of Jibou, no. 9.
18. 1 April 1654. The family archive of the Wesselényis of Jibou, no. 7.
19. On 12 January 1622, he appears in the document as *comes* of Middle Solnoc county, but by October 12 of the same year he had already passed away. The family archive of the Wesselényis of Jibou, no. 4.
20. Only a fragment of the will dated 10 March 1664 survived (in a transcript issued by the chapter of Bratislava in 1700). The family archive of the Wesselényis of Jibou, no. 8.
21. 26 December 1689. The family archive of the Wesselényis of Jibou, no. 10.
22. The parts of estates inherited by Sigismund: in Crasna county: parts of two *oppida*, and parts of seven estates; in Middle Solnoc county: parts of eight estates; in Turda county: parts of an *oppidum* and parts of six estates; in Sătmar county: parts of 16 estates; in Bihor county: parts of two estates. The family archive of the Wesselényis of Jibou, no. 6; Péter Levente, “Adalékok az aranyosmeggyesi kastély XVII. századi történetéhez,” in *Emlékkönyv Kiss András születésének nyolcvanadik évfordulójára*, eds. Sándor Pál-Antal, Gábor Sipos, András W. Kovács, and Rudolf Wolf (Cluj-Napoca: Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, 2003), 544–545.
23. 5 August 1642. The family archive of the Wesselényis of Jibou, no. 6.
24. The family archive of the Wesselényis of Jibou, no. 7.
25. *Ibid.*
26. A warrant dated 19 March 1664 proves that the domain of Luncani was given to Anne Lónyai. The family archive of the Wesselényis of Jibou, no. 8. The documents of the lawsuit and Anne Lónyai’s letter of complaint addressed to the Council of the principality in 1683. The family archive of the Wesselényis of Jibou, no. 9; Mária Ivanics, “Enslavement in the Crimean Khanate,” in *Ransom Slavery along the Ottoman Borders (Early fifteenth–Early Eighteenth Centuries)*, The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage: Politics, Society and Economy, vol. 37, eds. Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2007), 211.
27. 21 July 1683. The family archive of the Wesselényis of Jibou, no. 9.
28. The verdict of the suit had been included in the decree of the National Assembly held in March 1684: the family archive of the Wesselényis of Jibou, no. 9; Sándor Szilágyi, ed., *Monumenta Comititalia Regni Transylvaniae. Erdélyi Országgyűlési Emlékek 1540–1699*, 21 vols., Monumenta Hungariae Historica. Magyar Történelmi Emlékek, no. 3 (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1875–1898), vol. 18: 217.
29. 21 July 1683. The family archive of the Wesselényis of Jibou, no. 9.
30. Trócsányi, *Központi kormányzat*, 152.



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The Wesselényis were one of the aristocratic families which had large estates both in Transylvania and the Kingdom of Hungary, and therefore exerted significant political influence in both countries. Due to this outstanding political influence, Paul Wesselényi gained the position of general (1673–1680) in the anti-Habsburg (Kuruts) resistance movement started in the 1660s. Despite the fact that Paul Wesselényi was one of the great aristocrats in the principality, he did not hold any other political office in Transylvania. Most of Paul Wesselényi's Transylvanian estates were situated in Sălaj region (Crasna and Middle Solnoc counties). According to the sources, Paul did not make any estate acquisitions of his own, all his wealth resulting from inheritance. Amongst these properties there was the domain inherited from his father, Stephen Wesselényi (the estates belonging to the *oppida* of Hodod and Jibou).

**Keywords**

Wesselényi, family history, aristocracy, estate, anti-Habsburg rebellion, inheritance