

**Jukić, Zita (ed.): „Öszve eskettettek ilyen egyezkedés mellett...” Drávaszögi és szlavóniai református ígéretlevelek és házassági egyezségek. [“Married Under the Following Agreement...” Calvinist Promissory Letters and Marriage Contracts from Drávaszög and Slavonia].**

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## BOOK REVIEW

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Founded in 2011, the Tárkány Szücs Ernő Legal Cultural Historical and Legal Ethnographic Research Group has been one of the most significant and productive interdisciplinary endeavors in Hungarian ethnography in the past 10 years. Besides its many projects, events, and publications, it is continuously expanding its own series (Jogi Kultúrtörténeti, Jogi Néprajzi Kiskönyvtár 9 — Pocket Library of Legal Cultural History and Legal Ethnography), which already runs to 10 volumes. The series includes stand-alone monographs, conference proceedings, volumes of studies, as well as source publications. The volume reviewed here belongs to this last category. It is a fine example of cross-border cooperation, not only among disciplines

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but also between institutions and researchers. The promissory letters and marriage agreements that make up the volume were researched and edited by Zita Jukić, who works at the Osijek city archives and chairs the Zrínyi Hungarian Cultural Society, while colleagues from the Tárkány Szücs Research Group have also contributed to the publication in the form of an introductory study of around 50 pages written by *Szabina Bognár*, *Mária Homoki-Nagy*, and *Teodóra Janka Nagy*. The volume was copyedited by Péter Dominkovits.

During her research on registers from settlements in Drávaszög (Baranja) and Slavonia in the 18th and 19th centuries, Zita Jukić noted that some of the marriage entries were associated with separate contracts (promissory letters and marriage agreements). She collected these documents from seven settlements situated in the regions of Slavonia and Drávaszög, which were formerly populated by Hungarians and now belong to Croatia — Rétfalu/Ritfala/Rietdorf, Karancs/Karanac (now part of Hercegszöllős/Kneževi Vinogradi), Kopács/Kopačevo, Kórógy/Korođ, Sepse/Kotlina, Szentlászló/Laslovo, and Várdaróc/Vardarac. These settlements once had a predominantly Calvinist population, and the documents were entered into the parish registers by their pastors. A total of 96 sources are reproduced in the volume in the form of photocopies and verbatim transcriptions.

The published material is fascinating even for lay readers due to its local historical references and archaic language. The corpus, which is clearly delimited in terms of area but significantly more wide-ranging with respect to date (1789–1870), has also given the authors an opportunity to explore an important area that lies at the border between ethnography and legal history — the history of research into common-law marriage contracts, promissory letters, morning gift agreements, and other prenuptial agreements. This topic has been present since the very beginnings of institutionalized ethnography within the necessarily interdisciplinary framework of legal folklore research. Sources have been published in the journal *Ethnographia* since the 1890s; the ethnographer Károly Tagányi compiled a questionnaire on this topic; while significant findings also emerged between the two world wars. In this context, particular mention should be made of the research group organized around István Györfly, the most important members of which were Edit Fél, György Bónis, Ákos Szendrey, and László Papp. In the second half of the 20th century, advances were made in the field of source exploration and knowledge of marriage-related legal customs primarily thanks to the work of Ernő Tárkány Szücs and László Mándoki. From the introductory study, it is clear that the southern parts of the Hungarian language area are prominently represented in terms of research on morning gift agreements — documents from Kopács, a village that also features in the present volume, have earlier been published by Károly Lábadi, for example. After presenting the history of the research, the volume contains a brief description of the characteristics of the region and the respective settlements that are of relevance to the published sources. The authors then provide a detailed analysis of the published source material. Firstly, they introduce the historical significance of terms such as *hitbér*, *móring*, marriage contract, and other related concepts, placing the published corpus within this conceptual framework. The closely related terms *hitbér* (*dos*, or “wedding gift”) and *móring* (“morning gift”, derived from the German word *Morgengabe*) refer to the property promised by the groom to the bride and her family after the wedding, thus the *móring* or promissory letter included the amount due and the payment details. The marriage contract (*contractus matrimonialis*) was a more complex document that covered many other aspects of marriage. While only a small proportion of the documents published in the volume can be described as “purely” *móring* letters, the majority — typically drawn up in cases in which



one or both parties were widowed — can be classified as marriage contracts. Between these two types of document, the authors identify various provisional and unique cases, indicating that such documents evolved in the course of practice and represent a group of sources characterized by a bottom-up process of codification. One key element of these contracts, for example, is the settling of questions related to the property and inheritance of children from previous marriages. By analyzing certain clauses in these contracts, the authors have established the existence of various legal customs, some of which can be traced back to Werbőczy's *Tripartitum* (1517). The corpus also contains examples of rare cases, such as one marriage contract that determined the fate of a half-orphaned daughter who was born sick (and thus unsuitable for marriage). A particularly fascinating part of the analysis is where the authors identify the authentic content of certain contracts as the so-called purchase of a son-in-law, meaning that the family of a widow with children essentially “bought a new husband” for her. The published documents also contain important data related to the development of widows' rights and inheritance laws through the recording of local legal customs.

Researched by Zita Jukić and analyzed by Szabina Bognár, Mária Homoki-Nagy, and Janka Teodóra Nagy, the collection of sources provides a fascinating insight into the family relationships and living conditions of serfs and peasants in the 18th and 19th centuries. For researchers of legal and historical ethnography and the history of law, the collection offers a rich collection of examples, the significance of which goes beyond those aspects highlighted in the introductory study.

