

Corvée, Maps and Contracts: Agricultural Policy and the Rise of the Modern State in Hungary During the Nineteenth Century

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Introduction

The nineteenth century was a curious place. There were rivers of steel making their way across the landscape, funny men in trousers were meticulously measuring the earth, and threshing machines were parading about eating people. Things were appearing and disappearing: feudalism was sentenced to death, and a new state was being manufactured. The abandonment of feudal relations of servility entailed several major redefinitions of property: the properties of objects, such as land, the properties of people, most explicitly that of serfs, and the properties of political office, that is, the state. The transformation of the landscape—physical, social, economic—was quite remarkable.

In the following account, I wish to chronicle the increasing presence of the Hungarian state in everyday life during the 19th century, focusing attention on its role in restructuring agricultural production. In contrast to the usual approach in the literature on agrarian life in Hungary, I have not centred my discussion around the emancipation of the serfs and other reforms of 1848. I have chosen to offer an alternative chronology. I begin by discussing the urbarial edict of Maria Theresa (1767), the first instance of state intervention in local affairs between lords and serfs. I then move to the mid-nineteenth century, to examine the compilation of a cadastral survey proclaimed by Franz Joseph in 1855. This monumental task entailed the mapping of all landed properties in Hungary as a means to assess tax revenues. I end with a discussion of a series of labour laws passed in the late 19th century to regulate the movement and employment of agricultural workers and manorial servants. Thus, I show the manner in which the state attempted to intervene in local relationships of politics and economy, and moreover, how the specific character of intervention changed over 150 years. By doing so, I argue that the modern state in Hungary does not come into being in 1848, or in the years following the abolition of serfdom. A slow,

and ever more deliberate, development of a modern state architecture long precedes the mid-nineteenth century.

I have another purpose here. I intend to demonstrate how the state was implicated in, though not solely responsible for, the shift in the source of value in agricultural communities away from feudal categories of service to early capitalist notions of land as the pre-eminent social resource and then, by the turn of the century, to human labour as the privileged source of value. This trajectory represents my understanding of the shifting concepts of value in this period. It also places the reforms of 1848—the freeing of urbarial serfs, universal taxation, a free market in land—into perspective. In other words, it portrays the 1848 reforms as a piece of a larger puzzle about state control of production and social life, rather than as a starting point for the rise of capitalism.

The analysis provided below touches upon three singular, though significant moments in state policy. I would like to emphasize at the outset that by focusing on the state in the following account, I do not wish to attribute any greater causality to legal measures, or be understood to see the state as a totalizing and unmitigated force within the body politic. As I have tried to make clear throughout, the measures instituted by the state were taken in the midst of heated debates, bloody battles, and quiet, yet forceful deliberations.

Urbarial Edict of 1767: Serving the Empire

The sheep should be well-fed in order to make it yield more wool and more milk.

Maria Theresa, Empress of Austria [quoted in Blum, 1978:221]

Maria Theresa attempted repeatedly during her reign (1740-1780) to strengthen the central powers of the state over the Hungarian nobility and their vassals; she was only partially successful. Following the Turkish invasion in 1526, and the virtual demise of an independent Hungarian kingdom, Hungarians had been locked in a struggle to restore their sovereignty. This battle was as forcefully waged against the Hapsburgs as against the occupying forces of the Ottoman Empire. Freedom fighters often sided openly with the infidel Turk to stave off the advances of their Catholic neighbours, since the struggle during the 17th century concerned religious freedom as much as political sovereignty. With the full absorption of Hungarian territories into the empire after the defeat of Rákóczi's uprising (1703-1711), the Hapsburg house confronted in the Hungarians deep resentments of political subordina-

tion, but also firmly entrenched economic privileges the nobility was scarcely willing to abandon.

The rulers of the growing Hapsburg state were acutely aware of the crucial role of the peasantry to the political and economic health of the empire. Since the nobility paid no taxes, the full burden of financing the state fell on the peasants' shoulders. From the late 17th century, Hapsburg emperors feared the prospects of a debilitated peasantry, crushed by onerous servile duties, and so attempted to lighten their feudal burdens. Fears of peasant revolts and political instability also prompted their actions. Leopold I introduced legislation to modify service contracts in 1680 in response to peasant unrest in Bohemia, though the decrees were never implemented (Blum, 1978:221). It remained the task of Leopold's successors to rally to the aid of impoverished serfs.

During her reign, Maria Theresa encouraged the recruitment by noble landowners of Hungarian, Serb, Slovak and German peasants to repopulate Hungarian territories desolated by the Turkish occupation and insurrections of the previous two centuries. Noble landowners shared with the empress a concern for the provision of adequate supplies of labour for manorial production. They did not share, however, her goals of strengthening state power, and revenues, by weakening the control of landowners over servile labour. Maria Theresa made her purposes very clear in a memorandum written in 1770:

The peasantry, who are the most numerous class of the citizenry and who are the foundation and greatest strength of the state, should be maintained in such a condition that they can support themselves and their families and in addition be able to pay their taxes in times of both war and peace. The rights of the seignior must give way before these considerations. [quoted in Blum, 1978:221]

The need for the seignior to give way to the state was clearly at the heart of her reforms in the relationship between lord and peasant, the most important of these being codified in the Urbarial Edict of 1767.

In the years 1765 and 1766, Maria Theresa dispatched royal commissioners across the country to determine the extent of holdings worked by the serfs and the character of feudal service demanded in return by their lords. Maria Theresa had clearly lost faith in the veracity of accounts submitted by county officials to the court. This scepticism was reinforced by the testimony of peasant delegations seeking her

audience in 1766, against the protestations of Hungarian nobles who branded them as dangerous insurrectionists (Acsády, 1944:386-7). Yet the rigorous attention to detail devoted to compiling these accounts also testified to the spirit of the age: the age of encyclopedias, natural science and enlightened governing.

Appearing in every single village, the [royal commissioners] interrogated the mayor, his counsellors and several more intelligent serfs of the village concerning nine points indicated in their formidable directive about the existing state of corvée, considering every aspect of serf burdens. On the basis of this the commissioners wrote up the serfs of the village according to their names, wrote up their lands, pastures, vineyards, classified their soils according to quality and on this basis they determined future parcel holdings, about which they prepared exact tables. [Acsády, 1944:388]

Armed with a compendium of relationships and products, of labour service and land holdings, the state proceeded to regulate—and notably, to reduce—the serf's obligations to noble landowners.

The Urbarial Edict of 1767 restored the sixteenth-century quota of labour services: one day per week with, or two days without, a team of oxen for the tenant of a statutory parcel fixed between sixteen and forty-eight acres depending on the quality of the land. The edict also attempted to curtail the arbitrariness of the manor courts by banning landowners from juries hearing the cases of their own serfs, and by making appeal to royal courts mandatory in all capital cases. [Janos, 1982:28-29]

The intervention of the state in the relationship between lord and serf was significant, as it brought the arm of the central institutional power to the very heart of the political relations of the local community, barring (at least in principle) abuse of noble authority and privilege. The state's appearance on the local scene broke with earlier practices, in which the supervision and adjudication of local affairs were the sole responsibility of the landowning nobility. Some have argued that a key to understanding the process of reenserfment during the 16th century lay precisely in the ability of the nobility to withstand encroachment by centralized powers (Blum, 1957:822). The shift toward a centralized state envisioned

by Maria Theresa, and her son Joseph II, would erode these powers, albeit slowly.

The appearance of central power in local affairs is clearly of great import. Yet, what does it mean to say that central power appears in the local community? One crucial component of the presence of the state is the existence of the documents themselves; by state mandate, documents were prepared and made public recording entitlements to land, to service and to tithes. Prior to this time, labour contracts had been locally negotiated between noble landowners and peasants, recorded in copyhold agreements called *urbaria* (Janos, 1982:27). The Urbarial Edict of Maria Theresa represented the first national law stipulating in detail the servile duties of the serf to the lord (Wenzel, 1887:410). Moreover, as a national document the edict fixed, codified, mandated, (need I say) *stated* relations of property and labour. For it is the precisely the ability of the state to state, to prescribe the character of social relations in local communities which forges the machinery of modern state power (Corrigan and Sayer, 1985:3).

The state appears in the guise of public documents; the ubiquitous seals and stamps of Central European bureaucracies to this day convey the imprimatur of central authority. Yet a crucial means of affirming state authority is by underscoring its fixed, necessary presence in local affairs. As Michael Herzfeld reminds us, "*stato* is used as the past perfect participle of the verb for 'be'...such an etymology represents the state as the ultimate external verity, that which 'has [always] been,' and as such an outstanding example of what we would today call 'naturalization' (1986:75)." The given, taken-for-granted character of state power has a further implication: the actual presence of the state in relations among local actors. No longer do lord and serf, neighbour and neighbour interact as familiars. Their sociality is intruded upon, pulled asunder by the weighty bulk of state authority. The necessary presence of the state in local affairs is profound. It thus becomes apparent that the fixity of social forms as mandated by the state is one means by which social forms become fetishized. In other words, the entrance of the state as an unseen, yet constant third party to all affairs between lord and serf is a prominent example of reification, which entails a displacement of sociality away from immediate experience and onto the distant yet haunting presence of immutable authority (Barker, 1984).

Yet the imposition of state control, the intervention of state powers in local affairs was fiercely resisted by Hungarian nobles, and not without result. The actual implementation of the urbarial reforms fell victim to the machinations of the nobility. While in the Austrian territo-

ries Maria Theresa had completed a reorganization of administrative institutions prior to the introduction of urbarial reforms, in Hungary she had not, fearing the already vehement opposition of the nobility to her social programs. Hence implementation of the urbarial reforms was left to the county offices, which were controlled by the nobility (Acsády, 1944:396). The state goal of removing arbitrary abuse of powers was thwarted; local nobles interpreted the edict according to their own purposes. Peasants were no longer heeded in Vienna, to their great dismay.

Hungarian nobles feared the loss of sovereignty over local affairs, but they were equally afraid of the imposition of taxes and other fiscal duties on their own properties. In 1764, the government of Maria Theresa had already attempted to commute the military services of the Hungarian nobility into a money payment, but was unable to do so (Pamlényi, 1973:196). The urbarial reforms were considered a substantial threat, for although they merely registered land tenure and servile relations among serfs, they were perceived as a step toward determining (and publicly recording) the extent of a lord's property holdings. Until the late 18th century, noble properties had not been measured. Boundaries between properties were designated, but acreage had not been calculated. The Hungarian nobility reasoned that the government's interest in reckoning the size of noble properties would surely lead to taxation. This step—the taxing of all land, peasant and seigniorial—was taken by Joseph the II in November of 1789, as the final cornerstone of his agrarian reforms. However, this legislation went the way of all the Josephine reforms, to be repudiated on his deathbed. The simple repudiation of legal statute was not enough for the Hungarian nobility.

After [Joseph II's] death the survey was one of the motive forces of the 'national' resistance of the aristocracy. At the noisy county assemblies, it was decided that the cadastral maps and survey documents must be thrown on the fire. A substantial portion of extremely valuable works providing a mirror image of the conditions of the country in the late 18th century were tossed into the flames in the midst of spectacular ceremonies. [Varga, 1972:252]

The nobility triumphed over the dogged attempts of two self-styled absolutist monarchs. Their victory was both embodied and celebrated in the destruction of maps, charts, and lists, the very building blocks of modern state power.

Cadastral Surveys: The Privilege of Land

Marsh-fires in the night (*lidersfény*)—pale blue lights seen on the horizon—were interpreted by Hungarian peasants as souls bound to roam the earth, engineers damned to wander endlessly for having wrongly measured the land. That the engineer—the surveyor of land and maker of maps—should be singled out for damnation tells us much about the peasantry's condemnation of learned men and the purposes to which they devoted their science. Eternal hell fires would vindicate the poor and the weak, whose property values were misjudged and falsely reckoned by lackeys of state bureaus and local rulers.

The role of the state in measuring social products shifted from the 18th to 19th century. In the Urbarial Edict of 1767, Maria Theresa had been keen to improve the lot of the peasantry, to ensure higher levels of productivity and so greater revenues for the state. The attempt to intervene in local relations focused primarily on the extent of servile obligations owed to the nobility by enserfed peasants. Although royal commissioners had recorded the size of holdings in pursuit of determining servile obligations, the primary concern of the Urbarial Edict was not the exact measurement of landed properties *per se*. Rather, the edict was designed to tabulate the duties of peasants—in labour, in kind, in money. As of the mid-nineteenth century, however, taxation was assessed on the basis of the market value of landed properties. More accurately, land was classified and codified according to seven different categories, and the specific determination of the value of land was made in terms of the monetary value of the produce cultivated on those properties. The land tax register marks, therefore, a major change in the focus of state evaluation. Not only did the focus shift from service relationships, that is, a presumed reciprocity between lord and serf in which the lord provided land in return for the services of resident serfs. It also constituted a shift from recording properties to calculating the *market value* of land in terms of the produce cultivated. The shift to land, to marketable produce, and to money epitomizes agriculture in the mid-nineteenth century as little else can.

On the 20th of October, 1849, Emperor Franz Joseph issued a written order to initiate a land tax register. This order followed by only fourteen short days the execution of the former prime minister, Batthyány, and twelve generals of the now defeated War of Independence. The introduction of universal taxation had been a central component of the 1848 reforms, passed by the Hungarian Diet and sanctioned by the emperor prior to the outbreak of the fighting. Though attempts

were made by the provisional Hungarian government during the revolution to introduce taxation, peasants in many regions refused to pay. "After [the defeat of the Hungarian army] the absolutist government expended feverish activity, while establishing itself, to mine the revenue of the country. It is not an exaggeration to say that, besides punishing the rebels, the building up of fiscal affairs was one of the most important tasks of the imperial ministry" (Varga, 1972:256). In a few short years, the tax revenues assessed on Hungary multiplied several fold (Bernát, 1935:225).

To determine the value of landed properties, the emperor commanded in 1855 that a cadastral survey of all lands be completed. The full survey of agricultural properties would not be complete for decades, and in some regions was not even finished by 1918. This exacting, scientific survey would be preceded by a land register, compiled in each community by a committee of six people selected for this task, and then checked by appraisal commissioners employed by the state. The preparatory work assigned to the committee included:

a description of the boundaries of the tax community; a topographic register of fields surrounding the community indicating the customary branch of cultivation and the means of leasehold for each field, as well as for the entire area of the community; in the specific branches of cultivation, the differences or rather ranking of the quality and productivity of the land were to be determined with respect to the quantity and quality of obtainable produce; for every plot within and outside the borders of the village, the preparation of a "property declaration" or cadastral register for each field, and finally a ranking in identical categories of those pieces of land which fell under specific branches of cultivation in comparable conditions. [Varga, 1972:260-261]

Though the work was quite comprehensive, government offices posted very strict deadlines for the completion of these tasks. Depending on the size of the community, 8-14 days were allotted for writing up the fields, 14-21 days for the determination of categories of land and their classification, and 8-10 days for compiling the final property register (Varga, 1972:261).

The process of calculating land values entailed several innovative concepts, notions of property and economy central to the restructuring of agricultural production envisioned by reformers. Two categories are

of particular interest: classification of land types, and the concept of net income. Though attention is often focused on the political and economic consequences of taxation, a point I will return to below, I think it as important to examine the assumptions about agricultural production which inform the structure of the survey, and which were being introduced by state agencies in the process of conducting the survey itself.

The categorization of lands according to their quality had already been introduced with the *Urbarium* of Maria Theresa. Four categories of plough-land (I-IV), and three categories of meadowland (good, medium, bad) were used. In the land register of the 1850s, seven categories of land were established: plough-land, hay-field, garden, vineyard, pasture, forest, and reedy marsh. Further distinctions were also made, both in terms of the quality of the land and according to the frequency of natural disasters, e.g. floods and frost. Plough-lands were classified according to three classes, while the other categories were distinguished by two classes; reedy marshes were not ranked (Varga, 1972:261). The specific distinctions between categories, between lands devoted to the growing of grains, pasturage and garden properties, were of themselves not radical distinctions for the kind of agriculture being pursued in the 1850s. However, calculating the relative monetary worth of these properties for taxation—that is, tallying the market value of produce issuing from different holdings—was clearly an innovation for the time.

Taxes were calculated according to the net income of agricultural production. Net income on any particular type of land was reckoned "employing the customary economic system in the community as that earned in an average productive year after they deducted the usual costs here and there for cultivating the land, for sowing, for the tending of produce, and for harvesting" (Varga, 1972:259). The introduction of a category for the costs accompanying different phases of production was quite radical. Such calculations were quite foreign to most agricultural producers. The state nonetheless demanded that village committees estimate production costs as part of their survey.

The categories employed to compile the land register would have long term economic implications. For example, no accommodations were made in the original hurried land register, or in later legislation, to alter the tax base if properties were upgraded from a less productive to more productive category, e.g. if plough-land were to be replaced by a vineyard. Farmers could gain some advantage by transferring lands from one category to another, and so evade higher taxes on more profitable branches of production. Manorial estates would be especially well suited to transfer properties from one category to another, due to

their size and the variety of land types usually included in such a large farm. The flexibility and variety of productive branches characteristic of manorial properties always gave them an advantage over small holdings in this regard, and the advantage would accrue over time (Varga, 1972:259). As the burdens of taxation and redemption of feudal dues would weigh ever more heavily on the peasantry over the next fifty years, productivity and profitability would come to be diligently calculated. It bears emphasis that calculation means here both numerical reckoning and a considered weighing of choices structuring economic activity. The revolutionary impact of the survey's compilation resides in large part in the marriage of these two previously disparate activities—counting and choosing.¹

Legal provisions had been made in the land register process to permit objections to be raised either to the classification of properties or the determination of income. Peasants rarely availed themselves of these procedures. It is hard to determine from the historical record whether they did not do so because the legal process itself was too daunting, or because they did not anticipate the practical implications of these calculations. Some do believe that whatever else may have been the case, a major deterrent was the fear that taxes would increase rather than decrease after their objections were evaluated by state authorities (Varga, 1972:264; Bernát, 1935:224).

Wealthy landowners clearly had an advantage over the peasantry in both their knowledge of legal procedure and their personal connections with the authorities. Yet they also had other advantages. It was well known that compilation of the land register took into consideration political factors, most notably loyalty to the crown (Varga, 1972:263). Many wealthy nobles had clearly supported the Hapsburgs during the War of Independence, and were rewarded by being assessed lower tax rates. In contrast, owners of medium-sized properties, whose political loyalties were in general strongly supportive of the independent Hungarian government, were at a disadvantage in tax assessment. These landowners openly distanced themselves from the entire survey process as a form of passive resistance to the state. Moreover, the political history of particular counties—of rebellion or loyalty to the throne over the previous two centuries—were reflected in the treatment of tax levels in the land register. As contemporary observers attest, "[t]he less rebellious counties of Transdanubia acquired a reduced basis of assessment, and the other way around. The more nationalist [*kurucabb*] counties bore greater land tax as punishment" (Varga, 1972:263). Thus, the disadvantages felt by the peasantry vis à vis large landowners in the

registry were accompanied by territorial inequalities in levying taxes across the country.

Finally, the very process of assessing values was skewed to the disadvantage of Hungarian property owners. Although concern was expressed in the legislation for the contributions of knowledgeable community members, nearly all appraisal surveyors were bureaucrats from outside the community. In fact, it was made very clear to these surveyors—"land samplers" (*földkóstolók*) as they were known—that their own careers within the bureaucracy would be served by their zeal and diligence (Varga, 1972:259 footnote 61). So, for example, when compiling the proportionate values of the land, the surveyors often selected as the base value the properties at the high end of the scale, thereby inflating the value of all the other properties in the community (Bernát, 1935:223).

Compilation of the 1850s tax register had far-reaching implications, economically and politically. The differences between regions, and between agricultural producers would increase over time. It was well known that taxes were assessed to the disadvantage of the peasantry, and to the advantage of manorial properties, that is, that estates were undervalued. "[T]he process of categorization by no means reflected the actual quality and profit-yielding capacities of the land. Rather, the social position of the owners of specific sections of land at the time determined the results of the cadastral project" (Varga, 1972:306). Nonetheless, the cadastral maps remained the basis for taxation up through the Second World War, and were even used to determine who would be named a class enemy (*kulak*) during the Stalinist period in the 1950s.

The cadastral survey project tells us much about the shifting focus of state intervention. Much recent scholarship has considered the development of cartography and mapping, and its epistemological and political implications (for example, Foucault, 1972; de Certeau, 1984; Harvey, 1989). Of importance to us here is not only the attempt to appropriate lands and the value issuing from them, but the means by which this appropriation is conceived and executed: the abstract, rational surface of a map. As Harvey points out, the advent of mapping—expressed in the discourse of Euclidean geometry—facilitated the conceptual shift to understanding space "as something usable, malleable, and therefore capable of domination through human action" (Harvey, 1989:254). The construction of a cadastral survey had a very specific, and purportedly limited purpose: the development of a state treasury. The image of Franz Joseph sitting before a map of the Empire,

being able for the first time to move across his entire domain by finger tip is quite powerful. The feast to his eyes is sweetened by the knowledge that the map is itself a treasure chest, ensuring a regular flow of money into state coffers.² That a two-dimensional representation of space may become a deep well pouring forth state revenues illustrates the complex confusion of surface and perspective entailed in cadastral surveys. Moreover, this conceptualization of space parallels the increasingly differentiated, rational distribution of power imminent in the modernizing state of the nineteenth century.

A land tax register was mandated by Franz Joseph within a year after land was disencumbered of feudal bonds and freed to be bought and sold. The politics of space and the modern state, as Lefebvre argues, restructures the social purpose of space, as well as social identity through space (1991). The construction of a map then not only facilitated the increasing control of state authorities over local relations of property, but also was an important component in the fetishization of land concomitant with capitalism. Its identity was as a plot, an individualized bit of earth separated out from all other plots alongside it; it lived on its own as a participant in the reified spaces of market politics. This individuation presaged the alienation of individuals in work soon to be codified in the labour laws of the late 19th century. Among villagers, however, the fetishization of land and of labour would be expressed as a bodily possession. Land became an extension of the family; fed by blood and sweat, and after death, with the bones of ancestors, it became an embodiment of the social relations of emerging capitalism (see Lampland, 1991a). So too, a central feature of the transition to labour as the source of value would be the conceptualization of one's activity as an object to be possessed (*dolog*). As a property—meaning both a quality of person and a possession—it could be wrenched from one's very being and with time, be sold to others (Lampland, 1995). The distinction, then, between subject and object—understood here as the reevaluation of land and labour—seems to be an important transitional stage in the commodification of social life in Hungary. More generally, it suggests the intimate connection in capitalism between concepts of space and personhood.

Finally, I would like call attention to the curious association between the experience of movement and the attribution of constancy in the mid-nineteenth century. Social critics and artists often commented on "the discontinuous experience of time, space and causality as transitory, fleeting and fortuitous" (Frisby, 1985:4). Social analysts also shared this view about modern life, prompting Simmel to focus his analysis on

"the fortuitous fragments of reality" (Frisby, 1985:6). Marx's cogent analysis of commodity fetishism relied upon an appreciation of process and movement culled from Hegel's dialectic method (Nicolaus, 1973:29-30). Marx's goal of identifying the underlying structures of modern society nonetheless was similar to other attempts to capture the fixed in the ephemeral. For example, von Stein saw statistics to be a means of stabilizing the sense of movement which he and his contemporaries confronted (Frisby, 1985:22).

Social science methods for identifying the eternal in the ephemeral, the constant in the ever-changing were closely allied with the political projects of map making and survey "research." Statistics was defined in Germany at its inception in the 18th century as the "science of the state" (Linke, 1988:10). The science of statistics in Hungary came into its own in the 1860s and 1870s, in the pursuit of a more accurate approximation of the size of properties under cultivation and the amount of produce grown on these lands. Though not seen as a science of state building *per se*, statistics in Hungary certainly was a devoted hand maiden to the purpose, conceived as the rational embrace and construction of economic activity in space: both the space of village fields and the space of market activity. It is this appeal to science—the sociology of Marx, the statistics of von Stein, and the rational mapping of the state—I wish to emphasize here. All of the measures taken by the state—the urban edict of Maria Theresa, the cadastral survey of Franz Joseph, and the labour laws of the 1890s—are close kin to these scientific pursuits. Thus, it seems quite appropriate, though clearly unjust, that the land values assessed in the 1850s were used during socialist period to identify class enemies. The rationality of state science expressed in planning was clearly heir to the mapping of political allegiance and social value initiated by Franz Joseph, and the later projects of venerable statisticians. Though it must be said that Marxist-Leninist bureaucrats elevated these practices of economic science to a high art—a surrealism of nearly baroque dimensions.

Master Narratives: Labour Contracts for Agricultural Workers

When greeting each other sadly as we offer ourselves up on the labour market, we cast our eyes about, seeing millions and millions of our fellow workers sweating from working in the fields, whose faces are full of worry and despondent melancholy. [Sándor, 1955:48]

In 1897, villagers of Makó expressed their dismay and utter defeat, having been driven into poverty and forced to sell their labour on the open market. Earlier in the decade, a crowd of nearly 3-4000 workers, drawn from the nearby square where day-labourers gathered to find work, assembled in front of the town hall in Békescsaba. They demanded that officials, held responsible for withholding documents establishing a workers' club, be released to meet their punishment. As 750 soldiers approached to disperse the crowd, the workers shouted: "We ain't got nothing; if we die, it don't matter" (Gabona:1934:10).

The decade of the 1890s saw unprecedented political agitation among agrarian workers. The demonstrations of 1891 and 1892 in Békescsaba began a long decade of social unrest and military repression. The once quiescent poor were becoming increasingly demanding and violent. More dangerous still, the once docile poor were organizing themselves politically, with grave consequences for the propertied.

In some parts of the country... it was not safe for landowners to walk around even in broad daylight. In 1894 one of the agrarian leaders, John Szántó-Kovács, was arrested and his trial in the district court triggered another wave of violence that resulted in the imposition of martial law. In 1897-98 ill-organized agrarian unions struck the grain harvest and fought pitched battles against imported strikebreakers and the military units brought in for their protection. The authorities prevailed, but a National Union of Agrarian Labourers could still enlist 48,616 members, and within a few years the agrarian socialists succeeded where the industrial proletariat had failed. They elected two deputies—the socialist William Mezöffi, and the populist socialist Andrew Achim—to the House of Representatives. [Janos, 1982:161]

The agrarian proletariat struggled hard and long to forge a political and economic identity. Simple measures like forming a workers' club were punished, as were more forceful actions like harvest strikes.

The struggle over political categories of collective action was heated, and gained additional attention because of the frequent use of harvest strikes by the agrarian poor. Harvest strikes were a potent tool. Landowners feared crop losses, giving great weight to the progress of deliberations. Moreover, legislation passed in the 1870s had made provisions for the renegotiation of contracts, thus allowing workers a

legal basis from which to further their cause. "The verbal agreement for contracts, as well as the worker's right that in the case of a bad harvest one could renegotiate workers' wages, opened the way for debates which, as a consequence of lengthy legal procedures involving various authorities, crippled legal certainty" (Bernát, 1938:114-115). Dissatisfaction among wealthy landowners and agricultural workers spread, aggravated by disagreements over the legal code. Central authorities fought against a solidifying working class with equal fervour, though their arsenal was better equipped and far more effective. State agencies—both national and local—frequently resorted to violent repression of political demonstrations and economic actions. Better still than the occasional use of muskets and bayonets, however, would be the crafting of new legislation to regulate the employment of agricultural labour.

Lörincz states unequivocally that the most active period in agrarian labour law fell at the turn of the century (Lörincz, 1974:37). I would go further and claim that labour had come into its own as a social and economic question. Agrarian movements across the country and state measures taken on the "problem" of labour demonstrate this all too clearly. Two major laws were passed within a decade regulating the terms of agrarian labour contracts and the legal status of agricultural workers. The first of the two covered agricultural workers, specifically wheat harvesters, threshers, and day labourers; the second pertained to manorial servants. Additional laws covering labour relations included: day labourers and workers employed in water projects and road and railroad construction; threshing machine operators and farm hands; forestry workers; and tobacco growers and tobacco gardeners (Bernát, 1938:116-117).

One important law concerning agricultural workers precedes these statutes, a bill passed in 1876 to regulate the relationship between masters and servants, agrarian labourers and day labourers. Under the terms of this legislation, the servant was considered a member of the family, subject to the patriarchal authority of the master. The relationship between master and servant was seen to extend far beyond immediate economic concerns; accordingly, servants were expected to fulfil any task, even if it had not been explicitly mentioned when they were hired. Masters were to oversee the education of their servants, allow them to attend the church of their choice, and teach them to lead a "sober, thrifty and moral life" (Gabona, 1934:20). Furthermore, servants had to receive permission to leave the premises, could not receive guests, had to reveal the contents of their belongings on request, and were responsible for informing their master of disloyalty among their fellow servants. The

patriarchal rights of the master also extended to physical punishment, the specific character of punishment varying for women, men and children. "One may flog only mature men with the blow of a rod, one may use a switch for those youths who have not yet reached the age of 18, while women may only be punished after a precursory examination by a doctor; the number of blows may not exceed twenty" (Lörincz, 1974:40). Finally, the law also made strikes and any collective forms of extracting higher wages illegal, as they were considered a threat to private property (Janos, 1982:130). The 1876 law was considered an important watershed. Prior to its formulation, regulations concerning servants were locally determined, leading to clashes over differences between regulations established in various regions across the country. An additional problem, Bernát asserts, was that until the 1876 law "the central management of the administration of servant affairs was almost impossible" (1938:110), a comment which reveals much about the increasing importance of centralized state authority in labour relations.

Despite all attempts to bring order to the master-servant relationship in the 1870s, discord continued to characterize relations between workers and employers, heightened by increasing difficulties in the domain of agricultural production and commerce. Through the end of the century, voices were raised from all points on the political spectrum in criticism of provisions within the statute. Some simply questioned the efficacy of legal measures to bring any semblance of calm and obedience to serving poor. "Neither the law on servants, nor other measures help the problems besetting servants, unless the spread and strengthening of *good breeding and piety* improve their morals and ennoble their souls" (Lörincz, 1974:41; emphasis in the original). Amongst those who advocated additional legal reforms, there were those who found the 1876 law too constraining for employers, containing as it did passages permitting servants to renegotiate oral agreements (Lörincz, 1974:41). These conservative voices bemoaned the loss of the employer's full sovereignty. But in the 1870s the state's goal was to sweep away all barriers to the development of a free market, including constraints on the ability of workers to engage in wage negotiation (Janos, 1982:128). Others, to be found within the liberal camp, found the law too constraining in terms of the workers' individual freedoms. In the parliamentary debate over the right of manorial servants to strike, Árpád Szakolczai argued that "the servant cannot even be considered a freely contracting worker; his [her] personal freedom is restricted; despite the principles of legal equality, the legal grievances which fall on his [her] person cannot even be rectified" (Lörincz, 1974:42). The

development of individualism as a legal category thus corresponded to the development of labour law. The significance of this correspondence cannot be stressed too strongly.

In discussing state formation in Britain during the early 19th century, Corrigan and Sayer comment upon the apparent clash between *laissez-faire* economic policies and the extensive measures taken by the state to ensure a social context in which the market could flourish. Central to this process was the refashioning of the working class.

'Society', then, turns improvement on its new possession, labour. Formally and then really subordinating labour within production, it then catches up those same bodies, hearts and minds in their 'idle time' to thread together the fabric of the nation. As labour in production it had to be free(d) to be exploited; as labour in society it had to be moralized, normalized, individualized. It had to be simultaneously 'freed' and 'regulated'; forced and yet (positively) willed into new 'stations'... [Corrigan and Sayer, 1985:118]

I wish to discuss the laws concerning agricultural workers in this light, understanding their genesis to be a central component in the rise of modern state power. State bureaucrats and legislators from all variety of political parties joined to forge legislation regulating, codifying, stipulating when, where and how agricultural workers could be employed. The degree to which parties to labour contracts—employers as well as employees—were constrained was unprecedented, giving the state quite extensive power over the terms of labouring itself, as well as adjudication of disputes. It is of crucial importance to recognize that this step was taken in the midst of widespread unrest: struggles by the labouring poor to achieve greater economic security and battles by wealthy landowners to prevent the agitators from reversing their economic fortunes.

In the spirit of liberal principles of free contract, the 1897 law on agricultural workers was seen as providing the legal context for effective negotiation between individuals, to facilitate the best use of the labour force. As explained in the preamble to the bill,

With its decrees the law does not intrude into the legal conditions of questions clearly affecting issues of substantive significance or affecting the contracting parties, but only wishes to take measures as far as and in those instances, in

which insofar as, where, and to what degree need is expressed on the part of the public interest, namely from the economic, public safety and public health points of view. [Lörincz, 1974:44]

So we see in Hungarian labour legislation a curious juxtaposition of passages advocating the nonintervention of state bodies with passages stipulating conduct in a wide range of affairs, public and domestic. Hence, it is our purpose to examine in greater detail what in fact is deemed by legislators and bureaucrats to be in the public interest, in contrast to those concerns of a "private" nature. We need to remember throughout, however, that the very division of public and private is an index of the true supremacy of the state. "The state secures its overall penetration on the basis of an apparent withdrawal and limitation of its pertinent domain... the essence of this power lies as much in the line of division between the public and the private... as in the substantive contents of what lies to either side of it" (Barker, 1984:48). Although drawing the line itself is a categorical shift, the whereabouts of the line separating domains varies, even within the stubbornly fortified terrain of legal codes, where each passage stands alone, sufficient and self-evident. The awkward phrasing of the preamble quoted above conveys quite clearly—with all its instances, degrees and insofar as'es—how the law must make room for the line to shift and slide delicately through the body politic. As a final resort, the state would argue for a redefinition of legal measures due to the urgent need to protect "production value" ("termelési érték") in the turbulent decade of agrarian socialist movements (Lörincz, 1974:42). The discovery of production value by the state, and the task of revealing its true identity to the public in various social disputes, would become a valued technique of exercising state power.

It bears further emphasis that the character of state intervention in Hungary has never been subtle. In fact, I wish to underline the degree to which the state has been intrusive and abidingly interventionist. In 1880, the minister of commerce, in a memorandum to the cabinet and parliament, formulated his view of liberalism and national growth in the following manner:

The individual should be active, the whole society should be active, but the state should not remain inactive either, ... The principle of *laissez-faire* is justified only as long as natural growth is possible. Once the process of natural progress is

stalled, economic liberalism has only a paralyzing effect on national vigour. [Janos, 1982:128-129]

The government would champion liberal principles, but only as these principles truly expanded the market. If economic development was seen to be faltering, the state would promptly act to rectify problems. Steps taken to facilitate development would include extensive construction projects, model farms, agricultural schools, and national commercial exhibits. Another component of state economic enforcement would be a very active police force and gendarmerie.

The implications for the intrusive and ever present role of the state in local affairs and capitalist development are quite far-reaching. Lüdtkke has argued that Marxists and Weberians alike have placed too much emphasis on "the preponderance of internal or attitudinal control as a consequence of rationalization and modernization, or ... the ideological elements of 'internal control' (hegemony, but also legitimization strategies and manipulation) as inherent in the process of capitalization" (Lüdtkke, 1981:100). Lüdtkke's studies of the role of the police and the use by local bureaucrats of violence and its threat to mold the Prussian citizenry demonstrates very clearly that the state need not rely solely on market forces to generate new forms of social control and alienation. This approach prompts us to examine more carefully our assumptions about how the state participates in regulating behaviours conducive to capitalist society.

Lüdtkke concludes,

the analyses of Marx and Weber underrated one basic dimension of societal regulation—the permanent use and threat of *physical violence 'from above'*, executed by state officials, as a necessary condition not only for the establishment, but also for the *continuation* of exploitation, unequal exchange and institutionalised reproduction. In other words: during the process of capitalization external political control is not substituted, but completed by means of internal control. ... From this point of view *violence douce* (Bourdieu) and *violence ouverte* are related to one another, in the sense that the different forms of symbolic violence for the dominated always include the experience as well as anticipation of physical violence 'from above'. So *violence douce*, which masks itself in the way it works, should not be perceived as the more modern or rational opposite of physical

force; on the contrary it works only by the permanent presence of *violence brute* which it symbolises. [1981:105]

It is important, therefore, throughout our discussion of the crafting of modern state forms of regulation—legal, political, economic and moral—to be aware of the violent and oppressive character of these forms, portrayed as rationality and lived as terror. As such, they are, and continue to be, very modern.

The law on agricultural workers passed in 1898 was dubbed by contemporaries as the Slave Law (*rabszolgatörvény*) (Janos, 1982:130). The law consisted of seven sections, including sections on worker identity cards; entering and breaking a contract for agricultural labour; fulfilling the contract; a section on day labourers; criminal regulations; and authorities and procedures. I will not address all sections or points equally or even attempt to cover the full social breadth of the legislation. My point will be to highlight those aspects of the law which illuminate our understanding of the state's attempts to construct new relationships of labour and of identity, relationships which appear increasingly modern.

The most elementary observation is clearly the quantity of detail and elaboration represented by this legislation. Thinking back to the simplicity of Maria Theresa's Urbarium of a century earlier, we can appreciate the development of legal instruments and bureaucratic purpose over this period. The Slave Law even represented a leap in legal elaboration vis à vis the 1876 legislation on domestic servants. All the actors of the political drama are stipulated—employers, employees, national governmental bodies, county offices, local prefectures, the gendarmerie. The extent of their movements on and off stage are clearly choreographed, as are the particulars of their scripts. This is a radically new stage in forging the instruments of state power.

Another important change from the earlier legislation I have discussed is the depersonalization of authority. In contrast to the urbarial edict of Maria Theresa and Franz Joseph's cadastral survey, these legal instruments are truly the product of a bureaucratic process. The person of Maria Theresa and Franz Joseph were in all respects present in the earlier statutes. As edicts, they were in the most literal sense legal "acts" taken by the monarch. Marx's description of political subjectivity under feudalism clearly obtains. "'The unity of the state' appeared as 'the particular affair of a ruler isolated from the people, and of his servants'" (quoted in Sayer, 1991:75; emphasis in the original). This preeminently personal quality of ruling has given way to the

impersonal machinations of a bureaucratic enterprise, of which the Parliament is only one (reified) body. The legislative enterprise of the late 19th century is a far cry from the simple and very personalized tactic employed by Maria Theresa, for example, when in 1741, her throne threatened by a coalition of Western powers, she appeared before the Hungarian parliament cradling her infant child to appeal for their support. Following the Compromise of 1867, in which Hungarians acquired some independence over their own political affairs within the Empire, the national state began to develop its own governmental bureaucracy. The distribution of authority and power across a wide array of ministries and governmental offices, as well as legislative bodies, evinced a truly modern organization. "Acts" issued from these various halls were now of a quite different character, the very definitions of collectivities—individual agents and group bodies—having been remade.

The first section of the law stipulated that all those not employed as servants (*cseléd*) must own a permit, which listed the prefecture where the worker permanently resided. That the first and most prominent section of a law on agricultural labour should be devoted to carrying identity cards is quite provocative. Recent discussions of the manifestation of state power in everyday life have emphasized the role of documents, yet Weber may be credited with focusing early attention to these forms, especially as they related to the modern exercise of power through bureaucracy (Weber, 1958:197; Sayer, 1991:138). Notice, then, that the significant datum in the worker's identity card was the local office of state government, the prefecture. Hence woven throughout subsequent passages is the knowledge that the worker has been situated, fixed in political administrative terms to an office, a local bureau which will bear responsibility for his/her actions. The most frequent task borne by local officials would be returning stray workers to their job by force, with police escort.

It is important to note, however, that the passage stipulating identity cards in the Slave Law was not the first introduction of such instruments, which dated back to the 1876 legislation on servants. "Servants must be furnished with a servant book, while harvesters, threshers and generally those workers wishing to assume under contract any field work not in the capacity of a servant, insofar as they are not locals, must be furnished with an identity voucher or municipal certificate, without which it is illegal to hire them" (Bernát, 1938:110; emphasis added). The purpose of identity cards in this legislation is clarified by the phrase I have underlined—"insofar as they are not locals." Identity

cards for unknowns were a means of placing them, in both senses of the term: knowing where they came from, and identifying their social niche, their class position. As an outsider, one was called upon to reveal one's social identity; this was defined in official documents solely in terms of listing one's home town prefecture. This hard and fast boundary around communities is characteristic of the entire 1876 legislation, communities of familiars, in which families embrace kin and servants alike, in which patriarchal authority extends to all those inhabiting and working within the household. Outsiders, as anomalies, must bring their community with them, in their pockets on papers sanctioned by the state. The 1898 law is a step toward the universalization of the requirement of documentation in terms of administrative identity: all workers must carry identity cards listing their prefecture. This shift, then, is not only to a general principle of accountability through paper, but also a grounding of one's *individual* identity as a worker, in principle mobile throughout the body politic and economic realm (as defined by the state).

In this sense, the stipulation on identity cards, then, is intimately related to the passages concerning the right to strike and to act collectively. The state's construction of individuality in work precludes the possibility of acting collectively in the struggle over wages and labour conditions. "If, as Marx argues, consciousness is founded in social being, then undermining the possibility of class consciousness, on both sides, is the individualizing division of labour which is as constitutive a relation of capitalism as class itself" (Sayer, 1991:71). Passages in the law made it illegal to strike to obtain higher wages or other advantages from one's employer. It was punishable by a fine and jail term to attempt to impede the "free-will" of agricultural workers by striking, or to encourage contracted workers to meet, to spread rumours or raise money toward the discussion or implementation of such pacts or agreements. The unwillingness of the state to sanction collective discussions also extended to its refusal to set minimum and maximum wage levels across the country, which some had advocated. It was argued that this would interfere with the natural workings of the market and be to the disadvantage of the workers' movement. As Lörincz points out, "The logic, according to which the 'economy' and the workers' movement must be jealously guarded from wage protective measures, only makes sense to the selfishness and liberalism of the exploiting classes" (1974:45). The preeminent actor, then, in all legal transactions was the solitary individual: as worker, defenceless; as employer, bound to the appearance of legality.

Two full sections of the Slave Law concern conditions for entering and breaking a contract. These passages represent the fully modern identity of this legislation, qualifying the rights of both employers and employees as they come to establish a legal relationship over work. Moreover, the sanctity of the individual as free agent in contractual negotiations is codified in the beginning section of the article on entering a contract: "The establishment of the contractual conditions are the subject-matter of free negotiation of the parties" (1898.II, sec. 6). As section number six in a law which contained a total of 80 sections, we are made acutely aware of the degree to which the negotiations were fully free and open, especially as the following section stipulated that any agreement which did not follow the law would be illegal. The state clearly played the primary role in dictating the conditions for freedom and equality, as the classic phrase states, before the law. It is also important to note the manner in which the employer was constrained in his/her dealings with agricultural workers. The increasingly circumscribed powers of employers in labour relations, circumscription dictated by state powers, once more reminds us of the growing strength, representational and jurisdictional, of the national state government.

The section on entering a contract primarily discusses the conditions for employment—how much produce had to be harvested on how much acreage, the specific wage in produce or money, and whether the worker would be fed. The contract had to be drawn up in the presence of the workers, and read to them in their mother tongue before they signed it, or if they were illiterate, marked with an appropriate symbol. The consideration shown to illiterate workers, or those speaking another language, seems quite reasonable and appropriate in a time when migrant labour was moving across endless ethnic boundaries within the Empire. However, as Lörincz points out, the situation was far from a meeting of equals.

They signed the contract at the town hall, before the town clerk, often in the presence of a gendarme. Therefore for all practical purposes they were coerced to sign the contract. Open negotiation could not have succeeded if only because they generally entered into contracts in the winter, when the worker had been living from hand to mouth, without a wage, for months. [1974:44]

Workers were acutely aware of the absence of neutrality in offices of county and state officials, even when not they were not facing starvation

at the end of the winter season. As the proverb says, "The pigherder cannot tell the mayor what to do" (*A kanasz nem parancsolhat a bírónak*).

Conditions for breaking a contract on the part of the employer include assaulting or threatening the life and property of the employer, his family or staff; having been convicted of a felony or of a crime issuing from greed; attempting to strike or encouraging others to do so; becoming physically unable to work. The time frame and conditions for informing the worker were also stipulated. Only in the case of striking would a worker not be paid the wages due him/her for services already rendered. A worker could legally break a contract if: one's employer, his family member or staff endangered one's moral integrity, or committed, or attempted to commit a criminal act against the corporeal integrity, life or property of the worker; if a worker's remuneration had been withheld for day labour or for services rendered as a servant between the time of signing an agricultural worker contract and beginning the job; if the worker fell ill; or if the worker was called into military service. Similar provisions for informing one's employer were stipulated.

The section on fulfilling the contract contained provisions on how the employer could pay workers and how the workers were expected to work. The exact nature of payment had to be agreed upon, including proportions in kind and in money. Employers were forbidden from paying workers in all or in part with alcohol or coupons, or from substituting store goods for their salary. Workers could not be required to buy at the store owned by the employer, or at any store specifically designated by the employer. Provisions were included in case of work stoppages due to inclement weather. Employers were also responsible for taking care of workers who had taken sick who were not from the neighbouring community.

The clauses pertaining to the workers' responsibilities were straightforward:

Workers under contract are required to appear at the place and time specified by the employer, and if required by the contract, to arrive with their tools and farm hands; they are required to start work and to complete the work exactly according to the bidding of the employer, to keep the order of the farm as established by the employer, and generally to fulfil their obligations according to the contract. [Section 34 of Law II, 1898]

The consequences of not fulfilling the contract were clear. The same punishment was exacted of those accused of working poorly, fomenting strike actions or appearing at the job without one's tools or farm hands: a sentence of up to 60 days in jail. A jail sentence of 60 days and a 400 Crown fine would be inflicted if one was accused of talking others into not acquiring an identity card or refusing to fulfil a contract, threatening workers who were willing to fulfil a contract, or praising or collecting money for someone who had broken a contract. If workers were thought to have inflicted damages on the employer's property, then his/her wages were docked up to the value of damages incurred. The most humiliating punishment was inflicted on those who simply left their job behind: they would be led back to their job by force. The law was merciless. "The local authorities are required without delay to order decisively the escort of the workers back to the work place by force and to execute the order immediately. The ruling concerning the escort of workers is not subject to appeal" (1898.II, sec. 37). No recourse, no way of appealing the wretched treatment of being led at bayonet point through village after village, town after town. The hatred of the peasantry for the gendarmerie was clearly sown in this memorable passage. It was this clause on the use of force, perhaps more than any other, which branded the legislation as the "Slave Law."

Legislators penned the labour laws in response to agrarian workers' anger over the terms of agricultural production and profit. The tone of the legislation is the rational deliberation of all aspects of the labour relation: wages, health, identity cards, diligence, and morality. Yet in the final analysis, the appropriation of labour was ensured by the use of force. Echoing Marx, Weber defines the state as "a relation of men dominating men, a relation supported by means of legitimate (i.e. considered to be legitimate) violence" (Sayer, 1991:141). Yet the bureaucratic organization and ideological expression of these forms is central, as Weber points out. "The 'inner justification' of the modern state, differentiating it from its precursors, is 'the belief in the validity of legal statute and functional 'competence' based on rationally created rules'" (Sayer, 1991:141; emphasis in the original). The rules of contract—so cautiously and methodically compiled, yet so brutally enforced—ensured the calm execution of wheat harvests all across the country.

Within a decade, the Parliament turned its attention to revisions in the servants' law of 1876. In the preamble to the 1907 bill on manorial servants, the government stated: "Those provisions of social value are missing from the old law, the establishment of which are now necessary to ensure the uninterrupted course of national production and social

peace" (Lörincz, 1974:49; emphasis in the original). It was now self-evident that national production and harmony should be secured by more effective social regulations. In recognition of the means the state designated for achieving social harmony, the law for agricultural servants was nicknamed, the "Whipping Law" (*derestörvény*).

The 1907 legislation only addressed the relationship between masters and those servants engaged in agricultural activities. Servants employed solely inside the household, or any workers employed on a daily basis, such as sharecroppers or day labourers, were not considered agricultural servants. Although the law stipulated that one month's service was sufficient to qualify as an agricultural servant, the usual contract lasted for one year. Agricultural servants were required to carry a service book (*szolgálati cselédkönyv*), which would be issued free of cost. It was illegal to enter any information in the book regarding the servant's qualifications; however, an employer was allowed to draw up a separate document, if so requested by the servant, recording his/her qualifications. This reinforces our understanding that the identity card served the state's goal of fixing citizens, rather than the employer's interest in the quality of labour performed.

Many of the regulations encoded in the agricultural workers' law were included in the legislation on agricultural servants, for example, conditions for entering and breaking the contract; the use of police force to return a servant to his/her work place; or restrictions on means of payment, such as a ban on alcohol or coupons. However, differences did obtain. Servants could be given a month's notice if they took poor care of animals or were caught torturing them.³ They could be dismissed immediately if, despite warnings, they or their family members irresponsibly handled candles, lamps or fire. Employers were required to transport servants to the nearest mill in town rather than force them to grind wheat at the mill on manor property. The costs of school fees had to be borne by employers for children living on manorial estates. An interesting clause stipulated that manorial workers would be denied a passport if not given permission to leave by their master, except if the servant was a minor accompanying his/her parents. By the turn of the century, emigration had reached crisis proportions, frightening legislators and landowners alike with the prospect of labour scarcity.

Most agricultural servants were housed on manorial estates or on properties contiguous to the manor within the village proper. Therefore, most of the new provisions in the law dealt with housing and related services. Remuneration for the services of manorial workers included housing, a minimal monetary payment, and provisions such as bacon,

salt, fuel for cooking and heating, feed for animals and plots of land to grow additional food stuffs for family and animals. The specific content of a servant's yearly compensation (*kommenció*) varied from county to county, and even from estate to estate. As the provisioning of workers and their families on the estate was an integral part of the wage contract, the new legislation contained many passages addressing the specific character of supplies and services rendered by employers. Included among these requirements were the specific health regulations to be followed in housing; the quality and quantity of animal feed distributed; free provision of wood for fuel, cooking, heating and baking bread; and stipulations concerning household plots, e.g. quality of the soil, early dispersal during the agricultural season, and the specific requirements of cultivation if handled by the manor directly. Wealthy peasants often employed one or two farm hands, who were also considered servants under the law, although in contrast to manorial servants, they were usually bachelors or only served until they married. The character of their contract varied somewhat from that of manorial servants, as their room and board was provided as an extension of the domestic economy of which they were a member, however humble their position may have been.

Perhaps the most important provision of the law on manorial servants, from the view of the working poor, was the elimination of unpaid labour. Specifically, the law forbid any master from requiring family members of agricultural servants to perform tasks or services for free, referred to as the "new corvée" (*új robot*). (The passage concerning the free provision of wood fuel mentioned above referred directly to the practice of requiring family members living on the manor to work in exchange for firewood.) During the 1890s, the widespread practice of requiring additional work above and beyond the tasks required for sharecropping or harvesting infuriated workers, reminding them of the days of serfdom.

The otherwise hopeless fate of the poor was not only antagonized by having their share of the produce [from sharecropping contracts] forced down, but in taking advantage of their desperate straits by requiring them to take on additional work for free in return for the small plots of land given them to hoe and harvest. It was virtually a regular custom that manorial estates and wealthier peasants demanded from sharecroppers 5-10, or in some cases more

(10-15) days of *robot* for the use of one cadastral acre. [Für, 1976:217-219]

A central tenet of the agrarian workers' movements was the barring of the "new *corvée*" (Gabona, 1934:3; Bernát, 1938:112). Bernát claims that the exclusion of free labour had little economic consequence for manorial owners, but had great symbolic value for agricultural workers (1938:112). Unfortunately, this passage was not included in the legislation on agricultural workers, for whom it would have had equally important symbolic value, as well as significant economic consequences.

The category of leisure time, and its use, were introduced in sections which pertained to restrictions on the length of the workday and work week. Stipulations were made within the legislation concerning the amount of leisure time allocated by the manor, and sleeping time as dictated by seasonal demands. These provisions were to ensure that the work load not endanger the health or physical strength of servants. Leisure time was to be granted, usually on Sunday and on special holidays. This was to permit a day of rest, but also to allow servants to attend "on occasion" the morning service of their particular religious denomination. However, quite extensive exceptions were made, either for specific occupations on the manor or in cases of urgent production needs. Nearly every exemption for holidays listed in the law applied to the regular activities of fulltime staff.⁴ An early clause in the servants' law stated that, in the absence of other regulations or stipulations, civil regulations would cover the rights and responsibilities of the parties to the contract. This clause appeared to be an important deviation from the 1876 law, since it abolished the master's unbridled patriarchal authority and placed the relations between masters and servants under civil law. However, a later clause nullified this potential innovation. "If the servant fails in his duty, then the master may rebuke him as a member of household; however, he is not authorized to administer punishment by a fine or by docking his pay" (Section 33 of Law XLV, 1907). The use of physical violence to administer a reprimand was common, hence the epithet of the "Whipping Law."

The final section of both laws concerned the delineation of authority, the hierarchy of offices responsible for implementing the legislation. The close attention paid to the particulars of bureaucratic hierarchy polish off the full modernity of the laws on agricultural workers and servants. The lone worker wandering through the legislation is met by a whole gaggle of offices, elegantly reified bodies implementing the fine points of state power as legitimate violence.

Conclusion

The purpose of this exercise has been threefold. The first has been to show how the state has attempted to intervene in local relationships of politics and economics in Hungary, illustrated by three moments spanning 150 years. Clearly, the presence of the state has become ever more intrusive in local affairs, as its own existence as an institution and a form of knowledge has become grander and more encompassing. The instruments of its authority have also undergone refinement: from simple lists to sprawling maps to elaborate contracts. Finally, authority has been depersonalized, exalted personalities replaced by the anonymous inhabitants of modern bureaucratic organization. This project took a long time, and bears many similarities with the growth of modern states in the rest of Europe during the same period.

The second goal was to portray how the construction of value in late feudal and early capitalist relations shifts from service to land to labour. By the end of the century, labour is clearly a category to contend with—both in its abstract, reified sense as an object of legal attention, and as a social community, making itself felt in agrarian socialist agitation, as well as in massive emigration. Despite the mobilization of labour in strikes and agrarian socialist politics, labour is increasingly portrayed as the property and characteristic of individuals. In other words, the rise of labour as a category of action is directly associated with new concepts of individualism, forms of identity clearly bound up with the development of capitalist economy. This is not to deny the importance of land, for those who possessed it could claim a quite different relation to labour than their compatriots. The re-imagining of communities during this period in fact valorized, even mystified images of the land and the soil. These images are well known to us in the nationalist rhetoric of the past and present. My argument is simply that labour is perceived by villagers, and certainly by the state, as the most significant component of agricultural production at this time, thus warranting attention unprecedented in earlier decades.

Finally, I have attempted, if only in passing, to suggest the manner in which these shifts in the source of value and state intervention assist us in seeing the displacement of materiality and sociality associated with commodity fetishism and the rise of modernity. This displacement accounts for the increasing perception that concepts such as meaning, culture, and value exists outside the everyday actions of social beings, within a separate and enclosed realm. It would be worthwhile to examine these assumptions more carefully, in order to accommodate

understandings of meaning and value which do not cleave so dearly to the experience of capitalist and modern society.

Notes

1. I wish to underscore here the novelty of pairing choice with calculation. The assumption many influenced by rational choice theories often make is that decision-making requires numerical calculation. This is unfortunate, since the historical record suggests that one must learn that choice requires such enumeration. In this case we see that figuring out the relative value of various options necessitated a careful study of prices, land values, tax rates and market fluctuations. Prior to the imposition of these new techniques of calculation, it was possible, indeed common for people to consider possible alternative ways of acting, thinking, being *without* having to couch those possibilities in numerical or monetary terms. Thus we should caution our colleagues to not read back into history current habits of thought, lest these habits come to be seen as universal when in fact they are quite particular cultural, historical forms.

2. When the national currency was changed from the florin to the gold crown in 1892, the value of land came to be expressed in gold crowns. To this very day, people will speak of the gold crown value of their land, as if the soil bred money instead of wheat. Indeed, when land was redistributed in the process of decollectivization, former cooperative farm members were allotted the proportional amount of their holdings in the form of "gold crown" certificates.

3. I am curious what in fact servants could have been doing to warrant being fired for torturing animals. This curiosity is heightened by the fact that in the 1890s claims of torture were also hurled at people considered to be outsiders in the agrarian community, usually Jewish renters of manorial estates (Lampland, 1994:307). Land torturers (*földkinzók*) were assumed to be abusing the land, but just what this meant is hard to determine.

4. I am reminded of the comment made to me by an elderly gentleman who once worked as a dairy hand at the manor in Sárosd, where I conducted field work in the early 1980s. "I had to leave early and always came home late. I never once saw my children awake while they were growing up."

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Aithníonn Queeróg Queeróg Eile: Gaeilgeoirí Aeracha Aontaithe agus Gluaiseacht Chomhaimseartha na Gaeilge¹

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Áras Mháirtín Uí Chadhain,
An Cheathrú Rua

Fásann an páipéar seo as staidéar ar "Gaeilgeoirí Aeracha Aontaithe," grúpa caidrimh do dhaoine homaighnéasacha le suim acu i nGaeilge. Tríd an eagrás a shuíomh laistigh de ghluaiseacht chomhaimseartha na Gaeilge, déanaim anailís ar ghnéithe den teanga ó pheirspictíocht shochtheangeolaíoch, ag tarraingt ar smaointí Sapir, a deir

While language is a symbol system which reports or refers to or otherwise substitutes for direct experience, it does not as a matter of actual behaviour stand apart from or run parallel to direct experience but completely interpenetrates with it ... [language] not only refers to but can even mould, interpret and discover experience [Sapir 1949:11].

Sa chomhthéacs seo, léirim go bhfuil "Gaeilgeoirí Aeracha Aontaithe" (nó an GAA, mar a thugann siad orthu féin) ar ceann de na guthanna laistigh de dhioscúrsa na Gaeilge a threascraíonn na déantúis idé-eolaíoch curtha i bhfeidhm ar an nGaeilge ag gléasanna ceannasacha ón naoú haois déag i leith. D'fhéadfaí maíomh go bhfuil an dioscúrsa sin mar chuid de "réabhlóid shiombalach" (Bourdieu 1991:131) atá ar bun sa chultúr, a dhearbhaíonn gur féidir an iomaí éispéireas agus féiniúlacht bheith mar chuid den Ghaeilge agus den Ghaelachas.

Teanga agus Idé-eolaíocht

Mar a mhaítear thuas, cuireann anailís shochtheangeolaíoch i gcoinne an dearcadh struchtúrach, a bhreathnaíonn ar theanga mar chóras dúnta, mar cheann "which fails to grasp the specific social and political conditions of language function and use" (Bourdieu 1991:32). Díríonn an tsochtheangeolaíocht ar an urlabhra mar ghníomh, agus léiríonn sí go ndéantar idé-eolaíochtaí a tháirgeadh, a scaipeadh agus a chur i bhfeidhm trí úsáid teanga; go nglacann gléasanna ceannasacha seilbh ar chumhacht shiombalach trí chliarlathas teangeolaíoch a bhunú