

The Role and Importance of Assessors in the Administration of Viticulture in the Little Carpathian Towns

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Assessors, sometimes also referred to as sworn officials, formed an integral part of the organizational structure of vineyard offices (*vinohradnícke úrady*) in the Little Carpathian region during the seventeenth century. They primarily fulfilled supervisory and oversight roles in viticulture, ensured adherence to quality standards in wine production, and participated in the resolution of disputes among members of the vineyard community. Furthermore, they acted as assessors and advisors in the courts presided over by vineyard masters. As part of the local or municipal self-government, they played a crucial role in enforcing order and applying the legal provisions contained in the vineyard statutes. The number of assessors varied depending on the size and significance of each viticultural locality – in centres with more intensive winegrowing activity, multiple assessors often operated alongside several vineyard masters. Their activities had a substantial impact on the development of viticultural conditions in the region and contributed significantly to the preservation of its long-standing winemaking tradition.

Keywords: Little Carpathian region; vineyard assessor; viticultural institutions; viticultural judiciary.

Introduction

In previous historical research on viticultural institutions that operated in the winegrowing centers of western Slovakia, attention has primarily focused on the vineyard office (German: *Bergamt, Bergrecht, Berggericht*; Slovak: *Slávne perecké právo, Perecký úrad*) and its chief official – the vineyard master (German: *Bergmeister*; Slovak: *Horný, Pereg*; Latin: *magister montium*).¹ Other viticultural offices and their officials have been left somewhat aside and have not received as much interest from specialists. Our current knowledge about the activities, rights, and duties of lower-ranking officials in viticultural institutions remains rather general in nature, providing only a broad picture with few details.

In this study, therefore, based on our many years of archival research into viticultural institutions, we have decided to clarify the significance and fundamental aspects of the office of assessors (*prisediaci*) at the vineyard office and court during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. We have deliberately chosen the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries because it was precisely during this period that the definitive formation of viticultural institutions took place in the Little Carpathian winegrowing localities. Over these years, their organizational structure stabilized; their activities acquired a consistent character; and the competencies, rights, and duties of individual officials were clearly defined and delineated. This period thus represents a key phase

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1 FRANKO, *Organizácia a správa*, 29. Regarding the issue of vineyard masters, see also: KAHOUNOVÁ, *Vinohradníctvo Malých Karpát*.

in the history of local viticultural law and administration, laying the foundation for further development in this area. Geographically, we have focused on viticultural institutions that were formed and operated in the winegrowing towns of western Slovakia, specifically in the Little Carpathian region, which in the past was the largest and most productive winegrowing area in Slovakia.²

The growing production of wine in the Little Carpathian winegrowing regions at the end of the Middle Ages necessitated a more sophisticated organization and more efficient management of viticulture. As the importance of viticulture grew, so too did the efforts of the authorities to achieve the highest possible level of control in this sector.³ With the expansion of vineyard areas and the increasing involvement of the local population in vineyard work, the need for systematic management of wine production and the organized distribution of the wine produced also increased. This process naturally led to increased demands for legal protection and regulation of the entire sector. The traditional customs and practices which had previously sufficed were proving inadequate in the context of dynamic developments. New situations and emerging problems required the creation of new rules and the introduction of innovative organizational procedures.

Alongside the development of viticulture and the flourishing of the wine trade, there was also a growing need for the formation of specialized institutions and legal frameworks governing these activities. As a result, at the end of the Middle Ages, the winegrowing centres of the Little Carpathian region began systematically codifying older customs and customary law concerning the protection and management of vineyards. At the same time, the importance of viticultural institutions grew, as their activities became increasingly necessary for maintaining favourable production. In the second half of the sixteenth century, for example, Bratislava already had an independent vineyard office led by a vineyard master, who was responsible for the protection and management of the local vineyards.⁴

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the economic situation of the towns and villages of the Little Carpathian region – and thus also of local viticulture – did not undergo any significant upheaval, and developments in this respect were similar to those of the previous century.⁵ However, it was not an entirely ideal period. Not only viticulture but the entire economic development of the region was adversely affected by various disruptions, such as military events, fires and climatic fluctuations.⁶ From the second half of the seventeenth century, Little Carpathian viticulture gradually began to fall into crisis, which culminated at the end of the century. During the crisis,

2 The Little Carpathian region is located in southwestern Slovakia. Today, it is home to the so-called Little Carpathian Wine Region, which is one of the six officially recognized winegrowing regions in Slovakia. The Little Carpathian Wine Region is the oldest and most significant winegrowing area in Slovakia; in the past, it ranked among the most important wine regions within the entire Kingdom of Hungary. It stretched along the southern foothills of the Little Carpathians, from Bratislava through Pezinok and Modra to Trnava. During the Middle Ages and the early modern period, it played a significant role in the economic and cultural life of the region.

3 KAHOUNOVÁ, *Vinohradníctvo Malých Karpát*, 12.

4 FRANKO, *Malokarpatské vinohradnícke poriadky*, 35–36.

5 ŠPIESZ, *Malokarpatské vinohradnícke mestá*, 48–49.

6 For example, in 1619, Modra was burned down by the troops of Imperial General Buquoy. In 1633, the town was struck by a great fire, and in 1663, the area around the town was ravaged by Ottoman military units, who burned down the serf village of Kráľová. LEHOTSKÁ, *Dejiny Modry*, 44. See also: ŠPIESZ, *Malokarpatské vinohradnícke mestá*, 49.

some vineyards were not cultivated at all and became neglected, or, if cultivated, they were managed with less intensity.⁷ This situation had an adverse effect especially on the urban economy. In the second half of the seventeenth century, wine production declined and the situation in Little Carpathian viticulture became significantly more complicated than they had been in the sixteenth century.⁸

The towns' income from large-scale wine sales and the tapping of wine delivered by townspeople in the form of dues decreased.⁹ The unfavourable situation was also reflected in the long-distance export of municipal wine. Neither contemporary military events nor the overall political situation in the Kingdom of Hungary were favourable to Little Carpathian viticulture and the wine trade. At that time, imperial troops began long-term military operations to liberate Hungary from the Ottomans. The wars against the Ottomans along with uprisings against the Kingdom by rebellious estates, required truly substantial financial resources, to which the Little Carpathian towns and their inhabitants naturally had to contribute. The high contributions they had to pay nearly ruined their economies.¹⁰ The overall economic situation was very tough, and the region's urban economies took a long time to recover from these events. The towns tried to bridge this difficult period, for example, with large loans from wealthy individuals or church institutions (such as monasteries).¹¹ At the dawn of the eighteenth century, Little Carpathian viticulture was still in a crisis that had been developing since the mid-seventeenth century. Despite the crisis and economic troubles, viticulture in the Little Carpathian towns remained one of the main sources of municipal income and supported a substantial part of the population in the Little Carpathian winegrowing localities.

Viticultural Institutions

The importance of viticulture and winemaking in the towns of the Little Carpathians is also evidenced by the existence of special viticultural institutions – vineyard offices which operated within the local municipal structures. The first written record of such an institution dates from 1485 and refers to an office in Vajnory. These viticultural institutions developed alongside regular municipal administration, and their main task was the supervision, coordination and protection of local viticulture. The vineyard office coordinated the life of the viticultural community and represented an organized form of executive and judicial authority in viticulture. In the Little Carpathian region, these were either municipal or town institutions that combined supervisory, penal, judicial and control powers.¹² The functioning of viticultural institutions in the Little

7 Štátny archív v Bratislave, pracovisko Archív Modra, fund Magistrát mesta Modry, Acta varia, 1660–1674, inv. no. 1601 (hereinafter ŠA BA, pAM, MmM, Acta varia, inv. no. 1601).

8 KAZIMÍR, *Malokarpatské vinohradníctvo*, 135.

9 For the economic situation of the Little Carpathian towns, see ŠPIESZ, *Slobodné kráľovské mestá*.

10 TANDLICH, *Mestečká na území*, 41.

11 Between 1682 and 1689, Modra paid a total of the enormous sum of 72,791 goldens and 92 denarii in contributions. This amounted to an average of over 9,000 goldens per year. During the military years of 1694 to 1695, Modra was required to pay as much as 13,623 goldens. The situation became even worse during Rákóczi's Uprising (1703–1711), when both imperial and insurgent forces demanded financial contributions from the people of Modra. ŠA BA, pAM, MmM, Acta varia, inv. no. 1601. See also: ŠPIESZ, *Malokarpatské vinohradnícke mestá*, 49–50.

12 See the records of the activities of the Trnava vineyard masters. Štátny archív v Bratislave, pobočka Archív Trnava, Magistrát mesta Trnavy, Regestum promontorii rosarum MDLXIII, 1563–1632, sign. IV/m, fol. 171b (hereinafter ŠA BA, MmT, Regestum promontorii, 1563–1632, sign. IV/m.).

Carpathian region became more systematic during the sixteenth century, according to the documentation.¹³ From the second half of the sixteenth century, their activities were governed by legally binding norms codified in the so-called vineyard statutes.¹⁴ Gradually, however, landowners – mainly town councils in the Little Carpathian region – sought to limit the powers of viticultural institutions and subject them to their direct administrative control.¹⁵ Thus, vineyard offices and courts increasingly played the role of executive bodies within the local self-government of viticulture.

The number of members of these institutions varied in different periods. It depended, for example, on the size and significance of a particular viticultural locality, local traditions, and on the organizational structure of the town or municipal administration into which the viticultural institutions were integrated. During the seventeenth century, there were usually two vineyard masters in the Little Carpathian viticultural localities, who had at their disposal a varying number of assessors (most often referred to in sources as *Bergleute*, *Beysitzers*, or *Beysitzende*).¹⁶ As the area of vineyards in a given locality grew, so did the number of office members; in more prominent viticultural centres, up to four vineyard masters could operate at the same time.¹⁷

During the medieval period, the vineyard master decided on all important matters concerning viticulture with the participation of the entire viticultural community. In the vineyard statutes from Vajnory (today a district of Bratislava), which are so far the oldest known vineyard statutes from the territory of Slovakia (the second half of the 15th century), the vineyard master is mentioned in connection with his duty to oversee the collection of the vineyard levy.¹⁸ The Bratislava vineyard statute from 1570 details the duties and rights of the local vineyard master.¹⁹ In the sixteenth century, the scope of this officer's authority began to be more narrowly defined and individual tasks were specified.²⁰ The vineyard master was elected from among local winegrowers, and the election of other members of the vineyard office and court took place simultaneously with his election.²¹ In the seventeenth century, the vineyard master was essentially

13 See *Monumenta Hungariae Juridica-Historica*, 1–821. Archív mesta Bratislavy, Kniha cechových štatútov 135–140, sign. Ce 387., fol. 157–162 (hereinafter AMB, Kniha cechových štatútov, sign. Ce 387).

14 Štátny archív v Bratislave, pracovisko Archív Modra, Magistrát mesta Modra, Privilegia civitatis Modor, statuta civitatis Modor, Acta promonhorii vinearum 1608–1689, sign. V. áll., 155, 1232 sz. (hereinafter ŠA BA, pAM, Privilegia civitatis, 1608–1689, sign. V. áll., 155, 1232 sz.).

15 Archív mesta Bratislavy, Magistrát mesta Bratislavy, Zápisnice zo zasadnutí mestskej rady a index (Sitzungsprotokolle des Stadtrats und Index), 1641–1660, 2a10, inv. no. 10679, 1661–1671, 2a11, inv. no. 10686, 1675–1680, 2a13, inv. no. 10697 (hereinafter AMB, MmB, Sitzungsprotokolle, 1641–1660, 2a10, inv. no. 10679, 1661–1671, 2a11, inv. no. 10686, 1675–1680, 2a13, inv. no. 10697).

16 In 1603, six assessors served alongside the vineyard master in Pezinok. Štátny archív v Bratislave, pracovisko Archív Modra, Magistrát mesta Jur pri Bratislave, Spisy Magistrátu mesta Svätý Jur – základný rad. Čiastkový inventár I. diel. (1575–1638), box 62, inv. no. 1193.1. SM 1597 (hereinafter ŠA BA, pAM, MmJ, Spisy, box 62, inv. no. 1193.1. SM 1597).

17 Štátny archív v Bratislave, pracovisko Archív Modra, Magistrát mesta Jur pri Bratislave, Spisy Magistrátu mesta Svätý Jur – základný rad. Čiastkový inventár I. diel. (1575–1638), box 62, inv. no. 1193.1. SM 1597 (hereinafter ŠA BA, pAM, MmJ, Spisy, box 62, inv. no. 1193.1. SM 1597).

18 KOVÁTS, *A vajnorai hegyközség rendtartása*, 469.

19 See the individual provisions of the Bratislava Vineyard Statute of 1570. AMB, Kniha cechových štatútov, sign. Ce 387, fol. 157–162.

20 *Monumenta Hungariae Juridica-Historica*, 9–25; KIRÁLY, *Pozsony város joga*, 409–417; See also AMB, Kniha cechových štatútov, sign. Ce 387, fol. 157–162.

21 ŠA BA, pAM, MmP, Bergbuch, inv. no. 355.

a municipal official, elected and confirmed in office by the town council.²² After being elected or confirmed, Little Carpathian vineyard masters took an oath. Their term of office was one year, but they could be re-elected several times in succession.²³ The rights and duties of vineyard masters and other members of the vineyard office were mainly contained in the individual vineyard statutes and their addenda (*additamenta*).²⁴

Vineyard masters possessed primarily organizational, administrative, judicial, control, disciplinary, police (e.g., detaining unauthorized persons in the vineyards), administrative, material, and local competences and powers. A more detailed picture of their activities can be drawn, for example, from the records and books of vineyard masters (*Bergbuch, Bergprotokol*).²⁵ The power of vineyard masters was defined primarily territorially, meaning they had the right to manage and determine conditions in the vineyard hills and designated areas in their vicinity. Their main competences included supervising and inspecting vineyards and, if necessary, imposing sanctions on persons who violated the vineyard statutes. For example, the vineyard master regularly carried out not only inspections of local vineyards and vineyard-related work but also inspections of wells, embankments, roads, paths and turnarounds located in the given vineyard area.²⁶ In addition to these activities, the vineyard master presided over the vineyard court and regular meetings of the viticultural community.²⁷

Over time, however, the duties of the vineyard master increased and the vineyard office began to appoint assistants assessors. With the growing importance of viticulture and viticultural institutions, town councils gradually restricted the powers of vineyard masters and their subordinates. Individual town councils sought to subordinate the viticultural institutions and their personnel to their direct administrative control.

Basic Characteristics of the Role of the Assessor

As previously indicated, the vineyard master originally performed all important tasks and made decisions in viticulture with the participation of the entire community of winegrowers at joint assemblies in or near the vineyards. Over time, as viticulture and its institutions developed, this general participation was replaced by a narrower group of representatives of the winegrowing community, who carried out their duties

22 See the annual records of the election of personnel to individual municipal offices. AMB, MmB, Sitzungsprotokolle, 1589–1606, 2a6, inv. no. 10667, 1607–1621, 2a7, inv. no. 10670.

23 Štátny archív v Bratislave, pracovisko Archív Modra, Magistrát mesta Modry, Liber juramentorum ab Anno 1607 usque Annum 1643, inv. no. 1307, fol. 23 (hereinafter ŠA BA, pAM, MmM, Liber juramentorum. inv. no. 1307). It often happened, however, that a vineyard master proved adept at his office and, as a result, was re-elected for several consecutive years. In Modra, Tomáš Smigalik and Ján Kappl were elected vineyard masters in 1689. They retained their positions for four consecutive years, until 1692. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the record-holder for the longest tenure as vineyard master in Modra was Martin Kusnic, who held the office continuously for ten years. See Štátny archív v Bratislave, pracovisko Archív Modra, Magistrát mesta Modry, Zápisnice vinohradníckych majstrov, Bergprotokol 1661–1782, inv. no. 643 (hereinafter ŠA BA, pAM, MmM, Bergprotokol 1661–1782, inv. no. 643).

24 The addenda expanded, supplemented, specified, and clarified the provisions of older vineyard statutes. They were usually not incorporated directly into the text of the original statute but were recorded separately – either following the main text or in another part of the vineyard book. For the issue of the addenda to individual statutes, see, for example FRANKO, “Additamenta” – dodatky, 190–206.

25 See, for example ŠA BA, pAM, MmM, Bergprotokol 1661–1782, inv. no. 643.

26 The provision of the Modra Vineyard Statute of 1664. Štátny archív v Bratislave, pracovisko Archív Modra, Magistrát mesta Modry, Štatúty a inštrukcie, inv. no. 1303/a (hereinafter ŠA BA, pAM, MmM, Štatúty, inv. no. 1303/a). See also FRANKO, *Organizácia a správa*, 29–32.

27 ŠA BA, pAM, MmM, Bergprotokol 1661–1782, inv. no. 643.

after taking an oath.²⁸ The election or confirmation of assessors to their positions took place annually, usually in the spring months, and their final selection was approved by the relevant municipal magistrate. Initially, only two assessors were elected to assist the vineyard master, but their number increased over time. At the turn of the seventeenth century, four to six assessors typically served in the vineyard offices of Little Carpathian towns and villages. By the end of the seventeenth century, the vineyard office in Modra had as many as eight assessors.²⁹ The term of office for assessors was one year.³⁰

Assessors were elected from among the local population, and tended to be chosen from among older, more experienced and wealthier winegrowers or members of the municipal magistrate. They were required to have sufficient knowledge of vine cultivation, vineyard protection and grape harvesting.³¹ This practice ensured that influential and experienced townsmen, who also had a personal interest in the prosperity of local viticulture because they owned vineyards themselves, were involved in the management and resolution of viticultural matters. Thus, competent individuals with a mandate from the community stood alongside the vineyard master, which strengthened the legitimacy of their decisions and the exercise of their office.

At the end of the Middle Ages, until around the turn of the sixteenth century, assessors represented the interests of winegrowers in relation to the town or other authorities and were also in opposition to the local vineyard master. However, as viticulture developed and its economic importance grew, this role gradually transformed and underwent internal development. From the sixteenth century onward, assessors no longer represented only the winegrowing community but became the executive and advisory body of the vineyard master and began to defend the interests of the municipal magistrate in viticultural matters as well. They actively participated in the administration, organization and supervision of the municipal viticultural economy, implementing the orders and decisions of the municipal magistrate and the vineyard master.³² From the late sixteenth century, assessors became the closest collaborators of the vineyard master. Ideally, there was a partnership between them – the vineyard master led the office and represented the authority of the law, while the assessors provided support and ensured the implementation of his decisions. Their main task was to cooperate with the vineyard master in the protection, management, and administration of viticulture, ensuring above all that his decisions and orders were actually applied and carried out in practice. Assessors also formed a kind of advisory board for the vineyard master, serving as his support in decision-making. Little

28 Oaths from the Little Carpathian winegrowing localities have been preserved mainly from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries and are recorded in the municipal or vineyard books of the respective towns and villages. The oath represented a commitment expressed through a specific ritual form, invoking something sacred to the individual taking the oath. In the event of a breach of the oath, not only were specific punishment or sanctions imposed, the individual also faced moral dishonour. All members of the vineyard office, including those in the lowest positions, were required to take an oath of service. For oaths of viticultural officials, see: ŠA BA, pAM, MmM, Liber juramentorum. inv. no. 1307; and Štátny archív v Bratislave, pracovisko Archív Modra, Magistrát mesta Modry, Kniha prisah a inštrukcií /Liber concordiarum et iuramentorum/, inv. no. 1308 (hereinafter ŠA BA, pAM, Liber concordiarum, inv. no. 1308).

29 GÁBRIKOVÁ, *Malokarpatské vinohradníctvo*, 35–36.

30 ŠA BA, pAM, MmM, Liber juramentorum. inv. no. 1307.

31 ŠA BA, pAM, MmM, Liber juramentorum. inv. no. 1307.

32 See the records of the activities of the vineyard master and his assessors. ŠA BA, pAM, MmP, Bergbuch, inv. no. 355.

Carpathian vineyard masters often relied on the advice of their experienced assessors when dealing with complex problems.³³

Interestingly, assessors in these localities, with a few exceptions, did not have a precisely defined working time. The only specific mention of working hours was found in the later Modra edition of the statutes from the second half of the seventeenth century, which stated that Modra assessors were not allowed to remain at the division of vineyards later than three o'clock in the afternoon.³⁴

During the seventeenth century, assessors became not only an advisory but also an executive component of every vineyard office in the Little Carpathian region. Despite all their duties, they still represented the entire community of local winegrowers and thus served as the main link between the winegrowers and the municipal magistrate. In practice, this meant that the municipal magistrates gained direct reach over the entire winegrowing community and, through the vineyard master and assessors, could manage and control the entire organization of vineyard operations within their territory.³⁵

Activities and Duties of the Assessors of the Vineyard Master

The basic rights and duties of assessors were anchored in the individual vineyard statutes. As mentioned above, the body of assessors was not only an advisory body to the vineyard master. Various duties and rights of the vineyard master were gradually delegated to the assessors, and municipal magistrates periodically assigned them new tasks.³⁶

Their primary duties included supervisory activities. Either independently or together with the vineyard master, they monitored compliance with the provisions of the valid vineyard statutes and other regulations concerning local viticulture.³⁷ Assessors organized and coordinated collective work in the vineyard hills and in the vineyards themselves, which was crucial for maintaining the quality and continuity of viticultural production. They played a significant role in organizing work in the vineyards, overseeing all activities taking place in municipal, ecclesiastical and private vineyards.³⁸ They supervised pruning, tying and hoeing of vines and the harvesting of grapes during the vintage. They ensured the maintenance and cleanliness of paths, roads and wells in the vineyard hills, as well as all fortifications near the vineyards (walls, fences, gates, stone embankments, drainage channels for rainwater from the vineyards, etc.).³⁹ Proper organization of work activities, management of collective tasks in the vineyards and thorough supervision of their execution enabled effective use of the

33 ŠA BA, pAM, MmM, Bergprotokol 1661–1782, inv. no. 643.

34 "Gak dluhi čas pri Winohradnim deleny se zustawaty ma." ŠA BA, pAM, MmM, Štatúty, inv. no. 1303/a.

35 ŠA BA, pAM, MmJ, Spisy, box 62, inv. no. 1193.1. SM 1597. Štátny archív v Bratislave, pracovisko Archív Modra, Magistrát mesta Jur pri Bratislave, Zápisnica magistrátu 1618–1622, inv. no. 613 (hereinafter ŠA BA, pAM, MmJ, Zápisnica, inv. no. 613).

36 AMB, MmB, Sitzungsprotokolle, 1641–1660, 2a10, inv. no. 10679.

37 ŠA BA, pAM, MmP, Bergbuch, inv. no. 355. Štátny archív v Bratislave, pracovisko Archív Modra, Magistrát mesta Jur pri Bratislave, Perecký protokol /Bergbuch/, 1663–1761, inv. no. 954 (hereinafter ŠA BA, pAM, MmJ, Bergbuch 1663–1761, inv. no. 954).

38 ŠA BA, pAM, MmP, Bergbuch, inv. no. 355. ŠA BA, MmT, Regestum promontorii, 1563–1632, sign. IV/m. fol. 171b.

39 ŠA BA, pAM, MmJ, Bergbuch 1663–1761, inv. no. 954. Štátny archív v Bratislave, pracovisko Archív Modra, Magistrát mesta Modra, Zápisnice vinohradníckych majstrov, Berg Ordnungs Protokoll, inv. no. 644 (hereinafter ŠA BA, pAM, MmM, Berg Ordnungs Protokoll, inv. no. 644).

available labour. This was a key prerequisite for the successful progress of the growing season and the maintenance of economic balance within the winegrowing community. Assessors also assisted the vineyard master with various tasks and activities directly in the vineyards. They participated in measuring, dividing and inspecting vineyards, as well as in placing or removing boundary stones in the vineyard hills.⁴⁰

The supervisory role of assessors was not limited to monitoring the vineyards and the work carried out there but also included gathering information about violations of vineyard statutes and conflicts among winegrowers. Assessors maintained close contact with individual winegrowers, who provided them with the necessary information and pointed out problems related to the vineyards and activities within them.⁴¹ The assessors reported their findings to the vineyard masters and often acted as mediators, helping to resolve conflicts and ensuring that disputes were settled in accordance with agreed rules and local viticultural traditions. Through their activities and mediation, they often prevented the emergence of larger and more complex disputes.

The role of assessor was also associated with the need for close cooperation among members of the winegrowing community. Since assessors were often also members of the local municipal council or the vineyard court, they advocated for and promoted the views and needs of local winegrowers in these forums as well.⁴² In this way, they contributed to a transparent and fair management of the local winegrowing community.

Assessors also participated in meetings of the vineyard court (Slovak: *Perecké právo*, German: *Bergrecht*).⁴³ In this respect, they acted as advisors and assistants in the courts of vineyard masters. Thus, they were part of collective decision-making, using their experience and knowledge of viticulture. Together with the vineyard master and members of the municipal magistrate, they even participated in the creation of rules intended to ensure order in local viticulture.⁴⁴ In addition, they participated in the assessment of various, though usually less serious, offenses related to viticulture, such as damage to vines, theft of grapes or failure to fulfil work duties. Assessors took part in evaluating offenses and similar situations and, together with the vineyard master, proposed possible sanctions. In evaluating and classifying offenses and proposing subsequent sanctions, they primarily relied on the valid vineyard statutes and municipal laws.⁴⁵

The vineyard master was not allowed to issue a more serious verdict without the presence and consent of the assessors.⁴⁶ This ensured collective control over his power, and the assessors also served as a kind of counterbalance to any potential arbitrariness in the vineyard master's decision-making. The role of the vineyard master's assessors had a direct impact on maintaining stability and order in winegrowing communities.

40 ŠA BA, pAM, MmM, Štatúty, inv. no. 1303/a.

41 The Statutes of the Modra Vineyard Masters (after 1664). Štátny archív v Bratislave, pracovisko Archív Modra, Magistrát mesta Modry, Štatúty a inštrukcie, inv. no. 1298/a (hereinafter ŠA BA, pAM, Štatúty, inv. no. 1298/a).

42 AMB, MmB, Sitzungsprotokolle, 1589–1606, 2a6, inv. no. 10667, 1607–1621, 2a7, inv. no. 10670.

43 FRANKO, *Viničné právo*, 209–212.

44 See the final paragraph of the Svätý Jur Vineyard Statute of 1650. Štátny archív v Bratislave, pobočka Archív Modra, Spisy Magistrátu mesta Svätý Jur – základný rad (1639–1662), box 67, inv. no. 1245.37, SM 1650 (hereinafter ŠA BA, pAM, MmJ, Spisy, box 67, inv. no. 1245.37, SM 1650).

45 ŠA BA, pAM, Štatúty, inv. no. 1298/a.

46 Štátny archív v Bratislave, pracovisko Archív Modra, Magistrát mesta Modry, Liber statutorum 1617–1664, inv. no. 1296 (hereinafter ŠA BA, pAM, MmM, Liber statutorum, inv. no. 1296). ŠA BA, pAM, Štatúty, inv. no. 1298/a.

Although assessors did not possess full executive power, their participation in decision-making processes and in supervising labour discipline was irreplaceable. Effective management of work processes in the vineyards, consistent application of established cultivation methods and systematic protection of the vines had a direct impact on both the quantity and quality of the harvest, thus significantly contributing to increased production yields and improving the overall level of winemaking in the individual towns and villages of the Little Carpathian region.

Rewards and Benefits

The performance of the office of assessor to the vineyard master was associated with a set of privileges and benefits which represented a form of both material and symbolic recognition for fulfilling assigned tasks and responsibilities.⁴⁷ For example, assessors received income from fines, administrative fees and fees collected in connection with violations of the vineyard statutes. A common practice in the Little Carpathian region was that a certain portion (often half) of fines imposed for offenses in the vineyards went directly to the vineyard office, that is, to the vineyard master and his assessors.⁴⁸ During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, vineyard assessors did not have a fixed salary.

In addition to financial rewards, assessors also enjoyed gifts in kind and other advantages. During work activities such as appraising, measuring and dividing vineyards, the owners would usually host them, providing food and wine. This was both a form of social respect and traditional compensation for work performed in the field.⁴⁹ The assessor's role was also associated with ceremonial social events, such as lunches or breakfasts (*frúštik*) organized on the occasion of the inauguration of new vineyard office personnel, during which wine from municipal vineyards was served.⁵⁰ Such gatherings and feasts strengthened the community cohesion of vineyard office members and also underscored the importance of their role.

In Little Carpathian towns, assessors were exempt from certain municipal duties, such as guard service on the town walls or performing various labour obligations.⁵¹ These exemptions reflected not only the workload of assessors within the vineyard administration but also recognition of their social status. The advantages and benefits associated with the office served not only as compensation but also highlighted the prestige and trust bestowed upon them by the winegrowing community.

Despite these benefits, the position of assessor was primarily a public service based on the principles of trust, responsibility and ethical conduct. Assessors held authority within the urban winegrowing community. The moral capital of the office played an important role – assessors' social standing and reputation were closely tied to how honourably and impartially they performed their duties.⁵² In cases of failure

47 See the provision of the Modra Vineyard Statutes from the seventeenth century: "W kterich wecoch Pergmistrowe oslobozeny gsu." ŠA BA, pAM, MmM, Štatúty, inv. no. 1303/a.

48 ŠA BA, pAM, MmM, Bergprotokol 1661–1782, inv. no. 643. AMB, Kniha cechových štatútov, sign. Ce 387.

49 The provision of the Modra Vineyard Statutes from the seventeenth century: "...deleny Pred sebe wzty, ale s pomocu a Pritomnosti Prisedicich, ktorí za swu Pracu od Panow Pergmistrow tractowany biwagu..." ŠA BA, pAM, MmM, Štatúty, inv. no. 1303/a.

50 "Instruction wegen derer Mahlzeithen." ŠA BA, pAM, MmM, Liber statutorum, inv. no. 1296.

51 ŠA BA, pAM, MmM, Štatúty, inv. no. 1303/a. ŠA BA, pAM, MmJ, Spisy, box 67, inv. no. 1245.37, SM 1650. AMB, MmB, Sitzungsprotokolle, 1641–1660, 2a10, inv. no. 10679.

52 FRANKO, *Služobné príisahy*, 28–33.

or abuse of power, assessors faced sanctions and loss of credibility. In practice, this could lead to their premature removal from office or non-renewal of their mandate in the next term.⁵³ Thus, the office of assessor stood at the intersection of exercising power, serving the city and upholding the moral order of the winegrowing community.

The Position of Assessors within Municipal Self-Government

During the sixteenth century, viticultural institutions in the Little Carpathian towns had a relatively high degree of autonomy. Vineyard masters and their assessors often participated in the preparation and revision of vineyard regulations. In some cases and situations, they could decide independently based on their own judgment and local practice.⁵⁴

Gradually, however, the competencies of municipal authorities increased at the expense of the independence and autonomy of viticultural institutions. Especially during the seventeenth century, a trend of centralization of municipal administration can be identified, which manifested in the systematic restriction of the powers of the vineyard master and his assessors.⁵⁵ The magistrates of the Little Carpathian towns sought to manage and strictly control local wine production, as it generated significant revenue for the municipal treasury.⁵⁶ In the town of Svätý Jur, for example, from the mid-seventeenth century, the decision-making independence of vineyard office officials was significantly reduced. The office lost its character as an autonomous body and was transformed into a purely executive branch, implementing instructions and resolutions issued by the town council or mayor. Decision-making powers in more serious matters, such as disputes over vineyard ownership, organization of vineyard defence, or the collection of wine taxes, were transferred exclusively to municipal authorities.⁵⁷ A similar development, though with varying intensity, occurred in other towns of the Little Carpathian region.

Thus, during the seventeenth century, the vineyard offices of the Little Carpathians became firmly integrated into the structures of municipal self-government. The activities of each vineyard office's personnel were subject to formal oversight by municipal authorities, represented by the mayor, burgomaster and town council.⁵⁸ The town council fulfilled a regulatory and supervisory function, issuing generally binding regulations for the vineyard office and its officials, including vineyard statutes.⁵⁹ At the same time, it monitored and controlled the observance and implementation of these regulations through the vineyard office.

53 AMB, MmB, Sitzungsprotokolle, 1675–1680, 2a13, inv. no. 10697.

54 For this issue, see the provisions of the Bratislava Statutes of 1570. AMB, Kniha cechových štatútov, sign. Ce 387.

55 AMB, MmB, Sitzungsprotokolle, 1607–1621, 2a7, inv. no. 10670, 1622–1633, 2a8, inv. no. 10674, 1641–1660, 2a10, inv. no. 10679.

56 Archív mesta Bratislavy, Magistrát mesta Bratislavy, Rechtsbuch, 4s1 (hereinafter AMB, MmB, Rechtsbuch, 4s1); Archív mesta Bratislavy, Magistrát mesta Bratislavy, Majetkové prevody a index (Aufgaben, Kauf und Verkauf der Wiengarten und Häuser), 1606–1622, 4m1, inv. no. 11197 (hereinafter AMB, MmB, Aufgaben, Kauf, 4m1, inv. no. 11197).

57 FRANKO, *Organizácia a správa svätajurského*, 74–75.

58 "...Daß einer in Bergrecht zue einen Fiscal bestellet werden soll..." ŠA BA, pAM, MmM, Liber statutorum, inv. no. 1296.

59 "...Protož Slawni Magistrat na predgmenowane užiwigice Običage, nasledugice Prikazany ustanovity račil..." ŠA BA, pAM, MmM, Štatúty, inv. no. 1303/a.

The process of gradually integrating specialized viticultural bodies into the broader framework of municipal administration was motivated by the desire of municipal authorities to unify administration, strengthen central oversight, and enforce tax and legal obligations more efficiently. Despite these changes, assessors retained – albeit with limited powers – an important role in subsequent periods as a point of contact between the winegrowing community and the municipal administration. They continued to carry out executive tasks in the vineyards, contributed to resolving various local disputes and served as bearers of local viticultural tradition, thus remaining a stable element of communal identity and order.

Common Features and Differences with Assessors in Neighbouring Countries

The institution of the vineyard master and his assessors was not unique to western Slovakia and the Little Carpathian region. Similar forms of vineyard protection and administration existed in other winegrowing regions of Central Europe, albeit with local variations. Historically, Hungary had a model of viticultural organization and administration comparable to those in neighbouring countries. In the adjacent Moravian and Austrian wine regions, where viticulture was highly developed, viticultural institutions operated with almost identical personnel structures, foci and activities to those in Hungary and the Little Carpathians. Despite many shared features, there were certain differences worth noting.

In the vineyard offices of Austrian lands, Bohemia and Moravia, one or two vineyard masters were at the helm, typically assisted by two to six assessors.⁶⁰ Just as in Hungary, viticultural institutions in neighbouring countries were subordinate to municipal, local, noble or ecclesiastical authorities, and their activities were coordinated through relevant vineyard statutes and regulations.⁶¹ These institutions possessed varying degrees of autonomy, which the authorities sought to restrict from time-to-time for various reasons. The authorities subordinated viticultural institutions and their staff through various partial orders and regulations, but especially through new vineyard statutes (called *Bergtaidinge* in Austria) and their updated provisions.⁶²

One significant difference, however, must be highlighted: viticultural institutions in Hungary developed later than those in Moravia and Austria. When Hungarian viticultural institutions and law were flourishing (sixteenth–seventeenth centuries), their counterparts in Moravia, Bohemia, and Austria had already passed their peak. From the seventeenth century onward, wine regions in neighbouring countries experienced a shift from rights to increased obligations and greater influence from municipal councils or aristocratic vineyard owners.⁶³

In Bohemia and neighbouring southern Moravia, the so-called *horenské právo* (mountain/vineyard law)⁶⁴ was in effect from the Middle Ages, and viticultural institutions there shared many features with those in the Little Carpathians. In Moravian winegrowing localities, the main official was the *horský majster* (mountain/vineyard

60 In 1573, the vineyard master of the Aichberg vineyard hill had five assessors at his disposal. Gloggnitz, *Bergtaiding des Klosters Formbach* (1573). WINTER, *Niederösterreichische Weistümer. Teil 1*, 303–306, no. 56/2.

61 KAUT, *Wiener Weinkultur*, 259–260.

62 KAHOUNOVÁ, *Viničné právo*, 602.

63 KAHOUNOVÁ, *Viničné právo*, 604.

64 For the issue of vineyard rights (*horenské práva*) and vineyard regalia (*horenské regály*), see: BÍLÝ, *IUS MONTIUM I*, 60–67.

master, *hormistr* or *horymistr*), assisted, as in the Little Carpathians, by sworn assessors (*přísežní*), annually elected from the local winegrowing community.⁶⁵ The equivalent of assessors in Moravian sources was referred to variously as *horní konšelé*, *horní přísežní* or *přisedící* and colloquially as *horník* or *horníček*.⁶⁶ The term *horný* in Moravia often also denoted the vineyard master, so for distinction, the older *horný* was the vineyard master and the younger *horný* the assessor.⁶⁷ The rights and duties of Moravian assessors were largely identical to those of their counterparts in the Little Carpathians – they assisted the vineyard master in managing vineyards, co-settled disputes, substituted for the master, certified various actions that required the presence of assessors, sat on courts and oversaw compliance with vineyard statutes (*horenské artikuly*).⁶⁸ Thus, they represented both an executive and advisory body of the vineyard office. Many Moravian winegrowing towns (such as Znojmo, Mikulov, Strážnice or the Slovácko region) had their own vineyard statutes, which included extensive provisions on the rights and duties of assessors, often closely resembling Little Carpathian regulations.⁶⁹

In Moravia and Bohemia, from the fifteenth century, so-called Councils of Assessors (*Hornická rada*, *Horenská rada*)⁷⁰ also operated in some winegrowing localities, serving as permanent advisory, supervisory and judicial bodies for the vineyard master.⁷¹ There is no evidence of such an institution in Hungarian winegrowing localities.

As in the Little Carpathian region, Moravian and Czech assessors received wages from fines and administrative fees, and also received various gifts in kind.⁷² They were likewise exempt from some municipal or local duties.

A fundamental difference compared to the Little Carpathian region was in the area of vineyard judiciary. In the Little Carpathians, so-called vineyard masters' courts (*Slávne perecké právo*) handled and judged vineyard-related disputes.⁷³ These courts are mentioned in the earliest Little Carpathian vineyard books as *prima instantia*,⁷⁴ indicating they were the primary judicial instance for the winegrowing community. In contrast, in Bohemia, Moravia and Austria several different forms of vineyard courts existed. In Austrian and Moravian winegrowing localities, disputes were judged in the Middle Ages and early modern period at assemblies of winegrowers (German: *Bergtaiding*, Czech: *hromady*), convened two or three times a year and analogous to older main vineyard courts.⁷⁵

65 FROLEC, *Tradiční vinařství*, 123; BÍLÝ, *Modranský horenský řád*, 19.

66 VÁLKOVÁ – FRÝZOVÁ, *Úřad perkmistra*, 2; POŠVÁŘ, *Moravské právo*, 153–156.

67 BÍLÝ, *IUS MONTIUM II*, 36.

68 BÍLÝ, *IUS MONTIUM II*, 36–39; POŠVÁŘ, *Moravské právo*, 150.

69 KAHOUNOVÁ, *Viničné právo*, 597–600; KLVÁŇA, *Vinohradnictví na Strážnicku*, 166–184; KLVÁŇA, *Vinohrady na Slovensku*, 69–80.

70 The Council of Assessors (*Horenská rada*) supervised, for example, the proper conditions for vine cultivation and wine production. It also had influence over the course of the harvest celebrations, the start of which was determined by the vineyard master in agreement with the local authority. MITÁČEK – PROCHÁZKA, *Modřice. Dejiny města*, 736.

71 BÍLÝ, *IUS MONTIUM II*, 39.

72 BÍLÝ, *IUS MONTIUM II*, 37.

73 ŠA BA, pAM, MmM, *Statúty*, inv. no. 1303/a.

74 "Wer etwaß schädlicheß, so in seinem Weingarten geschehenn anzuedutern hatt, der soll prima instantia beim Bergmaisternn, dann beim ganzen Bergrecht...." ŠA BA, pAM, MmM, *Liber statutorum*, inv. no. 1296.

75 The vineyard statute from Bisamberg, Austria, states: "Item, von erst so meldent die erbern perknessen das man alle jar drew perktäding haben [sol], das erst des montags nach der liechtmess, das ander des montag

Additionally, in Moravia, there were also vineyard masters' courts known as Full Mining Courts (*Plné hornické soudy*); these were similar to the Little Carpathian vineyard masters' courts, but with the difference that in Moravia they also judged civil and criminal cases. These courts were presided over by the vineyard master, with assessors as permanent members of the judicial council. The vineyard masters' courts and Full Mining Courts met as needed, with the session date set by the vineyard master in agreement with the assessors.⁷⁶ These courts addressed and judged not only minor cases but serious property disputes and long-term personal disputes among winegrowers.⁷⁷ The range of regulatory and criminal provisions in Moravian vineyard statutes was very broad, often including harsh corporal punishments to ensure maximum protection of the vineyards.⁷⁸

By contrast, vineyard masters' courts in the Little Carpathian region mainly judged less serious public law, administrative and disciplinary offenses or private disputes, especially violations of the vineyard statutes.⁷⁹ Their jurisdiction included minor neighbourly disputes; debt disputes related to vineyards; disputes arising from appraisals, measurements and divisions of vineyards; damage to vineyards; and labour disputes. They also decided on whether to detain people or impose sanctions for violations of vineyard statutes.⁸⁰ Hungary's viticultural judiciary was less developed than in neighbouring countries. The viticultural judiciary in the Little Carpathians also had significantly limited autonomy and decision-making powers compared to those in neighbouring countries, where vineyard masters and assessors enjoyed much greater autonomy and authority.

In Austrian wine regions (Lower Austria – *Weinviertel*), similar viticultural institutions existed as in the Little Carpathians, but they operated under the influence of Bavarian-Rhine vineyard law. The function corresponding to assessors is referred to in written sources as *Beisitzer*, *Pergnassen* (assessors) or *Weingeschworenen*, (sworn vineyard officials).⁸¹ In Austrian wine towns and villages, assessors were elected annually at assemblies of the whole winegrowing community and confirmed by the municipal or local council, or by the estate owner or his representative in the case of manors. Elections

nach sand Jorgen tag, das dritt des nagsten montag nach sand Giligen tag." Bisamberg, Bergrecht Wolfgang Müestingers, nun der Bürger von Korneuburg. WINTER, *Niederösterreichische Weistümer*. Vol. 2, 345–349, no. 55/II. See also the vineyard statutes from Meidling (fifteenth century). WINTER, *Niederösterreichische Weistümer*. Vol. 1, 725; or the statutes Froschdorf, Bergtaiding (1527). WINTER, *Niederösterreichische Weistümer*, Vol. 1, 92–94, no. 19.

76 In Moravia, several different forms of vineyard courts operated, such as the Annual Miner's Court (*Výroční hornický soud*), the Vineyard Hill Courts (*Soudy vinohradní hory*), the Vineyard Master's Court (*Soud hormistra*), the Conciliation Vineyard Court (*Smírčí horenský soud*), the Upper Vineyard Court (*Vrchní horenský soud*) and the Higher Vineyard Court (*Vyšší horenský soud*). BÍLÝ, *IUS MONTIUM II*, 41–75.

77 KLVÁŇA, *Vinohradnictví na Strážnicku*, 169. See also FROLEC, *Tradiční vinařství*, 125.

78 See also Horenské právo Nosislavi, článok 7, horenské právo Rakvic, článok 18, horenské právo Němčiček, článok 6, and so on. FROLEC, *Tradiční vinařství*, 147.

79 ŠA BA, pAM, MmM, Liber statutorum, inv. no. 1296.

80 See the individual provisions of the Bratislava and Modra vineyard statutes from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. ŠA BA, pAM, MmM, Bergprotokol 1661–1782, inv. no. 643; AMB, *Kniha cechových štatútov*, sign. Ce 387.

81 Bisamberg, Bergrecht Wolfgang Müestingers, nun der Bürger von Korneuburg. WINTER, *Niederösterreichische Weistümer*. Vol. 2, 345–349, no. 55/II.

usually took place in spring.⁸² Their term was one year, as in the Little Carpathians and Moravia. Assessors in Austrian winegrowing localities had similar rights and duties as their colleagues in Hungary and Moravia, mainly serving as advisory and executive bodies in viticulture, without a precisely defined working time in the statutes.⁸³ Their pay came from fines and fees,⁸⁴ but in some Austrian localities, vineyard masters and assessors also received a regular salary. Like their colleagues in the Little Carpathians, they were exempt from certain municipal or estate duties and received various gifts in kind.⁸⁵ During various vineyard tasks, they were also hosted by winegrowers.⁸⁶

Assessors in neighbouring countries had broader powers in the area of vineyard judiciary than in the Little Carpathian region. The main difference thus lay in the area of jurisdiction. The powers and decision-making authority of Little Carpathian vineyard masters and their assessors were significantly restricted by municipal institutions.⁸⁷ While in the Little Carpathians, serious criminal cases related to viticulture were handled by municipal judicial bodies, in Moravian and Austrian winegrowing localities, the vineyard court could decide even serious and capital crimes.⁸⁸ Thus, Moravian and Austrian vineyard masters and their assessors had a greater degree of autonomy in vineyard jurisdiction than their counterparts in Hungary or the Little Carpathian region.

In comparison with other winegrowing regions in neighbouring countries, it can be concluded that Little Carpathian assessors fell firmly into the category of bourgeois-style viticultural administration.⁸⁹ They were closely connected with municipal self-government and deeply integrated into urban structures. In traditional winegrowing towns and villages in Moravia and Austria, local viticultural institutions and their staff enjoyed broader autonomy not only in jurisdiction but also in viticultural administration. In neighbouring countries, vineyard offices and their staff could defend their status and autonomy more effectively within municipal, local or estate administrations.⁹⁰

82 The vineyard statute from Gloggnitz, *Bergtaiding des Klosters Formbach* (1573). WINTER, *Niederösterreichische Weistümer*. Vol. 1, 303–306, no. 56/2.

83 The supervisory powers of the assessors are reflected, for example, in the provision "Beschauung des burgfrids, weeg und gräben" of the vineyard statute from Gaming, Austria. Gaming, *Bergtaiding* (1564–1576). WINTER, *Niederösterreichische Weistümer*. Teil 3, 600–607, no. 89/III/2.

84 Gaming, *Bergtaiding* (1564–1576). WINTER, *Niederösterreichische Weistümer*. Vol. 3, 600–607, no. 89/III/2. Bisamberg, *Bergrecht Wolfgang Müestingers, nun der Bürger von Korneuburg*. WINTER, *Niederösterreichische Weistümer*. Vol. 2, 345–349, no. 55/II.

85 Gloggnitz, *Bergtaiding des Klosters Formbach* (1573). WINTER, *Niederösterreichische Weistümer*. Vol. 1, 303–306, no. 56/2.

86 "...darumb sol man in genueng thun mit ainer suppen oder trunk." Gloggnitz, *Bergtaiding des Klosters Formbach* (1573). WINTER, *Niederösterreichische Weistümer*. Vol. 1, 303–306, no. 56/2.

87 In the seventeenth century, one municipal official (*fiscal*) was assigned to the vineyard court in Modra to oversee the course of judicial proceedings and to approve the verdicts rendered. Provision No. 5 of the Modra Vineyard Statute (manuscript B): "...Daß einer in Bergrecht zue einen Fiscal bestellet werden soll, undt wan etwan eine Parteÿ daselbst, von Fiscaln angeklaget wierdt, weg der conviction, wie mit ihme zue verfahren." SA BA, pAM, MmM, Liber statutorum, inv. no. 1296.

88 Die *Pantaiddingbücher* Des Klosters Heiligenkreuz. In: KALTENBAECK, *Die Pann- und Bergteidigbücher*, 3–21. Gumpoldskirchen, Traiskirchen und Pfaffstetten. *Bergtaidingsrechte des Klosters Mauerbach*. WINTER, *Niederösterreichische Weistümer*. Vol. 1, 521–532, no. 92. Nappersdorf, Banntaiding. WINTER, *Niederösterreichische Weistümer*. Vol. 2, 200–205, no. 33.

89 BAĐURÍK, *Vinohradníctvo na Slovensku*, 162; KAZIMÍR, *Malokarpatské vinohradníctvo*, 119–122.

90 See, for example, the individual versions of the statutes from Moravia and Austria. RITTER – CHLUMECKY, *Einige Dorf – Weistümer*; KALTENBAECK, *Die Pann- und Bergteidigbücher*, 1846–1847.

Little Carpathian towns and villages, on the other hand, stood out for their vineyard statutes, especially those from the modern era, which were quite diverse and extensive in content, focusing on various areas and codified in writing from the sixteenth century, as evidenced by preserved municipal books and statutes.⁹¹ Nevertheless, in some more remote wine regions of Hungary, orally transmitted customs and less formalized assessor roles persisted for a long time.

The designation of assessors differed from region to region and country to country, but the essence of the function was essentially the same everywhere: they were trusted landholders entrusted with supervising vineyards and enforcing viticultural law alongside the chief official, the vineyard master. They stood between the authorities, the vineyard master, and the winegrowing community, whose interests they represented.

Conclusion

In this study, we have aimed to provide a comprehensive analysis of the significance and mechanisms of the institution of the assessor to the vineyard master, highlighting its contribution to the structured organization of vineyard administration, the maintenance of public order and the stimulation of economic development in historically established winegrowing regions. The role of the assessor to the vineyard master in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries represented a complex system of powers and responsibilities that was crucial for the effective management and organization of viticulture at the local level. The assessor acted not only as an advisory and supervisory body, but also as a communication bridge between the winegrowers themselves and higher administrative authorities. Together with the vineyard master, assessors bore direct responsibility for the protection of vineyards and property rights, for overseeing the quality of viticultural production, maintaining work discipline, and resolving property and personal disputes within the winegrowing community. Their activities directly influenced the economic performance of winegrowing localities and simultaneously strengthened social cohesion and cultural continuity in regions with a long-standing winemaking tradition.

The results of this study indicate that the position of assessor went beyond the level of an ordinary administrative apparatus – it constituted an integral part of the social, economic and cultural system in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Today, this function can be interpreted not only as a significant historical phenomenon but also as a precursor of modern forms of collective management and participatory governance in local communities.

Assessors were part of the self-governing system of winegrowing communities and later of viticultural associations, whose primary purpose was to ensure order and the effective functioning of viticulture as an important economic activity. In the 1930s, significant changes took place in the protection, administration and organization of viticulture, not only at the local but also at the national level. With the dissolution of vineyard offices in the Little Carpathian region, the function of assessors also disappeared. Of the original viticultural institutions, only the role of the vineyard ranger has survived in the region to the present day.

91 Archív mesta Bratislavy, Magistrát mesta Bratislavy, Hospodárska kniha (dane, inventáre majetkov bratstiev, cechové artikuly, platby, dohody) / Wirtschaftsbuch 1364–1538, 3a1, inv. no. 11711 (hereinafter AMB, MmB, Wirtschaftsbuch, 3a1, inv. no. 11711); ŠA BA, pAM, MmP, Bergbuch, inv. no. 355; AMB, Kniha cechových štatútov, sign. Ce 387.

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