

ACTA UNIVERSITATIS SZEGEDIENSIS

FORVM

Acta Juridica et Politica

Professors of Law at the University of Szeged

Volume XI.
Number 2.

SZEGED
2021

Redigunt:

TAMÁS ANTAL, ZSUZSANNA JUHÁSZ, KRISZTINA RÚZS MOLNÁR,
ZSOLT SZOMORA, NORBERT VARGA

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Abbreviation of our publication

FORVM Szeged

ISSN 0324-6523 Acta Universitatis Szegediensis
ISSN 2063-2525 FORVM Acta Juridica et Politica

This book was published with the support of the Hungarian Ministry of Justice,
grant no. IX-14/18/2/2020

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MÁRTA GÖRÖG

BÉNI GROSSCHMID*

(1851–1938)

I. Biography

Béni *Grosschmid* is considered the “Master” of the defining private law scholars of Hungary in the early 20th Century.¹ *Grosschmid* also participated in the codification work that established the foundations for the renewal of contract law, while maintaining respect for tradition and family ties in inheritance and family law. He was born on the 9th of November, 1851², in Máramarossziget, to a family of ancient noble jurists of Saxon extraction. As his nephew, Sándor *Marai* noted about his family: “[they] are of Saxon descent, who migrated to Hungary in the XVIIth Century, faithfully serving the Habsburgs, and whose ancestor was rewarded by Emperor Leopold II with nobility. This ancestor was revered as »Chief Commissioner Count Kristóf« by the family, and who directed the royal treasury’s mines around Máramaros.”³ His father was Károly *Grosschmid*, his mother Klementína *Radványi* of Rozsnyó descent.⁴ He completed his

* Translated by Gábor Hajdu, PhD candidate at the University of Szeged, Faculty of Law and Political Sciences.

¹ And so especially Károly *Szladits*. See: SZLADITS 1948, 1. HAMZA – SÁNDOR, 2. Ifj. *Szigeti* László In: ifj. SZIGETI 1932, 427. *Meszlény* Artur. Lásd: MESZLÉNY 1931, 429–431. Further important representatives of the Béni *Grosschmid* school include: Bálint *Kolosváry*, Salamon *Beck*, Antal *Almási*, the latter of whom was a private professor of the Kolozsvár university from 1910 of the Budapest university from 1927, and of the Szeged university between 1926 and 1940; Vö. WEISS 2006, 102.

² Different sources record different dates for *Grosschmid*’s birth. 6 November 1851 is present in the following works: SZINNYEI 1955–1956., SÁNDOR 2013, 135., the Digitális Törvényhozási Tudástár [Digital Legislative Database], the Jogifórum [Legal Forum] (downloaded on 11.12.2019.); other sources list 6 November 1852 as birthdate: Magyar Nemzet, Issue on 8 September 1938. 2., *Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon* [Hungarian Biographical Lexicon] 1967, 623., Nemzeti Örökség Intézete [Institute of National Heritage] (downloaded on 17.12.2019.); *Tudósportál* [Knowledge Portal] (downloaded on 18.12.2019.); 1852 is present in the following sources: *Révai Kétkötetes Lexikona* 1. [Two-Volume Révai Lexicon 1.] A-J, Budapest, 1947. 508., *Új Lexikon* [New Lexicon] 1936, 1540. *Új Idők Lexikona* [Lexicon of new times] 1938, 2826., the obituary of *Pesti Hírlap*: *Pesti Hírlap* release of 8 November 1938, 4. Emília *Weiss* considers the alteration a result of a mistake in the *Hungarian Legal Lexicon* in her treatise, as it marks 1852 as the year of birth for *Grosschmid*. WEISS 2006, 114. end note no. 2. In contemporary documents, 9 November 1851 is used, and thus we also consider it as the true date. See especially: *A Magyar Jogászegylet Grosschmid előadása* [The Hungarian Lawyer Association’s *Grosschmid* lecture] 1936, 711. VLADÁR 1936, 325.

³ MÁRAI electronic release without page number.

⁴ ROKOLYA 2017, 13.

high school studies in his hometown, Máramarossziget, as well as Nagyvárad (Oradea). He started his legal studies in Vienna, and he acquired his doctorate in law at the University of Budapest in 1872. He received the Sztrokay Award of the Academy in 1873,⁵ with justification from general secretary János Arany, for his treatise titled *On the legitimate portion*. The treatise and the award were accompanied by public accolade. The next stage of his life found him at first in a judicial career, then a career at the justice ministry, and finally as an attorney. In 1880, he became a private professor of the Law and State Sciences Faculty of the University of Budapest. Between 1882 and 1885, he was a teacher of civil justice, then of trade and bill of exchange law at the Legal Academy of Nagyvárad. Starting from the 1884/1885 academy year, he was, for nearly seven years, a public extraordinary lecturer then a public regular lecturer at the Ferenc József University of Kolozsvár. In 1890, he became a professor of the Law and State Sciences Faculty of the University of Budapest, at its Hungarian Private Law Department.⁶ As an university professor he was “considered a peculiar teacher, he did not care too much about the zeal of his students, hated those who tried to cram subjects, and would rather let someone who knew nothing about the exam questions but was an intelligent person pass, than someone who crammed for the exam and jabbered the answers without ceasing. [...] he was capable of silently listening to an examinee for hours on end, patiently and comfortably, while the examinee squirmed and sweated. You do not address the subject, but I see that you are intelligent, he would sometimes say.”⁷

He was the dean of the Law and State Sciences Faculty of the University of Budapest for the academic years of 1897/98 and 1913/14.⁸ In 1917/1918, he was the university’s rector.⁹ In the 1890s and the 1900s, on request of the Justice Ministry, he was an active and notable participant of codifying Hungarian private law, especially on the field of

⁵ SZLADITS 1948, 3. *Szladits Károly I. tag gyászbeszéde Grosschmid Béni I. tag ravatalánál* [Eulogy of First Member Károly Szladits at the bier of First Member Béni Grosschmid] 1938, 204. VÉKÁS 2013, 261. There are sources indicating the year 1872 as well. See: SZINNYEI 1955–1956.

⁶ As Gábor *Vladár* wrote in his valedictory: “28 June 1890 is a lucky date in the yearbooks of our university, on which Hungarian youth received another great lecturer in the form of Béni Grosschmid at the Department of Private Law.” VLADÁR 1938, 326.

⁷ MÁRAI electronic release without page number.

⁸ The University’s 1914/1915 almanac gave the following summary of his biography: “BÉNI GROSSCHMID is the doctor of legal sciences, credible public and bill of exchange lawyer, doctor at royal Hungarian university of Budapest, public and regular lecturer of Hungarian private law and mining law, former chairman of the third foundation examining committee and the legal examining committee, member of the judicial practice examining committee, consultant then editorial member of the permanent committee established by the royal Hungarian ministry for the purposes of preparing the general private law code, member of the Hungarian lawyer association’s directorial committee, extraordinary then regular lecturer of civil litigation, bill of exchange and trade law at the royal legal academy of Nagyvárad, public extraordinary lecturer of Austrian civil law at the royal Hungarian Ferenc József university of Kolozsvár, inner member of the governmental review of legal sciences committee, dean and lecturer’s body president of the Budapest royal Hungarian university in the years 1897/98 and 1913/14, pro-dean of the same in 1989/99 and currently, Hungarian royal court counselor, elected correspondent member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, honorary member of the national association of Hungarian legal trainees, the pro-dean of the law and political sciences faculty (he was named extraordinary lecturer at the university of Kolozsvár in 1887, and he was named regular lecturer for the same university in 1890).”

⁹ *Grosschmid Béni 1917–18. tanévi Rector Magnificusnak Rektori székfoglalója*. [Inaugural speech of Grosschmid Béni as the Rector Magnificus of 1917-1918] 17–76.

family law¹⁰ and inheritance law. As a result of his manifold accomplishments, such as participating in the preparation of the civil marriage law of 1894, the draft of the first civil code,¹¹ as well as his notable work in the preparation of several other laws,¹² he was named royal court counselor in 1899.¹³ He went into retirement as a professor from the Hungarian Private Law Department of the Law and State Sciences Faculty of the University of Budapest at seventy-seven years old, on the 31th of August, 1928.¹⁴ He was elected as a corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences on the 10th of May, 1901.¹⁵

He decided to change his old aristocratic surname,¹⁶ as a university student, to Benő Zsögöd, after a Szekler village found in Csík county. His motivation was to express his sense of belonging to his Hungarian identity. He later returned to his original surname in 1904.¹⁷ The public was surprised by this later, unusual decision, and this reaction was even reported in the press.¹⁸ According to Gábor Vladár, Grosschmid explained his motives as follows: “In my zeal as a young man, I hungarianized my German-sounding name, and adopted the name of a small Transylvanian spa-town instead. I later regretted this, as I felt that I have caused offence towards the piety I owe to my ancestors, who acquired honors for many centuries with their German surname, as sub-prefects and other county and city officials in Nagybánya and the surrounding counties. Thus, our welding with Hungarian identity is expressed stronger, if I continue to use my German surname, if I serve my country with my German surname, and attempt my utmost to enrich its culture.”¹⁹ He also told the story of his name-changing to Pál

¹⁰ VÉKÁS 2014, 81.

¹¹ Benő Zsögöd participated in the preparation of the draft as a consultant member of the permanent committee for the preparation of the Hungarian general civil code. In: Jogtudományi Közlöny Szerkesztősége: *A magyar általános polgári törvénykönyv tervezetét előkészítő állandó bizottság jegyzőkönyvei*, 1897. [Minutes of permanent committee for the preparation of the Hungarian general civil code, 1897.], 5.

¹² Regarding the family property law chapter of the draft of the general Hungarian civil code see the minutes of the meeting on the 10th of December 1897. In: Jogtudományi Közlöny Szerkesztősége: *A magyar általános polgári törvénykönyv tervezetét előkészítő állandó bizottság jegyzőkönyvei*, 1897. [Minutes of permanent committee for the preparation of the Hungarian general civil code, 1897.], 71–86.

¹³ As Ady notes on the 1st of February 1903 in the Nagyvárad Journal: “Zsögöd Benő Grosschmid becomes a notable with his gracious court counsellorship [...]” ADY electronic release without page number (downloaded on 17 December 2019).

¹⁴ After his retirement, he lived in complete seclusion at the vacation house of his son, Lajos Grosschmid, in Visegrád. The Pest News (Issue on 8 September 1938, 4.), quoting his nephew’s words: “He reached the legal age limit when he went into retirement; he lived next to the Duna in a vacationing site, woke up at dawn, swam in the Duna as an eighty years old, and worked in his room until dusk, leaning on the writing table.”

¹⁵ SÁNDOR 2013, 135. Magyar Nemzet, Issue on 8 September 1938. 2., Magyar Nemzet, Issue on 11 September 1938. 18. He held his inaugural speech with the title *Intestate Succession in the laws of Solon. A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia tagjai 1825–1973* [Members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences 1825–1973] 1975, 93. However, other sources list him as a regular member. See: *Új Idők Lexikona* [Lexicon of New Times] 1938, 2826.

¹⁶ Márjai wrote the following on the origins of the family name: “My father’s German name, and the village of ancestors that still stands in Saxony, shows that the family was in the service of the elector of Saxony at the state’s mint, they smithed Saxon coins for centuries, they were Groschen-Schmieds, coinsmiths.”

¹⁷ The bulletin announcing it: *Budapesti Közlöny* 1904/147. 1. SZINNYEI 1955–1956.

¹⁸ Cf. *Pesti Hírlap*, Issue on 29 June 1904. 1–2. *Pesti Hírlap*, Issue on 30 June 1904. 3–4. *Független Magyarország*, Issue on 7 July 1904. 8. In Szeged press: *Szeged és Vidéke* 1904. július 1., 7. *Szeged és Vidéke*, Issue on 3 July 1904. 3.

¹⁹ VERESS electronic release without page number (downloaded on 17 December 2019).

Angyal as follows: “in the early 70s, I wanted to express my burning feeling of Hungarianness outwardly as well, and I picked the name of a small settlement in Csík, Zsögöd (Jigodin), almost on a whim; later, to show my noble origins, I used my two surnames together, and later returned to my original one.”²⁰

He did not prize formality much, “he was never present where he was celebrated.”²¹ As such, among other events, he failed to appear at the celebratory session convened for his 80th birthday, and at the *Grosschmid* Cup’s award ceremonies organized by the private law seminar of the Royal Pázmány Péter University.²² At the behest of Károly Szladits, the Hungarian Lawyer Association decided in 1935,²³ that in order to “[...] deepen the importance of *Grosschmid*’s work in the public consciousness”²⁴, they would hold *Grosschmid* lectures on a yearly basis.²⁵

Grosschmid was not only a trailblazer in legal science but was also one of the first long-distance swimmers of Hungary, who, according to credible contemporary sources, also achieved notable feats in this regard.²⁶ As the notary of the *Buda Gymnastics Association*, he participated in the unification of the latter organization and the *Buda Gymnastics Circle*, and in 1875, he participated in the creation of one of Hungary’s largest associations, the *Budapest (Buda) Gymnastics Association*.²⁷

His notable relative, Sándor Márai²⁸ was a writer. Furthermore, *Grosschmid* was the paternal uncle of the famous movie director Géza Radványi²⁹, and was also the elder brother of Géza *Grosschmid*, the famous lawyer, politician, and senator of the city of Kassa.

The death of his wife in the December of 1937³⁰ broke *Grosschmid*’s spirit,³¹ and in about a year, he died on the 7th of September, 1938, at half past nine in the morning,³² in

²⁰ ANGYAL 1938, 323.

²¹ GAJZÁGÓ 1938, 80.

²² VLADÁR 1936, 629., GAJZÁGÓ 1938, 70. János Nyulászi, the editor-in-chief of *Civil Law*, also held a cup speech. NYULÁSZI 1935, 587–592.

²³ See in detail: *Nyulászi János serlegbeszède* [Goblet-speech of János Nyulászi] 1935, 587. footnote marked with an asterisk.

²⁴ *A Magyar Jogászegylet Grosschmid előadása* [The Grosschmid lecture of the Hungarian Lawyer Association] 1936, 711.

²⁵ Antal Almási held the first lecture of the 1936 Grossschmid-cycle with the title “*Grosschmid and family law*.” See the summary: *A Magyar Jogászegylet Grosschmid előadása* [The Grosschmid lecture of the Hungarian Lawyer Association] 1936, 711. One of the last were organized by the Hungarian Lawyer Association in the year of his death. *Grosschmid-ünnep a Magyar Jogászegyletben* [Grosschmid-celebration in the Hungarian Lawyer Association] 1938, 261–262.

²⁶ The press of the time said the following about the more than thirty kilometers long swim between Pest and Vác: “Benő Zsögöd led the swim for a good while from the start, then Szekrényessy and then Bachmayer, who retained his position afterwards to become the winner at 200-250 laps; Kálmán Szekrényessy gained second place, and Benő Zsögöd third place with 100 laps behind.; [...] Benő Zsögöd arrived in the best condition, and it seemed, that we could predict another victory for him in a newer competition with sufficient further training.” *Vadász-Lap*, Issue on 16 July 1881. 231.

²⁷ Jogifórum, Tudóspotál (downloaded on 18 December 2019).

²⁸ Original name: Sándor Károly Henrik Márai *Grosschmid*.

²⁹ Born Géza *Grosschmid*, who adopted the name of *Radványi* after his parental grandmother. He was the 1947 director of the *Valahol Európában* movie, and after the Second World War, one of the first directors of the Theatre and Movie School’s movie department. (Abroad, he was the discoverer of Louis de Funes).

³⁰ Magyar Nemzet, Issue on 8 September 1938. 2.

³¹ Pesti Hírlap, Issue on 8 September 1938. 4.

³² *Ibid.*

Visegrád.³³ His death was mourned by his five children.³⁴ His coffin was carried from the aula of the central university building to the National Graveyard on the Fiume Road,³⁵ where he was laid to rest in a solemn gravesite donated by the capital,³⁶ on the 10th of September, 1938.³⁷ Two years later, his son, Lajos *Grosschmid*³⁸, mathematician, professor and dean of the Economics Faculty of the University of Budapest (1932-1933), was laid to rest alongside his father. The grave was declared protected by the National Memorial and Piety Committee in 2004.

II. Academic work

Grosschmid (Zsögöd) the genius of civilistics

Grosschmid was a genius legal scholar, the “Iliad of Hungarian private law.”³⁹ Reading and understanding his works is an intellectual challenge requiring concentration.⁴⁰ “In essence, *Grosschmid* affected Hungarian legal sciences through his loyal apprentice, Károly Szladits, who was the leading private lawyer of Hungary in the first half of the XXth Century. Szladits made him digestible, spread his theories in a comprehensible fashion.”⁴¹ As László *Asztalos*, said: “Szladits translated Grosschmid into Hungarian.”⁴²

His primary work⁴³ was undoubtedly *Chapters from our contract law*,⁴⁴ which was a trendsetter regarding the developmental curve and interpretation of Hungarian private law.⁴⁵ It was described as an “epochal work”,⁴⁶ a “book of eternal significance”⁴⁷ “notable

³³ See the circumstances of his death: Magyar Nemzet, Issue on 8 September 1938. 2. Elhunytát számos gyászír adta a jogászközönség tudtára, így többek között a *Polgári Jog* is. *Polgári Jog Közgazdaság és Pénzügy* 1938/7. 1. Pesti Hírlap, Issue on 8 September 1938. 4. Magyar Nemzet, Issue on 8 September 1938. 2.

³⁴ Lajos *Grosschmid* was a regular lecturer of mathematics at the university, István was chief director of Malert, Sándor was a judge, and two daughters. Pesti Hírlap, Issue on 8 September 1938. 4. Magyar Nemzet, Issue on 8 September 1938. 2.

³⁵ 41, N/A, 1, 36

³⁶ Pesti Hírlap, Issue on 10 September 1938. 9.

³⁷ Ibid. On the funeral: Magyar Nemzet, 1938. Issue on 11 September 1938. 18. Pesti Napló, Issue on 8 September 1938. 17.

³⁸ At his son’s birth, Grosschmid used the Zsögöd surname, and thus the son was named Lajos *Zsögöd* as well, which changed back to the original aristocratic name only later, in 1904.

³⁹ MESZLÉNY 1931, 430.

⁴⁰ Cf. CSEHI 2012, 18. SÁNDOR 2013, 136.

⁴¹ ECKHART 1936, 83.

⁴² ASZTALOS 1973, 14.

⁴³ “The colossal measure of his life’s work is most obvious, beyond the Chapters, in his Law Doctrine.” ALMÁSI 1931, 431. More details on the work: ALMÁSI 1931, 431–438.

⁴⁴ See the general review of the work in current legal literature: WEISS 2006, 103–105. VÉKÁS 2019, 33–48.

⁴⁵ The first edition of the I. volume was released in 1898, the second edition in 1901, and the II. volume was released in 1900. Both volumes received a celebratory edition in 1932-1933. The work is not “only” about classic contract law institutions, but also “scattered specific contract law branches”, such as the obligations appearing in property law, inheritance law and family law.

⁴⁶ SZLADITS 1936, 6.

⁴⁷ WEISS 2006, 104.

peak amongst the mountain ranges of Hungarian private law science”,⁴⁸ a “ [...] peerless work in the legal literature of the world.”⁴⁹ *Szladits* described him as follows: “The main objective of his life’s work was to lead back our legal science to that independent national basis, in which there was a break in 1848 and which was removed under the influence of a foreign legal system.”⁵⁰ In the words of Emília *Weiss*: “[...] he contributed to the scientific foundation of independent legal thought, and with regards to several of his achievements, he contributed to legal science from the entire world’s perspective.”⁵¹

Károly *Szladits*⁵² – “the humble apostle of Grosschmid’s genius”⁵³ – commented on his monumental, two-volume work that creating a comprehensive picture of its detailed elements would be akin to writing an entire book on them.⁵⁴ Even so, this book was completed: an inner circle of *Grosschmid*’s students⁵⁵, for the occasion of their “Master’s” 80th birthday, gifted *Grosschmid* a two-volume Glossary on the Chapters, alongside a festive edition of the Chapters.⁵⁶ Their goal was to “[...] summarize the perpetually meaningful achievements of the Chapters, and expand them with their own thoughts and from the perspective of contemporary use, with respect to the changed circumstances and law.”⁵⁷ The students organized a great festivity at the Vigadó of Pest, on the occasion of the Master’s 80th birthday: “His fellow teachers, his former students, various famed lawyers and judge, around two thousands of them came to celebrate *Grosschmid*, and even the minister appeared. But they waited unsuccessfully for him at the appointed hour: he sent a letter to the minister, he thanked the celebration, but excused himself, stating that he »will not let his life be shortened by such an event. «”⁵⁸ Artúr *Meszlény* appropriately expressed the respect and acknowledgement towards the Master and his work: “Our Master, you rise like an inspirative marble statue representing the old grandness of our law, amidst the bleakness of devastation that affects even the field of law. You, with your very existence, with the triumphant accomplishments of your immortal works, with the all-understanding wisdom and clear soul that looks across a lifetime’s struggle, express the intactness of Hungarian law, Hungarian private law, its

⁴⁸ VÉKÁS 2013, 257.

⁴⁹ SZLADITS 1948, 6.

⁵⁰ SZLADITS 1936, 6.

⁵¹ WEISS 2006, 104.

⁵² “Károly Szladits, »who served the genius of Grosschmid with filial piety and complete adherence throughout a human lifetime.«” *Beck Salamon felszólalása* [Words of Salamon Beck] 1935, 593. Károly Szladits dedicated his regular membership inaugural speech at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences to the memory of Béni Grosschmid. The speech was later also printed. See: SZLADITS 1948, 1–8.

⁵³ BECK 1938, 394.

⁵⁴ SZLADITS 1936, 11.

⁵⁵ Cf. *Grosschmid Béni: „Fejezetek Kötelmi jogunk köréből” új jubileumi kiadása* [New celebratory edition of the “Chapters from our contract law.”] 1932, 108.

⁵⁶ Glossza [Glossary] 1932–1933., The Glossarys comprised of twenty-two authors’ writings, and they also contributed its editorial board. Members of the editorial board: Antal *Almási*, Nándor *Baumgarten*, Viktor *Bátor*, György *Blau*, Bernát *Besnyő*, Salamon *Beck*, Gyula *Dezső*, Béla *Frigyes*, László *Fürst*, Frigyes *Görög*, Ödön *Kuncz*, Lóránt *Lőw*, Olivér *Markos*, Gáspár *Menyhárh*, Artúr *Meszlény*, Endre *Nizsalovszky*, János *Nyulási*, Béla *Reitzer*, Bertalan *Schwartz*, Kálmán *Személyi*, Károly *Szladits*, Lajos *Tóth*. For book introductions: IFJ. SZIGETI 1932, 426–429.

⁵⁷ IFJ. SZIGETI 1932, 427.

⁵⁸ MÁRAI electronic release without page numbers.

harmony with the requirements of morality, its living roots deep within the nation's heart, and its eternalness alongside the nation."⁵⁹

The sophisticated dogmatic analysis of *Grosschmid*, his trailblazing scientific systemizations aimed at realizing the requirement of "fairness" amongst the forms of statutory/regulatory law. In his statements siding with modern thinking, some feudal residue can still be found. His work was characterized by preserving and promoting the national traditions of legal thinking.⁶⁰ He desired to build a new Hungarian private law in opposition to German law.⁶¹ *Grosschmid's* work "is characterized in the field of family and inheritance law by conservatism, maximal respect for legal traditions, but in regard to contract law, his work is characterized by daring progress, which essentially created the Hungarian contract law from nothing."⁶² Beyond contract law, *Grosschmid* achieved forever important accomplishments in the fields of trade law, private international law,⁶³ inheritance law, and family law⁶⁴ as well. His works and statements on the latter subjects were guided by the desire to preserve traditions and his feelings on family matters. As this is the field where change is not recommended, even if everything else changes. As Károly Szladits expressed in his valedictory on behalf of the Pázmány Péter University and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences: "With his bright discussion papers and excellent treatises, he successfully ensured the perpetual continuation of our national institutions in the field of family and inheritance law, and through this, established the foundation for the further independent national evolution of our private law."⁶⁵

Due to the limits of the current volume, we emphasize *Grosschmid's* role in the development of inheritance law, especially his contribution to the codification of inheritance law, for multiple reasons. On the one hand, most analyses are connected to his Chapters, and on the other hand, we can establish a parallel between the draft of the inheritance law book of our private law code and his thought.⁶⁶ The codification of Act V of 2013, the Civil Code, was built upon the basic idea of "preservingly renewing", and during the creation of the inheritance law book, the Codification Editorial Committee placed great importance on only altering inheritance law when it was especially justified.⁶⁷ As Lajos Vékás noted in his treatise: "If you like, we acted in the spirit of Grosschmid, who firmly believed and repeatedly emphasized that inheritance law institutions freed from »traits contrary to the spirit of current times« should not be changed."⁶⁸

The debate between István Teleszky and Benő Zsögöd – Zsögöd and the codification of inheritance law

⁵⁹ MESZLÉNY 1931, 429.

⁶⁰ Cf. WEISS 2006, 101.

⁶¹ Cf. ehhez SZLADITS 1948, 5. 7. PESCHKA 1959, 60. ASZTALOS 1973, 75.

⁶² PÓLAY 1974, 8.

⁶³ BALLA 1931, 450–452.

⁶⁴ According to *Almási*, the legal foundation of the basics of the marriage law, fully or at least in major part, is the work of *Grosschmid*. ALMÁSI 1937., 3.

⁶⁵ Magyar Jogi Szemle 1938/8. 327.

⁶⁶ See in details: VÉKÁS 2019, 50–63. VÉKÁS 2013, 257–263.

⁶⁷ VÉKÁS (ed.) 2012, 537. VÉKÁS 2013, 258.

⁶⁸ VÉKÁS 2013, 258. Vékás 2019, 51.

Zsögöd's role in the codification of inheritance law is best assessed in relation to the Teleszky-draft on the subject. In essence, the codification of inheritance law was founded upon the debate and discourse of two great minds: *Teleszky és Grosschmid*.

István *Teleszky*, a lawyer from Nagyvárad, proposed during the 1871/II. Assembly of Hungarian Lawyers that, before the codification of civil law, inheritance law should be codified, a proposal which the Assembly approved.⁶⁹ Based on this support, the justice ministry requested that *Teleszky* prepare the draft of the inheritance law section of the Hungarian Private Law Code.⁷⁰ *Teleszky* begun his work, the result of which was released in 1876 inside his treatise titled *To the rules of our inheritance law*.⁷¹ This treatise merited praise from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in the Sztrókay-award.⁷² The treatise's central question was whether lineal succession should be kept in the legal system, or not. He summarized his opinion as follows: "[...] Hungarian legislation cannot maintain the separation between inherited and acquired wealth when it comes to regulating intestate succession; but a unified system of succession must be created, connecting the intestate succession to the natural familial ties, and *without regard to examining the origin of different elements of the deceased's wealth*."⁷³ The publication of the work caused a great, national debate, with *Zsögöd* at the helm of it. *Zsögöd* published his *Inherited and acquired wealth* treatise in the 1877-1879 volumes of the *Hungarian Justice*.⁷⁴ In this work, he supported, sometimes vehemently, the institution of lineal succession. As if in response, *Teleszky* released his inheritance law draft's general segment and his materials on intestate succession with an explanation as a private edition, in 1881.⁷⁵ The debates became constant, but for a time, *Zsögöd* stayed out of them and kept his distance. In 1882, the justice ministry released the full text of the Teleszky-proposal with the title: *General Private Law Code. Inheritance law*.⁷⁶ "István Teleszky's [...] inheritance law draft [...] was a direct descendant of the proposal in the National Judicial Assembly to completely sidestep traditional Hungarian inheritance law in favor of keeping the (then temporarily effective) Austrian civil code's inheritance law."⁷⁷ *Zsögöd* "strongly attacked"⁷⁸ this official draft of inheritance law in the coming civil code, this so-called Teleszky-draft.⁷⁹ The reason behind this was mostly the method of legislation of the era, which rested upon the "copying" of foreign law. "*The direction of our codification is marked by a certain degree of flippancy. To reach great goals with small tools, non-existent tool, as if this were possible. We copy some sort of foreign code, with acknowledged great personal excellency, but without any deeper inner work, and proclaim that the nation is progressing.*" *Zsögöd* voiced his displeasure at the *Teleszky*-draft of inheritance law.

⁶⁹ TELESZKY 1872. ZSÖGÖD 1887, 49.

⁷⁰ CSIZMADIA 1979, 36.

⁷¹ TELESZKY 1876.

⁷² PÓLAY 1974, 7. ZSÖGÖD 1887, 49.

⁷³ Emphasis by the author. TELESZKY 1876, 286.

⁷⁴ ZSÖGÖD 1877, 1878, 1879.

⁷⁵ TELESZKY 1881.

⁷⁶ TELESZKY 1882.

⁷⁷ KOLOSVÁRY 1938, 58.

⁷⁸ MIKSZÁTH electronic release without page number (downloaded on 17 December 2019.)

⁷⁹ On the Teleszky-draft, including its background, see in detail: PÓLAY 1974.

Reflecting on the draft proposal, *Zsögöd* released a series of extremely aggressively toned articles in the *Hungarian Justice's* 1882-1883 years.⁸⁰ (Besides *Zsögöd*, *Dell'Adami Rezső* also fiercely attacked the draft, but unlike *Zsögöd*, from a radical and not conservative perspective.⁸¹) An expert's council of judges, attorneys and law professors, assembled at the request of the justice ministry, began debating *Teleszky's* proposal in the autumn of 1883, which it finished in 1886.⁸² Meanwhile, *Zsögöd*, out of private diligence (*ex privata diligentia*), wrote in 1885 his own draft proposal regarding intestate succession, even though as he put it: "*the signs so far do not indicate in the slightest that these foundations would find much sympathy with the focus of the current direction.*"⁸³ In contrast to István *Teleszky*, he approached the matter differently, with the intent of protecting against German intellectual influence. In this work, he analyses and assesses the *Teleszky-draft* (Government-draft), and the "text agreed upon by the ministerial session"⁸⁴ (Session). He utilized the tool of legal comparison here, with specific attention paid to certain passages of the Austrian Civil Code, the Saxon Civil Code, and the Zürich Code. His line of thought was heavily influenced by respect to the family and the familial feeling,⁸⁵ the value system of his era. One manifestation of this was his thoughts on dower (which was exclusively reserved for the surviving wife): "*The ethical foundations of our dower, the roots of which reach back all the way to the law of Saint Stephen [...] is a certain chivalrous intent towards the weaker sex, and those stronger ties that bind a woman's position to her husband's (and not vice versa). The woman, even as a widow, is under the protective shield of her husband's name and social status, and dower transfers this shield to the estate as well. Furthermore, dower is a sort of continuation of the spousal maintenance obligation the husband had while alive. The chief objective is not to grant capital to the widow, it is to ensure her maintenance, which is one of the strongest postulatums of our national succession system's principles.*"⁸⁶ In *Zsögöd's* proposal, the dower is maintained for the duration of the widowhood, but unlike the *Teleszky-draft*, he restricted it to residence and maintenance, and made it possible for the descendants to restrict the widow's usufruct to one quarter of the estate, half of the estate in case of lineal successors.⁸⁷ The arguments raised against the "institution of dower" in the justification of the government-draft⁸⁸ are as follows: "*it is just as much not a Hungarian institution, but an imitation of similar foreign law, as the [rules of] lineal succession*" "*It clashes with the principle of reciprocity, in that it furnishes the woman with privileges regarding her deceased husband's estate that a man does not possess regarding his deceased wife's estate, [...] it often proves an impossible obstruction to finding a new husband.*" As such "*how much more is it correct, if the estate is divided, immediately upon the*

⁸⁰ ZSÖGÖD 1882, 1883.

⁸¹ Cf. PÓLAY 1974, 17–18. CSIZMADIA 1979, 36–37.

⁸² PÓLAY 1974, 19.

⁸³ ZSÖGÖD 1901, 63. p

⁸⁴ Ibid. 64.; TELESZKY 1884.

⁸⁵ Cf. WEISS 2006, 106.

⁸⁶ ZSÖGÖD 1901, 84.

⁸⁷ PÓLAY 1974, 20. VÉKÁS, 259.

⁸⁸ *Az általános magánjogi törvénykönyv tervezete. Öröklési jog. Indokolás* [The draft of the general private law code. Inheritance law. Justification.] 1883, 43.

deceased's passing, between relatives and the spouse in an equitable fashion that makes each of them the unrestricted owner and master of their own part of the estate that they can manage and harness as they desire. Thus, living with good understanding between each other, the widow, without risking the loss of material advantage, can remarry and raise good citizens for the nation.”⁸⁹

Zsögöd also dealt extensively with the problem of lineal succession in his proposal, maintaining its continued necessity. His conception rested on the principle of return, the restriction of the thread of lineal succession, and the construction of lineal inheritance as a form of *singularis successio*.⁹⁰ Regarding the return of lineal sub-estates, he supported an approach based on the Schaffhausen codex, but still different from it:⁹¹ he supported lineal succession only in relation to the predecessor and their descendants, the person from whom the sub-estate originally “descended from, but not in general the family side from which it came.”⁹² He cut short the potential thread of return, however, restricted it to a narrower group of relatives, the parents and grandparents and their descendants. He himself acknowledged that this restriction is “a great change in principle of our historical law.”⁹³ According to Zsögöd: “For the cause of lineal property, beyond our national legal thought, there are arguments, at least according to us, which are more significant than letting the woman »raise useful citizens« in her new marriage.”⁹⁴ The family, as a value, returns later in his proposal concerning spousal succession⁹⁵ as well: “The ethical basis of spousal succession is spousal love, or rather the notion that in the case of childlessness, the spouse is going to be the person closest in the world (even beyond the father, mother and sibling) to the deceased. Based on this, with regards to property where the individuality of the deceased can be accepted as an ethical center, the spouse should precede all other successors excluding the child. As it is she, who, as Verböczi said, is more than a sibling to a man.”⁹⁶

After the expert’s council debate between 1883 and 1886, Teofil Fabinyi justice minister presented the proposal to the national assembly on the 8th of January 1887. A week later, Zsögöd communicated fresh concerns about the reversionary succession part of the proposal⁹⁷ in his *Maintaining families and the inheritance law proposal*⁹⁸ treatise. He asked two questions in this regard and responded to both: 1. “Is there some kind of

⁸⁹ Quotes ZSÖGÖD 1901, 94.

⁹⁰ ZSÖGÖD 1901, 133.

⁹¹ The Schaffhausen “codex’s side-succession order, while falling relatively closest to the Hungarian, still possesses such stark differences, that even though we can consider it a relative to the Hungarian, we still have to see it as a completely different succession system.” ZSÖGÖD 1901, 182. „this succession, at least based on our opinion, is far behind our nation’s. Exactly the two principles on which the Hungarian system’s internal harmony rests, using the deceased’s personality as a basis for non-lineal property [...], the leading principle of descending inheritance and restricting the return [...], cannot be found in this succession by any means.” ZSÖGÖD 1901, 189.

⁹² Emphasis from the author. ZSÖGÖD 1901, 133.

⁹³ Emphasis from the author. ZSÖGÖD 1901, 134.

⁹⁴ ZSÖGÖD 1901, 94.

⁹⁵ Which succession, in contrast to the dower, are two-sided. ZSÖGÖD 1901, 96.

⁹⁶ Emphasis made by Zsögöd. ZSÖGÖD 1901, 97.

⁹⁷ Cf. PÓLAY 1974, 21. in Pólay’s treatise “Családfenntartás és örökjogi javaslat.” [Family maintenance and inheritance law proposal]

⁹⁸ ZSÖGÖD 1887, 49–69.

progression in the reversionary succession as found in the proposal, compared to the current institution in place, that significantly strengthens the maintenance of family” and 2. “And in general, what is the relationship between the institution of substitution and Hungarian intestate succession from the perspective of family maintenance, and most importantly, can it compensate for the other in this regard?”⁹⁹ One week later, Dell’Adami attacked the proposal in two ways: on the one hand, he thought that the institution of dower should be removed, and on the other hand, he recommended establishing the same position of succession for the children born out of wedlock as the children born in marriage.¹⁰⁰ Under the influence of the legal literary opinions that turned up, the justice ministry reviewed the proposal, and the modified *Law Proposal on Inheritance law* (alongside its justification) went in front of the national assembly convened on the 26th of September, 1887, at its session on the 22th of October. At the same time, the justice minister formally proposed the transfer of the proposal to the justice committee for purposes of debate.¹⁰¹ The proposal was supported by the assembly’s justice committee, and so its passing was considered likely. But then, as a sudden turn, the justice minister asked Zsögöd to prepare the law proposal for effectiveness.¹⁰² In 1889, the monarch named Dezső Szilágyi the justice minister, whom Zsögöd convinced of the notion that family and inheritance law are so closely tied together that inheritance law cannot be codified without codifying family law. Thus, the minister removed the proposal from the assembly’s schedule,¹⁰³ and the inheritance law codification ended without legislative results. This does not mean, however that the codification process was fully without results: Zsögöd’s fierce and enduring efforts prevented the disappearance of legal institutions like lineal succession, which remain a living part of Hungarian private law to this day.

Grosschmid (Zsögöd) left a complex and outstanding life’s work behind for private lawyers. A life’s work,¹⁰⁴ which though can be difficult to read and interpret, but still “[...] shows an unmatched originality when it comes to learning, processing and translating law, with his width of knowledge, incredible and original associative ability, and unique perspective.”¹⁰⁵ His importance and unavoidability is unquestionable in almost all fields of private law.¹⁰⁶ He was the shaper of the early 20th Century’s, and thus our current, Hungarian private law.¹⁰⁷

“Who was and who will be Grosschmid throughout the centuries, is known and will be known by all Hungarian lawyers.”¹⁰⁸

⁹⁹ ZSÖGÖD 1887, 58–59.

¹⁰⁰ PÓLAY 1974, 21.

¹⁰¹ Cf. PÓLAY 1974, 22.

¹⁰² Cf. PÓLAY 1974, 25.

¹⁰³ CSIZMADIA 1979, 37.

¹⁰⁴ Regarding the 1931 compilation of his life’s work, see especially: BLAU 1931, 438–441. IFJ. NAGY 1931, 442–445. IFJ. SZIGETI 1931, 452–455.

¹⁰⁵ CSEHI 2012, 18.

¹⁰⁶ In the *Chapters*, “he lay the foundations of the modern Hungarian contract law.” WEISS 2006, 106.

¹⁰⁷ “He was not only a master of his chosen field, but also a creator and discoverer of it. His writings suggested to the reader that nobody else dealt with private law before him, and that there is no point in significantly changing his statements afterwards.” MÁRAI.

¹⁰⁸ ANGYAL 1938, 324.

III. His selected works

Kiskorúak utáni törvényes öröklésről. [Intestate succession after minors.] Budapest, 1879. „Külön lenyomat a „Magyar Igazságügy” X. kötetéből.” [Special release from the 10th volume of “Hungarian Justice.”]

Csődtörvény: (1881: XVII. törvénycikk): jegyzetekkel, utalásokkal és magyarázattal. [Bankruptcy Act: (Act XVII of 1881): with notes, implications, and explanation.] Budapest, 1881.

Ungarisches Concursgesetz, (XVII. Gesetz-artikel vom Jahre 1881) mit Anmerkungen, Parallelstellen und Erläuterungen. [Hungarian Concurs Act, (XVII. Act of 1881) with annotations, parallel passages and explanations.] 1881.

Polgári törvénykezési rendtartás és végrehajtási eljárás: az 1868. LIV., 1881. LIX. és LX. törvénycikkek szakszerű használat céljából egybegyűjtve. [Civil litigation and execution: Acts LIV of 1868, LIX of 1881 and LX of 1881 collected for professional use.] Budapest, 1881.

Törvénytervezet a törvényes örökösödésről. Adalék az általános magánjogi törvénykönyvnek hazai önálló irányban való felépítéséhez. [Law-draft on intestate succession. Addendum to building up the general civil code in an individual national direction.] Budapest, 1886.

Öröklött s szerzett vagyon: tanulmány újabb irodalmunkból, függelékkal: a kiskorúak utáni törvényes öröklésről. [Inherited and acquired property: treatise from our newer literature, with annex on intestate succession after minors.] Politzer Zsigmond és Fia. Budapest, 1897.

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Fejezetek kötelmi jogunk köréből. 1. kötet. [Chapters from our contract law. Volume 1.] Wigand F. K. Budapest, 1898.

Fejezetek kötelmi jogunk köréből. 2. kötet. [Chapters from our contract law. Volume 2.] Athenaeum Irodalmi és Nyomdai R.-Társulat. Budapest, 1900.

Magánjogi tanulmányok, tervezetek és kisebb dolgozatok főként az öröklési, kereskedelmi és családi jog köréből: a „Magyar Igazságügy”-ben és másutt megjelent, továbbá némely kéziratban maradt dolgozatok gyűjteménye 1. kötet. [Private law studies, drafts, and smaller treatises chiefly about inheritance law, trade law, and family law: collection of treatises released in „Magyar Igazságügy” or retained in certain manuscripts. Volume 1.] Politzer Zsigmond és Fia. Budapest, 1901.

Magánjogi tanulmányok tervezetek és kisebb dolgozatok főként az öröklési, kereskedelmi és családi jog köréből: a „Magyar Igazságügy”-ben és másutt megjelent, továbbá némely kéziratban maradt dolgozatok gyűjteménye 2. kötet. [Private law studies, drafts and smaller treatises chiefly on the subjects of inheritance law, trade law, and family law: collection of treatises released in „Magyar Igazságügy” or retained in certain manuscripts. Volume 2.] Politzer Zsigmond és Fia. Budapest, 1901.

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