

The Jeremiah Smith Scholarship (1927–1941)

Contributions to the history of the technological elite education between the two world wars

PHD THESIS' MAIN STATEMENTS

Supervisors:

Dr. Makkai Béla

Dr. habil Ujváry Gábor

Prepared by:

Rapali Vivien Regina

Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary

Doctoral School of History

Head of the Doctoral School: Prof. Dr. Hermann Róbert university professor, DSc

Budapest, 2022

Table of content

1. Topic definition and choice motivation.....	3
2. Research sources	4
3. Research methodology	6
4. Short summary of academic results.....	8
5. List of publications.....	12
5.1. Pulications in connection with thesis topic.....	12
5.2. Further publications.....	13

1. Topic definition and choice motivation

The aim of my doctoral thesis was to reconstruct the history of a technical scholarship and its beneficiaries between the two world wars, based on archival sources. Thus, the thesis examines, in a broad sense, the scholarship policy of the period as a means of elite education, and in a narrower sense, the history of a specific technical scholarship, the Jeremiah Smith Scholarship Foundation (1927–1941) and its scholarship holders.

The time frame of this essay is the years 1927–1941 and the period between the two world wars for the history of the scholarship foundation, and 1890–1956 for the scholarship holders' careers.

Many publications have been published on education policy, science policy and scholarship policy between the two world wars. However, there has been little historical research based on archival sources on the foundation scholarships that were part of the scholarship system, including Hungarian technical scholarships. The history of the Jeremiah Smith Scholarship Foundation and its beneficiaries, the subject of this thesis, is also an unknown and unexplored area for Hungarian historiography. I have chosen to fill this gap as the subject of my dissertation.

In researching and writing the history of the Scholarship Foundation, I sought to answer a number of historical questions. In relation to the activities of the Foundation, I considered it important to examine whether its creation at the end of the 1920s was justified, how it fit in with Klebelsberg's scholarship policy concept, and whether it was even part of it. If it was set up for the purpose of elite training, have its objectives been met? On the other hand, it is interesting to know whether, in the operation of the foundation, the interested parties have kept in mind all the objectives that were set when it was set up. I was equally interested in examining the relationship between the Foundation and the University of Technology, which is the source of technical intellectuals, and how the latter has played a significant role in the history of the scholarship.

I also sought answers to the issue of whether the Foundation's scholarships abroad have left an imprint on the life paths of the scholarship holders, i.e. whether they have helped them to advance in their careers and develop their academic contacts. The possibility of preferential treatment emerged almost naturally in the course of the research, and I therefore looked for indications of how this might occur. To this end, I looked at the eligibility of the scholarship holders to see whether they met the criteria for being a foreign scholar. The latter questions

justified the creation of a scholarship data archive, in addition to the institutional history of the dissertation, drawing on the methodology of prosopography. It also included an analysis of the social composition of the scholarship holders, which answered the questions 'where they came from and where they were heading'.

2. Research sources

In reconstructing the operation of the Jeremiah Smith Scholarship Foundation, I have been able to rely mainly on primary sources, in the absence of historical research. The documents of the Rector's Office of the Royal Hungarian Joseph University of Technology and Economics and the Royal Hungarian Archduke Joseph University of Technology and Economics, kept in the Archives of the Budapest University of Technology and Economics, provided information on the procedures of the application and evaluation system. They contain correspondence between the university and the Ministry of Religion and Public Education between 1926 and 1941, the Ministry's proposals and transcripts, and, among the application documents, the scholarship course certificates, which have survived incomplete. In each case, I checked the ministry's proposals and transcripts against the minutes of the university council and the rector's council. As for the organisational structure of the University of Technology and the functioning of the individual departments, I have referred to the University's organisational regulations.

The records of the Ministry of Religion and Public Education in the National Archives of the Hungarian National Archives only contain information on the Jeremiah Smith Scholarship Foundation from the period 1932–1936. Among the records held in the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I have been able to draw on the records of the Hungarian missions in the United States relating to study trips, associations and cultural affairs, as well as the records of the Consulate General in New York, the Consular Office in Chicago and the Hungarian Embassy in Washington DC.

In the course of the financial reconstruction of the Foundation, I have examined the following in relation to the Foundation's assets and asset management: the statements on the implementation of the state budget and the so-called final accounts, which include the actual income and expenditure.

When creating the data sheets, I had to use a much larger number of sources, both primary and secondary, and a much more diverse range of sources. At the beginning of the research, I first looked at the scholarship course reports. To complement these, I used the

primary source groups used for other individuals as control sources. In cases where no archival sources were available – but the person was recognised by the public for his or her professional or public merit – I reviewed the secondary literature. In addition to information from biographical and other encyclopaedias, or in the absence of such information, the primary sources of information on the time and place of birth, parents' names, age, occupation and religious affiliation were the civil registers. For place and date of death, I relied on death certificates and the collection of obituaries digitised by the National Széchényi Library.

When giving the surnames, I have referred to the genealogical censuses of Iván Nagy and Béla Kempelen or to the entries in the birth certificate.

The occupations of the scholarship holders were determined on the basis of *Tiszti címtár*, *Központi Értesítő*, financial compasses, the Budapest directories of addresses and apartments, and the directories of employees and companies in Budapest. *Fővárosi Közlöny*, *Budapesti Közlöny*, *Hivatalos Közlöny* and *Magyar Közlöny* issues proved useful for individual appointments.

In addition to the sources above, the birth registers of the scholarship holders helped me to determine the occupation of the fathers. In the absence of a birth certificate, I have recorded the mother's name from the registers published in *Honvédségi Közlöny* or from marriage and death certificates.

The sources of data on the qualifications of the scholarship holders were, on the one hand, the University of Technology yearbooks, which published the names of the engineering degree and doctorate holders each year, the minutes of the Rector's and University Council meetings mentioned above, the student registers, and the university and doctorate degrees issued. All of these documents also indicated the religious affiliation of the scholarship holder. The student registers were particularly helpful in classifying diplomas. For doctorates obtained abroad, I relied on the sources already mentioned or on secondary literature.

The publications of the Hungarian Society of Engineers and Architects – the number one publishing platform of the Hungarian engineering profession in the period under study – as well as other professional journals and the catalogue of the National Széchényi Library proved useful in researching the publication and scientific activities of individuals, not to mention their place of work.

With regard to the research topics submitted in the course of the tender, I relied on the above-mentioned university and ministry archival sources, the annual volumes on scholarships

in Hungary with the title „*The operation of Hungarian institutes abroad and scholarships for higher education in the academic year...*”, the Collegium Hungaricum pocketbook as well as relevant issues of *Hivatalos Közlöny* and *Budapesti Közlöny*.

In addition to the sources described for fathers' occupations, I referred to university minutes, Budapest telephone directories, electoral rolls and, in the case of university employment, to teachers' master lists when providing the scholarship holders' employment details.

In order to draw more complete career paths, I searched the public and private collections of most of the fellows in Hungary and the US, as well as the legacies of individual archives, especially university archives. The number of private or professional letters preserved is negligible compared to the number of scholarship holders. Despite their small number, the correspondence collected from public and private collections abroad and in Hungary was a primary source for sketching and interpreting the pattern of careers, and was particularly useful for the contemporary representation of a particular problem.

The surveillance and investigative materials kept in the Historical Archives of the State Security Services and the documents kept in the Institute of Military History were relevant to the later careers of the scholarship holders who remained in Hungary after 1945.

In addition to the above-mentioned library and archival sources, I have also been assisted by tracing and locating descendants, using family documents and family memories.

3. Research methodology

The answers to the historical questions resulted in the development of a complex methodology, specifically adapted to the topic of the doctoral thesis, in the sense that the thesis is both an institutional history and a prosopographical study.

As the topic is less known and less researched, I have set as a primary methodological principle to reconstruct the history of the foundation on the basis of the sources described above.

In the course of the research, while studying the subject in depth, and due to the growing number of sources and historical questions, I decided to go beyond the monographic exploration of the history of the Foundation, to trace the careers of the scholarship holders and to describe their social composition. From this research milestone onwards, I started to collect even more primary and secondary sources in even larger quantities and on an even wider scale. The volume of data, which became unmanageable over time, justified the establishment of a second

methodological principle, according to which I treated the information collected in a systematic way, separated and selected from the core text.

In the case of the scholarship recipients, I could not undertake a full and comprehensive account of the life and work of the individual. On the one hand, because the number of scholarship holders was too large for a biographical description, and on the other hand, because the person was of primary importance for the research because he was a member of the group of Jeremiah Smith scholarship holders. I therefore decided to use the methodology of prosopography to meet the objectives set.

Its use is unusual because, while other prosopographical studies have examined large groups of at least 1000 people, ideally of similar occupations, for example, the present study was conducted on a group of 33 people. The common denominator was the existence of a scholarship and belonging to the technical intellectuals as a social group. Individuals, as I have just indicated, were important as members of the group and I have included only the information about them that was relevant to the research: information about their career paths, education and social background. I also collected a somewhat larger amount and different types of data compared to the prosopographic research.

The database, consisting of 33 person questionnaires, groups the data of the grantees according to many criteria that answer the research questions posed: the (pre-)qualifications required for eligibility, the career and life course characteristics and the social milieu in which the grantee is operating. In addition to providing structured information, the database provides data on the social composition and characteristics of the scholarship holders, which allows the fulfilment of the elite training objectives to be examined and the outline of the individual career patterns to be sketched.

My third methodological principle was to investigate the relationship between foundation activity and the careers of scholarship holders, based on the research methodology and the resulting analyses.

One of the main methodological difficulties in the analytical and evaluative sections on the career pathway, which were necessary to look at the concept of elite training, was that I had to describe changes in the workplace data of scholarship holders, the fact of emigration and the impact of these two on each other. This was compounded by the need to define the conceptual framework of each occupation and to treat it in a coherent way, and to reconstruct the job descriptions afterwards. A further difficulty was the management of the large amount and

variety of source material. Although, as I mentioned earlier, no biographical research was carried out, the careers of all the individuals had to be researched and treated in a coherent system, which is the result of many years of research work, both in the history of the institution and in the history of the scholarship holders, both at home and abroad.

4. Short summary of academic results

In my historical research, I found that the Jeremiah Smith Scholarship Foundation, which operated from 1927 to 1941, provided thirty-three young engineers with scholarships to study in the United States to supplement their scientific research and knowledge there. I have noted that this was the only scholarship in this period that was open to engineers exclusively.

I have presented the exclusive role of the University of Technology, the university that provided the target group of scholarship holders, which was reflected in the foundation and the operation of the fund. The scholarship awarding process showed that the departmental, rectorial and university councils, which are part of the university, played an important and inescapable role in the peer review and professional supervision. This exclusive and influential role of the University of Technology also indicates that the scholarship was partly or entirely part of the self-recruitment process of the technical elite.

Concerning the history of the foundation, I have described the circumstances that justified its creation in the late 1920s. By setting out the historical context, I placed the Foundation's place and role in the concept of elite education in the inter-war period. Taking into account the circumstances of the foundation and the text of the foundation charter, I found that the foundation was established on the initiative of the government with the support of Kuno Klebelsberg.

The evaluation of the application was carried out with all the objectives that were formulated at the time of its foundation – elite education, as well as the interests of the university and the economy. The main aim of the evaluation process was to ensure that the research topics of the winning applicants were (also) relevant to the scientific and industrial development of the country at the time. In this sense, the knowledge brought home by the Jeremiah Smith scholarship holders and the capital forged from it are part of the attempts to develop Hungarian engineering sciences, not least industry.

In connection with elite education, the question naturally arose whether the Foundation has achieved its goals, whether it has contributed to elite scientific education. I did this by

recording, comparing and analysing the career data of the scholarship holders at three points in time, and by plotting their career paths. The former scholarship holders continued to work in technical fields after their posting, and most of them did not change careers or leave – even among emigrants. They were able to work as engineers, heads of department, university lecturers, research directors, according to their qualifications, if not necessarily in their preferred field.

There are few fellows who have worked as academics or researchers in all three career paths. Similarly, there are few who have not been employed in a university or research institute in any of the three time bands. If I had considered the concept of elite training solely on the basis of the existence of the status of university lecturer or researcher, it would not have been clear in all cases whether the objectives had been met. This is all the more so as many of the fellows were not working in science, either for a longer or shorter period of time. I have therefore also taken into account that during this period they were involved, if not primarily in employment, then in scientific life. While reading the sectoral journals, the journals of the Association, it became clear that, regardless of their sector of employment and their job title, they were members of the Hungarian Society of Engineers and Architects before 1945, they regularly published in the professional journals or gave professional lectures, i.e. they were active in the professional public life, they were at home in it.

More than half of the scholarship holders held a doctoral degree in their lifetime, 8 of them earned a private teaching qualification and 4 became members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

The primary aim of the fund was therefore to train technical professionals of international standard, explicitly by overcoming domestic difficulties. It has contributed to the development of Hungarian technical research and to the supply of decision-makers, people in positions of authority or leadership in the technical profession, whether in universities, ministries, industrial companies or private practice. Many of the scholarship holders were involved in the work of the ministries and the University of Technology between the two world wars, others in the reconstruction work that began in 1945 and, although this was hardly the aim at the time of the foundation, in the long term they also contributed to the heavy industrialisation tendencies of the Rákosi regime.

The scholarship foundation can be seen as an attempt to educate the technical elite – a cornerstone of Klebelsberg's concept of elite education. However, it should be noted that, due to the fear of economic, social and political changes after the Second World War, as well as the

large-scale emigration resulting from the exchange of elites, changes in the workplace and possible retaliation, not all scholarship holders succeeded in remaining among the elite or in joining it. Not everyone has had an internationally successful or high-profile career. It may well be that in other historical contexts – for example, without the post-war elite transformation – fewer of them would have dropped out or more of them would have entered the technical elite in the traditional sense.

In evaluating the activities of the scholarship, I paid particular attention to the issue of emigration. Large-scale emigration took place only from 1944, the reasons for which may have been political, existential and moral factors outside the scholarship programme, as already mentioned. The compelling historical effects of the period 1943–1956 cannot be ignored, with the country becoming a theatre of war, the presence of the Soviet army, the B-listing, and the complete political, economic and social changes that took place after the war. The Scholarship Foundation was therefore successful in discouraging emigration, with the vast majority (83.9%) of participants opting for long-term settlement in their home country before 1943. This fact is remarkable in itself, as the conditions offered by the United States in the field of engineering offered the prospect of a more stable, faster, more advanced career prospects and international recognition.

The Foundation's scholarships abroad have helped the scholarship holders to develop their contacts abroad and benefit from them. As examples of the Hungarian–American scientific relations that developed, I mentioned the almost friendly letters of Iván Fényes (1935/36) and Tódor Kármán, the engineers doing aerodynamic research concentrated around Kármán, and the chemical engineers grouped around the Fleischmann Laboratory. The scholarship created a narrow group of academics who spent extended periods of time abroad, with a narrow network of contacts in the US, which was profitable for the sending institution, the Hungarian academic and cultural community, and the Hungarian economy.

Place of birth, denominational affiliation, occupation of fathers and social background as outlined by first names showed that, with few exceptions, scholarship holders came from a wide range of middle-class backgrounds. Among them were a large number of children of public and private servants and teachers, but there are also examples of the children of nine-acre farmers, blacksmiths and typesetters, as well as the offspring of architects, university lecturers and company secretaries. The analysis, however, only sketched the social background of the scholarship holders, and did not explore it in the depth that is usual in social background studies.

Despite the research difficulties, the thesis is unique in that it reconstructed the history of the scholarship foundation and the scholarship holders with the help of archival sources. The thesis contributes to the history of the University of Technology and, not least, to the history of technical intellectuals. By describing the characteristics of the scholarship awarding procedure and its practical implementation, and by analysing the careers of the scholarship holders, it provides an insight into the functioning of a scholarship foundation in the period between the two world wars, while at the same time complementing the history of scholarships as a means of elite education in the ministry period of Klebelsberg.

In addition to answering the historical questions, the thesis also raised other questions and shed light on new research directions, such as the exploration of previously unprocessed foreign scholarships, not to mention the reconstruction of the previously almost unknown university scholarships and grants, and the university scholarship network and the mechanisms of endowment. Future research could be based, among other things, on the social mobilisation and networking of the Smith scholarship holders and the Hungarian engineering faculty between the two world wars.

5. List of publications

5.1. Publications in connection with thesis topic

1. RAPALI, Vivien: Dear Professor! Letters of Iván Fényes to Theodore von Kármán (1936–1951) – *Lymbus – Magyarországtudományi Forrásközlemények*, 2020, 807–830.
2. RAPALI, Vivien: „There is no stopping in the scientific race” – The balance of the Smith Jeremiah Fellowship. *Veritas Évkönyv*, 2019, 214–231.
3. RAPALI, Vivien: „Not operationally useful” – Breakpoints and party-state interests in the career of a scientist. *Betekintő*, 14th year, 2020/1. 25–41.
4. RAPALI, Vivien: Report on a research trip to the US archives. *Levéltári Szemle*, 69th year, 2019/2. 78–83.
5. RAPALI, Vivien: „Only the monocles and the patent leather shoes are missing” – Avagy egy rendkívüli elme tündöklése és bukása. In: GYÖRGY, Sándor – HAJNÁCZKY, Tamás – KANYÓ, Ferenc (ed.): *Historical mazes*. Budapest, Gondolat, 2018. 245–254.

5.2. Further publications

1. RAPALI, VIVIEN: Cemetery of the Hungarians. Béla Makkai: Cemetery of the Hungarians, Old Romania. The Hungarians of Regat in the national politics of the dualism era. Budapest, Magyarországtudományi Intézet, 2021. *Rendszerváltó Szemle*, 7th year, 2022/1. 168–169.
2. RAPALI, Vivien – VERES, Violetta: „Progress was my keyword, but I was never a friend of extremes.”: Recollections of Mihály Perlaky (1814–1889). *Lymbus – Magyarországtudományi Forrásközlemények*, 2021, 59–90.
3. HÁZI, BALÁZS – JÓNÁS, Róbert – NAGYMIHÁLY, Zoltán – RAPALI, Vivien – STRAUSZ, Péter (ed.): *Changing times, changing memories: the changing assessment of 1956*. Budapest, Rendszerváltás Történetét Kutató Intézet és Archívum, 2021.
4. RAPALI, Vivien: 30th anniversary of the execution of Imre Nagy. In: HÁZI BALÁZS – JÓNÁS Róbert – NAGYMIHÁLY Zoltán – RAPALI, Vivien – STRAUSZ, Péter (ed.): *Changing times, changing memories: the changing assessment of 1956*. Budapest, Rendszerváltás Történetét Kutató Intézet és Archívum, 2021. 193–195.
5. RAPALI, Vivien: Historical Justice! The establishment of the TIB. In: HÁZI BALÁZS – JÓNÁS Róbert – NAGYMIHÁLY Zoltán – RAPALI, Vivien – STRAUSZ, Péter (ed.): *Changing times, changing memories: the changing assessment of 1956*. Budapest, Rendszerváltás Történetét Kutató Intézet és Archívum, 2021. 189–191.
6. RAPALI, Vivien: Hymn from the Train – Premiere of the Szerencsés Dániel movie. In: HÁZI BALÁZS – JÓNÁS Róbert – NAGYMIHÁLY Zoltán – RAPALI, Vivien – STRAUSZ, Péter (ed.): *Changing times, changing memories: the changing assessment of 1956*. Budapest, Rendszerváltás Történetét Kutató Intézet és Archívum, 2021. 150–152.
7. RAPALI, Vivien: „Two women face each other” – Premiere of the Károly Makk's movie, Szerelem. In: HÁZI BALÁZS – JÓNÁS Róbert – NAGYMIHÁLY Zoltán – RAPALI, Vivien – STRAUSZ, Péter (ed.): *Changing times, changing memories: the changing assessment of 1956*. Budapest, Rendszerváltás Történetét Kutató Intézet és Archívum, 2021. 122–125.
8. RAPALI, Vivien: „Not just good – Excellent” – The movie Tegnap is presented. In: HÁZI, BALÁZS – JÓNÁS, Róbert – NAGYMIHÁLY, Zoltán – RAPALI, Vivien – STRAUSZ, Péter (ed.): *Changing times, changing memories: the changing assessment of 1956*. Budapest, Rendszerváltás Történetét Kutató Intézet és Archívum, 2021. 94–97.

9. RAPALI, Vivien: „Well-meaning, solid, subtle” – The movie *Éjfélkor* is presented. In: HÁZI, BALÁZS – JÓNÁS, Róbert – NAGYMIHÁLY, Zoltán – RAPALI, Vivien – STRAUSZ, Péter (ed.): *Changing times, changing memories: the changing assessment of 1956*. Budapest, Rendszerváltás Történetét Kutató Intézet és Archívum, 2021. 74–77.
10. RAPALI Vivien: The MUK, HUKUK and the General Assembly of the MSZMP in May 1957. In: HÁZI, BALÁZS – JÓNÁS, Róbert – NAGYMIHÁLY, Zoltán – RAPALI, Vivien – STRAUSZ, Péter (ed.): *Changing times, changing memories: the changing assessment of 1956*. Budapest, Rendszerváltás Történetét Kutató Intézet és Archívum, 2021. 70–73.
11. RAPALI, Vivien: Count Imre Csáky. In: GULYÁS, László (ed.): *Handbooks for the study of the Horthy era Volume I: 111 biographies for the history of foreign policy (1919–1944)*. Szeged, Egyesület Közép-Európa Kutatására, 2020. 145–146.
12. RAPALI, Vivien: György Ghika. In: GULYÁS, László (ed.): *Handbooks for the study of the Horthy era Volume I: 111 biographies for the history of foreign policy (1919–1944)*. Szeged, Egyesület Közép-Európa Kutatására, 2020. 194–195.
13. HÁZI, Balázs – JÓNÁS, Róbert – NAGYMIHÁLY, Zoltán – RAPALI, Vivien – STRAUSZ, Péter (ed.): *Milestones of the democratic transition*. Budapest, Rendszerváltás Történetét Kutató Intézet és Archívum, 2020.
14. RAPALI Vivien: The reburial of Imre Nagy. In: HÁZI, Balázs – JÓNÁS, Róbert – NAGYMIHÁLY, Zoltán – RAPALI, Vivien – STRAUSZ, Péter (ed.): *Milestones of the democratic transition*. Budapest, Rendszerváltás Történetét Kutató Intézet és Archívum, 2020. 151–155.
15. RAPALI, Vivien: Installation of the Imre Nagy monument in Paris. In: HÁZI, Balázs – JÓNÁS, Róbert – NAGYMIHÁLY, Zoltán – RAPALI, Vivien – STRAUSZ, Péter (ed.): *Milestones of the democratic transition*. Budapest, Rendszerváltás Történetét Kutató Intézet és Archívum, 2020. 60–63.
16. RAPALI, Vivien: Perspectives: a memoirist with dual ties from the multi-ethnic Muraköz. *Pro Minoritate*, Autumn 2018, 131–132.
17. RAPALI, Vivien: Four sides of a woman: Lili Muráti the fashion lady, the sports lady, the adrenaline junkie and the celebrity. In: BALOGH-EBNER, Márton – GYÖRGY, Sándor – HAJNÁ CZKY, Tamás (ed.): *Uncommon history*. Budapest, Gondolat, 2017. 133–138.

18. RAPALI Vivien: The History of the Jeremiah Smith Scholarship. In: ILLIK Péter (ed.): *Dissent: The mainstream on the border of Hungarian history*. Budapest, Unicus Műhely, 2017. 114–142.