

Theses of Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation

Barnabás Guitman

**The first decades and the connections
of the reformation in Bártfa**

Supervisor: dr. Sándor Óze



Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Faculty of Humanities
Doctoral School of History
Modern Ideological History Program

Piliscsaba, 2009

I. Sources and preliminaries to the research

The archives of the royal free cities in Upper Hungary (Kassa, Bártfa, Eperjes, Lőcse*), saved by Turkish devastation, preserved excellent source material for Upper Hungary, the collecting, classifying, partly publishing of which started already at the end of the 17th century. One of the results of this exploration work is that even original manuscripts and letters of that age as well as copies of documents were taken to central source-preserving institutions such as the *National Széchényi Library* and the *Central Archives of the Lutheran Church in Hungary* in Budapest, which still offer unexploited possibilities for research.

After the upswing of Hungarian historical science in the second half of the 19th century, due to the fortunate source potentialities of the area many works on my topic were published, out of which the publications of the *Szepes Megyei Történelmi Társulat* are of outstanding importance. The examination of the field from church historical point of view fell into the background in Hungary due to the political circumstances following the shock of Trianon, then from the 1950s because of the ideologically determined directions of historical research. From the 1970s, however, more and more source-books and scientific works were born in (Czecho)Slovakia, outstanding of which are the writings and editions by Daniel Škoviera and the Finnish Ilpo Tapani Piirainen, cooperating with Slovakian authors. The modern literature of the area's urban history contains works by Zsuzsanna J. Újváry, István H. Németh, András Kubinyi, Zoltán Csepregi. Nevertheless, a comprehensive work on the church and ideological history of Bártfa has not been published in Hungarian yet.

* The official Slovak names today: Košice, Bardejov, Prešov, Levoča.

II. Methods and structure of the dissertation

In the course of treating my topic, I tried to survey the complete literature on this field and I built a lot of published and unpublished, earlier not or less used sources into the dissertation. From the second half of the 20th century several new theoretical approaches appeared in works on urban or reformation history, out of which I found the so-called *confessionalization theory* and its interpretation of reformation, elaborated in Germany, the most appropriate to use since this theory considers different denominations not as isolated, but as equal elements, it examines their common features, so it may be the most suitable for impartial, objective description. I partly used the methods and results of this theory when I built up my dissertation according to the traditional, source-based, descriptive way of history writing, with ideological and cultural historical points of view.

In the introductory part after giving reasons for the choice of topic I write about problems of transcription, word usage, methodology and periodization. Following this I briefly survey the primary sources of my topic as well as Hungarian and foreign secondary literature on the research into Lutheran reformation. I introduce literature on urban history only to the necessary extent since several excellent works have been published on this topic nowadays. The next chapter deals with the relation between and characteristics of urban life and religiousness in the 15th–16th centuries on the basis of examples from Germany and Hungary, then more thoroughly with the cultural and religious conditions in Bártfa and partly other towns in Upper Hungary at the beginning of the 16th century. I introduce the questions of schools, culture and reformation through Leonhard Stöckel's studies started in Bártfa, continued in Boroszló (Wrocław) and finished in Wittenberg. In connection with the first attempts of reformation in towns of Upper Hungary, mostly in

Bártfa I examine not only the foreign parallels but also how the different elements of power reacted on the appearance of reformation before and after the battle of Mohács (1526). I represent the process of the stabilization of reformation through the work of Leonhard Stöckel and Michael Radácsi, according to the points of councils, confession (the question of the *Confessio Pentapolitana*), controversies (Lauterwald, Szegedi, Stancaro), education and published works. In the final part of the dissertation I summarize my topic embedded in the frames of the confessionalization theory.

III. Results of the dissertation

The aim of this dissertation is to show, on the example of the alliance of towns in Upper Hungary, and especially Bártfa inside it, the main stages of the process through which this region became the most characteristic example of reformation and confessionalization in Hungary.

The citizens of the towns in Upper Hungary had close, cross-border connections with those in Transylvania, South Poland, Silesia and Germany. Commercial links were strengthened by setting up family relations, and their sons were sent to learn to each other's towns and schools. All these resulted in such a medium which ensured (compared to the age) quick and free streaming of spiritual and cultural goods. It is important to note that in the field of culture the most essential cementing force of this community was surely its members' German roots, the German language. Naturally, beside the growing importance of vernacular languages Latin kept its outstanding position for a long time.

Wandering humanists, preachers, men of the spirit (e. g. Valentin Eck, Georg Wernher etc.) coming from the West could find firm ground, appreciation and means of living in the towns of Upper Hunga-

ry, just as sons of these towns could become equal and honoured workers of their profession outside their homeland. Each people examined in this dissertation can be connected at least to two or three countries. Not only people but also communities, settlements and regions – as parts of a bigger whole – can be paralleled, this is why similar phenomena and events were shown by the examples of other, foreign towns, especially Boroszló and Königsberg. Though Bártfa was much smaller than them, nevertheless events and cultural influences constituted similar processes in the first half of the 16th century in these areas.

Through Leonhard Stöckel's studies an insight can be obtained into the life of Silesia and especially Boroszló, a region and a town having close connections with Bártfa, at the beginning of the 16th century. Several parallels can be drawn between the two settlements. Both of them were at the point of intersection of different cultures, and their church policy was determined by the fact that they fell under Habsburg rule during the century. Though they joined the Lutheran branch of reformation, the Catholic church system remained in both towns, which enabled the Evangelical church to organize its system only on local and not on state level.

The first prophets of the reformation appeared already in the 1520s in Bártfa. The citizens, sympathizing with the reformed doctrines, and the magistrate eliminated the only religious order of the town and at the same time they made careful steps to employ spiritual leaders suitable for their needs. In the beginning representatives of the state and the Catholic church managed to prevent the first reformers from staying for a longer time in Bártfa. The reasons for the quick leaving in the cases of Wolfgang Schustel and Esaias Lang might be the lack of their local origin and links, the crudeness of their teachings, and due to these the lack of their sufficient authority. Nevertheless, by their reforming activity they cleared the ground for Stöckel's and Radácsi's confessionalizing work, parallel with that of the masters (Luther and Melancthon) in Wittenberg.

Leonhard Stöckel made his mark in the field of education and through his writings. Michael Radácsi had an important role in organizing the Evangelical church system, constructing the denominational confession and reconciling the views of towns in religious matters. Both of them protected the clearness of the doctrine and took firm steps against those having different ideas on reformation. It is due to their activities that Bártfa could become the cultural and denominational centre of 16th century Upper Hungary and the wider region, a kind of local Wittenberg.

My most important basis for examining different fields was Leonhard Stöckel's written work. Beside his correspondence published by Škoviera I treated his two volumes of Latin sermons and his manuscript apology kept in the *Austrian National Library*. I also examined the school notes connected to his name in the *Evangelical lyceums* in Pozsony (Bratislava) and Késmárk (Kežmarok), which give evidence of his work as a teacher. Out of his printed school works I studied the *Apophthegmata* and the drama about Susanna. I dealt with the problems of the description about the martyrs in Libetbánya (L'ubietová), which is also attributed to Stöckel.

Beside the works by Stöckel the main source material for the dissertation is the collection of letters in the archive in Bártfa. Since this institution has no proper inventory for the documents from the year 1527, I mostly examined those letters out of the huge amount which were written in years important in Bártfa's church history (the first year of Stöckel's activity: 1540; the first council in Eperjes: 1546; the visit of the committee of religious matters: 1549; Stöckel's death: 1560), and I also browsed the collection at random. I completed this research in the archive in Lócse and in the *Central Archives of the Lutheran Church in Hungary* with the help of reference books and catalogues.

Beside treating its topic, the dissertation contributes to clear up or correct smaller questions such as the exact date of Valentin Eck's death, the circumstances of Ferenc Révay's death, proposed solutions

for letters with uncertain date, or some data for the problems of the *Confessio Pentapolitana* by examining sources so far unknown or hidden.

Because of the cultural similarities mentioned above, while treating the sources and secondary literature I could best use the results of the confessionalization theory and its modern interpretation of reformation. Nevertheless, the application of this theory for Hungarian conditions can be disputed or criticized, the more so since not even in foreign, German and English literature has crystallized a generally accepted approach yet. One of the problems is to fix the chronology of confessionalization. Naturally, in other regions of the country, divided into three parts, where owing to circumstances reformation or the Catholic reform took place later and in different forms we can talk about the complete realization of confessionalization decades or even a century later. However, I think that in the case of Bártfa the appearance of the group of phenomena formulated in German literature and often cited ever since can be traced from the 1540s and they fully developed by the second half of the century. Due to the special conditions of the region, confessionalization could not take place in such clear form in the development of church system and denominational life in the alliance of cities in Upper Hungary as e. g. in the Prussian areas where the complete church system was reformed by the state. The Catholic church and the state did not acknowledge the organizational independence of the Lutheran church in towns of Upper Hungary in that age. Moreover, even these towns accepted the bishop's authority and jurisdiction by expecting pontifical approval of their confessions presented and by referring to the alleged approvals as legal ground.

In spite of the question marks I think that the theory of confessionalization can be applied in the case of the towns of the Hungarian Kingdom. I am convinced that the region's history of society, culture and church can be put in a wider European context by using the paradigm of confessionalization and by treating and reinterpreting further contemporary archival and printed sources, and the general view of that

age can be cleared from mistakes and misinterpretations centuries old.

I regard this dissertation as the first important stage of summary of the work started. The most authentic view possible of the age and field could be obtained by systematic and complete examination of the material in the archive in Bártfa – hopefully I will have the opportunity of it in the near future.

IV. Publications related to the dissertation

Studies in volumes

1. *Res publica Christiana – Res Publica Litteraria. The 15th–16th Century.* In: Companion to the History of the Neo-Latin Studies in Hungary. Ed. Bartók, István. Budapest, 2005. 11–24.
2. *A libetbányai lutheránus vértanúk történetéhez.* [To the history of martyrs in Libetbánya.] In: A Duna vallomása. [The confession of the Danube.] Eds. Ábrahám, Barna–Pilecky, Marcell. Piliscsaba, 2006. 177–186.
3. *Stöckel Lénárd és a bártfai reformáció fénykora.* [Leonhard Stöckel and the golden age of the reformation in Bártfa]. In: Tanulmányok évszázadok történelméből. [Studies from the history of centuries.] Ed. J. Újváry, Zsuzsanna. Piliscsaba, 2006. 73–90.
4. *Trojaká identita inteligencie mesta Bardejov v 16. storočí.* [Triple identity of the intelligence in Bártfa in the 16th century.] In: K dejinám Podolínca a novovekého Spiša. [To the history of Podolin and the modern Scepusia.] Ed. Števík, Miroslav. Stará L'ubovňa, 2006. 238–243.
5. *Reformáció és felekezetszerveződés Bártfán.* [Reformation and confessionalization in Bártfa.] In: Szentírás, hagyomány, reformáció. Teológiai és egyháztörténeti tanulmányok. [Holy Scripture, tradition, reformation. Studies on theology and church history.] Eds. F. Romhányi, Beatrix–Kendeffy, Gábor. Bp., 2009. 252–262.

6. *Hitvallás és kínvallatás.* [Confession and torture.] In: *Apokaliptika és posztmodernitás.* [Apocalypticism and postmodernism.] Eds. Óze, Sándor–Szelke, László. Pilisecsaba, 2009. 108–132.

In the press

7. *A reformáció kezdetei egy boroszlói kanonok szemszögéből.* [The beginnings of the reformation from the point of view of a canon in Boroszló.]

