

**"BABEŞ-BOLYAI" UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY
DOCTORAL SCHOOL: CULTURE.CIVILISATION.HISTORY.**

DOCTORAL THESIS

**THE ROLE OF CLUJ AS A PRINTING CENTRE IN THE
16th-18th CENTURIES**

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**CLUJ-NAPOCA
2012**

Content

| | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Introduction..... | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| I.Historiographical considerations on printing and old books from Transylvania in the 16th-18th centuries | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| II.Urban History - Cluj in the 16th-18th centuries..... | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| III. The typographies of Cluj in the 16th-18th centuries | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| III. 1.1.A printing shop was born in Cluj..... | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| III.1.2.Gáspár Heltai – the printer behind the books..... | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| III.1.3. Continuity of the Heltai-press..... | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| III.2.Typographies belonging to different denominations in the 17th-18th centuries | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| Bookmark not defined. | |
| III.2.1.1.The common typography of the reformat church and college | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| defined. | |
| III.2.1.2.Tótfalusi – a worldwide known printer and puncher | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| defined. | |
| III.2.2.The typography of the Reformat Church | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| III.2.3.The typography of the Reformat College | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| III.2.4.The catholic typography (1726-1794) | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| III.2.5.The unitarian typography..... | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| III.3.The forerunners of a new mentality: the typographies of Martin Hochmeister and Peter Barth..... | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| IV.Books printed in Cluj between 1550-1800-The balance of 250 years.... | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| defined. | |
| IV.1.What are the numbers telling us?..... | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| IV.1.1.Analysis of the centuries..... | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| IV.1.2.Analysis of the typographies | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| IV.2. The perception of the value | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| IV.3. Type of books printed in this period..... | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| IV.3.1. Books and denomination (religious books) | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| IV.3.2. Books and education..... | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| IV.3.3.Occasional printings | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| IV.3.4.Literature..... | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| IV.3.5. Science and medicine | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| IV.3.6. History, philosophy and law | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| IV.3.7. <i>In folio</i> printings | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| IV.3.8.Others..... | Error! Bookmark not defined. |

| | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| V.The “status” of the printed book | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| V.1. Continuity and inovation in presenting the books in the Heltai-press ... | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| V.2.Original bindings: workshops and binders..... | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| VI.The catalogue of old books printed in Cluj (1550-1800)..... | 167 |
| VII.Conclusions | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| Bibliography | Error! Bookmark not defined. |

Key words: history of printing, history of books, Cluj, history of culture, old books, binding, type of printed books, catalogue.

The aim of this thesis is to present the printing activity of Cluj in the 16th -18th centuries, and, in the meanwhile, to offer an analysis of the production of books in each printer`s case, an analyses of the theme of the books published in this period and finally, to present a catalogue of the old books printed in Cluj between 1550-1800.

The thesis is composed of seven chapters beside the Introduction, the Bibliography and the Annexes. The first chapter, *Historiographical Considerations on Printing and Old Books from Transylvania in the 16th-18th Centuries*, is dedicated to the presentation of the various scientific achievements regarding the history of books and printing, focusing mainly on studies dealing with the situation of Cluj.

The second chapter, *Urban History-Cluj in the 16th-18th Centuries*, provides a brief overview of the urban history of Cluj, trying to present events that have had an impact, either positive or negative, on the development of local printing. However, there are also attempts to

show the complexity of the causes that contributed in a way or other to the cultural development of the town.

The description of the different printing shops are to be found in the third chapter, called *The Printing Shops of Cluj in the 16th-18th Centuries*. This was achieved by gathering the different data about the history of printing in Cluj that were published in different articles and studies that appeared over several decades. The importance of this chapter lies in the analysis of the different studies and articles and in the selection made among them according to their novelty and relevance regarding the historical printing shops of Cluj. The aim of this work was to provide a general presentation, as complex as possible, about the historical typographies of the town and the changes that occurred during these 250 years.

The fourth chapter, *The Books Printed in Cluj Between 1550-1800 – The Balance of 250 Years*, contains a new, so far unrealized approach concerning the presentation of the printing shops of Cluj. First, it is the statistical approach of the production of books in each century, followed by the statistical analysis of each printer's activity. I tried to find explanations for the shortage as well as abundance of prints from certain periods by associating it with different historical, social or cultural events from that period. Thus, it can be noticed that some undesirable historical or social events were not enough to ruin a printer, it was the printer's personality and skills that played a more important role and had a much greater impact on the activity of a printing shop. For example, the consequences of the censorship imposed on religious books were suppressed by the ingenuity of both Gáspár Heltai, in his last period of activity, as well as by his widow simply by switching to other types of books. It can be also mentioned István Páldi's case, the 18th century printer, who found possibilities to develop his printing activity despite the fact that the printing of the best-selling books was forbidden to him. But the cultural events always had a positive impact, for example, the cultural effects of the Protestant Reformation or those of the Enlightenment.

The statistical analysis of each printer's activity led, on the one hand, to the confirmation of certain assumptions related to printer's interest towards his work and his involvement that influenced his activity. But, on the other hand, it also led to the invalidation of some of the existing assumptions. For example, the lack of interest towards printing in the case of Gáspár Heltai's son resulted a continuous decrease in the number of printed books with the passage of

time. But the alleged lack of interest of Sándor Szathmári Pap is not confirmed by the number of books printed during his activity.

The third section of the fourth chapter is devoted to a thematic analysis of the printed books, which again led to some additions to our knowledge about the historical printing shops from Cluj. Due to these analyses we concluded that most of the printed books from that period were religious books of various kinds, belonging to different denominations. In terms of their percentage of the total printed books, it stays almost unchanged in every century, maintaining its position in the first place. Although it was the most read book, the printing of the Bible was not an easy task to perform and the different religious leaders often preferred ordering these books in famous European printing shops rather than at Cluj. Contrary to this, the printing of the books containing prayers and church hymns experienced a rapid development. This was also facilitated by the common Protestant format accepted by all the denominations and in this way, their printing was easy to perform and they became one of best sold books of the local workshops.

The second place is held by the books that were used in the process of education. In the 18th century, we can notice a thematic diversification among these books compared to the previous centuries. This can be explained only with the growing interest in education that characterized the century. Finally, on the third place we find the „*in folio*” printings, especially the orbituaries that were becoming extremely popular in the 18th century.

We can also notice a change in the readers` preferences by simply analyzing the types of books that were fashionable at different periods of time. Thus, we can find some types of books that were popular only till the middle of the 17th century, after which they gradually disappeared. As an example we can mention some collections of sermons, religious debates or different types of stories.

Moreover, as it was expected, towards the end of the 18th century new types of books began to appear, showing first of all the diversity of readers but also the cultural and scientific development of the society. The pace at which the new ideas of the Enlightenment were spread shows us that the society of that time experienced a dynamic development similar to the western European countries. And this was really welcomed after the stagnation of the late 17th century and early 18th century.

The fifth chapter, *The Status of the Printed Books*, contains short presentations regarding the illustrations of the books as well as the different book-bindings. These are important to

mention because they help us to form a complex view about the old books printed in Cluj, especially because the notion of old book does not refer only to the letters used in printing but also to their artistic value that lies in the illustration and bindings.

Although it is placed in the end of the thesis, the sixth chapter, *The Catalogue of the Old Books Printed in Cluj (1550-1800)*, represented the starting point of all the analyses performed by me in this study. The starting point is the year when the first printing book appeared in Cluj and it ends with the year 1800, the conventional closing date of old books. This catalogue was done with the help of different bibliographies from which the datas referring to Cluj were extracted. The latest discoveries were also included and in these cases I refer to the article in which they were mentioned. Beside these, I present the bibliographical description of twenty one theatrical posters which are still not included in the Hungarian bibliographies of old books. All in all we can say that this catalogue can be a useful auxiliary to all those who are interested in the history of printing in Cluj.

This catalogue is a novelty because so far it has not been registered in one place all the old books printed in Cluj. Each book is given at least one bibliographical reference and this enables the reader to perform further investigations if he is interested in it. These bibliographies contain many other information about the old books printed in Cluj and this is why I did not consider necessary to include them in this catalogue as well. The books are listed in a chronological order, but in the same time, in each year, they are also grouped according to the printer, which gives an extra utility to this catalogue.

As it was mentioned above, the catalogue contains the bibliographic description for the first time of twenty-one theatre posters printed in Martin Hochmeister`s workshop and now they can be found in the Romanian Academy Library of Cluj-Napoca. These posters were mentioned but not described in Sándor Enyedi`s doctoral thesis from 1974. Unfortunately their existence was forgotten and this led to the fact that they were not included in the 8th volume of the *Bibliography of the Hungarian Books* published between 1712-1860. The mentioned bibliography was published in 1991 and it contains a total of thirty-three theatre posters printed in Cluj which can be still found in our days. So, as a result of my research the number of still existing theatre posters printed in Cluj can be raised from thirty-three to fifty-four.

Printed books represented the main product of a typography and it contributed to the development of culture and science, transformed the mentality and marked the evolution of

human society. The printed book was not an ordinary object and its omnipresence influenced many aspects of people's lives. It is understandable that it can not be presented from a single point of view and only an interdisciplinary approach is meant to help the formation of a complex image about printing in Cluj. The different methods used in history, philology, library studies, art and also statistics played an important role in the process of writing this thesis.

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