

PhD Thesis

**The Literacy of Reformed Ministers István Miskolci
Csulyak and Mihály Tofeus**

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2016

I. Aim of the Thesis

The aim of the thesis is to map the background of the literacy of István Csulyak Miskolci (1575–1645, Dean of Zemplén) and Mihály Tofeus (1624–1684, Bishop of Transylvania), who are traditionally ranked to the side of the orthodox Calvinists. I did not intend to redefine the definitions of the Calvinist orthodoxy, but I made an attempt to present the mentioned two representatives from a view less applied in cultural history so far.

The basic questions of the thesis: how Miskolci Csulyak and Tofeus could obtain readings, what books they collected, and how the acquired works could finally influence their literacy, or in other words: how did they integrate what they had read. Did they know for example the determinant scientific accomplishments of their age? How did they react to them (if they reacted at all), especially to the appearance of the new theological and philosophical schools? In which way were the heritage of the Reformation and Humanism present in their erudition?

We can answer the majority of these questions based on their booklists (containing the obtained printed books or manuscripts), which testify who possessed certain books, or potentially what did they read. We can gain information by browsing their marginal notes (with autopsy): when and how did they read (with the purpose of acquisition of knowledge, using sources for the composition of a work, for recreational reasons). Searching their citations and analysing their texts (via philological approach) one could shed some light on the usage of their obtained knowledge.

Both of their careers is said to be typical among those who worked as the superiors of the Reformed Church in the Early Modern Period: studies in a Hungarian colleges (Csulyak in Debrecen and Sárospatak, Tofeus in Várad) continued by studying abroad, where they could intensify their obtained knowledge. Csulyak was a peregrinant student in Görlitz and Heidelberg (as a praeceptor of Miklós Thököly), decades later Tofeus directed himself towards the Netherlands: he studied at the university of Franeker, Utrecht, Harderwijk and Leiden. Returning home they worked as rectors (Tofeus in Várad and Patak, Csulyak in Tarcal), then served as ministers: Csulyak in Szerencs (the center of the Rákóczi family), Miskolc, Olaszliszka, Tofeus in Bodrogkeresztúr, Bihardiószeg, Szatmár and finally he preached in the court of Mihály Apafy, the Elder. As spiritual leaders of the Diocese of Zemplén or the Transylvanian Church District, they influenced the denominational life by convoking and leading councils, visitating the parishes and governing.

Their path of life (within two generations) covered almost the whole 17th century. During this time such determinant Western European theological and philosophical movements had appeared on the scene in the Carpathian Basin and got into interaction with Reformed Orthodoxy like Irenicism, Puritanism, Coccejanism and Cartesianism.

The career of Miskolci Csulyak was uncovered by the papers of Zsigmond Jakó, András Szabó and by the volume of the *Anthology of Old Hungarian Poets* (RMKT) XVII/2., while the career of Toefus was disclosed by József Koncz, Géza Kathona, János Győri L. and József Kurta. These essays and the literature of the history of sciences were the literary basis of the analysis.

While collecting sources, we visited the *Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences*, the *National Széchényi Library*, the *National Archives of Hungary*, and the *Central Library of the Hungarian Province of the Piarist Order* in Budapest. After searching the Reformed colleges of Debrecen and Sárospatak (*The College Library of the Transilvian Church District and Library of Theology* and the *Scientific Collections of the Reformed College of Sárospatak*), we mapped the Transylvanian collections: the *Teleki-Bolyai Library* (*Biblioteca Teleki-Bolyai*, Târgu Mures), the *Library of the Protestant Theological Institute of Cluj* (*Biblioteca Institutului Teologic Protestant din Cluj*), the *Library of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Oradea* (*Biblioteca Eparhială Romano-Catolice din Oradea*), the *Library of the Székely National Museum* (*Muzeul Național Secuiesc*, Sfântu Gheorghe), the *Gábor Bethlen Documentary Library* (*Biblioteca Documentară 'Bethlen Gábor'*, Aiud), and the *Rezső Haáz Museum Library* (*Biblioteca Științifică a Muzeului 'Haáz Rezső'*, Odorheiu Secuiesc).

II. Methodological considerations

Usually the private libraries, established mainly during their foreign study-tours, of the intellectuals of the Early Modern Period meant the fundament of literacy of the mentioned reformed pastors. Their booklists were scarcely presented and only incomplete descriptions of inconsiderable measure came to light about some of their survived volumes. Over and above collecting the dispersed books containing the possessor's entry of Csulyak and Tofeus from a dozen of institutes, the most important task was the reconstruction of the libraries on the basis of the booklists published in the series *Contributions to the History of the Intellectual and Cultural Movements in the Carpathian Basin in the 16th to 18th Centuries* vol. 13th and 16/3rd, completed with data from other possible sources. Exceeding the details and the analyses published before, the real novelty of the results of the dissertation was, above all, guaranteed by the collection and the detailed description of the once possessed books of the mentioned persons.

In order to unravel the items of the booklists I mainly used the database of *Gemeinsamer Verbundkatalog* (GVK), which over and above the VD 17 (*Das Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachraum erschienenen Drucke des 17. Jahrhunderts*), contains several printed works from the 16th century, published outside the German-speaking world as well. In case of the Hungarian old printings the catalogue of the *College Library of the Transibiscan Church District*, the *Hungarian National Common Catalogue of Old Prints* (MOKKA-R), and the volumes of the *National Bibliography of Hungary* (*Old Hungarian Library - RMK* and *Early Hungarian Printings - RMNy*) were widely used. With the help of the digital collections (*Europeana*, *Google Books*, *Gallica*) I was able to get an inside view of the identified works that were not available in Hungary in copy format.

Beyond the booklists testifying the erudition of the two Reformed ministers, fundamentally different sources were at our service, which require different approaches and methods during the elaboration of the topic. But the results received during the analysis are comparable for the most part. In case of Miskolci Csulyak the weight of the egodocuments are significant. His autograph *Diarium* (including his booklist containing detailed descriptions of his obtained books, his itinerary written by him during his peregrination, and his occasional orations), his album amicorum testifying about his social network (in Hungary and abroad), and some of his books discovered during the research made it possible to have different approaches than of Tofeus' inventory (listed extempore and copied by others). Here we found

his collected sermons issued at the Transylvanian Prince's court (*A' szent Soltárok resolútiója*, Kolozsvár, 1683), his printed disputations (printed in the Netherlands and in Várád/*Oradea*), some of his letters addressed to Mihály Teleki (1634–1690), chancellor of Transylvania, and some dozens of identified works from his former library. With the aid of these complementary data derived from different sources we could describe the literacy of the ministers. Because the number of similar complex analyses in the field of the cultural history of the members of the Reformed Church is very scarce, and due to the lack of proper and adequate analogies, it was reasonable to formulate the consequences very cautiously.

The presentation of these private collections of the Reformed ministers were made in the way of quantitative and qualitative analysis. First of all, in large quantity, more than 700 data items (mainly about printed books) were arranged in thematic groups of connecting works and a statistical evaluation was constructed with graphic illustration where it was possible. In the course of the qualitative research, after delineating the historical background, more detailed analysis was prepared. The multidisciplinary approach was justified by many historical circumstances. It was important not to neglect the fact that some of the natural sciences (according to the contemporaneous classification of sciences) were studied as part of the 'philosophia naturalis', as well as that the conclusions made in the field of Astronomy could have had significant philosophical and theological consequences (see Tofeus' opinion on the Copernican heliocentric model of the solar system in his sermons).

Finally we assessed the two pastors' library individually and at the end of the thesis jointly comparing them. Drawing a parallel between their erudition (Chapter IV.), the comparative analysis was completed by the presentation of the similar fields of interest of contemporary ministers. Detailed descriptions of the former possessed books discovered during the research (in order of the institutes) were collected in the *Supplement* (Chapter V.).

It was deemed to be important to display the conflicting viewpoints, whether about the polemy in the previously published scientific literature, or the refuting contents of the different possessed (or read) works by the ministers. The presumably larger or smaller deficiencies concerning the collections were systematically indicated.

The first chapter of the thesis discusses terminological and generic problems. After describing the methodology and historical review of the former researches, in two introductory subchapters the definition, the periodization and the changing adjudication of the Reformed Orthodoxy over the course of time were outlined. Then, due to the lack of proper synopsis, a short outline was drawn concerning the genesis and usage of the libraries of the Hungarian Reformed ministers in the Early Modern Period.

The second and third chapters discuss the literacy of István Miskolci Csulyak and Mihály Tofeus, in nearly equivalent structural units with the consideration that their literacy need to be the comparable. After presenting the biography (family background, Hungarian and foreign education, places of pastoral service, social networks, literary works), the source conditions and the history of their libraries, surveying the preceding papers were highlighted in both cases. In two short chapters both ministers' collections were evaluated with the consideration of bibliography, particularly the works relating to the subject matters of the *Old Hungarian Library (RMK)* and *Early Hungarian Printings (RMNy)*, or the possible 'Hungarica' works and the incunabula.

Separating the individual layers of literacy in the theological subchapters, we approached works belonging to Bibles and commentaries to the books of the Holy Scripture, Patristics, Dogmatics, Catechetics, Homiletics, Liturgy and Hymnology, (the very strong) Polemics, Casuistics, and finally 'other theological works' ('Miscellanea'). Following that the provable presence of the theological schools of the 17th century Europe, among them the Orthodoxy of Switzerland, Germany or the Low Countries, the Irenicist heritage of Heidelberg, and the Puritanism from the Netherlands and England was discussed.

Concerning the non-theological groups, first we examined the works of the trivium (Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic) linked to the education. As an unic cluster musical literature came to the light only in Csulyak's library. Tofeus was interested in several books connected to the oriental (biblical) languages. After describing the works belonging to Philosophy, Literature, History and Church History, Theory of State, Political Science, Jurisprudence, Natural Sciences (Natural History, Cosmography and Geography, Astronomy, Medicine), finally the works ranked under the umbrella term of 'nonconformist' were also listed. These all were present in both pastors' private libraries.

After analysing the thematic groups, each collection was appraised in separate subchapters, concentrating its individual peculiarities and making a comparison with the collections of other Hungarian and foreign intellectuals (when the previous researches offered us examples). In the case of both part-summary we demonstrated the percentage of the different thematic groups by pie graphics, facilitating comparability, presenting more spectacularly the differences and explaining the cause of diversity.

Meanwhile we had to create a classification system adjusted to the appeared works and readings. Analysing the individual items, we had to classify them ourselves because of the lack of the categories accepted by the Early Modern contemporaries. The libraries of the old Reformed colleges (contrary to the strict rules concerning the Catholic orders' collections)

can not serve as models, because their librarians never applied a complete system of classification. In these collections of some hundred books the 'bibliothecarius ordinarius' (an elected librarian student) could orientate well enough without classes. Sometimes provenience offered a cohesive force (the books inherited from their former owners were kept together), however this was an unusual solution, rather than a practice. Categorization by the supposed functions of the texts may have a hint of subjectivism to a certain extent, but a researcher can not avoid organizing a system.

Chapter four compares the collections of Miskolci Csulyak and Tofeus analysed in the previous chapters (second and third) in thematical groups. Lesser or greater divergences were brought to the surface during the analysis, which could be interpreted by the different range of interest of the owners and historical reasons of the literature, the history of the Reformed Church or typography. Finally, we can read a comparison with Miklós Apáti Madár (1662–1724) ranked to the Cartesian philosophers and a shorter outlook to the literacy of Pál Ember Debreceni (1660–1710), a Coccejian minister and church historian.

III. Results of the dissertation

- The former libraries of orthodox Calvinist ministers István Miskolci Csulyak and Mihály Tofeus partially became re-researchable by publicating detailed descriptions about the earlier incompletely registered (by János Herepei and Imre Bán) and the newly found volumes. New papers can establish based on the identified copies (overall: 101 works in 48 volumes scattered in more than a dozen collections), mainly through their autograph margins concerning e. g. Tofeus' historical readings. I could only refer to the possibility hiding in marginal notes, because these should be explored by other methods.
- The theological literacy of the Reformed ministers regarded as the member of the Orthodox party fundamentally could have been similar to the colleagues ranked to other movements (Puritans, Coccejans). Vast amount of dogmatical and polemical works built upon strict Biblical ground were characteristics of the collections of Csulyak and Tofeus, as most of the books were linked to these theological groups. Tofeus possessed 'modern' toolsets on Biblical philology as well (the studying of the 'biblical languages', especially the Hebrew language was in the centre of Theology in the 17th century). The Swiss (Helvetic) reformers were dominant in the collection of (the peregrinant of Heidelberg) Csulyak (and perhaps in his readings), whereas their printed works were repressed to some extent in the library of Tofeus, who gathered books in the middle third of the century. The literature of the first century of the Reformation (for example: Calvin's oeuvre) streamed in in a greater amount to the Carpathian Basin only in the 18th century as we can see in the museum libraries today.
- The percentage of the Polemical literature (in the case of Csulyak: 12%) was particularly high in the collection of Tofeus (19%). This phenomenon can be explained by the events of the church history and history of literature: the strengthening of the Counter-Reformation and the rise of the different (heterodox) schools within the Reformed Church. By the 'high' period of the Reformed Orthodoxy (1620–1700) the number of the religious controversies have significantly grown, partly between different denominations, partly between the members of the newly developed movements in a denomination. Our ministers collected Polemical works both from the Catholic–Protestant, and the

Reformed–Lutheran–Unitarian encounters, and even from the Calvinist inner-controversies (Remonstrants–Contraremonstrants, Orthodox Calvinists–Puritans).

- Tofeus' small but typical special collection of the works on church government partly was fed upon the contemporary polemics between the Episcopalians and the Presbyterians. As a superintendent he could have good use of these printings.
- The lack of the devotional literature (especially comparing to the amount of the polemical and dogmatical works) can be explained partly with the theory that some volumes supposedly remained at the pastor's families. We can not accept deducing this phenomenon from their orthodox theologian attitude, Csulyak's *Diarium* and Tofeus' prophetic sermons are contradicting to this picture.
- Almost all the significant theological–philosophical intellectual movements of the 17th century could be registered among the volumes of the ministers, proving that the Orthodox Calvinists made efforts to gather information. Certain elements (e. g. the praxis' coming into limelight, typology in biblical interpretation) were integrated successfully, therefore (according to the latest researches) the dichotomous approach (mainly published in the works of Jenő Zoványi and László Makkai) cannot be maintained in the future researches.
- In the case of both Csulyak and Tofeus concerning the Trivium, Ramist author's works were rather dominant to the Aristotelians.
- Csulyak preferred the Aristotelianism and Christian Neostoicism in philosophy, Tofeus collected Aristotelian authors and in several occasions condemned Cartesians (he obtained some works by Descartes, so he intended to orientate himself on the subject).
- The picture of Csulyak the 'maniac poet' is known for a long time in the history of literature (although his evaluation is not homogeneous). According to this, a large number of literary works were demonstrable in his collection, double the amount to Tofeus' similar readings. Beside the ancient Greek and Roman literature, collections of sentences and letters, Italian and German Neolatin authors were gathered by both

ministers. Also in the quite rare 'ars peregrinandi' genre Csulyak enriched his collection with precious works which influenced his itinerary (*Diarium Apodemicum*).

- The dissertation raised a new aspect to the circumstances of the genesis of Bálint Balassi's manuscript 'Szép magyar komédia' (*A Fine Hungarian Comedy*). Reading Tofeus' sermons we could provide new contributions to the first Hungarian translation of Emperor Hadrian's epigram from the 'Historia Augusta' as well.
- A rare printed memory of the written literature of music was registered, which could have granted a stable theoretical ground for the songwriter/poet Miskolci Csulyak.
- Tofeus collected much more historical works. Beside the ancient authors and volumes elaborating the whole world's history, he gathered the important territorial/national summaries of the Early Modern Period. His readings can be traced also in the text of his sermons on the Book of Psalms (mentioned above), and he frequently illustrated his message with 'extraneous' historical exempla for convincing his audience.
- The ministers were familiar to the greatest accomplishments of the theory of state from the period (Machiavelli, Bodin, Grotius, in case of Tofeus Campanella and Hobbes as well). Tofeus' collection was richer in works on Political Sciences, he collected mainly printings born in the age of the English Civil War and during his age in the contemporary Hungary.
- Small amount of works on natural sciences were registered, mainly from the field of Cosmography, Geography and Astrology, in this respect the collection of Tofeus was more up-to-date. Both of them collected the works on 'Schola Salernitana' (in contradistinction to the new Paracelsian or iatrochemic position), a bit old, but extremely popular school of Medicine until the 18th century. This could have been the most popular medical school among pastors. Defending the conservative geocentric model of the universe, originating from Antiquity, characterized the Orthodox preachers: Tofeus pronounced a judgement about the 'Copernician revolution', which influenced the theological thinking, even from the pulpit.

- Some 'nonconformist' books were present in their libraries, as an astonishing turn for the traditionally Orthodox-labeled Calvinist ministers. The enquiry for the curiosities and rarities was a typical trait for the intellectuals of the 16–17th century. The presence of a Rosacrucian writing (Csulyak's heritage from András Prágai), the volumes of 'magia naturalis', prints on demonology, Drabik's chiliast works arriving from Comenius to Tofeus, or the Kabbalah could be justified by that, the possessors probably were not the followers of any of these movements. A great amount of books from their library are against this supposition.
- The results of the dissertation are applicable to a wide range of the History of Sciences or the history of the reception of the intellectual movements in the Early Modern Period. Similar analysis could enrich the earlier established picture of the Cultural History of the Carpathian Basin.



Registry number: DEENK/204/2016.PL
Subject: PhD Publikációs Lista

Candidate: Róbert Oláh
Neptun ID: ZBHIG3
MTMT ID: 10037414
Doctoral School: Doctoral School of Literature

List of publications related to the dissertation

Hungarian scientific articles in Hungarian journals (5)

1. **Oláh, R.:** A héber nyelv szerepe Tofeus Mihály műveltségében.
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3. **Oláh, R.:** Bibliák a kora újkori református lelkészi könyvtárakban.
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List of other publications

Hungarian books (1)

6. **Oláh, R.**, szerk. Monok, I., Székely, J.: Protestáns intézményi könyvtárak Magyarországon, 1530-1750: jegyzékszerű források. Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, Budapest, 403 p., 2009. ISBN: 9789632005652

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The Candidate's publication data submitted to the iDEa Tudóstér have been validated by DEENK on the basis of Web of Science, Scopus and Journal Citation Report (Impact Factor) databases.

19 July, 2016

