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The Diplomatic and Ideological Relations of  
the Principal Court of Transylvania with the Netherlands  
in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century in the Light of Peregrination

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Theses of Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation

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## **I. The Theme and Objectives of the Dissertation**

### ***The issue and objective of the dissertation:***

My PhD thesis focuses on examining the diplomatic and ideological relations of the Transylvanian Principality and the Netherlands in the light of peregrination. The core of this essay is constituted by the survey of Transylvanian peregrinators and of two peregrine trips.

The aim of my examination is to demonstrate that a multifunctional network existed, made up of peregrinators, which connected European protestant countries – mainly the Netherlands – with Transylvania through the wandering students. The research of networks, the investigation of the history of information and of connections, especially the examination of agents and agent networks operated by them as part of this issue, is a relatively new line of scientific research. Within these fields the process of peregrinators forming a network and investigating the importance and nature of these networks merit attention, as the examination of their essential diplomatic, commercial and ideology historical role was somewhat ignored until nowadays; scientific research has not considered it a priority. Although the diplomatic and other functions of the peregrinators were emphasised before in some microhistories, these have not been considered to be networks.

Furthermore I intend to reveal that the network formed by peregrinators was not an isolated system used only by Hungarians for study matters, but it connected to other networks. In my essay I endeavour to highlight its direct and indirect link with formal and informal diplomatic and commercial or cultural networks (the so-called *republic of letters*). One of the main goals of my dissertation is to emphasise these links and to make them seen as a whole.

Doing so I touch only lightly upon the main theological and philosophical ideas in the early modern ages, which induced cultural and political changes not only in the West in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but also had a profound impact on Transylvania. My primary intention was to focus on introducing the personality of the mediators, and to map the network and the role of the newly built channels in the spreading of these ideas, focusing on their impact on the way of thinking, ideology, politics and sociology.

### ***The structure of the dissertation:***

In the introduction of my essay (Chapter I) I define the aims of my research, I make an attempt to review the antecedents of researching the topic, and lastly I determine the spatial and temporal limits of the period in question.

At first I clarify the notion of *peregrination* (Chapter II). The most popular form of travelling in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was undertaken by students travelling to universities abroad. Although the scientific literature does not always make a clear distinction between the two types of peregrination, I consider it important to distinguish them clearly and to define their characteristics. (The first one is '*peregrinatio academica*', which primarily serves learning purposes; the second one is '*Kavalierstour*', which has, first of all, ceremonial goals.) In relation to this I thoroughly examine how many peregrinators there were, their exact birthplace (if it can be identified), religion, nationality, their age when they departed, what they studied and who their patrons were.

After that we can see two case studies from two different periods of peregrination in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. I am going to represent a so-called '*Kavalierstour*' (a cavalier tour that originated from mediaeval traditions) or '*Grand tour*' in Chapter III. This was the way of young aristocrats travelling abroad, during which they visited European royal and baronial courts through a carefully planned route by their parents with a great escort. In this chapter I thoroughly report about a – perhaps the most frequently mentioned – *Kavalierstour*, the peregrine trip of Péter Bethlen, nephew of Prince Gábor Bethlen. I was intent on examining the trip and its real aims in a wider context, and especially I focus on its diplomatic importance and its connection and network building functions. That is why I devoted less attention to Péter Bethlen, the main character of this trip, instead I chose to study his companions, and especially the agents amongst them.

At Chapter IV we can follow a '*peregrinatio academica*', which is a European round trip undertaken mainly by persons of civic descent for the purpose of studying. I tried to point out what role peregrinators played in forming the cultural relations of Transylvania through Transylvanian students taking part in journeys like that, and to present some religious and ideological debates, which determined the mood of that period. I aimed to examine through István Pataki and his companions how joined or, on the contrary, how they stayed out of these debates. By that time the fully developed network, used consciously by Mihály Apafi, Prince of Transylvania, maintained well-functioning relations. Therefore it is interesting to follow through which ways and channels these ideas were spreading, and what kind of philosophical, theological and scientific thoughts were transmitted by them. I outlined the main tendencies and ideas (like Cartesianism, Cocceianism and Puritanism), which could affect the thinking of Transylvanian intelligentsia, presenting the religious and ideological background of my theme.

While I investigated the network building function of the peregrinators in the case of Péter Bethlen, here I concentrated on the role of Pataki and his companions as parts of a well-functioning network.

## II. Methodology of the Research

It is important to make clear that my dissertation does not primarily focus on interpreting or publishing new sources, nor making philological examinations. I rather strive to reveal deeper links based on known and partially explored sources, like the diary of Pataki, which place the theme into another context. Historians have not yet paid attention to the parts of the diary mentioned above dealing with the peregrination. I also concentrate on showing the peregrination as a complicated, multifunctional network possessing many advantages.

During the investigation of Transylvanian peregrinators I created a database about them. That was the base of my examination. It contains the names of the students (and also the variations of their names, which were recorded on the enrolment lists of the universities), their birthplace, religion, and those universities abroad in which they studied. Besides that I recorded another set of data about their family background, possible patrons and data about their future carrier. During the compilation of this database, which required approximately five years, I managed to draw some conclusions, to study their actions in a system, to make maps and graphs. The items of the database are mostly based on the lists and researches of Réka Bozzay, Sándor Ladányi, Miklós Szabó, Sándor Tonk, Imre Czegle and Jenő Zoványi.<sup>1</sup>

I tried to collect my sources from a wide range. There are student diaries (like the diary of István Pataki or János Horváti), personal letters of peregrinators sent to each other or to their patrons (amongst them Gábor Bethlen, István Bethlen, Mihály Apafi or Mihály Teleki), narrative sources (e.g. Gergely K. Kecskeméti: *Ulysses Pannonicus* and a funeral speech «*Funeral pomp...*»), university matriculation lists, records of alba amicorum and expense records, to mention just a few of them.

Naturally, I would like to relate to the previous lines of researches regarding methodology. Besides traditional methods of processing sources and scientific literature, I also tried to use the achievements of new methods in historical research. For instance the

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<sup>1</sup> Bozzay R.–Ladányi S.: Magyarország diákok holland egyetemeken; Szabó Miklós–Tonk Sándor: Erdélyiek egyetemjárása a korai újkorban, 1521-1700. Szeged, 1992.; Czegle Imre: A brémai főiskola magyar diákjai 1618-1750. Itk 78. (1974.) 1. sz. 89-103., Zoványi Jenő: Magyarország protestáns egyháztörténeti lexikon. Szerk. Ladányi Sándor. Magyarország Református Egyház Zsinati Irodája, Bp., 1977. I enclosed the database on CD to my work.

methods of *postmodern history writing*<sup>2</sup> based on examination of narratives, which turned attention to the history of connections and to *microhistory*, dealing with the study of politically less important persons. By examining the diary of István Pataki, for example, we can gain insight into the microhistory of a student who studied theology, a representative figure of the Transylvanian peregrinators from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Through it we can investigate his life, his peregrine trip and his carrier. I was able to adopt these methods in the course of both case studies, when I attempted to describe their personality and activity by piecing together the fractional information of subjective personal letters, student diaries, travelling records, contemporary news, newspapers and pamphlets. Revealing the events of peregrine trips in a more detailed way enabled me to highlight some connections, which can take us closer to display the circumstances of certain political-diplomatic steps, and to give us more data about the history of culture, way of living and mentality at that age.

Furthermore, I tried to apply new methods borrowed from mathematics, but now increasingly used in other fields of sciences as well, dealing with graphs, which helped me to examine the complex, cobweb like nature of peregrinators' networks. One of the main characteristics of similar (*scale-free*) networks is that central nodes are less important to the functioning of these networks, than those who maintain simple connections between nodes. Take out the central nodes and the network will still function because of them. They are the peregrinators in this case.

### **III. Main Results of the Essay**

Having examined the role of peregrinators we can state that they wielded an elemental importance in the field of Transylvanian–Dutch connections. Without their relay role these distant countries probably could not have established such tight diplomatic, ideological and cultural links between each other. I will group my conclusions in major topics about this very wide ranging theme below.

*Indirect and direct (diplomatic and cultural) relations and the role of peregrinators:*

- 1) We can state that Transylvania by the peregrinators connected (even if as a periphery and not as a centre) to the learning and scientific network called republic of letters.

This is proven by the fact that the students fulfilled the conditions of belonging to the

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<sup>2</sup> About the background of the principals, conceptions and methods of postmodern history writing see Gábor Gyáni: *Az elveszített múlt*. Nyitott Könyvműhely. Bp., 2010.

network. They had personal and epistolary connections with scholars (the central nodes of the network), therefore they could exchange information and scientific ideas. Moreover, from the change of the number of students and the survival of these connections after the Principality of Transylvania officially ceased to exist (1690), we can conclude that the students played a much more important role in holding the network together. We can see that the death of some professors or patrons, or even the temporary unavailability of universities (for example Utrecht, after it was occupied by the French troops in 1672) could not really indent existing connections.

- 2) We can estimate the number of peregrinators from Transylvania or those who somehow were linked to Transylvania around 430 (in the period from 1623 to 1700). This number differs from the thousand or thousands estimated by the scientific literature. The difference emerges from that they usually count the number of enrolments rather than the individuals personally, like my database. With the help of this we can exclude the multiple enrolments.
- 3) Examination of the birthplace of peregrinators shows that religion played a dominant factor in their decision making. Lutheran Saxons insisted on keeping their religion so much that they held onto the German universities even at the time of the 30 Year War, thus their involvement in Dutch peregrination is marginal. From a social point of view they originated mainly from the civic rank. This is supported by the fact that from the bigger cities (like Várad or Kolozsvár), which possess a college, the number of peregrinators was higher. Students coming from villages of Háromszék also show a surprisingly high number. We can find the reasons for this in the crisis of the soldier society and the sublimation policy of the princes.
- 4) I succeeded to draw some interesting conclusions in connection with the age of the students. We can find a difference between the age of the students when they departed abroad and the age of them claimed by the scientific literature<sup>3</sup>. They mostly departed at an age between 24 and 26 years (46% of the peregrinators). This is older than the European average. It is also noticeable that the age of the peregrinators is in inverse ratio to their social and financial statuses. The richer ones of noble origin departed at the youngest age, while the poorest ones who came from lower classes departed at the oldest.

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<sup>3</sup> Here I primarily refer to the average age between 22 and 24 years established by Miklós Szabó and Sándor Tonk.

- 5) We can also observe some phenomena in a relation to their patrons. At the beginning of the peregrination students were mainly promoted by Princes, but later the number of aristocrats (like Bánffys, Telekis) increased amongst the supporters. Furthermore, trends show that communities considered the education of intellectuals more and more a common case, therefore another group of supporters appeared (cities, colleges and the bourgeoisie).
- 6) We can ascertain some tendencies in connection with their studies. Theology had unbroken popularity, but during the century (particularly at the end of it) the attention of students turned to other subjects, like philosophy, law or medical studies. In the background of this we can also find religious reasons. Unitarians for instance had an inclination towards medical studies.

*First case study: forming of the network of peregrinators. The Grand Tour of Péter Bethlen and his companions:*

- 1) We can establish the fact that due to the Transylvanian peregrinators a new network emerged between Transylvania and the increasingly attractive Dutch universities during the Thirty Years War. Gábor Bethlen started to build this from the 1620s. His primary aim was to train a wide group of loyal ecclesiastical and secular intellectuals.
- 2) Tracking the Grand Tour of Péter Bethlen, the nephew of Gábor Bethlen, highlights that this newly formed network was connected to another network composed by 'agents'<sup>4</sup>, which he used for formal and informal diplomatic, information gathering, propaganda or commercial purposes as well.
- 3) I show some of these 'agents' in the circle of the companions of the above-mentioned Grand Tour, for example Ferenc Bornemisza and Ferenc Liszti, who fulfilled diplomatic missions, or Márton Zeller and Daniel Nijs, who were functioning as commercial agents or moneylenders.
- 4) I tried to illuminate in my research the role of Péter Maksai Özse. He was a peregrinator who made an article about Gábor Bethlen in the world encyclopaedia of Giovanni Botero<sup>5</sup> (*Relations of the Most Famous Kingdoms and Common-weales Thorough the World*). The purpose of the article was to praise the Prince. Although Maksai is mentioned in the scientific literature in connection with this, I am positive that he too

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<sup>4</sup> I use the term 'agent' in a wide sense to those mediators who were acting for and on behalf of other people.

<sup>5</sup> Its original Italian title was: *Relationi Universali*.

was an agent of Bethlen. The dates of the database also shed light on the link between him and Péter Bethlen's peregrine trip.

*Second case study: operation of the network of peregrinators. The peregrine trip of a theologian student, István Pataki:*

- 1) In this case new students joined an already existing, well-functioning system. It is worth to examine how Princes later on exploited the advantages of this network of peregrinators. Mihály Apafi – compared to the Rákóczi – allowed more space for the emergence of intellectuals who were educated in academies during the period of Princes before him. Maybe he was the first Prince who could really exploit the advantages of the network, as opposed to his predecessors. The tolerant Prince had a lenient attitude regarding new religious and philosophical theories, which gave a greater freedom for peregrinators.
- 2) Through the examination of István Pataki's diary, we can track a typical '*peregrinatio academica*'. It gives us the opportunity to observe a Transylvanian wandering student's life, hardships, relationship with his patrons, teachers, other peregrinators and those left at home. From his book lists and diary records dealing with his studies we can get a picture about his interests, and about what kind of ideas he had a predisposition to.
- 3) János Horváti, one of Pataki's companions also had a diary. It provides a unique opportunity to compare two separate diaries, and it duly demonstrates the differences between their interests.
- 4) I would also like to highlight István Kolosvári, a future Transylvanian bishop from the companions of Pataki. We can also label him as an agent, which gives us an opportunity to compare his role with agents of Gábor Bethlen. Some differences may be noted. For example, while Bethlen preferred to employ secular persons as agents, who have not personally been peregrinators, rather they were '*praeceptors*' or part of an escort of a nobleman, Apafi employed people with theological qualifications for these functions, who were former peregrinators in the Netherlands, using their ecclesiastical connections. The versatile functions of the agents still remained.
- 5) I also point out the significance of the network between teachers from the Netherlands like Johann Leusden and Frans Burmann and patrons of the students, which functioned extremely efficiently. This had several effects, like dedication of some works of Leusden to Prince Apafi or Mihály Teleki, the patrons of his pupils; moneylending for

students; or help to the galley slave preachers (for example to the peregrinator Ferenc Otrókocsi Fóris).

- 6) Here I examine the effects that appeared in the history of ideas from another point of view. Not on the level of texts found in peregrinators' works, instead I emphasise the parallels in ideology and in the way of thinking, which have serious social and political effects (as in the case of the Synod of Radnót) and which are similar to those experienced in the Netherlands. These two countries have similarities in how to think about the world, in the ethnic and religious tolerance toward refugees, in the apocalyptic thoughts because of continuous wars and in orthodoxy appearing as state religion. There are also similar debates around the ideas, which generated tension between social and political groups in both countries. In the Netherlands mainly De Witt, supported by the merchants of Amsterdam, was inclined to promote the Cartesian and Cocceian ideas, while the supporters of William of Orange rather promoted the Calvinist orthodoxy. Similar trends can be observed in Transylvania at the Synod of Radnót, when the Transylvanian aristocracy rather sided with those who were accused of propagation of Covenant Theology and Cartesian doctrines, in contrast to the orthodox Calvinists who put faith in the support of Prince Apafi. It is also typical that the debates took place in an institutional framework (within academic frameworks in the Netherlands, and within colleges in Transylvania). These debates ended with the integration of these new tendencies in some ways.

#### **IV. Publications Related to the Theme**

##### **Studies and conference lectures:**

*Kovács, Katalin Anita: A peregrináció mint kulturális kapocs a XVII. századi Erdély és Németalföld között. [Peregrination as a cultural contact between Transylvania and the Netherlands in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century] In: Rajzolatok a magyar történelemtől. [Drawings about Hungarian History] Ed. Antos Balázs–Tamás Ágnes, Szeged, 2010. pp. 221-229.*

*Kovács, Katalin Anita: Egy peregrinációs körút tanulságai, Bethlen Péter 1626-tól 1628-ig tartó peregrinációjának értékelése. [Edifications of a Peregrine Trip. The*

Evaluation of the Peregrination of Péter Bethlen from 1625 to 1628.] In: Szemelvények ötszáz év magyar történelméből [Extracts from Five Hundred years of Hungarian History], Ed. Antos Balázs–Tamás Ágnes, Szeged, 2011. pp. 75-89.

*Kovács, Katalin Anita:* A holland-erdélyi peregrináció egy új forrása, a Pataki-napló. [A New Source of the Dutch-Transylvanian Peregrination – Pataki’s Diary.] In: Történelmi emlékezet és identitás. [Historical Memory and Identity] Modern Minerva Könyvek 5. Ed. Strausz Péter–Zachar Péter Krisztián, Heraldika Kiadó, Bp., 2012. pp. 93-112.

The conference of PPKE-BTK (9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> November, 2011.) The title of the lecture: Egy erdélyi peregrinus, Pataki István és a holland teológia [A Transylvanian Peregrinator, István Pataki and the Dutch Theology.] (Under publishing)

*Kovács, Katalin Anita:* Bethlen Gábor diplomáciai hálózata. Ügynökök, kereskedők, bankárok és diákok a fejedelem szolgálatában. [The diplomatic network of Gábor Bethlen. Agents, merchants, bankers and students in the service of the Prince of Transylvania.] In: KorájkorÁSZ. Korájkor-történettel foglalkozó doktoranduszok tanulmányai. [Ed. KorájkorÁSZ. Studies of PhD Students Dealing with History of Early Modern Ages.] Kádár Zsófia–Kökényesi Zsolt–Mitropulos Anna Diána. ELTE BTK Történettudományok Doktori Iskola, Bp., 2014. pp. 180-199.

*Kovács, Katalin Anita:* Bethlen Gábor külpolitikai törekvései ügynökhálózat tükrében. [The Diplomatic Aspirations of Gabriel Bethlen through his Agent Network.] In: Bethlen Erdélye, Erdély Bethlene. A Bethlen Gábor trónra lépésének 400. évfordulóján rendezett konferencia tanulmányai. [Transylvania of Bethlen, Bethlen of Transylvania. Conference studies performed in the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of accession to throne of Gabriel Bethlen.] Ed. Dáné Veronika–Horn Ildikó–Lupescu Makó Mária–Oborni Teréz–Rüsz-Fogarasi Enikő–Sipos Gábor, Erdélyi Múzeum Egyesület, Kolozsvár, 2014. pp. 79-92.

*Kovács, Katalin Anita:* Pataki István, egy peregrinus viszontagságai naplója tanúsága szerint. [Vicissitudes of a Peregrinator According to the Records of his Diary] In: Társadalom- és életmód-történeti kalandozások térben és időben. A nyugat-dunántúli

végektől a Kárpátokig. Ed. J. Újváry Zsuzsanna. Kiadja a Pázmány Péter Katolikus Egyetem Bölcsész- és Társadalomtudományi Kar, Piliscsaba, 2014. pp. 203-225.

**Review:**

*Kovács, Katalin Anita: Medgyesi Pál redivivus. Tanulmányok a 17. századi puritanizmusról. [Pál Medgyesi redivivus. Studies about the Puritanism of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century.]* In: Egyháztörténeti Szemle, VIII./2012/1., pp. 103-105.