

Doctoral (PhD) theses

**Peter Bod's Historia Litteraria Program**

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## 1. Aim of the dissertation

The dissertation was written in the hope of being able to find new viewpoints to approach the *historia litteraria* part of Peter Bod's oeuvre based on manuscripts and to pronounce some new realizations that has been unsaid so far. The special literature on Peter Bod's oeuvre from a literary historian approach is vast, however the writings are full of repetitions and contradictions, and are not up-to-date. On the contrary, the author's work has been analyzed warmly from a (church) historical interest in the last two decades, however, the literary historian and critical approach has not, or not sufficiently adopted these new results. We intended to incorporate the findings of related studies to the dissertation so as to understand the literary historically relevant parts of Bod's work more completely.

We regarded all works, writings, letters, fragments written by Peter Bod in connection with old scholars and their work or with phenomena or events of *litteraria* to come under the scope of *historia litteraria* program. This means that we studied not only *Magyar Athenas* and other printed materials by Bod that are often quoted by scholars, but also the manuscript antecedents of the main work, and occasionally other printed or not printed writings related to the topic, in which Bod intended to register, archive and by these gestures, to animate the people and works of *res litteraria*. Literally *new* sources that had been unknown are not revealed in the thesis, however we do use materials that had been unprocessed before (eg. *Literata Pannodacica*, *A historiakra utat mutató magyar leksikon*, some of Bod's death speeches). Based on these sources in manuscript we can declare, that Bod, within his diversified oeuvre defined by church historical motivations, undoubtedly and provably collected and wrote the biographies of Transylvanian churchmen first and people of *litterae* from the two mother countries last as a completely separate project from his other works. From the beginning of the 1750s Bod was conceptually working on compiling the biographies of people deserving remembrance up until the edition of *Magyar Athenas* (and, of course, *Smirnai Szent Polikárpus*): he was sorting the forming texts and named the whole project from the beginning *historia litteraria*. The seemingly arbitrary topic of the thesis is justified by the inner accents of the sources.

When speaking about the scholarly work of Bod done in the field of *historia litteraria* it is a most exciting question how the author and his work is connected to the tradition of literary history writing. In the history of literary scholarship *Magyar Athenas* has a special place from several viewpoints. The fact that it was written in Hungarian is a curiosity among the *historiae litterariae* in 18<sup>th</sup> century Hungary, even if we have data on earlier attempts of this kind. What is more, as opposed to other *historiae litterariae* of Hungary from the same century (eg. Mátyás

Bél, Dávid Czvittinger, Elek Horányi, Pál Wallaszky, István Weszprémi), in *Magyar Athenas*, the religious topic and denominational approach is appearing much more vigorously than in the mentioned ones. Péter Bod was acting according to the tradition of *historia litteraria* genre when he emphasized religious neutrality in the preface, but that does not mean that Bod was able to or wanted to enforce the principles phrased in writing. In scholarly literature the bias or unbiased of Bod is a recurring and most debated question, which seems a relevant question if we are trying to find the roots of canonical literary history in *historia litteraria*, but regarding the diverse and ambiguous answers we might think that it is not a perfectly posed question. However, if we interpret *Magyar Athenas* in the context of old Hungarian literature, within denominational frames, we can explain Bod's partiality in a more explicit and exact way.

The thesis is built around two focal points, one of which is the general working method of Peter Bod, the other is the work of the author in the field of *historia litteraria*. After a summary of the research history of the topic, we are analyzing the elements of Bod's compiling and excerpting methods, then we focus on the conception and the change in the conception of the *historia litteraria* program. We are also trying to find an answer to why *Athenas* was published in Hungarian and finally we are collecting the works of different authors who intended to correct and/or improve Bod's main work.

## 2. Methodological considerations

It was a main task considering *Athenas* to philologically compare the text of the edition with the manuscript preliminary notes *Literata Panno Dacica*, and also to explain the decision on the language of the book. Besides analyzing related texts, in order to support interpretation, we had to use the means of rhetorics as well: the structural formation of the main text and of the peritexts, schemas and clichés in them, the rhetoricity of remembering all help to understand the meaning and significance of Bod's program, which is aiming at animating memory. It was also important to provide a contextualizing reading: we were trying to interpret *Athenas* and the intentions for its re-edition from the culture of Hungarian Calvinism and of Hungarian Calvinist ministers. Thus we were hoping to understand the phenomena that Péter Bod, even in his scholarly ambition, was attentive of the warranty and of amending of present and future readers. Regarding all that is mentioned above, it was not the correct or incorrect data that was interesting in the biographies and notes published in the lexicon (the correction or registration of which was not regarded as a task-to-be-done), but it was the role of the whole volume and of supplementaries to be examined in forming the identity of the Hungarian and Transylvanian Calvinist community.

### 3. New results

1. In presenting Péter Bod's excerpting and compiling practice in the first place we could show up new important results in his handling of the sources. This is important since a recurrent motive of scholarly literature is the applause of the productivity of the author and, in connection to this, sometimes explicitly, other times only latently, the proclamation of his originality, which motives are not relevant with respect to the scientific milieu of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This has been unambiguously reinforced both by Bod's own remarks and by the analysis of his texts. Namely, we have meticulously analyzed Bod's redaction methods used at the translation of *Kősziklán épült ház ostroma* and at the compilation of the last chapter of *Szent Hilárius*, and found that he tightly follows the sources and sorts out, translates and extracts the curiosities and those segments which are of scientific or of argumentative interest. The importance of the *Lexicon universale*, the encyclopedia of Johann Jacob Hofmann from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century has been proved by the analysis of the manuscript *A historiákra utat mutató magyar leksikon*: selected texts can be demonstrated in many printed works of Bod from *A szent bibliának historiája* to *Szent Heortokrates* and beyond. Up to now, it has been also unknown that the entry 'scribendi ratio' of Hofmann's work served as a source for the well-known preface of *Magyar Athenas* referring to the history of writing. This text has been considered as Bod's own contribution so far. Based on his using the lexicon of Hofmann and other sources (the church history of Debreceni Ember Pál or Heidfeld's *Sphinx philosophica*) we can settle that in tune with the cultivation of science of the period it is a fundamental practice in Bod's writing to compile from others' texts, sometimes indicated, other times not. Our observations in this subject modulate the long-standing image of Bod's extraordinary workload, productivity in writing and originality: he is only credited so many significant publications and manuscripts because the majority of his writings is not original but works brought about by compilation, redaction and translation of others' works.

2. While investigating Bod's historia litteraria program, it turns out that the key word of all his source text is recollection. The core of the concept is the intention to maintain, evoke and pass over the deeds of good people of the past. We have shown that in Bod's case the gesture of recollection works properly if there remains a written trace from the past from which one can evoke the forgotten values of the bygone. An important result of the dissertation is that it clarifies that the evocation of memory makes sense only if the target audience learns from the scientific-literary virtues recalled. Ultimately, the prime aim of Bod's literary, redactory and publishing activity is to amend his readers, to lead them to salvation. This idea comes from the

ideologists of the Reformation: knowledge and faith presuppose one another for Melancthon and his followers. Bod stands for this idea not only in his parochial writings but also in his scientific-educational works such as the *Magyar Athenas*. From concessional perspective, this parlance was received in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. However, as shown in the dissertation, it was anachronistic in the scientific literature of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. But this did not prevent even the extraordinary critical Horányi from cooperation and using the *Athenas* as source.

3. We have summarized how the *historia litteraria* concept of Péter Bod formed from its initial objective into a full-fledged program. Bod's initial objective was to collect the biography and works of notorious Transylvanian churchmen and publish it with the title *Dacia Literata*. We know from a letter dated from April 12, 1753 written by Bod to István Halmágyi that Bod first made up the biography of three famous Transylvanian reformed churchmen, Vitus János Balsaráti, István Geleji Katona and Páriz Ferenc Pápai in Latin. He would group the other biographies on a chronological order on the advice of the friars and patrons, albeit he found the alphabetical order due to Czvittinger more in place. Later more and more people, scholar and politician outside the church came within his sight, even people from Hungary. From his correspondence with Miklós Sinai, we can conclude that Bod collected the biographies in Latin until quite late, the spring of 1765 under the entry *Literata Panno-Dacica*, and made a decision in a for us not reconstructible way to rearrange the material and publish it in Hungarian. The collection of biographies in Latin would have given the basis of a whole series: it provided a source even for two volumes in Hungarian. Finally, Bod published the biography of the Transylvanian bishops of the Reformed Church in chronological order in his *Smirnai Szent Polikárpus*; and the biography of the Transylvanian and Hungarian scholars in alphabetical order in *Magyar Athenas*.

4. In case of both Hungarian publications by comparing texts we have proven that the starting point was the notes of the *Literata Panno-Dacica* which, however, has been later extensively completed. This means that Bod has worked out the biography of those nine Transylvanian bishops which previously did not feature in the *Literata Panno-Dacica*. In the redaction of the *Magyar Athenas* he tried to meet the demands of the *historia litteraria* genre but he was not able (and presumably did not even want to) to extend retrospectively the principle of impartiality. Thus, we can observe denominational benchmarks in his lexicon of scholars written in Latin despite of the principle of impartiality declared in the introduction. Reformed authors in the *Athenas* are highly overrepresented; Bod sometimes speaks about authors of other confession in pejorative terms; and he brings up from time to time the bitter

experience of persecution of the Reformed Church. Bod also used the terms referring to suffering, repression and persecution in connection to other protestant scholars. Hence, one can claim that the scientific perspectives of *Athenas* are greatly overshadowed by the martyrdom of the Reformed Church. Consequently, the main function of this work is not the role it played in scientific literature or in the circulation of science in Hungarian but more in the formation and strengthening of reformed identity.

5. In the last chapter of the dissertation we tackle the program of amending, completing the text of *Magyar Athenas* which overarches projects of different scale, ranging from random notes at the margin to systematic accumulation spanning centuries and generations and to enlarged, multi-volumed republications. The appendices and notes of *Magyar Athenas* has not been scientifically investigated yet. It becomes evident from the ambition of the authors that each author completed the text within his own competence and also that it was not in the interest of authors from other sects to strengthen Bod's work and thus the identity of the Reformed Church. One can also see the limitations of the *historia litteraria* program: the fragments collected locally, typically in the main centers of the Reformed Church moreover with a denominational filter do not line up in a consistent whole. Not to mention that after Horányi's *Memoria Hungarorum* the opportunities in the program had been exhausted. Regarding the further reception history of the work one can observe multiple tendencies: the cult of Bod could remain vivid in a religious environment only. *Magyar Athenas* reappeared only once, in 1887: the redactors of the *Új Magyar Athenas* published the biography of protestant Hungarian authors making use of Bod's material. Another aspect is the bibliographic value of Bod's work. The information in *Magyar Athenas* is valuable not primarily because of the subsequent aesthetically oriented literary history, but rather from a bibliographic perspective (and this holds not only to Bod's *Athenas* but also to other authors' *historia litteraria*): one often hit on rare and unpublished manuscripts or unknown issues which Bod yet witnessed. Bod's work remains an inestimable source of the retrospective bibliographies (as the RMNy or the early volumes of the Hungarian national bibliography).

#### 4. List of publications related to the dissertation

##### Studies

*Bod Péter historia litteraria programjának mártirológiai vonatkozásairól = Mártírium és emlékezet: Protestáns és katolikus narratívák a 15–19. században*, szerk. FAZAKAS Gergely Tamás, IMRE Mihály, SZÁRAZ Orsolya, Debrecen, Debreceni Egyetemi Kiadó, 2015 (Loci Memoriae Hungaricae, 3), 90–99.

*Kompiláció a Szent Hiláriusban: Bod Péter mennyországa = Menny és pokol a barokk kori ember életében*, szerk. BÁTHORY Orsolya, Budapest, MTA–PPKE Barokk Irodalom és Lelkiség Kutatócsoport, 2014 (Pázmány Irodalmi Műhely, Lelkiségtörténeti Tanulmányok; 7), 89-100.

*Idézetek a Magyar Athenasban = Historia litteraria a XVIII. században*, szerk. CSÖRSZ Rumen István, HEGEDŰS Béla, TÜSKÉS Gábor, munkatárs BRETZ Annamária, Bp., Universitas, 2006 (Irodalomtudomány és Kritika, Tanulmányok), 122–131.

*Bod Péter fordítása Kocsi Csergő Bálint Narratio brevis-éből*, ItK, 108(2004), 340–347.

*Bod Péter a magyar bibliafordításokról (Adalékok Bod Péter munkamódszeréhez) = Bod Péter, a historia litteraria művelője*, szerk. TÜSKÉS Gábor, Universitas, 2004 (Historia Litteraria, 15), 59–70.

##### Editing

*Historia litteraria a XVIII. században*, szerk. CSÖRSZ Rumen István, HEGEDŰS Béla, TÜSKÉS Gábor, munkatárs BRETZ Annamária, Bp., Universitas, 2006 (Irodalomtudomány és Kritika, Tanulmányok).



*Irodalomtörténetírás a XVIII. században: Válogatott bibliográfia*, összeáll. BRETZ Annamária, CSÖRSZ Rumen István, HEGEDŰS Béla, Budapest, MTA Irodalomtudományi Intézet, XVIII. századi Osztály, 2004.

URL: <http://xviii.iti.mta.hu/kiad.html>

## **Review**

*Egyház, társadalom és művelődés Bod Péter korában*, szerk. GUDOR Botond, KURUCZ György, SEPSI Enikő, Bp., Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem–L'Harmattan, 2012 (Károli Könyvek) = reciti, 2013.

URL: <http://reciti.hu/2013/1414>