

Babeş-Bolyai University
Faculty of Letters
Department of Hungarian Ethnography and Anthropology

**HISTORICAL ANTHROPOLOGY: THE ANALYSIS OF
EARLY MODERN HUNGARIAN CALVINIST MANUSCRIPTS**

Supervisor:
Prof. dr. Vilmos Keszeg

Doctoral student:
Zsombor I. Tóth

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historical anthropology, microhistory, rites of passages, threshold, preliminal stage, liminal stage, postliminal stage, social promotion, uses of literacy, Calvinism, Puritanism, predestination, religious despair, private life.

Outline

The *introduction* provides the presentation of sources, method and aims of interpretation I have relied upon in my thesis. The sources, both printed and manuscripts, used for this case study consist of eight calendars containing everyday notes between 1690–1698, and the books read by Cserei up to 1697, the original manuscript of Cserei's solely published work, *The History of Transylvania*. As for the published sources, I will rely on *The History of Transylvania*, because it also narrates the period of 1690-1697, which represents the range of my interest. The most important sources are these eight calendars, which contain marginal notes or comments in Hungarian and Latin.

Given the particularities of these sources, I have come to the conclusion that the optimal choice, in terms of method, it is to rely on two disciplines, often overlapping and close to each other. These two disciplines are: historical anthropology and microhistory. Consequently I decided to engage into a *microhistorical* reconstruction so that I can answer a historical anthropological question, namely, how did an early modern young man become a responsible adult? Accordingly, I have chosen a particular manner and style to unfold the life story of Cserei, implying to a narrativization which presents, at first, the events of a certain time span (1690-1697), then moves toward a more detailed reflection of these account.

Consequently in *the first part* of the thesis I provide the detailed, micro level story of the years 1690-1697/98. Hence, the story of the concluding part of Cserei's youth follows the pattern of the rites of passages, being delineated as follows:

Preliminal Stage (January the 1st 1690 – December 30, 1692)

Liminal Stage (January 1693 – April 1697)

Threshold: the Betrothal and Marriage of Mihály Cserei (May 10, 1697 – October 23, 1697)

Postliminal Stage (October 29, 1697 – January 2nd, 1698)

This story of the passage promotes a narrative which highlights the inner personal and public transformations undertaken by the main actor. Social promotion, but spirituality and intellectual development are displayed simultaneously, suggesting that the passage constitutes a determining process of outstanding significance in Cserei's life.

The *second part of my thesis*, apart from the compulsory historical anthropological evaluation of events, also deals with the development and functions of Cserei's literacy. Thus, the life story of the young man is complemented with the story of the literate man, the *writer* and *reader*. In order to achieve this I survey the books bought by Cserei during two decades, first during the 1670/1680 and later on during the 1690. Due to the marginal notes and comments executed on the pages of these books while a student at the Protestant Gymnasium of Udvarhely, or later in the service of Count Apor, the attentive observer can decipher the strata of Cserei's intelligence, education and religiosity. This analyses makes possible to complement and refine those debatable statements about Cserei's life to which, up to now, there has never been access due to the lack of sources. On the other hand, I reckon equally

important is this amazing possibility of reconstructing Cserei reading and writing habits, his particular uses of literate culture.

Having obtained such a precious, but also reliable context revealing not only Cserei's private life, but his education as well, I attempt to describe Cserei's mental world. Among all the disciplines he had studied (Latin, theology, rhetoric, poetic, grammar, dialectics, history, geography, and politics etc) it is theology that seemed to function as the main discipline, which also provided terminology and concepts for Cserei's worldview. It is with Calvinist and Puritan theology, especially Ames, that Cserei attempts to grasp reality, understand it and explain it for himself, first of all.

However, this was possible not only because of the thorough theological education he was provided with, but because of his particular interest in theology, not to mention his tormented religious life. At an early age, he was around 12 years old, right after having left home to study in Udvarhely, he converted for a short while to Catholicism. Although he had been convinced to turn back to his original confession, this experience influenced all his life and his confessional identity. Cserei seems that it was not only interested by double predestination, but he also seriously feared it. For Calvin teaching, undertaken by puritans as well, claimed that due to God's unquestionable righteousness some were chosen to eternal life (*electio*), while others were damned (*reprobatio*, *damnatio*) awaiting eternal suffering. Puritanism, adding to it an even more severe touch, held that it was every Christian duty to find out, through inner fight and crisis, whether he or she was an elect or a reprobate.

As for Cserei there are written signs unmistakably pointing to the fact that he was also struggling, moreover facing religious despair, he surely had his moments of weakness, but not as much as to attempt suicide. Religious despair, often equated by Puritans with a sort of dialectics of hope and despair, had deeply influenced Cserei's life and shaped his confessional identity.

The *conclusion* of my thesis clearly points out that the historical anthropological process of passage from youth to adulthood, in Cserei's case, implies several passages. One of them is a process during which the individual is looking for the optimal strategies to obtain social promotion. Not necessarily apart from that, there is an inner process, mostly displayed in the privacy of the individual which refers to spiritual and religious transformations, such as the quest for signs denoting salvation. The concluding part of Mihály Cserei's youth provides reliable historical access to these transformations and convincingly illustrates the complexity and subtleties of these processes.

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