

**University of Szeged Faculty of Liberal Arts
Doctoral school of the science of literature**

Arguments of a doctoral dissertation

The life and work of Martin Schmeizel (1679-1747)

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I. The reason for the choice of subject, methods of material collection

Locations of the development of the research subject: Special education course in the field of old books (led by István Monok) at the Faculty of Library History at the SZTE BTK and Special education course in the history of civilization (led by Mihály Balázs) at the Faculty of Old Hungarian Literature at the SZTE BTK. Following a preparation and guidance received at the above mentioned locations, I was able to start my hungarica-research at the Franckesche Stiftungenben in Halle in 2000, sponsored by a Klebelsberg-scholarship that I had been granted by the Ministry of National Cultural Heritage. During a thorough autopsy-based study of the Foundations' collection of nearly 110 thousand old books, besides a lot of hungaricum, I came across pieces from Martin Schmeizel's former library (these books were not Hungarian related). In the meantime, I had extended my research to Nagyszeben, where I came across the collection hungarica and transylvanica, that were believed to have been lost. So far, I have been able to identify nearly three hundred works from the Schmeizel-collection in six libraries (Halle, Jéna, Karlsruhe, Nagyszeben, Marosvásárhely, Kolozsvár). Meanwhile, I found a lot of documents in the archives (Brassó, Nagyszeben, Halle, Jéna, Weimar) in connection with this polymath from Brassó, with the help of which, I was able to start reconstructing his life's work.

During my study of the world's first hungarica-library that was compiled in a structured way, I made a serious digression into the world of the early 18th century scholar libraries. I studied from different angles the issues of the scholar libraries in Europe (mainly Germany) and Hungary, from the Renaissance all the way to the early years of the age of Enlightenment, and while doing so, I paid special attention to the introduction of those scholar libraries in the Carpathian basin from Schmeizel's time, that had been known for only a short time (Sámuel Köleséri, Mátyás Bél, Johann Christoph Deccard). Placing it among these, and drawing a parallel, I had made an attempt to define the place and role of the Schmeizel library in the history of civilization and libraries of the first half of the 18th century.

II. Basic ideas and results of the thesis

Thanks to the circumstances described in Section I., in my dissertation, I had made an attempt to explore briefly the life and scientific work of a man, who though playing a key role in the Hungarian history of the early 18th century *historia literaria*, has not received appropriate appraisal of his activities nor has his life's work been acknowledged in the national professional literature. Martin Schmeizel's name is completely unfamiliar to the general public; he is somewhat known in the scientific world, but he is still only rarely mentioned despite the fact that he should be equally ranked with the central figures of the Hungarian history of civilization.

In my dissertation, I examined the question of how the life of a scientist of broad and thorough erudition, coming from the peripheries, the most eastern part of Europe, is developing in Western Europe, and how he was able to succeed unaided in the scientific world as front line intellectual in the age of polymaths. To find answers, I followed Schmeizel's life from Brassó through Jéna and all other European travels, all the way to Halle, then I examined those branches of science where he had made significant, even lasting contributions (secular and church history, legal history, local history, history of science, history of literature, cartography, heraldry, publicism, statistics, numismatics, pedagogy). Some kind of innovation or pioneering initiative can be connected to his name in nearly all branches of science, which results in him being listed in several disciplines in the international professional literature. Some examples for his forward looking initiatives:

- Collecting historical sources and review of source materials: Appropriate to a historian, he comes out with source-publication in scientific circles, and all his life, collects numerous sources (related to the history of Jéna, Halle and Transylvania), which he then interprets with a kind of attitude for critiquing these sources that was considered modern at the time.

- History of literature: In the cultivation of historia litteraria in Hungary, Schmeizel gains undying distinction when he founds the world's first hungarica-library specializing in the collecting of historical works and compiled according to particular principles and aspects. Based on these materials, he intends to write a Hungarian literary or scholarly encyclopaedia.
- Travel-guide literature: Several of Schmeizel's geographical books and ones that give useful advice when travelling are considered to be among the most significant pieces of apademic literature, as well as forewards written by him to such publications.
- Cartography: He himself designs and draws the map of Transylvania, which is found by experts to be of optimum quality and accuracy in its own kind, and which is later printed (?) in the workshop of the world famous cartographer Johann Baptista Homann (1664-1724) in Nurnberg.
- Heraldry: He comes forward with completely new ideas about the methodology of teaching and studying heraldry as well as about the importance of heraldric(?) studies.
- Library and Archive Studies: He is giving his students training in theory, practice and methodology unknown of in those days.
- Publicism: He is the first to summarize in writing what is known at the time about printed matters, and he himself publishes several periodicals of new genres.
- Statistics: He is the first to give lectures under the name of Statistics, at the Jéna university, in fact, naming the concept can also be attributed to him.
- Numismatics: Again, he is the first to start teaching this subject at higher education level, as auxiliary science. He himself is a numismatist.
- Linguistics: He himself claims to be the first to discourse on language use of university students, to do research on (rétegyelv).

- Pedagogy: The wide range of his pedagogical activities are connected to the formation and introduction of the science of hodegetics (?).

From the above, by far not exclusive list, I was focussing in my thesis especially on one aspect: that of the role played by Martin Schmeizel in the Hungarian history of *historia litteraria*.

Because of the fact that Schmeizel's name had become known abroad well before it did in his own country, his plans that had great significance in Hungary, had realised well, since it was in an international environment that the results of his research in Hungarian *historia litteraria* as well as his *hungarica* related literary activities, were carried out. With such background knowledge did I claim in my thesis that Schmeizel might have become simply a good local historian had he stayed in Transylvania, isolated from the wide professional public, whereas he had the possibility to become an accomplished scientist in Jéna and Halle, centres of bookselling, publishing and education of the age in Germany. He was in the right place at the right time in history, and so it happened that he became one of the forming, central figures of the developing international interest in the history of Hungarian civilization. He taught generations of *hungarus*-minded peregrin students about various aspects of their own culture, and educated several of them who themselves did *hungarica*-research work.

Besides his activities in education and science (?), the most important accomplishment of his life is considered to be the world's first *hungarica*-library, which was based on the conceptional collecting of books ever published about Hungarian history. With a stock of more than 500 publications, it was accounted to be a special collection of outstanding significance at the time, and fitted well in the line of scientific aspirations to collect and record sources, typical of the early age of the Enlightenment.

Based on his own collection, Schmeizel had intended to write a scholarly-literary encyclopaedia, that is a Hungarian national bibliography, however, his work remained in manuscript form, which was lost. Thus, he was not able to complete this aspect of his life's work.

Consequently, the primary purpose of the present doctoral dissertation is to draw attention to Martin Schmeizel's work, who is justly apostrophized as the initiator of early hungarological (?) activities and a central, determinant figure of 18th century historia litteraria in Hungary; as well as to take the first steps towards his rehabilitation.