



The Public Defense of the Doctoral Dissertation of

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entitled

Memory from the Past, Display for the Future

Early Modern Funeral Monuments from the Transylvanian Principality

will be held on

Thursday, 14 December 2017, at 11:00 am

in the

Gellner Room – Monument Building

Central European University (CEU), 9 Nador Street, Budapest

Examination Committee

- Chair Balázs Trencsényi (CEU, Department of History)
- Members Péter Farbaky (Budapest History Museum)
- Gerhard Jaritz (CEU, Department of Medieval Studies)
- Katalin Szende (CEU, Department of Medieval Studies)
- József Laszlovszky (CEU, Department of Medieval Studies)
(supervisor)
- External Readers Phillip Lindley (University of Leicester) – present
- Pál Lővei (Hungarian Academy of Sciences) – present

The doctoral dissertation is available for inspection on the CEU e-learning site.
Should you wish to access it contact Csilla Dobos (dobos@ceu.edu)

Summary of the Doctoral Dissertation

This thesis is a study of funeral monuments created in the Transylvanian Principality in the second half of the sixteenth and the seventeenth century: how people used them to preserve and evoke the memory of their dead in order to present them for the contemporaries and the future generations. Though tomb monuments constitute a major group of material heritage from the principality period, they have never been surveyed, inventoried, and have never been analyzed as a coherent group in any respect.

Funeral monuments and burial sites have appeared as part of the heritage of certain Transylvanian communities, as a reference point in their identity construction. Separate Hungarian, Romanian, and German historiographies evolved, and funeral monuments were incorporated into these narratives. The changing framework of interpretation was interconnected with the history of the memorials, since certain objects were highlighted by moving and displaying them for a broader public, while others were left to decay. In terms of scholarly aims, studies on specific pieces fell into the scope of art history in the Central European academic tradition which mostly focused on identifying sculptors' hands and stylistic origins. However, a significant number of the funeral monuments from the Transylvanian Principality cannot be interpreted in terms of art because of their simplicity and poor quality; instead they belong to the sphere of visual or material culture.

This work builds on approaches towards early modern monuments in Europe developed by historians, archaeologists, and art historians for the recent few decades, which utilize models provided by anthropology, social history, linguistics, and literary criticism, and interpret the memorials in relation to their social meaning, embedded within the social history of death. The main functions of these objects have been defined as preserving the presence of the dead among the living, offering models to follow, and evoking acts of memory. The form, size, material, images, and texts of the monuments were all chosen to ensure that they properly fulfill their function. Funeral monuments are seen here as means of communication in the social process of commemoration, as the manifestation of a system of visual signs. Consequently, by going back to the social context, their comparative and contextual analysis can uncover the choices that were made about them and unfold the reasons why.

Choices were made by all those people who were involved into the creation of the memorial, from the commissioner through the poet who wrote the verses to the sculptor and the painter who finalized it. Individual solutions inspired by the wishes of a certain commissioner were built into the repertoire of the stonecutters and the concepts about memorials of the prospective patrons and subjects. Moreover, funeral monuments from the Transylvanian Principality as in their present state were impacted by a series of later decisions too: some people choose to preserve or to get rid of certain tombstones, others moved or modified them, and monuments have been involved in creating collective or social memories over the centuries. We inherited these layers of meanings too as part of

the objects, sources for the research. Keeping this in mind, the primary aim of this work is to find out what kind of memory people from the Transylvanian Principality – all those who contributed to the creation of funeral monuments – intended to preserve and evoke about their dead and themselves among their contemporaries and the posterity and why, in order to understand more how material and visual culture is used by humans to define, express, and influence their place and role in the world.

The message of early modern tomb monuments has two basic components: one concerns the place of the individual in the earthly society, and the other one their position concerning what is beyond, that is, their religious status. The period of the Transylvanian Principality was the time when the ideas of the religious reform initiated by Martin Luther spread there, and the country, due to the coexistence of a diversity of Christian denominations, has been known as a land of exceptional religious tolerance. The collection of tomb monuments from the principality is a suitable body of sources to examine the impact of the Protestant Reformation on commemoration and material, visual culture in a multi-ethnic, multi-confessional environment.

This work entails an inventory project based on fieldwork, the primary results of which are presented in a Catalog as an appendix, containing 314 items. This is the most complete corpus of funeral monuments ever compiled from the Transylvanian Principality. The thesis itself is composed of an introduction, five core chapters, and the conclusions.

Chapter 1 defines the circle of objects that are in the focus of this research as well as the geographical and chronological framework in the context of the relevant scholarly traditions. The previous scholarship of Transylvanian tomb monuments, their interpretation history is presented to understand how it contributed to the meanings we attribute to the objects and how it has been interrelated with their physical history.

Chapter 2 presents the results of the research concerning the physical history of Transylvanian funeral monuments based on the main site types: urban and village churches, churchyard cemeteries, communal cemeteries, and museums, to be able to interpret their present visual and material condition and spatial context. Several tomb monuments included here had been previously unknown and unpublished. In case of numerous others, this research produced a new identification of their subject or provenance, or specified their dating. The second part offers a system of typology that is meaningful for the analysis, developed to present both the similarities and the differences among the objects in as many respects as possible.

The next two chapters unfold how people who were involved into the production of funeral monuments influenced certain aspects – the location, visibility, size, material, form, images, architectural details, ornaments, and texts – by their decisions and explore why they made exactly these choices. Chapter 3 deals with the producers. Previous scholarship aimed to identify certain masters' oeuvres based on some signatures on the memorials and to distinguish their "own" works from "workshop products" based on compositional and stylistic similarities. Due to the collected corpus of tomb monuments, the knowledge base

about the circumstances of production could be broadened, and several tomb monuments could be organized into groups according to analogous characteristics that point at workshops in Sighișoara, Sibiu, Brașov, Cluj, and probably in Bistrița, some of which have not been identified before. Those memorials whose quality surpasses the average and are customarily labeled in scholarship as imported pieces present a special problem for research, together with the pieces that cluster around them. These groups and clusters, however, either suggesting local or foreign origins, cannot be interpreted in an identical manner. Their contextual study lead to the conclusion that the term “workshop” can only be applied as an abstract analytical category which refers to different aspects of the production: sometimes to people, sometimes to structures or geographical spots, and sometimes to clusters of forms and carving styles. The reason for this is that neither the commissioners, nor the tomb makers thought about funeral monuments as artworks, and they did not leave any signs that would suggest that they claimed an appreciation of individual artistic achievement. They saw the stone memorials as functional objects, and this attitude determined their expectations.

This statement leads to the role of the commissioner side. Chapter 4 focuses on this group, including the patrons as well as the subjects (a total of at least 500 individuals), since there is often no way to distinguish the roles. The known funeral monuments were made for members of three major social groups: the nobility, the townspeople, and the clergy. An in-depth investigation into the status of the subjects demonstrated that the uppermost layer is by far overrepresented even within these privileged groups of the principality: most of the memorials were installed for the most prominent aristocrats among the nobility, the elite of the towns, and church leaders. This creates a remarkably contrasting background for the generally simple design and poor quality of the funeral monuments, especially if compared to the memorials of similar social groups in the Kingdom of Hungary under Habsburg rule and the rest of Central and Western Europe.

The quantitative analysis of the urban memorials was based on three relatively large samples from Sibiu, Brașov, and Cluj, while the smaller ensembles from the rest of the towns were used to corroborate the interpretation of the results. A closer look at the particular towns demonstrated that in Sibiu and most of the Saxon towns, town leaders dominate among the subjects. In Cluj, however, only a few funeral monuments belonged to the administrative elite; most of the subjects were craftsmen and their family members. While the Saxon towns were dominated by adult men, in Cluj women outnumbered man, and the share of children is significant.

This difference in the social composition of the subjects is associated with an essential dissimilarity between the sites where the known funeral monuments were set up: while in the Saxon towns, they originate from church interiors, most of the objects that survived in Cluj and Târgu Mureș are gravestones from cemeteries. The type, form, and iconography of the tomb monuments was determined by the type of the sites from where they survived: modestly decorated gravestones from the cemeteries, and ledgers from the pavement of the churches complemented by a few memorials placed on and against the walls in the

interiors. The composition and decoration of the ledgers was especially complex in Sibiu. The series of town leaders' ledgers, in addition to commemorating the prestige of individuals, their social persona characterized by specific mental and moral qualities, also served as a professional gallery referring to the entire Saxon nation. Spatial proximity to the predecessors' burials, the repetition of forms, the addition of secondary subjects to old ledgers, as well as indicating influential patrons on the memorials, all contributed to this message about power, competence, and continuity. The simple funeral monuments preserved in Braşov apparently did not serve as this kind of personal and communal display. However, the single figural ledger that survived the late seventeenth-century fire, as well as the series of retrospective monuments from the eighteenth century suggest that commemoration in the church space might have had a similar function there as well.

In contrast with the practice in the Saxon towns, commemoration in graveyards dominant in Cluj no longer benefitted from the weekly church attendance of the community and the attention of the town's visitors. This weakened the role of funeral monuments in the social display; at the same time, they became available for a much broader layer, and it resulted in a shift from public towards private commemoration. This characteristic difference in the type, form, and quality influenced the later fate of the ensembles as well: since the Saxon funeral monuments in the churches were more suitable for representing the glorious past and continuity in a new national context from the nineteenth century onwards, they were elevated, selected, and displayed. In contrast, most of the gravestones from Cluj were either lost or removed from their original environment and taken to the museum.

Among the nobility, last wills suggest that four factors influenced their decision about the site of burial and tomb monument: family ties, the location of their residence, the offices they held, and religious affiliation. Most of the funeral monuments – ledgers and tomb chests – were set up at their own estates, in the parish churches, often among the tombstones of ancestors or family members, and can be interpreted as a means of representing their local power. Case studies presented in the chapter demonstrate that funeral monuments also offered an opportunity for the commissioners to mark their presence in the church space. The dominance of men characterizes the subjects, even if women and children from the highest-ranking families were more likely to receive a separate memorial.

Religious status was tightly interrelated with social position in the Transylvanian Principality, though the religious context of a funeral monument covers different things in case of distinct social layers. Chapter 5 focuses specifically on this aspect. In towns, one can talk about a Lutheran and a Calvinist or Antitrinitarian environment where the town management officially accepted one or another denomination, even if the others were also present. Individual confessions determined the religious background of nobles' funeral monuments. The clergy, as a third category, was the official representative of the respective churches.

Since the eschatological meaning of medieval burial topography lost its function with the Reformation, all Protestant churches urged to move the cemeteries from around the church

to outside the settlements. In practice, Lutherans were much less radical, and this phenomenon can be observed in Transylvania too: in the Lutheran Saxon towns, burial in the church interiors was allowed for the administrative and financial elite and the clergy, manifest in the rich ensembles of their tomb monuments. The administration of the Antitrinitarian-Calvinist Cluj, however, in accordance with the relevant ecclesiastical regulations, prohibited burials in the churches. Though there are a few tomb monuments that survived from a church interior in Cluj, it seems that the commemorative practice complied with the picture suggested by the regulations, and even among the urban elite. Tomb monuments of priests all over Transylvania also suggest that church regulations played a role in shaping the social norms and customs: for Lutherans (90% of all priests' memorials), they were set up in churches, while for Calvinists and Antitrinitarians, in the cemeteries.

Transylvanian ecclesiastic or secular authorities did not elaborate specifically on the applicability and form of funeral monuments, which were not affected by Protestant iconoclasm there. However, the different views of denominations on images can be captured on the objects. No portrait memorial or biblical scene is known from a Calvinist or Antitrinitarian urban environment. Narrative scenes were not widespread among the Lutherans either, but portraits were favored on their tombs by the clergy and the urban elite. Funeral monuments are in general much more modest among the Calvinist and Antitrinitarian townspeople and clergy than among the Lutheran Saxons.

The dominant tradition of the nobility, burial in the church, was explicitly supported by Catholicism, while it resulted in a clash with the ecclesiastical guidance issued by the Calvinist Church. However, the customs were apparently so powerful that by the mid-seventeenth century, the church had to comply with them and they allowed the elite to use their traditional burial sites. In contrast with the towns and the clergy, tomb monuments of the nobility did not display any significant difference based on religious affiliation, and some iconographic elements even contradict the relevant theological doctrines; apparently, the commissioners were not concerned about these details. In contrast, priests' tombs were carefully planned to distinguish them according to denomination.

The preserved pieces suggest that the Transylvanian elite did not expect innovative artistic products but preferred to connect to the traditions. Even in those few cases when they chose a tomb or a sculptor from abroad, the products were somehow associated with the previous funeral monuments in their environment; the only exception was the first wall monument in Alba Iulia ordered by Prince István Báthory from Poland. A possible reason for this phenomenon may lie in the geo-political separation of the country, and the commissioner side was apparently not motivated to overcome these difficulties to any extent. Memorials in the principality were primarily expected to express continuity, power, and stability in the face of social and political changes and the shock of death.

Curriculum Vitae

Education

2007–	PhD in Medieval Studies, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary
2006–2007	MA in Medieval Studies, Central European University Budapest, Hungary
2001–2006	MA in Archaeology, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest
1996–2003	MA in Art History, Eötvös Loránd University Budapest, Hungary (degree obtained in 2005)

Scholarships, grants, awards

2015	DAAD-MÖB Research Scholarship at the Universität Heidelberg
2012–2013	New Europe College Research Fellowship, Bucharest
2012–2013	Isabel and Alfred Bader Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences
2010	DAAD-MÖB Research Scholarship at the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen
2010	Award for Advanced Doctoral Students, Central European University
2010	CEU Doctoral Research Support Grant, University of Leicester
2009	Academic Achievement Award for First-Year Doctoral Students, Central European University
2007	Tanasa Fund Award, Central European University
2000	CEEPUS Scholarship, Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Department of Art History

Employment, teaching, selected projects

2014–	Teaching “Cultural Heritage Project Management” (Master’s level, Cultural Heritage Studies Program, CEU)
2014–	Academic coordinator, Cultural Heritage Studies Program, CEU
2012–2016	Editor of the journal “Hungarian Archaeology”
2012–2014	Curator of the exhibition “Rescued Heritage” presented in the Parliament of Hungary and at in 12 museums in Hungary

2011–	Board member of the Hungarian Association of Archaeologists (member from 2002, vice president from 2014)
2011, 2012	Teaching “Medieval Heritage of Budapest” course (Master’s level, Medieval Studies Department, CEU)
2008–2009	Vác Repository (Hungary), director, art historian
2004–2007	Conservational works on medieval churches near Alba Iulia, organized by the Ágoston Sándor Foundation
2001–2008	Museum of Pest County, site assistant (2001-2005) and archaeologist
1999–2001	Inventorying cultural heritage in Transylvania, organized by Teleki László Foundation and Entz Géza Foundation

Selected publications relevant to the Dissertation

Book:

“*The True and Exact Dresses and Fashion*” *Archaeological Clothing Remains and their Social Contexts in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-century Hungary*. Archaeolingua Central European Series 3, BAR International Series 2078, Archaeolingua Central European Series 5. Oxford – Budapest: BAR and Archaeolingua Foundation, 2010.

Articles:

“Stones in Floors and Walls: Commemorating the Dead in the Transylvanian Principality.” In: *Places of Memory: Cemeteries and Funerary Practices throughout the Time*, ed. Daniel Dumitran and Marius Rotar, 151-174. *Annales Universitatis Apulensis, Series Historica* 19/II. Alba Iulia, Editura Mega: 2015.

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“Commemorating the Polish Renaissance Child. Funeral Monuments and their European Context. Edited by JEANNIE ŁABNO. Farnham: Ashgate. 2011. 457 pp., £25.00 (hardback). ISBN 978-0-7546-6825-1.” Book Review. *Childhood in the Past: An International Journal* Vol. 6 No. 2, September 2013, 140–141.

“Digging for Ethnicity – Perspectives in Archaeological Research.” In *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* 17 (2011): 139–151.

"Apafi György síremléke" (The funeral monument of György Apafi). *Credo* 9 (2005): 3-26.