

ABSTRACT

THE REQUISITORS OF THE PLACE OF AUTHENTICATION FROM ALBA IULIA (1556–1690)

After the secularization of the Catholic ecclesiastical institutions in 1556, a new era had begun in the history of the place of authentication of the Chapter of Transylvania, which resided in Alba Iulia. This period has been characterized by a specific and totally different evolution of this institution, which was no more under the control of the Church. For the purposes of conducting its charter issuing activity, lay letter searchers (requisitors) were appointed by the princes, who were also paying these office holders. The majority of the members of the Chapter have left the country together with the bishop Paul Bornemissza (who's chair remained vacant for a long time), and those who remained in Alba Iulia were converted to Protestantism. They became the office holders of Queen Isabela and, after a while, of his son, prince Ioan Sigismund of Zápolya. The fact that some earlier members of the Chapter continued their work at the place of authentication proves that the state apparatus of the newly born Principality needed these intellectuals who had been previously educated by the Catholic Church.

For almost 20 years, the place of authentication and its archives had been given very limited tasks. The institution didn't dispose of a very important object used in the authentication process of the documents, namely the seal of the Chapter. This object has been probably taken by one of the canons, who left together with bishop Bornemissza. For this reason, the appointed office holders could only transcribe the documents kept in the archives of the Chapter. That's why they were called *requisitores*, which means "letter searcher".

The reorganization of this institution took place in 1575, when the requisitors were granted all the previous tasks: a new seal was given to the place of authentication, which was similar to the earlier; the requisitors among transcribing the documents started to issue different charters and to fulfill external activities on the demand of the princes (entering into possessions, boundary inspections, etc.).

Starting with 1556, the requisitors were appointed and paid by the princes and the character of the Chapter's archive has changed as the time passed: not only the documents created by the place of authentication have been kept here, but also the Libri Regii, tax registers and legislative documents. As a result of these changes, the archive became the institution that preserved the most important documents of the Principality and at the same time the reputation of the office holders grew. So, it was natural that during the period of the Principality, the office holders of the

place of authentication were chosen very carefully by the princes from the members of the Transylvanian intelligentsia, which had close ties both with the Unitarian Church and the Reformed Church.

The first chapter describes the birth of the *requisitorial* office and the secularization of the Catholic ecclesiastical institutions. This chapter, based on the consulted documents, proves that the ecclesiastical estates (including the lands owned by the Chapter) were already given to Queen Isabela and his son in 1556, and they haven't been returned to the Catholic Church, as one could suppose from the contradictory laws issued at the end of that year. The volume continues with the description of the period until 1575, when the appointed requisitors' single task was to search and transcribe documents. The reorganization that took place in 1575, based on a detailed written instruction dated at the end of that year, made the charter issuing activity of the requisitors of this institution comparable with the activity of the Chapter before the secularization. These characteristics remained unchanged until the end of the period of Principality.

The second chapter presents a detailed analysis of a group of intellectuals represented by the requisitors of the Chapter of Alba Iulia. The chapter starts with the presentation of this institution's structure and also discusses both the way the requisitors were appointed by the princes, and their duties and privileges. This chapter emphasizes the fact that the institution needed well-qualified personnel, and the requisitors needed to be well-trained in matters of paleography, Latin and legal issues. Romanian or German language proficiency often constituted an important advantage. It seems to be proven that the majority of the office holders spoke one of these languages.

Due to the fact that the prestige of the Chapters archive constantly grew, the requisitors have been entrusted with multiple new duties and responsibilities. In addition to these responsibilities, they were also granted some privileges.

As regards the estates and other properties possessed by the requisitors, it became obvious that many of the office holders were given goods and possessions by the clients of the place of authentication, in return for their services. The charters granted property rights of movable assets and real estates, and these rights represented the evidence of ownership in trials. For the clients who were taking part in actions for the ownership of properties it was of great importance to find these documents in the Chapters archive and to obtain their transcripts. The services of the office holders were rewarded with different donations.

It's well-known that during the Middle Ages, the personnel of the places of authentication consisted of clergy members who studied at Western universities or at the chapter or monastic schools attached to the chapters or convents. After 1556, the place of authentication from Alba Iulia was no longer under the jurisdiction of the church, but the society, in which this institution functioned, still remained religious. During the first period after the secularization, the earlier members of the clergy were appointed as requisitors and they have worked there until the reorganization that took place in 1575. After that, the personnel consisted of lay intellectuals, many of them with theological training. We may say that the majority of them have received higher education and have studied at Western European universi-

ties. A good example is the carrier of the chronicler of the court Gáspár Bojti and the personal librarian of Gabriel Bethlen, Mihály Barsi.

In addition to the above mentioned objectives, our purpose was to characterize the social class from which the requisitors originated, to describe their previous career and the time they served as a clerk at the archives. We concluded that before being appointed to this office, the clerks were often notaries of the princely chancellery and sometimes this office constituted a gift for different services rendered on behalf of the princes. It was also proven that every clerk became a noble at the end of his career as a result of his services rendered at the place of authentication on the request of the princes and other clients.

The third, longest chapter presents the biographies of 37 requisitors. Among them there were important figures of the Transylvanian cultural history, such as the chronicler István Szamosközy and Gáspár Bojti.

The volume presents the members of a group of intellectuals who worked in the probably **most important charter-issuer institution during the period of Principality**. To reveal the role and importance of these office holders, it is enough to have in mind the character of the Transylvanian society, based on the possession of estates. Nevertheless, the requisitors were members of an intellectual class that continued the heritage of the Medieval Era, they've had close ties with the Church, which supported their activity.