



Changes in the Townscape of Lampertszásza (Berehove/Beregszász) in the 13th–15th Centuries

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Abstract. Across the River Tisza, there lies a town, Berehove (hereinafter also referred to as Beregszász [Hu]), situated on the north-eastern edge of the Great Hungarian Plain with the wind swaying ears of wheat, on the flatlands surrounded by rustling oak forests, gold-sweating trachyte mountains, and rivers subsiding upon reaching the plain. It is a veritable fairy garden, a small piece of the realm that out foremother, Emese, dreamt of back in the day. Places, just as people, have their own destinies: they emerge, evolve, thrive, and then, if they are destined so, disappear from the stage of history. The very first mention of Berehove dates back to early 1063, recorded under the name Lamperti, as the estate of Prince Lampert, son of Béla I of Hungary. Prince Lampert founded the later town. At the time, a small settlement must have been situated here with the prince's countryside inhabited by the garrison and the household servants. Residents of the house were mostly the gamekeepers and huntsmen of Bereg Forest County.

To fully uncover the past is not possible – at the very most, some attempts can be made at its reconstruction by drawing on contemporary sources and relying on archaeological research. The mediaeval layout of the settlement is known from the available sources and serves as a basis for the present study in its efforts to reconstruct the settlement image of the historical town centre and to find out why Lampertszásza did not embark on the path of the 'classic, city wall/fortification' type of settlement development. The parish church is the only building of the mediaeval townscape that has

survived partially, which, however, provides us with indications about the contemporary buildings of the one-time regional town and the related 'block of church buildings'.

Keywords: Lampertszász, Béla IV, Saxon hospites, royal free city, Holy Cross, Dominican monastery, Reformation, Bereg County

The local and settlement history speaks about the past but addresses the present since by making use of research results it aims to contribute to the better understanding of the path leading to its present-day condition as well as of the principles of development. Speaking about our past always implies taking up some sort of position. We can bring ourselves into an organic relationship with our history only if we acquire the historicity of thought besides an adequate level of education – namely that we always take stock of people, events, and contexts while taking account of the place, time, and circumstances. Undoubtedly, a careful examination of history will sometimes shatter the illusions we live by, but it also presents us with true values in exchange. No question, historical tradition will continue to be necessary in the future because we want to learn from it, better ourselves through it, and live with it!

Why are there so many of us interested in local history lately? The fundamental, ultimate cause lies in the geographic division of human life and social movement, that is, in the obvious fact that events and processes take place somewhere. People are most closely connected to a well-defined place: their homeland, their place of residence; they wish to know as much as possible about it, and this strong emotional/spiritual link is also what fuels their desire to understand their native land in the narrow sense. However, there is a further essential motivation: the scientific recognition that the past and the present of a nation or a country are made up to a significant extent of local phenomena and processes.

Just like humans, places have their own destinies: they emerge, evolve, thrive, and then, if they are destined so, disappear from the pages of history. To fully uncover the past is not possible – at the very most, some attempts can be made at its reconstruction by drawing on contemporary sources and relying on archaeological research.

The essential aim of the present paper is to make use of the available literature and attempt to outline the main developments that took place over time in the formation of the townscape of Lampertszász/Beregszász and describe the impact of the church, and within that of the various religious orders, on the development of the settlement structure. Our research tries to find answers as to what circumstances constituted an obstacle to the settlement on its way to becoming a classic, walled city as well as to what accounts for the fact that Beregszász has lost its former status of royal free city and eventually degraded into a privately owned country town.

The city of Beregszász is currently situated in Ukraine – place-name etymologist Lajos Kiss traces the origin of its name back to Lampertszász (Sebestyén 2020: 50–

52). The written form of this name can be documented from 1247 to 1643, although the name Beregszász appears in earlier documents as well. The name Bereg was used starting from the year 1248 for the localization and designation of the royal forest county (the name of the forest county also emerges in *Regestrum Varadinense*), while at later times the territory of the Royal County of Borsova, destroyed during the Tatar invasion, would inherit the name Bereg County.

When writing about the changes of the name Lampertszásza–Beregszász, Lajos Kiss notes the following:

It referred to the Saxon settlers of the place on the one hand and to its presumed founder, Prince Lampert, on the other [viz. the place name Lampertszásza], who was the lord of these lands during the reign of Ladislaus I... The prefix of Lampertszásza was later replaced by the name of Bereg Forest County and then Bereg County because this was the main place [most probably *residence*] of the Count of Bereg at the end of the Kingdom of Hungary, where the county assemblies were held. (quoted in Takács 2015: 6)

In working up the legends on the foundation of the settlement, Mihály Tompa links the foundation to the pastoral people living in the marshy pastures, when the herdsmen found great treasures of gold in the hole dug out by lead bulls while fighting each other (Zubánics 2011: 8–9). The gold found here was used at first to build up a church, and then it gradually became an inhabited area. Historical tradition links the ‘foundation’ of the town to the younger brother of kings Géza I and Ladislaus I: Prince Lampert (Lambert). As postulated by Péter Takács, a peculiar feature of this settlement established in the neighbourhood of ‘the holy kings’ hunting forest’ and nearby the trade routes leading to Kievan Rus’ is that Prince Lampert settled here clergymen of various holy orders in addition to the winegrowing, pastoral Saxons – thereby, the settlement was also functioning as some sort of centre for missionary work aimed at eastern territories (Takács 2015: 6). The first settlement was destroyed during the 1241 Tatar invasion, but it would be rebuilt soon after by Béla IV, once again with the involvement of Saxon people. On 25 December 1247, the king granted town privileges to ‘our Christian guests of Lampertháza’. The most notable passages of the charter are as follows: jurisdiction exercised by their own magistrates (‘except for three: bloodshed, theft, and murder, nothing shall be enforced upon our sechesals’ courthouse, but they shall take the judgment of their village magistrate in all other lawsuits’), freedom of choosing their parish priest (‘and their tithe shall be paid in grain and wine to the priest they have chosen for themselves’), and the right to hold fairs (‘their market shall be held on Saturdays, and not more than one denarius shall be payable for each wagonload of merchandise neither by the buyers nor by the sellers’) (Zubánics 2011: 11). Besides their agricultural and wine-growing activities, the Saxon hospites were mining the

lode-gold deposits of the mountains surrounding the settlement: ‘deep in the gold-bearing mountain of Nagy-hegy, the mine-shafts dug quite laboriously and, as a rule, in pointed Gothic style are considered to be the remnants of the never-resting Saxons’ (Lehoczky 1881/III: 91).

The suppression of the Abas controlling a significant portion of our territory took place in the year 1312 in the Battle of Rozgony, where citizens of Lampertszásza also fought on the king’s side. As a token of gratitude, the king confirmed their charter and granted further rights to the town. In 1320 in Nagyvárad [*Oradea*] – on the fourth day of the Feast of the Finding of the True Cross –, in response to the complaints of the citizens of Luprechtszász, Charles I ordered the Lord Lieutenant of Bereg that the officers should not interfere unauthorized in their legal disputes and internal affairs and should not harass his guests despite the previously mentioned royal patent issued for their protection, because they are to pay taxes to him alone – the king, who is their liege lord –, and they should not be limited in exercising their privileges (Zubánics 2010: 185–187).

During the Late Middle Ages, Lampertszásza (and the entire royal estate of Munkács [*Мукачево/Mukachevo*]) became a reginal estate. Charles I (of the House of Anjou) and his queen consort, Elizabeth of Poland, established a reginal residence in the town. Several monasteries were established through his donations such as those of the Dominicans and the Franciscans. It is likely that this is the period when the foundations were laid for the present-day parish church, whose construction was finished in the year 1418, as attested by the date inscribed above the main entrance. (The corbels walled in above one of the portals of today’s parish church probably originate from this building: ‘... and those figures of a human and a dog’s [actually a *lion*’s] head that are built into the wall above the north door of the church and that are worked into this tale are one of the corbels supporting the vaults of the former, destroyed church’ (Lehoczky 1881/III: 90).

In his charter issued on 2 September 1342 in Visegrád, King Louis I granted the royal free city of Lampertszásza the right of *jus gladii*: ‘since the royal free city (‘*libera civitas nostra*’) lies near Russia, on the borderlands, it deserves to be specially favoured, and, granting it full right of *jus gladii*, he authorized it to pass sentences on nobles and commoners alike and to have its inhabitants held responsible in front of the local authorities alone and not to be subject to the jurisdiction of the county court’ (Zubánics 2011: 14). After the 13th century, *jus gladii* could be granted to some of the royal free cities (*libera civitas*) as a privilege. Its main feature was that these cities did not fall under the judicial jurisdiction of the lord lieutenant but were directly subordinate to one of the royal courts. And Lampertszásza did exercise the right of *jus gladii* since one of King Louis’s 1370 charters makes mention of the town’s executioner named Hankó.

Why did neither Lampertszásza nor other crown cities and country towns of north-eastern Hungary become ‘classic, walled’ cities? Péter Takács takes the view that the

settlements situated on the peripheral regions at the boundary of the highlands and lowlands (all inhabited places of the area fall into this category) could simply not be 'downsized' to walled cities due to the geographical and infrastructural factors influencing population trends as well as to issues determining the living conditions of the inhabitants (despite the Saxon population shaping the townscape – even though Lampertszásza had vast expanses of fertile fields/meadows and high-quality arable lands, also enjoying royal privileges as early as the 14th century, similarly to Debrecen). One reason for this may have been that it primarily relied on agriculture, livestock farming, and viticulture for revenue, which required large portals (homesteads) and vast spaces (Takács 2015: 10–11). Naturally, it had a smaller, so to speak classic town centre, which, however, developed first of all in the neighbourhood of church buildings. Besides country towns, settlements with castles were a characteristic feature of the region; yet, with the exception of Ungvár [today: Uzhhorod], the castles and their respective (country) towns lie at considerable distances from each other in most of the cases.

One of the stateliest edifices of Lampertszász (according to a 1507 royal charter issued by King Vladislaus II in Buda: 'Civitas nostra Beregszász alias Luprechtszasza'), bearing mediaeval features is the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (earlier: All Saints') parish church. Although burnt down (1657, 1686) and reconstructed several times, some of the sections of its walls and parts of the building still preserve the details of the parish church built in the time of the queen consort, Elizabeth of Poland (Kollár 2013: 174–178). Available data suggest that the priest of the church was subordinate to the Archbishop of Esztergom (instead of the territorially competent Bishop of Eger). Pope Leo X raised Lampertszász to the status of archdeaconry, and its parish priest was entitled to wear the insignia of the prelates. In this period, the annual income of the parish was 500 gold coins. Besides being a royal possession, the substantial amount of income is also indicated by the fact that when the obligation of free and mining towns to organize cavalry exhibitions was regulated by law in the years 1525 and 1545, the priest of Berehove was also mentioned by name.

Around the year 1418, there were eight rectors of the altar (*rector altaris*; for reasons of simplification, hereinafter also as: rector) and just as many altars (Bishop St Nicholas, St Elizabeth, Virgin Mary, St Dorothy, James the Great, Saints Cosmas and Damian, Archangel Michael, and John the Baptist) – some of them established by royalties – functioning in the church, all of them having their respective properties and real estates. As per Lehoczky's data, the number of altars increased to 24 (under the management of four rectors) by the age of the Reformation, which is indicative of the citizens' financial situation, inter alia. Most of the rectors' arcaded houses stood on Mindenszentek Str. (today: Bethlen Str.) – in his decree issued in 1518, King Louis II ordered the rectors who had their houses elsewhere in the city to sell their properties as soon as possible and buy/build houses on the said street. All evidence suggests that some sort of an internal 'block of church buildings' was formed within

the settlement. The parish house stood at the end of Mindenszentek Str., where ‘the only way for the wine-growers to transport their must to the town was leading through the parish courtyard, there being at first tithed’. Likewise, monasteries were also situated in this area, as follows:

- the Dominican monastery named after St Stanislaus (of Szczepanów), Bishop of Krakow and martyr (*Religiosi fratres praedicatorum in claustris beati Stanislai martyris in oppido Beregszász degentes*), built in the town in the early 14th century with the support of Elizabeth of Poland;

- the Franciscan monastery named after the Holy Trinity and founded in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary (*Religiosi fratres minorum ord. b. Francisci confessoris*);

- the convent of the Dominican nuns named after St Stanislaus.

At the south-eastern edge of the town stood the monastery of the Order of Saint Paul the First Hermit (*Eremitae ordinis sancti Pauli primi eremitae*).

‘Very limited credible data have remained on the monastery and convent of the brothers and sisters of the Dominican Order once present in Beregszász since neither the establishment nor the year of foundation nor the name of the saint in whose memory these convents were inaugurated in the name of God were passed on to posterity’ – wrote Jakab Rupp in his 1872 work, *Magyarország helyrajzi története* [The Topographic History of Hungary] (Rupp 1870–1876: 374). This statement remains valid practically to this day. Rupp presented but one relevant mediaeval charter (presumably assigning a wrong date even to that one) and made references to two earlier, 16th-century data on donating the possessions of the monastery already abandoned by then. Although Tivadar Lehoczky provided further data, he too failed to answer the fundamental questions in a satisfactory manner – all he did was an attempt to identify the founding person and the patron saint of the monastery (Zágorhidi Czigány 2000: 149). What exactly do we know about the Dominican monastery/ies of mediaeval Berehove? Data on the early history of these church properties can be found with regard to the nunnery alone, in the 1366 and 1368 documents cited by Lehoczky from the archives of the Leles(z) Convent, these records making reference to the nuns of the Saint Stanislaus Convent in Luprechtszász (*religiose domine claustris Beati Stanislai martiris de Lupp/re/htzaza*) and their estate in Kígyós [Kygios]. The most recent data we have on the religious sisters is from the year 1479, and it refers to their relocation to Szatmárnémeti [*Satu Mare – in Romania*]. This document contains the provincial’s order providing for the placement of Dominican friars in the convent. Also included in the census of properties compiled by the nuns, Kígyós was listed among their most significant estates. The flourishing of the Dominican monasteries established in our region by the elderly queen consort, Elizabeth (of Poland) can be dated to the 15th century.

The monastery of Lumprechtszász was one of the strongholds of the contemporary intellectual culture and literacy. The first significant library was also established here. In the year 1480, Lőrinc Szász, also a skilful scribe, became the head of the

monastery, who in 1478 obtained permission from the provincial to accept money in exchange for his work (material possessions were prohibited for members of the mendicant orders, thus for Dominicans as well). In 1489, we find here Friar Ambrus Malontai, ‘the Hungarian orator’, who has received numerous books from his mentor, Gerváz Pesti, Prior of Esztergom (Fehér 1971: 400–407). Documents dated from the end of the 15th century make mention of a certain Friar Imre, who has also been given permission by the provincial to purchase books from the alms he has received. The most significant Dominican orator of the age from Berehove was Tamás Székesfehérvári. By his own admission, he preached 60 sermons altogether in Berehove. The fact that in the year 1493 we come across the name of Bartholomeus de Halábor in the register of the Hungarians’ dormitory (Bursa Hungarorum) at the University of Krakow bears witness to the intellectual radiation of the monastery in Beregszász. He is the person named in a diploma issued in 1512 as ‘son of Gergely Halábori Dobos, Father Bertalan Dobos, royal notary and scrivener’. Bartholomeus is credited with the copy and revision of the Döbrentei Codex, one of our most beautiful linguistic and literary monuments. King Vladislaus II reinforced the monastery in terms of its property rights, according to which: ‘in exchange for offering a mass to God every week on Tuesday while invoking Saint Anne for assistance, the privileges granted by former rulers to the serfs and cottars of this monastic order that reside in Beregszász and Kígyós were reinforced’ (Zubánics 2010: 185–187). As attested by the document, the inhabitants of Újváros and Pap Str. (Mindenszentek) – the residents of nearly 40 plots – worked for the benefit of the monastery. Lehoczky refers to a 1518 document issued by King Louis II, claiming that Dominicans ‘are even running their own wine shop to the detriment of the landlord’. Although we cannot pinpoint an exact date for the destruction of the monastery and the flight of the friars, but it is probably linked to the reformation of the region. It was primarily the 1566 Tatar invasion that caused the end of monasticism, when a substantial part of the town fell into ruin. Their return was prevented by the Reformation that was gaining ground in the meantime as well as by the secularization of church properties, thus including the Dominican monastery. The most recent data related to the Dominicans is from the year 1572, when friars Ferenc Körösbányai and Mátyás Palkonyai were protesting before the General Assembly of Bereg County against seizing the lands of the monastery. They also claimed in their protest that ‘their fellow friars who had been expelled had to take refuge in St John’s Monastery in Szombathely’.

Regrettably, these church buildings were destroyed or served other functions during the Reformation. In 1565, members of the Protestant congregation in Berehove took control of the parish church and threw all the altars out of the building, whitewashed the frescoes, and started using it as their own church. In the year 1573, the monasteries located in the town were also plundered and closed down, while their buildings were converted into forts by the familiares of

Péter Petrovics. In this regard, Ferdinand I ordered the citizens of Bereg County in 1553 not to allow such remodelling. Later, one of the monarch's followers, Antal Dálnoki Székely, acted in a similar way, 'who would make use of the fortified church here as a shelter for his acts of violence, whom several landowners have spoken out against. Based on Art. 49 of the year 1569, King Maximilian II ordered the decommissioning of the fort, leaving it to the religious orders. 'The nearby town of Munkács (and its landowners, including Péter Petrovics in our case) had a predominant influence on the fate of Berehove in terms of military policy, taxation, and military tactics. By the end of the 16th century, the settlement's town status had gone into eclipse despite still enjoying its many freedoms – the town became a privately owned estate (Takács 2015: 11). In 1549, there were five landlords altogether who shared in its fields/meadows and the peasantry living off these lands with each other. This was one of the reasons why the population was unable to protect the civic interests and entrust its administration as well as jurisdiction to the administrative/legislative body of their choice. Thus passes the glory of the worldly, i.e. *sic transit gloria mundi*...

In 2019, the archaeological expedition of Uzhhorod National University made excavations in the courtyard and the cellar of the Bethlen–Rákóczi Castle in Berehove, during which several wall remains were found that clearly predate the courtyard of the manor house built in 1628 (Ферков 2020: 134). The findings made at the excavation site suggest that these buildings must have formed part of the so-called block of church buildings and may have belonged in particular to some of the monasteries.

Research results let us conclude that the city of Lampertszász/Beregszász has undergone a settlement history development that is characteristic of the region and that was in line with the general features that history formulated in this context. Indeed, what should we understand by city? Bálint Hóman and Gyula Kristó take the view that the formation of cities is connected to trade (Hóman 1908, Kristó 2007). In other words, cities were situated along trade routes, thereby serving as marketplaces at the same time. The formation of cities on the territory of Hungary can be dated to the 12th-13th centuries, foreign population groups having played a decisive role in their development. During the implementation of the settlement policy making use of the hospites (here the Saxons), the kings of the House of Árpád granted town privileges in a bid to form settlement 'blocks' (holding the population together). First of all, we are talking about economic privileges here, as well as granting jurisdiction. In the case of Lampertszásza, these conditions came to be fulfilled in the year 1247, when Béla IV granted it the status (and the associated rights) of free royal city. Throughout the history of its development, the town was part of the group of cluster-type settlements that included several towns/villages, and, since no county centre or castle was established in this area, it was most of all church institutions (monasteries) operated with royal support that contributed to

the formation of the townscape/settlement structure. Bearing in mind that exactly these relevant institutions – with considerable economic background – disappeared over the course of the 16th-century Reformation, it can reasonably be assumed that the urban bourgeoisie was no longer capable of confronting the landlords. This latter process was probably also accelerated by the weakening of the central royal power and the privatization of the (former royal) estate of Munkács. It can be concluded that Beregszász, although it started off its journey on the pages of history as a town under the king's and queen's protection, it was lagging behind in development by the 16th century and eventually degraded into a privately owned country town.



Figure 1. Map of Beregszász [Берегове/Berehove]

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