



The Educational Policy of the Sopron Town Council in View of the Lutheran Lycée's Historiography

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Abstract. In my study, through the example of the free royal city of Sopron, I am searching for an answer to the question how the Reformation influenced the political actions of the city's leading body and its room for movement within the frameworks of estates. I will attempt to show in sketches how the intellectual horizon that can be reconstructed behind the city's government is connected to the mentality of Lutheran Reformation. By focusing on one particular field, the educational policy of the town council, I will try to disclose how this manifested in practice in view of Sopron's new educational institution (the lycée) established and maintained by the town council without any aristocratic patronage, unparalleled at that time. Finally, in a short outlook beyond the boundaries of the investigated period and by focusing on the activities of one former teacher (János Ribini) and two alumni (Baron László Prónay and János Kis), I will give evidence for the continued existence of the lycée's mentality – which I will call confessional-patriotic – even after the town council had lost its supervision of the educational institution.

Keywords: Sopron, Lutheran lycée, town council, Reformation, Counter-Reformation

Introduction

It can hardly be disputed that the Lutheran Reformation had a significant impact on the territory of the Hungarian Kingdom firstly among the burghers of Western Hungary (including Sopron) and the Upper Lands and then the Saxons of Transylvania. That the burghers of the royal free cities (mainly those of German origin and language) decided to adapt the ideas of Reformation was most likely not based solely on the recognized truth of faith and the return to the teachings of the Bible as practical political considerations also played a

role in their decision. Commitment to Lutheran doctrines first of all created an opportunity to take properties and institutions of the church and place them under the management of the city and thus reduce the clergy's influence. Therefore, Reformation had proven to be an efficient means of maintaining and further increasing independence and privileges of the cities.

By eliminating the influence of the Catholic higher clergy this way, royal free cities, such as Sopron, depended only on the ruler indeed after joining the Lutheran Reformation, and in the period between the mid-16th century and the last third of the 17th century, with only a brief interruption, Sopron managed to maintain its self-determination within the framework of estates almost continuously. However, the Counter-Reformational intentions of the Catholic prelaty and the Jesuit order strongly intertwined with the Habsburg power strengthened by the expulsion of the Ottomans put an end to this. However, despite their difficult situation, the burghers of Sopron managed to negotiate some compromises, and, though they were forced to admit Catholics into the town council, the Lutheran church and its institutions were allowed to keep functioning in the city. (Unlike the hereditary provinces, where the Habsburgs strictly prohibited any kind of Protestant worship.) The aforementioned historic events make it obvious that in this context the use of the term Counter-Reformation seems by all means justified as in this case we cannot speak of the Catholic Church's renewal and the reshaping of its own identity but of recatholicization relying on the political power and military strength of the Habsburgs that did not even shrink back from the use of raw force, aiming at the complete elimination of Protestantism as far as possible. And yet, as history shows, Lutheran Reformation definitely increased the Sopron town council's room for movement. How was this possible?

The goal of my paper is to overview the changes in the policy of the city government in Sopron in the age of Reformation, referring to the position of Sopron and the conditions within the framework of estates. Focusing on the historiography of the Lutheran lycée founded in 1557 at the initiative of the Sopron town council, without aristocratic patronage – which was unprecedented in its time –, I will attempt to reconstruct its organizing principles, focusing mainly on the underlying Lutheran political philosophy according to which school is not only an *ecclesiasticum* but also a *politicum*. Luther attributed great importance to secular education, and in several of his writings called upon the aristocracy to promote a new, secular literacy. In his opinion, the flourishing of a town does not only depend on its economic and military power but on the number of educated, scholarly, and intelligent citizens that it raises for the benefit of the society. Another merit of the Reformer is that he put the reformation of the church in the first place and wanted to accomplish the social reforms by peaceful means, through the secular rulers that adopted the evangelical faith.

My study will briefly outline the impact of the Counter-Reformation on Sopron and the reopening of the school enabled by the laws passed at the Diet of Sopron in 1681, from which time the school was no longer maintained by the town council but by the Lutheran parish until 1853, well beyond our investigated period.

I will finish my lecture with Rector János Ribini and his powerful *Oratio* on the relationship of Latin Humanism and national language usage that became the norm by the mid-18th century in Western Europe. The main topic of the speech proved to be of high political relevance decades later, as I will attempt to show it through the actions of two Sopron alumni.

Every era has its own characteristic features. Those who lived then were trying to find and realize their goals and aims. Because of this, I will refer to some historical moments that could be perceived as trendsetting for the city government of Sopron.

My questions are the following:

How did the Reformation influence the town council's political activity and room for movement within the frameworks of estates?

What can we find out about the town council's educational policy regarding the new educational institution (the lycée) founded and maintained by the town council in view of its historiography?

Did the confessional-patriotic mentality survive?

The Effects of the Reformation on the Political Actions of the Town's Governing Body and Its Room for Movement

Sopron¹ as a free royal tavernical town had gradually expanding privileges within the framework of estates since 1277. Its delegates were invited to take part in crowning ceremonies and diets since the second half of the 15th century. From these facts, we can arrive at the conclusion that the city's leadership was carefully monitoring the events in their environment and interpreted that with prudence, all the more as they were successful in their political actions aimed at strengthening the town's position.

1 The area of Sopron has been inhabited since prehistoric times. After the Hungarian conquest, a new settlement was established here. Approximately between the 9th and the 11th centuries, the old Roman town wall was reinforced, and a castle was built. It was at this time that the town received its Hungarian name after its bailiff (Lat. comes) named Suprun and was already mentioned as an important fortress in 1153. During the 13th century, the settlement organized around the castle acquired the status of a city. The legal document of this, the charter containing the town's privileges dates back to the Czech–Hungarian war. In 1273, King Ottokar II of

For the individual, the city provides the opportunity to act. The implementation of this opportunity to act made possible and meaningful by the city is what we will consider to be politics.²

The following occurrence is a good example of the manifestation of *ratio civilis*³ in the politics of the town's leadership as it attests to their experience, wide intellectual horizon, and prudence, which they put to use for the benefit of their town. On 12 April 1464, King Matthias I, at the request of the town magistrate, the mayor, two council members, and the town clerk, had the most important points of the five charters that were handed to him copied into one document, reconfirming the privileges of the royal free town of Sopron (Házi 1926: 106). This political move can be perceived as one carefully thought out from multiple perspectives. In order to confirm and strengthen the position of their community within the framework of estates, they made the king aware of their city by asking him a favour, showing him their existing charters, making him remember that their city is a special one. Besides that, it was a very rational request because by recalling their existing privileges and merging them into a single document made these privileges more easily verifiable.

Bohemia occupied the castle by treason. Even though Ottokar had taken the children of the town's élite with him as hostages, Sopron opened its gates to king Ladislaus IV in 1277, who thus managed to retake it. As a reward, he made Sopron a free royal city. This charter was an important station of the city's development that led to Sopron's rise to become one of the most important tavernical towns of 14th-century Hungary. Free royal cities were only subject to the king and were considered as the king's property. Citizens of free royal towns, unlike inhabitants of market towns, had the right to enclose their town with a wall as part of their privileges. They could grant citizenship to people moving into their town. They could elect their own parish priests. Market and staple rights were important as well. Burghers were free to make their will. They paid their taxes to the king as a lump sum once a year (cf. Tóth 2008). The most important royal towns formed the group of the eight tavernical towns, which had the right of independent jurisdiction among their privileges. Tavernical towns were subject to the tavernical court. In these towns, the Buda city law code was in use, which had been developed from the Fehérvár city law code, and the master of the treasury (*magister tavernicorum regalium*) acted as judge. In civil affairs, their court of appeal was the tavernical court, which consisted of civil assessors. Cities belonging under the jurisdiction of the tavernical court were (from the 13th century until April 1848): Buda, Pest, Bátfá (today: Bardejov, Slovakia), Eperjes (today: Prešov, Slovakia), Kassa (today: Košice, Slovakia), Nagyszombat (today: Trnava, Slovakia), Pozsony (today: Bratislava, Slovakia), and Sopron. If delegates of less than five of these cities were present at the court's session, it could not be held (cf. http://lexikon.katolikus.hu/T/tárnoki_városok.html; <http://lexikon.katolikus.hu/T/tárnokmester.html>; http://lexikon.katolikus.hu/T/tárnoki_szék.html; last accessed on: 19/08/2019).

- 2 Ferenc Hörcher drew attention to the relationship between the city and the political action of the individual, adapted from Pierre Manent (see Horkay Hörcher 2017).
- 3 How urban elites tried to interpret their world (which we call 'reason of the city' – *ratio civilis*). In: Call for Papers for an International Conference in Budapest. Organized by The Institute of Philosophy of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. 'Ratio Civilis'. The Transformation of Urban Political Cultures in the Ages of the Reformation, Budapest, 2017. See the homepage of the conference at the following link: <https://ratiocivilis.webnode.hu> (last accessed on: 19/08/2019). For more on the origins and the usage of the term, see also Viroli 1992: 28–32.

In the age of the Reformation, this city which embraced the new Protestant mentality not only was able to keep its privileges but also managed to exert widespread influence through its political actions. How?

In a hierarchical society, such as the society of estates in the 16th- and 17th-century Kingdom of Hungary, the stratified social order was protected by a religious-moral worldview based on the authority of divine revelation that defined all aspects of the society from the scientific description of the world to moral commands. An important characteristic feature of a stratified society⁴ is that it not just consists of unequal parts, but the highest part has to be capable of governing the entire society as well. Thus, it is required that one part of the society appears as representing the whole. The church, referring to divine authority, mediated to the public whether something was liked or disliked by God, whether it was according to His will or not. In contrast with this, Luther viewed the world as ruled by God. He pointed out the connections between spiritual and secular, religious and political things. His 95 Theses and his teachings did not remain without response; people understood the need for reformation in the Church and understood the political implications of Luther's thoughts, too. In his sermons and catechisms, Luther seriously stressed the worldly, secular vocation of every human being. For him, this meant that everyone should consider their entire earthly life, not just their subsistence or job as a service they owe to God since God is maintaining the order of the world this way. He stressed that everyone, rich or poor, ruler or soldier, peasant or burgher would be called to account for their actions by God. In the society of that time, even if not everyone took these thoughts to their heart, a large proportion of people were affected, and thus the life of the society was shaped by them. In his political statements, though, Luther never supported or opposed the power of certain persons, only their particular actions.

On the basis of this exposition, let us briefly overview the commencement of Lutheran Reformation in Hungary, in which town burghers have been playing a key role from the beginning.

In the royal free towns of the Kingdom of Hungary, German-speaking town dwellers cultivated a close relationship with towns of Germany. Merchants and craftsmen frequently visited Germany's big cities and thus got acquainted with the ideas of the Reformation. Furthermore, their fellow townspeople also got to know these beliefs not only from hearsay but first-hand as German merchants also visited Hungary's more noteworthy cities and brought literary products of the Reformation with them (cf. Zoványi 2004: 13). In this way, towns become strongholds of the Reformation from the beginning. After the lost battle of Mohács (in 1526), the Hungarian civilians of the cities also joined the followers of the gospel with equal zeal. The Reformation was above all a cause of the civilian

4 For more on the theory of social systems, see Luhmann 1997.

class. The cities had also sent young Hungarians⁵ abroad for education (cf. S. Szabó 1928: 22). Of the towns within the boundaries of modern Hungary, Sopron was the first to be affected by the Reformation, and very possibly with the greatest intensity (cf. Fabiny 1986: 11).

However, the ruling regime took measures to nip the spread of Protestantism in its bud.⁶ In spite of the retaliatory measures, first the citizens and then the majority of the town council committed themselves to Luther's theses. Since 1532, Lutherans exiled from Austria moved to Sopron in great numbers, which also contributed to the strengthening of Protestantism in Sopron. At the Sopron Diet of 1553, no anti-Protestant edicts were passed. This confirms that by the 1550s Protestantism gained prevalence among the estates of the realm despite all efforts of the clergy. The Reformation had such a huge impact that by the middle of the 16th century the Lutheran faith achieved an almost absolute dominance in Sopron.⁷

This process I tried to sketch stands in close connection with the process referred to with the term 'confessionalization', which took place in early modern Germany as the separation of Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist (or Reformed) confessions on the basis of clarifying their principles of faith, establishing their separate church organizations, and forming their own identity – the former two also had a crucial importance in early modern Sopron as well. The paradigm of confessionalization was developed by Wolfgang Reinhard and Heinz Schilling in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Criticism voiced against this concept led to several modifications of it.⁸ The term 'confession-building' (Konfessionsbildung), which was introduced by Walter Zeeden with religious and church-historical relevance, was connected by Reinhard and Schilling into the paradigm of societal history (Gesellschaftsgeschichte). 'In their view, the confessional divisions and conflicts of the early modern period did not only affect the area of religion and church but the entire social and political system. The concept "confessionalization" contains this political and societal dimension' (Lotz-Heumann 2001: 95–96). This process went hand in hand with the integration of state and society. Ute Lotz-Heumann stresses that according

5 That means citizens of the Kingdom of Hungary, not just of Hungarian but of German and Slavic origins as well.

6 E.g., in 1521, the Archbishop of Esztergom, György Szathmári had the papal bull excommunicating Luther proclaimed in Sopron and other towns as well. Royal commissioners were sent to several towns, including Sopron, to prevent the spreading of the Reformation and especially to ceremonially burn Lutheran books and writings confiscated from burghers on the marketplace (cf. Fabiny 1986: 11). The Diet of 1525 declared: 'All Lutherans shall be rooted out from the country, and wherever they are found they shall be fearlessly seized and burned either by clergymen or laymen' (Zoványi 2004: 13–14 [author's transl.]).

7 During the time of King Ferdinand I (1526–1564), most burghers of Sopron lived in accordance with the teachings of the Church of the Augsburg Confession, and in 1565 the first Lutheran congregation in the territory of the Hungarian Kingdom was formed here by Lutheran preacher Simon Gerengel (cf. Krisch 2017: 18).

8 On the concept's origins, critique, and its usefulness as an interpretative category, see Lotz-Heumann: 2001.

to Schilling's views 'confessionalization could also provoke confrontation with religious and political groups fundamentally opposed to this integration of state and society. The process of confessionalization took place between the two poles of state-building and confessional conflict' (Lotz-Heumann 2001: 97).

On the basis of this, it can be ascertained that in Sopron, during the period of our research, the Counter-Reformational efforts of the Catholic Church relying on the central power of the Habsburgs correspond to the aforementioned aim for integration of state and society, whereas the burghers of Sopron led by the town council can be counted among the group opposing this. From a religious standpoint, this is self-evident, but from a political perspective the situation seems to be much more complex. It is almost commonplace in historiography that cities were interested in a strong central power that guaranteed their privileges and protected them against the oligarchs' arbitrary measures. From a geopolitical standpoint, the burghers of Sopron were forced to seek good relations with the Imperial Court of Vienna (e.g. their close proximity to Vienna; Sopron belonged to the Kingdom of Hungary during the entire period of the Ottoman occupation), but they always tried to maintain it on the basis of mutual concessions. Although they were clearly not in the same weight category with the ruler, the city's economic and intellectual power could still provide an effective basis against the military power of the Catholic Habsburgs, who, from a financial standpoint, depended upon the estates. As long as the ruler did not put the confessional issue before this cooperation of mutual benefit, the town burghers cultivated good relations with him (cf. the appointment of mayor Kristóf Lackner⁹ as count palatine). The conflict always intensified at times when the ruler gave way to the pressure from the Catholic Church and undertook measures to suppress Protestantism in Hungary. This may seem like an oversimplification, but for the political line represented by Wittnyédy,¹⁰ guaranteeing the freedom of religion for Protestants, it may have

9 Kristóf Lackner (1571–1631) was born in Sopron. He had various professions and interests, being a valiant soldier, a polymath, mayor, town magistrate, a great jurist of humanist erudition, a scholar of theology with vast knowledge of the Bible, a proven orator, smart diplomat, writer, playwright and poet, a goldsmith, copperplate engraver, and drawing artist. He was awarded the following titles: imperial councillor, count palatine, assessor of Sopron County, and member of the inner council. He applied for and got ennobled by Rudolph I, King of Hungary. In addition to his political activity, he founded a learned society (Foedus Studiosorum, Studentenbund) in 1604 (cf. Payr 1932). Members of this learned society could be men with university degrees, noblemen, and council members, both clerics and laymen, and – unprecedented at that time – wives of members too, who were allowed to keep their membership as widows as well (Horváth 1971: 278). The Society played a key role in making wealthy Sopron burghers familiar with contemporary European culture.

10 István Wittnyédy (Vitnyédy) (1612–1670) was a Sopron lawyer, town clerk, delegate of the city, chief tax collector of Sopron County, and emissary in the Hungarian Diet. He was a close intimate of Count Miklós Zrínyi (cf. Szinnyei). István Wittnyédy had far-reaching political plans with the organization and development of the Hungarian school. In both Sopron and Csáktornya, he often conferred with Count Miklós Zrínyi on the possibilities of a two-front fight of Hungarians

been one of the main motives of their orientation towards the anti-Habsburg forces besides their sense of patriotism for the Kingdom of Hungary, which they did not consider part of the Habsburg Empire. They regarded the person of the common ruler as the only connection between the two, who, however, in that particular period (1660s and 70s), had not been able to undertake effective steps towards the liberation of the entire country from under Ottoman rule. Abuse on the part of the Habsburg military also contributed significantly to the Protestant inhabitants of the country more and more considering Muslim Turks – who were relatively tolerant towards them – as the lesser evil compared to the rule of the Catholic Habsburgs (cf. Imre Thököly's movement of insurrection).

The Educational Policy of the Town Council with Regard to the New Sopron Educational Institution (the Lycée) It Founded and Maintained

According to Tibor Fabiny's work on the lycée's historiography (Fabiny 1986), the founding of the lycée can be traced back to the occasion when the Sopron parish school was taken under the supervision of the town council.

In 1553, the Sopron parish school emerged from under the supervision of the town parish priest and the guardianship of the Catholic Church and was placed under the supervision of the town council. The year considered as the founding date of the Sopron Lutheran lycée is 1557. This is also the date on the school's old seal. At that time, three schools¹¹ educating in reformed mentality had already existed in Western Hungary, all three at the initiative of Palatine Tamás Nádasdy. The novelty of Sopron's new school was that, compared to

against the Ottoman and the Habsburg empires. He also raised and educated his protégés in a strong Hungarian patriotic mentality. After the death of Zrínyi in 1664, Wittnyédy's daring plans related to international and religious politics became even more intense. On the one hand, he was, together with Miklós Bethlen, István Petrőczy, and István Thököly, weaving daring secret dreams about overthrowing the rule of the Habsburgs, while, on the other hand, he devoted his efforts to organizing a Lutheran college that would have offset Pázmány's Catholic university of Nagyszombat (Tyrnau, Trnava). This plan became a reality in 1667 with the establishing of the college of Eperjes (Presov). The organization of such an institute was not possible in Sopron because of its proximity to Vienna. In the 1660s, when Wittnyédy's political career was at its height, Sopron possessed two flourishing Lutheran grammar schools (Fabiny 1986: 30). The Habsburg–Jesuit Counter-Reformation considered that the time had arrived for the great counter-attack. After the Peace of Vasvár in 1664, many agreed with Wittnyédy that putting out the conflagration of the Court is even more important than the necessity of stopping the impending Turkish flooding. Plans of several Lutheran noblemen met with the visions of a few leading Catholic patriots in a specific way, and this later materialized in the tragically ending Wesselényi-conspiracy.

11 In Sárvár, Nemetkeresztúr, and Csepreg.

these, the reorganization of the school took place without aristocratic patronage, at the initiative of the town council, whose members unanimously adopted Lutheran piety (cf. Fabiny 1986: 13). All this serves to confirm how great an impulse Reformation gave to the political ambitions of the civilian class of the cities to extend their room for movement, the basis of which was just as much of intellectual as of economic nature. An important aspect of the *ratio civilis*, the intellectual horizon that can be traced behind the political activity of town burghers, was the question of education that provided continuity and progress.

Educational affairs were discussed at the council's meetings. But as early as the mid-16th century, the need was seen to have an organization besides the council, the '*senatus ecclesiasticus*',¹² which dealt solely with issues regarding the church and the school. A new consistory (*Kircheninnung*) was founded, which had 8 members, 3 pastors, and 5 senators. For the supervision of the schools, a separate school committee was established even before the founding of the consistory. All school classes were divided among the pastors, and inspectors were ordered at every pastor's side. Their duty was to visit the schools every month without appointment – from 1636, even as often as once or twice a week – to observe whether the director and the teaching staff did everything they can regarding the educational progress and the religious moral upbringing of the pupils, to point out unsuitable conditions, and, in case their reprimand was ineffective, to report it to the council (cf. Németh 2007: 13–14).

Historical sources have not left us enough data to outline a complete picture of the ideo-historical development of the school's first period. However, from the available data – such as which foreign universities the first teachers came from or where the first scholarship students went to –, it becomes evident that the educational practice of the Sopron school was based on the Melanchthonian-humanistic principles of Wittenberg University, the centre of Lutheran Reformation (cf. Fabiny 1986: 14). All this not only affected the theological and pedagogical relations but had practical political implications, too.

The Wittenbergian principles, according to which school is not only an *ecclesiasticum* but a *politicum* as well, arose from the fundamental perceptions of Martin Luther (1483–1546). Parallel to his theological and ecclesiastical reforms that are going back to the sources, the responsibility for secular education – to increase general education and to organize quality schools – received a special emphasis. He considered its practical promotion as a task of the secular authorities because it serves the good of the entire society. Therefore, it is an obligation of the council and the authorities to devote utmost care and attention towards the upbringing of the youth. A town's flourishing not only depends on how much treasure it collects or how strong walls are protecting it but on how

12 Essentially, this is the organization that under the name of 'convent' conducted the affairs of the congregation after the separation from the town council (cf. Németh 2007: 13).

many educated, scholarly, and intelligent citizens it educates for the community. The common ideal of Humanism and the Reformation was promoted by a close associate of Luther's, Philipp Melanchthon (1497–1560). He considered a thorough knowledge of the classical antiquity absolutely necessary to the real understanding of Christianity. This gave him the urge to reorganize Latin schools and universities. A unique ramification of the Melanchthonian school type was Valentin Trotzendorf's (1490–1556) famous Goldberg school in Silesia. Its characteristics were the complete equality of students irrespective of national and feudal differences. Besides Melanchthon and Trotzendorf, another great humanist of that age, the first-class master of Latin style, Johann Sturm (1507–1589) from Strasbourg also had an impact on the Sopron educational institution. Sturm indicated the aim of school education in 'sapiens et eloquens pietas' (intelligent and eloquent piety). He based the material of education on classical languages, predominantly on Latin (cf. Fabiny 1986: 14). From this, we can conclude that the institution's models transmitted the highest possible level of freedom assertable within the frameworks of estates to the students, a mentality which could have been seen by the council members as the guarantee of the town's further progress.

In addition to the Latin education of the intellectual élite and in harmony with the reformed mentality, they also considered the native-language education of wider social classes to be important. Between 1569 and 1584, a German primary school (Volksschule) was functioning in the town, and in the seventies of that century a Hungarian school operated, too (cf. Fabiny 1986: 18).

Changes in the political situation, however, interrupted this rising process, and in order to ensure continuity significant institutional changes had to be made. Even if the first wave of the Counter-Reformational attacks¹³ were successfully fought back as the success of Bocskay's freedom fight (1604–1606) forced the Vienna Court to accept compromises, the second wave after the exposure of the Wesselényi-conspiracy¹⁴ definitively altered the confessional constitution of the

13 Sopron's Latin–German–Hungarian schools were under the patronage of the town council. However, the Catholic clergy could enforce its recatholicizing ambitions, and, if only temporally, from 1584 to 1606, the institutions of education in service of the Reformation were taken into Catholic hands once again (cf. Fabiny 19). On the initiative of György Draskovich (Bishop of Zagreb and later of Győr, Governor of Croatia, later Chancellor) in the spring of 1584, Archduke Ernst von Habsburg summoned the seven-member Sopron council led by mayor Johann Steiner and town magistrate Johann Gering to appear in Vienna, and because the council refused to dismiss its pastors the leaders of the delegation were arrested. Mathesius, Grand Provost of Győr, even threatened with Sopron's armed occupation. The council was forced to dismiss the two German pastors still dwelling in Sopron. The intimidated town council was then forced to dismiss the schoolmasters too. Rector Abraham Schremmel and Conrector Virgilius Faedis had to leave the school that had been operating in reformed mentality for 25 years. The students were scattered by the despotism for more than two decades. Together with Sopron, the villages of its countryside lost their freedom of religion as well (cf. Fabiny 1986: 20).

14 The quelling of this movement and the following period of retaliation became known as the *Decade of Mourning* (1671–1681), which tragically struck Sopron as well. István Wittnyédy

town council, which made some radical changes necessary in terms of the lycée's maintaining background as well.

With the conclusion of the Peace of Vienna in June 1606, a new era began in the life of Sopron's Lutheran community. Despite all the attacks of the Counter-Reformation, it created a special situation in Sopron: The prevailing town council stood atop of the local church in the role of the presbytery, and it provided all the resources needed for the undisturbed functioning of the ecclesiastical and school life (cf. Fabiny 1986: 23).

During the 17th century, the Lutheran church, school, and town council became even more closely related. The council chose not only the teachers but the pastors as well. Salaries, rewards, and the travel expenses of teachers and pastors were partly covered from the town's money supply. The town council conducted the disciplinary affairs of the teachers, too (cf. Németh 2007: 13–14). The Lutheran school of Sopron was functioning consistently in the spirit of the *Confessio Augustana* (Confession of Augsburg), and its teachers too were chosen and invited in accordance with that. The teachers were mostly of German vernacular. The locations of their birth- and/or working places were: Tübingen, Regensburg, Amstetten, Neustadt, Jihlava, Königsberg, Westphalia, Hamburg, Coburg, and Wittenberg (cf. Fabiny 1986: 23). As we can see from this list, the Sopron town council could win over outstanding teachers even from distant locations for its educational affairs, generating rapid development. This development of the school to an ever higher level must be appreciated all the more as in this era its functioning was endangered by politics of religion and then by military occurrences. 'In the midst of political hard-pressedness and everyday danger' (Fabiny 1986: 24 [author's transl.]), Kristóf Lackner (see *Footnote 9*) attributed great importance to education. His pedagogical aim was to prepare young people to be able to carry the burdens of future public affairs. Lackner regularly inspected the school. He also issued a set of school regulations titled *Semproniensi Praescriptae Leges Scholasticae*. In this, he expected the school to be like an arsenal from which weapons of intellectual warfare can be drawn. He also referred to the school as 'seminaria virtutum' (vegetable garden of virtues) and 'officina pietatis' (workshop of piety) (cf. Fabiny 1986: 24–25). Not long after Lackner's passing in December 1631, the educational politics of the Catholic Restoration gained a strong momentum. In 1636, the Jesuits obtained an order from King Ferdinand II in Vienna with the help of Rome, and on the strength of it they opened their school in Sopron. The establishing of the

suddenly died at the beginning of 1670 at the shores of Lake Fertő (Neusiedlersee), István Petrőczy went into Transylvanian exile after hearing the news of his expected arrest, and István Thököly died at the end of 1670 at the besieged Castle of Árva. Based upon two letters of Wittnyédy with questionable authenticity, the Emperor's officials preferred charges against the Lutheran leaders, pastors, and teachers of Transdanubia and of the Upper Lands, considering them to be part of an anti-Habsburg conspiracy. In Vienna, it was decided to take away the churches and schools of the Protestants based on Wittnyédy's compromising letters (cf. Fabiny 1986: 31).

Jesuits' school in Sopron urged the town council to enforce immediate reform measures. On the initiative of István Wittnyédy (see *Footnote 10*) and mayor Erhard Artner, measures were taken in order to compensate for the Jesuit competition, which included steps to improve the level of education and students' discipline, who were told not to listen to the preachers of the Jesuits and not to get into any conversations with them (cf. Payr 1917: 367). The period between 1630 and 1650 is characterized by the noble competition between the Lutheran Latin school and the Catholic school of the Jesuits. On 14 May 1657, Richard Reichenhaller proposed that the interior council should set up a Hungarian school in Sopron, conveying the wish of the burghers (cf. Payr 1917: 397). The building of the new school was inaugurated on 11 July 1658. From July 1659, Pál Kövesdy, a teacher from Eperjes, who was recommended by Wittnyédy, became the school's first rector (cf. Fabiny 1986: 28). The Hungarian grammar school had three classes. Not only from Transdanubia but also from the Western and even from the Eastern part of the Upper Lands, many noble and refined young men visited the increasingly famous Sopron school. A syllabus from 1659 proves that the Hungarian language was strongly gaining ground. According to it, the same books and auctors were to be used in the Hungarian as in the Latin grammar school, but the catechism was to be learned in Hungarian and biblical texts were to be read in Hungarian language, too. In this syllabus, there is a 'beautiful harmony' (*dulcis harmonia*) between the Latin and Hungarian grammar schools, but as the aim of this grammar school was a Latinity in accordance with the Hungarian language, the German language was to be completely banished. Students were only allowed to speak Latin and Hungarian; German was prohibited. On the occasions of school exams (*examen*), written essays of the students had to be submitted to the school inspector and the members of the board of examiners. The school's inspection took place every month, its findings were received by the mayor in written form (cf. Fabiny 1986: 29).

After the exposure of the Wesselényi-conspiracy (see *Footnote 14*), the town was forced to include Catholics first into the external (in 1672) and then into the internal council as well (in 1673), and it had to endure the removal of town magistrate Johann Serpilius (cf. Payr 1917: 429). With this, the Lutheran character of Sopron's administration, which had been managed to be maintained since 1556 for more than a century, came to an end. The citizens were forced to accept handing over the three Lutheran churches and both schools as well. The teaching staff of both schools lost their jobs (cf. Fabiny 1986: 33).

A new period began in the history of the lycée with the 1681 Diet of Sopron, where, despite the increasing pressure on the part of the clergy, the Vienna Court was forced to make concessions because of the military success of Imre Thököly. The Lutherans were allowed to reopen their grammar school in Sopron in the summer of the following year, on 9 July 1682 (cf. Fabiny 1986: 34). The main difference in the functioning of the school compared to previous times was the

change of the inspection and maintenance system. The maintainer of the school was no longer the town council but the local church as the council's composition had become confessionally mixed. This resulted in a completely different approach towards the ecclesiastical schools than during the time when all the council members were Lutherans. In 1749, Queen Maria Theresa banned all communal support given to churches. Among all the attacks against Protestant schools, this was probably the most dangerous one. The congregations had to produce all the financial means of their schools' maintenance (cf. Németh 2007: 15). In spite of all this, the mentality represented by the school did not change with the change of its maintainer, and the goal remained the same: to raise virtuous, well-educated, and patriotic citizens who can responsibly participate in public affairs.

All this exemplifies that the Lutheran urban élite was able to produce the necessary sources of the institution's maintenance within their own confessional framework, and even at the price of significant material sacrifices they considered it important to proceed with the heritage of the Reformation. They deemed this indispensable in maintaining the city's strength because, in accordance with Luther's principles, they regarded school not only as an *eccelesiasticum* but as a *politicum* as well. This mentality is discernible in later centuries, too.

Excursus: The Survival of a Confessional-Patriotic Mentality?

As we have seen, the Reformation strengthened the patriotism of Sopron's German burghers towards the Kingdom of Hungary. Defence of the shared faith brought them into a closer relationship with the Hungarian nobility fighting for the independence of the Hungarian Kingdom. The burghers of Sopron regarded their town, as member of the Kingdom of Hungary, a Hungarian town. German burghers were learning Hungarian. Ádám Lackner, a goldsmith who immigrated from Bavaria, said in the town hall with regrets that he could not answer in Hungarian, but he sent his son, Kristóf, to the school in Csepreg to learn the language (cf. Payr 1924: 895). The founding of the Hungarian grammar school (*Gymnasium Hungaricum*) by the town council in 1658 (see page 10) was an important step in this process. In 1682, the Sopron lycée was reopened in this school building and was deemed as the successor of the Hungarian grammar school (cf. Németh 2007: 131). Hence, the cultivation of the Hungarian language played a prominent role in the school, which Dániel Hajnóczy, rector of the school, formulated as: '*Linguae Hungaricae studium more antiquitus recepto urgeatur et continuetur.*' (The study of the Hungarian language shall be continued according to ancient custom and cultivated diligently.) This is confirmed by Kristóf Russ, member of the Lutheran convent as well: '*Linguae Hungaricae usus*

in omnibus omnio classibus commendatur, ut scholae nostrae, id est ungarische Schule et nomen et omen habeant.’ (The use of the Hungarian language is highly recommended in all classes so that our school will be by all means worthy of its name: Hungarian school.) (cf. Németh 2007: 130).

It is no surprise that a powerful speech was born in this environment, stressing the importance of the Hungarian language by János Ribini (1722–1788), rector of the school between 1747 and 1758, which he addressed to his students in 1751 (Ribiny 1992 [1751]).

In the speech he delivered under the title *Oratio de cultura linguae Hungaricae*, he praised the excellence of the Hungarian language he considered as domestic language, he expounded the duties towards it, and in the end he showed how it can be cultivated. In his opinion, the incomprehensible practice of the Latin language overshadowing the domestic language must come to an end, and he set the young noblemen studying in the school the task of making the latter flourish. For the cultivation of the language, he stressed the importance of writing and reading Hungarian literary works, making translations and, in case of lacking proper expressions, the creation of new words, together with the importance of patronage supporting Hungarian writers. With these, he was a precursor of the theses of the Language Renewal and of the Reform Age.

From his speech, we can relate to Ribini’s awareness of the possible political changes in the near future as there were indications that Maria Theresa would undertake a series of measures in order to modernize her empire. One characteristic feature of this was secularization. She would place worldly experts in positions that had been traditionally positions for clergymen. For the audience of the *Oratio*, the Hungarian noble youth, the preparation to take over these positions as worldly experts is not an end in itself but an instrument in order to be able to take part in the management of state affairs and have influence over making Hungarian the official language in the Kingdom of Hungary. The improvement of the Hungarian language and the support of its cultivators is also essential in making this possible. This speech arising from a clear political vision addressed to young noblemen can be seen as a manifestation of prudence.¹⁵

Ribini’s *Oratio*, and the school’s confessional-patriotic mentality which was represented by it did not remain without influence in decades to come, as the examples of two outstanding Sopron alumni who were forerunners of the aforementioned Reform Age show. Baron László Prónay – who appears in the dedication of Ribini’s *Oratio* as one of his pupils to whom Ribini addressed his exhortation to cultivate Hungarian language – became one of the leading representatives in the fight to make Hungarian the official language in the Kingdom of Hungary at the Diet of 1790–1791. He also played a key role in the organization of the 1804 competition on how to cultivate Hungarian language. The author of

15 More about the origins and the interpretations of prudence, see Horkay Hörcher 2006.

the prize-winning work, János Kis was also a Sopron alumnus, who later became an illustrious writer, poet, translator, a Lutheran pastor, later superintendent in Sopron, member of the arranging commission of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and one of its first regular members. He ‘reminded’ Hungarian readers of Ribini and his *Oratio* in an article (Kis 1830) he published in 1830, as an important preliminary of the pursuit aimed at making Hungarian the official language, stressing its timeliness.¹⁶ However, this already exceeds the boundaries of the period of our research.

Conclusions

Based on our investigation, we can conclude that adopting the Reformation undoubtedly increased the town’s room for movement within the framework of estates. The political thinking of the town council, especially regarding its educational policy, was influenced by the Lutheran mentality, according to which school is not only an ecclesiasticum but a politicum as well. Their confessional-patriotic mentality indicated that they considered their confessional identity and their belonging to the Kingdom of Hungary as equally important. The German burghers of Sopron strived for cooperation with the Protestant Hungarian estates as they considered the ensuring of their own freedom as inseparable from that of the Kingdom of Hungary. They aspired to maintain good relations with the Catholics, who tolerated their religion as well. The Hungarian language as domestic language played an important role in this process, too. As we have seen in the *Excursion*, the school was able to effectively transmit this confessional-patriotic mentality even after it emerged from under the maintenance of the town council.

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16 The article originally appeared under the initials S. K. J. [= Superintendens Kis János].

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