

THE BINDINGS OF WORKS BY PELBARTUS DE THEMESWAR AND
OSUALDUS DE LASKO IN THE COLLECTIONS OF THE
UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, CLUJ

Hajnal ILYÉS BARTHA

PhD Student

Eötvös Lóránd University, Budapest

I became acquainted with the Early Hungarian Collections of the University Library¹ when writing my diploma work²; my aim was to make a list of copies of 15th and 16th century printings. Besides the bibliographic description I dealt with the origin of the collection, the ownership history of the copies as well as the thematic composition of the collection. My further studies helped me to continue my research and enrich research criteria. It seemed suitable to extend the chronological limit to 1800.

In my diploma work I dealt with the history of binding only to the extent of indicating the works which were preserved with their original binding. This was mainly because of the lack of works about the history of binding in our libraries. Without these and without appropriate tuition I would have been unable to do this successfully. In Budapest I attended Marianne Rozsondai's courses in the history of bookbinding and also worked under her tuition and I would like to pay tribute to her valuable assistance.

As the treatment of bindings is most important for our research, I decided to avoid analytical entries and many other aspects which are not closely related to this subject.³ I gave the author, the short title, shelfmark, location list and glosses (if any). This is followed by the presentation of the binding and the detailed description of the decoration. The latter makes possible the dating of the book and the identification of the bindery. Although there are similarities between motifs of decoration belonging to a given period, accurate identification can only be done by meticulous work; the variant which is identical in every tiny detail and the size

¹ "Lucian Blaga" Central University Library, Cluj

² 15th and 16th Century Early Hungarian Printings in the Cluj University Library. Faculty of Letters, "Babeş-Bolyai" University, Cluj, 1995.

³ I presented my methodology at the Conference of Masters and PhD students, in March 1996, organised by the Hungarian Literature Department within the "Babeş-Bolyai" University, Cluj.

given in mm (millimetre) must be chosen . In the case of German Gothic and Renaissance bindings the Ernst Kyriss, Ilse Schunke, Kurt Holler and Konrad Haebler binding catalogues⁴ were used. When these proved to be inadequate, the stamps and rollers presented by various studies about bindings published in the Gutenberg Jahrbuch (Mainz) assisted identification. The bookbinderies could not be identified in all cases, but the provenance of bindings could be approximately localised on the basis of motifs. International special literature may provide further clues about these bindings in the future.

Éva Koroknay's work⁵ for the identification of Hungarian Renaissance bindings was consulted.

Pelbartus de Themeswar (1440-1504) was a Franciscan monk, preacher and prose writer with an encyclopaedic knowledge; he studied at Cracow University and in 1483 became Professor of Dogmatics at the Franciscan College in Buda. His works were well-known all over Europe and re-published several times in the 15th and 16th centuries.

Although there are only two printings by Osualdus de Lasko in the University Library, these must be considered because they have preserved their original binding. It is justified therefore to treat them together with the printings of Pelbartus de Themeswar, all the more so as both of them were Franciscan monks and prose writers, and Osualdus de Lasko was the disciple of Pelbartus de Themeswar who completed the last work of his master.

The sixteen works by Pelbartus de Themeswar held in the collections of the University Library are: *Pomerium sermonum de sanctis* (4 copies), *Stellarium* (4 copies), *Pomerium sermonum de tempore* (4 copies), *Aureum rosarium* (3 copies), *Sermones quadragesimales* (1 copy). From Marianne Rozsondai's study

⁴ Ernst Kyriss, *Verzierte gotische Einbände im alten deutschen Sprachgebiet. Textband 1-3. Tafelband*, Stuttgart, 1951-58.

Ilse Schunke, *Die Schwenke-Sammlung gotischer Stempel- und Einbanddurchreibungen nach Motiven geordnet und nach Werkstätten bestimmt und beschrieben. I. Einzelstempel*, Berlin, 1979, in: *Beiträge zur Inkunabelkunde*. Dritte Folge 7.

Kurt Holler, *Verzierte Wiener Bucheinbände der Spätgotik und Frührenaissance*, in: *Codices manuscripti*, 1977, Sonderheft.

Konrad Haebler, *Rollen- und Plattenstempel des XVI. Jahrhunderts. Unter Mitwirkung von Ilse Schunke. Bd. 1-2*, Leipzig, 1928-29, in: *Sammlung bibliothekswissenschaftlicher Arbeiten 41-42*. (Reprint: Wiesbaden, 1968.)

⁵ Éva Koroknay, *Magyar reneszánsz könyvkötések. Kolostori és polgári műhelyek (Hungarian Renaissance Bookbindings. Monastery and Bourgeois Bookbinderies)*, Budapest, 1973, in: *Művészettörténeti füzetek 6*.

on Pelbartus de Themeswar⁶ it is evident that the Early Book Collection of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Library shows a similar distribution of copies. The author remarks, "Although these numbers of copies refer to the collections of a single library and therefore can be accidental, we think that they show nevertheless which works of Pelbart were most popular."⁷ This excerpt is relevant because the relatively few copies (16) of Pelbartus works held in the University Library (compared to a number of 107 held in the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Library) shows the same proportion, confirming Marianne Rozsondai's assumption about the popularity of Pelbartus' works.

It is regretful though that only six out of the sixteen forementioned Pelbartus' works have preserved their original binding. Besides these, there are the bindings of *Biga Salutis* and *Gemma fidei* by Osualdus de Lasko. Therefore eight bindings had to be identified. The works are not grouped by authors, but divided according to the style of binding: Gothic, Gothic to Renaissance, German Renaissance and Buda Renaissance.

There are no relevant national differences in the majority of blind-stamped Gothic bindings: stamps of this decoration are almost identical all over Europe, with regard to their content (their forms are various and thus it is an important element in identifying bindings.) The provenance (the town) of the following two bindings could not be clearly defined. However, the approximate identification is also valuable as the books do not have ownership notes and therefore something could be found out about their "lives" before they became part of the University Library collections.

1. Pelbartus de Themeswar: Aureum Rosarium theologie... Hagenau, 1503

Shelfmark: EK. BMV 50

Location List: RMK III. 114

Glosses: Latin gloss

Binding: Blind-stamp decorated leather binding with wooden book-cover, front and back cover differs, new spine, no headband, unadorned tool, the mark of two book-clasps can be seen.

Decoration of the binding: St Mary banderoles alternate with large rosettes in the first frame of the front book-cover; six-petal rosettes emphasize the

⁶ Marianne Rozsondai, *Temesvári Pelbárt népszerűsége Európában (Miről vallanak a könyvkötések) (The Popularity of Pelbartus de Themeswar in Europe)*, in: Magyar Könyvszemle, 1984, 4, p.300-319.

⁷ Rozsondai, M, *op. cit.*, p.302.

ends of ribs along the spine; there are guttiform basiliscs in the four corners. Stamps of Gothic foliation round a stick form the second frame. The third frame is similar to the first frame, consisting of large rosettes alternating with St Mary banderoles. There are rosettes in the intersection of the corners. The middle-field is filled with three large S shaped free Gothic leaves and there is a small rosette in the intersection of the corners.

There are two-two St Mary banderoles in the first frame of the back book-cover and stylised four-divisioned flowers in squares in the four corners. The second frame is identical with the second frame of the front book-cover. There are St Mary banderols on the four sides of the third frame. The middle-field is divided by two diagonals and there are S shaped free Gothic leaves in the triangles.

Identification: supposedly the work of an Austrian bookbinder

2. Pelbartus de Themeswar: *Stellarium...* Lyon, 1509

Shelfmark: EK. BMV 152

Location List: RMK III. 158

Glosses: no glosses

Binding: Blind-stamp decorated leather binding, front and back book-cover differs, new spine, headband, unadorned tool, the mark of middle and corner mountings and of book-clasps can be seen.

Decoration of the binding: On the front cover the blind-lined cover of the middle field has one frame. At the head of the smaller side there are small pomegranate flowers, at the foot and there are unusual pomegranate-variants on the two longitudinal sides. The middle field is filled by half-size herb of grace foliation and the forementioned pomegranate-motif.

The back cover is divided by a horizontal, a vertical and two diagonal lines; in each field thus created there is a stylised pomegranate. The binding is decorated by three sorts of stamps.

Identification: supposedly the work of an **Upper Northern Hungary** bookbinder. The pomegranate flowers on the smaller side of the front cover are identical with those of the RM III F 36a printing in the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Library.⁸

The following are three bindings which represent the **transition between the Gothic and the Renaissance**.⁹ Book-covers were decorated by rollers instead

⁸ Rozsondai, M, *op. cit.*, p.314.

⁹ This term was first used by Marianne Rozsondai. See: Marianne Rozsondai, *Művészeti kötetáblák a Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Könyvtárában és ezek könyvtörténeti vonatkozásai. Kandidátusi*

of stamps in this period, because the traditional way of decoration with stamps proved to be too slow with the increasing number of prints. Rollers contain Gothic elements, but the frames and middle fields reflect the conception of the Renaissance. Examples of all the four main rollers of this period are to be found in the University Library: flower foliation, hunting scene, grid and arch-decoration.

These bindings can be defined as belonging to the anonymous bourgeois bookbinding in Augsburg, presented in the second volume of covers of the bookbinding catalogue of Ernst Kyriss.¹⁰ I will point out the motifs which can also be identified in Ilse Schunke's work¹¹.

3. Pelbartus de Themeswar: Stellarium... Hagenau, 1511

Shelfmark: EK. BMV 85

Location List: RMK III. 169

Glosses: "Martini Reisneri"

Binding: Blind-stamp decorated leather binding with wooden cover, front and back book-covers differ, original spine, five simple ribs, unadorned tool, the mark of two book-clasps can be seen.

Decoration of the binding: On top of the front cover the title is written in black letters pressed in leather. The first frame has a hunting-scene roller with stag, dog, unicorn and deer surrounded by foliation. This is followed by an empty frame and the middle field is lengthwise divided into three streaks, each decorated by grid rollers.

The first frame of the back cover is unadorned, the second frame has the forementioned hunter scene roller. The middle field is decorated by two diagonals and a horizontal blind line and the fields thus created were left empty.

Identification: Kyriss161, nr.79. Augsburg. According to Kyriss, this bookbinding functioned between 1482-1532. The hunter scene roller is listed by Schunke, too (Jagd 11), she also makes reference to Table 161, Kyriss, and calls it Augsburg Jagdrolle.

4. Pelbartus de Themeswar: Stellarium... Hagenau, 1501

Shelfmark: EK. BMV 40

Location List: RMK III. 91

Glosses: no glosses

Binding: Blind-stamp decorated leather binding with wooden cover, front and back book-covers differ, original spine with three double ribs, unadorned tool, there is a mark of book-clasp.

értékelés (Artistic Bindings in the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Library and Their Relevance for the History of Books. Dissertation), Budapest, 1985, p.77-92.

¹⁰ Ernst Kyriss, *op. cit.*

¹¹ Ilse Schunke, *op. cit.*

Decoration of the binding: On top of the front cover the title is written in black letters pressed in leather. The first frame was decorated by a roller of interlacing arches; its inner side is lined by a floral pattern, its outer side lined by stylised geometrical patterns. The second frame is a variant of the flower-foliation and bird roller. Each of the two vertical parts of the U-shaped third frame is decorated by three six-divisioned flower, on its horizontal part there is one flower. The middle field is decorated lengthwise by three parallel grid rollers.

The first frame of the back cover is empty, the second frame is decorated with the forementioned flower-foliation and bird roller. The third frame is empty, the middle field is the same as that of the front cover.

Identification: Kyriss Tafel 175, nr.86. **Augsburg.** This bookbinding functioned between 1473-1527.

Schunke's bookbinding catalogue mentions the following rollers: flower-foliation and bird roller, under the number Ranke 185 (Augsburg Flechtwer R) and grid roller under the number Stabchen 38 (Augsburg Flechtwer R). In both cases there is reference to Kyriss' work.

5. Pelbartus de Themeswar: Pomerium sermonum de sanctis... Hagenau, 1500

Shelfmark: EK. BMV 32

Location List: RMK III. 55

Glosses: "1505", "1544", the name of the possessor is coloured

Binding: Blind-stamp decorated leather binding with wooden cover, front and back book-covers are identical, original spine with three simple ribs, headband, four corner-mountings on the front cover and two book-clasps, marks of two corner mountings on the back cover, two book-clasps and a middle mounting, unadorned tool.

Decoration of the binding: In the first frame of the front cover the title is written in black letters pressed in leather. The second frame has a variant of the flower-foliation and bird roller. The middle field is decorated by a blind-lined rhombus, intersected by a diagonal starting from the left corner of the middle field, forming an interesting pattern.

Identification: Kyriss, Tafel 177, nr. 87, **Augsburg**

The flower-foliation and bird roller can be found at Ranke 187 (Augsburg Jagdrolle) in Schunke's work. There is reference to Table 177 in Kyriss' work.

Renaissance bookbindings have their specificities in every country. Middle fields are centre-structured, the motifs of decoration form a vertical pattern and their content is changed. Floral ornamentation has a lesser role. The following

binding is probably an Early-Renaissance work, its structure Renaissance but its motifs characteristic with the Gothic.

6. Osualdus de Lasko: Gemma fidei... Hagenau, 1507

Shelfmark: EK. BMV 59

Location List: RMK III. 141

Glosses: Latin glosses; Conventus Szokolcen; 1660; the printed bookplate of Count Imre Mikó

Binding: Blind-stamp decorated leather binding with wooden cover, front and back book-covers identical; original spine; headband; five double ribs; unadorned tool; two book-clasps

Decoration of the binding: The middle field has two vertical stripes with foliation/ bird/human figure roller. The frame of the middle field is decorated by free lilies facing each other. The next frame is empty, the last frame is probably decorated by the forementioned roller (it cannot be defined clearly because the binding has deteriorated.)

Identification: probably the work of an Austrian bookbinder

German Renaissance bindings are technically not exceptionable, but they are "rougher" than Italian-French Renaissance bindings; they also lack elegance. The plate and the roller with figural motives (allegorical characters, Reformers, Bible scenes, coats of arms of towns or monarchs) are its main decorations. Some bindings might have stamps, but these are not decisive.

The following binding is a beautiful example of German Renaissance. Its description begins with the exact size of the roller, then the exact text of inscriptions, caesura, without the explanation of the abridged text. According to Konrad Haebler¹², the letters on the roller are the initials of the bookbinder, while the date marks the date of completion of the binding, but also they point to the date when the bookbinder became a member of the bookbinder guild in question or when he was promoted, e.g. became master in the guild.

7. Pelbartus de Themeswar: Pomerium sermonum de sanctis... Hagenau, 1515

Shelfmark: EK. BMV 90

Location List: RMK III. 202

Glosses: no glosses

Binding: Blind-stamp decorated leather binding with wooden cover, front and back book-covers identical; original spine; headband; five double ribs; unadorned tool; the mark of two book-clasps can be seen

¹² Konrad Haebler, *op. cit.*

Decoration of the binding: The first two frames are decorated by a narrower and a wider stylised flower-foliage roller. Spiral trailer-plaiting and heads in locket decorations decorate the third frame. The fourth frame has figural decorations. Size: 167 x 15mm; Salvator, hallmark: 1560: IHS - Moses : Mos-Paulus, shield: Paul-Johannes : Johan.

The middle field is decorated by a highly stylised German variant of the Buda acanthus-palmette line.

Identification: Haebler I, 124-125. N.F. Nicasius Florer, Nürnberg, Rolle 2.

Finally there is the **Buda Renaissance** binding (Fig. 4.) Marianne Rozsondai called my attention to these bindings. She found that the twenty groups of binding presented in Éva Koroknay's work cannot mean twenty bookbinderies. In her opinion there were not so many workshops in the whole country at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries¹³, let alone in Buda and Pest.

8. Osualdus de Lasko: Biga salutis... Hagenau, 1498

Shelfmark: EK. BMV 20

Location List: RMK III. 39

Glosses: Conventus Szakolcen, the printed bookplate of Count Imre Mikó

Binding: Blind-stamp decorated leather binding with wooden cover, identical front and back book-covers; original spine; three double ribs; unadorned tool; the mark of book-clasps can be seen

Decoration of the binding: The first frame is decorated by an acanthus-palmette line, the second frame is empty, the middle field is decorated by small pomegranates. narrower and a wider stylised flower-foliage roller. Spiral trailer-plaiting and heads in locket decorations decorate the third frame. The fourth frame has figural decorations. Size: 167 x 15mm; Salvator, hallmark: 1560: IHS - Moses : Mos-Paulus, shield: Paul-Johannes : Johan.

The middle field is decorated by a highly stylised German variant of the Buda acanthus-palmette line.

Identification: Koroknay (list 48, picture 45; list 287, picture 39; list 236, picture 48; list 120, picture 47).

The binding is decorated by two motifs; these can also be found in the Codex Virginia and Codex Lányi group. Marianne Rozsondai mentions a rosette stamp which links the two groups¹⁴. In this case the small pomegranates link these

¹³ Marianne Rozsondai, *Magyarországi gótikus és reneszánsz bőrkötések (Gothic and Renaissance Bookbindings in Hungary)*, in: *Ars Hungarica*, 1989, p.66.

¹⁴ Marianne Rozsondai, *Művészeti kötéstechnikák...* p. 209.

two groups. Therefore this book held in the Cluj University Library is further proof of the relation between the forementioned groups.

The decoration of the book with shelfmark BMV 20	Codex Virginia	Codex Lányi
acanthus-palmette	list 48, picture 45; list 287, picture 39; list 236, picture 48	
pomegranate	list 287, picture 39	list 120, picture 47

The rarity and increasing value of early printings makes necessary the recording and indexing of all copies and their processing from the point of view of their bookbindings. The protection of original copies and their restoration is the only way to preserve these books which are invaluable for the recording of cultural history.