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VALENTIN MANTSKOVIT: A POLISH-BORN PRINTER IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY HUNGARY

On Valentin Mantskovit's origins. The Bornemisza–Mantskovit Press. Mantskovit's press at Hlohovec and Vizsoly. Mantskovit's calendars.

KEY WORDS: book culture, history of book printing, Hungary, Poland, sixteenth century, Valentin Mantskovit

INTRODUCTION

Valentin Mantskovit (first name variants: Valentín, Valentin, Valentinus, Bálint, Walenty; last name variants: Mančkovič, Mantschkovitsch, Manckovič, Mantskowits, Manczkowicz, Mączkowicz, Farinola, Krafftmehl) was an itinerant printer of probably Polish origin who worked in the Kingdom of Hungary in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. His activity reflects the closely interconnected cultural relations that existed in Central Europe, especially in the territories of the present-day Visegrád Four countries, in the early stages of the history of book printing. Valentin Mantskovit worked as a printer in the territory of present-day Slovakia (in Šintava, Plavecký Castle and Hlohovec) and Hungary (Vizsoly) and there is also evidence that he did work or had contacts in Poland, Austria and in Moravia, in present-day Czechia. It is a very important fact that Valentin Mantskovit is one of the founders of book printing in the Kingdom of Hungary and the territory of present-day Slovakia. In spite of this fact, there is a lack of comprehensive studies of Mantskovit's printing activities in the context of Central European cultural cooperation. This paper employs an analysis of Valentin Mantskovit's book printing work and his typographical production to point to links in cultural activities in the history of book culture in the territory of Poland and Slovakia in the sixteenth century. A source recently discovered in the archives enables additions and amendments in a previously vague area in the chronology of

Mantskovit's printing activities, and, last but not least, the paper provides details of the production of Mantskovit's publication of Cracow calendars.

ON VALENTIN MANTSKOVIT'S ORIGINS

Literature has been speculating on the Polish origin of Valentin Mantskovit since 1895, when the Hungarian historian Károly Firtinger published an article in the *Magyar Nyomdászat* magazine entitled "Farinola recte Mantskovit Bálint". The belief that Mantskovit was Polish is based on his surname.¹ The word *mączka* (pronounced "moŋtch-ka") means "flour" in Polish. This corresponds to the Latin word *farina*, which Mantskovit used as the basis for his pseudonym "Farinola". In addition to the Polish and Latin forms of his surname, he also used a German derivation. The earliest known use of such a derivation can be found in the recently discovered archival document that is the topic of this study (see Annex) — a letter that Mantskovit sent to the town council in Banská Štiavnica in 1582, signed "Valentin Mantschkovit Krafftmehl genant" ("Valentin Mantskovit, aka Krafftmehl"). The nickname Krafftmehl is based on the German word for flour, *Mehl*. It is certain that Mantskovit did not come from Hungary. He himself confirms it in the introduction to the Bible of Vizsoly, where he writes that he is "of another nationality". The Polish research literature considers it either certain or most probable that he was a Polish-born printer.²

We do not know the exact circumstances or date of Mantskovit's arrival in Hungary and we are not aware of any sources confirming that he operated a press in Poland.³ His place of birth and where he received his professional training in printing are also unknown. He first came into contact with the black art in his home country, Poland, and it may also be here that he met his first print collaborator, an important Slovak Protestant typographer and a leading representative of the Hungarian Lutheran Church in the sixteenth century, Péter Bornemisza. Bornemisza had contacts in Poland and there is evidence that his press was partly based on typographic equipment he bought from the Cracow printer, the Calvinist Matias Wierzbith.⁴ Judit Ecsedy argues against this, however, claiming that her more recent findings suggest that Bornemisza probably obtained the typographic equipment for his press from Vienna, which was much closer than Cracow, and

¹ J. Ecsedy, *A Bornermisza-Mantskovit nyomda története*, Budapest 1990, p. 52.

² "Mantskovit, Bálint", [entry in:] *Piastowskie kolekcje ze zbiorów Biblioteki Uniwersyteckiej we Wrocławiu: Digitalizacja i udostępnienie* [database], <http://dk.bu.uni.wroc.pl/bp/display-Dokument.htm?docId=4000002483> [accessed: 12.03.2018].

³ J. Ecsedy, *A könyvnyomtatás Magyarországon a kéziszajtó korában 1473–1800*, Budapest 1999, p. 68.

⁴ P. Gulyás, *A könyv sorsa Magyarországon*, Budapest 1961, p. 133.

where he also had contacts. She believes that a part of his type came from the Viennese printer Stainhofer.⁵

It must be noted that most of what we know about Valentin Mantskovit is deduced from the works he printed. As to Mantskovit's activities outside his homeland, there is reason to believe that his decision to emigrate was linked to the plague epidemic that broke out there in 1576.⁶

THE BORNEMISZA–MANTSKOVIT PRESS

Valentin Mantskovit worked as a factor (an agent or manager) at the press of Péter Bornemisza, which had been established in Šintava (now in the Galanta district of Slovakia) as one of the very first printing presses in the Kingdom of Hungary in 1573. It is thought that Mantskovit worked there in the period 1573–1578. It is certain that Mantskovit was working at Bornemisza's press in 1579, when it was forced to move from Šintava to Plavecký Castle (now incorporated into the village of Plavecké Podhradie in Slovakia). A peripatetic lifestyle was commonly forced on printers in the last third of the sixteenth century due to the decrees of emperor Rudolf II, who favoured Catholicism. As a means to gain control of printing in his Hungarian territories, he issued a decree forbidding any press to operate without imperial permission on 8 February 1579.⁷ To avoid confiscation of their presses, Protestant printers moved around a lot and frequently kept their place of work secret. Neither Bornemisza nor Mantskovit could avoid this lifestyle. The Bornemisza–Mantskovit Press continued to operate, as did most other printers supporting the Reformation, though they could not avoid problems. Their survival depended on the financial and moral support of powerful aristocratic families, patrons and sponsors.

Historians have applied the term Bornemisza–Mantskovit Press to the period when the press operated in Plavecký Castle because it is believed that Mantskovit had become its co-owner in the last years of Bornemisza's life.⁸ However, as part of our research in the archive of Banská Štiavnica we have found a letter from Mantskovit to the town council in Banská Štiavnica dated 10 December 1582,⁹ which indicates that Mantskovit was the sole owner (not co-owner) of the press in

⁵ J. Ecsedy, *Névtelen szerző gúnyos receptje a 'rest avagy csácsogó' asszonyok ellen*, „Magyar Könyvszemle” 1985, //epa.oszk.hu/00000/00021/00328/pdf/MKSZ_EPA00021_1985_101_03-04_276-316.pdf [accessed: 21.02.2018].

⁶ Ibidem, p. 290.

⁷ J. Ecsedy, *A Bornemisza-Mantskovit nyomda...*, p. 55.

⁸ Eadem, *A könyvnyomtatás Magyarországon...*, p. 69.

⁹ Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, State Archives in Banská Bystrica, Archive of Banská Štiavnica, fonds of the Municipality of Banská Štiavnica, material group Correspondence, year 1582, box 2.

Plavecký Castle as early as 1582. In the letter, Mantskovit stresses that the 1583 calendars that he is sending to the town council in Banská Štiavnica have been printed by a press that he is the sole owner of (“in meiner gantz gewangen [= gefangen!] Druckerei”; “in my fully bought out press”). This changes our previous conception of the start of Mantskovit’s career as an independent printer, which was previously dated to 1584/1585, in the period after Bornemisza’s death.

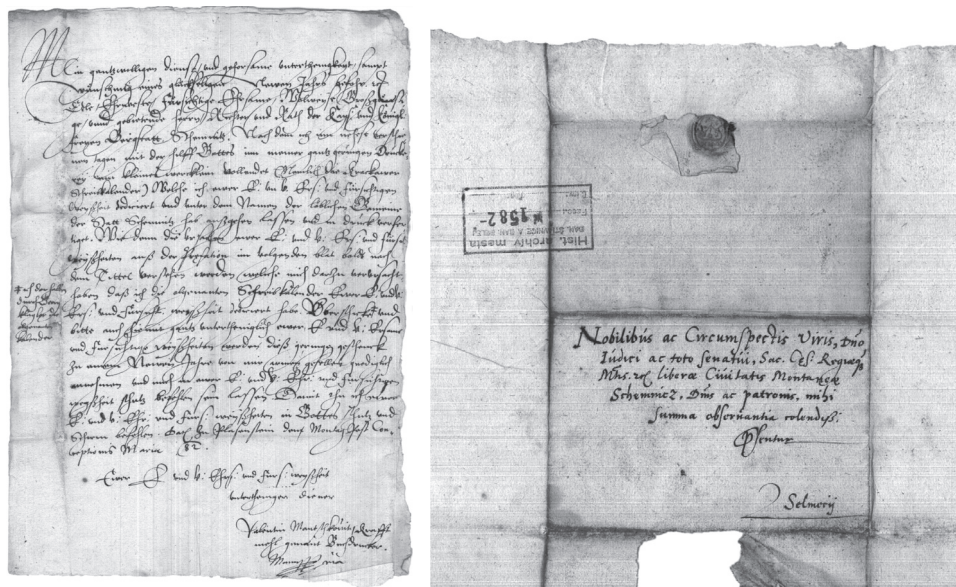


Fig. 1. Letter from Valentin Mantskovit to the municipality of Banská Štiavnica, 10 December 1582, Plavecký Castle

Source: Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, State Archives in Banská Bystrica, Archive of Banská Štiavnica, fonds of the Municipality of Banská Štiavnica, material group Correspondence, year 1582, box 2.

MANTSKOVIT’S PRESS AT HLOHOVEC AND VIZSOLY

After Péter Bornemisza’s death at the turn of 1584/1585, Mantskovit relocated the press from Plavecký Castle to Hlohovec (now part of the Trnava region of Slovakia), where he worked until 1588. Afterwards, he relocated to Vizsoly (in present-day Gönc district, Hungary) in 1589 and remained there until 1599. He moved there based on an invitation to work on a major project — the printing of the first Hungarian Reformation translation of the whole Bible (known as the Bible of Vizsoly), the work of a Calvinist priest, Gáspár Károlyi (see Fig. 2).¹⁰

¹⁰ P. Gulyás, op. cit.

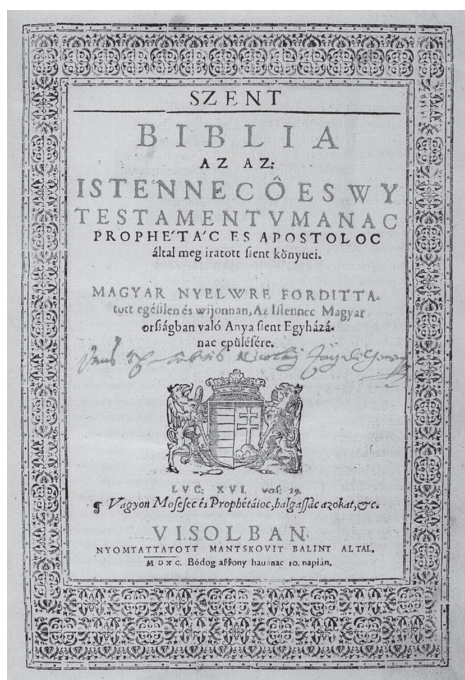


Fig. 2. Bible of Vizsoly

Source: *A Bornemisza-Mantskovit műhely*, Budapest 2011, <http://typographia.oszk.hu/html/hun/nyomdak/bornmant.htm> [accessed: 9.03.2018].

Mantskovit became famous throughout Hungary thanks to this edition of the Bible and he was rightly recognised as one of the masters of this art. It should be added that he had already been a recognised master printer during his collaboration with Bornemisza and even then he used his own printer's device of a serpent on a cross of Moses whose lower part resembles an anchor (see Fig. 3). The fact that Mantskovit was hired to print the Bible of Vizsoly confirms the high value of his printing art and a well-equipped workshop.

Mantskovit was a printer committed to the Reformation, who focused on works by and for Protestants. He was relatively productive for an itinerant printer, especially if, as it is reasonable to note, only a small fraction of his production has survived. There are 27 known publications from his press, excluding *Prunov katechizmus* ("Prun's Catechism"), a Slovak work whose connection to Mantskovit has been challenged by recent research. He printed doctrinal and polemical works on the Reformation, meditations on the gospels, gospel extracts, occasional and crypto-Calvinistic poetry, besides the complete Bible. Furthermore, as Bornemisza's factor he participated in the printing of Bornemisza's Bible commentaries, sermons and hymn books whose large volume made this a demanding job.



Fig. 3. Mantskovit's printer's device (1580)

Source: *A Bornemisza-Mantskovit műhely*, Budapest 2011, <http://typographia.oszk.hu/html/hun/nyomdak/bornmant.htm> [accessed: 9.03.2018].

Mantskovit printed mainly the theological works of Hungarian Protestant theologians, propagators of the Reformation and, above all, the crypto-Calvinists, for whom he had obvious sympathies. Mantskovit omitted his name or place of publication from most of the crypto-Calvinist polemics, which clearly shows that he wanted to protect his secrecy. He was contacted by writers with Calvinist sympathies not only from the territory of Hungary but also from Moravia. One of the first Protestant priests that Mantskovit cooperated with was the Slovak Renaissance dramatist and religious writer, Pavel Kyrmezer, originally from Banská Štiavnica. He submitted his Protestant theological work *Acta concordiae* for printing by Bornemisza's press in Plavecký Castle in 1580.¹¹ It describes the disputes he had with members of the Unity of Brethren as a dean of Uherský Brod in Moravia. The conflict was related to Kyrmezer's efforts to unite the Protestant churches in Moravia. "Pannonius" Kyrmezer addressed the foreword of his work to all parish priests and deans in Uherský Brod and other church leaders in Pannonia (a historical term for the territory including present-day Slovakia), Bohemia, Moravia and Poland.

¹¹ J. Čaplovič, *Bibliografia tlači vydaných na Slovensku do roku 1700*, vol. 2, Martin 1984, entry 1685 (hereinafter Čaplovič II, entry number).

In one of the Calvinist polemics¹² there is an interesting endnote stating that the numerous errors and delays in printing were caused by the illness and eventual death of the printer. It is more than likely that this unnamed printer was Valentin Mantskovit. This means that Mantskovit's death can be dated to the period before 10 April 1597, which is the date of dedication in the relevant work.¹³

Finally, another crypto-Calvinist polemic,¹⁴ dating from 1599, states that the printer is not confident in Latin and has asked local priests to check the text. The reference to a printer who does not know Latin well is evidence that it was not Mantskovit because he was an educated man with a good command of Latin. Mantskovit was probably no longer living. It is interesting that the Mantskovit press continued to operate under his name after his death and it was probably run by his heirs.

The most important work that Mantskovit printed was the Bible of Vizsoly, as mentioned above. Historians consider it the most influential Hungarian book of the sixteenth century in terms of its role in the development of the Hungarian language and the Reformation in Hungary. It is one of the most notable works of this period in the history of the book culture in the Kingdom of Hungary.¹⁵

Mantskovit was not unknown even in Vienna. Viennese booksellers were amongst the customers for his calendars. The printing of the 1582 Cracow calendar of Peter Slovaciuc may have been financed by the Viennese printer and bookseller Erhard Hiller,¹⁶ and Mantskovit himself claims in the calendar that Viennese booksellers long encouraged him to publish a calendar in Hungarian.¹⁷ Erhard Hiller was also the publisher and commissioner of a collection of gospel extracts in Hungarian dedicated to Katarina Pálfi,¹⁸ which Mantskovit printed in Plavecký Castle, probably in 1581, like the aforementioned calendar.

Mantskovit also made translations alongside his printing. He translated from German to Hungarian and even though he was probably Polish, the spelling of the works he printed shows he had a good command of Hungarian.¹⁹

Besides being one of the kingdom's leading master printers, Mantskovit was a highly regarded scholar in Hungary. Evidence of this includes a request from the Bratislava Chamber dated 20 November 1587, requesting him to travel to Nitra

¹² The polemic *Exarmatio Scvty Laniani*, printed by the Mantskovit press in Vizsoly without identification of the place of printing or the printer in 1597 (*Régi Magyarországi Nyomtatványok: 1473–1600*, Budapest 1971, entry 814; hereinafter RMNy I, entry number).

¹³ P. Gulyás, op. cit.

¹⁴ The polemic *Panharmonia* by István Gönczi, 1599 (RMNy I, entry 863).

¹⁵ G. Žibritová, *Čo je Vižol'ská biblia?*, „Knížnica” 3, 2002, no. 4, p. 184, http://www.snk.sk/images/snk/NBU/Kniznica/4_2002/183.pdf [accessed: 10.02.2018].

¹⁶ Čaplovič II, entry 1687.

¹⁷ J. Ecsedy, *A Bornermisza-Mantskovit nyomda...*

¹⁸ Čaplovič II, entry 1686.

¹⁹ J. Ecsedy, *Névtelen szerző gúnyos receptje...*, p. 292.

(in the territory of present-day Slovakia) to assess a library that the humanist and Hungarian scholar Zachariáš Mošovský had left on his death.²⁰

Mantskovit's press continued to operate under his name for two years after his death, that is, until 1599. It is thought that during this time it was managed (though probably not on the premises) by Jakub Klös, who was probably Mantskovit's son-in-law and his former printing assistant at Vizsoly. By that time, Klös had become a well-regarded printer at Bardejov (now in Prešov region, Slovakia).

MANTSKOVIT'S CALENDARS

Caleendars were amongst the most successful smaller print jobs in the early modern period. They were a lucrative and profitable business for printers. Mantskovit's late-sixteenth-century calendars in Hungarian (like other calendars in other national languages) influenced popular reading habits and promoted learning.²¹ The authors of calendars published in the Kingdom of Hungary were major personalities of their time, regarded as experts and authorities. Notable names besides the Cracow astronomer Peter Slovacius included Valent Fontanus, also of Cracow.

Mantskovit is known to have printed Hungarian calendars in Plavecký Castle for the years 1580, 1581, 1582 and 1583.²² The calendars printed for 1582 and 1584 were compiled by Peter Slovacius. Both of Slovacius's calendars from Mantskovit's press were in the format known as "Krakauer Schreib-Kalender" (Cracow calendar). Calendars of this type included blank pages for notes, often pre-printing the day of the month for handwritten entries. Blank lines were used for various purposes such as recording personal data, debts, household accounts and the like.

The Cracow calendar for 1582 was a 52-page brochure with a calendar section. It is thought that Mantskovit had a sponsor for this publication, most likely the Viennese bookseller, Erhard Hiller.²³ He himself confirmed that Viennese booksellers had long encouraged him to publish a Hungarian calendar.²⁴ The foreword suggests that Mantskovit found preparation of the calendar for the press demanding, but recognised its importance for users: "Although working with an annual calendar is arduous work, both for the one who writes it and for the printer, it is vital, because no reasonable person can be without one, and for this reason

²⁰ K. Komorová, *Knižnica Zachariáša Mošovského*, Martin 2009, p. 17.

²¹ J. Valach, *Staré tlačiarnie a tlačiari na Slovensku*, Martin 1987, p. 95.

²² The calendars are recorded in Čaplovič II, entries 1684, 1687, 1688a, except for the calendar for 1581, which is recorded only in RMNy I, entry 455A.

²³ Čaplovič II, entry 1687.

²⁴ J. Ecsedy, *A Bornermisza-Mantskovit nyomda...*

it is distributed across the whole land”.²⁵ For this reason, Mantskovit wrote, the calendars were made available not only in Cracow but also in other places and various languages, for students and nobles, whereas he explained the decision to publish a calendar in Hungarian as serving “the elite of the Hungarian nation”.

The 1583 calendar has not been preserved but there are secondary sources confirming its existence. These are archival records in both cases. The first is Mantskovit’s letter to the town council in Banská Štiavnica and the other is an entry in the municipal accounts ledger of Banská Bystrica. The letter to Banská Štiavnica is mentioned above as evidence that Mantskovit took over Bornemisza’s press earlier than was previously assumed. In it, Mantskovit modestly describes the calendar as a “ein kleines Wercklein” (“small job”). The letter makes clear that it was sent together with the “Krakauer Kalender” (Cracow calendar) which he had “succeeded in completing with God’s help”. He had published and printed the calendar under the name of the town council of Banská Štiavnica, presented it as “small gift” for the new year and asked the town council for its protection. Čaplovič mentions the accounting entry from Banská Bystrica²⁶ and states that it was dated 22 December 1582. It confirms the receipt of 12 bound calendars from a printer of Plavecký Castle for 2 florins.

Although emperor Rudolf II had established the new Gregorian calendar in Hungary, Mantskovit continued to print the old calendar alongside the new one after the reform because Protestants wanted it. This made the imperial court angry with him.²⁷ A letter of Archduke Ernest Habsburg of Austria dated 3 March 1589²⁸ accused Mantskovit of printing old calendars and other prohibited books and urged the Spiš Chamber to obtain the assistance of Mantskovit’s patron, count Sigismund Rákóczi, to destroy the unauthorised printing press operating in Vizsoly together with all its equipment and any books found there. The date of the letter (1589) suggests that Mantskovit may have printed Protestant calendars after 1583, even though we are not aware of any such calendars. The Spiš Chamber delivered the archduke’s request to Sigismund Rákóczi, who replied on 26 March 1589 that the printer in Vizsoly was not printing any calendars or anything else except the Bible.²⁹

²⁵ Peter Slovacius, *Kalendarium 1582. évre*, Detrekö 1581.

²⁶ Čaplovič II, entry 1688a.

²⁷ P. Gulyás, op. cit., p. 132.

²⁸ The listed is published as no. 26 in: *Magyar protestáns egyháztörténeti adattár. XI*, ed. F. Zsinka, Budapest 1927.

²⁹ P. Gulyás, op. cit.

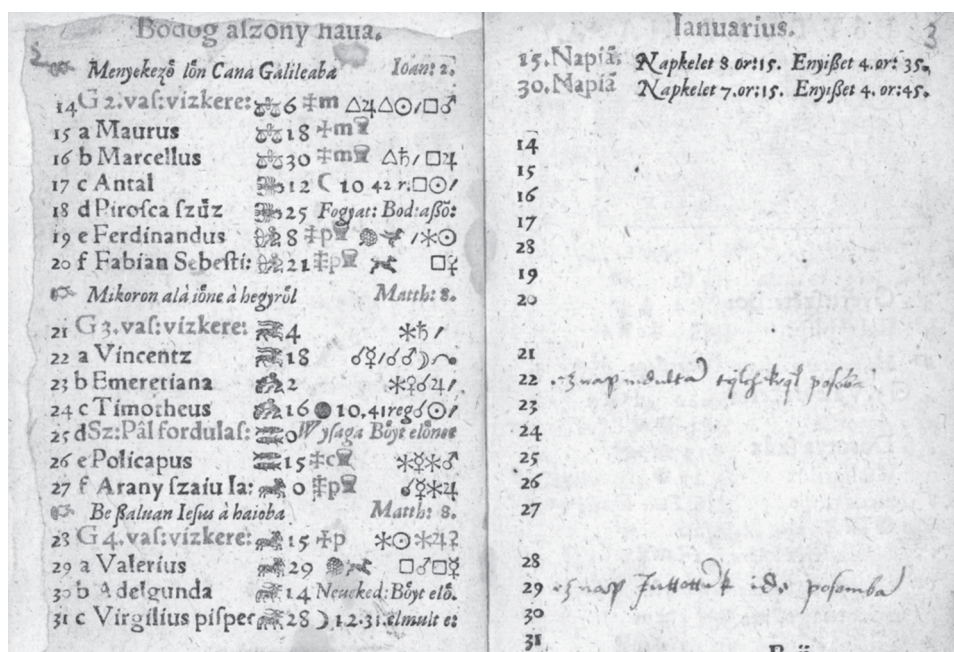


Fig. 4. Part of the calendar for 1582

Source: *Hungaricana: Old Hungarian Library*, signature RMK I. 196, https://rmk.hungaricana.hu/en/RMK_I_196/?query= [accessed: 9.03.2018].

CONCLUSION

Mantskovit dedicated himself as a printer to the Reformation. He gave most of his attention to printing the religious dogmas and polemics of Protestant theologians. At a time of many disputes in print between Lutherans and followers of Calvin's Reformed version of the Reformation, he took the side of the crypto-Calvinists and printed their works.

It is necessary to highlight the significance of Valentin Mantskovit's work for Slovaks in the sixteenth century. Being one of the first printers to operate in the Slovak lands gives him an important place in the early development of printing and book culture. Although Mantskovit's production was in Latin and Hungarian, and recent research has cast doubt on his printing in Slovak, it should be borne in mind that many of his books were intended for Slovak readers — priests and believers — and for promoting and defending Reformation ideas in the Slovak lands.

Despite the two relocations of Mantskovit's press and the illegality of printing without a government licence, he managed to operate an independent press continuously for 15 years until his death. This was because he was ready to relocate to

places where he could find suitable conditions, the support of patrons and demand for his products. There are grounds for talking about a longer operating period for the Mantskovit press — in total 17 years counting from 1582 (when he was already the owner of the press in Plavecký Castle) to 1599, when he was no longer living but the press was still working. From a typographical and organisational point of view, the Mantskovit press ranked amongst the best in Hungary in the sixteenth century, as can be seen from the printing of the Bible of Vizsoly.

A final important point is that Valentin Mantskovit's career reveals a system of cultural ties between Slovakia, Hungary, Czechia, Poland and other Central European countries in the earlier stages of the book culture. Mantskovit probably came from Poland and operated a printing press in Slovakia and Hungary, where he printed, amongst other things, works of Moravian theologians and cooperated with Viennese printers and publishers.

Hungary honoured his memory and his contribution to printing and book culture three years ago, in September 2015, with the opening of an interactive museum of the history of printing in Vizsoly that bears his name: Mantskovit Bálint Nyomdatörténeti Múzeum.³⁰

ANNEX

TRANSCRIPT OF VALENTIN MANTSKOVIT'S LETTER TO THE TOWN COUNCIL OF BANSKÁ ŠTIAVNICA, DATED 10 DECEMBER 1582

Mein gantzwilligen Dienst und gehorsame Unterthenigkeyt, sampt wünschung eines glückseligen Newen Jahrs beföhr etc Edle Ehrenweste Fürsichtige Ehrsame Wolweise Großgünsti (-) ge und gebetende Herrn, Richter und Rath der Kays:(erliche) und Königl(iche) Freyen Burgstatt Schemnitz. Nach dem ich inn nehest verschie (-)nen Tagen mit der Hilff Gottes inn meiner gantz gewangen Drucke (-)rey ein kleines Wercklein vollendet nemlich die Krackawer Schreibkalender Welche ich ewer (euer) E: len (Edlen) V. Ers: (samen) und Fürsichtigen Weyßheit dediciert und unter dem Namen der löblichen Gemeine der Statt Schemnitz hab außgeben lassen und in drück verfer (-)tiget. Wie dem die Ursachen ewer (euer) E: und V. Er: und Fürsicht: Weyßheiten auß der Prefation im folgenden blat baldt nach dem Tittel verstehen werden welche mich darzu verursacht haben daß ich die obgenanten Schreibkalender Ewer E: und V: Ers: und Fürsicht: Weißheit dediciert habe. Oberschicke und bitte auch hiermit gantz untertheniglich ewer E: und V: Ersame und Fürsichtige Weyßheiten werden dieß geringe Geschenck zu einem Neuen Jahre von mir armen Gesellen gnedichlich annehmen und mich in einer E:

³⁰ *Megnyílt a Mantskovit Bálint Nyomdatörténeti Múzeum*, „Magyar grafika” 2015, no. 6, http://mgonline.hu/system/articles/1717/articles_1717_original.pdf?1479180702 [accessed: 27.02.2018].

und V: Ehr: und Fürsichtigen Weißheit Schutz befehlen sein lassen. Damit ihn ich
 ewer E: und V: Ehr: und Fürs: Weißheiten in Gottes Schutz und Schirm befehlen.
 Dat(um) zu Plasenstein dem Montag post Con(-) ceptionis Mariae 82. Ewer E und
 V. Ehr: und Furs: Weysheit Untertheniger Diener

Valentin Mantstkovits Krafftmehl genant Buchdrucker

Manu propria

* ich den halben durch Georg Klugler der obgenanten Kalender

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MARTA ŠPÁNIOVÁ, LUCIA LICHNEROVÁ, ZUZANA NEMCOVÁ

VALENTIN MANTSKOVIT: A POLISH-BORN PRINTER IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY HUNGARY

Summary

Valentin Mantskovit was a Polish-born itinerant Protestant printer who worked in Hungary in the sixteenth century. The present study points to the interconnection of cultural activities in the history of book culture between Poland and Slovakia in the sixteenth century. The authors

analyse and summarise the typographical works of Valentin Mantskovit and point to the social circumstances leading to the relocations of his press within the Kingdom of Hungary. They present the characteristics of the products of his press, focusing in particular on calendars, including the Cracow calendar that he printed. They correct the previously imprecise chronology of his printing activities in the territory of present-day Slovakia with reference to preserved archival sources.

KEY WORDS: book culture, history of book printing, Hungary, Poland, sixteenth century, Valentin Mantskovit