

**Debates over biblical chronology in the intellectual culture of Silesia and Upper Lusatia (1550-1650):
Abraham Buchholzer, Leonhard Krentzheim, Andreas Dudithius, Bartholomaeus Scultetus, Abraham
Frisius, and Gottfried Scherdinger**

Summary for the general public

This project aims at reconstruction of ideas on broadly understood chronology formulated by six representatives of Lower Silesian and Upper Lusatian intellectual milieu. The discipline of chronology evolved parallel to humanist philology, critical historiography and modern astronomy and has reached its mature form shortly before the end of the 16th century thanks to the Leiden scholar Joseph Scaliger and his two works: *De emendatione temporum* and *Thesaurus temporum*. Before the inquiries related to dating of events from the deep and distant past, such as the dates of birth and death of Jesus, took on a form of systematic interdisciplinary research grounded equally in the scrupulous critique of textual sources and application of mathematical apparatus offered by astronomy and making possible the reconstruction of ancient and exotic systems of time reckoning and their synchronization with those used by Judaism and Christianity, the discipline has went through a long way. Not all of the winding paths of chronology have lead to the actual progress and seem valid from the modern point of view but their analysis allows one to reconstruct an extremely rich intellectual culture in which these inquiries were grounded as well as the scholarly workshops of learned men who coined these ideas.

Within this project I am planning to research various aspects of development of early modern chronology by means of a series of six mutually related case studies dedicated to scholars based in various towns and cities of Lower Silesia and Upper Lusatia. The first of them is Abraham Buchholzer (1529–1584), a Protestant theologian and historian based in Grünberg and Freistadt. In his works, *Isagoge chronologica* and *Index chronologicus*, Buchholzer combined critical reconstruction of historical material that can be extracted from the Bible with erudite and at times symbolic interpretation. An analogous approach can be found in the work of Leonhard Krentzheim (1532–1584), evangelical theologian and chronologer who was active in Liegnitz and Fraustadt, who based his two-part *Chronologia* on the work of Gerardus Mercator. His Görlitz publication of 1571 is on the one hand an illustration of transmission of ideas across the state borders, while on the other hand it should be read as an attempt at rendering these ideas in vernacular languages. Görlitz was also an arena for another scholar, Bartholomaeus Scultetus (1540–1614), an astronomer and astrologer educated at the universities in Leipzig and Wittenberg who was also a Mayor of Görlitz, Scultetus as the city astronomer was responsible for the production of annual calendars and prognostica yet in the light of his handwritten *Nachlass* it is evident that his interests in the field of time reckoning went well beyond the standard list of topics. Scultetus created a very complex (and extremely attractive) astronomical and astrological reconstruction of the chronology of the Old Testament as well as a set of paper machines for conversion of dates expressed by means of various European and Asian calendrical systems. He also belonged to a circle of men loosely associated with Andreas Dudithius (1533–1589), a former Catholic bishop and Imperial envoy who converted into Antitrinitarianism and settled in Breslau in 1580s where he created a circle of learned men. One of the topics that attracted his attention was chronology, what finds confirmation in books he gathered, one manuscript which is now in Stockholm and in the network of direct and epistolary contacts he created, with Scultetus as one of its members. Finally, chronology played yet another role in the intellectual and religious culture of the region, i.e. that of the bone of contention. In early 17th century Abraham Frisius and Gottfried Scherdinger, two Protestant clergymen, fought with each other over a series of chronological problems based on the text of the Bible and the whole argument can be now reconstructed thanks to four quite extensive polemical works they published. What is curious here is the fact that Görlitz became one more time an arena for intellectual, not entirely peaceful, practice related to chronology as all four books were published and disseminated further from the local Görlitz printing shop. The analysis of these scholars in a series will enable shedding some additional light on a number of phenomena related to the development of chronology as discipline of knowledge; at the same time, on a more general level, it will clarify some of the aspects of the dynamics of Silesian and Lusatian intellectual life and its relation with the confessional culture of these two regions.

Within the framework of the project I am planning to reconstruct sources of ideas of the above-mentioned scholars and expose the specificity of their conceptions, including their social and confessional contexts. I am planning also to reconstruct networks of contacts of these scholars and trace possible – direct or mediated – relations between them, what is particularly tempting in case of Buchholzer, Krentzheim and Scultetus. During the project I am planning to carry out archival and library surveys that can lead to finding materials shedding some additional light on their activities and reception of their ideas. The resulting image will enrich our knowledge of the intellectual culture of these two regions and will also contribute to our understanding of the dynamics of the circulation of ideas in late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.