PUBLIKATIONEN DER UNGARISCHEN GESCHICHTSFORSCHUNG IN WIEN BD. XVII.

NICOLAUS OLAHUS 450

Tagungsband der internationalen Konferenz zum 450. Todestag von Nicolaus Olahus

Herausgegeben von EMŐKE RITA SZILÁGYI



WIEN 2019

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Proceedings of the International Conference on the 450th Anniversary of Nicolaus Olahus' Death

Edited by Emőke Rita Szilágyi

VIENNA 2019

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Publikationen der ungarischen Geschichtsforschung in Wien

Herausgeber Institut für Ungarische Geschichtsforschung in Wien Balassi Institut – Collegium Hungaricum Wien Archivdelegation beim Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Wien

Redaktionskollegium Dr. Iván Bertényi, Dr. Csaba Szabó, Dr. Gábor Ujváry, Dr. István Fazekas, Dr. András Oross, Dr. Péter Tusor

Der Band wurde mit der Unterstützung der Ungarischen Akademie der Wissenschaften und des Projekts "MTA Premium Forschungsstipendium für Postdoktoranden" veröffentlicht





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Sprachredaktion: István Fazekas d. J., Réka Futász Übersetzungen: Regina Goda, Ferenc Vincze

http://www.collegium-hungaricum.at

ISSN 2073-3054 ISBN 978-963-631-280-0

Herausgeber:
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Budapest

Layout: Zsuzsa Szilágyi N. Illustration: Géza Xantus Druck: Kódex Könyvgyártó Kft. Direktor: Attila Marosi



Grabstein von Nicolaus Olahus in Trnava/Nagyszombat/Tyrnau (1568) Foto: Kornél Divald (1927)

THE SECOND LETTERS PATENT (GRANT OF BARONY) ISSUED TO NICOLAUS OLAHUS (1558–1560)

The second letters patent issued to Nicolaus Olahus and his family is among the most richly decorated charters produced in Hungary in the second half of the sixteenth century. The grantee of these letters patent, the humanist prelate Nicolaus Olahus, was at that time Archbishop of Esztergom (1553–1568); earlier he had served as Bishop of Zagreb (1543–1548), and Bishop of Eger (1548–1553); he also headed the Hungarian Court Chancellery in Vienna from 1543 to 1568 as deputy chancellor, chancellor, and finally high chancellor. As a significant member (and later head) of the Hungarian ecclesiastical elite, who also served as royal regent from 1562, he was an outstanding collector and patron of the arts of the period.

Portraits of Olahus frequently appeared on works of art in which he was involved in some capacity (as publisher, patron, etc.). In 1558, the year his second letters patent was issued, he commissioned German engraver Hans Sebald Lautensack of Vienna to execute his portrait. This half-length depiction is the earliest known example of a Hungarian portrait accompanied by epigrammatic praise. These epigrams featured common humanist topoi related to art (e.g. the ancient painter Apelles) and were written by Olahus and other

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¹ For more on the two letters patent issued to Nicolaus Olahus, see the essential articles by András Kovács, 1969; Kovács, 1994.

² For his career, see, among others: R. VÁRKONYI 2003; FAZEKAS, 2005; FAZEKAS, 2012, 50–51; FAZEKAS, 2013, 106–107; see also the chapter by István FAZEKAS in the present volume.

³ Jakó, 1968, 200–204; Jakó, 1997, 351–357; Mikó, 2009, 126. For more on Olahus' library, see the chapter by István Μονοκ and Edina Zvara in the present volume.

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members of his humanist circle, including György Bóna, Miklós Istvánffy, and Sebestyén Liszthy. This etching and an updated copy of it, a woodcut made by German printmaker Donat Hübschmann in 1560 (also in Vienna), were published six times between 1558 and 1562 in Olahus' printed works and in books the publication of which he had supported.⁴ Another portrait of Olahus, a full-length figure, can be found on his excellent sepulchral monument, which was erected in accordance with his last will and testament in the St. Nicholas Church in Trnava (Nagyszombat, Tyrnau), seat of Hungarian archbishops, sometime after 1568.⁵

In the following, we will see that Olahus' painted portraits also appeared in the border decorations of his two letters patent, which he commissioned in 1548 and 1558, respectively. However, in contrast to the previously mentioned portraits, the decorations on these charters did not contribute to the prelate's public self-representation because they adorned extraordinarily important official documents and were thus stored among Olahus' most treasured personal effects.⁶

The richly decorated second letters patent (a grant of barony) was issued to Nicolaus Olahus and his family on 17 April, 1558 in Vienna by Ferdinand I of the House of Habsburg, in his capacity as the King of Hungary. This charter is now stored in the Archive of the Esterházy family, at the National Archives of Hungary in Budapest. As was previously noted, Olahus was the Archbishop of Esztergom and high chancellor of the Hungarian Court Chancellery in Vienna at that time.

The charter was produced in booklet form; it is a so-called *libellus*. The manuscript comprises three parchment bifolia held together by a gold and silver cord. It seems that it was originally an unbound manuscript; the thick, blank parchment bifolium that covers the booklet might originally have

⁴ Rózsa, 1960, 433–438; Galavics, 1990, 401–406; Fazekas – ujváry, 2001, No. 14.1.; Galavics, 2001, 66–68; Seipel, 2003, No. IV.11. (István Fazekas); Réthelyi – F. Romhányi – Spekner – Végh, 2005, No. VIII-12. (Zuzana Ludiková); Mikó – Verő, 2008, Vols. I–II., No. II-1. (Gödölle Mátyás); Ludiková (ed.), 2009, No. II.1.7–8. (Zuzana Ludiková); Buzási, 2014, 33, 67.

⁵ Galavics, 1995, 316; Ludiková, 2002, 85–86, 90–91; Mikó, 2005, 630; Buzási, 2014, 33, 35.

⁶ Cf. Kovács, 1994, 106.

National Archives of Hungary, Budapest, P 108, Rep. 2–3, Fasc. K, No. 163 (NYULÁSZINÉ STRAUB, 1999², 184–185; NYULÁSZINÉ STRAUB, 2000, No. 167; http://adatbazisokonline.hu/adatbazis/cimereslevel-adatbazis), cf. RADOCSAY, 1964, 101, 106; SZÁNTÓ, 1965, 1, 80–81; JAKÓ, 1968, 203–204; KOVÁCS, 1969, 106–108; VIGNAUWILBERG, 1992, 8; KOVÁCS, 1994, 105–106; SEIPEL, 2003, No. IV.13. (István FAZEKAS); LUDIKOVÁ, 2009, No. II.2.4. (Zuzana LUDIKOVÁ); MIKÓ, 2009, 126; GULYÁS, 2016, 111.

served as the binding of the charter. The original wax seal of these letters patent is the double seal (sigillum duplex) Ferdinand I used as King of Hungary. Folia 1 and 2r of the booklet are blank. The two-page frontispiece of the letters patent is located on ff. 2v and 3r (Fig. 1. [Abb. 1.]). The text of the charter continues until f. 5r, where the signature of the grantor, King Ferdinand I, can be found. Ff. 5v and 6 are blank as well.

This work was dated and signed by the calligrapher György Bocskay.⁹ This artist's œuvre includes a large number of charters, both in single folio and in booklet form, most of which were letters patent issued to Hungarian nobles. This is because Bocskay worked at the Hungarian Court Chancellery¹⁰ in Vienna for thirty years, the central governmental office of the Kingdom of Hungary within the composite state of the Habsburg Monarchy. As mentioned above, Nicolaus Olahus headed the Chancellery, which he operated out of his own house in Vienna, 11 between 1543 and 1568. If the king conferred a coat of arms upon a Hungarian nobleman or elevated him to a higher rank (e.g. a barony), the letters patent certifying such royal acts were prepared at the Chancellery. In accordance with their importance, such manuscripts were drawn up on ornately decorated parchment and fitted with a miniature depicting the granted coats of arms, usually accompanied by other painted or calligraphic ornamentation. Many of the latter decorations appearing on letters patent drawn up at the Chancellery between around 1550 and 1575 can be attributed to Bocskay. Through his work at this office, Bocskay established a sort of school, with the most distinctive decorative elements living on past his death, continuing to appear on letters patent, albeit in simplified form, even into the seventeenth century.

Based on my research, I consider it highly likely that Bocskay first came to the Chancellery in 1545 as a personal scribe to Nicolaus Olahus. ¹² Bocskay's subsequent appointment as Hungarian court secretary (c. 1563–1564), a position he would hold for the rest of his life, was an important promotion for him, as it meant that he was now an employee of the state; from then on, he would receive an annual salary from the Hungarian Chamber. ¹³ In

⁸ Opponent's review by Árpád Mikó: MIKÓ 2013, 338.

⁹ GULYÁS, 2016, 111. The calligraphic decoration on this charter has been attributed to Bocskay by SZÁNTÓ, 1965, 1, 80–81; JAKÓ, 1968, 204; KOVÁCS, 1969, 106; VIGNAU-WILBERG, 1992, 8; KOVÁCS, 1994, 105; SEIPEL, 2003, No. IV.13. (István FAZEKAS); LUDIKOVÁ, 2009, No. II.2.4. (Zuzana LUDIKOVÁ).

¹⁰ PÁLFFY, 2002, 71–74; FAZEKAS, 2012; FAZEKAS, 2013; see also the chapter by István FAZEKAS in the present volume.

¹¹ Perger, 1994, 17–18; Fazekas, 2012, 51.

¹² Letter from György Bocskay to Tamás Nádasdy, Vienna, 9 June 1557, National Archives of Hungary, Budapest, E 185.

¹³ Cf. Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Vienna, AVA FHKA HKA HFU Rote Nr. 11, Konv. 1564, 234–235; this information was kindly shared by István FAZEKAS.

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those days, two people were generally employed as Hungarian court secretaries; these men occupied positions of influence within the Chancellery. Bocskay's fellow secretaries included, for example, the humanist András Dudith, historians Miklós Istvánffy and Ferenc Forgách, and the future leader of the Chancellery, János Liszthy. As mentioned above, Istvánffy, and János Liszthy's brother Sebestyén, who also served at the Chancellery, were among the authors of the epigrams that accompanied Olahus' printed portrait.

The calligrapher Bocskay was thus commissioned these extraordinarily high-quality letters patent by his first patron in Vienna and his immediate superior at the Chancellery. The close relationship between Bocskay and his patron Olahus explains the appearance of the artist's signature on this document. The miniature painted coat of arms and border decorations occupy all of the marginal space on the left side of the two-page frontispiece. The coat of arms is repeated along the border in the lower left-hand corner of the page. Behind the shield stands a crucifix, the lower upright of which bears Bocskay's signature, written in gold (Fig. 2. [Abb. 2.]). This signature has been interpreted as "15 HGB 60," but it ought to be read as "15 FGB 60," which stands for "15 Fecit Georgius Bocskay 60," meaning "Made by György Bocskay in 1560." Although this charter was issued in 1558, the signature on it suggests that the decoration was completed two years later.

It is important to note that Bocskay used the abbreviation "FGB" as a signature on several occasions in his two writing model books, which were prepared around the same time. The first one was a small-scale manuscript, which Bocskay made for Ferdinand I in 1561–62, and which the Flemish artist Joris Hoefnagel illuminated for Rudolf II a few decades later, sometime before 1596. Folio 99r of this work contains a writing sample dated 1562, which is framed by a decorative scrollwork (*Rollwerk* in German). The calligrapher placed his signature in the center of the lower border of the ornamental frame. In another manuscript Bocskay prepared around that time, a large-scale, oblong-format work he dedicated to Ferdinand I in 1562, the same signatures are hidden within letters: in a writing sample of interlaced *Fraktur* initials (a form of German blackletter), it can be found in the letter "O" (f. 9r), while in another sample of decorated Roman inscriptional capitals it can be found in the letter "I" (f. 10r).

¹⁴ Pálffy, 2002, 72–73; Fazekas, 2012, 50–51; Fazekas, 2013, 105–106, 116–119.

¹⁵ cf. Szántó, 1965, 1, 80–81.

¹⁶ The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Ms. 20., cf. *Prag um 1600*, 1988, No. 600 (Thea Vignau-Wilberg); Hendrix, 1988, 110–117; Hendrix – Vignau-Wilberg, 1992; Vignau-Wilberg, 2017, 82–91.

Osterreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, Cod. ser.n. 2664., cf. Vignau-Wilberg, 1992, 9; Gulyás, 2015, 222; Vignau-Wilberg 2017, 72; Gulyás, 2018, 118–119.

Before discussing the ornamentation on this charter, it is worth looking at the first letters patent granted to Nicolaus Olahus (Fig. 3. [Abb. 3.]). The latter is a single folio manuscript, which lacks any significant calligraphic details and features a different painted decoration. Ferdinand I had issued this charter (a confirmation of nobility and grant of arms) to Olahus and his family ten years earlier, on 23 November, 1548, in Bratislava (Pozsony, Pressburg); it is also stored in the Archive of the Esterházy family at the National Archives of Hungary in Budapest.¹⁸

As Dénes Radocsay and András Kovács have pointed out, 19 the margins of this manuscript are occupied by miniatures that include foliate ornamentation and fourteen separate scenes, most of which are portraits. According to the inscriptions on the portraits along the left border, they depict members of the Jagiellonian and Habsburg dynasties who played important roles in Olahus' career: starting in the upper left-hand corner and moving downward, these illustrations represent Holy Roman Emperor Charles V seated across from King Wladislas II of Hungary and Bohemia, King Louis II of Hungary and Bohemia and his spouse, Mary of Hungary, Holy Roman Emperor and King of Hungary and Bohemia Ferdinand I and his spouse, Anna Jagiellon, Archdukes Maximilian and Ferdinand of the House of Habsburg, and Joanna of Austria. Each of these figures is presented in a niche flanked by columns. The coat of arms granted to Olahus is composed of a shield charged with roses and laurels, with a unicorn in the middle, supported by lions, and surmounted by a crowned helmet also bearing a unicorn. It appears to have been modelled after the coat of arms of Nicolaus Olahus' former patron György Szatmári, the secret chancellor who served as Bishop of Pécs and later Archbishop of Esztergom.²⁰ Olahus' personal coat of arms, a smaller version of this shield surmounted by a miter, is positioned along the upper border decoration beside a figure of Olahus kneeling to pray in front of a crucifix. According to the inscriptions on the other portraits along the upper bar, they represent the other grantees of these letters patent: his brother Máté Oláh and his family; his sister Orsolya Oláh and her family; and his sister Ilona Oláh with her husband Miklós Olasz. In addition, along the upper bar of the border, each family portrait is followed by a depiction of a landscape. These

National Archives of Hungary, Budapest, P 108, Rep. 2–3, Fasc. K, No. 162 (Nyulásziné Straub, 1999², 184–185; Nyulásziné Straub, 2000, No. 151; http://adatbazisokonline.hu/adatbazis/cimereslevel-adatbazis), cf. Radocsay, 1964, 96–101; Jakó, 1968, 203; Kovács, 1969, 101–106; Kovács, 1994, 103–105; Fazekas – Ujváry, 2001, No. 14.2; Seipel (ed.), 2003, No. IV.12. (István Fazekas); Réthelyi – F. Romhányi – Spekner – Végh, 2005, No. VIII-13. (Éva Künstlerné Virág); Ludiková, 2009, No. II.2.3. (Zuzana Ludiková); Mikó, 2009, 126.

¹⁹ Radocsay, 1964, 96–99; Kovács, 1994, 103–105.

²⁰ Kovács, 1994, 106–107; Farbaky, 1999/2000, 267, Note 84; Farbaky, 2002, 80–81; Opponent's review by Péter Farbaky, Farbaky 2013, 344.

miniatures were painted by a skilled but as yet unidentified master, whose poetic landscapes preserved the tradition of the "Danube School" of the first half of the sixteenth century.²¹

Let us now turn to the miniatures of the second letters patent (Fig. 4. [Abb. 4.]). As András Kovács has noted,22 the entire left side of the frontispiece is covered with a decorative border fitted to the shape of the text it accompanies. A separately framed miniature of the granted coat of arms is placed in the upper left-hand corner at the beginning of the text. The nature-themed border decoration is strewn with flora and fauna, including a variety of three-dimensional flowers, fruits, and birds. The full border also features symbolic depictions such as the phoenix arising from the ashes on the left. These symbols are multiplied in the decorations along the lower border, where Nicolaus Olahus himself is portrayed (Fig. 5. [Abb. 5.]). Olahus' personal coat of arms is positioned in the lower left-hand corner, on a crucifix that is surmounted by his miter. Olahus is depicted here kneeling and praying in front of this crucifix. He is wearing choir robes and is holding a crosier, accompanied by his cross and biretta. To the right of this figure are several symbolic elements. The pelican feeding its young with its own blood is a reference to the Holy Church. This bird is seated in a nest in a laurel tree, which is a symbol of eternity. The description of the coat of arms in the text of the charter mentions this laurel ("laurus"), along with the fruits of "bonae litterae" and other pleasures of a peaceful life. Another motif of Olahus' coat of arms, the unicorn, also recurs in the lower border. This fabled animal generally denotes chastity; however, the description of the coat of arms interprets it here as a symbol of valor ("fortitudo"). The thistle refers to Christ's victory over evil. The lily of the valley depicted here in a vase denotes chastity; the flying bee also evokes chastity, as well as diligence and eloquence.

In the literature on this subject, Dénes Radocsay has suggested that this manuscript was painted by an unknown master, who also worked in the style of the aforementioned "Danube School" but was not the artist who prepared Olahus' first letters patent.²³ Zsigmond Jakó has attibuted the miniatures featured in the second letters patent to masters active in Vienna.²⁴ According to András Kovács, the painter of this charter originated from a German-speaking country, or possibly the Netherlands, given that his work reflects the traditions of Renaissance miniature painting

²¹ Radocsay, 1964, 99; Kovács, 1994, 104.

 $^{^{22}}$ Kovács, 1994, 105. All of the observations in this paragraph are based on the work of Kovács.

²³ Radocsay, 1964, 106.

²⁴ Jakó, 1968, 203.

influenced by the style of the Late Gothic period.²⁵ In my dissertation, I suggested that György Bocskay was responsible for both the calligraphy and the border decorations of this manuscript;²⁶ however, in the debate during the defense of my thesis, Árpád Mikó convincingly argued against my view.²⁷ As a result, the painter of this manuscript has yet to be unequivocally identified.

Let us now look at the lettering of this charter. Like other calligraphers, György Bocskay derived his letter forms from printed writing manuals, which enjoyed great popularity at that time. Unlike most of his contemporaries, however, he was not always satisfied with simple copies of existing letters; instead, he preferred to individualize them. Another characteristic that made him superior to others working in the same field was that he was equally at home producing Gothic and humanistic scripts; he would even use these different styles in combination within the same text. This individuality is also on display in these letters patent, which Bocskay produced using letter forms from the printed writing manuals of at least three Italian calligraphers — Ludovico degli Arrighi, Giovanbattista Palatino, and Vespasiano Amphiareo — and one German calligrapher, Johann Neudörffer the Elder.²⁸ The authors listed here were among the most influential writing masters of the age, which demonstrates how widely read and up-to-date Bocskay was as a practitioner of his art. These same writing manuals were also demonstrably the primary sources for Bocskay's own calligraphic writing model books.²⁹

On the left side of the two-page frontispiece (Fig. 4. [Abb. 4.]), the Latin text of Ferdinand I's titulary begins with the word "Ferdinandus". The opening element of the first line is a finely shaped, symmetrical arabesque in black. Such curvilinear ornamentation was a popular motif in the sixteenth century; it was widely disseminated in printed pattern books.³⁰ This is followed by a Neudörffer-style interlaced *Fraktur* (German blackletter) F-initial (*Flechtwerkinitial* in German), in gold with gold and red flourishes³¹. The text of the first line continues in Roman inscriptional capitals (*antiqua*) in red, which Bocskay supplemented with black arabesques. The letters of the second line are Amphiareo-

²⁵ Kovács, 1994, 105–106.

²⁶ Gulyás, 2012, 140.

²⁷ Opponent's review by Árpád Mikó: MIKÓ 2013, 339.

²⁸ For more on the aforementioned masters of calligraphy, see, among others: Johnson, 1950, 24–26, 31–36; Ogg, 1953; Doede, 1958, 37–40, 42–43; Linke – Sauer, 2007.

²⁹ cf. Hendrix, 1992, 34–37.

³⁰ Kühnel, 1949.

³¹ cf. Neudörffer, c.1550, f. 12.

style decorative Roman capitals in the forms of tree trunks,³² written in black, and again adorned with gold arabesques. The third unit of text is composed of Arrighi-style gold blackletters, formed in the shapes of banderoles.³³ The fourth line features another set of Amphiareo-style decorative Roman capitals,³⁴ also executed in gold. In the fifth line, likewise written in gold, Bocskay reverted to the Arrighi manual, using the Italian writing master's decorative interwoven capitals.³⁵ In the last line, again executed in black, Bocskay combined the letter types of the two previous lines, thus creating an individual letter form based on Amphiareo's and Arrighi's decorative capitals.³⁶

This alternation of styles continues on the right side of the frontispiece (Fig. 6. [Abb. 6.]), which features a wide selection of Gothic and humanistic hands supplemented by rich interlinear foliate ornamentation, including, among others, Palatino's round Italian Gothic type (*Lettera Moderna*),³⁷ the same writing master's swashed *Lettera Trattizata* (highly flourished capitals of italic script),³⁸ and Amphiareo's blackletters with zigzagged or dotted lines.³⁹ These styles are ultimately followed by German blackletter, which is then replaced in the final lines by the aforementioned blackletter by Palatino.⁴⁰ From that point until its end, the text is written using this same letter form, with the more important words highlighted in gold Roman inscriptional capitals. In short, Bocskay created a novel decorative effect for this frontispiece by making simultaneous use of multiple letter forms and styles of ornamentation.

In summarizing the calligraphic details which distinguish the second letters patent issued to Nicolaus Olahus, it should be noted that another one of Bocskay's works serves as a companion piece to this charter, namely the letters patent (also a grant of barony) issued to Márk Horváth-Stanchich by Ferdinand I in Vienna in the same year as Olahus'. ⁴¹ The grantee of this latter charter had served in a number of significant military capacities in the Kingdom of Hungary, including captain general of the key border fortress of Szigetvár, and his charter was prepared in a similar booklet format. ⁴² The systems of

³² cf. Amphiareo, 1554, ff. BVIIIv–CIr.

³³ cf. Arrighi (Vicentino), 1523. (Ogg, 1953, 54–55.)

³⁴ cf. Amphiareo, 1554, ff. BVIIv–BVIIIr.

³⁵ cf. Arrighi, 1523 (Ogg, 1953, 52–53.)

³⁶ cf. Amphiareo, 1554, ff. BVIIv–BVIIIr; Arrighi, 1523 (Ogg, 1953, 52–53.)

³⁷ cf. Palatino, 1561, f. DVIIv.

³⁸ cf. Palatino, 1561, f. EIIr.

³⁹ cf. Amphiareo, 1554, ff. BVIr, BVIIr.

⁴⁰ See Note 38.

⁴¹ Vienna, 4 June 1558, Spišský archív v Levoči [City Archive of Levoča], Horváth-Stansith zo Strážok, bez signatúry, cf. GULYÁS, 2016, 109–112.

⁴² Szakály, 1987, 46–50; Varga, 2007, 7–8.

calligraphic decoration on these two manuscripts are almost identical. Even so, the miniatures featured on Olahus' letters patent differ stylistically from those of Horváth-Stanchich: the full border of the latter features a variety of grotesque elements which have to be attributed to another unknown master.

In conclusion, the second letters patent issued to Nicolaus Olahus and his family is an exquisite work of art, which, given the quality of its miniatures and its calligraphic ornamentation, occupies a prominent place in the history of Late Renaissance art in Hungary.

Borbála Gulyás

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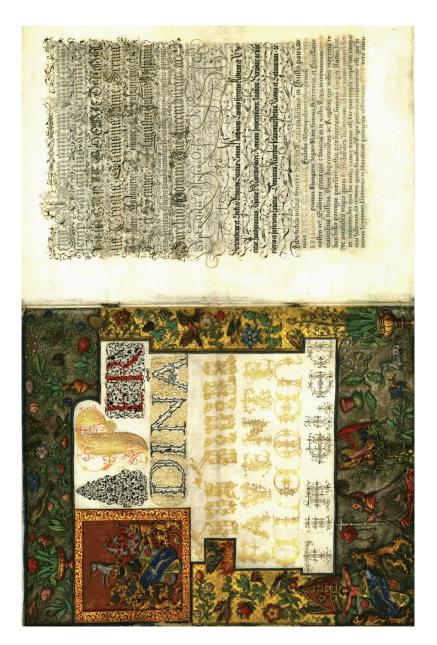


Abb. 1. The two-page frontispiece of the second letters patent issued to Nicolaus Olahus, 1558–1560. Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára / National Archives of Hungary, Budapest, P 108, Rep. 2–3, Fasc. K, No. 163.

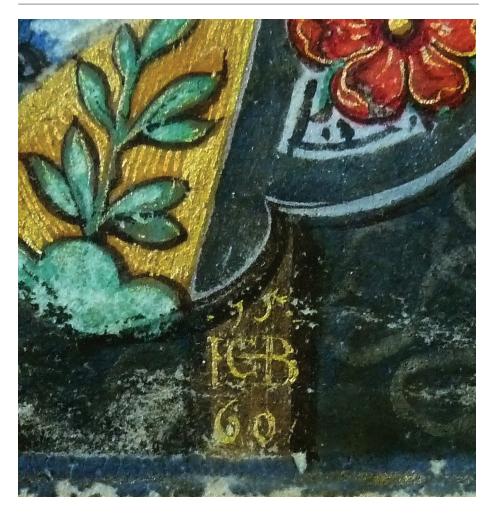


Abb. 2. Signature of György Bocskay ("15 FGB 60") on the second letters patent issued to Nicolaus Olahus, 1560. Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára / National Archives of Hungary, Budapest, P 108, Rep. 2–3, Fasc. K, No. 163.



Abb. 3. The first letters patent issued to Nicolaus Olahus, 1548. Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára / National Archives of Hungary, Budapest, P 108, Rep. 2–3, Fasc. K, No. 162.

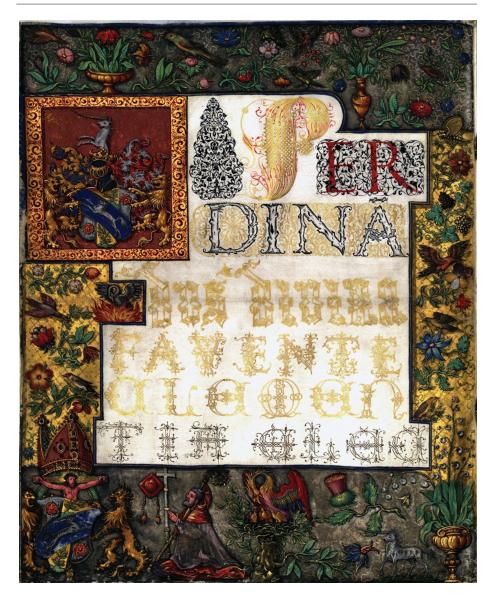


Abb. 4. The left side of the frontispiece of the second letters patent issued to Nicolaus Olahus, 1558–1560. Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára / National Archives of Hungary, Budapest, P 108, Rep. 2–3, Fasc. K, No. 163.



Abb. 5. The lower border of the left side of the frontispiece of the second letters patent issued to Nicolaus Olahus, featuring the portrait of Olahus, 1558–1560. Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára / National Archives of Hungary, Budapest, P 108, Rep. 2–3, Fasc. K, No. 163.

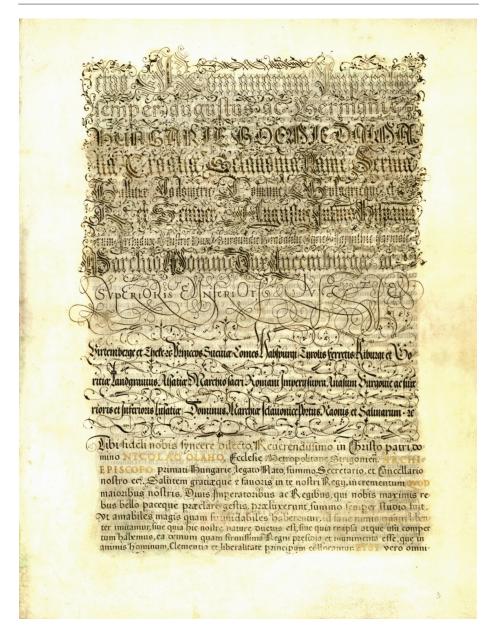


Abb. 6. The right side of the frontispiece of the second letters patent issued to Nicolaus Olahus, 1558–1560. Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára / National Archives of Hungary, Budapest, P 108, Rep. 2–3, Fasc. K, No. 163.