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Andrea Seidler und István Monok

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EDINA ZVARA

Protestant Books of a Hungarian Catholic Aristocrat

Pál Esterházy (1635–1713) (**Fig. 1**) was one of the most influential aristocrats in the Hungarian Kingdom in the Early Modern Age. He was elected Palatine in 1681 and in 1687 emperor Leopold I issued a princely diploma elevating Paul to the position of Prince of the Holy Roman Empire. Esterházy was raised in a deeply religious family and studied at Jesuit institutions. He built churches and altars, wrote and compiled books in addition to financing their publication. When studying his library¹, one cannot help but notice that there is a great number of protestant books and of books from formerly protestant owners in the collection.² Going through the authors, it is striking how many Lutherans there are among them (be it any of the branches of Lutheranism) as well as Filippist authors. Luther's books are present in the collection in great numbers (about 150 books) and publications by Melanchthon are also well represented (about 60 books). These numbers are even more striking considering the size of the prince's library which most probably included about 2500 volumes.³

Questions as to why there were so many protestant books in the Esterházy library and from where these books originated are valid questions to raise. To answer these questions one must be aware of the fact that the *Bibliotheca Esterháziana* was not only collected by Pál Esterházy. Several members of the family were bibliophiles and collectors themselves. Besides Pál Esterházy, we have owner's marks by his father Miklós Esterházy

1 The research was supported by project nr. NKFHI OTKA K 116154. See István Monok, Edina Zvara: Esterházy Pál könyvtára és olvasmányai, in: Pál Ács (Ed.): A műkedvelő mecénás. Egy 17. századi arisztokrata-életpálya a politika és a művészet határvilágkében, Budapest 2015, p. 199–218; István Monok, Edina Zvara: Esterhasiana Biblioteca, Budapest 2020.

2 István Monok: A művelt arisztokrata. A magyarországi főnemesség olvasmányai a XVI–XVII. században, Budapest 2012 (Kulturális örökség), p. 33–34, p. 131–133.

3 This is especially noteworthy since the occurrence of Luther's and Melanchthon's books went in the opposite direction in the second half of the 17th century. This shows that these books may have been inherited or come through a 'Büchervisitatio'. See István Monok: Luther és Melanchthon műveinek előfordulási gyakorisága a kora újkori könyvjegyzékeken, in: Ildikó Horn, Éva Lauter, Gábor Várkonyi, István Hiller, Zsófia Szirtes, Zsuzsanna Balogh, Katalin Pásztor, Máté Tamás (Eds.): Művészet és mesterség. Tisztelgő kötet R. Várkonyi Ágnes emlékére, Budapest 2015, p. 115–132.

(1582–1645), his father's brother Dániel (1585–1654)⁴, his own brothers István (1616–1641) and László (1626–1652) as well as his son László Ignác (1662–1689). Among the bibliophile Esterházys one could list Pál's grandfather Ferenc Esterházy (1533–1604) and his uncle Tamás (born in 1570 – died after 1615) although they belonged to the Lutheran branch of the family.⁵

Miklós Esterházy (1582–1645) (Fig. 2)

Miklós Esterházy was born in a protestant family and brought his love of culture and books from home. His father, Ferenc Esterházy was a nobleman but not an aristocrat. As a patron Ferenc Esterházy financed the publication of a protestant book of sermons.⁶ Miklós Esterházy's mother, Zsófia Illésházy (1547–1599) was from a family that was one of the most ardent supporters of Lutheranism in Hungary along with the Thurzó family. It is worth noting that Miklós stayed in the court of his uncle István Illésházy (1541–1609) for years. Forward the end of his life, István Illésházy became palatine (from 1608 to 1609).⁷

Palatine Miklós Esterházy was in connection with the Thurzó family in several respects. His son István married a woman from the Thurzó family (see more on him later). His second wife, Krisztina Nyáry (1604–1640), was first married to Imre Thurzó (1598–1621) and she may have taken a

⁴ Judit Vásárhelyi: A győri Székesegyházi Könyvtár possessorai. IV. Egyéb, sem Erdélyhez, sem Győrhöz nem kapcsolható hazai személyiségek könyvei, Magyar Könyvszemle 96/4 (1980), p. 329.

⁵ Scholarship states that Palatine Miklós Esterházy's sister, Zsófia (1578–1620) had two books in which her owner's marks can be seen: "Ex libris Comitissae Sophiae Ludoviciae Amaliae Wilhelminae Crescentiae Esterházy de Galántha". One of these books, the Isocrates book, can be found today in the National Széchényi Library while the Josephus Flavius volume is in Martin, Slovakia. When examining the possessor marks closely, it is clear that the owner of these two books was a member of the family, Countess Zsófia Esterházy (1742–1778) who lived in the 18th century. The owner could not have been Miklós's sister because neither their father (Ferenc Esterházy), nor her husband (Márton Révay) was a count, therefore Zsófia could not hold the title of countess. Let me acknowledge here the help I have received in this regard from István Monok, Helena Saktorová and Farkas Gábor Kiss.

⁶ Péter Bornemisza: Predikatioc egész esztendo altal minden vasarnapra rendeltetet euangeliombol. Detrekoebe és Rabokon, 1584 (RMNy 541). The dedication of the book explains that the publication costs were partly borne by Ferenc Esterházy.

⁷ About his library see Péter Ötvös: Egy főúri könyvtár 1772-ből: Illésházy István, in: István János Bálint (Ed.): Adalékok a 16.–20. századi magyar művelődés történetéhez, Budapest 1987, p. 129–142; Monok: A művelt aristokrata (see fn. 2), p. 180–185.

few books with her from her first husband's library to the library of Miklós Esterházy. This hypothesis may be supported by the fact that Thurzó in part inherited his father's library in 1616⁸. Unfortunately, very little evidence has been unearthed which would prove that Thurzó's widow would have taken a few books with her to her new husband's house.⁹ Three books, in fact, are in connection with Imre Thurzó in the Esterházy library: two volumes of his speeches as a rector in Wittenberg¹⁰ and one book by Friedrich Balduin (1575–1627) dedicated to him.¹¹

Going back to Miklós Esterházy, the palatine established his collection in Lakompak (Lackenbach, Austria) which he also enriched with books he had bought as a protestant. Opening his letter to his future brother-in-law Ferenc Nádasdy III (1623–1671), from 1642¹², we find citations, apart from the Church fathers, from Andreas Musculus, Jacobus Andreae as well as from the Principles of the *Confessio Augustana* and books by Luther in particular.¹³ Miklós Esterházy was well versed in theology which was made possible by an excellent library. (Most of the authors he quoted were also present in the booklist of Pál Esterházy.)¹⁴

8 Monok: A művelt arisztokrata (see fn. 2), p. 167.

9 Stefan Körner: Die Bibliotheka Esterháziana in Eisenstadt und Forchtenstein, in: Esterházy Privatstiftung (Ed.): Blaues Blut und Druckerschwärze. Aristokratische Büchersammlungen von 1500 bis 1700, Internationale Wanderausstellung, Zagreb, Martin, Bratislava, Budapest, Burg Forchtenstein, Herbst 2005 bis Herbst 2007, Eisenstadt 2005, p. 115; Helena Saktorová: Die Bibliothek des Palatins Georg Graf Thurzó und die Familienbibliothek Illésházy, in: Blaues Blut, p. 165.

10 Imre Thurzó: Rectoratus academicus, id est, orationes, quas Comes Emericus Thurzo de Arwa; etc. Rector hactenus Academiae Wittebergensis etc. officii causa publice habuit. Wittebergae 1616. 1. Eisenstadt, Esterházy-library, 15,410 H/7; 2. Poss.: Sum ex libris Hermanni Bernhardi Feulner. Wittenberg 1617. Superelexibris: H. B. F. C. 1617. Budapest, Országos Széchényi Könyvtár (National Széchényi Library), RMK III. 1185.

11 Friedrich Balduin: Phosphorus veri catholicismi. Devia papatus, et viam regiam ad ecclesiam vere catholicam et apostolicam fideliter monstrans, facemque praelucens legentibus Hodegum Petri Pazmanni olim jesuitae, nunc cardinalis ecclesiae romano-papisticae ... Wittenberg 1626. – The first owners of this book were Protestant ministers and the books did not go through the Thurzó line when they were incorporated by the Esterházy's in their library. Eisenstadt, Esterházy-library, Zimmer I., 15,640 K/8.

12 Miklós Esterházy: Értekező levél G. Nádasdi Ferenchez, Nagyhöflány, 1. November 1642, in: Ferenc Toldy (Ed.): Galantai gróf Esterházy Miklós munkái: eredeti kéziratok és kiadások után a szerző életrajzával, Pest 1852 (ND Budapest 2012), p. 6–190..

13 István Bitskey: Esterházy Miklós, a hitvitázó nádor, in: István Bitskey: Eszmék, művek, hagyományok, Debrecen 1996, p. 207.

14 A book list was drawn up of Pál Esterházy's books in 1756 long after his death in 1713 when the family handed over his books to the Franciscans in Eisenstadt as was requested by Pál Esterházy in his last will. See Monok, Zvara: Esterhasiana Biblioteca (see fn. 1).

Tamás Esterházy (born in 1570 – died after 1615)

When studying the protestant books in the Esterházy library, Tamás Esterházy seems to be a key figure. Unfortunately, very little is known of his life except for a few key facts. He enrolled at the University of Wittenberg on October 3rd, 1590 and became a member of the Hungarian coetus a few days earlier, on September 29th.¹⁵ In 1592, unknown reasons led to his expulsion from university, but later he was re-admitted after he repented.¹⁶ His *album amicorum*¹⁷ survived with poems and greetings by his fellow students and professors, among them lines by Aegidius Hunnius (1550–1603), the notorious representative of orthodox Lutheranism.¹⁸ Tamás Esterházy translated one of Hunnius' pamphlets into Hungarian with István Kürti († 1612?)¹⁹ that was published with the typography of Johannes Manlius in 1602.²⁰ According to church historian Arnold Ipolyi, they both translated this piece written by the theologian of Wittenberg because they had heard that Miklós Esterházy decided to re-convert to the Catholic faith and they intended to deter him or else wanted to take revenge on Miklós Esterházy and make up for his conversion.²¹ The two translators, however, did not reach their goal since Miklós Esterházy, who converted at the end of the 1590s, remained a devoted member of the Roman Catholic church all through his life.

It is important to point out that the publication costs of this translation were borne by the above mentioned relative, István Illésházy, a great patron of the Lutheran Church and that it was dedicated to Katalin Pálffy, Illésházy's

15 László Szögi: Magyarországi diákok németországi egyetemeken és akadémiacon: 1526–1788, ELTE Levéltára, Budapest 2011, p. 301, nr. 3703.

16 András Szabó: Coetus ungaricus: A wittenbergi magyar diáktársaság: 1555–1613, Budapest, Balassi, MTA BTK ITI Reneszánsz Osztály, 2017, p. 138. It may not be by chance that this took place when Hunnius surveyed the religious orientation of the students. Those who did not sign the *Formula Concordiae*, 18 Hungarian students among them, were excluded from university.

17 Today this can be found in the Croatian National and University Library as part of Miklós Zrínyi's (1620–1664) library. See Tibor Klaniczay (Ed.): A Bibliotheca Zriniana története és állománya, written and compiled by Gábor Hausner, Tibor Klaniczay, Sándor Iván Kovács, István Monok, Géza Orlovszky, Budapest 1991, p. 282, nr. 309.

18 Szabó: Coetus ungaricus ... (see fn. 16), p. 67.

19 Aegidius Hunnius: *Articulus de ecclesia vera et hujus capite Christo, pontificiis opposita*, Frankfurt a.M. 1596.

20 Aegidius Hunnius: *Az igaz anyaszentegyhásról és ennek fejéről az Krisztusról, ismeg az római anyaszentegyhásról és ennek fejéről, az római pápáról való artikulus*, translated by Tamás Esterházy and István Kürti, Sárvár, Manlius, 1602 (RMNy 888).

21 Arnold Ipolyi: Bedegi Nyáry Krisztina: 1604–1641, Budapest 1887, p. 67.

wife. 13 books are in connection with Hunnius in the Esterházy Collection and since several of these are colligations so the number of pieces written by Hunnius is 20.²² All these may have been Tamás Esterházy's but neither the original pieces nor the translations survived in the Esterházy library. One volume, however, can be linked to Tamás Esterházy personally and to the Esterházy library: one of the laudatory poems to Leonhardus Pannonius Mokoschinus' piece (*Historiarum Veteris Testamenti heroico carmine redditarum*, Wittenberg, 1599)²³ was written by Tamás Esterházy while the foreword was penned by Aegidius Hunnius, professor in Wittenberg.

István Esterházy (1616–1641) (Fig. 3)

It is well known that, in his childhood, there were a lot of problems with Miklós Esterházy's son, István Esterházy, whose mother was Orsolya Dersffy (1583–1619). Many thought he was mentally disabled.²⁴ As an adult, however, he outgrew of this condition and accompanied his father regularly on his official visits. He should be mentioned because the family may have acquired protestant books through his wife, Erzsébet Thurzó (1621–1642).

István Esterházy may well have been a serious collector. Although the size of his book collection cannot even be estimated, several of his books are known which contain his own owner's marks while in two of his books the following note can be read: "Inscriptus Catalogo Librorum Comitis Stephani Eszterhaz". It means that he employed a librarian and his books were catalogued. He was attached to his books which is indicated by his monogram *C. S. E.* on the front board of the binding of his Jeremias Drexel volume. An important fact regarding his library comes from a letter his brother, László Esterházy wrote to his widow, Erzsébet Thurzó, in which he asked for two books from his deceased brother's library: a book by Calepinus and another one by Miklós Istvánffy.²⁵

22 Monok, Zvara: Esterhasiana Biblioteca (see fn. 1).

23 *Historiarum Veteris Testamenti heroico carmine redditarum. Libri: Genesis. Exodus. Numerorum. Iosuae. Iudicum. Ruth. Samuelis Duo. Regum Duo ...*, translated by Leonhardus Mokoschinus Pannonius and Aegidius Hunnius, Wittenberg 1599 (RMK III. 938 (3)).

24 Katalin Péter: Esterházy Miklós. Budapest 1985, p. 24–26; Judit Fejes: Az Esterházyak házassági politikája 1645 után, in: Katalin Péter (Ed.): Gyermek a kora újkori Magyarországon: "adott Isten hozzánk való szeretetéből ... egy kis fraucimmericskét nekünk", Budapest 1996, p. 120–123.

25 László Esterházy to Erzsébet Thurzó, Wien, November 1643. Budapest, Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára, Az Esterházy család hercegi ágának levéltára, P 123, 13. cs., László Esterházy to Erzsébet Thurzó. (Nr. 4695.) Let me thank Noémi Viskolcz for the data.

If one were to briefly sum up his library, similarly to his father's book collection in Lakompak one would use the term "of a Jesuit design".²⁶ A recently unearthed source, however, proves that István Esterházy did not only read Aristotle, Jeremias Drexel, the sermons of the Jesuit György Káldi or historians such as Antonio Bonfini or Miklós Istvánffy. In a regulation dated to 1636, István Esterházy was allowed to read prohibited books.²⁷ One of the books he wanted to read was the *Commentarius ad edictum Henrici Secundi Regis Galliarum, contra parvas datas et abusus curiae Romanae* [...] (Basel, 1552)²⁸ by the Huguenot Charles Dumoulin (1500–1560). The French lawyer and legal historian with a Humanist education was a follower of Philipp Melanchthon and the friend and later opponent of Jean Calvin. This book is included in the book list of 1756²⁹ and a copy of it still exists (which may have been István Esterházy's although there is no owner's mark in it).³⁰

His father, Miklós Esterházy, was famous for one of his "favourite pastimes", conversing during meals when the invited guests, often protestants, discussed theological matters. Polemics such as these were held in the family residence in Kismarton (Eisenstadt, Austria) in 1634. The two opponents were István Esterházy and a "Protestant scholar, dr. Ádám Lassius".³¹ This indicates how well educated the first-born son of the palatine was in theological matters which, besides having received an excellent education from the Jesuits, he could only have acquired through using a well equipped and rich library, such as the one established by his father.

Three of Miklós Esterházy's sons held the title of Lord-Lieutenant of Pápa: István from 1639, László from 1648 and Pál from 1655.³² The town of Pápa, located in Transdanubia North of Lake Balaton is especially important for the present study since all the protestant ministers whose books can be found in the Esterházy Library were directly or indirectly

26 Monok: A művelt arisztokrata (see fn. 2), p. 136.

27 1636. Dispensatio Nuncii Apostolici pro legendis libris prohibitis Stephano Eszterházy data. Budapest, MNL OL, P 108, Rep. 1., Fasc. A. Nr. 4. Let me thank Noémi Viskolcz for the data.

28 Jean-Louis Thireau: Charles Dumoulin (1500–1566). Etude sur les sources, la méthode, les idées politiques et économiques d'un juriste de la Renaissance, Genève 1980.

29 Item (936), in the 'Juridici' section and not in 'Haeretici'.

30 Eisenstadt, Esterházy-library, III-J-5.

31 Ipolyi: Bedegi Nyáry Krisztina (see fn. 21); László Szelestei Nagy: "János-pohár": Hitvita vagy asztali beszélgetés?: Esterházy Miklós nádor asztalánál, 1627. In: Emil Hargittay (Ed.): Pázmany Péter és kora. PPKE BTK, Piliscsaba 2001. p. 355.

32 Tibor Martí: Gróf Esterházy László (1626–1652): Fejezetek egy arisztokrata család történetéhez, PhD thesis, Budapest 2013, here: Chapter 5: A major milestone in an independent career: holding the title of Lord-Lieutenant of Pápa, p. 153–184.

connected to this important town in Transdanubia. These ministers were namely three members of the Beythe family, István (1532–1612) and his two sons András (1564–1599) and Imre († 1624), as well as János Kanzsai Pálfi (1582–1641) and Pál Ceglédi Szabó († 1649). We have more than 80 books in which notes by these important protestant ministers can be found.³³ Only these five ministers should be mentioned here, although there had been more of them; the numbers of books is no direct key to the amount of books belonging to each of them.

How their books found their way to the library of the Catholic Esterházy is unknown. Since there is no evidence, all we have are a few hypotheses. One of the Esterházy (most probably Pál) may have collected these books on one of his *Büchervisitatio* he had executed as landlord of Pápa³⁴.

Miklós Oláh (1493–1568)

Out of the extended family several members can be assumed to have enriched the *Bibliotheca Esterházyana* with protestant books, most notably Miklós Oláh, Archbishop of Esztergom (see Fig. 4). The majority of the scholarly humanist's book collection was scattered after his death but an important number, yet again thanks to the Esterházy, survived. His relationship with the Esterházy and the way his books were acquired by them is well known.³⁵ Out of the 155 volumes³⁶ we have registered almost 70 that were included in the famous *Bibliotheca Esterházyana*. Out of these, 30 books can be linked to protestant, mainly Lutheran and Filippist authors. Almost all of the books are fundamental books of Humanist philology and Biblical commentaries.

33 Edina Zvara: Nyugat-dunántúli protestáns lelkészek könyvei a késő humanizmus korában, Budapest 2013, p. 343, 361, 426. This book includes data concerning the locations where Esterházy books could be held, namely Eisenstadt and Moscow. Thanks to an international agreement, the majority of the prince's library were, however, returned to Eisenstadt since then.

34 At the beginning of the 1660s, Pál Esterházy turned against the protestants in Pápa. This is well documented. Confiscating the books of the ministers may have been proceeded as one of these measures. See Gábor Hausner: A Sz. Patricius Purgatoriumjáról való historia kiadásának történetéhez, Magyar Könyvszemle 117 (2001), p. 332–340.

35 László Szelestei Nagy: Oláh Miklós könyvtáráról, in: Huba Mózes (Ed.): Program és mítosz között: 500 éve született Oláh Miklós: az 1993. jan. 9–10-i kolozsvári megemlékezés anyagából, Budapest 1993, p. 51–69; Monok, Zvara: Esterházy Pál könyvtára (see fn. 1), p. 203–205.

36 Klára Boross, István Monok, Edina Zvara: Oláh Miklós és körének könyvei (forthcoming 2020).

As we can see, the protestant books in the collection of Pál Esterházy may have arrived from different sources turning his library into a rich and diverse book collection. If one would like to answer the question from where the protestant volumes in the Esterházy Library in Kismarton came, one could answer in part, that he inherited them from his father Miklós Esterházy,³⁷ his uncle, Tamás Esterházy as well as from the Thurzós in addition to those confiscated at his estate in Pápa.

It is also an important question whether the prince palatine read and used these books at all. Ferenc Nádasdy III (1623–1671), a relative highly esteemed by Pál and his father, Miklós, might have been a role model for him in this regard. Nádasdy “not only inherited but collected and read Protestant literature most probably so he would be well read in Protestant matters.”³⁸ In Nádasdy’s case this is understandable. He was a landlord who converted to Catholicism in 1643 but followed the lives of the protestants living on his estate with attention. Being broad-minded he was interested in the religious matters of the country.³⁹ From this point of view Pál Esterházy was in a different situation since he was born a Catholic. It is unlikely that he would have read protestant books on a regular basis (which may have been the case with his father)⁴⁰ neither would the Franciscans in Kismarton have done so to whom he left his “beautiful library collected with no small effort” in his last will.⁴¹ The prince palatine in fact kept this rich book collection shut away⁴² in the same way as Ádám Batthyány I (1609–1659) who ordered to take his father’s and his grandfather’s books as well as those of the school and the ministers’ book collection to the Franciscan cloister in

³⁷ A part of Miklós Oláh’s books found their way into the Esterházy library through Miklós Esterházy. See Monok, Zvara: Esterházy Pál könyvtára (see fn. 1), p. 203–204.

³⁸ Noémi Viskolcz: A mecenatúra színterei a főúri udvarban: Nádasdy Ferenc könyvtára, Szeged–Budapest 2013, p. 252.

³⁹ This phenomenon can be considered widespread among Hungarian aristocrats. As landlords they had to be present at the meetings of ministers of different faiths than theirs. If they wanted to understand what the religious debates were about, they had to be informed about the issues in question. See Monok: A művelt arisztokrata (see fn. 2), p. 175.

⁴⁰ Considering the fact that Pál received the papal’s *dispensatio* in 1679, we get a slightly different impression: *Facultas haereticos Libros legendi et servandi Principi Paulo Eszterhaza ad quinquennium indulta*. Budapest, MOL OL, P 108, Rep. 1. Fasc. A. No. 11.

⁴¹ Prince and Palatine Pál Esterházy’s documents dated March 2nd, 1695 and December 8, 1696 establishing *fideicommissum familiae* in Hungarian translation, Chapter XIII., Budapest MNL OL, P 113 IV B 19.

⁴² He also wrote that by doing this he allowed “all the people who travelled there to use these books.” (see fn. 41).

Németújvár (Güssing, Austria).⁴³ This, on the other hand, helped the collections survive and allowed us to open these books today.

The fact that Pál Esterházy preserved the protestant books indicates an important quality he had: he meant to keep the objects he inherited. He was a passionate collector and was keen on keeping the family fortune together. The fact that the books were protestant was of secondary importance to him. What mattered was the fact that books were valuable and added to his wealth.

⁴³ About his library see András Koltai: Adam Batthyány und seine Bibliothek, Eisenstadt 2002.



Fig. 1: Portrait of Pál Esterházy, in: Trophaeum Nobilissimae ac antiquissimae Domus Estoriana in tres divisum partes, Vienna 1700. Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden: Hist. Hung. 81, pl. 162



Fig. 2: Portrait of Miklós Esterházy, in: Elias Widemann: *Icones Illustrium Heroum Hungariae*, Vienna 1652. Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek: A: 36.9 Geom. 2°



Fig. 3: Portrait of István Esterházy, in: Elias Widemann: *Icones Illustrum Heroum Hungariae*, Vienna 1652. Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek: A: 36.9 Geom. 2°

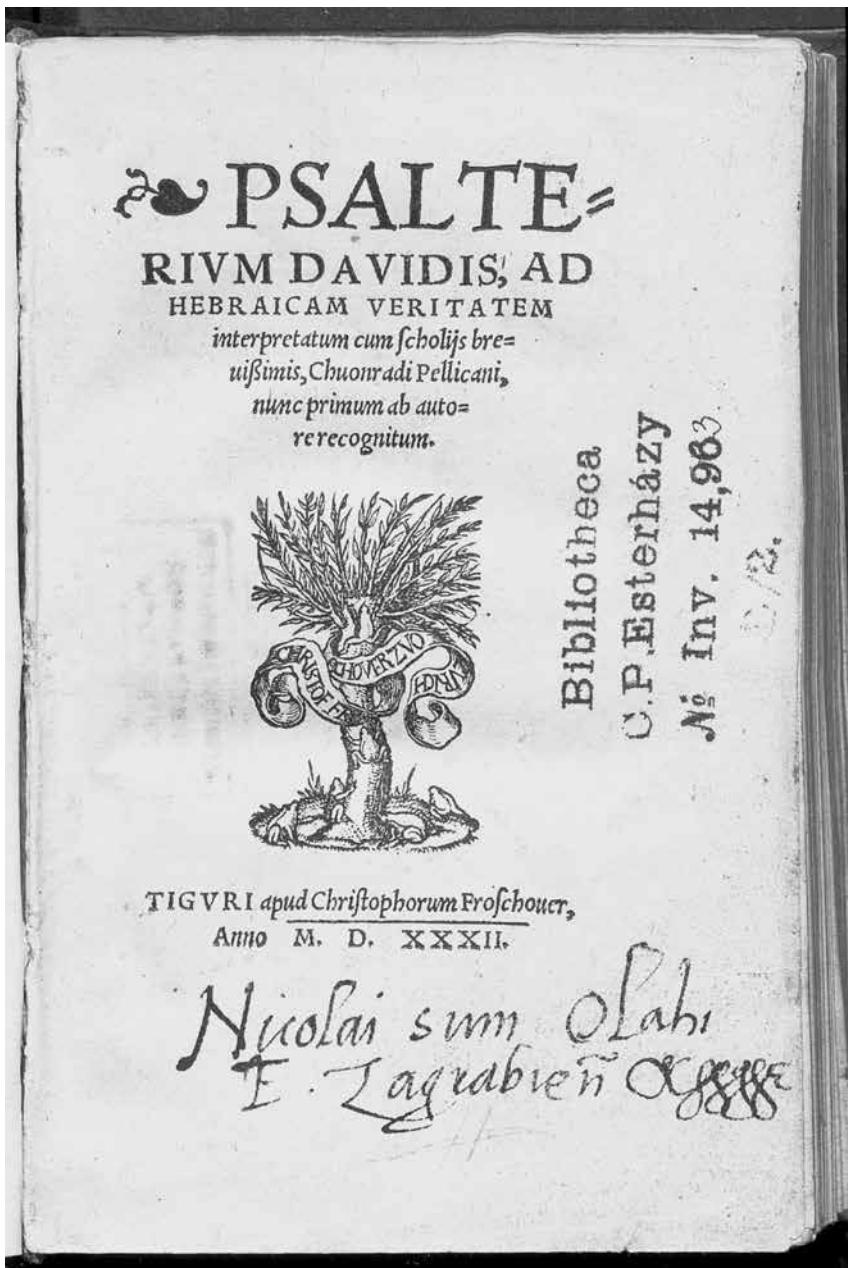


Fig. 4: Inscription of possessor on the title-page: Nicolai sum Olabi E(piscopi) Zagrabiensis. Eisenstadt, Esterházy Palace

Kurzvitens der Autorinnen und Autoren

Prof. Dr. FRÉDÉRIC BARBIER

(geb. 1952), Studium der Archivwissenschaften und der Paläographie an der École nationale des chartes (1972–1976), Abschluss 1976, Doktor der Geschichte (Paris I, 1980), Doktor der Literatur- und Humanwissenschaften (Paris IV, 1987). Bibliotheksdirektor in Valenciennes (1976–1982), danach wissenschaftlicher Forscher am CNRS / École normale supérieure (1982–2018), Professor für Buchgeschichte an der École pratique des Hautes Études (1993–2018), Professor für Buchgeschichte an der ENSSIB (Lyon II, 2000–2004), Mitglied des Instituts für Höhere Studien der Universität Straßburg (2013–2014). Ehrendoktor der Universitäten Eger und Szeged.

Kontakt: frederic.barbier52@wanadoo.fr

Prof. Dr. ZOLTÁN CSEPREGI

(geb. 1964) ist ordentlicher Professor für Kirchengeschichte an der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Theologischen Universität Budapest. Gegenwärtige Mitgliedschaften: Ungarische Rektorenkonferenz; wissenschaftlicher Beirat vom Interdisziplinären Zentrum für Pietismusforschung in Halle; Redaktion von den Zeitschriften *Egyháztörténeti Szemle* [Kirchengeschichtliche Rundschau] und *Hungarian Historical Review*. Laufende Forschungs- und Editionsprojekte: Pfarrerbuch der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche in Ungarn (16.–18. Jh.); Martin Luthers ausgewählte Werke (in ungarischer Übersetzung, bisher sieben Bände); Edition: Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Generaliumque Decreta: die Bekenntnisse und Synodalakten des Reformationsjahrhunderts aus Ungarn. Letztes Buch: Die Hungarica-Sammlung der Franckeschen Stiftungen zu Halle. Teil 2: Handschriften. Budapest 2015.

Kontakt: zoltan.csepregi@lutheran.hu

Prof. Dr. DETLEF HABERLAND

2000 Habilitation an der Universität zu Köln, nachfolgend Lehre in Köln bis WS 2006/7. 2007–2018 Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter am Bundesinstitut für Kultur und Geschichte der Deutschen im östlichen Europa (BKGE, Oldenburg). WS 2009/10. SS 2018 Lehre als apl. Prof. an der Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg. 2013–2018 Vorsitzender der Oldenburgischen Bibliotheksgesellschaft, ab 2017 Präsident des Mitteleuropäischen Germanistenverbandes.

Zahlreiche Publikationen zu Reiseliteratur und -geschichte, Buch- und Druckgeschichte (vornehmlich des östlichen Europas), zu Engelbert Kaempfer und anderen Reisenden, zu Barock, Romantik, Realismus, 1950er Jahren und zur Literatur im östlichen Europa.

Kontakt: detlef.haberland@bkge.uni-oldenburg.de

MARTIN KRICKL

(geb. 1981), Studium der Germanistik und Italianistik an der Universität Wien. 2012–2018 Mitarbeiter der Sammlung von Handschriften und Alten Drucken der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek im Projekt *Austrian Books Online*. Seit August 2018 wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter / Datalibrarian im Projekt *Travelogues – Perceptions of the Other 1500–1876*. Herausgeber der Digitalen Katalogedition „Blotius Online“ der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek.

Kontakt: martin.krickl@onb.ac.at

Dr. URS B. LEU

(geb. 1961 in Zürich), Studium der Geschichte, Kirchengeschichte und Mittellatein an den Universitäten Zürich, Frankfurt a. M. und Heidelberg. Er ist Leiter der Abteilung Alte Drucke und Rara der Zentralbibliothek Zürich, Dozent für Buchgeschichte an der Universität Zürich und Verfasser verschiedener Publikationen zur frühneuzeitlichen Buch-, Kirchen- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte. 2010 war er Stipendiat der Princeton University Library (USA).

Kontakt: urs.leu@zb.uzh.ch

Prof. Dr. ISTVÁN MONOK, DSc

Universitätsprofessor für Kulturgeschichte an der Universität Szeged, Doktor der Ungarischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Generaldirektor der Bibliothek und des Informationszentrums der Ungarischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Zahlreiche Publikationen und Schriftenreihen zur Buchgeschichte im Karpatenbecken mit Schwerpunkt auf Bibliotheken als Orte des Sammelns und Lesergeschichte. Editor-in-chief der Zeitschrift *Magyar Könyvszemle*.

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Kontakt: <http://monokistvan.hu>

Univ.-Prof. Dr. KARL W. SCHWARZ

(geb. 1952 in Villach/Kärnten), Studium der evangelischen Theologie in Wien, Genf und Zürich, und Ergänzungsstudien in Osteuropäischer Geschichte sowie Rechtsgeschichte und Religionsrecht in Wien. Nach Abschluss des Studiums 1975 Assistent, nach Promotion, Habilitation und Ordination zum geistlichen Amt Tätigkeit als Dozent und Professor für Religions- und Schulrecht. Gastprofessuren in Bratislava, Budapest, Leipzig, Klagenfurt. 1997–2001 Generalsekretär, 2015–2019 Vorsitzender des Südosteuropäischen Fakultätentages für Evangelische Theologie (SOMEF). 1998–2018 im Hauptberuf Ministerialrat im Kultusamt, zuständig für Kirchen und Religionsgemeinschaften in Österreich. Seit 2000 (ehrenamtlicher) Direktor des Instituts für Kirchengeschichte des Donau- und Karpatenraumes an der Evangelisch-theologischen Fakultät der Comenius-Universität in Pressburg/Bratislava. Wissenschaftlicher Forschungs- und Arbeitsschwerpunkt: Protestantismusgeschichte Österreichs und Südostmitteleuropas sowie Religionsrecht in Österreich und in den Nachbarstaaten.

Kontakt: karl.schwarz@univie.ac.at

a. o. Univ.-Prof. Dr. ANDREA SEIDLER

außerordentliche Universitätsprofessorin für Ungarische Literaturwissenschaft am EVSL/Abteilung für Finno-Ugristik der Universität Wien, Präsidentin der International Association for Hungarian Studies. Zahlreiche Publikationen zur Mediengeschichte in der Habsburger Monarchie mit Schwerpunkt 18. Jahrhundert. Herausgeberin mehrerer Schriftenreihen aus dem Bereich der Kulturwissenschaften und Hungarologie. Editor-in-chief der Kultur- und Literaturwissenschaftlichen Zeitschrift *Hungarian Studies*. Vortragsschwerpunkte: Ungarische Literaturgeschichte und ungarische Sprache; Mehrsprachigkeit; Historische Medienforschung; Reise als Narrativ; Gelehrter Briefwechsel; Aufklärungsforschung; Digitalisierung und Editionswissenschaft; literarische Nachlässe (Karl Gottlieb Windisch literarische Übersetzung (Theorie und Praxis).

Kontakt: <https://andreaseidler.wordpress.com>

PhDr. RICHARD ŠÍPEK, Ph.D.

(geb. 1978), befasst sich seit Langem mit der Bibliotheksgeschichte, Buchkultur und Geschichte des Lesens. Er arbeitet in der Abteilung Handschriften und Frühe Drucke der Bibliothek des Tschechischen Nationalmuseums und unterrichtet am Institut für Informations- und Bibliothekswissenschaften der Karls-Universität Prag.

Kontakt: richard_sipek@nm.cz

PD Dr. ATTILA VERÓK

(geb. 1975), lehrstuhlleitender habilitierter Universitätsdozent. Studium an der Universität Szeged (Geschichte, Ungarische Sprache und Literatur, Bibliotheksessen, Ungarische Frühgeschichte). PhD-Grad (2008) in der Doktorschule für Literaturgeschichte an der Universität Szeged (Thema: Leben und Werk von Martin Schmeizel [1679–1747] aus Kronstadt). Habilitation (2018) in der Doktorschule für Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaften an der Universität Debrecen (Thema: Hallesch-siebenbürgische Kulturkontakte im 17.–18. Jahrhundert). Seit 2014 Leiter des Lehrstuhls für Kulturelles Erbe und Kulturgeschichte an der Károly-Eszterházy-Universität Eger/Erlau. Forschungsschwerpunkte: Kultur-, Bibliotheks-, Buch- und Lesegeschichte im Ungarn und Siebenbürgen der frühen Neuzeit; Buchkultur der Siebenbürger Sachsen (16.–18. Jh.); Geschichte der Peregrination des Donau-Karpatenraumes (16.–18. Jh.); Typographie- und Buchgeschichte von Eger/Erlau (16.–19. Jh.).

Kontakt: verok.attila@uni-eszterhazy.hu

a. o. Univ.-Prof. (i. R.) Dr. KARL VOCELKA

Studium, Promotion und Habilitation für das Fach Österreichische Geschichte an der Universität Wien. Langjähriger Institutsvorstand des Instituts für Geschichte und vielfacher wissenschaftlicher Ausstellungsleiter und Vortragender in vielen amerikanischen Programmen. Kurator vieler Ausstellungen, zuletzt *Maria Theresia* in Schlosshof und Niederweiden, sowie *Brennen für den Glauben* im Wien Museum. Zahlreiche Veröffentlichungen zu den Habsburgern und zur österreichischen Geschichte.

Kontakt: karl.vocelka@univie.ac.at

PD Dr. EDINA ZVARA

Universitätsdozentin an der Universität Szeged. Das Hochschulstudium absolvierte sie an der Universität Szeged in den Fächern Bibliothekswissenschaft, Ungarische Sprache und Literatur und Geschichtswissenschaft. Den Doktortitel erwarb sie im Jahre 2007 ebenda im Rahmen des Programms für Alte Ungarische Literatur an der Doktorschule für Literaturwissenschaft (Universität Szeged). Forschungsschwerpunkt: Rekonstruktion alter Buchbestände im Karpatenbecken (Familie Esterházy; Franziskanerbibliothek in Eisenstadt, Güssing, Kaplau, Skalicza). Vereinsmitglied: Arbeitskomitee für Bibliotheksgeschichte und Bibliographie der Ungarischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Mitglied seit 2000, seit Sekretärin 2018; Gesellschaft für die Ungarische Geschichte, Mitglied seit 2010; Internationale Gesellschaft für Hungarologie (bis 2001 Internationale Ungarische Gesellschaft für Philologie), Mitglied seit 1994.

Kontakt: zedina@hung.u-szeged.hu