

# Book collectors and patrons of the *Zólyomradvány Bibliotheca*

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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

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### ABSTRACT

Over many decades, the library of Radvány castle has developed into a valuable and organized collection. The founders and owners of the library were members of the Radvánszky family from Radvány right until the time when it finally became state property. The collection has been described on several occasions, and the state of the library has been explored several times in the literature; however, to date, its holdings have not been described and published in detail. However, the specialist would be in an easy position, since catalogs have survived and, in addition, a significant part of the collection still exists, so there is a good chance that the library's stock can be reconstructed. The real and the supposed processes of building the collection may be traced back quite clearly over a period of more than a century and a half.

### KEYWORDS

book collectors, patrons, Radvánszky family, private library, cultural history, library history

### INTRODUCTION

The Radvánszky dynasty has made a significant contribution to Hungarian culture throughout its history. It is hard to distinguish between the respective achievements of successive family

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members, as the Radvánszkys have been an integral part of the Hungarian political, cultural and literary sphere ever since their very inception.

The history of the family is usually divided into two parts reflecting the two home bases, Radvány and Sajókaza, as these locations played a determining role in the dynasty's past. The present study focuses on culture and general education as these two areas were the main concerns of most Radvánszkys. My primary goal is not to explore the history of the family, but to assess their role in promoting general culture and to outline their efforts towards making a contribution to literary history and historiography.

While several researchers have investigated the family's past and singled out their respective bibliophile commitment, I start my inquiry at the Radvány beginnings and trace the line of events up until the emergence of the library at Sajókaza.<sup>1</sup>

The dynasty was primarily active in the 18th and 19th centuries as its members strove to uphold and further the family's commitment to general culture. In order to provide a thorough account I will take a look at both preceding events and developments in later times.

## THE RADVÁNY MANSION

Records indicate that the history of the Radvánszky library began in Zólyom County (vide Radvaň nad Hronom). The historic mansion is located next to Besztercebánya (Banská Bystrica), at the eastern foot of the Kőrmöc Hills (Kremnica). The settlement was granted to the Radvánszky family by King András II (cc 1177–1235) and since then their name had been inseparable from the history of the local community and county. As János Hunfalvy wrote: "The mansion is decorated by corner towers along with a square surrounded by notched and grooved walls and was built partly in the 16th and 17th centuries."<sup>2</sup>

Ferenc Kubinyi provides a detailed description of the castle, but he does not treat the library and archives in detail. Retracing his steps from the inner court located to the right of the courtyard we can reach the first floor with the dining hall to the left via a fairly wide staircase. The dining hall opens on one side of the women's ceremonial hall, eventually leading to the Rákóczi hall, while the other side door opens to the armoury and to the library densely decorated with paintings.<sup>3</sup>

Most descriptions provide only a superficial view of the library as they take note of the highly precious archives and book collection,<sup>4</sup> but do not give any more details. As far as the modern

<sup>1</sup>H. HUBERT Gabriella, *A sajkókazai Radvánszky-könyvtár története*, (The history of the Radvánszky library at Sajókaza) Szeged, JATE, 1998.

CZEGLÉDI László, *A Radvánszky család sajkókazai duplumkönyvtára a Debreceni Egyetemi Könyvtárban = Szemelvények a Debreceni Egyetemi Könyvtár történetéből (1912–1980)*, (Double issues in the Sajókaza Library of the Radvánszky dynasty held by the Library of Debrecen University. In: Excerpts from the history of the Library of Debrecen University, 1912–1980) ed. JUHA Enikő, SZESZÁK Ferencné, Debrecen, Debreceni Egyetem Egyetemi és Nemzeti Könyvtár, 2009 (Egyetemtörténeti kiadványok, 1), 75–106.

<sup>2</sup>HUNFALVY János, *Magyarország és Erdély eredeti képekben*, (Hungary and Transylvania in original depictions) 2, Darmstadt, Lange Gusztáv György, 1860, 149.

<sup>3</sup>KUBINYI Ferenc, *A radványi várkastély*. In: *Magyarország és Erdély képekben*, (The castle of Radvány. The illustrated history of Hungary and Transylvania) ed. KUBINYI, Ferenc, VAHOT, Imre, Pest, 1853, Reprint, Bp., ÁKV, 1995, 94–99.

<sup>4</sup>LOVCSÁNYI Gyula, *Zólyommegye. Az Osztrák-Magyar Monarchia írásban és képekben*, (Zólyom County. Description of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in written materials and pictures) 18, ed. JÓKAI, Mór, Bp., Magyar Királyi Államnyomda, 1900, 18.



period is concerned, until the formation of the First Czechoslovakian Republic (1918) only sporadic information was published regarding the historic mansion, which was owned by the Radvánszky dynasty until then, while between 1954 and 1998 it was the home of the National Archives of Slovakia.

## PATRONS OF BOOK COLLECTING AND GENERAL CULTURE IN THE RADVÁNY MANSION

### The beginnings

The dynasty has a long history in book collection and this tradition began with the tutoring of their own young descendants. Statistical records indicate that the library was established in the 17th century,<sup>5</sup> and this claim is substantiated by the following data.

The oldest record, to my knowledge, mentioning the Radvánszky dynasty in connection with books comes from 1613.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, Ferenc (III) Radvánszky (1600–1645) lent a certain amount of money to Pál (I) Radvánszky in order to purchase books. This book purchase entailed a mere 7 items, including biblical texts and works of general instruction. Furthermore, a letter written two years later in 1615 by Éliás Budner, public notary of Körmöc (Kremnica), confirms that Ferenc (III) Radvánszky was still covering the expenses of the education of Pál. The respective package of 6 texts contained religious and textbooks in addition to a volume of Virgil.<sup>7</sup>

György (IV) Radvánszky (1645–1687), son of Ferenc (III) Radvánszky, is primarily known for dying a martyr's death after being tortured by Antonio Caraffa (cc. 1646–1693) in Eperjes. Most accounts of his life omit the fact that he favoured knowledge and scholarship over the sword, and he would rather write and support poor students. His commitment to culture is demonstrated by the significant number of manuscripts he left behind. While no references can be found to him as a book collector, he must have been a well-read person and may have possessed a certain, smaller number of books. This claim appears to be substantiated by Szinnyei who refers to a group of manuscripts as “miscellaneous notes from several outstanding volumes.” The manuscript collection also includes a fraction of György's journal entries from 1665.<sup>8</sup>

The importance of this fact is that in the Radvánszky family, as in all noble dynasties, personal journals were an established means of commemorating the important events of one's life. The above mentioned excerpt from György (IV) Radvánszky is the oldest dated record proving the existence of this tradition in the Radvánszky dynasty.

<sup>5</sup>*Magyarország köz- és magánkönyvtárai 1885-ben*, (Public and private libraries in Hungary in 1885) ed. GYÖRGY Aladár, Bp., Athenaeum, 1886 (Hivatalos statisztikai közlemények), 504.

<sup>6</sup>*Magángyűjtemények a királyi Magyarországon és az Erdélyi Fejedelemségben 1533–1721*, (Private collections in the Hungarian Kingdom and the Transylvania Principality 1533–1721) ed. HERNER, János, MONOK, István, Szeged, JATE, 1985 (Könyvtártörténeti füzetek, 4), 26.

<sup>7</sup>*Magyar leveleskönyv*, 1, (Hungarian epistolary book) ed. BALOGH József, TÓTH László, Bp., Corvina, 2001, 177–179.

<sup>8</sup>SZINNYEI József, *Magyar írók élete és munkái*, 11, (The life and works of Hungarian authors) Bp., Hornyánszky Viktor, 1906, 407–409.



## János Radvánszky – the father of the literary tradition

It was shown that the offsprings of the Radvánszky dynasty had been the beneficiaries of a substantial intellectual legacy launching their literary or scholarly career. One of the best known descendants is János (II) Radvánszky (1666–1738), the only son of the martyr of Eperjes, who gained fame as treasurer and close adviser to Ferenc Rákóczi II.

He achieved a significant literary career as his love poems and biography were published by Béla Radvánszky.<sup>9</sup> It is noteworthy and has special importance that his name is included on the book borrower list of Count Pál Ráday (1677–1733), as he borrowed Gáspár Heltai's *Chronica*. The friendship between the Count and Radvánszky developed during the time of the Rákóczi War of Independence around 1705.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, no exact date is available about the actual library transaction, but according to contemporary records it could have taken place between 1720 and 1730. Nonetheless, the fact of borrowing the book and the belletristic activities of Radvánszky suggest that he liked books and maintained a type of private library.

The importance of such data is further substantiated by the fact that Heltai's book, at that time not owned by the Radvánszky dynasty, can be found in the duplicate library transferred from Sajókaza to Debrecen. Later, however, even two or three copies became part of the Radvánszky library. Heltai's book was rather popular, and Farkas Deák makes note of a sound copy held in the double edition collection, while in most cases the *Chronica* was available in rather used, or almost raggedy form.

Another reference to the existence of the library of János (II) Radvánszky comes from his close friendship with Mátyás Bél (1684–1749). The surviving pieces of their rather frequent correspondence indicate that Bél often sought Radvánszky's opinion regarding his historical works. He sent him a signed copy of his *Prodromus* and asked him to proofread the manuscript of his work *Tractatus de rustica Hungarorum*. The letters also tell us that János (II) Radvánszky made observations or additional notes to the description of Zólyom County.<sup>11</sup> In most cases Bél corrected the manuscript accordingly and enhanced the text with the suggested supplementary materials.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, based upon the previously mentioned facts we have, even if, indirect proof to substantiate the claim that János (II) Radvánszky had already possessed a potentially significant book collection. At any rate due to lack of tangible evidence researchers consider only László (II) Radvánszky (1701–1758) as the first significant bibliophile and book collector of the dynasty.

<sup>9</sup>Radvánszky János versei (1666–1738), with an introduction and published by RADVÁNSZKY, Béla, (Poems by János Radvánszky 1666–1738) Bp., Ráth Mór, 1905 (Közlemények a br. Radvánszky-család levéltárából, I, 3), 55.

<sup>10</sup>SEGESVÁRY Viktor, *A Ráday könyvtár 18. századi története*, (The history of the Ráday library in the 18th century) Bp., Ráday Gyűjtemény, 1992, 286.

<sup>11</sup>Bél Mátyás levelezése, (The correspondence of Mátyás Bél) arranged for publication by SZELESTEI, N. László, Bp., Balassi, 1993 (Magyarországi tudósok levelezése, 3), (Correspondence of Hungarian scholars) 130, 177–183. – Items 232, 328 and 332.

<sup>12</sup>Bél Mátyás kéziratai a pozsonyi evangélikus liceum könyvtárában: Katalógus, (Manuscripts of Mátyás Bél in the Library of the Evangelical Lyceum in Pozsony) compiled by TÓTH, Gergely, Bp., Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, Gondolat, 2006 (Nemzeti téka), 5. – Tétel: 8.



## László Radvánszky– the first great book collector

All writings testify to László (II) Radvánszky's passion for books and scholarship. Furthermore, he is also considered as a sponsor of writers and poorer youth dedicated to learning. This quality, however, is generally typical of any member of the Radvánszky dynasty due to the family's commitment to education and culture. His large collection of mostly theological and historical volumes made a significant contribution to the establishment of the dynastic library in Radvány.

The carefully planned and regular nature of the family's book collecting efforts is further substantiated by the exchange of letters. One piece of the correspondence originated from Daniel Burius (1683–1729?) who enclosed a catalogue of 86 items in a letter addressed to Radvánszky in 1727. The catalogue is based upon the manuscript collection of István Ostrosith (?-1639/1640?).<sup>13</sup>

Testifying to the thorough and calculated aspect of compiling the book collection, another letter dated from 1740 includes a 20 item register on the works of classical authors and contemporary philosophers. While Ádám Molnár S, the letter writer, promises to check whether the respective volumes are available in Leipzig and Amsterdam, the enclosed supplement lists such books as sent.<sup>14</sup> Based upon the above mentioned sponsorship of the Radvánszky dynasty, it is highly likely that the letter originates from the Ádám Molnár S. (1713–1780) who later became a doctor. Previously he studied at the Augustinian Evangelical Secondary School in Sopron, then continued his studies in the Pozsony Lyceum in 1733 and became a student of law at the University of Halle in 1738. Although he began a career as a lawyer in Kolozsvár, he lost his initial enthusiasm and started to work as a tutor in leading families. He travelled to Germany for a second time in 1740, then he went on to Belgium.<sup>15</sup>

Thanks to sponsorship from his father, in his youth László (II) Radvánszky became a favourite student of Mátyás Bél, the scholar who had a major impact on members of the dynasty in the fields of scholarship and education. Bél's correspondence provides notable information concerning the cultural aspects of László (II) Radvánszky's life. Bél was aware of the fact that the Radvánszky dynasty was a significant historic family of the region and that the office of sub-lieutenant was passed from father to son. Regardless of their friendship and professional connections, just as in the case of the elder Radvánszky, he sought László's opinion on the description he gave of Zólyom County and on his *Prodromus* in general. Perhaps László (II) Radvánszky was the only one to reject the office and he turned toward literature and culture instead. Similarly to his father he provided a significant amount of data to the history of the

<sup>13</sup>Daniel Burius levele Radvánszky Lászlónak = *Magyarországi magánkönyvtárak 1643–1750*, (Letter of Daniel Burius to László Radvánszky = Private libraries in Hungary 1643–1750) ed. MONOK, István, curated by ZVARA, Edina, arranged for publication by CZEGLÉDI, László, KRUPPA, Tamás and MONOK, István, Bp., Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, 2010 (Adattár a XVI–XVII századi szellemi mozgalmaink történetéhez, 13, 5) 188–195.

<sup>14</sup>*Intézményi és magángyűjtemények 1589–1750*, (Institutional and private collections 1589–1750) ed. MONOK, István, Szeged, Scriptorum, 2001 (Könyvtártörténeti füzetek, 11), 110.

*Molnár S. Ádám levele Radvánszky Lászlónak = Magyarországi magánkönyvtárak 1643–1750, i. m.*, (Letter of Ádám Molnár S. to László Radvánszky = Private libraries in Hungary 1643–1750) 195–198.

<sup>15</sup>SZINNYEI, op. cit., 151–152.



county and Bél strongly encouraged him to collect information on the history of the family.<sup>16</sup> His works on family history, especially the *The history of the Radvánszky dynasty until 1738*, are considered by Szinnyei as examples of the first scientific genealogy in Hungarian literature.<sup>17</sup>

The correspondence also provides information on how the works of Mátyás Bél were integrated into the family library, which was the result, among others, of the sponsorship activity of László (II) Radvánszky. As Bél's letter reveals, László did not want to have the books free of charge, instead he asked Radvánszky to send the money for the second volume after he received the first volume of the *Notitia*.<sup>18</sup> In another letter Bél himself asks Radvánszky for financial support for the publication of the first piece of the second *decasa* of *Adparatus*.<sup>19</sup> Bél forwards Priscus' *Attila* in three copies via László's nephew, Dénes (II) Radvánszky (1725–1760). One copy would be given to László, the second copy was offered to László's brother, also a disciple of Bél, György (V) (1700–1763), while the last volume was granted to Ottó Károly Moller (1670–1747), a doctor from Besztercebánya (Banská Bystrica) and a patron of Bél. In addition to the forwarded package, Bél informed that the second part of the second *decas* was under printing and the printing of the fifth volume of the *Notitia* had started as well.<sup>20</sup> This is all the more noteworthy as the respective fifth volume was not published at that time, but much later. It was Count Jenő Zichy (1837–1906) who had it published in 1892 by utilizing the manuscript version.

### György Radvánszky – the erudite orator

While the previously mentioned György (V) Radvánszky, elder brother to László, is not listed among the owners of the library, his well-known sophisticated knowledge proven by researchers warrants a brief summary of his contributions to culture. In addition to commemorating the history of the national Diet in 1728 in two volumes, he authored several travelogues, one of the best-known is his report on his travel to Prague for the coronation of Empress Maria Theresa titled “A short diary of my journey to Prague. 1743” Although this event was also recorded by László who was better trained in the discipline of history, György provides more details in a meticulous manner. The “Diary” testifies to his proficiency in Latin, his rhetorical skills, general knowledge and cultural background. One such example is a report on a luncheon with the Chancellor accompanied by high ranking officials during which György had a thorough discussion with Vratislav, the minister from Poland concerning current matters in Europe. At the end of the conversation the Polish official hugged and kissed his companion on the cheeks and declared that Hungarians clearly had more skills than just sword fighting.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, as a result of such public recognition the Hungarian delegation asked György Radvánszky to address

<sup>16</sup>Bél Mátyás levelezése, op. cit. 84, 114–115, items 129, 206 and 209. (The correspondence of Mátyás Bél)

<sup>17</sup>RADVÁNSZKY László, *A Radvánszky-család története 1738-ig*, (The history of the Radvánszky dynasty up to 1738) translated by R. Kiss, István, Sajókaza, Lévai Izsó Rimaszombat, 1905 (Közlemények a br. Radvánszky levéltárból, VII, 4)

<sup>18</sup>Bél Mátyás levelezése, op.cit. 330. – Tétel: 524. (The correspondence of Mátyás Bél)

<sup>19</sup>Bél Mátyás levelezése, op.cit., 525–526. – Tétel: 874. (The correspondence of Mátyás Bél)

<sup>20</sup>Bél Mátyás levelezése, op.cit., 530–531. – Tétel: 886–887. (The correspondence of Mátyás Bél)

<sup>21</sup>R. Kiss István, *Magyarok Mária Terézia 1743. évi prágai koronázásán*, Budapesti szemle, 123(1905), 213. (Hungarians at the coronation of Empress Maria Theresa in Prague in 1743)



the Empress on their behalf in a ceremonial speech.<sup>22</sup> The importance of culture and literature in addition to military prowess is demonstrated by the following lines written to him on the occasion of his name day. The two protagonists of the lyrical dialogue, György and his cousin Gerhard (III) György (first half of the 18th century), demonstrate their commitment to the valorous St George. The unknown author of the poem concludes his work with these lines:

“May you be raised in beautiful morals,  
Be well-versed in science,  
Bring happiness to your parents,  
And share their joy in the heavens!”<sup>23</sup>

The letters of Ferenc (IV) Radvánszky (1734–1810), the son of György, also prove his dedication to books and literature. The correspondence of Ferenc, who later chose the life of a soldier, includes letters written in verse form, student poems and poems addressed to the family. In a letter addressed to his mother he hints at his closeness to books: “[...] What my professor says is hardly more than what I can find in books, and I can learn from books without the explication of my esteemed tutor.”<sup>24</sup>

### János Radvánszky – the heir of the library

A new chapter began in the history of the library when László (II) Radvánszky's heir, János (III) Radvánszky (1739–1815), continued his father's legacy by keeping detailed notes, adding volumes and even compiling a library catalogue. His correspondence reveals his support for the arts and proves that he maintained connections with leading figures of literature. Consequently, his popularity among the literary establishment rivals that of his ancestors and is demonstrated by the friendship of such leading authors as József Benczúr (1728–1784).

A fraction of the correspondence between Benczúr, a noted political writer and historian, and the members of the Radvánszky dynasty was introduced in 1902 by Imre Szentpétery.<sup>25</sup> László (II) Radvánszky supported Benczúr's studies abroad via the foundation established by Sámuel Bohus as the administrator of the foundation. What's more, after Benczúr's return he helped the former to find employment in the school at Késmárk. Subsequently, as a result of this relation, he established a close connection with László's son, János (III) Radvánszky. The respective correspondence reveals an active literary commitment as the main focus in all letters is the acquisition of manuscripts and books in addition to current political and literary events.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup>R. KISS, *Magyarok...*, *op.cit.*, 214–215. (Hungarians...)

<sup>23</sup>BAROS Gyula, *Radványi verses könyvek*, ItK, 14(1904), 457–459. – section No. 6 and concluding section. (Poems and verses from Radvány)

<sup>24</sup>BAROS Gyula, *Radványi verses könyvek*, ItK, 13(1903), 460. – 2. közl. (Poetry collections from Radvány)

<sup>25</sup>SZENTPÉTERY Imre, *Benczúr József levelei Radvánszky Lászlóhoz és Jánoshoz*, (Letters of József Benczúr to László and János Radvánszky) ItK, 12(1902), 101–113, 232–237.

<sup>26</sup>SZENTPÉTERY, p. 102–103.





## Patrons and heirs in the 19–20th centuries

Among the owners of the manor and the library the name of Antal (II) Radvánszky (1807–1882) should be included. While he is not primarily known for enhancing the library, it is highly probable due to his educational background and well-known interest in literature.<sup>27</sup>

At the same time he had a major role in promoting the education and schooling of his nephew Béla Radvánszky. He hired Sándor Prónay (1760–1839) as a notary to keep minutes for the meetings held at the mansion. He retired from public affairs after the Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence (1848–49) and dedicated his life to agriculture and science. In 1879 he was elected to be inspector general of the Evangelical Church of Agostinian Faith. He spoke five languages, was well informed in politics, church affairs, clerical law and the sciences. „He continued his studies even when he was advanced in age. When you visited him at Radvány he would always be in his so-called study office next to the Rákóczi Hall, either writing official letters or sharpening his mind by reading. Anyone who conversed with him was impressed by his wide knowledge and erudition.”<sup>28</sup>

According to available data János (IV) Radvánszky (1854–1899) did not play a significant role in matters related to the library. While Aladár György mentions him in his statistical report<sup>29</sup> as a man in charge of the mansion and the library, there is no indication of a substantial commitment on his part to maintaining or enhancing the book collection. His son, Antal (III) Radvánszky (1882–1933), the last owner of the library, played practically no role whatsoever, except for the fact that he sold the Balassa Codex to Kálmán Radvánszky (1887–1965) for 36 million coronas at the end of 1923.<sup>30</sup> This piece of information, however, pertains to the history of the library in Sajókaza.

Obviously the commitment of the Radvány branch of the dynasty to culture and self-improvement does not end at this point. Antal (IV) Radvánszky (1908–1996) played an important role in the promotion of education and culture both as a historian of the constitution and as a publicist. He was an active participant in the life of the Hungarian Evangelical Church as a representative at the Lutheran World Federation in Geneva from 1945 until 1948, in addition to being a significant member of the emigré press. Although after his retirement he immersed himself in “historical research,” he had no control over the manor, archive, and library in Radvány, despite the fact that as a result of his professional life he could have significantly enhanced the library. His several published works, public role and active participation in clerical affairs make him a worthy representative of the history and tradition of the Radvánszky dynasty.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup>Pl.: *Z veršov Varšianskeho (Baróna Antona Radvánszkeho)*, Slovenské Pohľady, 15(1895/5), 315–320.

<sup>28</sup>HAAN Lajos, *A magyarországi ágostai hitvallású evangélikusok egyetemes gyűlései és az Egyetemes Világi Felügyelői Hivatal*, (General Assemblies of Augustinian Evangelicals in Hungary and the International Secular Inspectorate) Bp., Magyarországi Protestánssegylet, 1882 (Protestáns theologiai könyvtár, 17) – M. Önéletrajz, Radvánszky Antal önéletrírása, 183.

<sup>29</sup>*Magyarország köz- és magánkönyvtárai 1885-ben, i. m.*, 447. (Public and private libraries in Hungary in 1885)

<sup>30</sup>RADVÁNSZKY Kálmán, *A képes Balassa-kiadásról*, MBibLSz, 1(1924/1), 81. (On the pictorial edition of the Balassa Codex)

<sup>31</sup>BORBÁNDI Gyula, *Nyugati magyar irodalmi lexikon és bibliográfia*, Bp., Hittel, 1992, 299. (Encyclopedia and bibliography of Hungarian emigré literature in the West)





## THE LIBRARY IN RADVÁNY

It took many centuries for the library to develop into a valuable and appropriately arranged book collection. Whereas several descriptions of the collection are available and the library has been the subject of numerous research efforts, apart from the catalogue compiled in 1750 a detailed and thorough assessment of its condition is yet to emerge. Such an effort would be greatly assisted by the respective book lists, while the catalogue prepared by János (III) Radvánszky is still latent. Since a significant part of the collection is currently accessible, the structure and content of the library could be reconstructed without any significant difficulty.

Although according to the 1874 report by Farkas Deák the library does not have a systematic list of the volumes it contains,<sup>32</sup> this statement primarily refers to the conditions before the detailed exploration of the family archive. Aladár György mentions an unfinished title list in 1885,<sup>33</sup> but the full list is unlikely to have been compiled even at a later date. While several sources point to the catalogue of the library, it is Imre Szentpétery who is the first to confirm its actual existence in 1902. He states that the catalogues of László (II) Radvánszky and János (III) Radvánszky were still available or accessible in the dynastic archives.<sup>34</sup> Presently, the only known catalogue is the one list of manuscripts made or commissioned by László (II) Radvánszky describing the state of the library in 1750. This information is revealed in the study of Gabriella Hubert H.<sup>35</sup> A transcript of this catalogue is available to researchers.<sup>36</sup>

A small portion of the library is kept in the Slovakian National Archives at Banská Bystrica (Štátny archív v Banskej Bystrici).

After the archives were transferred from the manor, cataloguing efforts commenced, and to my knowledge are in progress to this day. While the full evaluation of any given segment cannot be expected until cataloguing is completed, researchers are provided on-site access to particular books in the archival library.<sup>37</sup>

### The composition and structure of the collection

Regarding its size and composition the library was considered a significant and valuable private book collection at the middle of the 18th century. The 1750 catalogue, at least according to the incomplete data, includes 436 items, 390 of which are listed as separate volumes and 46 are

<sup>32</sup>Deák Farkas *jelentése a Radvánszky-család radványi könyvtáráról s a levéltár egy kis részéről*, Századok, 1875, 102. (Report by Farkas Deák on the library of the Radvánszky dynasty at Radvány and a fragment of the archives)

<sup>33</sup>Magyarország köz- és magánkönyvtárai 1885-ben, i. m., 447. (Public and private libraries in Hungary in 1885)

<sup>34</sup>SZENTPÉTERY, op. cit. 101.

„...Ez az élénk érdeklődés viszi a család tagjait arra, hogy könyvtárt alapítsanak s azt folyton fejlesztésék és bővítsék, mint azt Radvánszky Lászlónak és ifj. Radvánszky Jánosnak a br. Radvánszky-család levéltárában most is meglevő könyvtár-catalogusai bizonyítják.” (Such a strong interest compels the members of the family to establish and continuously enhance a library as is demonstrated by the still existing library catalogues of László Radvánszky and János Radvánszky Jr. in the family archives of Count Radvánszky.)

<sup>35</sup>*Catalogus Bibliothecae Ladislai de Radvan*, Magyar Országos Levéltár, P566, 45. cs., III. o., LX. Cs., 1. sz.

<sup>36</sup>Radvánszky László *könyvtárának katalógusa, 1750. Magyarországi magánkönyvtárak 1643–1750*; op. cit. 159–188. (The catalogue of the library of László Radvánszky, 1750. Private libraries in Hungary 1643–1750)

<sup>37</sup>Štátny oblastný archív v Banskej Bystrici (Komenského 26, 974 01 Banská Bystrica)



previously separate volumes bound in one volume (colligatum). The main arrangement principle is the origin of the author, either Hungarian or foreign, followed by the book size, such as in folio, in quarto, in octavo, in duodecimo. As far as content is concerned, most books focus on Hungarian history or theological issues. Similarly to the library in Sajókaza a stamp displaying roman numerals represents the various content categories.<sup>38</sup> The stamps are located on the verso of the cover or on the book spine, but in case of notebook type soft cover publications or thinner volumes the stamp can be found on the cover, as well.

In his remarks on the private collection of László Radvánszky Jr., István Monok asserts in the Preface to the book *Private libraries in Hungary 1643–1750* that “Radvánszky, advised by the intelligentsia or the Hungarian professional class urging the writing of the history of the country, established a genuine collection including both published works and manuscripts, a real example of a unique Hungarian cultural achievement.”<sup>39</sup>

According to Ferenc Kubinyi’s 1853 description the library included several thousands of books, where the author highlights that “works of classic Roman authors, Hungarian historians, national Diet reports and numerous famous writings expressing interest in Hungarian history enhance the collection.”<sup>40</sup>

Two decades later the Hungarian Historical Association held its on-site assembly in Radvány. During their stay the delegates thoroughly assessed and explored the library, the archives, and other historical values of the manor. The members of the Radvány Committee reported on their findings in the periodical *Századok* (Centuries). Farkas Deák was mainly responsible for the full exploration of the library and he mentions approximately 4,000 volumes with  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the collection either written in Hungarian or pertaining to Hungarian culture. He singles out a selected list of original works of Hungarian historiography as the most valuable member of the collection. It must be noted, however, that a few of these volumes can also be found in the double publication collection of Sajókaza. (This also means that in case of certain rare publications no fewer than three copies were owned by the members of the Radvánszky dynasty.) Deák also introduces a list of 22 old books published before 1711 and the description of the 27 codexes in the manuscript collection. Furthermore, he mentions calendars and other interesting items of the archive.<sup>41</sup>

Nevertheless, a statistical description of Aladár György in 1885 contradicts the previous appraisals asserting that “[...] the current owner holding that it contains 4,000 volumes [...] tends to underestimate the size of the library.”<sup>42</sup>

Subsequently, additional figures about the size of the Zólyomradvány library are not available. Presently a collection of 1528 items is held in the library of the Štátny archív Banská Bystrica. The books mostly represent the modern age, even including some items from the 20th century. While such findings could lead to the conclusion that the library was continuously enhanced, it is difficult to provide a full appraisal of the size of the total collection.

<sup>38</sup>H. HUBERT, *i. m.*, 25–26.

<sup>39</sup>Monok, István, *Előszó. Magyarországi magánkönyvtárak 1643–1750*, op. cit. VIII. (Preface. Private libraries in Hungary 1643–1750)

<sup>40</sup>KUBINYI, *op. cit.* 95.

<sup>41</sup>DEÁK, *op. cit.* 102–112.

<sup>42</sup>*Magyarország köz- és magánkönyvtárai 1885-ben*, op. cit. 447. (Public and private libraries in Hungary in 1885)



The respective works are marked with the letters RK and an ordinal number referring to the position of the given book in the storage, and the archivists provided a circular stamp on the title page of each volume with the words: “The library of Count Radvánszky, Radván.” The omission of the first name alludes to the multiple ownership of the books.

The catalogue compiled in 1750 affords an overview of the language and temporal breakdown of the collection. Accordingly, the library contains books written in Latin (74%), German (11%), Hungarian (9%) and Slavic (6%) languages.

As far as the year of publication is concerned, the 436 items include approximately 532 volumes after breaking up the multivolume publications and the colligata. (Since in case of some items an exact volume number is not available, a total volume number cannot be established clearly). The chronological composition of the library is described below.

The years of publication cover the period from 1449 until 1756. This is all the more noteworthy as the catalogue is dated from 1750, however, 8 items, none of them multivolume works or parts of colligata, were published in the following years: 5 in 1751, 2 in 1753, and 1 in 1756. There are 24 items whose date of publication cannot be ascertained. We hope to obtain such data as a result of individual identification. As for the rest of the volumes, 3 volumes come from the 15th century, 68 volumes from the 16th, 158 from the 17th, and 279 from the 18th century.

A brief glimpse into a smaller group of the volumes reveals that the exploratory work will result in a valuable collection containing priceless marginalia and rare books with possessory marks or signatures of László Radvánszky (Ladislaus Radvan) or János Radvánszky (Ex biblioth. Joan. de Radván). Such exact identification can provide numerous valuable data for related cultural historical studies.

While I am aware of the fact that other segments of the Radvány collection can be found in several archives or libraries of Slovakia, continued inquiry would exceed the temporal and spatial limits of the present study. Yet I express all hope that such a famous treasure trove of Hungarian history and culture will be fully explored by researchers.

## FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS CONCERNING THE RADVÁNY MANOR

Since 2002 the Radvány Manor has been under the auspices of the Municipal Estate Protection Authority of Banská Bystrica. This way the castle is protected from general decay, but complete renovation and reconstruction are out of the question due to budgetary constraints. While Spanish and Italian investors expressed interest in 2003, the negotiations did not provide any results.<sup>43</sup> Although the location of Radvány is listed by travel books as the outskirts of Besztercebánya (Banská Bystrica) and even the manor is mentioned, today the building is uninhabitable. The walls and towers are still erect, but the beautiful park once surrounding the manor is severely neglected and reduced to a fraction of its original size. Basic level maintenance efforts have proven to be unsatisfactory, and the once opulent castle would have come to ruins without direct intervention.

After several unsuccessful attempts, the city of Banská Bystrica finally allowed the Akadémii umeni (Academy of Arts) to rent the establishment for a symbolic amount, 1 euro per year.

<sup>43</sup> MKŠ, *Radvanský kaštieľ v dezolátnom stave: Investuje mesto doňho milióny*, BB Žurnál, 5(2005/13), 1, 5.



Supported by Norway Grants the local university invested EUR 1,65 million into renovation. Tender requirements stipulated that if renovation did not start within two years, the castle would be transferred back to the ownership of the city of Banská Bystrica.<sup>44</sup> Subsequently, Ján Nosko, the mayor of Banská Bystrica announced in December 2014 that the government of Slovakia was contributing EUR 1 million to supporting the renovation effort, and the actual works began on 15 April, 2016.<sup>45</sup> First the roof structure was restored, and the progress of the project was tracked by several articles, short films, and press reports.

Soon, however, the renovation project was significantly modified, since according to reports by the end of 2019 the full renovation cost was estimated to be around EUR 11 million due to the fact that preliminary explorations uncovered several priceless items which require a much more sophisticated investigative approach.<sup>46</sup> Thus the expected completion of the reconstruction project has become significantly delayed and it will be a long time before the historic home of the Radvánszky dynasty regains its original glory.

<sup>44</sup>Bučko, M., Kaštieľ Radvanských dostal ďalšiu šancu na rekonštrukciu, Banská Bystrica, BOnline.sk, 2013.2.12., URL: <https://bbonline.sk/kastiel-radvanskych-dostal-dalsiu-sancu-na-rekonstrukciu>

<sup>45</sup>FOTO: V piatok začala dlho očakávaná rekonštrukcia kaštieľa Radvanských, [online], bystricoviny.sk, 2016.04.15., URL: <https://www.bystricoviny.sk/spravy/foto-v-piatok-zacala-dlho-ocakavana-rekonstrukcia-kastiel-radvanskych/>

<sup>46</sup>Rekonštrukcia kaštieľa Radvanských by mala stáť takmer 11 miliónov eur, [online], MY Bystrica, 2019.10.04, URL: <https://mybystrica.sme.sk/c/22228551/rekonstrukcia-kastiel-radvanskych-by-mala-stat-takmer-11-milionov-eur.html>.

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