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The Distribution of Works by Erasmus in the Carpathian Basin during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

Summary of Statistical Spread

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Booklists that have come down to us from particular periods are of great significance in the investigation of the sources of erudition. Over twenty years of systematic research into the sixteenth-seventeenth-century distribution of manuscripts and documents in the Carpathian Basin has unearthed some 2032 booklists.¹ This is a large-enough number for a statistical analysis of a given author's work, or for determining the spread of ideological trends with the help of historical statistics. These basic sources were supplemented with data taken from volumes of retrospective national bibliography (more precisely, those with data that represent a given author's works published in Hungarian throughout Europe), covering works of a given ideological trend that were published in the Carpathian basin.²

¹ Katalin Keveházi, *Aufarbeitung und Publikation von ungarischen Bücherverzeichnissen aus der Zeit vom 16. bis 18. Jahrhundert* (Wolfenbüttel 1985), 68-77 (Wolfenbütteler Notizen zur Buchgeschichte); István Monok, *Zur Quellentypologie der Geschichte des Lesens in 16-17. Jahrhundert in Ungarn* (Berlin 1990 [1991]), 81-88 (Das Hinterlassenschaftsinventar=Berliner Beiträge zur Hungarologie 5.); István Monok, "Burgenländische Quellen zur Erforschung der Lesekultur in Ungarn vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert," in *Reformation und Gegenreformation im Pannonschen Raum*, 13-14. Schläiningener Gespräche 1993/1994. Red. von Gustav Reigrabner, Gerald Schlag, 193-202 (Wissenschaftliche Arbeiten aus dem Burgenland. Bd. 102.); István Monok, "Die buchgeschichtlichen Forschungen in Szeged 1980-1995," *Frühzeit-Info* 7 (1996, 2): 253-258; István Monok, "Forschungen zur Bibliotheks- und Lese-geschichte im Rahmen der Rezeption von Geistesströmungen am Beispiel Ungarn," *Frühzeit-Info* 9 (1998, 2) [1999]: 180-184.

² *Régi magyarországi nyomtatványok* (Old-Hungarian Prints) - *Res litterariae Hungariae vetus operum impressorum* (henceforth: *RMNy*) Vol. I. 1473-1600. Cura: G. Borsa, F. Hervay, B. Holl, I. Küller, Á. Kelecsényi, (Budapest 1972); Vol. II. 1601-1635. Cura: G. Borsa, F. Hervay, B. Holl, auxilio: J. Fazakas, J. Heltai, Á. Kelecsényi, J. Vásárhelyi, (Budapest 1983).

The present analysis of the spread of Erasmus' works has been supplemented by research concerning works by Erasmus that have survived in the significant book-collections of the present territories of Hungary, Slovakia and the Transylvanian region of Romania. The data taken from these three groups of resources constitutes an appropriate background for deeper analyses that have already been written on quotation from various Hungarian authors' works, or on the genesis of the ideas summarized in those works.

Before giving an overview of the statistics, some restrictions that may influence the interpretation of the data need to be mentioned. The sixteenth century saw some new trends in the history of European erudition. At the beginning of the century, the books preferred by contemporary humanists were extensively appreciated in other circles of society. The love for *studia humanitatis* remained present in academic circles throughout the century. However, the Reformation and the spread of vernacular literature brought with it a lower regard for the theoretical and practical appreciation of books, even in the circles described as "late humanist." The inventories appear to show some discrepancies between what was believed to be important reading, what was important for collectors, and finally, what literate society actually read and cited.³

³ About Hungary's situation see: Mihály Balázs, "Einleitung," in *Bibliotheca Dissidentium. Répertoire des non-conformistes religieux des seizième et dix-septième siècles*. Ed. par André Séguenny, Tom. XII. (Baden-Baden 1990) (Bibliotheca Bibliographica Aureliana. CXXI.); Jenő Berlász, "Die Entstehung der ungarischen Bibliothekskultur im 16-17. Jahrhundert," *Magyar Könyvszemle* (1974): 14-28; Csaba Csapodi, "Ungarische Bibliotheksgeschichte. Vom Mittelalter bis zum Frieden von Szatmár (1711)," *Gutenberg Jahrbuch* (1984): 332-357; Átlám Dankanits, *Lesestoffe des 16. Jahrhunderts in Siebenbürgen*. Bearb. der deutschen Ausgabe Gustav Gündisch. (Bukarest 1982); Tibor Klaniczay, "Réforme et transformation culturelle en Hongrie," in *Les réformes européennes socio-culturelles. XXVe colloque international d'études humanistes* Tours, 1-13. juillet 1982. Études réunies par Bernard Chevalier, Robert Sauzet, (Paris 1982); Tibor Klaniczay, "Die Soziale und institutionelle Infrastruktur der ungarischen Renaissance," in *Die Renaissance im Blick der Nationen Europas*. Hrsg. von Georg Kaufmann (Wiesbaden 1991), 319-338 (Wolfenbütteler Abhandlungen zur Renaissanceforschung. Bd. 9.); István Monok, "Nationalsprachliche Lesestoffe in Ungarn im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert," in *Latin und Nationalsprachen in der Renaissance*. Hrsg. von Božo Guthmüller (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998), 137-150 (Wolfenbütteler Abhandlungen zur Renaissanceforschung. Bd. 17.); István Monok, "Lutherische Orthodoxie, sächsischer Philippismus und Irenismus im Lesestoffe des lutherischen Bürgertums in Ungarn," in *Bürgerliche Kultur im Vergleich. Deutschland, die böhmischen Länder und das Karpatenbecken im 16. und 18. Jahrhundert*. Hrsg. von István Monok, Péter Ötvös (Szeged: Scriptum, 1998), 71-80.

It is worthwhile to cite here what Erasmus himself has to say about reading. In *De duplici copia verborum*, first published in 1512, he states that, if someone wants to educate himself, he must compile a list of works to be read; and at least once in his life, he must take the listed work into his hands: "*Ergo qui destinavit per omne genus auctorum lectione grassari (nam id omnino semel in vita faciendum ei, qui velit inter eruditos haberi) prius sibi quam plurimos comparabit locos.*"⁴ In 1526, in a version of *Adagia*, Erasmus complains that a great number of insignificant works see the light of day, and that the time we spend reading these works is wasted: "*Nunc illis propemodum antiquitatis omnibus omnium naevius terimus horas, negliguntur interim honestae disciplinae cum suis auctoribus.*"⁵ In his essay *On Books*, Michel de Montaigne, who was born a few years before Erasmus died, states that never again in his lifetime will he take a contemporary book in his hands, because the older ones are more valuable: "*Je ne me prens guiere aus nouveaus, pour se que les anciens me semblent plus tendus et plus roides.*"⁶ At the same time, he often refers back to contemporary French, Italian or Neo-Latin literature. In an essay published later, he contradicts Erasmus by saying that he is opposed to deeper knowledge of antique or "older" authors. Instead, he prefers the acquisition of useful knowledge and facts, and approves the reading of amusing and relaxing works: "*Je souhaiterois bien avoir plus parfaite intelligence des choses, mais ie ne la veus pas acheter si cher qu'elle couste ... Je ne cherche aux livres qu'à m'y donner du plaisir par un honneste amusement.*"⁷

It behoves us to be cautious in judging the erudition of great Western European personalities, and even more caution is required when assessing the erudition of scholars living in the peripheral territories of Western Christianity.

⁴ *Opera omnia Erasmi*. Ed. B. I. Knott, Vol. VI-1. (Amsterdam 1988), 258.

⁵ Erasmus von Rotterdam, *Adagiorum chiliades...* Hrsg. von Theresia Payr (Darmstadt 1972), 495 (Ausgewählte Schriften. Bd. 7).

⁶ Michel de Montaigne, *Essais*. Vol. 2. (Bordeaux 1580), 99.

⁷ Montaigne, *Essais*. Vol. 2., 96. Cf. Sabine Vogel, *Kulturtransfer in der frühen Neuzeit. Die Vorworte der Lyoner Drucke des 16. Jahrhunderts*. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 1–19. (Einleitung) (Spätmittelalter und Reformation. Neue Reihe Bd. 12.). On the typology of reading see: *Histoire de la lecture dans le monde occidentale*. Sous la dir. de Guglielmo Cavallo et Roger Chartier (Paris: Seuil, 1997), 38–43.

In particular, factors that are not, or less, relevant to Western Europe must be taken into consideration in arriving at any conclusions.

The first and most significant of these is that there was virtually no organized book-trade in the Carpathian Basin until the end of the seventeenth century. The books that came into the area arrived (in the majority) through personal connections (such as those between traders, aristocrats, or diplomats), or else via the scholars embarked upon the *peregrinatio academica*. When considering the reception of Erasmus' ideas, it is important to note which European universities were frequently visited by Hungarian scholars. In Erasmus' lifetime, these were Vienna, Cracow, Bologna, and Padua. From the beginning of the Reformation (especially in Wittenberg itself), the Helvetic universities, and at the turn of the century, Heidelberg, were also considered important centres. All the universities mentioned above, and especially Vienna and Cracow (as well as Basle), led the field in disseminating Erasmus' works. It is not surprising, therefore, that the works of Erasmus published in the sixteenth century were brought from the aforementioned locations. Nor is it surprising that the first persons to publish Erasmus' works in Hungary were the alumni of these same universities.⁴

Another view of Hungarian erudition in the early modern era assumes that the surviving archival sources reflect the factual erudition of their owners. Although this statement may seem dubious, one should not forget that in the sixteenth century even the greatest Hungarian book collections did not exceed five to nine hundred volumes altogether. On average, the number of the volumes is less than fifty. We do not know of any collections that were built up over several generations. Furthermore, if we take into consideration the difficulties of acquiring books and their relatively high price, we can be fairly sure that the

⁴ See Tibor Klaniczay, "Les intellectuels dans un pays sans universités (Hongrie: XVIe siècle)," in *Intellectuels français, intellectuels hongrois*, Ed. par Béla Köpeczi, Jacques Le Goff (Budapest-Paris, 1985), 99-109. On the history of Erasmusian ideas in Hungary, see: Rabán Gerézdi, "Érasme et la Hongrie," in *Littérature hongroise – littérature européenne* (Budapest 1964), 153-163; Tibor Kardos, "L'esprit d'Érasme en Hongrie," in *Colloquia Erasmitiana Turonensia* (Paris: Vrin, 1972), 634-642; Tibor Klaniczay, "Un épisode de la postérité d'Érasme: L'Enchiridion hongrois (1627)," *Revue de la Littérature Comparée* (1978): 185-193.

book collectors of Hungary were indeed driven by the aim of gathering knowledge and not with the aim of compiling a valuable collection per se.⁹

However, three exceptions to this statement are known. The libraries of Hans Dernschwam,¹⁰ Andreas Dudith¹¹ and Johannes Sambucus¹² are humanist collections on the Western European model. All of these collections held more than two thousand volumes, and the owners enriched them with the passion of bibliophiles, even if they also displayed the humanist's quest for knowledge. Nearly all of Erasmus' works can be found in each of these libraries. Significantly, the owners also allowed their friends use their books.

To facilitate an analysis of the remaining documents for our present purposes, I have arranged the readers of Erasmus' works according to their religion and their social status. The period between 1500-1630 is an interesting one, since there are only four surviving booklists that are known to have belonged to aristocratic families in Hungary at that time. Of course, each of the four lists contains titles by Erasmus, and not surprisingly all four families were of the Lutheran faith. However, when considering the reception of Erasmus' works (and with the possible exception of the Thurzó family), the Lutheran commitment does not seem to play a significant role. The New Testament published by Erasmus could be found in the libraries of Ferenc Zay¹³, Boldizsár

⁹ István Monok, "Private Bibliotheken in Ungarn im 16. Jahrhundert," in *Bibliotheken und Bücher im Zeitalter der Renaissance*. Hrsg. von W. Arnold, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1997), 31-54 (Wolfenbütteler Abhandlungen zur Renaissanceforschung. Bd. 16.). A bibliographical overview: *Könyvtártörténeti Füzetek* (Papers in the history of libraries) Vol. I-X. Ed. I. Monok, (Szeged, 1981-2000). Publications featuring the booklists from 1526-1750 period: *Adattár XVI-XVIII. századi szellemi mozgalmaink történetéhez* (Materials for 16-18th-century Hungarian cultural history) Ed. Bálint Keszrű, Vol. 11-20 (Szeged, 1983-2000), henceforth: *Adattár*.

¹⁰ *Adattár* 12/1, its German version: *Die Bibliothek Dernschwam. Bücherinventar eines Humanisten in Ungarn*. Hrsg. von Jenő Berlász (Szeged: JATE, 1984).

¹¹ *Adattár* 12/3, its English version: *András Dudith's library: A partial reconstruction*. Compiled and with an introduction by József Jankovics and István Monok (Szeged: Scriptum, 1993).

¹² *Adattár* 12/2, its German version: *Die Bibliothek Sambucus. Katalog. Bibliothecae Ioannis Sambuci Catalogus librorum 1587*. Nach der Abschrift von Pál Gulyás. Hrsg. von István Monok. Einleitung von Péter Ötvös. Bibliographie von András Varga (Szeged: Scriptum, 1992).

¹³ *Adattár* 13. *Magyarországi magánkönyvtárak I.* (Private libraries in Hungary) (1533-1657). Ed. András Varga (Budapest—Szeged, 1986), 9-11.

Batthyány¹⁴, Szaniszló Thurzó¹⁵, István Illésházy¹⁶ and György Thurzó¹⁷. In addition, the *Adagia* and at least one edition of Erasmus' personal correspondence were also to be found in these libraries.

The two Thurzó collections are worth examining closely. A glance at the booklist of the collection of Szaniszló Thurzó (dated from 1586), is enough to confirm that his collection was a humanist one; and six of its ninety-three volumes were either written or edited by Erasmus. The early seventeenth-century collection of Palatine György Thurzó can be regarded as a Lutheran theological collection. It is worth noting that Erasmus's *De libero arbitrio* could be found in only two collections: specifically, in the Palatine's collection and (in 1553) in the library of a Lutheran pastor in Eperjes. György Thurzó had a nine-volume version of Erasmus' *Opera omnia* in his possession, as well as nine other independent editions by Erasmus. In addition to the previously mentioned *De libero arbitrio*, these editions include the *Paraphrasis in Epistolas Sancti Pauli*, a volume that occurs only in this collection.

Shifting our focus to the collections of the Catholic prelacy¹⁸, we find that all the existing booklists contain works by Erasmus. From the period examined, twelve booklists have survived to the present day, each of them containing both the New Testament and the *Adagia* edition. Surprisingly, the most frequently appearing works are Erasmus's volumes on the Church Fathers, and especially the one on Cyprianus. Strikingly rare, on the other hand, are Erasmus's New

¹⁴ *Adattár* 11. *A magyar könyvkultúra múltjából. Iványi Béla cikkei és gyűjtése*. (From the Past of Hungarian Books and Reading. Selected papers and research-data collected by Béla Iványi) Eds. János Herner, István Monok, (Szeged 1983), 389–436. See also: Szabolcs Barlay Ö., "Boldizsár Batthyány und sein Humanisten-Kreis," *Magyar Könyvszemle* (1979): 231–251.

¹⁵ *Adattár* 11, 489–490.

¹⁶ *Adattár* 11, 149–152. See also: Péter Ötvös, "Egy főúri könyvtár a XVII. század elején (Illésházy István)" (The library of an aristocrat at the beginning of the 17th century: Illésházy), in *Az értelmiség Magyarországon a 16–17. Században. Die Intelligenz in Ungarn in dem 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, Ed. István Zombori (Szeged 1988), 149–158.

¹⁷ *Adattár* 11, 505–536.

¹⁸ The most important collections are: Miklós Telegdi, Archbishop of Esztergom (1586: *Adattár* 13, 36–42); János Kutassy, Archbishop of Esztergom (1607: *Adattár* 13, 87–89); Ferenc Forgách, Archbishop of Esztergom (1614: *Adattár* 13, 96–101); Bernardus Maszman, Canon of Esztergom (1616: *Adattár* 11, 177–180).

Testament commentaries that were published separately. The greatest number of Erasmus editions appear in a booklist from 1587 compiled for Zakariás Mossóczy, the Bishop of Nyitra.¹⁹

Most of the booklists still in existence are those that belonged to the bourgeoisie,²⁰ many of whom possessed one or more works by Erasmus. However, the short titles of such works indicate that they were probably published for educational purposes. The *Adagia*, *Colloquia*, *Apophthegmata* and the *Civilitas Morum* are the volumes most frequently mentioned. A posthumous list (from 1583) compiled from the stock of Hans Gallen, a book seller from Kassa,²¹ gives an overview of the reading material of the bourgeoisie in Upper Hungary. This list contains 662 titles, but only the *Colloquia* and the *Civilitas Morum* are listed in substantial quantities.

Lutheran and the Calvinist priests also read these widely consulted works of Erasmus. In the booklist for the collection at Eperjes dating to 1553, *De libero arbitrio* and Luther's *De servo arbitrio* can be found side by side. It is

¹⁹ *Adattár* 11, 437–486.

²⁰ The probate inventories of certain Hungarian cities: Lőcse (Leutschovia, Leutschau, Levoča): *Adattár* 13/2: *Magyarországi magánkönyvtárak* (Private libraries in Hungary) II. (1580–1721) Comp. G. Farkas, T. Katona, M. Litzkovits, A. Varga, ed. I. Monok (Szeged: Scriptum, 1992), 227–327; Kassa (Cassovia, Kaschau, Kosice): *Adattár* 15: *Kassa város olvasmányai* (The readings in Kassa) (1562–1731) Comp. H. Gácsi, G. Farkas, K. Keveházi, I.D. Lázár, I. Monok, N. Németh, ed. I. Monok (Szeged: Scriptum, 1990); Kolozsvár (Claudiopolis, Klausenburg, Cluj Napoca): *Adattár* 16/2: *Erdélyi könyvesházak* (Libraries in Transylvania) II. Kolozsvár, Marosvásárhely, Nagyenyed, Szászváros, Székelyudvarhely. Compiled with the help of Zsigmond Jakó's collection by I. Monok; N. Németh, S. Tönk, ed. I. Monok (Szeged: Scriptum, 1991), 16–28; and the cities in West Hungary (Kőszeg (Güns), Sopron (Ödenburg), Ruszt (Rust)): *Adattár* 18/1–2: *Lesestoffe in Westungarn* I. Sopron (Ödenburg) 1535–1721. Hrg. von T. Grill, K. Keveházi, J. L. Kovács, I. Monok, P. Ötvös, K. Szende, red. von I. Monok, P. Ötvös, H. Prickler (Szeged 1994). (Burgenländische Forschungen. Sonderband XIII.); *Lesestoffe in Westungarn* II. Forchtenstein (Fraknó), Eisenstadt (Kismarton), Güns (Kőszeg), Rust (Ruszt). Hrg. von T. Grill, K. Keveházi, K. Kokas, I. Monok, P. Ötvös, H. Prickler (Szeged 1996) (Burgenländische Forschungen. Sonderband XV). A major analysis of Viliam ěičaj about the reading material of the cities in Upper-Hungary (present-day Slovakia): *Knižná kultúra na Strednom Slovensku v 16–18. storočí*. (Bratislava, 1985); in Hungarian: *Bányavárosi könyvkultúra a XVI–XVIII. században* (The culture of book in the mining-towns of 16–18th centuries) (Szeged 1994) (Olvasmánytörténeti dolgozatok IV).

²¹ *Adattár* 13, 22–34.

worth noting that this work of Luther is found just as rarely in an independent edition as is the replica by Erasmus.²²

The picture we receive from the owners' notes on the archival documents and surviving copies resembles the one we have for Erasmus editions published in the Carpathian Basin. The history of Erasmus editions in the early modern Hungarian era can be divided into two parts, and the same goes for the history of the reception of works by Erasmus. The first relevant publisher was Johann Honter, who studied printing in Basle, and published *Epitome Adagiorum Graecorum et Latinorum* in 1540.²³ His successor, Valentin Wagner, published the Greek and Latin versions of the New Testament seventeen years later.²⁴ At the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries, only Erasmus's works on moral philosophy were published. The *Civilitas Morum*'s Hungarian version was published twice in 1591 and again in 1598 and 1632.²⁵ Although the identity of the translator is not known for sure, it is thought to have been either János Csáktornyai or János Laskai, both of whom are known to have been translators of tracts in moral philosophy. During the first third of the seventeenth century, *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* was published in Leiden by Johannes Cornelius Wourdanus and György Salánki (1627).²⁶ This significant work by Erasmus was very widely distributed and much read in Hungary from the second half of the seventeenth century until the first part of the nineteenth century. In terms of archival sources, the *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* can be regarded as very rare. Interestingly enough, it occurs only once in a small village in Upper Hungary, in the collection of a Lutheran pastor, listed in 1575.²⁷

In summary, it may be said that, based on the analysis of the statistical sources of the historical reception of Erasmus' works, the most widely distrib-

²² *Adattár* 11, 361–363. For the lists of Lutheran and Calvinist pastors' collections see: István Monok, *Private Bibliotheken in Ungarn im 16. Jahrhundert*, (note 2.)

²³ *RMNy* 43.

²⁴ *RMNy* 138.

²⁵ *RMNy* 656, 663, 840 and 1548.

²⁶ *RMNy* 1393.

²⁷ *Adattár* 11, 366–368.

uted works by the great humanist of Rotterdam were the Latin and Greek versions of the New Testament. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that these works were also the most significant sources for Hungarian Bible translators of the sixteenth century. Other well-known works are the aphoristic collections of Erasmus such as the *Adagia* and the *Colloquia*. Erasmus's letters were also read by a relatively large number of people. In the early sixteenth century, his works on theology and moral philosophy are generally absent, although there are some examples of them being published. The works of moral philosophy were first published at the turn of the sixteenth and the seventeenth century, the period regarded as late humanist in Hungary. Perhaps it is an exaggeration to say that these ideas were received with the same enthusiasm as the works of Antonio Guevara and Justus Lipsius, but it is a fact that the Hungarian translations of *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* were published together with Guevara's *Horologium Principum* and Lipsius' *Politica*. Interestingly, the *Basilicon doron* of James I and the *Discursus de summo bono* of Ziegler also appeared at this time. The impact of Erasmus' *Enchiridion* has already been mentioned, while the works of moral philosophy of Lipsius were still being translated in the nineteenth century.