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Aristocratic libraries in Slovakia – status, research, history

Abstract: The author has divided her article into two parts. The first part describes the status and research of aristocratic libraries in Slovakia. For a certain period, these libraries occupied an underappreciated place in the history of book culture in Slovakia. The socialist ideology of the ruling regime allowed their collections (with a few exceptions) to be merged with those of public libraries and archives. The author describes the events that affected these libraries during and particularly after the end of World War II and which harmed the current disarrayed state and level of research. Over the past decades, there has been increased interest in the history of aristocratic libraries, as evidenced by multiple scientific conferences, exhibitions and publications. The second part of the article is devoted to a brief history of the best-known aristocratic libraries that were founded and operated in the territory of today's Slovakia. From the times of humanism, there are the book collections of the Thurzó family and the Zay family, leading Austro-Hungarian noble families, and the library of the bishop of Nitra, Zakariás Mossóczy. An example of a Baroque library is the Pálffy Library at Červený Kameň Castle. The Enlightenment period is represented by the Andrassy family libraries in the Betliar manor and the Apponyi family in Oponice.

Keywords: aristocratic libraries – history of libraries – Austro-Hungary – Slovak territory – research of aristocratic libraries – Zay family – Apponyi family – Pálffy family – Thurzó family – Andrassy family

Aristocratic libraries form an integral part of the history of book culture as well as the intellectual heritage of Slovakia. In the Slovak history of libraries, aristocratic libraries have a long and rich tradition. They are most often found among private historical libraries. Thanks to the material wealth of the nobility and the principle of the indivisibility of family property, they outlived their founders and could have been further developed over the next generations. In the 18th century, a library was an essential part of almost every aristocratic residence, illustrating the social status of the owner. However, aristocratic libraries were not only the result of merely random book collections, they also reflected the professional, linguistic and personal interests of their owner. The nobles, as bearers and patrons of culture, education and art, influenced the cultural life of the region and the entire country.

The development of aristocratic libraries in Slovakia is related to the changing conditions of the nobility throughout its development throughout history. The 18th century appears to be the most favourable period for the life of the Austro-Hungarian nobility, according to the share of members of the nobility in the total population¹. While in most European countries the nobility accounted for 1% of the total population, in Austro-Hungary they represented up to 5%². It was a consequence of a more democratic system of property inheritance. While the rest of Europe saw only the eldest son be the universal and sole heir, in Austro-Hungary all children, including daughters, inherited in equal share³. The 18th century was the time of a deep crisis among European nobility, with the Enlightenment questioning the origin of aristocratic privileges. Despite changes in the rest of Europe, aristocratic privileges in Austro-Hungary lasted until the mid 19th century. While the nobility came to be put on an equal footing to other classes in society in 1848, the Austro-Hungarian nobility nevertheless still retained its leading role in the country's political and economic life. The nobility came to be abolished only following the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic, in Act No. 6/1918 Coll. on the abolition of nobility, orders and titles. The former nobles, though, to a great extent continued to own their property up until 1945, when the state confiscated their assets.

Learning the current state of aristocratic libraries in Slovakia is challenging for several reasons. Firstly, no institution deals specifically with this type

1 K. Čaplovičová, *Uhorská šľachta v 18. storočí*, "Historický Časopis" 2003, Vol. 51, No. 2, pp. 297–298.

2 According to the latest Hungarian research, 416.000 people held an aristocratic title. In a pan-European comparison, Austro-Hungary, after Spain and Poland, had the largest number of nobles.

3 Under this method of inheritance, the property was subdivided into ever smaller portions, in the end some members of the noble families owned only modest property or were without any property whatsoever. The social status of nobility, nonetheless, did not lose value.

of library, and there are no records whatsoever. As a result of socio-political events, the nationalised collections of aristocratic libraries ended up under the administration of various cultural institutions, hidden in deposits, and remained outside the sphere of the professional interest of librarians. Other countries which have devoted long-term and intensive attention to aristocratic libraries may serve as a model. Their research forms an integral part of research into the history of the material and intellectual culture, as well as research into the everyday life of European nobility.

The current state and level of research on aristocratic libraries have been adversely impacted by the events affecting these libraries during and especially after the end of World War II. At that time, aristocratic libraries suffered serious damage. Their owners, in fear of the approaching Russian army, abandoned their aristocratic residences, leaving them unattended. These subsequently became the target of destruction and looting not only by the army but also by the local population. According to data from 1947, 450 aristocratic residences and 220 libraries and archives were destroyed or damaged in this way⁴. At the legislative level, the issue was addressed throughout 1945, when several regulations on the nationalisation of agricultural property held by Germans, Hungarians, but also traitors and enemies of the Slovak nation were issued⁵. These regulations nationalised agricultural property, as well as artistic and cultural objects and items of aristocratic residences. The nationalised aristocratic residences were in the care of the Board of Trustees for Education and Awareness (Povereníctvo školstva a osvety), which secured and transported movable properties from the abandoned residences to a safe place. In 1946, the National Cultural Commission (Národná kultúrna komisia) was established, seated in Bratislava, with the role of ensuring the professional rescue and administration of nationalised buildings. Today's opaque condition of aristocratic libraries is also a result of the gathering and relocation activities of the National Cultural Commission, which took place in the 1940s–50s. To rescue the collections from looting, the nationalised aristocratic libraries were moved from their original places to depositories, and after some time were re-assigned to the administration of various cultural institutions. The integrity of the collections was consequently disrupted, causing some aristocratic libraries in their original composition to essentially vanish.

Modern research on aristocratic libraries in Slovakia made little headway, impeded by the political ideology of the time, which perceived these libraries

4 M. Orosová, *Pôdohospodársky archív a Národná kultúrna komisia 1946–1951*, [in:] *50 rokov Slovenského národného archívu. Osudy, problémy a perspektívy slovenského archívnictva*, Bratislava 2005, pp. 27–28.

5 Regulation of the Chairmanship of the Slovak National Council No. 4/1945.

as a product of the former ruling class and their collections as uninteresting for learning about the Slovak national past. Research began in the 1950s, focused only on those libraries that survived intact and that had not been so decimated by the war and post-war devastation. These were the three largest aristocratic libraries that had been established and operating in Slovakia for many decades. Their owners – the Zay, Andrassy and Apponyi families – belong to the elite aristocratic families of Austro-Hungary. The Zay Library from Uhrovec and the Apponyi library from Oponice came under the administration of the Slovak National Library in Martin (Slovenská národná knižnica v Martine). The Andrassy Library in the Betliar manor house is administered by the Slovak National Museum (Slovenské národné múzeum).

We perceive the current research of aristocratic libraries in Slovakia as spontaneous and uncoordinated. It is conducted by librarians dealing with the history of book culture, but also experts from other scientific disciplines – history or archiving. This multidisciplinary approach is nonetheless somewhat beneficial. The same applies to the ongoing research by one expert with the progressive publication of results. A benefit of the latest research is that the focus increasingly covers the lesser-known aristocratic libraries that may be smaller in size. In the result, research is dominated by partial research, rather than comprehensive, in its scope. The results of research papers presented at professional events are usually published in various professional journals and anthologies, entailing a lack of transparency and diminished availability. Over recent years, four monographs have been published focusing on the aristocratic libraries from the territory of what is today Slovakia⁶ and one monograph on the personal library of the Polish nobleman Melchior Krupek, whose books are currently held in Slovakia⁷.

A very attractive and unique platform for bringing the history of aristocratic libraries to the general public was the international travelling exhibition *Blue Blood, Black Ink*, which ran in the period of 2005–2007⁸. Within the exhibition, Slovakia was represented by the libraries of four important

6 J. Cabadajová, P. Králik, *Aponiovská knižnica v Oponiciach*, Martin 2018; K. Komorová, *Knižnica Zachariáša Mošovského*, Martin 2009; H. Saktorová, *Turzovské knižnice: (osobné knižné zbierky a knihy dedikované členom rodu Turzovcov)*, Martin 2009; M. Sibyllová, *Knižnica Rudolfa I. Pálfiho (1719–1768), zakladateľa šľachtickej knižnice Pálfiovcov na hrade Červený Kameň*, Bratislava 2012.

7 K. Komorová, *Knižnica významného poľského šľachtica a bibliofila 16. storočia Melchiora Krupeka*, Praha 2002.

8 The exhibition was installed in the cities of Zagreb, Budapest, Burg Forchtenstein, Bratislava and Martin. The exhibition catalogue was also published in English – *Blue Blood, Black Ink. Book Collections of Aristocratic Families from 1500 to 1700. International Travelling Exhibition Zagreb, Martin, Bratislava, Budapest, Burg Forchtenstein fall 2005 – fall 2007*, ed. I. Monok, Budapest [2005].

Austro-Hungarian families: Révay, Thurzó, Illésházy and Pálffy. Noble libraries from Austria, Hungary and Croatia were also presented. The exhibition highlighted the common past of these Central European states and contributed to the knowledge of the rare book heritage preserved in aristocratic libraries.

The phenomenon of the nobility and its contribution to the cultural history of Slovakia is becoming a frequent topic of various scientific events. A specific event dedicated to aristocratic libraries was the scientific conference entitled *Aristocratic Libraries – sources, state of processing, and starting points for research*, organised by the University of Prešov (Prešovská univerzita v Prešove) and the State Archives in Prešov (Štátny archív Prešov) in 2012. The conference not only presented new knowledge on this topic but also drew attention to the need for further systematic research in heritage institutions in Slovakia and abroad. The conference was organised within the framework of the project of the University of Prešov VEGA no. 1/0278/12: “Aristocratic libraries in eastern Slovakia”. This project eventuated in two almanacs with a common title *From the history of aristocratic libraries in Slovakia*⁹, with one dedicated particularly to aristocratic families and libraries in eastern Slovakia¹⁰. The almanacs were published in electronic form and provided a space for the presentation of results from the research of aristocratic libraries not only to the project’s researchers but also to other interested parties.

In 2014 and 2015, two more scientific conferences were held on this topic. On the occasion of the 240th anniversary of the founding of the famous Apponyi family library, in 2014 an international scientific conference was held, entitled *The Apponyis in the History of Book Culture*. It was organised by the Slovak National Library in Martin. Twelve articles devoted to the book collections of this important aristocratic family are published in an almanac in a Slovak and English version¹¹. In 2015, the scientific conference *The Nobility of Central Slovakia and its Influence on the Cultural Development of the Region* took place. The main organiser was the State Scientific Library in Banská Bystrica (Štátna vedecká knižnica v Banskej Bystrici). The conference sought to deliver a comprehensive picture of the cultural life of aristocratic families living in the region of central Slovakia, and also to highlight the nobility’s influence on life

9 *Z dejín šľachtických knižníc na Slovensku I.*, ed. M. Domenová, Prešov 2013, [online] <https://www.pulib.sk/web/kniznica/elpub/dokument/Domenova1> [accessed 07.05.2021]; *Z dejín šľachtických knižníc na Slovensku II. (fragmenty – pramene – sídla)*, ed. M. Domenová, Prešov 2014, [online] <https://www.pulib.sk/web/kniznica/elpub/dokument/Domenova3> [accessed 07.05.2021].

10 *Šľachta a šľachtické knižnice na východnom Slovensku (sídlá – každodennosť – knižná kultúra)*, ed. M. Domenová, Prešov 2014, [online] <https://www.pulib.sk/web/kniznica/elpub/dokument/Domenova4> [accessed 07.05.2021].

11 *Aponiovci v dejinách knižnej kultúry*, ed. A. Klimekova, Martin 2015; *The Apponyi Family in the History of Book Culture*, ed. A. Klimekova, Martin 2015.

in the region. The contributions mention the families Radvanský in Radvaň, Berchhold from Uherčice, Eszterházy from Vígľaš, Wilczek, Ostrolúcky from Ostrá Lúka, Trstenský, Oldenburg from Brodzany, Révay, Stainlein-Saalenstein from Horné Semerovce and others¹².

The preserved and reconstructed historical libraries in Slovakia are described in the *Spríevodca po historických knižniciach na Slovensku* [*Guide to Historical Libraries in Slovakia*]. In the four volumes published in 2001, 2004 and 2009, 2012, a total of 86 historical libraries were processed under the administration of libraries, archives, museums, galleries, orders and ecclesiastical institutions¹³. Aristocratic libraries are also represented in the number of 18 libraries¹⁴. The uniform structure of the Guide (history of the library, scope and composition of the collection, current owner or administrator, literature on the library, conditions for using the collection, historical and current catalogues) provided a basis for a clear series of manuals intended for the professional and lay public. The multi-volume handbook of historical libraries with a predominantly German-language book collection in non-German-speaking Europe has a similar structure – *Handbuch deutscher historischer Buchbestände in Europa* [*Handbook of German Historical Books in Europe*]. This guide also captures the current state of three libraries of the aristocratic families: the Horvát-Stančič family in Strážky, the Keglevič family in Topoľčianky and the Ostrolúcky family¹⁵.

From the history of aristocratic libraries in Slovakia

So far, we consider the library of the Bishop of Nitra Zakariás Mossóczy and the book collections of the Thurzós and Zays, both leading Austro-Hungarian and Slovak aristocratic families to be the most important aristocratic libraries founded and operated during the period of humanism in the territory of today's Slovakia.

Z. Mossóczy (Zachariáš Mošovský, Mossovius 1542–1587), unlike the Thurzó family, did not belong to the ancient nobility. His aristocratic origins

12 *Šľachta stredného Slovenska a jej vplyv na kultúrny rozvoj regiónu*, eds. E. Augustínová, M. Bôbová, Banská Bystrica, 2015.

13 *Spríevodca po historických knižniciach na Slovensku. Zv. 1–4*, eds. P. Sabov et al., Martin 2001–2012.

14 The 1st volume includes the libraries of the families Zay, Apponyi, Senney from Biel, Andrassy and Mikuláš Forgách; the 2nd volume covers the libraries of the families Edelsheim-Gyulai and Príleský; the 3rd volume Sizzo-Noris, Zamarovský, Friesenhof, Ostrolúcky; the 4th volume Illésházy from Dubnica and from Trenčín, Rakovský and Szentiványi from Lontov, Csáky from Spišský Hrhov, Semsei, Steiger-Zamoysky.

15 *Handbuch deutscher historischer Buchbestände in Europa*. Bd. 4: *Slovak Republic*, Hildesheim 2000, pp. 307–313, 313–319, 347–351, [online] https://fabian.sub.uni-goettingen.de/fabian?Slowakische_Republik [accessed 13.05.2021].

have not yet been precisely determined by genealogists. It is believed that he belonged to the so-called *armálistas*, i.e. the new coat-of-arms nobles¹⁶. His library is one of the richest humanistic ones established in the territory of today's Slovakia. This library was reconstructed by Klára Komorová based on a testamentary list and preserved copies of books¹⁷. Z. Mossóczy was born in 1542; he probably studied in Bratislava, Trnava or Vienna, and later at the University of Kraków, where he obtained his master of arts degree. He devoted his whole life to a church career, reaching the rank of Bishop of Nitra (1582–1587). He began building up his library during his student years, purchasing or receiving books as gifts from leading scholars and church dignitaries of the time. These included the Slovak humanist Ján Sambucus, the Bishop of Transylvania and Nitra Pavol Bornemisa, the Archbishop of Esztergom Mikuláš Telegdy, the Flemish humanist Nicasius Ellebodius, and others. He kept the library in his apartment at Nitra Castle. According to the testamentary census, his library contained 936 prints and manuscripts of the 15th–16th century. It was dominated by theological literature, which corresponds to his professional focus. Nevertheless, he also owned philosophical, legal, linguistic, historical, scientific and medical books. In 1587 Z. Mossóczy bequeathed his library to his sister's husband, the nobleman Andrej Kecskés, and the library thus found its way to Bratislava. It was then inherited by Andrej's son, Ján Kecskés, who worked as the administrator of the Jesuit College in Bratislava. From him, the books of Z. Mossóczy were donated to the library of the Bratislava Jesuit College. Mossóczy's library has not been preserved intact; K. Komorová identified 455 titles in the collections of domestic and foreign libraries referring to possessory records¹⁸.

The **Thurzó** (Turzo) family played an important role in the political, economic, cultural, and ecclesiastical history of the 15th–17th centuries, not just in Austro-Hungary. Through their business activities in the field of mining and metallurgy, they also entered the pan-European business environment. As patrons and owners of book collections, they also made a significant impact on the book culture of the Central European area. Detailed information on this theme can be found in Helena Saktorová's book entitled *Turzovské knižnice (Osobné knižné zbierky a knihy dedikované členom rodu Turzovcov)* [*The Thurzó Libraries (Personal book collections and books dedicated to members of the Thurzó family)*]¹⁹. The extensive library was owned by the

16 F. Federmayer, *Neskorší majitelia knižnice Zachariáša Mošovského v genealogických súvislostiach*, "Studia Bibliographica Posoniensia" 2017, p. 14.

17 K. Komorová, *Knižnica Zachariáša...*, op. cit.

18 Ibidem, p. 30, pp. 49–259 contain a list of preserved titles.

19 H. Saktorová, *Turzovské knižnice...*, op. cit.

most prominent member of the family, the Austro-Hungarian Palatine Georgius Thurzó (Juraj Turzo 1567–1616), who contributed to the development of the Evangelical Church in Austro-Hungary, particularly in Slovakia. In addition to his military and political career in the service of Emperor Rudolf II, he was also the patron of many artists and scholars. From his residence in Bytča, he created an important cultural centre, where theatrical performances, concerts, theological and philosophical disputes were held, and where he also kept his library. Based on the period catalogue, we know that the library held about 450 books²⁰ in Renaissance leather binding with the supralibros C.G.T.R.H.P. (*Comes Georgius Thurzo Regni Hungariae Palatinus*) and its variants²¹. Other members of the Thurzó family also participated in the cultural events of the country; they owned libraries and were patrons of humanist authors, or supported Austro-Hungarian students during their studies. A notable patron of Silesian humanists was Johannes Thurzó IV (Ján Turzo 1466–1520), who was the Bishop of Wrocław in the years 1506–1520. He was helped in this by his brother Stanislav Thurzó (1471–1540), who as Bishop of Olomouc was in connection with the Moravian cultural environment. Today we know 217 titles from the libraries of members of the Thurzó family, which have been preserved yet scattered across several libraries both in Slovakia and abroad²².

Zay Library (Zai) is the second largest aristocratic library in our territory after the Apponyi Library in terms of its collections. This fact is based on statistical data of the Austro-Hungarian libraries dating from 1885, recording this library under the name of its then owner, Count Albert Zay, with a range of 20.500 volumes of books²³. The Zay family library has the longest genesis of development among all aristocratic libraries operating in the territory of today's Slovakia. Its origins go back to the Reformation. This is documented by a manuscript catalogue of Franciscus Zay written in 1553, whom we can rightly call the founder of the family's library. The catalogue contains 81 titles printed by medieval, humanistic and reformist authors in the 15th century and the first half of the 16th century²⁴. F. Zay (František Zai 1505–1570) founded the family library at the castle estate Uhrovec, which he received for his services in the battles against the Turks as a donation from King Ferdinand I in 1547. In the service of this monarch, he worked not only as a warrior against the Turks but also as a military official and diplomat, thus gaining the title of Baron for himself and his sons in 1560. However, he did not confine

20 Ibidem, p. 12.

21 Ibidem, p. 20.

22 Ibidem, p. 24, pp. 41–188 contains a bibliographic list of preserved titles.

23 A. György, *Magyarország köz- és magánkönyvtárai 1885-ben*, Budapest 1886, pp. 522–523, [online] <http://mek.oszk.hu/13200/13294/pdf/> [accessed 11.05.2021].

24 H. Saktorová, *Najstarší katalóg knižnice rodu Zaiovcov*, “Kniha” 2016, pp. 335–342.

himself to the pursuit of a military career. As a young man he studied at the University of Padua, he belonged to the circle of scholars around the diplomat and ecclesiastical dignitary Antun Vrančić (Antonius Verantius), with whom he took part in a diplomatic mission to the Ottoman Empire in the years 1553–1557. He spoke many languages, Hungarian, German, Serbian, Croat, Latin, Italian and probably Turkish. He corresponded with Austro-Hungarian and European humanists, whom he had encountered during his diplomatic journeys. His wealthy contacts certainly helped him build his library, and laid the foundations of the Zay family Library. These facts depict the person of F. Zay not just as a professional soldier and diplomat, but also as an intellectual. He was also literarily active, writing a work on the conquest of Belgrade by the troops of the Ottoman Empire in 1521, which is preserved in the manuscript. From among the analysed aristocratic libraries preserved in the territory of what is today Slovakia, the Zay Library contains the most prints from the 16th century – an impressive 488 titles. A bibliographic inventory and analysis of them were prepared by H. Saktorová²⁵. This library is so far the only aristocratic library in Slovakia that contains many mainly territorial Slovakia-related works²⁶. Its collection revealed hitherto unknown prints of “travelling or nomadic” printers who worked in the territory of Slovakia in the 16th century, such as Peter Bornemisa and Valentín Mančkovič. The collection of music notes, containing Slovak folk music, is also valuable²⁷. A catalogue has been preserved from the end of the 19th century, with 15.468 titles registered. The last owner of the library was Countess Margita Zay (1868–1937), and the library was stored at all times in the family residence in Uhrovec. After nationalisation, it was moved many times until it was transferred to the collections of the Matica slovenská in Martin, today the Slovak National Library. The library was built from the middle of the 16th century until 1937 and its current state is 22.454 volumes²⁸. The most detailed study of this library so far was published by Vševlad Jozef Gajdoš in 1968²⁹; more recent information is contained in a contribution by Peter Sabov from 2001³⁰.

25 H. Saktorová, *Tlače 16. storočia v šľachtickej knižnici rodu Zai*, Martin 2017.

26 There are a total of 610 titles of territorial Slovakia-related works, among them the most represented are book products of printers in Bratislava (446 editions), Levoča (43 editions) and in Trnava (46 editions), see *Spríevodca po historických knižniciach... Zv. 1*, 2001, p. 23.

27 P. Sabov, *Analýza súčasného stavu historických knižníc z Uhrovca a Oponíc*, “Teória a Výskum Knihovníctva a Bibliografie” 1996, pp. 52–62; *Spríevodca po historických knižniciach... Zv. 1*, pp. 18–24.

28 *Spríevodca po historických knižniciach... Zv. 1*, p. 19.

29 V.J. Gajdoš, *Zayovská knižnica v Uhrovci (stručná história a rozbor fondov)*, “Knižničný Zborník” 1968, pp. 94–119.

30 P. Sabov, *Zayovská knižnica*, [in:] *Spríevodca po historických knižniciach... Zv. 1*, pp. 18–24.

An example of a Baroque library in the history of aristocratic libraries in Slovakia is the aristocratic library at Červený Kameň Castle. It belonged to the **Pálffys** (Pálfi), one of the most politically influential and richest aristocratic families in Austro-Hungary. It was founded in the middle of the 18th century by a count Rudolf Pálffy (1719–1768) and was gradually built into a representative family library of encyclopaedic nature. Its books are now stored at two places, under the administration of two institutions. The original place of its storage is the Červený Kameň Castle, where only the torso of this library remains (approximately 2.580 volumes). This part of the Pálffy Library is administered by the Slovak National Museum – the Červený Kameň Museum (Slovenské národné múzeum – Múzeum Červený Kameň), where it is also part of the exhibition. Most of the collection with the rarest books (approximately 5.400 volumes) was transferred in 1952 to the University Library in Bratislava (Univerzitná knižnica v Bratislave). The library of R. Pálffy, the founder of the Červený Kameň family tree line, was an organised collection of books, which had its catalogue and professional construction of the collection. The catalogue was compiled in the second half of the 18th century and records 281 titles of books in 442 volumes. With the help of this catalogue, the reconstruction of the Rudolf Pálffy Library was carried out in the collection of the University Library in Bratislava (Univerzitná knižnica v Bratislave). The reconstruction revealed 107 out of a total of 281 titles registered in the catalogue. The preserved books were printed in the 16th–18th centuries, with a large predominance of the 18th-century books (86%). From a linguistic point of view, books in German clearly predominate (63%), the remaining 28% belong to books in French, Latin, Italian and Hungarian languages. The tradition of further building and expanding the library was continued by several descendants of R. Pálffy until the second half of the 20th century. During this development, the library's collection increased several times, from at least 462 volumes of R. Pálffy's library to 8.000 volumes of the family library. The most important historical moment in the development of the Pálffy library was the Second World War and the events that followed it, which adversely impacted the current state and the storage of its collection. The last owners saved the library from the greatest war damage by hiding it behind a solid wall in the castle shelter. Nevertheless, the library's nationalisation and transportation of the books in the 1940s and 1950s meant the demise of the library as a whole.

The Enlightenment period in the history of aristocratic libraries is represented by the Andrassy family libraries in the Betliar Manor House and the Apponyi family in Oponice. Despite the adversity of fate and time, both are stored in their original places.

The Andrassy Library and its books have not left the Betliar Manor House throughout its existence. Today, the library is included in the Manor House's

exposition and fall under the administration of the Slovak National Museum. The founder of the family library in Betliar is thought to be Count Lipot Andrásy (Leopold Andráši 1767–1824), the Enlightenment contemporary and expert in the field of mining and metallurgy. The Count was an educated traveller, numismatist, advocate of voltairism and a member of the Freemasonry movement. For the library purposes, he had a classicist building with a circular floor plan built – the rotunda, which is located at the entrance to the English landscape park. Count Andrásy promised to build a library building, combining his library as well as his natural and numismatic collection with the library of the Gemer Evangelical Seniorate of the Augsburg Confession in Štítnik. The library was inaugurated on 26 June 1816. It served not just for the needs of the family, but it was also used by researchers of the Gemer-Malohont Learned Society (Gemersko-malohontská učená spoločnosť). After 1909, the collection of the historical library was moved to the central area of the second floor of the Manor House, to the site of the former picture gallery. At present, the collection of this library consists of almost 15.000 volumes of books and magazines. From a chronological point of view, it covers the 15th–20th centuries, with the core of the collection fund dating from the 18th and 19th centuries. The oldest and rarest books include 5 first editions and 261 prints printed in the 16th century³¹. The library also registers 26 manuscripts from the 17th–19th centuries. The language composition is diverse, the books are written in more than 10 languages. We do not know any original historical catalogue of the library. The first inventory was compiled in 1947 by O. Wagner and contains 12.664 titles³².

The Apponyi Library was founded in 1774 in Vienna by György Antal Apponyi (Juraj Anton Aponi 1754–1817), who was a passionate collector of books. At the end of the 18th century, his library consisted of more than 30.000 volumes and was one of the largest libraries in Vienna. The Jesuit librarian Augustín Michelazzi greatly contributed to building up the library. After the death of G.A. Apponyi in 1817, the library was taken over by his son Antal Apponyi (Anton Aponi 1782–1852). Karol Anton Gruber (1760–1840) became the new librarian, who compiled an important source for the history of this library³³ and proposed to transfer the library to Bratislava and make it available to the public. On 13 June 1827, the Apponyi Library was placed in the newly built palace and inaugurated as the First Public Library

31 K. Takácsová, *Osudy historickej knižnice v kaštieli Betliar*, [in:] *Z dejín šľachtických knižnic na Slovensku I.*, p. 60, [online] <https://www.pulib.sk/web/kniznica/elpub/dokument/Domenova1> [accessed 14.05.2021].

32 A. Klimeková, *Historická knižnica Múzea Betliar*, [in:] *Spríevodca po historických knižniciach... Zv. 1*, pp. 108.

33 K.A. Gruber, *Collectio monumentorum quae in memoriam Bibliothecae Apponianae custodia sunt*, Posonii 1827.

in Bratislava. It operated here until 1846. Due to the city's lack of interest in funding it, the library was transferred to the family estate in Oponice, where a large gallery room was built for it. At that time, the collection held only 25.000 volumes of books, some of the rarest books were sold at auctions in Vienna in 1818 and 1819. Auctions continued also later, in 1892 the library lost rare prints, incunabula and manuscripts. In 1935, its last indebted owner, Henrik Apponyi (Henrich Aponi 1885–1935), sold it and yet another auction (1939) followed³⁴, but the library was saved from its overall piecemeal sale by the Second World War. After the war, the library was nationalised and in 1956 was assigned under the administration of the Matica slovenská, today the Slovak National Library in Martin. The latter had the library's collection transferred from Oponice to its building in Martin, where it was cleaned and restored. The library total of 15.042 volumes was relocated in 2011 back to its original space, to a completely reconstructed manor house in Oponice. Its collection still contains books from all disciplines, including fiction. From a chronological point of view, the 16th–20th-century books are represented in the library, with a predominance of books from the 18th–19th centuries. The 16th-century prints, of which 244 titles have been preserved, are expertly processed and analysed³⁵. The language structure of the whole collection is varied, containing books mostly in Latin, French and German³⁶. The most important historian of this library was V.J. Gajdoš (1907–1978), who published several works on the history of the library and its catalogues³⁷.

The aristocratic libraries, despite being established as private libraries, also performed important functions vis-à-vis society. Some aristocratic owners donated or bequeathed their libraries to various cultural and educational institutions, thus contributing to the development of important school and national libraries. For all the examples we will mention the famous **Illésházy Library from Dubnica nad Váhom**. Its last owner, Count István Illésházy (Štefan Ilešházi 1762–1838), bequeathed the library in 1835 to the emerging National Széchényi Library (Országos Széchényi Könyvtár) in Budapest. The Illésházy Library, with a collection of 6.000 works in 8.000 volumes, was one of the largest private collections donated to the library. Its size surpassed

34 On auction catalogues from auctions of the Oponice Library, see E. Augustínová, *O katalógoch Aponiovskej knižnice*, [in:] *Aponiovci v dejinách...*, pp. 53–66.

35 L. Fábryová, *Tlačé 16. storočia v knižniciach nitrianskeho samosprávneho kraja a nitrianskej diecézy*, Martin 2013; idem, *Aponiovská knižnica v Oponiciach a jej tlačé 16. storočia*, [in:] *Aponiovci v dejinách...*, pp. 67–79.

36 J. Cabadajová, *Analýza knižnice Aponiovcov*, [in:] *Aponiovci v dejinách...*, pp. 45–52.

37 V.J. Gajdoš, *Oponická knižnica*, Martin 1971; idem, *Katalógy Apponyiovskej knižnice v Oponiciach*, [in:] *Z minulosti knihy na Slovensku. Knihovedný zborník*, ed. B. Bálent, Martin 1959, pp. 211–264.

(by up to two thirds) the library of the founder Ferenc Széchenyi³⁸. By making it accessible to the public, the social function of this library has been fully fulfilled, albeit outside the territory of its foundation and origin.

In the complex history of book culture in Slovakia, aristocratic libraries occupied an underappreciated place for a certain period. The ruling socialist regime allowed their collections to merge with the collections of public libraries and archives. The only exception was reserved for the collections of prominent aristocratic families, which reached a European dimension during the life of their owners (Zay, Apponyi, Andrásy). The legitimate integration of aristocratic libraries into the history of book culture in Slovakia was hindered not only by their opaque state but also by the slow pace of progress in researching them. In individual stages of the historical development of the book, this type of library enjoyed a justified place in organising the social use of books in Slovakia and it deserves a rightful place in the complex history of book culture in Slovakia. The importance of aristocratic libraries is underlined by their breadth of content, which proves that the territory of Slovakia was not isolated from European progressive thinking in any area of human knowledge. They reflect the intellectual standard of life of the nobility, presenting themselves as one of the few literate classes of the population. The preserved collections of these libraries are an important part of the cultural heritage of the Slovak nation and a unique source for the history of books and book culture in Slovakia.

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38 E. Frimmová, *Vzťah Ilešháziocov ku knižnej kultúre*, “Kniha” 2002, p. 416.

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