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Aristocratic Libraries as Mirrors of Social and Cultural Identities: The Intellectual Network around Jozef Esterházy's Library in his Čeklís Manor in the 18th Century¹

Abstract: The study focuses on the phenomenon of aristocratic libraries as cultural centres and repositories in social history and the history of book culture. Aristocratic libraries reflected the social status, erudition, political ambitions, religious beliefs, and values of their owners. Research into them makes it possible to trace not only the dissemination of scientific and literary knowledge but also the processes involved in the reception and formation of European learning, intellectual networks, contacts with both domestic and foreign milieux, and the construction of cultural identities. Provenance evidence, dedications, ex-libris, loan records, and preserved correspondence reveal contacts between members of the nobility, scholars, church dignitaries, and officials. The library thus emerges as a hub of communication and of politico-intellectual networks. The authors present their research on aristocratic libraries through the example of the library of the prominent politician and provincial judge of the Kingdom of Hungary Jozef Esterházy at his manor in Čeklís (present-day Bernolákovo in Slovakia). Their aim is to contribute to a broader reflection on the history of book culture while at the same time expanding the perspectives within the study of the history of knowledge. In the context of the intellectual network that developed around Jozef Esterházy's library, the study also highlights the connections between Hungarian (in the historical sense) and Polish historical and scholarly traditions.

Keywords: aristocratic libraries – noble libraries – history of book culture – history of knowledge – transfer of ideas – intellectual networks – 18th century – aristocratic library of Jozef Esterházy (1682–1748) in his Čeklís (Bernolákovo, Slovakia) manor – Hungarian-Slovak-Polish relations

¹ This study was written as part of the project *APVV-22-0130 Aristocratic Libraries of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries in Western and Central Slovakia*.

Słowa kluczowe: biblioteki arystokratyczne – biblioteki szlacheckie – historia kultury książki – historia wiedzy – transfer idei – sieci intelektualne – XVIII wiek – biblioteka arystokratyczna Józefa Esterházyego (1682–1748) w jego posiadłości w Čeklísie (Bernolákovo, Słowacja) – relacje węgiersko-słowacko-polskie

Introduction

The aristocratic book culture in 18th-century Kingdom of Hungary was shaped by education, European cultural impulses, traditions of patronage, and the aristocracy's personal passion for books and knowledge. Modern intellectual currents such as the Enlightenment and Freemasonry penetrated Kingdom of Hungary largely thanks to rich aristocratic libraries, which became important centres of European science and literature. The dynamics of the era and its tendency towards a cult of authority and splendour led to a willingness to sacrifice considerable wealth for expensive books and library furnishings. The library thus became one of the attributes that elevated individuals above the masses of ordinary people².

The spread of Enlightenment ideas gradually influenced the contents of the libraries of the Hungarian aristocracy, particularly from the second half of the 18th century onwards. In addition to literature in Latin and German, which had previously dominated most Hungarian aristocratic libraries, books in French began to appear in greater numbers, while secular and practical works became increasingly sought-after. Libraries often included specialised collections devoted to national history and literature – so-called *patriotica* – reflecting a growing interest in domestic history and cultural identity. The secularisation of library collections and the shift towards domestic history at the end of the 18th century demonstrate that the Hungarian nobility underwent a significant intellectual transformation, moving from medieval piety towards Enlightenment curiosity. Aristocratic libraries were not only a reflection of these changes but also an active agent in them: they provided spaces where new ideas could be stored, studied, and subsequently disseminated throughout society³. The synergy of learnedness and power thus laid the foundations for modern intellectual culture and significantly accelerated its development within historical Kingdom of Hungary.

2 M. Szarvasi, *Magánkönyvtáraink a XVIII. században: (Főpapok és főurak, nemesek és polgárok gyűjteményei)*, [online], Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum Orsz. Széchényi Könyvtára, Budapest 1939, <https://mek.oszk.hu/03200/03246/03246.htm> [access 13.01.2026].

3 I. Monok, *Transformations de L'ordre des Bibliothèques Aristocratiques dans la Hongrie des 17e–18e Siècles*, “Hungarian Studies” 2012, vol. 26, pp. 241–250, [online] <https://doi.org/10.1556/hstud.26.2012.2.5> [access 2024-12-12].

Research into aristocratic libraries shows that their significance must be understood within the broader intellectual networks that formed around them. These networks consisted of scholars, professors, clergy, officials, specialists in various fields, and aristocrats, all interconnected through personal contacts and the exchange of books, manuscripts, and information. Hungarian aristocrats did not create libraries solely to satisfy their own tastes and the needs of their families, but also made them available to scholars, teachers, students living nearby⁴, and professional staff on their estates. In this sense, the aristocratic library emerged as a unique phenomenon at the intersection of private and public intellectual space⁵. Through the lending of books, intellectual networks were created in which knowledge was transferred across denominational, social, and professional boundaries. Hungarian practice confirms that knowledge was perceived as a universal value that transcended narrowly defined partial interests. In this system, the library functioned as a hub that connected local and supra-regional intellectual spaces and created conditions for the emergence of a shared cultural discourse.

The library of Count Jozef Esterházy (1682–1748) at Čeklís manor (today Bernolákovo, Slovakia) represents a prime example of an aristocratic library functioning as the core of such an intellectual network. Esterházy himself was its principal protagonist – patron, organiser, and mediator of knowledge – whose role extended far beyond bibliophilia. He consciously created a space for cooperation between scholars of different denominations, social backgrounds, and professions. The case of J. Esterházy’s library at Čeklís manor demonstrates that aristocratic libraries were an important factor in the modernisation of knowledge in Kingdom of Hungary. Their existence and openness contributed to the fact that the country did not remain on the periphery of the European intellectual sphere but participated actively in the reception and production of scientific and historical discourses.

Jozef Esterházy – an important Hungarian politician and army commander, Ban of Croatia and provincial judge of the Kingdom of Hungary during the reign of Maria Theresa – established his aristocratic library in the Čeklís manor that he had built between 1713 and 1725. The size of the library collection was comparable, in terms of the number of volumes, to other aristocratic libraries of the period. Noble libraries in Kingdom of Hungary in the 17th

4 I. Monok, *The Cultural Horizon of Aristocrats in the Hungarian Kingdom*, Praesens Verlag 2019, p. 29.

5 P. Bourdieu, *The Forms of Capital*, [in]: ed. J. Richardson, *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, Greenwood 1986, pp. 241–258, [online] https://home.iitk.ac.in/~amman/soc748/bourdieu_forms_of_capital.pdf [access 12.12.2024].

and 18th centuries usually contained around 1,000 to 2,000 volumes, which could increase to approximately 5,000 in cases where collections accumulated through generational inheritance⁶. This was not the case with J. Esterházy's library, which he built up from scratch, practically beginning with the first book and without any connection to a pre-existing family collection. The catalogue compiled in 1749⁷, which records the state of the collection as Esterházy left it, lists a total of 882 titles and 1,100 volumes. Since the catalogue does not record the units within composite volumes, the number of works owned by the count was undoubtedly even higher. A detailed thematic analysis of the catalogue reveals the presence and predominance of several groups of literature: banned books ("libri prohibiti", all intended for sale or exchange, predominantly Protestant theological literature)⁸, school literature (textbooks), military works, mathematics, architecture, technology, history, politics, economics, agriculture, books about horses, household management, medicine, law, geography, religious literature, classical literature, dictionaries and encyclopaedic works, belles-lettres, and works by Byzantine and Hungarian authors. In terms of language, the collection was predominantly Latin, but it also included books in German, Hungarian, French, Italian, Greek, and Hebrew, as well as multilingual works containing texts in Biblical Czech, Illyrian, Spanish, and English. Chronologically, the collection encompassed printed books and manuscripts dating from the 15th to the 18th centuries.

The Intellectual Network Around Count Jozef Esterházy's (1682–1748) Library in Čeklís

In his collecting and patronage activities, J. Esterházy continued the family traditions of his ancestors, both on his father's side (František Esterházy, 1641–1683) and on his mother's side (Katarína Thökölyová, 1655–1701). His paternal grandfather was Mikuláš Esterházy (1583–1645)⁹, Palatine of King-

6 I. Monok, *The Cultural Horizon of Aristocrats...* p. 124.

7 S. Székely de Doba, *Catalogus Librorum qui in Bibliotheca Comitum Josephi Eszterházy, in Cseklesz prope Posonium reperiuntur confectus Aprili 1749 per Samuelem Székely de Doba Locumtenentem ex Ejusdem Comitum legatione, 1749, Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, Budapest, shelfmark: Kézirattár, Fol. Lat. 4.*

8 We examined the possible reasons for the presence of banned books in Jozef Esterházy's library (which accounted for almost 10% of the entire collection) – see: L. Lichnerová, M. Špániová, *The Čeklís Branch of the Hungarian Noble Family of the Esterházy's in their Čeklís Manor (Bernolákovo, Slovakia) in the Mirror of Book Culture*, "Res Gestae" 2025, no. 20, pp. 117–145.

9 For more detail, see D. Duchoňová, *Palatín Mikuláš Esterházy a jeho dvor. Spoločnosť, normy, rituály každodennosti*, Bratislava 2013.

dom of Hungary, a patron of culture and the Church, a supporter of the Jesuits, and the founder of one of the most important family libraries in the Kingdom of Hungary, known as the “Esterhasiana Bibliotheca”, which originated in Lackenbach (Austria) and was later continued in Eisenstadt and Forchtenstein¹⁰. On his mother’s side, Jozef Esterházy’s great-great-grandfather was Count and Palatine Juraj Thurzo (1567–1616), a patron of Hungarian Lutherans and a central figure in Hungarian Protestantism, a supporter of humanistic education and cultural life, a bibliophile who established an important noble library in the Slovak regions of Kingdom of Hungary in Bytča. Research into their libraries reveals the breadth of cultural relations, activities, and influence exercised by both the Esterházy and Thurzo families within the context of literary and book culture in Kingdom of Hungary and Central Europe¹¹.

Like his ancestors, J. Esterházy acted as a patron of culture, spirituality, and scholarship. His appreciation of education and culture was demonstrated not only through the valuable library that he established and expanded, but also through his support for students, scholars, and Catholic religious orders. The intellectual network that developed around him included some of the most prominent Hungarian scholars of the period. One of the earliest figures associated with the count’s circle was his “fiscalis”, the Trnava lawyer and polymath Štefan Pavol Munkáči (1683–1723). The cooperation between the two men appears to have extended well beyond legal services. When Munkáči died in 1724, J. Esterházy purchased his library in accordance with Munkáči’s last will¹² and incorporated it into his own collection, which he made accessible to Hungarian intellectuals for the purposes of their scholarly research. This was by no means an insignificant library. Although its catalogue has not survived, another prominent intellectual of the time, the Hungarian polymath and one of the most important European Enlightenment scholars of the 18th century Matej Bel (1684–1749) described Munkáči as a lover of books, “which he accumulated passionately at great expense – expense that almost exceeded his income. He obtained, among others, the best editions of the most outstanding authors, mostly from abroad, and his remarkable collection resembled more

10 I. Monok, E. Zvara, *Esterhasiana Bibliotheca. A gyűjtemény története és könyvanyagának rekonstrukciója*, Budapest 2020, p. 9, [online] https://real.mtak.hu/112863/1/Esterhasiana_Bibliotheca_2020_K.pdf [access 12.08.2024].

11 H. Saktorová, *Turzovské knižnice (Osobné knižné zbierky a knihy dedikované členom rodu Turzovcov)*, Martin 2009.

12 [Š.P. Munkácsi], Testamentum Domini Stephani Munkácsy. 16. Februarij 1723, manuscript, Ministerstvo vnútra SR, Štátny archív v Trnave, fonds: Magistrát mesta Trnava. Testamenty, shelfmark: Fasc. 9, No. 17, Inv. No. 382.

a public than a private library”¹³. Štefan Pavol Munkáči’s library was therefore not regarded merely as private property, but rather as cultural and intellectual heritage intended for the broader community of scholars and scientists. His testamentary decision that the collection should be purchased by J. Esterházy demonstrates his conscious effort to ensure the continuity of knowledge and the accessibility of the book collection even after his death. The choice of Esterházy as the new custodian of the library was thus not accidental but a logical step based on the expectation that its new owner would respect its original mission and preserve it as an open and living part of the intellectual sphere. Matej Bel himself expressed the wish that Munkáči’s library, from which he had personally borrowed books, should after its owner’s untimely death pass into the hands of someone who, “if not similar to Munkáči, should at least not be difficult to approach and should be inclined to assist us”¹⁴. Bel’s request demonstrates that he considered the preservation and accessibility of knowledge to be of paramount importance. In his view, a library should function as a dynamic shared resource rather than a closed private possession. His efforts to secure the continuity of Munkáči’s collection and its accessibility to researchers also reveal the close interconnection of the regional intellectual network and the systematic exchange of information about collections among Hungarian scholars. It should also be noted that Munkáči and Bel borrowed books from one another and worked closely together. Munkáči is believed to have been Bel’s closest collaborator in gathering information about Trnava and the surrounding region for Bel’s work *Notitia Hungariae Novae*¹⁵.

Matej Bel was a prominent figure at the centre of J. Esterházy’s intellectual circle. His reputation extended far beyond the Kingdom of Hungary, and as a member of several foreign learned societies – including the Royal Society in London, the Berlin Academy of Sciences, the Latin Society in Jena, and the *Societas incognitorum in terris Austriacis* in Olomouc – he became integrated into a wide European network of scholarship. As a polymath and polyglot working on a comprehensive encyclopaedic historical and geographical description of Kingdom of Hungary – *Notitia Hungariae Novae historico-geographica* (Historical and Geographical Knowledge of Modern-Day Kingdom of Hungary) – Bel represented the broader historical trends of the 18th century, where knowledge and texts circulated between Kingdom of Hungary and

13 M. Bel, *Hungariae antiquae et novae prodromus cum specimine, quomodo in singulis Operis Partibus Elaborandi*, Norimberg 1723, Praefatio.

14 M. Bel, *Hungariae antiquae et novae prodromus...* Praefatio, § XII.

15 E. Juriková, *Matthias Bel and Trnava. An Analysis of Latin Written Sources*, “Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae” 2009, vol. 49, pp. 241–248.

other European regions (including Poland) through transnational academic networks. Through his *Notitia*, Bel became the founder of modern homeland studies in Kingdom of Hungary. In compiling this work, he relied on the cooperation of dozens of collaborators – students as well as Protestant and Catholic scholars – who collected data on the regions of Kingdom of Hungary and conducted field research for him. Bel subsequently undertook the final processing and editorial work on this essentially collective project, which may therefore be regarded as the product of teamwork¹⁶. This work, to which Bel devoted all his life, was supported by Emperor Charles VI and is considered the most important achievement of Enlightenment scholarship in Kingdom of Hungary¹⁷. For his meritorious scientific activity, he was referred to by his contemporaries as “the great ornament of Kingdom of Hungary” (*Magnum decus Hungariae*). In the wider European context, particularly in Germany, Austria, Bohemia, and Poland, Bel was regarded as the foremost expert on Kingdom of Hungary. From the perspective of scholarly communication, he remains one of the most frequently cited authors¹⁸.

Bel’s works were also cited in Poland by contemporary Enlightenment historians and scholars. For example, the 18th-century Polish historian and politician Gottfried Lengnich used Bel’s *Hungariae antiquae et novae prodromus* (Introduction to the History of Ancient and Modern-day Kingdom of Hungary; Nuremberg, 1723), in which Bel analysed scientific research on the historical, ethnographic, geographical, and linguistic development of Kingdom of Hungary, as one of the sources for compiling his own work on the history of Poland, *Historia Polona a Lecho in annum 1748* (Gdańsk, 1750)¹⁹. Both Bel and Lengnich belonged to the same academic milieu of the University of Halle, where they had studied. However, Lengnich began his studies three years after Bel had completed his, so it is unlikely that they met in person there. Bel was therefore perceived as an internationally respected authority whose works circulated widely within the scholarly networks of Central Europe. The fact that his *Prodromus* was used by the Polish historian Gottfried Lengnich in the preparation of his own history of Poland demonstrates the close connections between Hungarian and Polish Enlightenment historiography. It also confirms

16 I. Kollárová, I. Nagy, *Matej Bel: Osobnosť, médium a transfer ideí na prahu osvietenstva*. Literárne informačné centrum 2021, p. 134.

17 Ibidem, p. 28.

18 Ibidem, p. 8.

19 Evidence for this can be found in the index of cited authors (*Index I. Auctorum*) in the following work: G. Lengnich, *Historia Polona a Lecho ad Avgvsti II mortem*, Lipsiae: impensis Iacobi Schvster 1740. Digitalised access at: [online] <https://polona.pl/item-view/36d25fe1-95f1-4b5d-83c3-9885011ecb52?page=501> [access 15.02.2026].

that knowledge about Kingdom of Hungary was actively transmitted to the Polish scholarly community through Bel's writings.

For research into J. Esterházy's library in Čeklís, it is particularly significant that M. Bel was the first author to describe and publish information about Esterházy's manor house in Čeklís in his *Notitia* (Vienna, 1736), where he also mentioned its remarkable library²⁰. Our research has further demonstrated that Bel and J. Esterházy borrowed books from one another. Their collaboration mainly concerned the Paris edition of works by Byzantine authors, containing bilingual Latin–Greek texts of Byzantine writers collectively referred to as the *Corpus Historiae Byzantinae* (the so-called Byzantine Corpus)²¹. The Byzantine Corpus represents the earliest predecessor of the modern *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*, which today constitutes a fundamental source for the study of Byzantine historical texts. The Paris edition of the corpus had an enormous impact on early modern European scholarship. Its publication began in 1645 at the Royal Printing House (Regia Lutetiae Typographaei Officina, Typographia Regia) in Paris at the initiative of French scholars interested in Byzantine history. The project represented a monumental undertaking aimed at making the Greek texts of Byzantine historians and chroniclers available in printed form, mostly accompanied by Latin translations and scholarly annotations. Publication continued until 1688, with additional supplements appearing until 1819²². The project was initially directed by the French Jesuit scholar Philippe Labbe (1607–1667), whose own work *De Byzantinae historiae scriptoribus* (Paris, 1648) is regarded by modern historiography as a foundational achievement for future generations in historical scholarship²³. In total, thirty-eight volumes of the Byzantine Corpus were published in Paris, containing the writings of nearly all known Byzantine historians from the 4th to the 15th centuries. Jozef Esterházy acquired at least thirty-three of these titles, as recorded in his library catalogue. Among them are many Byzantine treasures and works of incalculable value, which are truly exceptional within the Hungarian intellectual context.

20 M. Bel, *Notitia Hungariae novae historico geographica, ... Tomus Secundus*, Viennae Austriae: Impensis PAVLLI STRAUBII Bibliopola, Typis JOHANNIS PETRI VAN GHELEN Typographi Caesari 1736, pp. 177–178. Also available as a Google Book.

21 Sometimes referred to as the “Paris Corpus”. See: G.D.R. de Candal, *Bibliographia Historica Byzantina: A Historical and Bibliographical Description of the Early Editions of the Corpus Historiae Byzantinae (1556–1645)*, 2015, p. 12, [online] https://www.academia.edu/64909944/_The-sis_Bibliographia_Historica_Byzantina_a_historical_and_bibliographical_description_of_the_early_editions_of_the_Corpus_Historiae_Byzantinae_1556_1645_ [access 15.02.2026].

22 G.D.R. de Candal, *Bibliographia Historica Byzantina...* p. 12.

23 Labbe, Philippe, [in]: *Encyclopedia.com*, [online] <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/labbe-philippe> [access 15.02.2026].

From the aforementioned rare Paris edition of works by Byzantine authors, in 1744 J. Esterházy lent M. Bel the first volume of the work by the French Jesuit who initiated the series in the 17th century – Philippe Labbé's *De Byzantinae historiae scriptoribus*. Bel requested this volume in a letter²⁴, explaining that he required it in order to complete the eleventh part of the second volume of his work *Adparatus ad Historiam Hungariae* (Preparation for the History of Kingdom of Hungary) about Attila the Hun through excerpts from *Attila missis, acceptisque legationibus, illustris ex Prisco rhetore sophista*, written by the rhetorician, diplomat, and historian Priscus, who had served at Attila's court. From a publishing perspective, *Adparatus* is regarded as Bel's most significant editorial undertaking. At the time of its publication in 1735, it represented the largest edition of historical sources relating to the history of Kingdom of Hungary. Jozef Esterházy was among several prominent Hungarian figures to whom the work was dedicated, in recognition of their support for the author.

Equally noteworthy is the fact that Bel also lent books to Count J. Esterházy. Among them was the universal encyclopaedia commonly known as Hübner's *Lexicon*²⁵, which contained information useful to the count regarding coal²⁶. On his estate in Tata, specifically in the village of Somló (in present-day Hungary), where a coal deposit had been discovered, Esterházy intended to initiate coal mining. At the time, however, he lacked sufficient knowledge and financial resources for such an undertaking²⁷.

The examples of M. Bel and J. Esterházy demonstrate that denominational differences did not represent an obstacle to cooperation among members of the Hungarian intelligentsia. Bel was an Evangelical Lutheran pastor and rector of the Evangelical Lutheran Gymnasium in Bratislava, whereas Esterházy was a devout Catholic who actively supported the recatholicisation of his estates. Despite their differing denominational affiliations, Esterházy remained a supporter of Bel. Their actions illustrate that knowledge was perceived as a value transcending religious boundaries.

24 Bél Mátyás levele Esterházy Józsefnek könyvkölcsönzés ügyében, 1744, Egyetemi könyvtár, Budapest, shelfmark: LEO0562b, RD42151, kéziratár. Letter of 12.9.1744 – see also: L.N. Szelestei (ed.), *Bél Mátyás levelezése*. Budapest 1993, p. 519. Also available at: <https://mek.oszk.hu/17800/17810/17810.pdf> [access 28.01.2025].

25 *Reales Staats-, Zeitungs- und Conversations-Lexicon*.

26 Information about this loan is preserved in a letter written by Jozef Esterházy to his regent and estate administrator Ferenc Balogh on 17 July 1746: Esterházy József országbíró levelei Balog Ferenc uradalmi régenshez, Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár – Országos Levéltár, Budapest, shelfmark: P197, capsza 50, fasc. 104 (1741–1748), l. 112.

27 É.M. Fülöp, Cs. Schmidtmayer, *Galántai Balogh Ferenc (1708–1765) régens: A Billegpusztai rezidenciális központ*, Tata 2017, p. 29.

In the Slovak regions, works on Byzantine history were published in the mid-18th century by the University Press in Trnava. Between 1738 and 1760, for example, nineteen known editions of the compendium *Epitome Historia Byzantinae* (A Brief History of the Byzantine Empire) were published. The author and editor of this work was the Hungarian physicist, astronomer, historian, Jesuit, professor of philosophy, and rector of the University of Trnava, František Borgia Kéri (1702–1768), who was likewise connected to the Čeklís library. Kéri was a distinguished scholar and a recognised Hungarian specialist in Byzantine and Ottoman history. In this work he traced Byzantine history from the reign of Constantine the Great to the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans, drawing primarily on Greek sources. One of his aims was to examine Byzantine–Hungarian relations and to emphasise the role of medieval Kingdom of Hungary within the wider network of international relations²⁸. Esterházy owned Kéri’s work in his library at Čeklís in the 1741 edition. In addition, Kéri published an overview of Byzantine rulers entitled *Imperatores Orientis*, including portraits of the emperors (Trnava, 1744), covering the period from Constantine the Great to the last emperor, Constantine XI, whose reign ended with the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453²⁹. All editions of *Epitome Historia Byzantinae*, including the copy owned by Esterházy, were issued by the University of Trnava as so-called graduation prints, that is, publications distributed on the occasion of bachelor’s and master’s degree ceremonies³⁰. For this reason, they also contain historical questions relating to Byzantine history that were discussed during the academic ceremony (problemata in actu decisa). This valuable evidence indicates that, at the turn of the 1730s and 1740s, Byzantine history was likely part of the curriculum of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Trnava³¹. Contemporary historians regard Kéri’s historiographical work as unique within European Byzantine studies of the 16th to 18th centuries and consider it the very first comprehensive his-

28 S. Zavorský, *K latinským pamiatkam spätým so zjednotenou cirkvou byzantsko-slovanského obradu na Slovensku (17. a 18. storočie) – prehľad výskumu*, [in]: P. Žeňuch et al.; eds. S. Vašíčková, L. Wilšínská, *Pohlady do problematiky cyrilskej písomnej tradície na Slovensku*, Bratislava 2019, pp. 113–124. Also available at: https://www.academia.edu/39164282/Poh%C4%BEady_do_problematiky_cyrilskej_p%C3%ADsomnej_trad%C3%ADcie_na_Slovensku, p. 121 [access 08.02.2026].

29 E. Juriková, *Latinská baroková literatúra. Literatúra z prostredia historickej Trnavskej univerzity*, Trnavská univerzita 2022, p. 51, [online] https://ff.truni.sk/sites/default/files/dokumenty/katedry/kkj/TRUNI_LATINSKA_BAROKOVA_LITERATURA_VNUTRO_KOREKTURA_1.pdf [access 10.02.2026].

30 A. Klimeková, E. Augustínová and J. Ondroušková, *Bibliografia územne slovacikálnych tlačí 18. storočia. Zväzok III. I – M*. Slovenská národná knižnica 2008, pp. 129–133.

31 S. Zavorský, *K latinským pamiatkam...* p. 122.

toriographical treatment of the Byzantine Empire produced within European Byzantine studies³².

Jozef Esterházy's contribution and the significance of his library for the history of knowledge – not only in Kingdom of Hungary but also in a broader European context – are therefore indisputable. Esterházy lent Kéri books from his Byzantine collection, which served as essential sources for the preparation of Kéri's scholarly works. We know, for example, that in 1740 he lent him the six-volume *Historia Nea* by the Byzantine historian Zosimus, published in Oxford in 1679. This work contains a detailed account of the later history of the Roman Empire from the end of the 3rd to the beginning of the 6th century and includes Zosimus's reflections on the causes of the decline of Roman imperial power. In a letter requesting the loan of the volume, Kéri emphasised that he would be "immensely grateful for this kindness for the rest of His Grace's life"³³. Such wording illustrates not only the dependence of scholars on aristocratic libraries as repositories of knowledge but also the close connection between Esterházy's library and academic centres such as the University of Trnava, where the count himself had completed his philosophical studies. Kéri used and cited Zosimus's *Historia Nea* in the section of his work devoted to the reign of Constantine the Great³⁴. The 1741 edition of *Epitome Historia Byzantinae*, which was part of Esterházy's collection, may have been presented to the count by the author himself as a token of gratitude for lending him the source material. This exchange represents an important example of the intensive and mutually beneficial cooperation between J. Esterházy and the intellectuals of Trnava – professors at its university. This cooperation resulted in significant acquisitions for the Čeklís library: Esterházy's library catalogue included among books by Hungarian writers (classified under *Scriptores Hungarici*) numerous *slovacica* written by authors tied to the Slovak regions – professors who lectured at the University of Trnava, among them Kéri himself. These scholars shaped the intellectual environment of the university and its broader cultural sphere and directly influenced Esterházy's own intellectual and educational horizons.

Jozef Esterházy began to assemble a thematic collection of Byzantine authors published in Paris as early as 1731. The organisation of this collection

32 Ibidem, p. 121.

33 G. Kolinovics, *Gabrielis Kolinovics... Epistolarum. Liber III.*, Senqviczii 1755, manuscript, Egyetemi Könyvtár, Budapest, shelfmark: G 90, p. 457.

34 A.J. Tóth, *Kéri Borgia Ferenc Bizánci történetének forrásai*, "Antik Tanulmányok" 2025, vol. 69, no. 1, p. 91, [online] <https://akjournals.com/view/journals/092/69/1/article-p83.xml> [access 11.02.2026].

was entrusted to the Hungarian scholar of Croatian origin from Šenkvice, Gabriel Kolinovič Šenkvičský (1698–1770), who had established a reputation as a scribe, accountant, historian, and later as a compiler of indices and organiser of libraries and archives. Kolinovič described the Byzantine collection as particularly important and noted that it was stored in a separate cabinet so that the volumes could be kept together within the library³⁵. It is likely that such a collection was unique among the Hungarian nobility; according to an analysis of published catalogues, works of this kind were not preserved in comparable numbers in other aristocratic libraries in the region³⁶. Kolinovič also compiled the first catalogue of Esterházy's library and, in collaboration with the count, developed a methodology for arranging the collection. This system combined thematic and author-based classification with the recording of formal characteristics of the books, creating a hybrid organisational model. Surviving sources describing the classification and arrangement of the library³⁷ indicate that the collection was divided into eleven principal and several subsidiary classes and stored in 17 glass-fronted cabinets, as Kolinovič himself recorded in his works *Idaea procerum* and *Posthuma memoria*³⁸. The intention was to create a systematically organised and logically structured body of knowledge that respected both the spatial possibilities of the library and the aesthetic requirements of representative visual arrangement.

As an author and historian, G. Kolinovič left behind an extensive body of work. Some of his writings were published in print, while many others remained in manuscript form. At the same time, he built his own personal library, which he referred to as a *musaeum*, and regarded its preservation in its entirety as essential. He explicitly requested that after his death the collection

35 G. Kolinovics, *Posthuma Memoria Josephi Esterházii De Galantha...* Tyrnaviae: Typis Academicis Societ. Jesu 1754, Univerzitná knižnica, Bratislava, shelfmark 22.D.12320.

36 L. Czeglédi, T. Kruppa and I. Monok, *Magyarországi magánkönyvtárak V.: 1643–1750*, Budapest 2010, pp. 72–113.

37 G. Kolinovics, *Gabrielis Kolinovics... Epistolarum. Liber IV.*, Senqviczii 1755, manuscript, Egyetemi Könyvtár, Budapest, shelfmark: G 90; ed. M.G. Kovachich, *Gabrielis Kolinovics Senquicziensis Chronicon Militaris Ordinis Equitum Templariorum*, Pestini: Litteris Trattnerianis 1789.; G. Kolinovics, *Idaea procerum in sapientia laureata Joseph Esterházii... Libri IV.* (a. 1729–1748.). Senquiczii, 1749; G. Kolinovics, *Fatorum Posthuae Jos. C. Esterházij Memoriae. Liber I.* [s. a.], Egyetemi Könyvtár, Budapest, shelfmark: G 90; G. Kolinovics, *Vita et gesta Gabrielis Kolinovics Senquicziensis. 1698–1770*, Egyetemi Könyvtár, Budapest, shelfmark: G 99; ed. M.G. Kovachich, *Gabrielis Kolinovics... Epistolarum. Liber IV....*; G. Kolinovics, *Posthuma memoria Josephi Esterházii de Galantha...*

38 G. Kolinovics, *Idaea procerum in sapientia laureata Joseph Esterházii...* p. 40; An almost identical description can also be found in: G. Kolinovics, *Posthuma memoria Josephi Esterházii de Galantha...* pp. 31–32.

should neither be divided nor merged with other libraries, thus demonstrating a strong sense of systematic organisation, continuity of the collection, and respect for provenance. After organising Esterházy's library, Kolinovič was granted permanent access to the count's book collection and family archives³⁹. He worked as a librarian for Esterházy at Čeklís manor and made extensive use of the collection for his own scholarly work. Significantly, thanks to his unrestricted access to Esterházy's archival documents, Kolinovič also became the count's biographer. He composed an extensive Latin biography of J. Esterházy, which was published in Trnava in 1754⁴⁰.

Kolinovič was not merely an isolated "domestic" librarian; rather, he operated within a network of scholarly contacts. Evidence of his activities is preserved in the correspondence⁴¹ that he copied by hand. The letters bear witness to a "living" library that served as a tool for education and professional research even outside the Esterházy noble residence. The network of contacts that Kolinovič gradually established and maintained around the count's library, as well as around his own collection in Veľké Šenkvice, can be interpreted as part of a broader model of information circulation in early modern Kingdom of Hungary, where the exchange of books, manuscripts, and scholarly letters served as an effective substitute for an absent institutionalised distribution infrastructure. Kolinovič maintained contact with the aforementioned M. Bel, for whom he compiled indices for the extensive historical and geographical works *Adparatus* and *Notitia*. He also mediated and lent books to Bel, and their correspondence refers to specific loans while emphasising the disciplined return of borrowed volumes.

Letters and other archival documents reveal the collaboration between J. Esterházy and his librarian G. Kolinovič with Bernhard Heinrich von Germeten (1680–1737), a Prague professor of law who worked in Vienna in the service of the Habsburgs. In Vienna he held several important offices, including director of the Hungarian Royal Chancery, imperial counsellor, and secret director of the chancery of Duke Francis Stephen of Lorraine. Kolinovič borrowed books from Germeten's Vienna library for his own studies⁴², while at the same time securing loans for Germeten from the Esterházy library in Čeklís⁴³. Germeten's name is also connected with the work of the polymath

39 G. Kolinovics, *Gabrielis Kolinovics... Epistolarum. Liber IV...* p. 3.

40 G. Kolinovics, *Posthuma memoria Josephi Esterházi de Galantha*. Tyrnaviae: Typis Academicis soc. Jesu 1754.

41 J. Pavelek (translator; compiler), *Listy Mateja Bela*, Matica slovenská 1990.

42 G. Kolinovics, *Gabrielis Kolinovics... Epistolarum. Liber IV...* p. 468, Letter IX.

43 *Ibidem*, p. 466, Letter V.

M. Bel. He was expected to act as guarantor for the learned society *De litteraria societate Posonii instituenda*, which Bel planned to establish in 1735. This project, the first of its kind in Kingdom of Hungary, aimed to create a universal nationwide scholarly society based in Bratislava that would publish the scientific journal *Observationes Posonienses* (Observations from Bratislava)⁴⁴. Due to opposition from governmental circles, however, the project was never realised⁴⁵. Germeten maintained a close personal friendship with Esterházy, admired his genuine interest in culture and literature, and supported him politically⁴⁶.

Access to the Čeklís library extended to important employees of J. Esterházy's estates. Among them was the aforementioned secretary to the count and administrator of his estates, František Balogh. Evidence for this is provided by preserved correspondence between Balogh and the count's librarian G. Kolinovič, in which Balogh requests loans from the library.⁴⁷ The books he sought were primarily of an economic character, corresponding to the professional needs of a regent responsible for managing all of Esterházy's estates, including those located outside Kingdom of Hungary in Croatia. Balogh served for many years as the count's adviser in matters of business and investment. Through his work as administrator of the estates, he became one of the most respected Hungarian economic and financial experts of his time. He recommended specialists necessary for the development of the estates and advised Esterházy on the acquisition of useful economic literature, which he himself subsequently consulted. Balogh also built up a valuable private library, and surviving correspondence indicates that he and Kolinovič regularly borrowed books from one another. They even concluded an agreement that in the event of the death of one of them the other would inherit his books,⁴⁸ although this arrangement was never ultimately realised. The books belonging to Balogh and to the count also served an educational purpose for young officials working on the Esterházy estates. Under Balogh's guidance, they studied the theory of estate management, which helped them develop their practical skills⁴⁹.

Among the Slovak scholars and Enlightenment figures who collaborated with J. Esterházy, as well as with M. Bel and Esterházy's regent F. Balogh, particular attention should be given to the prominent Slovak cartographer,

44 J. Lukačka et al., *Chronológia starších slovenských dejín*. Bratislava: Prodama 2008, p. 213.

45 L.W. Prikryl, *Matej Bel ako geograf*. "Geografický časopis" 1984, vol. 36, no. 1, p. 14, [online] https://www.sav.sk/journals/uploads/05280954GC_1984_1_1_Prikryl.pdf [access 26.11.2024].

46 G. Kolinovics, *Posthuma memoria Josephi Esterházii de Galantha...* p. 34.

47 G. Kolinovics, *Gabrielis Kolinovics... Epistolarum. Liber IV...* p. 478.

48 É.M. Fülöp, Cs. Schmidt Mayer, *Galántai Balogh Ferenc (1708–1765) régens...* p. 29.

49 *Ibidem*, p. 101.

county mathematician and geodesist of Bratislava County⁵⁰, imperial geometer, and court engineer of J. Esterházy, Samuel Mikovíni⁵¹. Mikovíni almost certainly had access to the library at Čeklís. At least the technical and geographical works contained in the collection could have served as valuable sources for both his research and his work on the Esterházy estates. These may have included, for example, the treatise of the Italian humanist and priest Polidoro Vergilio, *De rerum inventoribus* (1613), dealing with the inventors of technical, scientific, and civilisational innovations, as well as the rare copy of the work of the Italian military engineer Agostino Ramelli (1531–c. 1610), *Le diverse et artificiose machine*, published in Paris in 1588. Ramelli's work belongs to a new genre of literature introduced at the end of the sixteenth century, often referred to as the “theatre of machines”. It presents a series of ingenious mechanical devices designed to solve practical problems of everyday life. Among other innovations, it contains elaborate designs for hydraulic mechanisms and water-management systems, which could have been useful to Mikovíni in his planning of drainage systems and sewerage works on Esterházy's estate in Tata (present-day Hungary). Under the command of J. Esterházy, Mikovíni also participated in the Silesian campaign during the War of the Austrian Succession of Maria Theresa as chief engineer of the Hungarian noble army⁵². As an outstanding specialist in fortification architecture, he made an important contribution in 1745 to strengthening the strategically situated town of Koźle in Poland⁵³ on the banks of the Oder River. There he completed the fortifications begun by Prussian architects and expanded them with additional defensive structures.⁵⁴ As noted earlier, S. Mikovíni also collaborated closely with M. Bel. For Bel's geographical work *Notitia Hungariae Novae historico-geographica* he prepared detailed county maps, and he also produced maps for Bel's earlier work *Hungariae antiquae et novae prodromus* (Nuremberg, 1723). In addition to maps, Mikovíni created engravings depicting Hungarian towns and castles for these publications⁵⁵. His maps represent one of the most important achievements of 18th-century Hungarian cartography⁵⁶.

50 J. Lukačka et al., *Chronológia starších slovenských dejín...*, p. 209.

51 He was appointed imperial geometer by Charles VI in 1735; see: J. Lukačka et al., *Chronológia starších slovenských dejín...* p. 213.

52 É.M. Fülöp, Cs. Schmidt Mayer, *Galántai Balogh Ferenc (1708–1765)...*, p. 41.

53 Cosel, Poland

54 G. Kolinovics, *Posthuma memoria Josephi Esterházii de Galantha...*, p. 199.

55 I. Kollárová, I. Nagy, *Matej Bel: Osobnosť, médium a transfer ideí...*, p. 136.

56 *Vedecké dielo Mateja Bela na webe*, [in]: *Slovenská akadémia vied*, [online], 20/10/2006, https://www.sav.sk/?lang=sk&charset=&doc=services-news&news_no=1126 [access 11.02.2026].

The binding of the first edition of the important “encyclopaedic” work *Curiosiora et Selectiora Variarum Scientiarum Miscellanea* (Rare Selections from Various Fields of Knowledge, Trnava, 1689) by Martin Szentiványi (1633–1705) reveals yet another figure connected with Count Esterházy’s intellectual circle. Szentiványi had been Esterházy’s teacher at the University of Trnava and significantly influenced his intellectual formation. The binding of *Curiosiora* preserves the only known supralibros belonging to the count, bearing the inscription *Ill. Com. Jos. Ester. De Galantha* and the date 1727. This discovery is particularly remarkable, as no other Esterházy bookbinding bearing a supralibros has yet been identified. The volume is currently preserved in the Library of the Benedictine Priory of St Maurus in Győr (Szent Mór Bencés Perjelség Könyvtára)⁵⁷. In addition to this copy, a second copy once owned by Š.P. Munkáči is preserved in the University Library in Bratislava⁵⁸. Martin Szentiványi, who published his work at the Jesuit University Press in Trnava over a period of thirty years (1689–1709), is regarded as one of the most important figures in the intellectual history of Slovakia. He was widely considered the best encyclopaedist and the greatest authority in encyclopaedic work in Kingdom of Hungary, and M. Bel himself regarded him as his model. Szentiványi’s *Miscellanea* served as an important source of information for Bel’s *Notitia*, in which Bel provided a detailed geographical, historical, and ethnographic description of the counties of the Kingdom of Hungary, of which he had gathered a remarkable amount of information. This work remains an invaluable, unique scientific source for understanding the history, geography, ethnic composition, and social structure of the Kingdom of Hungary and is complemented by important cartographic and iconographic material.

Szentiványi’s three-volume work presented a broad selection of contemporary knowledge, primarily from the natural sciences, alongside spiritual texts and writings intended for meditation. As a miscellany, it represented an important contribution to Baroque cosmological thought. Often described as the first Hungarian “encyclopaedia”,⁵⁹ it is regarded as the first systematic

57 The copy preserved in Győr is discussed by É.M. Fülöp, *Habent sua fata... Gróf Esterházy József országbíró (1682-1748) tanulmányai során használt kötet a győri Szent Mór Bencés Perjelség Könyvtárában*, “KemLib” 2012, vol. 2, 2012, no. 3, pp. 12-13, [online] https://epa.oszk.hu/02700/02762/00014/pdf/EPA02762_kemlib_2012_03_12-13.pdf [access 13.03.2025].

58 Univerzitná knižnica, Bratislava, shelfmark 25.D.17371.

59 S. Zavarský, *Chapter 70. Between the Universe and Universal Knowledge: Martinus Szent-Ivany’s Curiosiora et selectiora variarum scientiarum miscellanea (1689–1709)*, [in]: *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Vindobonensis. Proceedings of the Sixteenth International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies*, Vienna 2015, pp. 788–801, [online]

<https://brill.com/display/book/edcoll/9789004361553/BP000081.xml> [access 10.02.2026].

concept of academic scholarly activity at the University of Trnava⁶⁰. Because of its question-and-answer structure, the work was used as a textbook for the teaching of natural sciences at the university, and J. Esterházy almost certainly studied from it, too⁶¹. Szentiványi achieved considerable renown through this work not only within the Habsburg Monarchy but also beyond its borders. He also taught in Vienna, Graz, and Munich, and his work was therefore widely known throughout Central Europe. His multifaceted scientific and organisational activities were pioneering in shaping the profile and the scientific trajectory of the University of Trnava at the end of the 17th century⁶². The *Miscellanea* also represents an important example of Hungarian–Polish relations in the history of book culture. The 1697 edition was dedicated to Count Alexander Dominik Czobor Tarnowski, hereditary lord of estates in both Poland and Kingdom of Hungary and former canon in Gniezno, whom Szentiványi described as his “most revered patron”. Szentiványi and Tarnowski were in written contact from 1693 onwards – as Tarnowski’s surviving diary⁶³ reveals – and they had probably met in person in the summer of 1688, when Tarnowski travelled to his Hungarian estates inherited from his grandmother, Anna Czobor of Szentmihály (in Borsod County, present-day Hungary). During this journey he visited Svätý Jur near Trnava and Bratislava. The dedication reflects Tarnowski’s role as a **generous patron of Szentiványi** and presents him as a personification of **ties between Poland and Pannonia** (as the scholars of the time referred to the territory of Kingdom of Hungary and its Slovak regions). It also celebrates the military achievements of the Tarnowski family in their campaigns against the Turks and Tatars in various regions, including Kingdom of Hungary and Moldavia. Significantly, in the dedication Szentiványi quoted from a speech concerning King Sigismund of Poland by the Polish historian Marcin Cromer, published in his work *De origine et rebus gestis Polonorum libri XXX* (On the Origins and History of Poles in Thirty Books). This demonstrates that Szentiványi had access to Polish historical sources and incorporated them into his own writings, illustrating the close

60 *Bibliografia niektorých knázov. Sentiváni, Martin, SJ*, [in]: *Dominikánsky knižný inštitút*, [online], https://www.knihydominikani.sk/hlavna_bibl_b4?autor_id=1477 [access 10.02.2026].

61 É.M. Fülöp, *Habent sua fata... Gróf Esterházy József országbiró (1682–1748)*...

62 E. Juríková, *Martin Sentiváni, hviezda najväčšej veľkosti*, [in]: *Trnavská univerzita v Trnave*, [online] <https://www.truni.sk/news/martin-sentivani-hviezda-najvasej-velkosti> [access 11.02.2026].

63 J. Tarnowski, *Urywek diaryusza Aleksandra Dominika Hrabiego z Tarnowa i z Czoboru kanonika gnieźnińskiego. 1691–1697*, Lwow 1895, p. 10, [online] https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/52/Jan_%28Kanty%29_Tarnowski_%E2%80%93_Urywek_z_diariusza_Aleksandra_Dominika_Hrabiego_z_Tarnowa_i_z_Czobru.pdf [access 11.02.2026].

connections between Hungarian and Polish historical scholarly traditions, while *Miscellanea* is a prime example of intellectual exchange in Central Europe in the late 17th century.

Szentiványi's Catholic apologetic work *Opusculum polemicorum*, directed against heretics and presenting a systematic explanation and defence of the Catholic faith, was also widely read across Europe (in two editions, 1700 and 1718, both Trnava). His *Miscellanea* and apologetic writings illustrate a characteristic Jesuit synthesis in which knowledge of nature, the universe, and humanity was fully compatible with the Catholic faith. During Esterházy's studies at the University of Trnava, Szentiványi served as rector⁶⁴, and it was he who awarded the 18-year-old graduate the title of Doctor of Philosophy on 9 August 1700⁶⁵. It is therefore reasonable to assume that Martin Szentiványi influenced J. Esterházy not only as a teacher and author but also intellectually, shaping his approach to knowledge and spiritual reflection. He entered Esterházy's intellectual circle as an authority who co-determined his way of reasoning, treatment of knowledge, and attitude to science. The preserved copy of the *Miscellanea* should thus be regarded not merely as evidence of book ownership but as a trace of the broader intellectual influence exerted by Szentiványi on Esterházy's intellectual horizons – his understanding of knowledge as a synthesis of scientific reasoning, scholarship, and spiritual reflection. *Miscellanea* was a long-term, systematically conceived project (with thirty years of work, systematic structure, and textual typology), which may also have inspired Esterházy's understanding of knowledge as something that should be systematically organised, classified, and constructed methodologically. The presence of the count's supralibros on this volume further suggests that he regarded the book as a marker of intellectual identity and status. Szentiványi's work may have served as an intellectual "reference point" for Esterházy, which he kept revisiting even after his studies. Szentiványi thus undoubtedly shaped Esterházy not only through his university teaching but also through his writings, which offered a model of Baroque scholarship that combined knowledge of the natural sciences with philosophical method and a theological interpretation of the world. In this way, he contributed to shaping the count's relationship to knowledge and his broader intellectual self-awareness. Moreover, Szentiványi's reputation throughout Central Europe and the

64 Szentiványi himself served for twenty-two years as prefect of the University of Trnava's printing house and played a crucial role in expanding its academic library.

65 G. Kolinovics, *Posthuma memoria Josephi Esterházi de Galantha...* p. 11; J. Esterházy, *Mihi Comiti Josepho Esterházy interventorum vita mea comite, singularium magis, ac quodammodo memorabilium Connotatio*. Completed in 1740, Egyetemi Könyvtár, Budapest, shelfmark: G 90, p. 4.

reception of his apologetic writings across Europe may have reinforced Esterházy's awareness that Trnava was not merely a provincial academic centre, but a place interconnected with to the broader intellectual world.

In the environment of an early modern university, where students' cultural horizons were largely shaped by authoritative texts and their international circulation, the European reception of Szentiványi's works could naturally have broadened Esterházy's perception of where Trnava and its scholarship belonged within Europe. Szentiványi's Latin works were encyclopaedic compilations and apologetic treatises and these were precisely the genres that were disseminated supraregionally in Jesuit Europe. The power of the Jesuit communication network, through which Jesuit books regularly reached college and university libraries in various countries, together with Szentiványi's connections to his Polish patron Count Tarnowski, suggest that his works were also known in Poland.

Another prominent Hungarian figure associated with the Esterházy library in Čeklís, as well as with M. Bel, was Samuel Székely de Doba⁶⁶ (1704–1779), a native of Huncovce⁶⁷. Székely was a respected historian of his time who travelled extensively and collected historical sources during his journeys. He showed a strong interest in the libraries he visited and gradually assembled an impressive collection of documents, books, coins, and manuscripts⁶⁸. A scholar, lawyer, teacher, officer, and passionate collector, he became involved in the intellectual networks of Hungarian scholars already in his youth. In 1741 he entered military service and became an officer in the regiment of Tamás Szirmay. His military career brought him to several European centres, where he visited libraries and established contacts with librarians, as evidenced by entries in his *album amicorum*⁶⁹. In 1744 he also met G. Kolinovič in his library in Šenkvice. These experiences significantly deepened Székely's knowledge of library organisation, classification systems, and the management of book collections, and this later resulted in the compilation of the 1749 catalogue of the Čeklís library, which he was commissioned to do by Count J. Esterházy⁷⁰. On 23 March 1749⁷¹ Székely began working on an inventory of the

66 Sámuel Székely Dobai

67 Hunfalva (Hungary)

68 Székely himself used a heraldic *ex-libris*, a digitised version of which is available at: http://www.bibliotheca.hu/possessores/061_szekely.htm

69 *Dobai Székely Sámuel emlékkönyve I. Rész*, "Forum Hungaricum", [s. a.], [online] <https://mandadb.hu/dokumentum/278068/dobai1.pdf> [access 14.01.2023].

70 S. Székely de Doba, *Catalogus Librorum qui in Bibliotheca Comitum Josephi Eszterházy, in Cseklesz...*

71 His *album amicorum* reads: *Dobai Székely Sámuel emlékkönyve I. rész...*

books held in the Čeklís library, which he completed on 30 April 1749.⁷² The resulting manuscript catalogue today represents a key source for understanding the composition of the library during its most flourishing period.

Among the personalities who influenced Székely's scholarly development, M. Bel was particularly important. The two maintained a long-standing correspondence, within which Székely supplied Bel with copies of documents, procured books for him, and provided historical information. He assisted Bel in the preparation of the geographical work *Notitia Hungariae Novae*, searching for necessary information and helping to compile descriptions of the counties of Zemplín and Timiș.⁷³ It may also be assumed that Székely brought information to Čeklís about newly published books and about valuable older literature. It is even possible that during his travels he acquired books not only for his own collection but also on behalf of the Esterházy family in Čeklís.

Transregional Readers' Networks without Denominational Borders

The surviving books from the library of J. Esterházy at Čeklís Castle attest to the fact that Catholic intellectuals of the 17th and 18th centuries read Protestant theological literature as well as works included in the Index of Prohibited Books. Their engagement with such texts was motivated by theological, political, intellectual, and practical considerations. Reading these works did not necessarily imply agreement with their contents; rather, it often arose from an informational, polemical, or strategic need. In the context of religious negotiations in the Kingdom of Hungary, it was essential for Catholic scholars to understand Protestant positions.

The abundance of critical and dissenting readers' notes preserved in the Esterházy volumes clearly demonstrates the reception of important Protestant historiographical works. They appear, for example, in a chronicle of world history written by the 15th – and 16th-century German astrologer Johann Carion and later edited by the Protestant theologian Caspar Peucer the Elder. This work is considered the beginning of Protestant historiography and was widely used as a history textbook in Protestant schools. In it, Carion described the political and cultural history of humankind. The chronicle was translated into Latin and edited by Philipp Melancthon, who based his own lectures on

72 The colophon of the catalogue reads: *Dobai Székely Sámuel emlékkönyve 1. rész...*

73 This is revealed by his correspondence with Matej Bel, e.g. the letter of 13 December 1731 – see: N.L. Szelestei (ed.), *Bél Mátyás levelezése*, Budapest 1993, p. 241. Also available at: <https://mek.oszk.hu/17800/17810/17810.pdf> [access 28.01.2025]; Letter of 8 July 1731 – see: ed. N.L. Szelestei (ed.), *Bél Mátyás levelezése...*, p. 234; Letter of 10 May 1731 – see: ed. N.L. Szelestei, *Bél Mátyás levelezése...*, p. 228.

history on Carion's work. In time, however, Melanchthon began publishing an independent chronicle under the title *Chronicon* (1558, 1560), while still retaining Carion's name in the title. After Melanchthon's death, his son-in-law Caspar Peucer the Elder continued to prepare and publish new editions of Carion's chronicle – editions from 1562 and 1566 are known to bear his name. It was precisely this latter edition from Wittenberg that J. Esterházy possessed in his library, in three parts. Peucer's editions were in high demand and were disseminated more widely than those issued by Melanchthon⁷⁴. Catholic theologians, however, rejected Carion's chronicle as a heretical and unreliable work that distorted the history and attacked the legitimacy of the Church. For this reason, it was repeatedly placed on the Index of Prohibited Books.

In the third part of Carion's chronicle, *Tertia Pars Chronici Carionis* (Wittenberg, 1566), which Esterházy acquired from Š.P. Munkáči, there are – besides Munkáči's critical annotations – also handwritten comments in Polish by an unknown reader⁷⁵. These rhymed Polish marginalia constitute a denominationally preconditioned commentary directed against Carion, whom the author labels with the expressive derogatory terms *plugawy* (“filthy”) and *czystości sprany* (“deprived of purity”), expressions that may be interpreted as allusions to his supposed heresy. The notes are neither Munkáči's nor the count's, and there is no evidence that J. Esterházy spoke Polish. His brother Anton Esterházy, however, had a connection to Poland: after the defeat of Rákóczi's War of Independence, in which he had served as a Kuruc marshal, he emigrated there and lived in the country for a period of time. According to the extensive monograph on the Esterházy family written by János Esterházy, Anton's third wife was reportedly of Polish origin, although her identity remains unknown (it was unknown even to him)⁷⁶. Historian László Berényi, however, mentions only two marriages of Anton Esterházy and makes no reference to any third Polish wife⁷⁷. It may nevertheless be assumed that Anton spoke Polish and read Polish books. Similarly, Jozef's stepfather – the third husband of his mother Katarina Thököly, Johann Jakob Löwenburg – was of Silesian origin and maintained close ties with Poland. While living there he used the Polish

74 Carion, Johann, [in]: *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, [online], https://de.wikisource.org/w/index.php?title=ADB:Carion,_Johannes&oldid=- [access 11.05.2025].

75 Univerzitná knižnica, Bratislava, shelfmark 25.G.10823.

76 J. Esterházy, *Az Eszterházy család és oldalágainak leírása*, Budapest 1901, p. 149, [online] <http://real-eod.mtak.hu/5543/1/000909556.pdf> [access 12.05.2025]. Similarly, the Slovak Biographical Dictionary also mentions Anton Esterházy's alleged third Polish wife, although it does not provide any further identification, either – see: *Slovenský biografický slovník II.: E-J.*, Martin: Matica slovenská, p. 27.

77 L. Berényi, *Esterházyak II.: Egy ezeréves család történetei*. Fertőd 2014, p. 636.

form of his surname, Lovorovszky (Loworoffsky). However, the Polish marginalia in the volume probably do not belong to either of these figures and may have been written by a previous owner of the book. In the context of the interconnections between Hungarian and Polish book culture, this example points to the circulation of books across linguistic, denominational, and geographical boundaries. Polish marginalia in a work that later circulated within a Hungarian Catholic milieu suggest the existence of transregional reading networks in which books moved between Poland, Silesia, and Kingdom of Hungary. Book culture was not confined to a single denominational or linguistic community but functioned as a shared communicative space in which different intellectual traditions encountered and confronted one another. The preserved volume therefore also confirms that European Catholic scholars consciously engaged with Protestant literature and historiography, albeit in a polemical manner. Books in this context served as dynamic vehicles of ideas, interpretations, and disputes that transcended denominational borders.

A similar practice of reading, openness to different schools of thought, and a critical engagement with texts, can also be observed in the work of M. Bel, albeit on an even broader, more systematic, and encyclopaedic scale. As noted above, Bel – together with other members of Esterházy's intellectual circle – was driven by an idealistic effort to collect and promote scientific knowledge, while the transmission and reception of cultural information took place irrespective of religious affiliation⁷⁸.

Matej Bel's Integrative Role in Jozef Esterházy's Intellectual Network

Matej Bel emerges as an exceptionally significant intermediary figure – a scholar who not only absorbed ideas from various intellectual milieux but also systematically synthesised and disseminated them. His encyclopaedic historical-geographical work, extensive correspondence, and membership in foreign learned societies place him at the centre of a transregional intellectual network in which domestic and international scholarly discourses intersected. Bel therefore represents a paradigmatic example of an Enlightenment polymath for whom the crossing of denominational, linguistic, and geographical boundaries became one of the essential elements of knowledge in the Central European space.

Matej Bel also played a key role within the intellectual network that developed around J. Esterházy. He may be regarded as the most prominent central

78 I. Kollárová, I. Nagy, *Matej Bel. Osobnosť, médium a transfer ideí...*, p. 13.

figure of the Hungarian scholarly community of his time. Several individuals from Esterházy's circle collaborated with Bel and were directly involved in his extensive editorial projects, whether as contributors, intermediaries, indexers, or patrons. The fact that J. Esterházy became the dedicatee of Bel's work *Adparatus*, and that the two men lent books to one another, may be interpreted as a clear expression of mutual recognition and trust within their intellectual relationship.

Conclusion

An analysis of aristocratic libraries in 18th-century Kingdom of Hungary reveals that the noble library functioned as a powerful symbol of cultural capital through which members of the aristocracy legitimised their social dominance not only through power and wealth but also through erudition and the capacity to participate in the wider European discourse of scholarship. During the 18th century, a significant functional transformation occurred in the character of libraries maintained by the Hungarian nobility. Collections that had originally been private and predominantly denominational in orientation gradually evolved into more open intellectual spaces that performed important informational and communicative functions. Through the practice of lending books beyond the confines of the noble residence, aristocratic libraries contributed to the wider circulation of texts and ideas and thus became active agents in the transfer of knowledge.

J. Esterházy was a mediator of knowledge who created the conditions for cooperation among the members of the intellectual network that formed around his library at the manor in Čeklís. His library functioned as an intellectual hub in which scientific, academic, economic, and cultural interests intersected.

The operation of the intellectual network around the Čeklís library further demonstrates that knowledge in the 18th century frequently transcended denominational boundaries. In the context of early modern book culture, such boundaries were not insurmountable barriers but rather penetrable lines through which texts, ideas, and interpretative strategies circulated. The collaboration between Catholic and Evangelical Lutheran scholars, the mutual lending of books, and the participation in shared scholarly projects illustrate that a noble library could serve as a neutral space for dialogue and the exchange of ideas. Within this environment, books did not function merely as static artefacts but as active mediators of knowledge, debate, and cultural transfer between different regions of Europe.

Résumé

The study analyses aristocratic libraries in 18th-century Kingdom of Hungary as important cultural centres and repositories of knowledge that reflected the social status, values, religious beliefs, and political ambitions of their owners. It emphasises that research into libraries allows us to trace not only the dissemination of literature and scientific knowledge but also the reception processes of European learning, the transfer of ideas, the formation of intellectual networks, and the construction of cultural identities. An important methodological dimension is provided by provenance evidence (ex-libris, supralibros, dedications), loan records, and correspondence, which reveal the library as a hub of communicative and politico-intellectual connections.

A prominent example is the library of the provincial judge Jozef Esterházy (1682–1748) at his manor in Čeklís (present-day Bernolákovo). The library, which was built without any direct connection to an earlier family collection, contained 882 titles in approximately 1,100 volumes according to the catalogue compiled in 1749, although the actual number of works was probably higher because several texts were bound together into composite volumes. Thematically, the collection covered a wide range of disciplines, from theology, law, and history to military science, engineering, mathematics, economics, medicine, as well as linguistic and encyclopaedic works. Linguistically, the collection was dominated by Latin, although it also included works in German, Hungarian, French, Italian, Greek, Hebrew, and other languages.

The central focus of the study is the reconstruction of the intellectual network that developed around the Esterházy library. The authors demonstrate that the library functioned as an open resource for Hungarian intellectuals and specialists and contributed to the circulation of books and knowledge beyond the boundaries of the noble estate. Key figures within this network included the polymath Matej Bel, the lawyer and polymath Štefan Pavol Munkáči, the Jesuit and Byzantinist František Borgia Kéri, the librarian and historian Gabriel Kolinovič Šenkvičský, the regent František Balogh, the cartographer Samuel Mikovíni, and the historian S. Székely de Doba. At the centre of this network stood Bel, an internationally recognised authority who functioned as an integrating figure connecting domestic and foreign scholarly milieux.

Special attention is devoted to the Byzantine studies section of the Esterházy collection, particularly the Paris edition of the *Corpus Historiae Byzantinae*, which was exceptional among aristocratic libraries in Kingdom of Hungary. These volumes served as a source base for Kéri's *Epitome Historia Byzantinae* as well as for Bel's editorial and historiographical projects. The study also demonstrates the permeability of denominational boundaries: the

Esterházy collection contained banned works and Protestant literature, which were read polemically, critically, or for pragmatic purposes. Marginalia written in several languages – including Polish – indicate the transregional circulation of books between Kingdom of Hungary, Silesia, and Poland.

In conclusion, the authors interpret the Čeklís library as an intellectual hub in which scientific, economic, academic, and cultural interests intersected. The case of the Esterházy library demonstrates that aristocratic libraries in Kingdom of Hungary were not merely representative symbols of cultural capital but also active agents in the modernisation of knowledge and the transfer of ideas in Central Europe. The study also highlights the connections between Hungarian and Polish historical-scholarly traditions and emphasises the significance of aristocratic libraries as spaces of intellectual exchange during the 17th and 18th centuries.

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