

**BABEŞ–BOLYAI UNIVERSITY, CLUJ–NAPOCA  
FACULTY OF LETTERS  
DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF HUNGARIAN STUDIES**

**BOOKCULTURE AND ARISTOCRATIC  
PATRONAGE IN THE 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY  
AT BETHLEN COLLEGE**

**Abstract**

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**2020**

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**Keywords:** book culture, Bethlen Gábor College, protestant aristocracy, Transylvania, 18<sup>th</sup> century, protectorate, book donation, bibliofilia, private libraries, reformed academic pilgrimage

This PhD thesis analyzes a segment of the functioning and book collection at the Bethlen College library from the beginning of the 18th century, which provides the cultural background of its readership.

Regarding the book collection of the 17th century of the College library, with a rich historical heritage, apart from its bibliographic description, very few analytical studies have been published, just as the specialists in this field did not evaluate and analyze the rich book fund from the 18th century, which, among other things, contributed to the local establishing of various philosophical ideas and Protestant theology.

The dissertation therefore tries to fill in the gap. An analysis of the entire 18th century book stock would exceed the limits of this dissertation, so the restriction of the theme was imposed. From the collection of books ordered according to the theca, I relied on a single donation, namely that of Count József Teleki (1675–1732). The donation, entitled in library records as Theca Telekiana, appears in the dissertation as Teleki's Theca, not to be confused with the Hungarian name of the book collection in Târgu Mureș, of the much better known Sámuel Teleki, coming from the same family, but a few decades later.

I want to emphasize that because of the agitated history of the Bethlen College and the library in Aiud, only a tiny part of the volumes that make up the collection may be browsed today. For this reason, the dissertation provides a guidance in assessing the damage suffered by the College. For the same reason, during the construction and analysis of the collection, I had to operate on hypotheses, or using similarities of the libraries of the reformed colleges of the time.

### **The structure of the dissertation**

The dissertation was built around four major topics in four chapters.

The first chapter presents the research topic and the objectives of the thesis, then the premises and the methodology of the research are reviewed.

The second chapter discusses the operation of the college library in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. By sketching the patronage of the College, I tried to show the funding system of the library. I analyzed the *Fundus Bibliotheca*, that is the establishment and operation of the other library foundation, having the role of ensuring its financial base. The acquisitions of the library were provided by the foundation set up by the College's teachers, *Fundus Bibliotheca*, the administration of which was in the competence of the professor overseeing the library. Given the fact that in the Transylvania of that period, in fact, there was no Western-style book trade, the books needed for the educational process in the College were purchased from several sources. The development of the library's book fund was ensured through auctions, fairs, agents and through various donations. I presented the local distribution model of the new books published through Péter Bod's book distribution network, based on his diary and printed correspondence. The aim of the doctoral theses is not to present Péter Bod's social book-distribution network in its entirety, because I believe that the available sources that I have access to are not complete, this should be the subject of further research. The case study gives us an insight into the book distribution work of the consignors, bookbinders, printers, students of the Aiud College, priest-colleagues of Péter Bod, and last but not least to the patrons. Besides Cluj and Sibiu, book auctions were regularly organized in the College of Nagyenyed before 1752, where mainly old publications changed hands. It was an opportunity for the College library to fill in the missing publications, but at the same time to sold their duplicates. The activity of the agents of the Reformed church in Transylvania next to the Viennese chancellery, regarding the book acquisitions of the College from Aiud, is completely unknown, although analyzing Sámuel Szilágyi's circle of commanders, as son of professor Péter Szilágyi, respectively that of Sámuel Türi's, as son of the College's administrator, Mihály Türi, one can say with certainty that their services were used also regarding the book acquisitions of the College.

I examined publications received as donations in two groups, based on their provenance. Donations from the College's professors and students are dissected through micro-histories of book acquisitions. In this thesis I have given more space to noble books and intellectual donations.

The private libraries of Zsigmond Bánffy II., containing books of law and those of Márton Borosnyai Nagy, containing books of medicine, are very special and distinguished because specialized libraries in that period were quite rare. Through the dominance of Latin-language publications, which appeared mainly in the 18th century, it is not so much the

archaic part that is revealed, but especially the more modernist character of the collections. At least, based on the collections that arrived in the College. The book catalogue of Countess Kata Bethlen's Library, not long ago revealed, specifies the composition of the collection that arrived in Aiud, and the accounting of the publications that have survived to this day refutes that thesis of Péter Bod, according to which the collection would have had a uniform bond.

According to the laws governing the College, the library was under the supervision of the current language teaching professor, after reading the study belonging to Zsigmond Vita on student librarians, I analyzed the scientific training and the activity of the teachers in charge of the library, who also left their mark on the development of the library's collection. In another subchapter, I examined what manuscript records are available for the today's researcher in the reconstruction of the library's collection, among which the 1752 and the 1764 catalogues are basic sources for the dissertation.

In the third chapter of the dissertation I set out to analyze the book donation of Count József Teleki I., which also means sketching the cultural profile of the Transylvanian aristocrat in the 18th century. The trajectory of Count Teleki's aristocrat career is a typical Calvinist one. The reason why I wanted to detail his training, his role in society, his activity of patronage in science, his patronage and economic activity, is that these components also determined his cultural profile, just as his education certainly determined his leadership attitude in ecclesiastical and secular circles. I analyzed whether social embeddedness of József Teleki I. marked in any way his habits as a book collector, as well as his relationship to the bibliophilia of his wife, Kata Bethlen.

The presentation of the Teleki collection, which was transferred to Bethlen College, in terms of language, time, place of printing and content, was performed by quantitative, qualitative and comparative analysis. I examined whether there is any relationship between the place of study of Teleki's peregrins supported by him and the place of publication of the analyzed collection. I drew a parallel between the book collector mentality of a prominent representative of the Hungarian Reformed aristocracy, Pál Ráday, and his Transylvanian contemporary, József Teleki I.

Following the evaluation of the collection, the dominance of Latin-language books (80%) is evident from a linguistic point of view, followed by Hungarian (8.84%), German (5.64%), French (2.54%) and Italian (1.79%) publications. The presence of the books in French and Italian, their content, in my view, justifies that József Teleki I. absorbed his son's

collection (József Teleki II., who died in 1729), or a part of it. The analysis by the year of the publications revealed that more than 12% of the 18th century books could not be owned by Teleki, as they were published after his death. I hypothesize that these publications may have been donated to the College by (a) person(s) close to József Teleki I. The distribution of the collection by printing places reflects the contemporary peregrination path of the College's students, more than two thirds of the publications are German printed products, followed by Dutch and Swiss printings. József Teleki has been the chief curator of the Bethlen College since 1718, so in addition to the alumni he supported, the peregrins of the College could also contribute to the growth of his personal library.

The content analysis of the books was carried out in the context of cultural history and sociology of reading, involving different disciplines: history, theology, history of education, history of literature, natural sciences. As Teleki's collection did not retain its specialist classification, I formed thematic groups from the large amount of data, observing the systematization principles of contemporary noble libraries. During analyzing these, I was curious about the emphases within each group, what kind of ideological currents could have reached a noble collection in Transylvania through the books, and I also present the connections between the family ties of the books.

The content composition of József Teleki I.'s library does not show much difference compared to other Reformed aristocratic libraries, its most important thematic groups – history, theology and law – are the same. A quarter of the entire collection is provided by historical prints. József Teleki I. purposefully collected publications on the history of Transylvania and the Hungarians. His knowledge in the historical sciences is shown by the fact that he acquired some of the 16th century Hungarian historical source publications. Due to the role of the Teleki family in the history of Transylvania, publications on the events of the anti-Turkish wars make up a significant part of the historical block. We do not know if József Teleki I. has taken part in a longer trip abroad, nevertheless we can find a significant number of guidebooks in his collection, which may have triggered the fact of the trip itself. The histories of different countries of Europe, the chronicles of individual peoples, ancient Greek and humanist historians, Protestant historians of the Reformation era, and church histories formed an exciting group of works with Hungarian relevance.

We started the inventory of theological works with Teleki's Bible collection. Unsurprisingly, he had Bibles flipped by Protestants, with only a small number of catechisms

entering the College. The collection had speech collections and commentaries from the early Calvinist Reformers from the early stages of the Reformation. Among the 17th century Dutch theological trends, the ideas of Arminianism, Coccejanism, Puritanism of English origin, and German Pietism also took root in Transylvania through the peregrines and the books they imported. Since most of Teleki's alumni and his son, József Teleki II., studied in Halle, we could have expected to meet a large number of Pietist publications in the collection. Surprisingly neither the works of a teacher, nor a first-line Pietist author (Spener, Underyeck, Hesse) was included in the Teleki library. Anna Maria Schurman's book *Nobiliss on the Necessity of Women's Education*, or the presence of August Hermann Francke's institutional history in Teleki's collection, provides new data on the Teleki couple's pietistic behavior.

The public roles of József Teleki I. included legal knowledge, we find in his collection the basic Hungarian and non-Hungarian jurisprudential works, Werbőczy's *Tripartitum* can be found in almost all major aristocratic libraries, the jurisprudence of János Baranyai Decsi and the contemporary Transylvanian codes.

The publications of the trivium thematic group used to teach the humanities, consist mainly of works by humanist authors, grammars, dictionaries, glossaries, rhetoric and logic books. The most significant textbooks in the fields of philosophy, physics, mathematics, astronomy, and geography were in the collection. Among medical books, in addition to books on anatomy and pharmacy, we can also find books on curiosities and occultism. In addition to antique literature, we also reported some contemporary literary works with Teleki. Besides them, I think that the fun anecdote books, the publications describing the rules of the card game, the basic rules of riding and the techniques of learning to dance could have been included in the Teleki library from the collection of Teleki's son.

As a patron of science, we have no knowledge of the scientific activity of József Teleki I., his intellectuality is questionable. He did not take part in a study travel abroad, which would have been an irreplaceable experience of an intellectual, but the encyclopedic and bibliophilic nature of the books he collected suggests us a high degree of awareness, even if we do not know exactly the mechanisms of book acquisitions.

The dissertation concludes with a summary evaluation, the *Appendix*, containing the most important manuscript sources used and the bibliography.

**PUBLICATIONS**  
**results obtained during the doctoral programme**

**BOOKS:**

- PÁPAI PÁRIZ Ferenc, *A gyulafehérvár–nagyenyedi Behlen-kollégium alapítása és története*, kísérőtanulmánnyal és jegyzetekkel közléteszi RÁCZ Emese, ford. IMREGH Monika, Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, 2016. <http://real.mtak.hu/id/eprint/48021>
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- RÁCZ Emese, „Itten kezdetiben láték más világot, az élet rendiben ékes *Theatrumot*”: *Teleki József és Teleki Ádám külföldi tanulmányútja (1722–1725) = Homo Viator : tanulmányok az irodalom-, nyelv- és kultúratudományok köréből*, szerk. Mihály Vilma-Irén, Pap Levente, Piédner Judit, Tapodi Zsuzsa, Kolozsvár : Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület ; Sepsiszentgyörgy ; Bukarest : RHT Kiadó, 2015, 147–162.
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- RÁCZ Emese, „*Bibliothecam (...)* az Enyedi Collegiumnak maradgyon”: *Teleki József (1675–1732) könyves mecénaturája = A Telekiek és a kultúra: A 2016. októberi marosvásárhelyi konferencia tanulmányai*, szerk. Bányai Réka, Marosvásárhely : Teleki Téka Alapítvány, 2016, 91–112. <http://real.mtak.hu/id/eprint/63779>
- RÁCZ Emese, *A nagyenyedi Bethlen-kollégium könyvtárának katalógusai a 18. század derekán = Hortus amicorum : köszöntőkötet Egyed Emese tiszteletére*, szerk. Bartha Katalin Ágnes, Biró Annamária, Demeter Zsuzsa, Tar Gabriella-Nóra, Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, Kolozsvár, 2017, 131–135. <http://real.mtak.hu/id/eprint/85719>
- RÁCZ Emese *A reformáció 1717-es évfordulójára írt vitairatról = A reformáció öröksége: egyháztörténeti tanulmányok*, szerk. Kolumbán Vilmos József, Kolozsvár,

Kolozsvári Protestáns Teológiai Intézet, 2018, (Erdélyi Református Egyháztörténeti Füzetek, 24.) 9–21. <http://real.mtak.hu/id/eprint/99080>

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