



Lucia Lichnerová*, Marta Špániová**

Bratislava

The Čeklís Branch of the Hungarian Noble Family of the Esterházy in their Čeklís Manor (Bernolákovo, Slovakia) in the Mirror of Book Culture***

Abstract

The Esterházy family is among the most important aristocratic families of the Kingdom of Hungary, not only in the public, but also in the cultural life of the country. Members of the family built one of the largest and most significant libraries in the history of the Kingdom of Hungary in the 17th–19th centuries, internationally known as the *Esterhasiana Bibliotheca*. The activities of the Esterházy in the field of cultural policy, patronage of art, science, and literature, and enhancing literacy in the country were highly influential. This study focuses on the activity of the Čeklís branch of the Esterházy family in the field of culture, literature, and book culture. It is based on the research of archival records, biographical materials, and other published sources, library catalogs, and preserved books from the aristocratic library of the Čeklís mansion (present-day Bernolákovo, Slovakia). The main aim is to examine the character and use of the aristocratic library of Jozef Esterházy (1682–1748), a prominent member of the Esterházy family, who was a high-ranking Hungarian official and provincial judge at the Čeklís manor. This is examined against the backdrop of the cultural and social conditions of the Kingdom of Hungary in the 18th century. The study analyzes acquisition motivations and the library's influence on the activities of Slovak Enlightenment scholars.

Keywords: Jozef Esterházy (1682–1748), Aristocratic Library in Čeklís Manor (Bernolákovo, Slovakia), book culture, eighteenth century, Enlightenment

Słowa kluczowe: Jozef Esterházy (1682–1748), Arystokratyczna Biblioteka w Dworze Čeklís (Bernolákovo, Słowacja), Kultura książki, XVIII wiek, oświecenie

* Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave; e-mail: lucia.lichnerova@uniba.sk; ORCID: 0000-0002-7536-4808.

** Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave; e-mail: marta.spaniova@uniba.sk; ORCID: 0000-0003-3470-3671.

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Introduction: The Development of Aristocratic Libraries in Eighteenth-Century Hungary and Their Significance for Intellectual History

In Western European countries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, absolutist rulers proclaiming their omnipotence and their limitless hereditary power derived from God's grace promoted science and the arts, spurring the modern cultural development of European nations. With scholarly interest and sparing no expense, they established and developed royal artistic and library collections, which later became the basis for national cultural institutions. The development in Hungary, which included the present-day territory of Slovakia for over a millennium, from 895/896 to 1918, was specific as compared to other culturally advanced European countries. The Habsburgs, who ruled Hungary from 1526 for nearly four centuries, resided permanently outside the territory of the Kingdom, as the center of their court was in Vienna, Austria, rather than on Hungarian soil. In 1526, Hungary became a permanent and integral part of the Habsburg Monarchy (i.e., Austrian Monarchy) and no longer had rulers of its own. It was ruled by the monarchs of Austria, who were formally crowned as kings of Hungary. Moreover, the Habsburgs were of German nationality, while the population of Hungary was predominantly Hungarian and Slovak. Unlike in the West, cultural development in Hungary lacked a central factor that would have provided the strongest material and spiritual stimuli in the field of libraries. Although eighteenth-century Hungarian rulers – King Charles III, his daughter Maria Theresa, and her son Joseph II – did care for the cultural welfare of the country, it was a kind of distant care that lacked a direct and warm connection typically associated with a sense of shared nationality. The Habsburgs considered Hungary to be their province, and the specific Hungarian national culture was essentially alien to them.¹ In an interview during a 1741 session of the Hungarian Diet, Queen Maria Theresa admitted to Jozef Esterházy – a top Hungarian official and provincial judge whose aristocratic library in his Čeklís manor is the focus of this study – that she was aware that her German ministers disliked Hungarians. However, she ignored this fact in her decision-making and remained favorably disposed to the “most noble” Hungarian nation. She said she had the demands of the Hungarian nobles, discussed at the Diet, translated into German to understand them more fully.² During the 1741 session of the Hungarian Diet, Hungarian nobles discussed with Maria Theresa a proposal for the establishment of a Hungarian ministry, through which Hungary would acquire its legal independence from Austria in domestic policy, finance, and the military sphere. Although Maria

¹ M. Szarvasi, *Magánkönyvtárainak a XVIII. században: (Főpapok és főurak, nemesek és polgárok gyűjteményei)*, Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum Orsz. Széchényi Könyvtára, Budapest 1939, <https://mek.oszk.hu/03200/03246/03246.htm> (accessed: 4.06.2024).

² G. Kolinovič, *Posthuma memoria Josephi Esterházii de Galantha*, Typis Academicis soc. Jesu, Tyrnaviae 1754, pp. 123–124, https://books.google.sk/books?id=y21UAAAACAAJ&prints=ec=frontcover&source=gbs_atb&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false (accessed: 22.07.2024).

Theresa – then only twenty-four years old and in her first year as monarch – listened to these demands, they were ultimately not met.³ Maria Theresa even burst into tears during her conversation with Esterházy out of despair over the situation and over the fact that her Austrian officials were not favorably disposed to the Hungarians.⁴

In terms of both cultural and economic development, Hungary lacked a royal residence that could serve as a central hub for leading intellectuals, material resources, and national cultural institutions, including libraries. For the Hungarians, this central hub was Vienna – the imperial seat of the Habsburg court – where the upper echelons of Hungarian society, the Hungarian aristocracy, absorbed the cultural influences and glory of Austrian culture, striving not to be overshadowed by the cultural dominance of Western nations. In the glittering imperial city of Vienna, the Hungarian nobility absorbed Western cultural ideals and brought them home, becoming the primary conduit between Hungary and Western Europe. The cosmopolitan Hungarian aristocracy reached the level of European culture and education, even though it could not build on its own centuries-old traditions, relying instead almost entirely on foreign cultural sources. For a Hungarian nobleman, it was not important whether he had a good command of his native language (primarily Hungarian); rather, the most important requirement was proficiency in foreign languages – especially German – as this was vital for professional advancement, whether in politics or the military. Therefore, even if their family did not reside in Vienna, young Hungarian nobles usually spent extended periods abroad, familiarizing themselves with European countries, and many children, especially those from Catholic noble families, studied in Vienna. Western ideas found their way to Hungary via Vienna and through the aristocrats, who adopted Viennese culture, embraced modern spiritual currents such as the Enlightenment and freemasonry, and fostered the cultural development of their nation. Wealthy aristocratic libraries played a crucial role in this cultural exchange, serving as hubs of European science and literature and significantly advancing scientific and literary life at home. From the 1760s onwards, Hungarian aristocratic libraries in Baroque manor houses and palaces became centers of modern Enlightenment literature and ideas, often containing a predominance of works from the French Enlightenment. It should be emphasized that noble collections now form a substantial part of the holdings in almost all major public libraries in Hungary and Slovakia. They made their way into these libraries as gifts or, in later times, through purchases or confiscations from noble estates, eventually being transferred to various cultural institutions during the nationalization process after the Second World War, where they remain under

³ K. Weisz, *Az Osztrák – Magyar monarchia írásban és képen. Rudolf Trónörökös Főherceg és Császári és Királyi fensége kezdeményezéséből és közreműködésével. Magyarország I. kötete, A Magyar Királyi Államnyomda kiadása*, Budapest 1888, p. 228.

⁴ J. Esterházy, *Az Esterházy család és oldalágainak leírása*, Az Athenaeum r. társulat könyvnyomdája, Budapest 1901, p. 156, <http://real-eod.mtak.hu/5543/1/000909556.pdf> (accessed: 14.07.2024).

state care today. When accumulating their library collections, many aristocrats considered not only their own personal interests but also the higher goal of supporting domestic intellectuals, Enlightenment scholars, and men of letters in their localities or courts, to whom they regularly lent their books. Thus, a common feature shared by prominent book collectors from the aristocratic class was their inherent commitment to the sciences and the arts, stemming from their lineage and the precedent set by their ancestors' patronage of culture, arts, and literature. This was related to the motivational influence of their families in building their libraries, their family traditions, and other factors, especially their education and the places where they studied – which were primarily Vienna or Trnava (in present-day Slovakia) or Buda (now Budapest in Hungary) in their homeland (as there were universities in these cities) for Hungarian Catholic youth and Germany, Switzerland, or the Netherlands for Protestant youth. In addition to these external influences, a more significant aspect was the internal drive of individuals, their love of books, and their careful and systematic collecting habits and reading practices, which required a reflective disposition and a preference for intellectual solitude. The fashion for reading and the nobility's inclination to ostentation, symbolized by magnificent libraries with books in sumptuous bindings and bookshelves filled with volumes for decoration (even though such examples were few) might have also been motivating factors. In the context of book culture, the golden age of book collecting in Hungary can primarily be identified as the final third of the eighteenth century. At that time, there was hardly a castle without a library, and some held thousands of volumes. The arts, music, and sciences flourished within the circles of the Hungarian aristocracy, particularly from the 1780s onward, largely due to the Theresian and Josephinian reforms inspired by the ideas of the European Enlightenment. In rural noble residences, libraries were established with custom-made furniture, reading rooms, concert halls for court orchestras, ballrooms, as well as theater buildings and music halls in garden parks. This was a period when theater, visual arts, and architecture developed side by side, creating and enhancing the ideal conditions for the cultivation of book culture.

We must not forget that, in the previous period, between 1526 and 1699, a major part of Hungary, including the present-day territory of Slovakia, was under Ottoman rule. Almost the entire seventeenth century was marked by bloody wars against the Turks who occupied Hungarian territories and by the anti-Habsburg uprisings of the Hungarian nobility, who were dissatisfied with the curtailment of their aristocratic privileges by the Viennese Habsburg court ruling Hungary. Finances were used for the army fighting both the Turks and the domestic rebels. Consequently, not only the material but also the spiritual prerequisites for cultural activities and the development of libraries were severely hindered. The organization of the defense of the country and the related financial burden rested on the shoulders of the Hungarian nobility,⁵ who con-

⁵ M. Szarvasi, *Magánkönyvtárainak a XVIII. században...*

sidered military service and the defense of their homeland with arms in hand, as it formed an integral part of the code of noble virtues.⁶

Esterhasiana Bibliotheca: The Aristocratic Library of the Esterházy Family

During the one hundred and seventy years of Turkish subjugation and domestic military unrest in the Kingdom of Hungary, both existing and emerging libraries suffered greatly, facing constant threats from enemy forces. Nevertheless, some noble families managed to establish and develop rich and precious family libraries even in this turbulent period. Chief among them was the Esterházy family (also spelled Esterházi, Eszterházy, or Estoras), one of the greatest patrons of culture and the arts in the Kingdom of Hungary. From the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, they created one of the largest and most significant libraries in Hungarian history, internationally renowned as the *Esterhasiana Bibliotheca*.⁷ The Esterházys were an old Hungarian aristocratic family prominent as early as the twelfth century. They were closely connected to the royal court and, due to their support of the reigning Habsburgs and their exemplary Catholic piety, held many important positions in the country. Members of this family became Palatines of Hungary (the Palatine served as the king's chief advisor and the highest-ranking Hungarian official after the monarch), royal councilors, archbishops, bishops, diplomats, Bans of Croatia, marshals, generals, and other crucial military posts, as well as literary figures. The Esterházys owned the largest tracts of land in the monarchy and held extensive estates in the territories of present-day Slovakia, Hungary, Austria, Germany, Romania, Slovenia, Croatia, Italy, and Ukraine, where they established their residences and built distinguished libraries. Count Mikuláš Esterházy (1583–1645), a native of Galanta (in today's southern Slovakia) and Palatine of Hungary, the highest political official of Hungary in the first half of the seventeenth century, was the architect of the family's legacy and the founder of the Esterházy de Galanta et Frakno line. He was the first significant cultural patron of the family, a visionary of their cultural policy, and the founder of the Esterházy family library, which was initially housed in their residence at Lackenbach Castle and later relocated to their Forchtenstein Castle (both in Austria). The library was first named *Esterhasiana Bibliotheca* by his son, another very important family member and the founder of the princely line, Prince Pavol Esterházy (1635–1713), Palatine of Hungary, in his 1668 will. He continued his father's passion for collecting and significantly expanded the family libra-

⁶ E. Kowalská, *Dôstojník v armáde a spoločnosti na prelome 18. a 19. storočia: Imrich II. Zay a jeho kariéra (1765–1831)*, "Vojenská história: časopis pre vojenskú históriu, múzejníctvo a archívniectvo" 2015, no. 2, p. 148, <https://www.vhu.sk/data/att/4879.pdf> (accessed: 10.08.2024).

⁷ K. Komorová, *Esterhasiana Bibliotheca*, "Knižnica: časopis pre knihovníctvo" 2021, no. 3, p. 53, https://casopiskniznica.snk.sk/fileadmin/user_upload/Rocnik_2021/2021_10_04_07_Klara_Komorova.pdf (accessed: 12.08.2024).

ry.⁸ In addition to this library, he established another one for family use in their castle in Eisenstadt, Austria, where he lived with his family that held approximately a thousand volumes at the time of his death. He had as many as twenty-six children and also cared for the seven descendants of his prematurely deceased brother, František Esterházy. Along with their mother, his brother's children lived on his Eisenstadt estate while they were young. One of them was his nephew, Jozef Esterházy, later a prominent Hungarian politician, provincial judge, and close advisor to the Palatine of Hungary. His aristocratic library in his Čeklís manor (in today's Bernolákovo in western Slovakia, near the capital Bratislava) is the subject of this study and will be discussed below. The books that remained in the family's possession in Eisenstadt and Forchtenstein were further enriched by later descendants who added their own volumes. When the descendants of the Esterházys unified all the library collections from various family members and estates and relocated them to a single place – the Esterházy castle in Eisenstadt, Austria – in the mid-nineteenth century (in 1862), *Esterhasiana Bibliotheca* comprised approximately seventy thousand volumes.

The exceptionally valuable Esterházy treasury, founded in 1692 by Palatine Prince Pavol Esterházy at Forchtenstein Castle, is also worth mentioning, as it is the only treasury in Europe that has survived in its original location to this day. As a late expression of humanist-era collecting practices, it is unique in Europe due to its almost entirely preserved inventory and furnishings, forming a “princely universe” representative of the dynasty. The collection includes ethnographic, artistic, and scientific objects from all over the world, rare Augsburg machines and clocks, exotic curiosities, rare silver furniture, and Europe's largest privately held arms collection.⁹

The Esterházy Aristocratic Library at Čeklís Manor in the Service of Enlightenment Scholars

The long-desired peace that ended the prolonged state of war in Hungary, which had persisted through most of the seventeenth century, was established in 1711 at Sathmar (present-day Satu Mare, Romania). Many nobles who had distinguished themselves on the battlefield were rewarded by King Charles III of Hungary for their military service. Among those rewarded was the twenty-nine-year-old Jozef Esterházy, the grandson of the famous Mikuláš Esterházy and nephew of the aforementioned Pavol Esterházy. He used this royal reward to finance the construction of a magnificent Baroque manor house in Čeklís,

⁸ I. Monok, E. Zvara, *Esterhasiana Bibliotheca: A gyűjtemény története és könyvanyagának rekonstrukciója*, Kossut Kiadó, Budapest 2020, p. 9, https://real.mtak.hu/112863/1/Esterhasiana_Bibliotheca_2020_K.pdf (accessed: 12.08.2024).

⁹ E. Kiss, *A fraknói tárház, ahogy Esterházy Pál megalkotta*, [in:] *Esterházy Pál, a műkedvelő mecénás: Egy 17. századi arisztokrata-életpálya a politika és a művészet határvidéken*, Budapest 2015, pp. 151–152, <https://mek.oszk.hu/19200/19203/19203.pdf> (accessed: 14.03.2025).

where he established his own aristocratic library – distinct from the family collection founded by his grandfather. Through his collecting and patronage activities, he continued the family tradition of his ancestors, not only from his father's side but also from his mother's. His maternal great-great-grandfather was Palatine Count Juraj Turzo (Thurzó György, 1567–1616), the most important patron and central figure of Hungarian Protestantism, a patron of humanist education and culture, a bibliophile, and the founder of the famous aristocratic library in Bytča, in the Slovak part of the Kingdom of Hungary (today's northwestern Slovakia).

Inspired by monumental Austrian architecture, the Baroque castle built by Jozef Esterházy in Čeklís between 1712 and 1725 is a real architectural gem, ranking among the most splendid Baroque manor houses in the territory of present-day Slovakia. It was completely renovated in 2017; however, the li-



Figure 1. Čeklís Manor (Bernolákovo, Slovakia) today
Author of the photographs: Marta Špániová.

brary is no longer part of the estate, as the National Cultural Committee in Bratislava redistributed its holdings among several cultural institutions in Slovakia after the confiscation of the Esterházy family's property in the late 1940s. Some of its books are known to be held in the University Library in Bratislava, the Slovak National Library in Martin, and the Slovak National Archives in Bratislava. Among the Esterházy family, Jozef Esterházy achieved the highest position after his grandfather Mikuláš and uncle Pavol: in 1741, he was appointed Provincial Judge, the second-highest political rank in Hungary after that of the Palatine.

He had already been active in politics prior to that appointment: he had served as a royal governor's counselor and the Ban of Croatia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia, which was the third highest political office in the country. In addition to his political career, he also pursued a military path: he was a cavalry general and distinguished himself in several battles against the Turks, during the last anti-Habsburg uprising of Francis II Rákóczi, and in the wars for the Austrian Succession on the side of Queen Maria Theresa. Maria Theresa held him in high regard as both a politician and a person, regarding him as a zealous, loyal, sincere man who approached public affairs with a love of justice and tireless energy, and whose "virtues deserved to be crowned."¹⁰

Jozef Esterházy's library in his Čeklís manor was not inherited; its foundations were laid by the count himself during his secondary or university studies at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. At that time, it was customary for a young nobleman with a desire for education to begin collecting books during his studies, which is how the core of many aristocratic collections came into existence. Among other places, Esterházy purchased books in Venice, as his route home from his studies at the *Collegium Germanicum et Hungaricum* in Rome passed through the city. He did not complete these studies due to health issues, and after his early departure from Rome, he studied architecture and military and technical sciences privately in Vienna, where he undoubtedly continued to expand his library thanks to the flourishing Viennese book market, which at the time served as a primary source for acquiring foreign books. He significantly enriched his collection of books after the construction of rooms specifically designed for a library in his Čeklís manor in the 1720s. During that period, he purchased the entire scientific library, along with the furnishings, of his lawyer Štefan Pavol Munkáči after his death for two thousand guilders. In his will, Munkáči estimated the value of his books to be six hundred guilders.¹¹ It should be noted that, in the eighteenth century, a nobleman's specially designed library room was an essential component of every noble house, regardless of the motivations behind its construction. By the mid-eighteenth century, the Esterházy's library in their Čeklís manor was renowned throughout Hungary as a modern aristocratic *bibliotheca*. Many

¹⁰ G. Kolinovič, *Posthuma memoria...*, p. 129.

¹¹ [Š. Munkáči], *Testamentum Domini Stephani Munkácsy*, 16.02.1723. Manuscript, State Archive in Trnava, Shelfmark: Testamenty, inv. no. 382, pp. 3–4.

Hungarian scientists, historians, writers, and literary scholars were drawn to Esterházy for his erudition, intellectual generosity, and dedication to acquiring works critical to Hungarian scholarship. By making his books available, he not only facilitated their research but also provided financial support, including help with publishing their works. In his biography, Gabriel Kolinovič, a historian and prominent figure among the Slovaks of Croatia, describes Jozef Esterházy as his principal patron and benefactor. As the count's archivist and librarian, Kolinovič had unrestricted access to the library and archive in his Čeklís manor without any restrictions. Therefore, he was able to consult important source for writing his historical works, which included the history of the Templars, *Chronicon militaris ordinis equitum Templariorum*. In the mid-eighteenth century, he was the first Hungarian author known to have engaged with this topic, confirming the presence of the Templars in Upper Hungary (present-day Slovakia). The collection of the library founded by Jozef Esterházy in his Čeklís manor, which included valuable scientific literature, was also used by Slovak Enlightenment scholars for their research and publishing activities. Notably, Esterházy lent his books to the most important Slovak polymath and Enlightenment scholar, Matej Bel, a prominent figure of European importance, who used the count's books for writing his historical works on Hungary (even though he owned his own valuable library with numerous manuscripts). From the perspective of the history of Hungary and Slovakia, Bel's historical work on Hungary, *Adparatus ad Historiam Hungariae* (Preparation for the History of Hungary), printed in Bratislava in 1735, is regarded as his most significant work and was dedicated to Jozef Esterházy for his support in its compilation. At Bel's request, Esterházy lent him the first volume of the Jesuit Philipp Labbe's book on writers of Byzantine history, *Tomo I. Scriptorum Byzantinorum, edente Philippo Labbeo*,¹² from his Čeklís library, which enabled Bel to complete the eleventh part of the second volume of his *Adparatus*, focusing on Priscus – the orator, diplomat and historian active at the court of Attila the Hun, titled *Attila missis, acceptisque legationibus, illustris Ex Prisco rhetore sophista*.¹³ From an editorial perspective, *Adparatus* is regarded as Bel's most important editorial undertaking – at the time of its publication, it was the most extensive Hungarian edition of historical sources related to the nation's past. As the Ban of Croatia, Jozef Esterházy was one of the most prominent figures in Hungary, honored in the dedication of this work. Bel dedicated the seventh part of the first decade of his *Adparatus* to him, which included the first printed publication of *Commentatio epistolica de legatione sua ad Stephanum Botskay* by the Hungarian humanist poet, diplomat, and historian Ján Bocatus (1569–1621),¹⁴ which had previously existed only in manuscript form. In his dedication to Esterházy, Bel highlighted, among other qualities, the count's efforts

¹² The exact title of the book was *De Byzantinae historiae Scriptoribus*.

¹³ A. Tarnai, *Bél Mátyás levelezése*, Balassi kiadó, Budapest 1993, p. 521, <https://mek.oszk.hu/17800/17810/17810.pdf> (accessed July 15, 2024).

¹⁴ A. Tarnai, *Bél Mátyás levelezése...*, p. 663; M. Bel, *Adparatus ad Historiam Hungariae... Tomus primus*, Part 7, ed. J. P. Royer, Posonii 1735, p. [318].

during peacetime to enrich and expand his library with the works by the most esteemed authors and compared him to the renowned Hungarian monarch of the Renaissance, Matthias Corvinus, “who wasted no time without reading and enjoying literature even on the battlefield amidst the roar of weapons.”¹⁵ It is important to remember that Matthias Corvinus (1443–1490) founded a highly esteemed royal Renaissance library at his Buda Castle (in what is now Budapest, Hungary), the *Bibliotheca Corviniana*, which was of great significance to both Hungarian and European history and held the second-largest Renaissance book collection in Europe after the Papal Library.¹⁶ In the dedication of his *Adparatus*, Bel addresses Esterházy saying: “Ever since your early youth, you have combined study and wisdom with military exercises, Mars with Pallas, in such a perfect manner that one may wonder which is better and more profitable for our homeland; you being a soldier or a citizen.”¹⁷ Moreover, Bel was the first author to praise the beauty of Esterházy’s Čeklis manor and its library in a printed work – in the second volume of his major scholarly work on Hungary, *Notitia Hungariae Novae Historico-geographica* (Historical and Geographical Knowledge of Contemporary Hungary). He noted of the manor and its library as follows:

In one of the rooms, (the count) has made a library elegantly furnished in the French style and full of books in various languages and on various sciences, which is not common in our nation. The appearance of the manor lacks nothing to rival the most elegant ones of its kind in beauty.¹⁸

It is worth mentioning that Bel pays considerable attention to Slovak life and describes Slovak as a pleasant and gentle language. He condemns the denigration and enslavement of Slovaks, whom he considers to be highly industrious and among the most useful peoples in Hungary. Bel admired Esterházy for his wisdom, reason, calmness, and peacefulness paired with courage, resolve, and valor. He admired his aptitude for mastering both scholarly pursuits and military strategy. He believed that, as a politician and loyal royalist (serving as Ban of Croatia), Esterházy was a steadfast guarantor of public safety, safeguarding the country and ensuring the queen’s stability during an era marked by continuous warfare. During Esterházy’s lifetime, his librarian and biographer Gabriel Kolinovič assisted Bel in compiling the second volume of his *Notitia Hungariae Novae* and created comprehensive indices for his *Adparatus*. Bel’s surviving correspondence reveals that Kolinovič was responsible for supplying

¹⁵ M. Bel, *Adparatus ad Historiam Hungariae...*, p. [209].

¹⁶ Cs. Csapodi, K. Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Bibliotheca Corviniana*, Budapest 1990, <https://moly.hu/konyvek/csapodi-csaba-csapodine-gardonyi-klara-bibliotheca-corviniana> (accessed: March 15, 2025); Mátyás Corvinái: csak a pápának volt nagyobb könyvtára, “Magyar Hírlap” April 13, 2023, Budapest, <https://www.magyarhirnap.hu/kultura/20230412-matyas-corvinai-csak-a-papanak-volt-nagyobb-konyvtara> (accessed: 14.03.2025).

¹⁷ M. Bel, *Adparatus ad Historiam Hungariae...*, p. 319.

¹⁸ Eadem, *Notitia Hungariae Novae Historico Geographica... Tomus secundus*, P. Straub, J. P. van Ghelen, Viennae Austriae 1736, p. 177.

him with volumes from Esterházy's Čeklís library. Kolinovič was considered, even by his contemporaries, among the foremost Hungarian historians and scholars. Esterházy sought to create the best possible conditions for Kolinovič's research, including its financial support. Kolinovič undoubtedly played a crucial role in expanding Esterházy's library, recommending from the book market with attention not only to the count's literary preferences but also to his own scholarly interests and those of their intellectual circle. At the time, it was common for renowned scholars and writers to assist collectors in curating valuable and relevant works for aristocratic libraries, as evidenced by surviving correspondence.

Sámuel Székely de Doba (Sámuel Székely Dobai 1704–1779), the compiler of the 1749 catalogue of Jozef Esterházy's library¹⁹ and a distinguished historian of his time, who traveled extensively and collected historical sources along the way, had a keen interest in libraries and frequently visited them, gradually building an impressive personal book collection. He presumably also brought information to Čeklís about newly published books and other valuable older literature. It is believed that, during his travels across Europe, Székely might have acquired books not only for himself but also for the Esterházys in Čeklís. Székely was an avid collector of books, documents, and coins, and owned a library that included rare codices and incunabula, which he offered for sale to interested parties, primarily from higher ecclesiastical circles. Kolinovič, Esterházy's librarian and archivist, and Székely, the cataloguer of Esterházy's library and later a historian who also served as an officer in the army regiment of the count's son Jozef Esterházy Jr., were key figures in connecting scholars with the Esterházys' library in Čeklís during the eighteenth century. Among the well-known Slovak scientists and Enlightenment scholars collaborating with Esterházy and the polymath Matej Bel was the eminent Slovak cartographer and engineer Samuel Mikovíni, who took part in the development of the Esterházys' estate in Tata (in present-day Hungary). At the invitation of Jozef Esterházy, he carried out a geographical survey, including drainage plans for the marshy terrain and sewer system, beginning in 1728. Mikovíni also drew the county maps of the region for Bel's *Notitia Hungariae Novae historico-geographica*, a scientific work on Hungary. As the engineer of the Esterházys' court, Mikovíni must have had access to their Čeklís library, and its extensive collection of technical, hydrological, and geographical works would have been valuable for his research and professional duties. Among the most notable was a rare copy of the work the Italian military engineer Agostino Ramelli (1531–c. 1610): the 1588 Paris edition of his *Le diverse et artificiose machine*,²⁰ also known as the

¹⁹ The manuscript catalogue: *Catalogus Librorum qui in Bibliotheca Comitum Josephi Eszterházy, in Cseklesz prope Posonium reperiuntur confectus mense Aprili 1749 per Samuelem Székely de Doba Locumtenentem ex Ejusdem Comitum legatione*, National Széchényi Library in Budapest, shelfmark: OSZK Kézirattár, Fol. Lat.; A duplicate of the catalogue was published in: M. Balázs, B. Keserű, *Magyarországi magánkönyvtárak V. 1643–1750*, Budapest 2010, pp. 115–145, http://misc.bibl.u-szeged.hu/28986/1/ad_013_5.pdf (accessed: 10.08.2024).

²⁰ It is kept in the University Library in Bratislava under shelfmark 25.B.1198.

“Theater of Machines,” which marked the emergence of a new literary genre emerging at the close of the sixteenth century. Ramelli’s work offers original mechanical solutions to everyday problems. It contains ingenious designs for water management (wells, fountains, water mills, etc.), grain milling, excava-

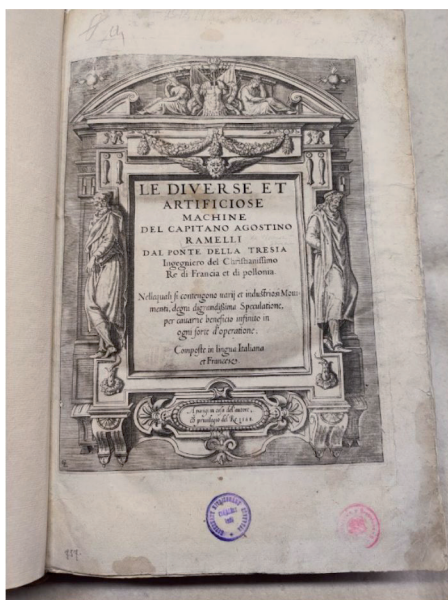


Figure 2. A. Ramelli, *Le Diverse Et Artificiose Machine*... Paris, 1588
Source: University Library in Bratislava, shelfmark: 25.B.1198.

tion, hauling heavy objects, military arms for sieges and defenses of towns, and even mechanisms designed to entertain and education the social elite (e.g., the bookwheel). All the nearly two hundred machines included in his book are illustrated with full-page or double-page engravings (some shown from multiple perspectives) and are accompanied by detailed descriptions of each mechanism in both Italian and French.

Another prominent figure who served at the Esterházy's court in Čeklís was Anton Bernolák (1762–1813), a Slovak linguist, a key figure in the revival of the Slovak language in Hungary, and the first codifier of the written Slovak language, after whom the historical town of Čeklís was later renamed Bernoláko-vo. He served as a Roman Catholic priest and worked as a curate (assistant to the parish priest) at the Čeklís parish from 1787 to 1791, which was his first assignment after his studies at the General Seminary in Bratislava. As a curate, he performed all pastoral duties, typically performed by a parish priest, and, in addition to the parish church, he preached to the Esterházy's in their manor chapel. Although there was a small library at the Čeklís parish, Bernolák brought his own books (his library contained about three hundred and fifty to four hundred volumes at the time of his death²¹) and also used the Esterházy's manor library for research and writing his scientific works. Evidence of Bernolák engaging in research in their library is found in his handwritten notes in several books, where he, among other things, corrected errors in Latin.²² At that time, the lord of the Čeklís estate was František II Esterházy of Galanta (1758–1815), a collector of philological and encyclopedic Enlightenment literature, which represented a significant group of the library, accounting for nearly a quarter of the entire collection – five hundred and fifty out of a total of a thousand seven hundred and twenty-eight titles.²³ In this library, Bernolák could study, for example, the rare and highly sought-after sixty-eight-volume *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon*, or “Zedler's Encyclopedia”, which encompassed all sciences and arts and included valuable biographical entries, published between 1731 and 1754 by the Leipzig bookseller Johann Heinrich Zedler, of which the Čeklís library housed a complete 1732 Halle and Leipzig edition. It is regarded as the first modern German-language encyclopedia and among the largest ever printed encyclopedias. In addition, František II Esterházy owned the Geneva edition of the complete works of the French Enlightenment scholar Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the seventeen-volume *Collection complète des oeuvres des Rousseau*, and numerous other French Enlightenment titles, which Bernolák was able to study, as he was proficient not only in Slovak, Czech, Latin, German, and Hungarian but also in French. It is important to

²¹ P. Horváth, *Anton Bernolák (1762–1813): Pôvod a osudy jeho rodiny: život a dielo*, Bernolákova spoločnosť s Maticou Slovenskou s príspevím Ministerstva kultúry SR, Bratislava 1998, p. 199.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 138.

²³ *Catalogus librorum Qui Cseklészii in superiori et inferiori Illustrissimi Domini Jopsephi e Comitibus Eszterházy Bibliotheca 1816 continentur*, University Library in Bratislava, shelfmark MS 953.

emphasize that, as an Enlightenment scholar and Slovak linguist, Bernolák actively promoted Slovak nation-building within the Kingdom of Hungary and founded a national movement with his followers that persisted for over fifty years. Thanks to the favorable working conditions he enjoyed in Čeklís, he compiled his significant linguistic works there: the first normative grammar of the Slovak language, *Grammatica Slavica*, published in Bratislava in 1790; the etymology of Slovak words, *Etymologia Vocum Slavicarum*, published in Trnava in 1791; and the first large multilingual dictionary of the Slovak language, which function as a normative reference for Slovak vocabulary, *Slowár Slowenský Česko-Latinsko-Německo-Uherský* (Slovak-Czech-Latin-German-Hungarian Dictionary), printed in Budapest from 1825 to 1827 after Bernolák's death, along with other works that remain in manuscript form. The modern Slovak nation is widely considered to have begun forming through the activities of Bernolák and his followers. The Slovak national revival movement and the works of Štúr and his followers were significantly influenced by the linguistic foundation laid by Bernolák. Alongside Bel, Bernolák is recognized as one of the foremost figures of the Slovak Enlightenment. The Esterházys in Čeklís undoubtedly contributed to the development of Hungarian (Enlightenment) sciences in the Slovak territory of Hungary by making knowledge accessible by amassing a significant library in their manor house during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, which they lent to intellectuals on the estate and in the surrounding area, not to mention their support and financial assistance for the publication of scholarly works. Moreover, Bernolák's followers – Ján Hollý, Anton Knapp, Jozef Pantoček, and Jozef Petrovič – collaboratively translated a Hungarian work of Pavol Esterházy, Palatine of Hungary, dedicated to the Marian cult, titled *Az egész világon lévő csudálatos Boldogságos Szűz képeinek rövideden föltett eredeti* (Trnava, 1690), into Bernolák's standardized form of Slovak. This translation was published in Bratislava in 1838 by his follower Alex Jordánsky as *Krátki Opis Milostiwích Obrazow blahoslawenég Pani Marie Matki Božég*. Two years prior, Jordánsky had also published a German-language edition of the same work.²⁴

The Character and Use of Jozef Esterházy's (1682–1748) Aristocratic Library at His Čeklís Manor

Let us now return to the library of Jozef Esterházy, the builder and founder of the Čeklís manor house. The 1749 library catalogue²⁵ records eight hundred and eighty-one titles; however, this number does not include twelve books²⁶

²⁴ I. Kotvan, *Bibliografia Bernolákovcov*, Matica Slovenská, Martin 1957, p. 188.

²⁵ *Catalogus Librorum qui in Bibliotheca Comitis Josephi Eszterházy, in Cseklesz prope Posonium reperiuntur confectus mense Aprili 1749 per Samuelem Székely de Doba Locumtenentem ex Ejusdem Comitatus legatione*, National Széchényi Library in Budapest, shelfmark: OSZK Kéziratár, Fol. Lat. 4.

²⁶ The data points to August 30, 2024.

that bear the *ex libris* of Jozef Esterházy and/or Štefan Pavol Munkáči, which we discovered among the collections of the University Library in Bratislava and the Slovak National Library in Martin. In addition to these twelve books, we also found three other titles absent from the catalogue, though they may have been added by subsequent owners rather than belonging to Jozef himself. The books that Jozef Esterházy donated to the Capuchin order on his estate in Tata (in present-day Hungary) are not listed separately either; the catalogue only includes a general note regarding them. His library thus demonstrably contained more than eight hundred and eighty-one registered titles.²⁷

To acquire books, Jozef Esterházy relied primarily on bookshops in the imperial city of Vienna, just like his uncle, Palatine Pavol Esterházy, and most Hungarian noblemen did at the time. His uncle may even have personally introduced him to favored booksellers. It should be added that, in Jozef's early childhood, his uncle Pavol – the brother of Jozef's father František Esterházy (1641–1683), who died prematurely when Jozef was just sixteen months old – acted as a father figure. Along with Jozef's mother, it was his uncle who helped shape Jozef's life path and supported his university studies in Trnava. He most probably also guided his acquisition of valuable literature and encouraged his passion for reading. An initial comparative analysis of the catalogues of the libraries of Jozef and Pavol Esterházy confirms the presence of some titles and editions from Vienna in both, which supports our hypothesis that they may have purchased books together. Moreover, in some cases, the same titles by the same authors – such as the Church history of the Greek historian of Christianity, Eusebius Pamphilus's *Historia Ecclesiastica*; a seminal work on Czech history, *Historia Bohemica* by the humanist philosopher Aeneas Silvius Bartholomeus Piccolomini;²⁸ and the historical work of the German theologian and historian Johann Clüver, *Historiarum totius mundi epitome* – appear in both catalogues, albeit in different editions. It should be emphasized that aristocratic libraries were primarily intended for the use of family members. Consequently, it is plausible that Jozef Esterházy had unlimited access to the books of Pavol Esterházy, and that some of his uncle's old books, written by time-honored European authorities may have motivated him to acquire newer editions of those same titles.

With a few exceptions identified through surviving volumes, Jozef Esterházy's library did not contain any collections from other noblemen. A significant part of it consisted of the books originally owned by the collector and lawyer Pavol Štefan Munkáči, who had built up a valuable scientific library that Esterházy purchased from his widow after Munkáči death, as previously noted. Munkáči expressly wished that his "little library," as he called it in his will, be entrusted to good hands – ideally those of Jozef Esterházy.²⁹ It is not known how

²⁷ We intend to follow up on this subject in the next phase of our research.

²⁸ Aeneae Sylvii *Historia Bohemica. Omnia opera* (Basel 1571) in Jozef Esterházy's library, Piccolomini, Aeneas Sylvius: *Historia Bohemica* (Amberg 1592) in Pavol Esterházy's library.

²⁹ [Š. Munkáči], *Testamentum Domini Stephani Munkácsy...*, p. 3.

large Munkáči's library was or what proportion it represented within in Esterházy's collection, nor has any catalogue of it survived. Nevertheless, Munkáči's will confirms that it did exist. Moreover, many of the surviving books can be identified easily, since each was marked with his handwritten *ex libris*. If we consider the ratio between the sum paid by Esterházy for Munkáči's books in 1723/1724 (six hundred guilders for the books, excluding the furniture) and the estimated total value of his library states in his 1731 will (four thousand guilders), Munkáči's books may have amounted to roughly fifteen percent of the entire collection.

In their eagerness for science and education, noble collectors were usually interested in all areas of intellectual life. A comparison of existing library catalogues shows a consistent set of subject categories, particularly religious literature, ancient literature, history, law, philosophy, geography, economics, and fiction. The influence of the Enlightenment on the development of libraries and the growing interest in specialist literature – reflected in the increasingly encyclopedic nature of collections – and French titles can be observed from the latter half of the eighteenth century onwards, while older libraries exhibited distinctly Baroque characteristics, with a strong emphasis on religious literature. This also applies to Jozef Esterházy's library, where religious and theological literature accounted for almost a quarter of the collection. The Esterházy's deep piety must not be forgotten: Jozef's grandfather, Palatine Mikuláš Esterházy, and his grandmother, Kristína Nyári, were patrons of Hungarian writers and publishers and supported the production of Catholic religious literature for the Hungarian faithful, as did Jozef's uncle, Palatine Pavol Esterházy, who authored religious works dedicated to the patroness of Hungary, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and to Marian devotion within Catholicism. Jozef Esterházy intended to become a Catholic priest himself and compiled several theological treatises in his youth which survive in manuscript form.

The thematic composition of the Jozef Esterházy's library collection follows contemporary trends and reflects his education, religion, occupation, and interests. He made daily use of the library, which was essential to his routine. This is also confirmed by his biographical literature, which states that, he would hid in a corner with a book to avoid disturbance and spent up to six hours a day reading,³⁰ as well as by a testimony that when he was abroad serving as the Ban of Croatia, his librarian continued sending him books all the way to Croatia.³¹ The Esterházy library collection was divided into seventeen groups, with subject matter being the predominant sorting criterion, although it was also combined with other practical criteria, such as size, author's origin, etc. The library consisted of works on religion and theology, history, philosophy (especially scholasticism),

³⁰ G. Kolinovič, *Posthuma memoria...*, p. 32.

³¹ Eadem, *Kolinovics Gabrielis Senquiciensis. Idaea procerum in sapientia laureata Joseph Esterhazii iu licis curiae regiae per Ungariam seu commentarius in historiam de vita rebusque ab eodem pro deo. rege, patria, domi ac foris, toga et sago, immortalis sui nominis gloria laudabiliter gestis. Libri IV. (a. 1729–1748). Senquiczii a. r. s. 1749*, University Library in Budapest, shelfmark G 89, p. 7.

law, geography, linguistics (dictionaries and textbooks), economics, husbandry (with particular attention to horse care), ancient literature, mathematics, architecture, military science, and medicine (especially healing practices).



Figure 3. One of Jozef Esterházy's books featuring his heraldic ex libris, handwritten ex libris inscriptions of previous owners, and handwritten notes

Source: University Library in Bratislava, shelfmark 25.G.10752.

Latin-language books predominated, while German and Hungarian were the most dominant among the national languages. In addition to the primarily German prints, the collection also contained books pertaining to Slovak, Czech, and Pole – either by territory, authorship, or content. The Poland-related volumes were analyzed in our 2023 study, published in issue 3 of the *Z Badan nad Książką i Księgozbiorami Historycznymi*.³²

The need to navigate social and political developments with historical understanding motivated Jozef Esterházy to acquire numerous historical works, which are well represented in his library. The study of history, too, gained significant momentum from the eighteenth century onward. Large, multi-volume historical works were being published and were highly sought after by the educated aristocracy. Interest in European and world history was a distinctive feature of aristocratic collecting practices at the time. Esterházy's library contained some crucial works of Hungarian historiography and national studies: in addition to Bel's writings, it included, for example, *Rerum Hungaricum decades quatuor* by the Italian historian and humanist Antonio Bonfini, who compiled it at the request of King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary, serving as royal historian at the king's court in the late fifteenth century. This work had a major impact on Hungarian humanist historiography and was one of the most influential sources of Hungarian history in European academic discourse until the late eighteenth century. In his library, Esterházy tried to gather the most significant European and Hungarian historical works available on the contemporary book market, including, of course, ancient historical writings. His handwritten notes in the surviving volumes testify to his careful study and deep understanding of the historiographical literature from his own time and earlier periods. *Historia Regni Hungariae* by the Hungarian historian Mikuláš Istvánfi is frequently referenced in his books – Jozef Esterházy owned its second edition, published in 1685 in Cologne. He cites Istvánfi's work in handwritten notes found in several books. Istvánfi offers a vivid and direct account of Hungarian history from the death of King Matthias Corvinus to the end of the so-called Fifteen Years' War in 1606. His book bears witness to his time and has found a permanent place in Hungarian historiography as one of its most significant achievements.³³ Istvánfi was even nicknamed "the Hungarian Livy." According to the testimony of his biographer Gabriel Kolinovič, history was one of Esterházy's hobbies and was among the subjects he read with the greatest enthusiasm. He reserved a special place in his library for a collection of historical works of Byzantine authors in Greek and Latin, along with related studies published by the Imprimerie Royale in Paris (*Typographia Regia; Regia*

³² M. Špániová, L. Lichnerová, *The Private Aristocratic Library of Jozef Esterházy (1682–1748) in his Čeklís Mansion (Bernolákovo, Slovakia): Pilot Research*, "Z Badan nad Książką i Księgozbiorami Historycznymi" 2023, vol. 17, no. 3, pp. 357–375, <https://journals.indexcopernicus.com/search/article?articleId=4035719> (accessed: 12.09.2024).

³³ P. Miklovič, *Humanista Mikuláš Istvánfi, jeho dielo a význam pre výskum uhorských a českých dejín*, "Historica Olomucensia" 2013, vol. 45, no.2, p. 28, <https://historica.upol.cz/pdfs/hol/2013/02/02.pdf> (accessed: 15.09.2024).

Lutetiae Typographaei Officina).³⁴ This collection was considered unique even by contemporary Hungarian scientists and scholars, and several volumes from it were borrowed by the polymath Matej Bel.

Interestingly, a relatively large part of the books in Esterházy's library – representing nearly a tenth of the collection, or eighty-three volumes – consisted of “banned” Protestant (mostly theological) books. In this context, it is important to emphasize that the Esterházys did not let religious affiliation limit their acquisitions. Despite being Catholic, they also collected Protestant works, especially famous titles by intellectuals, humanists, historians, scientists, and clergy. They viewed books as valuable both materially and spiritually, and it is because of this outlook that a large storehouse of books – now a vital part of our cultural heritage – has been preserved. Works by Protestant theologians were well-represented not only in the library of Jozef Esterházy but also in that of his ancestors. After all, the polymath Matej Bel was a Lutheran preacher, serving as a pastor of the German Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Bratislava and as rector of the Evangelical Lyceum in the same city; yet this did not affect Esterházy's support for him in his contributions to Hungarian scholarship and national studies. They respected each other; Esterházy supported Bel and, as noted earlier, lent him several volumes from his collection. Esterházy's library contained Protestant Bibles, as well as polemical and theological works on the Reformation from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries written by leading Protestant theologians, including Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, Matthias Flacius Illyricus, Theodor Beza, Abraham Scultetus, Franciscus Junius, William Whitaker, Peter Martyr Vermigli. It also featured works by Hungarian Protestant authors such as Péter Bornemissza, István Matkó, Péter Pecsvárad, and István Czeglédi. The catalogue of Esterházy's library, prepared after his death for the inheritance proceedings, lists this group of Protestant literature as “*Libri prohibiti vendendi vel cambiandi*” (Banned Books for Sale or Exchange), indicating that neither Jozef Esterházy nor his son – for whom the catalogue was compiled – meant to read them. However, handwritten notes in Jozef Esterházy's books suggest that he did engage with some of this works, likely in an effort to better understand Protestant thought and internal debates. His motivations may not have been purely intellectual; as a landowner and councilor of the royal governor, he likely felt a responsibility for religious matters not only on his estates but also throughout the wider kingdom. He made this particularly evident at the Hungarian Provincial Diet of 1728–1729 under the reign of King Charles III when, as the leader of the opposition, he contested the Protestants' demand to be exempt from swearing an oath invoking the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints, as this prevented them from holding public office.³⁵ The 1681 Articles of Sopron (reaffirmed by

³⁴ G. Kolinovič, *Posthuma memoria...*, p. 31.

³⁵ J. Esterházy, *Az Eszterházy család és oldalágainak leírása*, Az Athenaeum r. társulat könyvnyomdája, Budapest 1901, p. 155, <http://real-eod.mtak.hu/5543/1/000909556.pdf> (accessed: 14.07.2024).

the Hungarian Diet in 1715), which regulated religious matters in Hungary and were drafted by Catholics in the absence of Protestant representation, contained laws concerning the freedom of religion of Protestants. While allowing them to hold higher office, these regulations simultaneously prevented it by requiring them to swear a Catholic oath, which invoked the Blessed Virgin Mary and other saints. This was unacceptable for the Lutherans and ultimately led to the exclusion of Protestants from all important public institutions and intensified their marginalization. Such discrimination of Protestants, driven by Catholic supremacy, was a manifestation of the silent counter-Reformation movement during the reigns of Charles III and his daughter Maria Theresa. The significant representation of Protestant books in Jozef Esterházy's library was reflected as well in the collection of his uncle, Palatine Pavol Esterházy. There, Protestant works and books previously owned by Protestant – Lutheran and Calvinist – individuals were also significantly represented. Jozef Esterházy's grandfather, the founder of the Esterházy family library, Palatine Mikuláš Esterházy, also collected Protestant literature, although he converted to Catholicism early in life. Protestant books could have entered the Esterházy collection through purchase, confiscation, or ecclesiastical inspections,³⁶ as none of the three – Jozef, his uncle Pavol, and his grandfather Mikuláš – shied away from aggressive re-Catholicization on their estates. They could have confiscated books from Protestant preachers when expelling them from their estates. For example, in 1711, Jozef Esterházy ordered Protestant pastors and teachers to leave the villages of his estates, expelled the Protestant population from some of his villages, and seized several Lutheran churches on behalf of the Catholic Church. His Protestant books may have also come into his possession through inheritance from his mother, Katarína Tököly (1655–1701), who had been a Lutheran before converting to Catholicism after marrying Jozef's father. Her paternal great-grandfather, Count Juraj Turzo, Palatine of Hungary, was a passionate Protestant who built an important Renaissance library in Slovakia. Reports even suggest that, after the conquest of Orava Castle during the fights in Tököly's anti-Habsburg uprising, Jozef's uncle Pavol Esterházy removed books from Tököly's library located in the castle.³⁷ At that time, Orava Castle was occupied by the Lutheran family of Jozef's mother, Katarína Tököly, and her brother, Jozef's uncle Imrich Tököly, was leading the anti-Habsburg uprising. Our research reveals that at least five titles in the catalogue of Jozef Esterházy's Čeklís library are identical to those in the inventory of a smaller collection of books (seventeen titles) owned by Jozef's maternal uncle Žigmund Tököly in Kežmarok (Eastern Slovakia): the work of the Calvinist Ján Bethlen on the history of Transylvania, *Rerum Transylvanicarum libri quator*, of which Jozef owned two editions; a multilingual dictionary by Ambrogio Calepino, listed

³⁶ I. Monok, E. Zvara, *Esterhasiana Bibliotheca...*, p. 24.

³⁷ Esterházy's soldiers allegedly handled the books carelessly and threw them off the walls into wagons in the rain. the information was obtained through personal communication with the historian Anna Jonas (September 11, 2024).

in Jozef's catalogue in its six-language version published in 1567 in Basel; the Hungarian historian Mikuláš Istvánfi's work on the history of Hungary, *Historia Regni Hungariae*, which Jozef owned in its 1685 Cologne edition; the renowned polemical writing, *Kalauz*, by the Hungarian Jesuit and Archbishop of Esztergom Péter Pázmány, of which Jozef possessed two editions, the 1627 and 1637 editions; and finally, Jozef's own copy of his uncle Pavol Esterházy's work, *Boldogságos Szűz csudalatos képe*, printed in Trnava in 1690.³⁸ Some of these books may have entered Jozef Esterházy's library through his mother's relatives, though this cannot be definitively proven.

An analysis and comparison of the two surviving catalogues of the aristocratic library at the Čeklís manor – the 1749 catalogue of the library's founder, Jozef Esterházy (1682–1748), and the 1816 catalogue of his relative and namesake, Jozef Esterházy (1791–1847) – reveal that the Protestant books listed in the earlier catalogue were indeed sold. They are no longer present in the later catalogue, although there are some new additions of Protestant theological literature – for example, a 1740 edition of the German Protestant Bible by Martin Luther, published in Sulechów, Poland (Züllichau in German),³⁹ among other works. According to the 1816 library catalogue, the majority of newly added older editions from the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries consisted primarily of French literature and French-language books, since the founder's death; unlike his noble contemporaries, Jozef Esterházy the elder had not cared much about these.

Jozef Esterházy collected books by Hungarian writers and categorized them under a distinct heading, “*scriptores Hungarici*,” which did not include titles by Hungarian Protestant theologians (as these were classified separately among banned books). In addition, some works by Hungarian authors were placed in other groups based on their subject matter, such as the works of the polymath Matej Bel on geography. Besides Bel's works, Esterházy focused on the works of his uncle, Palatine Pavol Esterházy, and the ecclesiastical writer and Catholic bishop of Transylvania, András Illyés. His collection also encompassed books by the Catholic theologian and leading Counter-Reformation figure Péter Pázmány, the philosopher, polymath, and encyclopedist Martin Sentiváni (Márton Szentiványi), the Hungarian humanist poet Jan Bocatius, the Catholic theologian and Jesuit professor at Trnava University and rector of the Pázmáneum in Vienna František Kazi (Ferenc Kazy), the aforementioned Hungarian historiographer, chronicler, and humanist Mikuláš Istvánfi (Miklós Istvánffy, Ištvánfi), and Jozef Esterházy's librarian and archivist, the historian Gabriel Kolinovič, who wrote his biography.

At the age of twenty-three, Jozef Esterházy abandoned his ecclesiastical career and joined the army. He pursued an impressive military career for nearly

³⁸ The inventories of the books of Žigmund and Imrich Thököly were researched by I. Monok, *The Cultural Horizon of Aristocrats in the Hungarian Kingdom: Their Libraries and Eruditions in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, Praesens Verlag, Wien 2019, pp. 210–211.

³⁹ *Cathalogus librorum Qui Cseklészii in superiori et inferiori Illustrissimi Domini Jopsephi e Comitibus Eszterházy Bibliotheca 1816 continentur...*, p. 16.

his entire life; he was on the battlefield, leading his force of nine thousand troops as a general during the Silesian War of the Austrian Succession, well into his sixties.⁴⁰ His military career and the need to be familiar with the subject theoretically were reflected in the composition of his library. Military literature was a defining component of a nobleman's library in the modern period, reflecting the expectation of military service and the associated need for theoretical preparation.⁴¹ Esterházy's library contained books on military architecture, instructions for building traps, drawbridges, observation posts, and fortifications, as well as influential works on military tactics dating back to antiquity. Examples include the analytical and critical commentaries of two Dutch humanist scholars and historians, Peter Schrijver (Scriverius) and Gottschalk Stewech (Godescalcus Stewechius), on the Roman military expert Flavius Vegetius Renatus's treaties on warfare, *De re militari* (also known as *Epitome rei militaris*, or "Outline of the Military Art"), which was regarded as the most influential military writing in the Western world. Vegetius provided important insights into Roman siege techniques, urban defense strategies, the Roman fleet, naval warfare in late antiquity, and the necessity of military discipline. For centuries, this book was viewed as the military bible of Europe, and even the skills and knowledge of generals were judged according to Vegetius's approach. One of his famous aphorisms was "If you want peace, prepare for war."⁴² The obligation to engage with military theory remained constant throughout Esterházy's life. Even after thirty-six years of military service, he remained an active soldier and general, whom Empress Maria Theresa appointed chairman of the delegation tasked with designing a military command and control system for troops during the War of the Austrian Succession at the Hungarian Provincial Diet in 1741.⁴³

Jozef Esterházy's intellectual horizon also encompassed law, economics, geography, natural sciences, and architecture. In the context of his interest in legal matters, his involvement in politics and law is also worth mentioning: he served as the provincial judge of Hungary for seven years, from 1741 until his death, and prior to that, he had held the office of assessor of the Court of the Seven, where he was a renowned jurist. His library also featured rare scientific works, among them a copy of Ptolemy's *Geography*, which contained a corpus of twenty-seven original historical Ptolemaic maps, as well as a section of thirty-seven modern maps from 1562. It was the second edition of one of the most successful versions of this work in print, edited by the Venetian scholar, mathematician, and cartographer Girolamo Ruscelli, and translated into Latin for the first time. Its historical significance lies in its influence on the earliest printed atlases. Among other things, Ruscelli included a map titled

⁴⁰ G. Kolinovič, *Posthuma memoria...*, p. 12.

⁴¹ V. Čičaj, *Šľachtická knižnica*, [in:] *Zemianstvo na Slovensku v novoveku. Časť II.: Duchovná a hmotná kultúra*, eds. M. Kovačka et al., Slovenská národná knižnica, Martin 2014, p. 121.

⁴² *Vegetius*, [in:] *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Vegetius> (accessed: 25.07.2024).

⁴³ G. Kolinovič, *Posthuma memoria...*, p. 126.

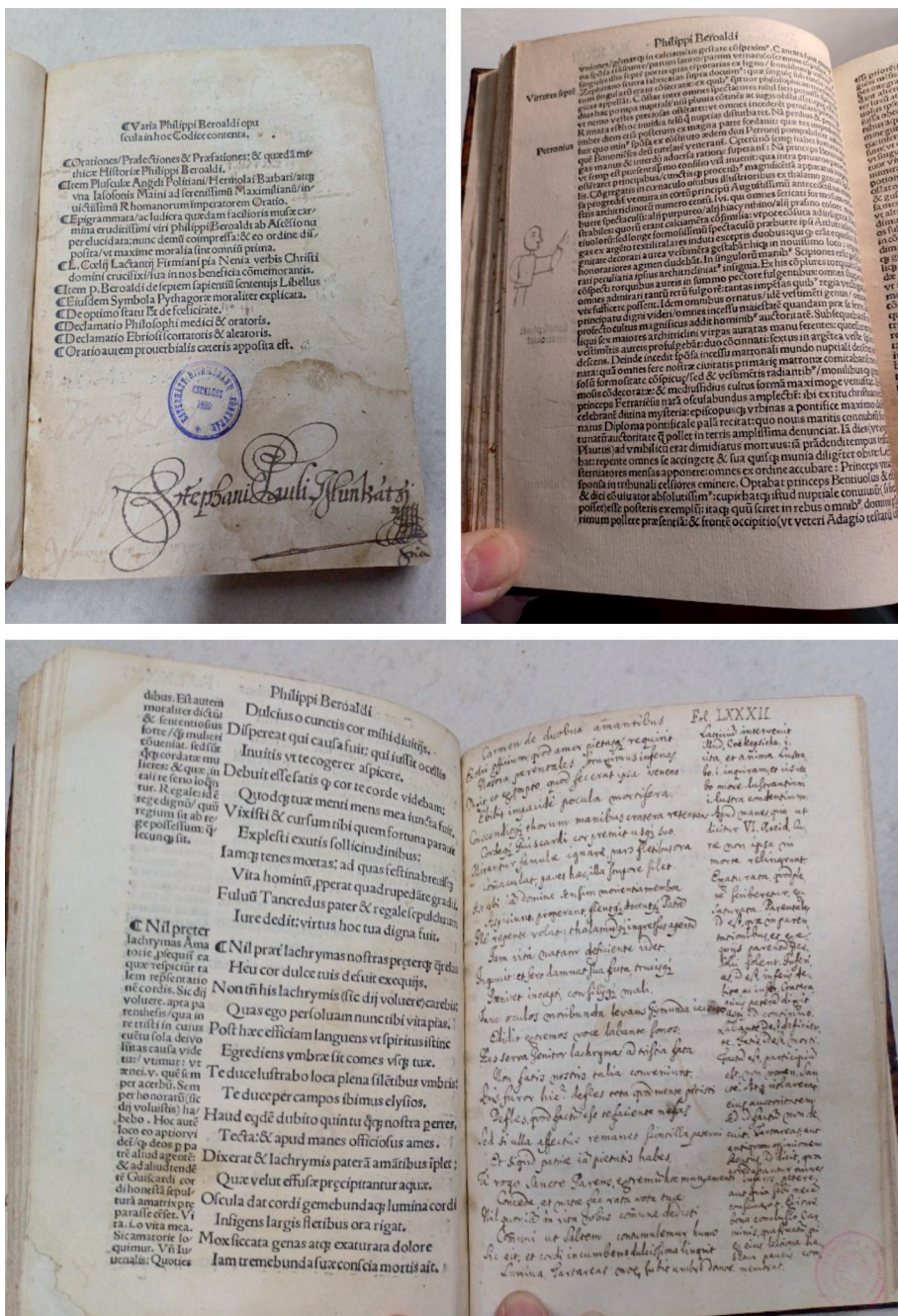


Figure 4. F. Beroaldo the Elder, Varia Philippus Beroaldi opuscula Basel 1509 – The oldest preserved book from Jozef Esterházy's library

Source: University Library in Bratislava, shelfmark 25.D.6189.

“Orbis description,” which was the first occurrence of a world map with both hemispheres. Nevertheless, the most interesting map in the book is considered to be a copy of Zen’s map of the North Atlantic, first published in 1558 by the Venetian humanist Nicolò Zen the Younger, based on a fourteenth-century manuscript map drawn by travelers (his family ancestors) in the North Atlantic, although some later historians regard this map by Zenas to be a forgery. For his collection, Esterházy also acquired an important astronomical treatise, *Astronomicon*, by the Roman astronomer and astrologer Marcus Manilius, which is the earliest extant treatise on astrology from the first century AD. Esterházy owned its 1679 Paris edition, which featured illustrations of astrological constellations. Architecture was another great passion for Esterházy, and according to the inscription on his *castrum doloris*, he was known for his knowledge of it “far and wide.” As his memoirs reveal, he applied this knowledge to the construction of his residences. He began his private study of architecture during his stay in Vienna at the age of nineteen. His library included, for example, the important architectural scholarly writing of the Italian Renaissance architect Vincenzo Scamozzi, *Architettura universale*, which is recognized as a fundamental text of architecture in Northern Europe, particularly in the Netherlands, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Esterházy owned the 1698 Nuremberg edition. He also owned another important work on architecture, *De Architectura libri decem*, by the ancient Roman technician and architect Marcus Vitruvius Pollius, which preserved significant knowledge about Roman architecture and technical inventions. He had an illustrated edition of this book, published in 1649 in Amsterdam, with a full-page engraving on its title page depicting the author and an ancient school of architecture. This ancient treatise by Vitruvius was the earliest printed work on architecture and influenced the understanding of architecture up to the Baroque period.

In general, Jozef Esterházy made a point of acquiring ancient literature, and such titles appear across nearly all thematic categories in his library. Among the works of ancient writers, he was particularly fond of reading Ovid, whose books provided personal consolation, as noted by Kolinovič in his biography.⁴⁴ The 1513 Venetian edition of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* is the oldest book listed in Esterházy’s catalogue and the second oldest book in his collection, after the 1509 Basel edition of *Varia Philippi Beroaldi opuscula* by the leading Italian humanist Filippo Beroaldo the Elder, acquired after Munkáči⁴⁵ and omitted from the catalogue. The fact that Esterházy read ancient writings is attested by his numerous handwritten notes referencing them in his books. In addition to Ovid, he read primarily Cicero, Seneca, Virgil, Sophocles, Xenophon, Pindaros, Dionysius Cassius, Petronius, Suetonius Tranquillus, Flavius, and others, whose works he had in his library and referenced in the notes he wrote in his books.

⁴⁴ Ibidem, p. 57.

⁴⁵ This is known from a surviving copy in a collection of sixteenth-century prints held at the University Library in Bratislava (shelfmark 25 D 6189).

As mentioned above, Jozef Esterházy acquired books according to his own needs and interests. His entire manor house and estate – comprising parks, woods, a preserve for big game, an area for hunting activities, and a large horse-riding arena – were also adapted to these interests. Equestrian literature and works on animal husbandry were assigned to a special category in his library and included representative editions on equine bridledways, harnesses construction, training methods, care techniques, and hunting-related topics. Horses remained one of Esterházy's enduring passion. In 1715, he established a horse stud farm with extensive stables on his estate in Jatov (in the Nitra region of present-day Slovakia), where he kept a herd of fifty mares.⁴⁶ This facility was intended to serve both military and private purposes.⁴⁷ A riding school with a spacious riding hall was also part of the premises of Jozef's manor in Čeklís. The University Library in Bratislava has preserved a unique volume collected by Jozef Esterházy: a rare book by the Braunschweig miner, stable master, publisher, and writer Georg Engelhard von Löhneysen, *Von Zeumen: Gründtlicher Bericht vom Zeumen und ordentliche Ausstheilung* (A Thorough Report on the Bridle and the Proper Layout of the Mouthpiece and the Bars) in its 1610 Remlingen edition,⁴⁸ featuring over fifty full-page, A3-sized artistic engravings of horses, horse harnesses, bridles, tournaments, and even war songs with musical notation.

Conclusion

Noble book collections now constitute a substantial part of the holdings in most major public libraries in Hungary and Slovakia. These collections entered public institutions as gifts or, later, through purchases and state confiscations of noble estates during the nationalization process after the Second World War, and they remain under state custodianship. When accumulating their library collections, many aristocrats were motivated not only by their own personal interests but also by a higher goal: the advancement of local intellectuals, Enlightenment scholars, and literary figures, to whom they frequently lent volumes from their libraries. The Baroque castle built by Jozef Esterházy in Čeklís between 1712 and 1725 – an architectural masterpiece modeled on grand Austrian architectural traditions – stands among the most splendid Baroque manor houses in the territory of present-day Slovakia. It was fully renovated in 2017, but the original library is no longer housed there, as the National Cultural Committee in Bratislava reallocated its holdings among multiple Slovak cultural institutions after the confiscation of the Esterházys' property in the latter half of the 1940s. Some of its books are now preserved in institutions such as the University Library in Bratislava, the Slovak National Library in Martin,

⁴⁶ [J. Esterházy], *Mihi comiti Josepho Esterhazy interventorum Vita mea comite singularium magis ac quodammodo memorabilium Connotatio*, University Library in Budapest, shelfmark G 90, p. 12; G. Kolinovič, *Posthuma memoria...* p. 17.

⁴⁷ G. Kolinovič, *Posthuma memoria...*, p. 18.

⁴⁸ University Library in Bratislava, shelfmark 25 A262.

and the Slovak National Archives in Bratislava. The thematic composition of the collection reflects contemporary trends as well as Esterházy's education, religious background, professional roles, and personal interests. For him, the use of the library was a daily necessity. Esterházy lent his books to Matej Bel, the most important Slovak polymath and Enlightenment scholar and a prominent figure of European importance, who used the count's library for his historical writings on Hungary. Another distinguished figure working at the Esterházy court in Čeklís was Anton Bernolák (1762–1813), a Slovak linguist, initiator of the Slovak language revival in Hungary, and the first codifier of the written Slovak language. In fact, the historical town of Čeklís was later renamed Bernolákovo in his honor. For the Esterházy, books were valued both for their material and spiritual worth. It is thanks to this reverence that a significant portion of the collection has survived, now forming a vital part of Slovakia's cultural heritage, has survived to this day.

Besides the testimony of his biographer and librarian Gabriel Kolinovič, the importance and spiritual value of books and the library for Jozef Esterházy is further attested by the words inscribed on his *castrum doloris*:

Goddess of literature and wisdom! Behold... Jozef Esterházy, highly esteemed by the whole kingdom of Corvinus, if not by entire Europe, a graduate in philosophy and law, endowed with muses and known far and wide for his knowledge of architecture. He drew his successful genius from books, not from teachers. What miracle? He built a library at no small expense, carefully selecting the most famous authors and editions... it is well-known that he spent at least six hours a day reading, as those who had the occasion to benefit from the erudition of this eminent man know.⁴⁹

After the death of his son and heir, Jozef Esterházy Junior, the manor was inherited by his uncle (his paternal uncle) František Esterházy, and, subsequently, by his cousin František Esterházy Junior (1715–1785). The latter also used it as his residence and continued to expand the manor library. The manor house was also visited by members of the Viennese court. In 1766, František Esterházy Junior even hosted Empress Maria Theresa and her family to celebrate her birthday.⁵⁰ On that occasion, a magnificent pavilion was built near the manor house at the Old Pheasant House, and a highly varied program was prepared – fishing on the Danube, Chinese horse racing, and the Flying Dutchman. The biggest attraction was a fair where Persians, Turks, Armenians, Egyptians, Russians, Dutch, English, and other nations had their sumptuous stalls. Thousands of visitors from the surrounding areas participated in the celebrations. The manor house was illuminated by Bengali fires, and a thousand lanterns enhanced the spectacle of the night.⁵¹ After the death of

⁴⁹ G. Kolinovič, *Posthuma memoria...*, p. 57.

⁵⁰ É. M. Fülöp, *A pápa-ugod-devecseri Esterházy-uradalom megszervezése és gazdálkodása a 18. század folyamán*, Magyar Elektronikus Könyvtár – Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, <https://mek.oszk.hu/02100/02182/html/02.htm> (accessed: 27.09.2024).

⁵¹ História obce: Obec Bernolákovo: Oficiálna Webstránka Obce, <https://www.bernakovo.sk/19002/historia-obce> (accessed: 25.07.2024).

František Esterházy Junior, Čeklís – along with its manor house and library – was inherited by his son František II Esterházy of Galanta (1758–1815) and after him by his son Jozef Esterházy (1791–1847).⁵² Subsequent research will focus on their collecting activities, based on the surviving 1816 library catalogue.⁵³ Evidence already confirms that, during the remainder of the eighteenth century, the Čeklís manor book collectors concentrated on French literature and textbooks, significantly enriching the collection with Enlightenment encyclopedias and related works.

In conclusion, the Esterházys were enthusiastic book collectors, acquiring their extensive libraries through both purchase and inheritance. They viewed books and libraries as a means to showcase the glory of their family, their past, and their power. Their approach reflected the concept of *memoria – fama – gloria* (memory – fame – glory),⁵⁴ which signified that works were created to preserve memory, gain fame, and consolidate glory.

Unfortunately, no relevant archival documents have survived that could serve as sources for research on the acquisition of books or purchases from booksellers during the lifetime of Jozef Esterházy, the founder of the manor and its library. The Čeklís manor burned down in 1911, and with it, the older section of the family archive, where such documents were kept, was also reduced to ashes. Therefore, our primary sources today are the copies of these sources made by Esterházy's librarian and archivist, Gabriel Kolinovič, preserved only because they were stored off-site. By the 1940s, when the Czechoslovak authorities confiscated and removed the aristocratic library of Čeklís manor, it held around five thousand volumes. While this number may seem modest by contemporary standards, one must consider the limited book production of earlier centuries and the difficulty of acquiring books at the time. In this light, the collecting passion of the Esterházys at Čeklís remains truly admirable.

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⁵² *Esterházy – čeklíska vetva: 1498–1939*, inventory, Slovak National Archive in Bratislava, shelfmark: L. Rody a panstvá L/I.

⁵³ *Catalogus librorum Qui Cseklészii in superiori et inferiori Illustrissimi Domini Jopsephi e Comitibus Eszterházy Bibliotheca 1816 continentur...*

⁵⁴ I. Monok, E. Zvara, *Esterhasiana Bibliotheca...*, p. 26.

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