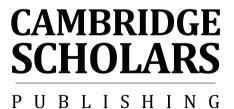# The Politics of Translation and Transmission

The Politics of Translation and Transmission: *Basilikon Doron* in Hungarian Political Thought

By

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INTRODUCTION

This study is an introduction into the foundations of Hungarian political thought, as laid down by two 17th century mirrors of princes, the first attempts at political theorising in the Hungarian vernacular. The unlikely source text for these treatises was an advice book by King James I and VIth to his son, Henry: *Basilikon Doron.* As an analysis of the translation and re-reading of a widely circulated text by the king of England and Scotland, the book is also a study in early modern cross-cultural dialogue, situated in the context of recent discussions on transculturalism, and more specifically on the intellectual connections between Britain and the world. As it provides an analysis of the way King James's book was read on the continent, it also aims to contribute to the recurring debates on early modern, and especially Stuart absolutism.

The study arose from a larger research project designed as a monographic review of early modern Hungarian political thought. From very early on, however, it became clear that the groundwork for such an analysis has not been laid down. There are very few modern editions of texts making up the corpus of works of early modern Hungarian political theory. Similarly, very little work has been done on the persons of authors.

The extant research in the field was primarily carried out by literary historians according to their own criteria, these texts being important for them from the point of view of the development of Hungarian prose style, and representing additional genres of old Hungarian literature. The postface of the anthology of 17th century Hungarian thinkers discussed for example all theoretical-philosophical works of the period in their thematic, generic and stylistic diversity as mere surrogates for the lack of literary prose genres like short-stories or novels.[1]

Another commentary on a translation from Guevara stated that it would be illegitimate to treat this text as a work of political theory, since it mainly consisted of fiction meant to entertain. It was much more interesting, the argument went, as a work pertaining to the *belles lettres,* representing a significant momentum of 17th century trends in prose style.[2]

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[1] Márton Tarnóc, ed., *Magyar gondolkodók 17. század*, Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1979, 1265.
[2] Imre Bán, "Fejedelmek serkentő órája. Adalék a XVII. századi magyar stílus történetéhez," in idem, *Eszmék és stílusok*, Budapest: Akadémiai, 1976, 156.

Historians seem to have accepted that the field was a dominion of literary studies, implicitly accepting thus the insignificance of these texts from the point of view of intellectual history or political thought. This is the stance adopted by the ten-volume academic history of Hungary, where the chapter on intellectual history starts with the heading "The Lack of Political Thought."[3] The reason for this apparent shying away from the topic is the lack of originality of a corpus a significant part of which consists of translations. The other works are original in the sense that there is no single other work that has been or can be identified as their source, but they too transmit arguments and topoi familiar from the dominant European languages of political thought.

The above features of the historiography of the field define several main aspects of the present study. The first concerns its design. We shall be concerned with the first two texts of political theory in the Hungarian vernacular, György Szepsi Korotz's Hungarian translation of King James VI and I's *Basilikon Doron*, Oppenheim, 1612, and János Pataki Füsüs's *Királyoknak tüköre*, Bártfa, 1626. We shall need to clarify some basic issues like the stemma of the first, the international and local contexts of these texts' birth, or the intellectual and personal connections of the authors. Together with the analysis of the political languages they spoke and the questions they were attempting to answer, this will take up the space available for a book-length study.

Treating the two texts together is warranted by factors other than chronology. Apart from belonging together in present-day canons of early modern political works, or in the genre-specific canon of mirror of princes literature, several further factors connect them historically as well: as the chapter dealing with the connections of the authors will show, these figures belonged to the same circle of literati. There is also textual evidence that the second was written with reference to the first. We shall of course need to investigate the meaning of this claim in close textual analysis. Finally, the two books were already seen as belonging together by contemporaries: they keep recurring together in surviving seventeenth century book records.

As concerns their alleged lack of originality, we shall look at the fact of the first being a translation, and the second mixing a large variety of political languages in use at the time as a source of inspiration rather than embarrassment. Translated texts underwent changes due to the intentional interventions of their translators, who abridged them or added their own comments or examples. Prefaces, introductions, dedications attached to

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[3] Zsigmond Pál Pach, ed.gen., *Magyarország története*, vol. 3/2 (1526–1686), Budapest: Akadémiai, 1985, 1529.

them further channelled the possible meanings into a desired direction. These rewordings and re-readings of originals are possible points where specificities of the transmission and reception of ideas can be grasped. Apart from the intentions of the agents proper, necessary transformations were also brought about by the new linguistic, historic, cultural context in which ideas were formulated anew. Translations mark an attempt at creating a language capable of articulating the received ideas, and reflections on the possibilities of articulation in the vernacular will occur in both texts.

There is another issue that will recur in the analysis of both texts to a great extent because of the need to tackle a widely and uncritically accepted truism of the literature in the field: that both are instances of absolutist political theory, the first translating, according to the academic history of Hungarian literature, "a primitive work of the widespread literature of absolutist theory,"[4] and the second allegedly being written in support of the "absolutist" rule of Gábor Bethlen, prince of Transylvania.[5] There are several problematic assumptions underlying these arguments. One is common in English historiography as well, and has recurrently come into much heated discussion. It has been poignantly summarized by Jenny Wormald as "an error which has been remarkably persistent: the belief that an English king called James I wrote a book about absolute kingship called *Basilikon Doron.*"[6] If in English historiography, the question of Stuart absolutism is related to mapping the road leading up to the English revolution, and is portrayed in works positing James's absolutism as concealing a conspiracy against the monarchy and the institution of king-in-parliament,[7] in East-Central European historiographies in general, the Hungarian included, the opposite is the case: absolutism is not associated with the arbitrary exercise of power, but with the

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[4] Klaniczay Tibor, ed., *A magyar irodalom története 1600-ig*, vol. 2 of István Sőtér ed., *A magyar irodalom története,* Budapest: Akadémiai, 1964, 41.

[5] Emil Hargittay, *Gloria, fama, literatura. Az uralkodói eszmény a régi magyarországi fejedelmi tükrökben,* Budapest: Universitas, 2001, 51; István Schlett, *A magyar politikai gondolkodás története*, vol. 1, Budapest: Korona, 1996, 160.

[6] Jenny Wormald, "James VI and I, Basilikon Doron and The Trew Law of Free Monarchies: The Scottish Context and the English Translation," in Linda Levy Peck, ed., *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 52.

[7] J.G.A. Pocock, "A Discourse of Sovereignty: Observations on the Work in Progress,", in Nicholas Phillipson and Quentin Skinner, eds., *Political Discourse in Early Modern Britain*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 390, 377–428.

strengthening of the administrative powers of the state, the provision for schools and public welfare. In fact, the term "absolutist" has different meanings in different European historiographies: it can refer to a despotic and autocratic rule, but also a bureaucratic one, strengthening the military and focusing on the welfare of subjects. In his *The Myth of Absolutism. Change and Continuity in Early Modern European Monarchy*, Nicolas Henshall argued that none of the latter developments leading to the rise of the modern state required tools commonly designated as "absolutist:" centralised, bureaucratic states emerged in cooperation with ruling elites and town guilds and corporations.[8] A somewhat diverging view is that of Heinz Schilling, who wrote that the rise of princely absolutism in the German principalities, understood by him as the rise of centralised territorial states, "not only limited the economic opportunities of the middle class, but it was also a blow to their self-confidence and a setback for the political culture of German society in general."[9]

In studies in the wide field of Hungarian cultural and intellectual history, there is a widespread assumption, sometimes made explicit as an argument in favour of the absolutism of the early seventeenth century Hungarian mirror of princes literature, that the government of the Transylvanian principality exhibited absolutist tendencies in the period. Such studies also frequently claim that and Korotz as well as Füsüs gave theoretical expression to, legitimized and underpinned this supposedly absolutist principality. A recent monograph of the seventeenth century mirror of princes literature explicitly ascribed the absolutism of these texts to the existence of an absolutist state:

> It is a fact that the genre of mirror of princes appears at the meeting point of political theory and practice: the precondition of its flourishing is the protracted existence of a homogeneous, absolutistic legal unit. As in Europe the genre flourished in the 16th-17th centuries, and the kingdom of Hungary was in the period in a specific decentralised state, it was primarily in the 17th century Transylvanian principality that the conditions of the genre becoming popular existed. [10]

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[8] Nicolas Henshall, *The Myth of Absolutism. Change and Continuity in Early Modern European Monarchy*, London and New York: Longman, 1992, 1–6.
[9] Heinz Schilling, "Civic Republicanism in Late Medieval and Early Modern German Cities", in idem*, Religion, Political Culture and the Emergence of Early Modern Society. Essays in German and Dutch History*, Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J.Brill, 1992, xii.
[10] Hargittay*, Gloria, fama, literatura,* 8.

The government of Transylvania in the seventeenth century is, however, hard to describe as absolutist. Historians dealing with the government of Transylvania and the nature of princely power in the period generally stress that the power of the prince only extended to his own private and crown estates, and it was in these realms that his actions were not bound—nor regulated—by positive law. The lack of an aristocracy and the weakness of the estates, as well as the fact that the prince tended to be the richest landowner of the principality were not enough to let princely power penetrate realms regarded as belonging to the noble or urban estates, including jurisdiction and taxation.[11] It is interesting, and somewhat puzzling, that historiographic treatments of the government of the Transylvanian state failed to make an impact on the work of authors dealing with early modern Hungarian political theory.

The persons of their authors, their dedications or maecenature indeed link our texts to the principality. We shall devote special attention to Füsüs's relationship to the propaganda literature around Gábor Bethlen, to whom his work was dedicated. Füsüs's dedicatory epistle explicitly addressed the nature of princely power, stressing the need that the ruler governed together with the magistrates, and that he relinquished the false and tyrannical opinion inculcated by flatterers that "princeps lege solutus est." Furthermore, Füsüs discussed the authority of the prince as subordinate to the authority of the law and spiritual authority of ministers as magistrates. Nevertheless, the text is still commonly referred to as an exponent of princely absolutism.

The answer to the puzzle again lies in the historiographic stakes of using the label. These stakes are most apparent in the literature on the treatise generally regarded as the first instance of Transylvanian political

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[11] cf. Zsolt Trócsányi, *Erdély központi kormányzata, 1540–1690*, Budapest: Akadémiai, 1980, a work describing the practice of government as medieval (228); cf. also László Makkai and Zoltán Szász, eds., *History of Transylvania, vol. II. From 1606 to 1830*, translated by Peter Szaffkó et al., Boulder, Colorado: Atlantic Research and Publications, 2002, where Katalin Péter makes the point that not even the reign of Gábor Bethlen can be described with the term "absolutism" as used in Western historiography (esp. 53–55.) The same point is made by legal and constitutional historians as well, though on opposite grounds; they claim that the form of government was a feudal-representative one (see for example Andor Csizmadia, Kálmán Kovács, László Asztalos, eds., *Magyar állam- és jogtörténet*, Budapest: Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, 1987, 197.) The latter argument was taken in extremis by Lajos Rácz, who argued that the laws and election contracts passed by Transylvanian diets laid down the basis of a constitutional monarchy and ministerial responsibility to the diet; cf. Lajos Rácz, *Főhatalom és kormányzás az erdélyi fejedelemségben*, Budapest: Akadémiai, 1992.

theory, Farkas Kovacsóczy's *De administratione Transylvaniae dialogus*.[12] The Latin text discussed in form of a dialogue the best form of government during the rule of an underage prince. One partner argued for government by a single person versus the government of the many, and was defeated in the debate by his friend, who rephrased the question as referring to the structure of the council with whom the ruler had to govern, so that he could be checked and tempered, preventing the ascent of flatterers and the destruction of the life and property of subjects. The text used the same phrase from Juvenal as Füsüs to refer to absolute rule to be avoided, "Sic volo, sic iubeo, sit pro ratione voluntas."

Discussions of Kovacsóczy's text were carried out with a heat indicating that the primary stakes of the label touched upon Marxist visions on the unfolding of history. According to the academic history of Hungarian literature, the dialogue was a debate on absolutist and republican forms of government, and supported the latter with a "reactionary"[13] argument. Béla Köpeczi, on the other hand, argued that the dialogue did not question the absolute rule of the prince, a forward-looking idea as it promoted centralisation and opposed "nobiliar anarchy." The debate was, he showed, about the number of governors assisting the prince, and Kovacsóczy argued for a governing council, as a single governor would presumably have been easier to counter by the nobility opposing princely centralisation. According to Köpeczi, the dialogue was a humanist political treatise relying on Lipsius, who was in his turn described as an ideologist of absolute monarchy, understood as a progressive ideology overcoming in the backwardness of feudalism.[14]

The meaning and use of the term "absolutism" is thus highly problematic. Even more so is the process of the transfer of a work sometimes described as "absolutist" in English historiography, with the applicability of the term so strongly disputed, to the Hungarian context, where the label has totally different meanings and uses, and with the process of transfer itself occasioning profound changes to the text and its powers of articulation. We shall cover the English debate in the chapter discussing Korotz's translation, and argue that his translation was one of the contemporary interpretations supporting the constitutionalist rather than absolutist understanding of James's work.

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[12] Farkas Kovacsóczy, *De administratione Transylvaniae dialogus*, Kolozsvár, 1584, RMNY I 545.

[13] Klaniczay, ed., *A magyar irodalom története 1600-ig*, vol 1. of Sőtér ed., *A magyar irodalom története*, 428–29.

[14] Béla Köpeczi, "A magyar politikai irodalom kezdeteihez. Kovacsóczy Farkas Dialógusáról," *ItK* 74. no. 5. 1970: 577–587.

The other problematic issue in describing the politics of translation of James's text is the question of what was transferred. The chapter devoted to the international fortunes of *Basilikon Doron*, a book that was actually an early modern bestseller with numbers of copies rivalling that of Castiglione's *Courtier,* will show that each printing of the book in different contexts and languages enlisted it to different agendas, making it difficult for us to cast the process as a story of a reception of an idea, but calling attention to the importance of the local stakes involved in translation.

This latter point leads us to the importance of the language the two works were published in, the Hungarian vernacular. The first, introductory chapter argues that the programme of making the vernacular the language of culture and learning was in itself laden with political stakes. A prominent exponent of this programme, himself pursuing various political and diplomatic agendas, was Albert Szenci Molnár, who also stood at the centre of the network of authors and translators Korotz and Füsüs belonged to. This chapter also explains why the category of speech situation will be central to our analysis of the two texts. In works written in the Hungarian vernacular, reflections on the choice of language, the rhetorical structure of dedications, the double audience of patrons and reading public framed a complex speech situation in which needs of representation of patrons could be met by addressing them, too, in a strongly normative discourse, putting forward norms of everyday conduct and of exercising political power that were binding for all.

It is the importance of the speech situation, seen as explanatory of the local and transnational stakes of the texts discussed, that explains the title of the study, *The Politics of Translation and Transmission.* The wordings of paratexts contextualising the texts, the sermonising, didactic and thus strongly normative dictions used will be shown to have been political acts in themselves. The focus on the speech situation also explains why these texts should be described as instances of "political theorising" rather than "political theories." "Theorising" is ambiguous term, with some negative connotations: it denies the performance of solving lofty issues of political philosophy, which could have been described as "theory." Instead, it focuses our attention on the actual historical performances of authors and texts as agents. Simply put, the performance these texts carried out was putting forward norms of conduct, in everyday life as well as in the exercise of political power.

Throughout the text, Hungarian names are used according to English usage, i.e. with given names coming first. Several early modern Hungarian

names, however, were made up of three elements, with the first element of the family name being typically a place-name: János Pataki Füsüs for example was originally from the town of Sárospatak. Such figures will be referred to by their last name, i.e., Korotz for György Szepsi Korotz, or Molnár for Albert Szenci Molnár. Place-names of Hungary and Transylvania are given according to the Hungarian usage that was customary in the circles of our authors, i.e. Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca, Klausenburg), Bártfa (Bardejov, Bartfeld), Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia, Weissenburg), Pozsony (Bratislava, Pressburg.) Other place-names are used in their English versions, if available. In comparing texts, double and single quotes alternate. Double quotes refer to word forms and passages as they occur in the text they are quoted from, whereas single quotes are used in rendering meaning: "oltalmazni," 'to protect.' Translations from Hungarian texts, primary and secondary, are all mine, unless otherwise indicated. A list of abbreviations used, some of them devised for the purposes of this study, is provided in the following pages.

ABBREVIATIONS

Adattár 1
Keserű Bálint, ed., *Herepei János cikkei.* Adattár XVII. századi szellemi mozgalmaink történetéhez 1. Polgári és kulturális törekvések a század első felében. Budapest-Szeged, 1965.

Adattár 4
Csanda Sándor, Bálint Keserű, ed., *Szenci Molnár Albert és a magyar késő-reneszánsz.* Adattár XVII. századi szellemi mozgalmaink történetéhez 4. Szeged, 1978.

Basilikon Doron
James VI and I, *Basilikon Doron.* In idem, *Political Writings.* Edited by Johann P. Sommerville. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Dictionarium Latinoungaricum
Szenci Molnár Albert, *Dictionarium Latinoungaricum.... Item vice versa Dictionarium Ungaricolatinum.* Nürnberg, 1604. RMNY II 919. (Faximile edition by Péter Kőszeghy, Bibliotheca Hungarica Aniqua 25. Budapest: Akadémiai, 1990.)

DNB
Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. Oxford University Press, 2004.

ItK
Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények

Királyoknak tüköre
Pataki Füsüs János, *Királyoknak tüköre.* Bártfa: Klösz Jakab Jr.,1626. RMNY II 1347.

Királyi ajándék
Szepsi Korotz György, transl., *Basilikon Doron.* Oppenheim: Galler, 1612. RMNY II 1038.

RMK III
Szabó Károly—Hellebrant Árpád, *Régi magyar könyvtár III. Magyar szerzőktől külföldön 1480-tól 1711-ig külföldön megjelent nem magyar nyelvű nyomtatványok könyvészeti kézikönyve I-II,* Budapest: A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Könyvkiadó Hivatala, 1896–1898.

RMNY I
Borsa Gedeon—Hervay Ferenc—Holl Béla—Käfer István—Kelecsényi Ákos, *Régi magyarországi nyomtatványok 1473–1600.* Budapest: Akadémiai, 1970.

RMNY II
Borsa Gedeon—Hervay Ferenc, *Régi magyarországi nyomtatványok 1601–1635.* Budapest, 1983.

RMKT XVII
Régi Magyar Költők Tára XVII. Század. 1–16. Budapest: Akadémiai, 1959–2000.

STC 2nd ed.
Alfred W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, *Short Title Catalogue of English Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475–1640.* London: The Bibliographical Society, 1986.

Zoványi
Zoványi Jenő, *Magyarországi protestáns egyháztörténeti lexikon.* Budapest: A Magyarországi Református Egyház Zsinati Irodájának Sajtóosztálya, 1977.

CHAPTER ONE

THE STAKES OF TRANSLATION,
THE USES OF THE VERNACULAR

The first texts of political theory written in the Hungarian vernacular were born as parts of a wider process of making the vernacular the legitimate language of culture and learning. Reflections on the choice of language in the two texts, links between their authors and the central figures articulating the process in a programmatic way, the political stakes of the points they made connected them in various ways to this larger process that we shall attempt to overview in the following pages.

Hungarian-language books came to outnumber books printed in Latin in Hungary by the 1570's.[1] Even though Latin mostly remained the language of official proceedings and science, the period between the mid-16th and the mid-17th centuries witnessed a significant rise not only in numbers of books printed in, but also the status of the vernacular.

The process was primarily connected to the needs of the Protestant and Catholic Reforms, both assigning great weight to producing works in the vernacular and thus reaching a wider audience. From the very beginning, this programme was one of translation, primarily of the Bible. The first important group of translators into Hungarian were Erasmian court literati who translated parts of the Bible following the recommendation of Erasmus that the Bible should be made available in the vernacular to everybody, and using his edition of the Bible.[2] These books printed abroad, in Krakow and Vienna, were followed by the first Hungarian-

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[1] Tibor Klaniczay, ed., *A magyar irodalom története 1600-ig*, vol.1. of *A magyar irodalom története,* ed. Sőtér István, Budapest: Akadémiai, 1964, 320.
[2] Benedek Komjáthy, transl, *Epistolae Pauli lingua Hungarica donatae. Az szent Pál levelei magyar nyelven*, Krakow, 1533, RMNY I 13; Pesti Gábor, transl., *Novum Testamentum seu quattuor evangeliorum volumina lingua Hungarica donata,* Vienna, 1536, RMNY I 16.

language book printed in Hungary, again a partial Bible-translation based on Erasmus.[3]

At first, translations of books other than the Bible were also seen as promoting the knowledge of the Bible by spreading the ability to read in the vernacular. As the author of the first Hungarian-language primer put it,

> Books translated to our language are a major help to the whole community in reading the Holy Scripture. But one comes to writing via the knowledge of letters and reading. We must all learn these, so that we can all read the Holy Scripture, inquire about the will of God, and have a support to lean against among so many confusions.[4]

Translation had long been a pedagogical exercise used in the teaching of Latin, as testified by the large number of bilingual textbooks, and now it was being applied to the opposite effect, to aid the spread of the use of the vernacular. As the spread of the ability to read in the vernacular[5] appeared to require translations other than the Bible, the scope of this programme soon grew wider than answering religious needs. As the same introduction to the primer immediately added,

> Our knowledge to read and write, apart from guiding us to the Scripture, where our salvation lies, also helps us write to each other, so that we do not have to seek the help of others in every minute thing.[6]

There were two separate processes involved in the spread of the use of the vernacular. One was the widening of the reading public: using the vernacular in the Bible-translations and religious works like books of

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[3] János Sylvester, transl, *Újtestamentum magyar nyelven*, Sárvár, 1541, RMNY I 49.

[4] Mátyás Dévai Bíró, *Orthographia Ungarica*, Krakow, 1549, RMNY I 77, introduction.

[5] On the spread of literacy in the 16–17th centuries, István György Tóth, *Literacy and Written Culture in Early Modern Central Europe,* Budapest: CEU Press, 2000. Data are more readily available on the ability to write than the ability to read, and these show that in the 19th century, more than half of the population of the kingdom was still illiterate. As concerns the nobility, however, from the 16th century the inability to read and write appears as an exception rather than a rule. See also Kálmán Benda, "A magyar nemesség iskolázottsága a 16–17. században," in Ferenc Szvircsek, ed., *Magyarország társadalma a török kiűzésének idején,* Salgótarján, 1984, 98–102.

[6] Dévai Bíró, *Orthographia Ungarica,* introduction.

prayers was aimed at reaching a wider readership. The other process we witness here was the elevation of the status of the vernacular: Hungarian language was deemed fit for use not only in everyday communication, but also in fields with disciplinary status.

The most important such field was theology, the highest university specialization. If in the sixteenth century theological debates were printed in Latin, in the seventeenth the vernacular overtook Latin in this field as well. Calvin's *Institutes* were translated in 1624.[7] On the Catholic side, archbishop Pázmány wrote a very influential compendium of Catholic doctrine in Hungarian,[8] and translated the meditations of Thomas à Kempis.[9]

The vernacular appeared in the other queen of the disciplines, law, even sooner. The handbook of Hungarian customary law, Werbőczy's *Tripartitum*[10] came out in a Hungarian translation at Debrecen in 1565.[11] The Hungarian translation was reprinted three more times in the 16th century in Transylvania,[12] whereas the Latin version continued to be printed, as the original was, in Vienna.[13] In the 17th century it was typically printed in bilingual editions.[14]

The largest part of the corpus written in or translated into the vernacular consisted of texts serving religious needs, like Bibles, Psalters, catechisms, hymnals, books of prayers. There were two further, large categories of works translated: histories and books of conduct. The latter included books of manners like Erasmus's *Civilitas morum,*[15] books on the exercise of spiritual and practical piety like Lewis Bayly's *Praxis*

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[7] Albert Szenci Molnár, transl. (Jean Calvin), *Az keresztyéni religióra és igaz hitre való tanítás,* Frankfurt, 1624, RMNY II 1308.

[8] Péter Pázmány, *Isteni igazságra vezérlő kalauz*, Pozsony, 1613, RMNY II 1059.

[9] Péter Pázmány, transl. (Thomas à Kempis), *Kempis Tamásnak Krisztus követésérül négy könyvei,* Vienna, 1624, RMNY II 1297.

[10] István Werbőczy, *Tripartitum opus iuris consuetudinarii inclyti regni Hungarie*, Vienna, 1517, RMK III 214.

[11] István Werbőczy, *Magyar decretum,* transl. Weres Balázs, Debrecen, 1565, RMNY I 207.

[12] Gyulafehérvár, 1568, RMNY I 255; Kolozsvár, 1571, RMNY I 307, Kolozsvár, 1572. RMNY I 317.

[13] RMK III 217, RMK III 362, RMK III 486, RMK III 619, RMK III 704, RMK III 933.

[14] Five bilingual prints until the middle of the seventeenth century (RMNY II 1011, RMNY II 1521, RMNY III 1688, RMNY III 1922, RMNY III 1986).

[15] *Civilitas morum Erasmi... Az erkölcsnek tisztességes /emberséges/ volta,* Debrecen, 1591, RMNY II 656, with several reprints in the 16th and 17th centuries.

pietatis,[16] texts on courtly life like Guevara's *Libro aureo de Marco Aurelio*[17] or books on military conduct and discipline.[18] Both texts to be discussed in this study exhibited many features of conduct-books, as we shall later show.

As concerns the translators themselves, they generally fit into the typology of the Renaissance European translator, set up by Peter Burke.[19] Burke identified two main types of translators: the professionals, who translated for money and spent a significant time of their life translating, and the amateurs, who included for example nobles and princes translating as a learning exercise or an aristocratic pastime, as well as practicians of other professions translating works related to their vocation. The latter subgroup could include for example physicists translating herbals, or artists and connoisseurs translating treatises on art and architecture. A significant part of European translators were apparently go-betweens, whose personal history would account for their proficiency in foreign languages: "merchants, diplomats, teachers, missionaries, inhabitants of border regions and displaced persons."[20]

Hungarian translator-figures typically belonged to the second group of amateurs. Professional translators, making a living out of translating, were quite rare, but in Europe in general even the most proficient translators would have had some other primary occupation like teaching, working as a secretary or pursuing a church career.

The figure who came closest to the professional type in the early seventeenth century was Albert Szenci Molnár, who will also be shown to have stood at the centre of the network of students and authors that Korotz and Füsüs belonged to. His translation of the Geneva Psalter, his edition of Károli's Bible-translation, his Latin-Hungarian and Hungarian-Latin

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[16] Pál Medgyesi, transl. (Lewis Bayly), *Praxis pietatis,* Debrecen, 1636, RMNY III 1639.

[17] Book II translated by János Draskovich, Graz, 1610, RMNY II 994; books I, III transl. András Prágai. They were printed together as Draskovich János—Prágai András, transl. (Antonio Guevara), *Fejedelmeknek serkentő órája,* Bártfa, Klösz, 1628. RMNY II 1400.

[18] Eg. Pécsi Lukács, transl. (Petrus Bacherius), *Az keresztyén hadakozásnak tüköre, melyben minden hadviselők... életeknek ártatlanságát és rendtartását haszonnal megtekinthetik,* Nagyszombat, 1595, RMNY I 765.

[19] Peter Burke, "The Renaissance Translator as Go-between," in Andreas Höfele and Werner von Koppenfels, eds., *Renaissance Go-Betweens. Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe*. Spectrum Literature, Comparative Studies 2. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005, 17–31.

[20] Ibid., 20.

dictionary—the first Hungarian-Latin dictionary—and his Hungarian grammar won him wide recognition both home and abroad.[21] Molnár put forward a programme of elevating the Hungarian language to the rank of Greek, Latin "and other languages schooled in humanist erudition."[22] The edition of the Bible, the grammar and the dictionary were seen as parts of this programme elevating the vernacular.[23] The idea that the vernacular should match Latin, the main source-language of translation in flexibility and power of expression will have wide-ranging consequences on the actual practice of translation, which shall become apparent when discussing Korotz's translation practice.

Molnár worked in Germany, mostly in Frankfurt, Heidelberg, Oppenheim, and Hanau, and he won the patronage of prince Moritz of Hesse, himself an amateur of linguistic studies. The cultivation of the German language to which Moritz tried to contribute by himself working on a German grammar and lexicon, and later joining the language society *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* may well have influenced the young Molnár, also in contact with Matthias Bernegger or Martin Opitz, credited with giving a national touch to the German humanist tradition.[24]

Molnár was constantly begged to return home. The offer he finally accepted was made by the prince of Transylvania. Prince Bethlen promised Molnár a position in his court that would have entailed only the translation of books, a remarkable position indeed, had the prince not died before Molnár could have taken it up.[25] Although for a number of years he

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[21] Albert Szenci Molnár, *Psalterium Ungaricum*, Herborn, 1607, RMNY II 962; idem, ed., *Szent Biblia,* Hanau, 1608, RMNY II 971; *Dictionarium Latinoungaricum.... Item vice versa Dictionarium Ungaricolatinum,* Nürnberg, 1604, RMNY II 919; *Novae Gramaticae Ungaricae,* Hanau, 1610, RMNY II 995.

[22] Judit Vásárhelyi, "A humanista Szenci Molnár Albert," in Adattár 4, 39–40.

[23] Mihály Imre, "Szenczi Molnár Albert, Dictionarium Latinoungaricum," in Albert Szenci Molnár, *Dictionarium Latinoungaricum,* faximile edition, Biblioteca Hungarica Antiqua 25, Budapest: Akadémiai, 1990.

[24] József Turóczi–Trostler, "Szenczi Molnár Albert Heidelbergben," in idem, *Magyar irodalom—világirodalom*. Vol. 2. Budapest: Akadémiai, 1961, 109–155.; Bruce T. Moran, *The Alchemical World of the German Court. Occult Philosophy and Chemical Medicine in the Circle of Moritz of Hessen* (1572–1632), Sudhofs Archiv, Zeitschrift für Wissenschaftsgeschichte 29, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1991, 23.

[25] Szenci Molnár Albert, *Válogatott művei*, ed. by Gábor Tolnai and Judit Vásárhelyi, Budapest: Magvető, 1976, 467–551; Turóczi–Trostler, "Szenczi Molnár Albert Heidelbergben"; Judit Vásárhelyi, "A humanista Szenci Molnár Albert," 37–41.

managed to live by the income gained from his works, he still depended on patronage. Apart from allowances received from the margrave and from different patrons at the Heidelberg court, his income also consisted of the other typical source of income for authors and translators, rewards received for dedications. A further way to fund his work was the so-called *collecta*: donations made by private individuals for the printing of books, typically religious works or books for school use. Generally it was townsmen who funded in this manner works for their individual and collective needs, like the *cives* of Nagyszombat, whose power of patronage rivalled that of the prince of Transylvania.[26]

Burke included in the second group of early modern translators, the group he called amateurs, persons translating occasionally, either as a pastime, or as an exercise in language or piety. We encounter such amateurs among Hungarian translators, too. Two such figures are worth mentioning here. One is Bálint Balassi, the first great poet writing in the vernacular Hungarian, and also the first in a long series of Hungarian poet-translators. He translated from German a book of Lutheran meditations,[27] a theological treatise of the English Jesuit Edmund Campion[28] and probably also a love-story, printed anonymously, as such works tended to be.[29] Balassi claimed he translated to comfort his parents; similarly, János Draskovich, another aristocrat translated the second part of Guevara's *Horologium principum,* the book on family life, as he claimed, for the elevation and comfort of his wife.

The third, largest group of translators were ecclesiastic figures translating religious literature. What was particular about this group in the Hungarian case was that many of them translated and had their translations printed abroad. In early modern Europe, displaced persons like religious refugees often made use of their linguistic skills and made a living as translators or teachers of languages. We shall encounter several such figures when discussing the fortunes of *Basilikon Doron*. As opposed to these, however, Hungarian translators working abroad translated into Hungarian, and for the Hungarian audience back home. This phenomenon was connected to the characteristics of the training of the Hungarian

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[26] János Heltai, "Egy művelődéspártoló polgári kör a XVII. század elején," *Magyar Könyvszemle* 98, no. 2, 1982: 113–126.

[27] Bálint Balassi, transl.(Michael Bock), *Beteg lelkeknek való füves kertecske,* Krakow, 1572, RMNY I 318.

[28] Bálint Balassi, transl. (Edmund Campion), *Campianus Edmundnak... tíz magyarul írott okai*, Vienna, 1606, RMNY II 943.

[29] *Eurialus és Lukrécia históriája*, Debrecen, 1587, RMNY I 594.

ecclesiastic elites. As there was no university in the country until 1635, when a Jesuit academy was founded at Nagyszombat, they went to study abroad. Yet they rarely studied for a degree, and visited several universities. These peregrine students, as they were called, proved that they had acquired the erudition expected of them by having a work printed. These publications tended to be brief and unoriginal dissertations recounting the teaching of a professor, but some such students also had translations printed. This is how King James's *Basilikon Doron* was translated by a Heidelberg student and printed in Oppenheim, how Erasmus's *Enchiridion militis Christiani* was translated by a Leiden student and printed in Leiden,[30] Perkins's *Treatise of the Cases of Conscience* in Amsterdam[31] and several catechisms and conduct-books in Utrecht.[32]

As concerns the translation practice, by the seventeenth century, translation had become an honourable endeavour, and in 1644 János Laskai, the translator of Lipsius' *Politica* and *De constantia* even described it as an activity equal in rank to producing an original work.[33] From a somewhat different perspective, János Pataki Füsüs also argued for the value of works written in the vernacular by claiming that history repeated itself, and thus practically everything had been written about in ancient histories. What was left was to embellish one's own language.[34]

If in the sixteenth century we still find many adaptations, especially of histories and fables, which would not specify the original, in the seventeenth century names of authors and translators were generally given

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[30] György Salánki, transl. (Erasmus), *Rotterodámi Rézmannak az keresztyén vitézséget tanító, kézben viselő könyvecskéje,* Leiden, 1627, RMNY II 1393.

[31] János Jánsonius, transl. (William Perkins), *A lelkiismeretnek akadékiról,* Amsterdam, 1648, RMNY III 2201.

[32] János Mikolai Hegedűs, transl., *Biblia tanúi,* Utrecht, 1648, RMNY III 2247; idem, transl., *Az istenes cselédeknek lelki prebendájok*, Utrecht, 1648, RMNY II 2248; idem, transl., *Szentek napi-száma,* Utrecht, 1648, RMNY III 2250; idem, transl. (Alexander Grosse), *Az mennyei igazságnak tüzes oszlopa*, Utrecht, 1648, RMNY 2249.

[33] János Laskai, transl. (Justus Lipsius), *A polgári társaságnak tudományáról,* Bártfa, 1641, RMNY III 1867; idem, transl. (Justus Lipsius), *Az állhatatosságról,* Debrecen, 1641, RMNY III 1876. (Modern editions: Márton Tarnóc, ed., *Laskai János válogatott művei. Magyar Justus Lipsius*, Régi Magyar Prózai Emlékek 2, Budapest: Akadémiai, 1970.) On Laskai's views on translation see István Bartók, *Sokkal magyarabbúl is szólhatnánk és írhatnánk. Irodalmi gondolkodás Magyarországon 1630–1700 között*, Budapest: Akadémiai, Universitas, 1998, 286.

[34] *Királyoknak tüköre*, Dedication.

in a newly-born attempt at philological precision. Exceptions were love-stories, which were popular and marketable prints, but which were generally published anonymously.

When looking at these translations, we find many declarations that the translator attempted to be faithful to the original. In struggling with difficulties encountered in such attempts, translators frequently commented on the differences of Hungarian from other languages. A prominent topos in these comments was the poverty and unpolished state of the language, in fact an international commonplace: translators in Elisabethan England, in the age of Shakespeare, made the same complaints regarding English.[35] In sixteenth and seventeenth-century Hungary there were of course debates and reflections on whether translations should be literal, held to be important especially in the case of Bible translations, or should follow the meaning of the original according to the properties of the Hungarian language. As concerns meaning, however, there was a consensus that the translation could and should be faithful to the original.[36] It was in fact the art of conveying the *sensus* according to the requirements of good style (*euphonia* or *elegantia*) and the properties of the language (*proprietas*) that made translation a respectable enterprise.[37]

Virtually all texts written in the vernacular contained reflections on the stakes of translation and the uses of the vernacular. When looking at these reflections, one is struck by the frequency of comments like "the difference of languages does not make the things themselves different,"[38] or that there was nothing new under the sun.[39] The reflection from which we shall start our review of contemporary reflections on translation was triggered by the Hungarian translation of Antonio Guevara's mirror of princes. First published in Spanish in 1528, the work has known numerous editions and translations into French, English, Italian, Dutch, or German.[40] It was widely popular among both Protestants and Catholics, maybe because it was more a collection of moralizing tales than a political treatise. It was then translated into Latin in 1601, and after that translated into Hungarian in two steps. First, the Catholic and Croat aristocrat János

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[35] Julia G. Ebel, "Translation and Cultural Nationalism in the Reign of Elizabeth," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 30, no. 4, 1969: 593–602.

[36] Bartók, *Sokkal magyarabbúl...,* 290–292.

[37] Sándor Lukácsy, "Pázmány fordítói elvei és gyakorlata," *ItK* 94. no. 1, 1990: 3.

[38] Nánási István, transl. (Daniel Dike), *Szű titka,* Kolozsvár, 1670, RMK I. 1103.

[39] *Királyoknak tüköre*, Dedication.

[40] Zombori István: "Külföldi művek magyarországi fogadtatása," in idem, ed., *Az értelmiség Magyarországon a 16–17. században*, Szeged, 1988, 165.

Draskovich translated the second part dealing with family life, than the Hungarian and Protestant preacher András Prágai translated the remaining two parts as well.

The route by which Guevara's work came to be translated into Hungarian is worth noting since it shows the remarkable variety of cultures, linguistic or religious, in which it could be received and achieve popularity, and the diversity of people that could contribute to the creation of a single "national" version as concerns their social background and mother tongue. The Hungarian version can be regarded as a "cultural mixture" not only given the different linguistic and cultural mediations via which it came to be received in Hungary, but also given the different social and religious backgrounds of its two translators, a mixture made possible by the building blocks of the book, the already mentioned moralizing tales that could pass in different cultures.[41] This makes it all the more interesting to see how it fit into the project of building a Hungarian national culture.

The poet János Rimay commented on the Hungarian version in a letter to the Transylvanian prince who commanded the translation of the parts left out by Draskovich and had the two translations published in a single volume. He stated that it was high time the work was translated into Hungarian: it had already appeared in Italian, French and Latin. He then quoted Lipsius' remark that there was no region so happy as to hold all wise men; all countries had their own gems shining with the light of knowledge, by whom their countries also shone. Rimay's subsequent comments implied that having translated Guevara, Prágai, the translator, did shine as he was supposed to, serving the greater glory of the country. But, he went on, the country itself would only shine if its office-holders would live up to the standards set forth there.[42]

These comments were profoundly ambiguous, and quite illuminating as concerns the way the stakes of translation were understood in early seventeenth century Hungary. Rimay's comments made reference to three ideas that were shared by many contemporary authors: the idea of a common pool of knowledge, the topos of the competition of the nations, and the expectation that the intended audience of political and moral

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[41] On cultural mixture and the role of moralizing phrases usable in different religious contexts see Natalie Zemon Davis, "Cultural Mixture and Historical Mediation," *Budapest Review of Books* 7, no. 1–4, 1997: 6–9.

[42] Rimay János, Letter to prince György Rákóczi I., May 25, 1629, reprinted in Márton Tarnóc, ed., *Magyar gondolkodók 17. század,* Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1979, 517.

works should regulate their activities according to the norms set forth in
the work translated.

The idea of a common pool of knowledge scattered throughout the
world, along with the wise men possessing it, went back to the way the
classical heritage was conceived of: as international (or rather non-
national), the common possession of everybody who had the means of
access to it. The classical heritage in its turn was also described as a
knowledge scattered throughout the different parts of the world and
collected from these different places:

> Like the bee… that collects goods not only in the garden of his master, but
> also flies to foreign lands and returns with its legs heavy with sweets, only to
> please his master: so many of the ancient, wise Greek philosophers did not
> consider it sufficient to always reside in Athens, and serve their country with
> knowledge found there, but they departed without any impediment to distant
> foreign lands: Sicily, Italy, Gallia, and other places to see, hear, learn. The
> Latins in their turn went to Caldea, Egypt, Syria, Greece. Pythagoras … as a
> young man went to Egypt to meet the priests who trained him in the Jewish
> religion and accepted him among them by the sacraments. From there he
> went to Persia to learn astrology, and to Crete and Lacedemon to learn about
> the law and see the noble republics.[43]

This quotation came from travel literature. The metaphor of the bee
collecting knowledge from different sources was also used, however, in
reflections on writing as well. "I am not showing off anything of my own,
but rather offer you, like a bee, sweets collected from the beautiful and
flowery writings of wise and knowledgeable men"—wrote Ambrus
Derecskei for example.[44]

In a study on historic thinking in intercultural discourse,[45] Jörn Rüsen
argued that the classical mode of historical interpretation commonly
described by the "historia magistra vitae" formula understood the past as a
container of knowledge and experience from which general rules of

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[43] Márton Szepsi Csombor, *Europica varietas*, Kassa, 1620, RMNY II 1219,
modern edition: Kovács Sándor Iván and Kulcsár Péter, eds., *Szepsi Csombor
Márton összes művei*. Régi Magyar Prózai Emlékek 1., Budapest: Akadémiai,
1968, Introduction.

[44] Ambrus Derecskei, *Az szent Pál apostol levele, melyet írt az Rómabeli
keresztyéneknek,* Debrecen, 1603, RMNY II 895, Dedication.

[45] Jörn Rüsen, "Geschichtsdenken im interkulturellen Diskurs," in idem, ed.,
Westliches Geschichtsdenken. Eine interkulturelle Debatte, Göttingen:
Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 1999. 13–31.

behaviour could be gained. This "container," or to use our previous expression, the common pool of knowledge and experience included the whole human past, and was neutral to ethnic and cultural differences. The idea that there was nothing new under the sun, or that in the classical languages everything had already been written, was very much connected to the view of otherness implied by the "historia magistra vitae" formula. Aware as they otherwise were of the difficulties of surpassing linguistic boundaries, these translators were convinced that valid knowledge could be found in works written in other contexts and transmitted via translation, that the differences in *verba* did not imply differences in *res,* and that from this knowledge the intended audience should draw consequences on their everyday conduct. We shall return later to the political consequences arising from here.

If we claim, however, that the way these translations were conceptualized in the early modern period implied a conception of the transmission of ideas that was neutral to national or linguistic boundaries, a conception of communication by which valid and immediately applicable knowledge could be drawn from works born in other linguistic and spatial contexts, we have to explain the frequent references to nations seen as in competition with each other.

A recurrent element of prefaces to translations was that the translator wished to serve the greater glory of his country by translating a work that had already appeared in several other European vernaculars, so that Hungary should not lag behind. This topos was in fact to be found throughout Europe. Elizabethan translations for example, as a modern commentator put it, "apply to the translation the language of international rivalry that we think of as appropriate to armaments."[46] The Hungarian translator of James's *Basilikon Doron* justified the necessity of translating the work by the fact that, having seen its usefulness, the Germans, French, Belgians had all translated it to their language.[47] Translations of contemporary authors were in this respect again similar to those of classical ones: comments on translations from Roman authors almost always claimed that they were motivated by the fact that other nations have also translated them. It seems that one of the central elements to be borrowed via translation from other nations was seen as the very practice of translation.

A related comment was that national culture should be enriched by translation, and thus made "competitive" with others. The point was made

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[46] Ebel, "Translation and Cultural Nationalism in the Reign of Elizabeth," 597.

[47] *Királyi ajándék*, Dedication.

most clearly by the introduction to a translation from Sallust, which is
worth quoting at length:

> There are many wise and learned men in our nation, even among the high
> and mighty. But they are ashamed to be occupied in such honourable
> activities, and when bored with other pursuits, they spend their time feasting,
> hunting, and in other similar ways, which, as the wise say, are activities fit
> for servants. This is not what Cicero… and other honourable men have done,
> who found joy in the reading or writing of books, among their other tasks of
> government. Who was a greater lord and prince than Julius Caesar? Yet he
> was not ashamed to write not only a history, but also a grammar. He knew
> that the pen did not hurt the lance, nor did the book damage the shield. In our
> days the Italians, Germans and other nations translate Aristotle, Cicero,
> Virgil and all sorts of learned authors to their languages, which proves highly
> beneficial for them. Therefore the learned men of our nation should well
> either write the history of their own times, or translate Julius Caesar, Tacitus,
> Curtius and similar excellent historians into Hungarian. Or at least they
> should show wisdom and learn to value such works.[48]

National culture should be enriched by translation and by elevating the
vernacular—this was a recurrent claim in reflections on the choice of
language. The emphasis, however, was not only on taking over the
achievements of other cultures, but on giving a definition of the nation that
would include scholarly activities as an important element of this
definition. The compulsory reference in this respect was king Matthias I,
who, argued James's translator, called into Hungary learned men from
distant countries, so that the Hungarian nation, distinguished by its
military virtues, should also be distinguished by its learning. The same
argument we find in Rimay's letter discussed above: the commentator of
Guevara's translation praised the prince who financed its printing by
saying that this act of his will serve his glory much more than his military
victories. The very endeavour of printing the book was described as
wisdom coupled with bravery: "Thus the memory and fame of your
majesty's name is enhanced much more than in could ever be enhanced by
Your grand victories over great enemies in battle."[49] It is certainly not by
coincidence that central to the fashioning of Matthias I as the great patron
of arts and learning were the first two semi-professional translators: Albert

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[48] János Baranyai Decsi, transl. (Sallustius), *Az Caius Crispus Salustiusnak két
históriája,* Szeben, 1596, RMNY I 786, Introduction. Faximile edition by Varjas
Béla, Bibliotheca Hungarica Antiqua 10, Budapest: Akadémiai, 1979.
[49] Rimay, Letter to prince György Rákóczi I, 517.

Molnár, whom we have already described as a proficient translator, and
Gáspár Heltai, considered one of the fathers of Hungarian prose-style.[50]
Heltai is also very important figure in the history of Hungarian language
because, as a printer, he consciously tried to contribute to the development
of a uniform spelling and of a normative version of the written language.
As a translator, he himself produced many works for his printing-shop. He
also exemplifies what Burke called the go-between, although he included
in this category inhabitants of linguistic borderlands or travellers. Heltai
was neither, as Kolozsvár was not a linguistic borderland, but it was
multilingual, and Heltai himself was bilingual. Moreover, his first
language was German, and at the beginning of his career as an author he
apologised in print for not writing proper Hungarian. Heltai's history of
Hungarians, relying among others on Bonfini's chronicle, was important
for the perpetuation in Hungarian of the humanists' image of Matthias I as
a great patron of arts.[51]

When translators described their endeavours as central for the elevation
of the nation, and the supporting of these activities, especially of the
printing of translations, as wisdom necessary in all governors, they
attempted to redefine the concept of the nation by redescribing one of its
central elements, bravery, the traditional virtue of a military nobility that
made up the political nation. The authors and translators writing in the
vernacular claimed that by their activities they served the greater glory of
the nation—but they could only do so by redefining what served the glory
of the nation, and implicitly what lay at the core of the definition of the
nation. The claim that what should be imitated about other nations was the
practice of translating and elevating the vernacular becomes meaningful in
this context. They conceptualised what they were doing not so much as
intercultural communication, but rather as an intracultural power game.[52]

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[50] For an overview of the changing image of Matthias I see Csilla Gábor, "A
'Mátyás-rejtély': hagyományok, paradoxonok, kutatási irányok," in *Religió és
retorika,* Kolozsvár: Komp-Press, 2002, 99–120.

[51] *Krónika az magyaroknak dolgairól,* Kolozsvár, 1575, RMNY I 360; his other
translations include Martin Luther, *Catechismus minor*, Kolozsvár, 1550, RMNY I
86; Johann Habermann Avenarius, *Imádságok a hét napjaira,* Kolozsvár 1570,
RMNY I 289; Aesop, *Száz fabula*, Kolozsvár, 1566, RMNY I 219; Reginaldus
Gonsalvius Montanus, *Háló*, Kolozsvár, 1570, RMNY I 288; *Ponciánus históriája.*
Kolozsvár 1571–1574, RMNY I 314 etc.

[52] This is also one of the conclusions reached by László Kontler's overview of
early modern European theories and practices of translation: "For translation in
history is not primarily an instance of inter-cultural communication, aiming to
penetrate the Other in its fullness and make it intelligible in its otherness, but a

The comparison with other nations was not primarily about the actual characteristics of others, but about the characteristics these authors expected their audience to manifest.

The choice of the vernacular also implied a choice of readership, and reflections on the choice again defined this readership in novel terms. The Bible-translator János Sylvester addressed his work "to the Hungarian people that reads this,"[53] and went on to include in his concept of the "Hungarian people" children, servants and "feeble maids," as well as the gentle and urban ranks.[54] Other writers in the vernacular also frequently addressed themselves to the speakers of Hungarian as the Hungarian people or the Hungarian nation. Laskai described the uses of his translation in the following manner:

> Let us apply Lipsius to Hungary, as in his book now he addresses us in Hungarian! I do not think he could have tailored his writing better to us even if he had lived in this country. Which of all nations of this wide world would be more in need of constancy than the Hungarian nation?[55]

Based on such reflections, historians and literary scholars have put forward the claim that by the seventeenth century an ethnolinguistic conception of the nation had come into being. Katalin Péter for example has argued[56] that in the sixteenth century there existed a notion of the common patria not coextensive with any of the political units existent on the territory of the former medieval kingdom, i.e. with the three states, rather unviable in themselves: one overrun by the Ottomans, the other vassal to the Porte, and the third with a Habsburg king. This notion of a common patria existed together with a consciousness of a "natio Hungarica" or "Pannonica" inhabiting it, phrases that referred to a unit with hardly definable social boundaries, which could encompass all inhabitants of the territory of the medieval kingdom, regardless of mother-tongue or social standing. Then, already in the 16th century, a new meaning of the "nation"

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communicative act whose purposes are predominantly intra-cultural and consist in supporting domestic agendas to which the translated text seems instrumental." (László Kontler, "Translation and Comparison: Early-Modern and Current Perspectives*," Contributions to the History of Concepts,* no. 3. 2007: 98.)

[53] Sylvester, *Újtestamentum magyar nyelven*, "Az magyar nípnek, ki ezt olvassa."

[54] Ibid., Introduction.

[55] Laskai, transl., *Az állhatatosságról,* Introduction.

[56] Péter Katalin, "A haza és a nemzet az ország három részre hullott állapota idején," in idem, *Papok és nemesek,* Budapest: Ráday Gyűjtemény, 1995, 211–232.