

Péter Révay. *De Monarchia et Sacra Corona Regni Hungariae centuriae septem: A Magyar Királyság birodalmáról és Szent Koronájáról szóló hét század*, 2 vol. Edited, introduction, and annotations to the Hungarian translation by Gergely Tóth; Latin text edited and translated by Bernadett Benei, Rezső Jarmalov, Sára Sánta, and Gergely Tóth, the introduction translated to English by Thomas Cooper.

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Péter Révay's *De monarchia et Sacra Corona Regni Hungariae*, a major history of Hungary, was published at an opportune moment. Soon after it first saw the light of day in Frankfurt in 1659, thanks to his grandson Ferenc Nádasdy, European public opinion turned its attention back to events on the frontiers of the Ottoman Empire, in the Kingdom of Hungary and Transylvania. The fall of Nagyvárad (Oradea, RO) in 1660, followed by the campaign of 1663–64, in which a large number of imperial and French auxiliaries took part, was a source of great anticipation for all those who had access to written or printed news. Two decades later, this was only intensified by the Turkish invasion of Vienna and the Christian counterattack that followed the successful defence. Anyone in Western Europe at this time who wanted to find out about Hungarian history was likely to come across Péter Révay's work, which was published in Germany,<sup>1</sup> not to mention the impact of the work on Protestant historians in Hungary, such as Dávid Czvittinger and Mátyás Bél. It was

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1 The expanded 1665 edition of *L'État de l'Empire* written by Louis Du May, the French educator of the children of the Duke of Württemberg on the constitutional tradition of the Holy Roman Empire, for example, also covers the Kingdom of Hungary, and the main source for this section was Péter Révay's work: Fököli, "A várnai csata mint az emlékezet helye," 166–71.

high time to publish a critical edition of the text, which Gergely Tóth and his colleagues undertook. The publication of the book is the culmination of a consciously structured research programme, since Gergely Tóth's earlier works have given us a clear picture of the erroneous preconceptions and literary inaccuracies that it would be desirable to dispose of once and for all in connection with Révay's work. Perhaps the most significant of these was the statement, testifying to a superficial knowledge of the text, that *De monarchia* was only an expanded version of the author's earlier book on the history of the Holy Crown, known as *Commentarius*, and that it similarly avoided making any remarks from a confessional point of view. The reality is that *De monarchia* is a comprehensive history of the country, its subject matter goes far beyond the fate of the crown, and Révay's Protestant and political commitments are also reflected in it.<sup>2</sup>

However, the publication of texts is not only of historiographical interest but also of great importance for literary studies. Such a critical edition could also help to clarify questions about literary models and stylistic ideals that have long been a preoccupation of the scholarship on Révay. It is not unknown to scholars of early modern literature that Révay, like others such as the poet János Rimay, was a great admirer of Justus Lipsius, whose influence is worth examining in two directions, which are often hardly distinguishable. The first is the Neo-Stoic philosophy of the state, which both set high moral standards for rulers and governments and reckoned with the reality and necessity of secret manipulations of power (*arcana imperii*) and the inevitability of modern absolutism. The second direction is stylistic and relates to the study of the elliptical, enigmatic writing of Latin Silver Age literature and, above all, of Tacitus, which rejects the Ciceronian harmony and clarity that had previously prevailed and which may, of course, have epistemological and hermeneutical implications for political philosophy, insofar as aphoristic enigmatism is seen as a school of a new type of political reasoning. Révay's situation is unique in this respect since he trained his style—and probably his civic morals—by reading and imitating Cicero during his studies, first at the Jesuit College in Vienna and then, and certainly more importantly, in Strasbourg, as a pupil of Melchior Junius. The most recent research shows that he was neither a historian who cultivated the Tacitean style nor a political philosopher committed to absolutism. Once again, Gergely Tóth has the merit to be credited.<sup>3</sup> It is also true, however, that it is precisely the edition of *De monarchia*, prepared with unparalleled philological acuity, that allows us to assess how much ammunition Révay's book provided for a strategy of reading concentrated on the meticulous examination of subtle historical examples and political maxims, a version

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2 Tóth, "Lutheránus országtörténet újsztoikus keretben," 117–26; Tóth, *Szent István, Szent Korona*, 43–56.

3 Tóth, "Állhatatosság és politika."

of which was represented by the Tacitist historians and their Hungarian followers, including Miklós Zrínyi. Gergely Tóth and his collaborators' transcription accurately reflects the typographical complexity of the *editio princeps*, which directs the reader's attention through marginalia and cursive maxims of morality and political philosophy, and in which Révay's posthumous book rivals András Prágai's translation of Antonio Guevera's *Relox*, considered exemplary in this respect.

The critical edition starts with an introductory essay by Gergely Tóth in Hungarian and English. The text, which covers a hundred densely packed pages, is almost monographic. As far as *De monarchia* and many aspects of Révay's political career and life's work are concerned, it is much more thorough than György Bónis's pioneering biography and contains factual clarifications. For example, footnote 28 on page 19 reveals that Bónis mistakenly believed that in 1606 Archduke Matthias appointed Révay master of the doorkeepers (*magister ianitorum*).<sup>4</sup> With a more thorough knowledge of the text of *De monarchia*, the introductory study also provides a more accurate picture of the oppositional inclinations and Protestant sympathies of Révay, who was a faithful partisan of the Habsburgs. It does not detract anything from the value of the study, but for the sake of researchers interested in Révay, it should be noted that it cannot—and does not intend to—replace Bónis's small monograph, which seems to rely more on Révay's family correspondence and which contains important documents in its appendix, including the epistle to Lipsius. Another interesting difference is that while Bónis describes in relative detail Révay's studies in Vienna and Strasbourg on the basis of his notes preserved in the Archdiocesan Library of Esztergom,<sup>5</sup> Gergely Tóth concentrates on the orations and legal disputations that survive in print, describing his years of study (1: 18). A little bibliographical addition would not be amiss here. In fact, Gergely Tóth lists among the printed sources in Strasbourg, in addition to the legal disputation defended on the subject of the loan, the orations delivered under the presidency of Melchior Junius, such as an oration on the history of patricide, a speech on the benefits of hunting, a speech in praise of Cicero, and his texts recited as a praetor in the (re-)setting on the trial of Murena, defended by Cicero. However, he overlooks the fact that Junius's collection contains another text by Révay, a preface that he wrote for his fellow students discussing the four cardinal virtues in their respective speeches. Révay's authorial autonomy is, of course, debatable since his teacher Junius must have had a say in the final shaping of the texts unless he wrote them entirely by himself.<sup>6</sup>

4 Cf. Bónis, *Révay Péter*, 20.

5 Bónis, *Révay Péter*, 9–10.

6 The full list of texts available for Strasbourg rhetorical training: Melchior Junius, *Orationum, quae Argentiensi in Academia exercitii gratia scriptae et recitatae ab illustribus, generosis, nobilibus et aliis ... pars prima* (Strasbourg: Lazarus Zetzner, 1592), 38–42 (oration on parricide)

The annotations of Gergely Tóth's edition, as well as the introductory essay, carefully take stock of the historical sources used by Révay, whether printed or manuscript. Tóth argues convincingly that Révay was already familiar with the manuscript version of Miklós Istvánffy's work, published only in 1622, and then only in part. The introduction and the text edition already draw on the lessons of the Johannes Michael Brutus manuscript found by Gábor Petneházi and analysed together with Péter Kasza. By presenting the use of sources in detail, Tóth also attempts to assess Révay's performance as a historian and his critical sensibility, and in some cases, points out the bias that is evident in many cases, including the tendency of the Lutheran author to negate, or even to portray in an unfavourable light the historical role of the Catholic clergy, especially the high priests and popes. Moreover, by including other non-historical sources, such as Erasmus' *Adagia* and the political maxims of the Huguenot Lambert Daneau, the work contributes to the examination of the above-mentioned questions concerning the organisation of state philosophical knowledge in the early modern period. It is important to note that, to my knowledge, Gergely Tóth is the first in the literature to address the significance of the term *monarchia* in the context of Protestant doctrines on the rise and decline of empires and, following in the footsteps of Emma Bartoniek, he also addresses the division into *centuria*, again pointing out the work's embeddedness in the international Protestant historiographical tradition. The edition is, of course, accompanied by a rich critical apparatus and textual commentary, and Tóth and his colleagues also publish Révay's additions to the manuscript, the so-called *Additamenta*. Considering that many of the letters written by King Mathias first appeared in print in Révay's work, a table of these letters is a very useful appendix, where their archival locations are also indicated: several of them have not yet appeared in modern source editions.

The thoroughness of the philological work is beyond question. The Hungarian version, which runs parallel to the original text, is a tight and faithful translation typical of classical philologists, while Bernadett Bene, Rezső Jarmalov, Sára Sánta and Gergely Tóth render Révay's text in fluent Hungarian. There are only two places where I could suggest an alternative interpretation of their translation of the text. The first is the passage where Révay calls the internal strife following the death of Matthias I "an amorous rivalry" (*amoribus corrivalium*) because, as he notes, he wants to express himself using "civil terms" (*civili verbo*) (1. 6.1.3 [2: 6–7]). According to the editors' footnote 4, the adjective *civilis* may be understood as the opposite of military, but it is more likely that Révay is here trying to point out that

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(VD16 J 1115); Melchior Junius, *Orationum ... pars secunda* (Strasbourg: Lazarus Zetzner, 1592), 10–14 (oration on hunting), 115–119 (Révay's preface to the oration about the cardinal virtues), 210–230 (oration in praise of Cicero), 250–252, 271, 281–282 (Révay's part in the reenactment of Murena's trial). (VD16 J 1116.)

his particular choice of words is more polished and restrained—i.e. closer to the ideal of *civilitas*—compared to what he has in mind in the situation. The other passage is about the Battle of Várna of 1444. Protestant historiography has interpreted the death of Władysław I as divine punishment for the king's breach of the Treaty of Szeged, which he had previously signed with the Sultan. According to historical sources, the Christian side swore an oath of allegiance to the Gospel in Szeged, and Révay adds a curious detail to the usual account of the events: he writes that Sultan Murad was given the body of Christ in the form of a piece of a host as a guarantee of peace. Under these circumstances, the swearing of an oath is particularly flagrant sacrilege, and according to Révay, it is true “even according to those who hold that in the consecrated host the true Christ is present, even when it is not in use” (*etiam secundum illorum placitum, qui in hostia consecrata extra usum verum Christum esse profitentur*) (5.31.10 [1: 508–510] – the italics are mine.) Tóth and his colleagues suggest that Révay may be thinking here of the Lutheran doctrine of *ubiquitas*, that is, the ubiquity of the body of Christ. The term *extra usum*, on the other hand, may refer rather to the Catholic teaching that the consecrated bread retains its sacramental character outside the liturgy so that the host stored in the sacristy or tabernacle can be used for later communion. The *Kalauz* (*Guide to the divine truth*), the major work on the controversial theology of the Jesuit Péter Pázmány, uses the expression in the same context, namely in the title of chapter XI, 2: “The body of Christ, *extra usum*, is present in the sacrament”.<sup>7</sup> The reference to the Catholic consensus makes the Lutheran Révay's argument even stronger.

Révay's Latinity—partly because of his conscious stylistic choices, partly because he did not have time to revise the text at the end of his life and could not supervise the posthumous edition—often puzzles philologists, so many such problematic passages may turn up in the future. And this edition will still be in use a hundred and fifty years from now. But this is just another indication of the amount of work that has been done. And the publishers of the text deserve credit not only for the difficulties they have overcome but also for the quality of the final result.

## Literature

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7 Péter Pázmány, *Pázmány Péter összes munkái: Magyar sorozat*, 7 vols. (Budapest: Magyar Királyi Tudományegyetemi Nyomda, 1894–1905), 4: 415, (My italics – G. F.).

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