

Between Aristocratic Education and Political Representation

East Goes West: Kavalierstours of Hungarian Aristocrats in the Seventeenth Century. By Bálint Ugry. Budapest: Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Art History, 2024. 308 pp.

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Bálint Ugry's monograph is the revised English edition of his 2023 PhD thesis under the title *A Magyar Királyság főrendjeinek Kavalierstourjai a 17. században*,¹ which introduces the development of one of the most distinctive practices of European noble education, the *Kavalierstour*, in Hungarian aristocratic families in the Kingdom of Hungary.

The book opens with a general overview of European *Kavalierstours*, establishing the etymological background of the term and surveying its historiographical usage. The author rightly opts for the designation *Kavalierstour*, emphasising that it is a nineteenth-century scholarly construct rather than a contemporary one, while also underlining that the seventeenth-century terms *Länderreise*, *Große Tour* and *Grand Tour* may not fully capture the specific phenomenon under examination.

The first chapter addresses the development of the practice of *Kavalierstour*, touching upon the phenomenon of educational travel and the tradition of *peregrinatio academica*, dating back to the Middle Ages. By devoting considerable attention to the presentation of the 'science of travel' (*ars apodemica*) and its theorists, Ugry provides a comprehensive overview not only of the theoretical background of the early modern approach to travel but also of its contemporary pedagogical methods. This carries particular importance, as European travel literature demonstrably made an impact on both the Kingdom of Hungary and the Principality of Transylvania. The author notes that "opinion-shaping intellectuals in the field of pedagogy not only wrote down their educational principles but were also actively engaged in the new method" (p. 28). The *Kavalierstour* included several visits to courts, which gave the young nobles an insight into the social and political milieu they were expected to later join. Accordingly, the

1 Ugry, *A Magyar Királyság főrendjeinek Kavalierstourjai*.

concept of a 'domesticated aristocrat' is described in a separate subchapter, approaching its early modern Hungarian reception from the perspective of literary history. In the chapter, all the important participants and stages of a *Kavalierstour* are introduced, offering a thorough overview of early modern educational travel. Arranging a *Kavalierstour* required careful planning as well as substantial financial and human resources, which aligns with the key question the monograph addresses: Was it ultimately worth taking the tour? We encounter the court masters (*Hofmeister*) and the preceptors (*praeceptor*) who accompanied the *kavaliers* on their journeys. They were primarily selected for their language proficiency and travel experience, and their main responsibility was to supervise the young nobles' moral conduct.

In addition to the participants, the actual stages of a *Kavalierstour*, the routes involved, as well as the criteria for choosing certain cities to visit are also reconstructed. We learn that the presence of knight academies, prevailing trends, geographical accessibility, denominational affiliation, and the attractions of particular towns were all influencing factors. By unfolding details, Ugry demonstrates the "informal sites for the 'absorption' of information" (p. 46). He effectively argues that the *Kavalierstours* were far more than mere academic tours, as in addition to courts and residences, the *kavaliers* also visited popular sites associated with knowledge transfer, most notably collections of rarities, which may be regarded as precursors to modern museums. Such collections were also found at aristocratic courts, boasting alluring curios. As financing the tour was a most significant practical aspect of *Kavalierstours*, it is explained meticulously. Funding was by no means simple. Given that the resources required were handled by banking and trading houses, we are given a chart for the clarification of the typical process. Thus, the introductory chapter successfully prepares the reader for the analysis of the book's core subject. It offers an overview from an international perspective, discussing travel planning, destinations, and informal sites of knowledge transfer. Moreover, the last subsection of the chapter provides an insight into the eighteenth-century afterlife of the *Kavalierstours*, thereby shedding light on emerging forms of travel.

The second chapter examines the *Kavalierstours* of the political elite of the Kingdom of Hungary by analysing the educational trips of young nobles, including members of the Batthyány, Draskovich, Erdődy,² Esterházy, Nádasdy and Pálffy families. A chronological order is followed when covering the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth century; however, as emphasised in a footnote: "It is by no means certain that the study tours abroad mentioned here fully meet the criteria of the *Kavalierstour*. Still, they may serve as orientation for future research" (p. 65). Although the scarcity of sources poses a challenge, by drawing on a wide

2 In an earlier study, the author had previously examined the *Kavalierstour* of Ádám Erdődy. Ugry, "Erdődy Ádám *Kavalierstourja*," 181–207.

range of thoroughly examined archival and published sources and engaging with the existing scholarly literature, Ugry succeeds in providing a complex and comprehending understanding of the aristocratic families' educational strategies in the Kingdom of Hungary. The chapter concludes with a broader outlook, addressing the *Kavalierstours* undertaken by members of other noble families, as well as by some from the Principality of Transylvania, thereby further strengthening the contextual framework of the monograph.

In the third chapter, the *Kavalierstours* are approached through the lens of art history, Ugry's own field of research. It examines the sites and objects Hungarian aristocratic travellers regarded worthy of attention from the perspective of aristocratic or royal representation. By way of introduction, Ugry refers to early modern travel literature, noting Nathan Chyträus's 1594 *Variorum in Europa itinerum deliciae*, which served as a model for later travel diaries. Although Chyträus listed and classified places and attractions to be visited, Ugry points out that, despite his extensive scope, he did not necessarily meet the needs of travellers coming from different socio-cultural backgrounds. Therefore, the 'imported theory' should be complemented by sources conveying the personal experiences of the *kavaliers*, a task the author undertakes through the description of three travel diaries and three sets of correspondence. In addition, he also offers depictions of the places referred to in the sources, using fascinating engravings of the *Munich Residenz* (p. 175), the *Palazzo del Quirinale* in Rome (p. 179), the residence of the Archbishop of Salzburg (*Schloss Hellbrunn*) (p. 180), the *Zeughaus* in Augsburg (p. 183), and the *Arsenale* in Venice (p. 184). By visualising the sites Hungarian travellers frequented and favoured, the author renders the differences between Hungarian and Western European travellers tangible. For example, arsenals were more popular with Hungarians, a preference that can be explained by the militarised nature of the Kingdom of Hungary. Apart from arsenals, the Hungarian *kavaliers'* interest focused predominantly on "churches, relics, and the objects of piety", as indicated by the title of the relevant subchapter. Within this category, in comparison to Western European trends, relics stand out: for the Hungarian travellers, the visitation (and not infrequently the acquisition) of such relics enjoyed particular priority among other Christian 'objects of piety'. Concluding the subchapter, it is stressed that "the Hungarian aristocrats' interest in travel was not shaped by a single dominant perspective (i.e., Western European apodemic literature) but by the 'dialogue' with their local social roles and cultural relations" (p. 195). The seventh subchapter places even greater emphasis on visits to monuments of representational power, concentrating on two Medici burial sites: the *Sagrestia Nuova* and the *Cappella dei Principi* in Florence, the latter of which Ugry had already analysed in an earlier study.³ Serving as the mausoleum of

3 Ugry, "A sokszínű természet tára," 82–96.

the Dukes of Tuscany, the *Cappella* was a popular attraction in early modern Europe; the construction itself represented “the main symbol of the Medici family’s power in early modern Florence” (p. 206). The subchapter presents the experiences of four Hungarian travellers in the Medici chapels, revealing that the display of wealth in the *Cappella* proved more appealing than the artistic value of the *Sagrestia Nuova*, which likewise reflects an interest in the material representations of power. The example of Florence is compelling on multiple fronts, as it illustrates how an urban landmark could simultaneously function as an instrument of political propaganda, a tourist attraction, and a cornerstone of local identity-building, which the author effectively contextualizes in relation to the Hungarian traveller’s interest.

The final subchapter of both the chapter and the entire monograph provides a strong conclusion to the book, as it introduces János Szunyogh’s art patronage of during his studies in Italy.⁴ He financed the Italian engraver Giacomo Lauro, who dedicated to him a print with the view of the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, as well as the Szunyogh family’s coat of arms. In the subchapter, richly illustrated with engravings, we are introduced to Lauro, who presumably produced several engravings under the patronage of European *kavaliers*. Several *kavaliers*, like Szunyogh himself, came into contact with him through Giovanni Alto, a guardsman and guide. This is a significant detail, as it confirms that Szunyogh had indeed been to Rome and that his representational activity as a patron was highly conscious. The display of the Szunyogh family’s coat of arms and the names of the seats of their lands on a mural at the university of Padua, where he “declared himself a member of the German nation” (p. 222), allows us to assume such representational ambitions. This sheds light on the complexity of the *kavalier* identity, in which the linguistic and cultural background, aristocratic affiliation within the Holy Roman Empire, and deliberately chosen representational strategies were at least as significant as national or territorial identity.

In conclusion, Bálint Ugry’s monograph is a pioneering work in several aspects. The author succeeds in offering a multifaceted and comprehensive presentation of the seventeenth-century *Kavalierstours* of the Hungarian aristocracy, demonstrating his wide-ranging knowledge of the relevant sources and the scholarly literature. Rather than concentrating on individual young nobles or particular families, he analyses the phenomenon from a broader perspective, thereby providing deeper insight into the educational strategies of the Hungarian aristocracy, while taking their specific socio-cultural background into account. He focuses closely on the attractions visited and those to be visited; using the *Cappella dei Principi* as an example, he explores how representations of power, urban identity, and the system

4 The author addressed János Szunyogh’s stay in Rome in a study published in 2018. Ugry, “Szunyogh János Rómában (1618),” 189–202.

of the traveller's demand and expectations were intertwined. This case study not only clarifies the *kavaliers'* orientations of interests but also enables more general conclusions to be drawn from the cultural embeddedness of travel and its historical transformations. Therefore, the monograph serves not only as a foundation for the study of Hungarian *Kavalierstours* but also as a contribution of broader relevance to the international discourse on early modern travel, education and representation.

Literature

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