

The Franeker Academic Prints¹

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We received from one of the authors (Ferenc Postma, Professor of Hebrew and the history of old European books at the Faculty of Theology of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam) a massive bibliographic research regarding – as the title itself shows – the academic prints of Franeker, Holland. The book, a result of over ten year's work of the two authors, impresses by monumentality and methodology; the whole process of elaboration is computerized. Otherwise, Prof. Postma is also the initiator of the Dutch group of computerized Bible research.² For gathering data, the two authors have literally crossed the whole of Europe, and have investigated the stocks of over 70 old libraries, out of these 13 being Transylvanian Humanist-type libraries in Romania (Aiud, Alba Iulia, Cluj, Miercurea-Ciuc, Odorhei, Sibiu, Sighișoara, Sfântu Gheorghe, Târgu Mureș, and Zalău). Moreover, partly through collaborators, partly by using the “modern possibilities of electronic data processing (EDV) in Dutch libraries (PICA) and, to a certain extent, the “world-wide-web” (WWW)”, they have succeeded to access bookstocks from the Republic of South-Africa, USA, Russia, and Japan.

The work is structured in the following sections:

- *Introduction*, dense and applied, containing four attachments (selective bibliography (*die Literatur*), the list of professors in alphabetical order, abbreviations for the libraries consulted, and technical abbreviations) on pages IX-XLVIII, written in German, and repeated “in friesischer Sprache”;
- the bibliography itself, that is, the main body of the work, is divided in chapters: *Orationes & Disputationes sub praeside* (p. 1-428), *Disputationes pro gradu* (p. 431-508), and *Miscellanea* (p.

¹ Postma, F. and J. van Sluis, *Auditorium Academiae Franekerensis: Bibliographie der Reden, Disputationen und Gelegenheitsdruckwerke der Universität und des Athenäums in Franeker 1585-1843*, Leeuwarden: Fryske Akademie, 1995, XLVIII + [4] + 706 + 2 f. volante (in 8⁻; 29×21,5 cm).

² For details on the activity of the Professor, see: *Liber amicorum Fr. Postma Een boek heft een rug*, Zoetermeer, 1995, 225-228; Fr. Postma, “În căutarea tipăriturilor academice de Franeker” (Searching the Academic Prints of Franeker), translated from Dutch by I.M. Oros, *Limes* (Zalău) no. 2-3 (1998): 51-54.

509-594; I have indicated the pages as well in order to mark the extent of each chapter in the whole of the work);

– the last part contains a list of concordances: student names from the *Album Studiosorum Academiae Franekerensis* (with the registration number of each); an *Album Promotorum* listing the names found on the title pages of the *Disputationes*; indexes of persons and the language of the *Carmina*; and, finally, two loose pages, containing an *Index Professorum, numerose et alphabetice* – practically, a mobile working tool.

Coming back to the *Introduction*, the authors justified their work from the very beginning by drawing attention to the incontestable value of the *Orationes et Disputationes* as a source for the history of academic learning. These sources offer not only inestimable data on the *Peregrinatio Academica*, the evolution of academic teaching, and the subjects of learning over two and a half centuries, but also as a “starting point for the prosopographic study of the students or auxiliary methods for the completion of biographical or genealogical facts.” Besides these *Orationes* and *Disputationes*, the *Auditorium Academiae Franekerensis* contains bibliographic lists of other categories of writings that illustrate, one way or another, European academic life in general, and Dutch in particular in the 16th through 18th centuries, such as: *Carmina gratulatoria*, *Epicedia*, *Leges academiae*, *Ordines lectionum* or *Programmata*, library catalogues or other writings connected to the *Academia Franekerensis*.

The authors continue with a short overview of the history of research on orations and disputes, the works of the precursors (C. van der Woude, J.J. Kalma, a.s.o), previous selective bibliographies, and the catalogue cards left behind by these scholars. They also underline the similarities and differences as compared to their foregoers, the tradition they follow and the innovations they bring into their book, or to be more precise, what they themselves call “to grasp Franeker as a whole”, that is, to include “all the professors from the four faculties (Theology, Law, Medicine, and *Artes*), for the complete period there was academic activity in Franeker: between 1585-1811 at the University, and between 1816-1843 at the Athenaeum”.

The observations on the bibliographic method adopted, applied for the computer and fully respected by the authors and collaborators, are explained in the *Preface*. The authors present in a few lines the selection itself and the criteria that guided the creation of this bibliographic

research (“The present bibliography contains only printed material”, and “The condition of being included into this bibliography generally was not the grade of notoriety of a source, but the physical possibility to take and study the sources by sight”). They insist that it is impossible to be exhaustive, to be “fully” complete, due to the method applied, and the fact that the catalogues viewed do not always contain all the sources, forcing the authors to apply the principle of “direct autopsy” (that is, to see “at least one copy of every title mentioned in the catalogue”).

The completeness of the work that the authors speak about stands principally in its “opening”. Although the work in its present form is of great importance, massive, and close to being exhaustive, further information is still required to complete it, a clear proof being the recent correspondence received from the author, in which he sends a *Frustula Academia Franekeriana (Eine erste Ergänzung zum Auditorium Academiae Franekerensis)*, containing over thirty new bibliographic entries.

Similarly, to understand the method and the techniques used in bibliographic description, the authors offer details about the places of discovery, the “category of professors”, *pro gradu*, and *miscellanea*. Thus, a first grouping of bibliographic references inside the book is made according to the nature of the units described: a) *Orationes et Disputationes sub ,raeside*, b) *Disputationes pro gradu*, and c) *Miscellanea*, and within these the ordering is chronological; for the first category according to the date of the professor’s appointment to the Academy (each having thus a number from 1 to 203, cf. *Index Professorum*). A reference either to the *Album Studiosorum Franekerensis* (S.J. Fockema Andreae, Th.J. Meijer, Franeker, 1968), or to the *Régi Magyar Könyvtár* (K. Szabó, Á. Hellebrant, Budapest, 1896-1898) completes each bibliographic unit, these two sources being at the same time criteria for control. For example:

- G/1694.8 Aeschinus Saagmans, Leov. Frisius, *Disputatio philosophica inauguralis de dubitatione, Ipsis Id. Oct. Franekeruae, Johannes Gyzelaar, 1694, 4⁻; 46 S. – Ph. doct.*
 Carm.: S.G.M.D. & C. [= Sixtus Greydanus, med. et chirurg.]; J. v. Dooreslaar.

Anm. : [†] Zalāu <8210> - Ast. 8597, 9373. -
APr 15 Oct. - Cf.
Sibranda, 103/1694.1

The work of the two scholars, besides being a veritable library catalogue, as it contains several thousands of titles (6000-7000), may well be considered a source for the history of printing and books as well, on account of the great Dutch typographies and famous printers mentioned (from Aegidius Radaeus and Abbe Wibes, Uldericus Balck and Johannes Gyselaar, to Henricus Halma and Gulielmus Coulon, etc.).

The gallery of the famous professors of the time: S. Lubbertus, J. Coccejus, C. Vitringa Senior, H.A. Röell, R. Andala, A. Schultens, J. Ph. Scheidius, or the members of the famous Schotanus family, and many others from the over 200 academics, who gave dignity to the faculties they served, made the small Franeker University famous all over Europe, at least in the 17th century.

The authors bring our attention to the fact that these *Disputationes* had a didactic role of instruction, and that “they mediate an image of *communis opinio* over certain topic”, as in the 17th and 18th centuries the university served more for education than for research, unlike nowadays.

“No bibliography can replace the scholars’ desire to see the originals” – the authors conclude. Yet, this work of reference *par excellence*, apparently dry and hyper-scholarly, that is, one to consult, rather than literally read, may allow for several modes/levels of reading. I mean that, besides the intellectual satisfaction offered to the scholar by the data contained in each bibliographic reference (a phenomenon characteristic for a so-called linear reading), one may imagine, each time, the solemnity of the moment of “defense” of the dispute – this “tournament of clerics”, as it was called, and may do so by an emphatic reading, and without betraying the intentions of the author, or denaturing the exact, intrinsic sense of the data. Almost each bibliographic unit here “encloses” a small show, the “decryption” of which captures interesting “university mentalities”: one of them being connected to the very academic ceremony itself, scholarly officiated, of sustaining the dissertation; since, willingly or not, while simply reading a bibliographic reference regarding one or another *Disputatio*, their “physiognomy” shows through. It is, I think, one of the beauties of the book, coming in completion of its bibliophilic virtues as the inventory of so many rarities on the one hand, and its scholarly qualities on the other.

Not by chance, perhaps; the first to be closely interested in these *Disputationes* were the historians of law in Germany.

Moreover, the book manages to seize even thus, in this “between the titles” manner, the theological tumult of so many years, proving that this vast TABLEAU OF IDEAS IN TENSION does not represent a mere scholastic “enumeration” in itself, but it builds upon a continuous rhetorical evolution, and a (self) discipline of the spirit within the academic institution, while from a hermeneutic viewpoint it presumes a continuous exercise of exegetical engrossment.

So this work may be considered a mere bibliography only at a first glance – as its subtitle would suggest: *Bibliographie der Reden, Disputationen und Gelegenheitsdruckwerke der Universität und Athenäums in Franeker 1585-1843* (A Bibliography of Orations, Disputes, and Occasional Prints of the University and Athenaeum of Franeker 1585-1843). More than that, on account of the abundance of data one can extract from here, the book may well be considered, albeit indirectly, a history of philosophical-theological (yet also judicial, medical, etc.) ideas/topics that concerned the theological and university elite of 16th – 18th century Europe, as well as a sound source for the history of academic learning, and a faithful image of cultural interferences due to the *Peregrinatio Academica (Ungarica et Transylvanica)*.

The work fills a serious gap in the field, it is a real surprise in the literature of specialty, and it undoubtedly represents a model for possible future Romanian works of this type. It proves even timelier for Romanian scholars since here this chapter of *Peregrinatio Academica* in the Netherlands is yet “uncovered”; it is a phenomenon which, in our case, perfectly mirrors the European relations between Hungary and Transylvania, on the one hand, and the Netherlands, on the other, at least in its university-theological and humanist aspect. These were made possible “thanks to Latin, the unitary scholarly language”, and due to the fact that the circulation of these *Orationes et Disputationes*, as the circulation of European books in general, was connected to “student mobility”. In order to realize the dimensions of the phenomenon throughout the period between 1585-1843, “when Hungarian students came to the Republic to complete their studies, and students from the Netherlands went to Padua or Basel to take their doctoral degree”, from the Index of Names alone I have identified not less than 250 students of the University of Franeker of Hungarian or Transylvanian origin, plus a Michael Corvin Petroselinus from Krakow (when in that period, besides

Franeker, there were universities in Holland at least at Amsterdam, Utrecht, Leiden, Harderwijk, and Gröningen).

The great surprise of this monumental opus, probably one not intended by the authors themselves, is the fact that it produces an impressive number of unique copies (*unikum, rarété*). This way, involuntarily, the two authors have committed an act of high patriotism, have offered a national service to their country by identifying these pieces of bibliophile patrimony – previously considered lost – and recovering them by photography. Consequently, in this respect the bibliophile aspect reflected in the presented bibliographical work should not be underestimated either. Statistically speaking, one single and difficult mechanical counting regarding rarities has yielded the result that, out of over 680 titles in 850 copies (or texts in case of colligates) that exist in the Transylvanian libraries studied, there are 158 Dutch unique copies, that is, almost a quarter of the titles. And this is only the case of Franeker prints! Although, at a first sight, the authors seem to have proposed to only browse through the collections where they assumed a certain range of *Peregrinatio Hungarica* from the very beginning, I believe that for an extra completeness research should be extended over the libraries of other Romanian provinces, an idea in accord with the authors' thoughts when they say: "we must not exclude the fact that other libraries in Eastern Europe and the United States might possess precious prints from Franeker".

Pointing out once more the monumentality and timeliness of this work, I am only left to strengthen the remark of the two authors: "Professors and students a long while ago used to address their writings to the public, today these sources must find their way to the *Auditorium* of historians". But, as the "description of the title cannot replace the original print", and "a description can only give an impression on the author's intent", this book will display its full value once the intention of the authors to edit the second volume, which would contain the corpus of these *Orationes* and *Disputationes*, is carried out.