

THE INCUNABULA OF THE DOMINICANS FROM BISTRIȚA AT THE CENTRAL PIARIST LIBRARY IN BUDAPEST

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Abstract The article presents the history of a series of incunabula belonging until the Reformation to the Dominican convent of the Holy Cross in Bistrița, Transylvania. The books were discovered in 1776 by the Piarists, who had been active in Bistrița since 1717. In 1878, the books were transferred to the Central Piarist Library in Budapest. To establish the books' history, the present research has benefited from two recent resources: the on-line catalogue of the Central Piarist Library, and the hitherto unused *Historia Bistriciensis Domus Scholarum Piarum ab anno MDCCXVII*, discovered in 2009.

Keywords Incunabula; Dominican; Piarist; Bistrița, Transylvania.

The Central Piarist Library in Budapest (Piarista Központi Könyvtár) has been known to possess three incunabula of Transylvanian provenance, singled out in the census of *Bibliotheca Hungarica*: Inc. 10 (BH 619) and Inc. 13 (BH 620) had belonged to the Dominican convent of the Holy Cross in Bistrița (German Bistritz/Nösen, Hungarian Beszterce, Latin Bistricia), dissolved during the Reformation, and Inc. 42 was owned in the fifteenth century by a Dominican from Baia Mare (BH 622).¹ However, another ten items of Transylvanian provenance have recently been identified and catalogued.² With one exception (Inc. 36, from Cluj), these books also come from Bistrița, which is remarkable, since almost nothing has survived from this city's

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¹ Csaba Csapodi, Klára Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Bibliotheca Hungarica. Kódexek és nyomtatott könyvek Magyarországon 1526 előtt I. A-J* (Budapest: MTAK, 1988).

² The catalogue of the Central Piarist Library can be consulted at: http://pkk.piarista.hu/szikla/egyszeru_kereses (last consulted on 9 July 2017). Many thanks to the librarian, Mr. Baranya Péter, who kindly and competently informed me about the incunabula of Transylvanian provenance and allowed me to consult them during my visit to the library, in June 2017.

medieval book collections.³ The present article focuses on this compact collection, in an attempt to reconstruct its history; a list of the books of Transylvanian provenance is offered in Appendix I.

To begin with, the books from Bistrița display an intriguing ownership note stating that they were given to the Piarists by Her Majesty (Empress Maria Theresia) in 1777 (e. g. **figs. 1, 3**); among them, three volumes (Inc. 10, 13 and 31) bear an ownership note linking them explicitly to the Dominican library in Bistrița (**figs. 1-3**).

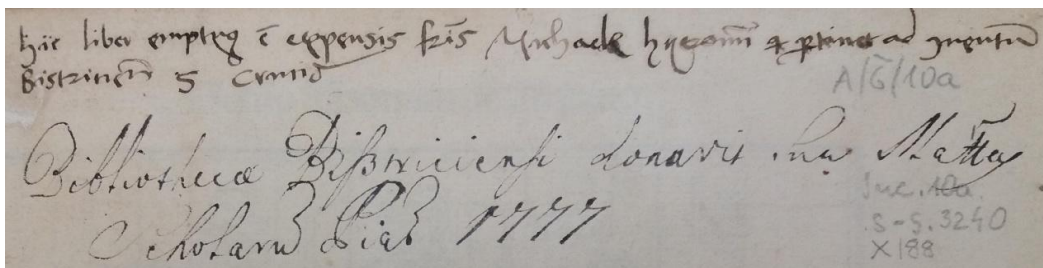


Fig. 1. Inc. 10: “Hic liber emptus e<st> expensis fr<atr>is Michael<is> Hyero<ni>mi qu<i> p<er>tinet ad conventu<m> Bistricien<sem> S<an>ctae Crucis” (s. XV); “Bibliothecae Bistriciensi donavit Sua Maiestas Scholaru<m> Piar<um> 1777”

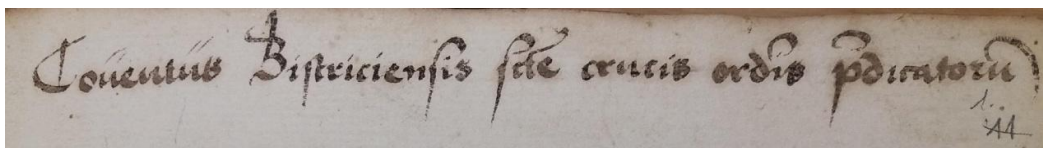
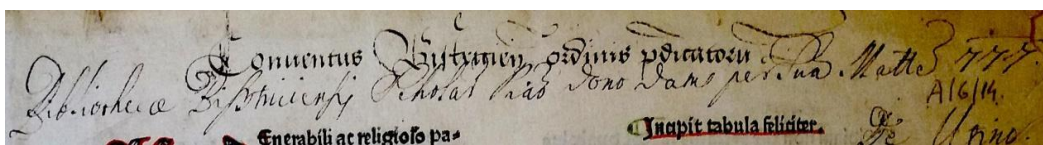


Fig. 2. Inc. 13: “Conuentus Bistriciensis s<an>cte crucis ordi<ni>s p<re>dicatoru<m>” (s. XV).



³ Altogether, the Bistrița-Năsăud County Library has only ten volumes printed before 1541; all had belonged to the Reformed College. Cf. Elena Dorobont, *Carte veche în Biblioteca Județeană Bistrița-Năsăud: secolele XV–XVII* (The old books from the Bistrița-Năsăud County Library: 15th–17th centuries), vol. I (Cluj: Eikon, 2005), 15–24; Horst Göbbel, Michael Weihrauch, “Ein wahrer Schatz: die alten Bücher des Evangelischen Gymnasiums in der Kreisbibliothek Bistritz-Nasod,” in *Wir Nösner: Beiträge zur Geschichte und Kultur der Stadt Bistritz und des Nösnerlandes* (Nürnberg: Haus der Heimat, 2010), 97–100.

Fig. 3. Inc. 31: “Conuentus Bistriciensis ordinis p<re>dicatoru<m>” (s. XV); “Bibliothecae Bi&striciensis Scholar<um> Piar<um> dono datus per Sua<m> Ma<jes>t<a>te<m> <1>777”.

This crucial piece of information is key to solving the puzzle of the books’ history from the late medieval times to the present day. Here it is: The Dominican convent of the Holy Cross was established in Bistrița soon after the Mongol-Tatar invasion of 1241; the famous inquisitor Bernard Gui refers to it in 1303 as “conuentus de Hystricia”, and a document from January 1309 mentions the name of its prior, “frater Christianus”.⁴ The convent had a *studium solemne* in the fifteenth century, and documents show that its residents studied in Buda, Paris, Siena, Rome, and in other places, and brought books home upon their return.⁵ For instance, brother Balthasar bought in Rome “bibliam, breuiarium et Antoninum in stampa,” and was allowed to keep them for his personal use upon his return to the convent in 1479.⁶ As Lutheranism grew popular among the Saxon communities of Transylvania in the 1520s, the friars’ activity became increasingly difficult in Bistrița. The City devised all kinds of harassments in order to intimidate the Dominicans, and went so far as to arrest several members of the community in 1529.⁷ However, Bistrița turned Lutheran only in 1541, after the death of the last Catholic parish priest, the highly respected Matthias Teutsch.⁸ The Franciscans were expelled from the city in 1541, and the altars were stripped in 1543, but the Dominicans were still active at that time; they were most likely banished in 1556, when their estates and goods were confiscated by the authorities.⁹ The convent’s buildings were taken over by the City, and were used for storing cereals until the Counter-Reformation, in the eighteenth century.

In 1717, the military governor of Transylvania, Field Marshal Steinville invited the Piarists to take over the parish of Bistrița, and in 1718 he offered them the buildings of the former Dominican convent of the Holy Cross.¹⁰ The Piarist ecclesiastical domination of Bistrița ended in 1878, when the diocese of Transylvania regained control of the parish; thus, on 23 August

⁴ Béla Iványi, “Geschichte des Dominikanerordens in Siebenbürgen und der Moldau, hauptsächlich unter Benützung des Zentralarchivs des Dominikanerordens in Rom,” *Siebenbürgische Vierteljahrschrift: Korrespondenzblatt des Vereins für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde* 62 (1939): 22–59 (“2. Bistritz”, 29–41); Mihaela Sanda Salontai, *Mănăstiri dominicane din Transilvania* (Dominican monasteries from Transylvania) (Cluj: Nereamia Napocae, 2002), 97–106.

⁵ Salontai, 101–103.

⁶ Iványi, 30.

⁷ Albert Berger, *Urkunden-Regesten aus dem Archiv der Stadt Bistritz in Siebenbürgen (1203–1570)*, vol. I, Cologne/Vienna: Böhlau, 1988, 301, doc. 1133; 306, doc. 1154; Iványi, 33; Salontai, 105.

⁸ Otto Dahinten, *Geschichte der Stadt Bistritz in Siebenbürgen*, ed. Ernst Wagner (Vienna/Cologne: Böhlau, 1988), 85.

⁹ Berger, 607, doc. 2278; 778–779, doc. 3038; Dahinten, 85; Salontai, 105.

¹⁰ Iványi, 37–41; Dahinten, 100; Tibor Borián, András Koltai, László Legeza, *Piaristák*, Budapest: Mikes Kiadó, 2007, 50.

1878, the Piarists closed down their college in Bistrița and transferred their valuables, including their books, to Budapest and to other cities.¹¹

This is what has been known so far. Yet, an important recent discovery sheds full light on the history of the eleven incunabula under scrutiny, and allows us to know how the Dominican books remained unharmed during the Reformation, and how the Piarists came to own them in 1777. In 2009 the archivists of the Roman-Catholic Diocese of Transylvania discovered the documents of the Piarist order from Bistrița, left behind in the attic of their former residence.¹² Particularly interesting among these documents, whose very existence had been ignored since 1878, are the two manuscript volumes of the *Historia domus* for the years 1717–1832 and 1832–1879 (317/g/1.a–b), and a catalogue of the books belonging to the Piarist college, drafted in 1810 (317/g/8.e).¹³

First of all, I must mention that the incunabula now in Budapest do not appear in the 1810 catalogue. The oldest book in this catalogue was printed in the sixteenth century, but most volumes are from the eighteenth century. However, the first volume of the *Historia domus* (pp. 48–49) reveals how the prior of the Piarist College discovered and managed to keep the Dominican incunabula (the full story is transcribed in Appendix II). In September 1776, the building of the city hall collapsed, and several old trunks were discovered in one of the rooms. The Piarist prior was invited by the town magistrates to join a commission charged to inspect the contents of the trunks which, he believed, had been lying there since the time of Matthias Teutsch, the last Catholic priest of Bistrița. Upon opening the trunks, they discovered “in two of them such books as are called ‘chained’, printed in ancient Gothic letters, inscribed [with the name of] the Dominican monastery of the Holy Cross (whose ruins are still standing)” (*ecce in duabus libri, ut solet dici catenati, vetustissimi gothici typi, Monasterio Dominicanorum S. Crucis (cujus rudera actu etiam extant) inscripti* - **fig. 4**). This, of course, is a fitting description of our incunabula, since Inc. 6 (**fig. 5**), 7, 29, 31, 32 and 43 are indeed *libri catenati*, and Inc. 10, 13, and 31 still have the medieval Dominican ownership notes.

¹¹ György Balanyi, Zoltán Lantos, *Emlékkönyv a magyar piarista rendtartomány háromszázéves jubileumára* (Budapest: Budapesti Piarista Diákszövetség, 1943), 206; Borián, Koltai, Legeza, 50.

¹² Rita Magdolna Bernád, “Centrele de colecție ale Arhivei Arhidiecezane de Alba Iulia,” *Revista Arhivelor* 88 (2011): 41.

¹³ Cf. Bernád, *Plébániai levéltárak I. A Gyulafehérvári-, a Sepsiszentgyörgyi-, a Szamosújvári- és a Gyergyószentmiklósi Gyűjtőlevéltárak repertórium. Arhive parohiale I. Repertoriul Arhivelor de Colecție din Alba Iulia, Sfântu Gheorghe, Gherla și Gheorgheni*, Alba Iulia/Budapest, 2009, 220–29. The material from Bistrița has been transferred to the Roman-Catholic Archdiocesan Archive in Gherla, str. Bobâlna 8. I would like to thank Dr. Rita Bernád and Mrs. Katalin Bartha, who kindly assisted me in consulting their holdings.

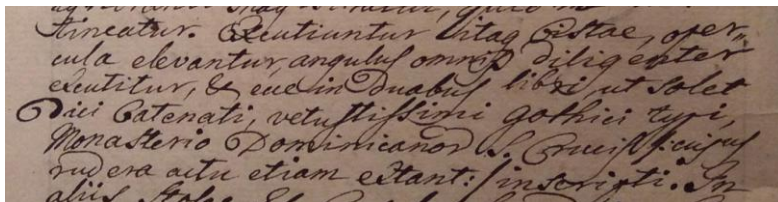


Fig. 4. Gherla, Arhiva de Colecție a Arhiepiscopiei Romano-Catolice, 317/g/1.a: *Historia Bistriensis Domus Scholarum Piarum ab anno MDCCXVII* for 1776, p. 48.



Fig. 5. Inc. 6, binding.

Apart from these large chained books, occupying two trunks, the commission also discovered worn-out chasubles, five eucharistic chalices and other objects. The treasure was at once coveted by both civil and ecclesiastical authorities: the Piarist prior argued that the objects had belonged to the Catholic Church, while the city magistrates wanted to sell them at auction. Acting swiftly, the prior managed to prevent the auction with the support of the Catholic bishop of Transylvania. However, the author of the *Historia* regrets that the prior did not expose to the Empress the poverty of the Piarist church from Bistrița, so that, moved by pity, she might entrust the entire treasure to this scholarly community. In the absence of such supplication, an imperial decree allowed the Chapter to seize the luxury items, so that only one

chalice and “wretched, incomplete and imperfect books” came to the Piarists (*libros quoque miseros, eosque mancos tantum, & imperfectos, reliquos Capitulum occupavit*).

Since the books seized by the Alba Iulia Chapter are no longer extant or have not been identified yet, it is hard to judge whether the lamentation of the clerk who wrote the *Historia domus* is justified. At any rate, the surviving books are neither “wretched” nor “incomplete”; on the contrary, they were certainly deemed too precious to enter the college library, and were treated as a special collection: this is why they do not appear in the 1810 catalogue. Upon handing over the parish of Bistrița to the bishop of Transylvania one century later, the Piarists cared little for their archive, which was abandoned *in situ*, but took the old Dominican books to the central house of the order in Budapest.

Even in the absence of these precious details, it would have been obvious that all eleven volumes acquired by the Bistrița Piarists in 1776, and not just the three having medieval ownership notes, belonged to the old Dominican collection. They contain mainly Dominican authors (Johannes Nider-Inc. 6, Leonard of Udine-Inc. 7, Thomas Aquinas-Inc. 12, 30, 43) and the *Decretales* (Inc. 29, 33), all essential for the Dominicans’ philosophical and legal studies. Moreover, several bindings display the same type of label, with the author and title written in Gothic *textura* (Inc. 7-fig. 6, 12, 13, 30, 33, 43).



Fig. 6. Label on Inc. 7:

“Sermones quadragesimales fratri leonhardi de utino ordinis predicatorum”.

A few remarks on the books themselves may complete this note on a collection whose existence and history have been ignored for too long, and shed some light on the interests and competences of the Dominicans from Bistrița. It is not my intention to offer an exhaustive description of the volumes, since the on-line catalogue of the Central Piarist Library in Budapest does that; moreover, many of these incunabula have been digitised and can be perused online. I shall therefore dwell only on a few notable aspects.

To begin with, the incunabula do not demonstrate intensive reading. Only Inc. 13, containing sermons, is heavily annotated, and a full sermon on the apocalyptic prophecies in Joel 2, Luke 21 and Matthew 24 is added on f. 230r-v (Inc: "*Erunt signa in sole luna. Que Johel 2 <supra, add.: Mt xxiii> [recte Luc. 21, 25] Sol obscurabitur et luna non dabit lumen suum et stelle cadebunt de celo. Johel 2. Sol conuertetur in tenebras et luna in sanguinem [Joel 2, 31]...*").

So far as illumination is concerned, the modest flourished and rubricated initials in Inc. 13 (**fig. 7**) deserve attention because they may be the work of a local friar. Indeed, they were drawn by the hand that added marginal notes in red, underlined biblical passages, and highlighted minor initials. On the contrary, Inc. 12 and 33 were decorated by professional illuminators in Germany and Italy, where they were printed. Both have lavishly decorated *lettrines*, foliated initials and margins, illuminated in a number of colours (green, pink, viz. black, red, green) and gold (**figs. 8-9**).

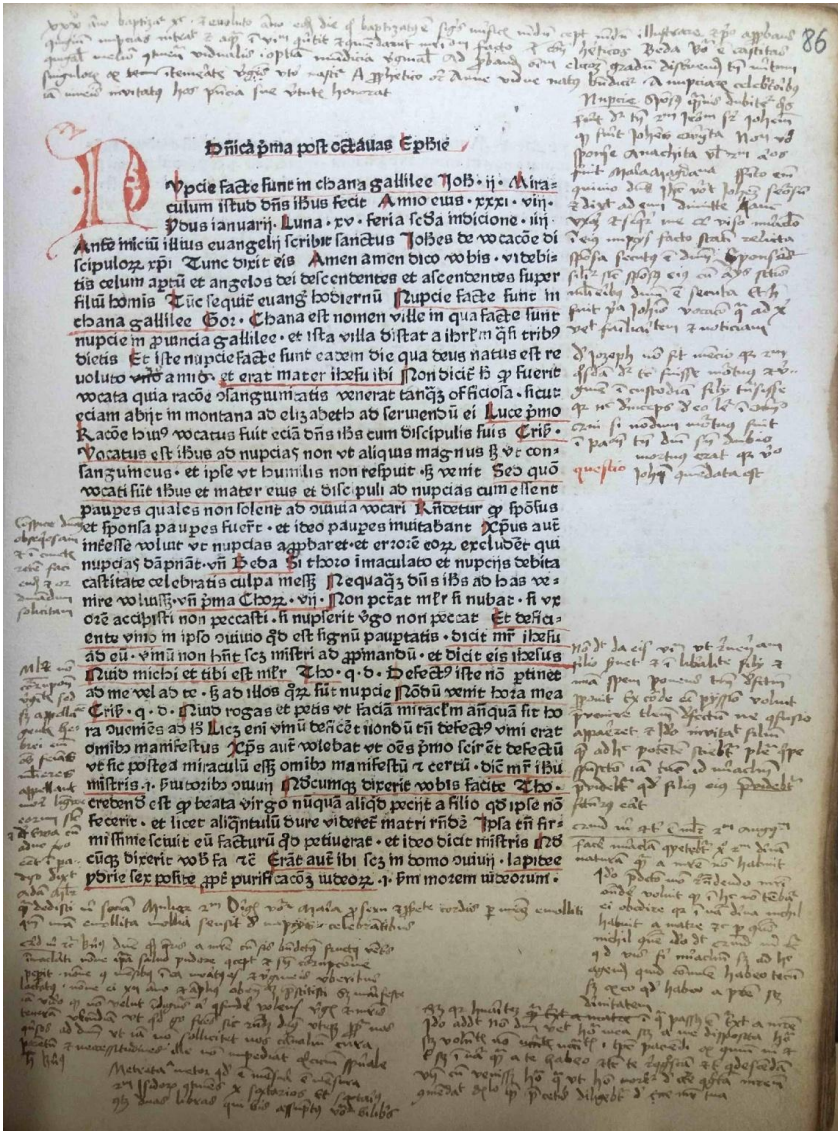


Fig. 7. Inc. 13, f. 86r.

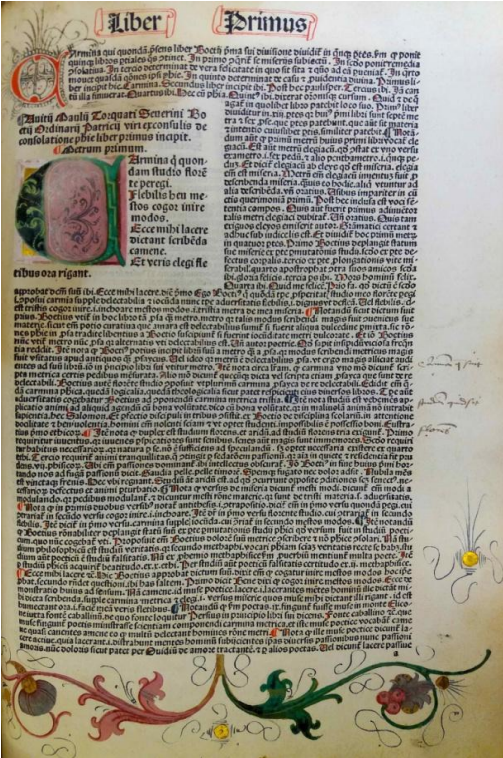


Fig. 8. Inc 12.



Fig. 9. Inc 33, f. 1r.

All incunabula still have their original bindings, some in pristine condition, while others were beautifully restored in recent years. The books are bound in the typical Gothic fashion of the late-fifteenth century, in white, brown or red tanned leather decorated with blind-tooled geometrical and floral motifs. In some cases (Inc. 7 [fig. 10], 13, 29, 33), the original metal pieces (clasps, corner pieces and centre pieces with bosses) have survived.



Fig. 10. Inc. 7, binding.

It is also worth mentioning that the end flyleaf of Inc. 12 consists of two parchment leaves pasted together, containing a German scribe's advertisement sheet. It displays different styles of late fifteenth-century *textura quadrata*, *textus praescissus*, and *bastarda*, complemented by a profusion of cadels and an alphabet of flourished initials (fig. 11). The front flyleaf contains two unidentified poems in Middle High German.¹⁴



Fig. 11. Inc. 12, flyleaf: a scribe's advertisement sheet.

¹⁴ The poems were transcribed by András Vizkelety, *Beschreibendes Verzeichnis der altdeutschen Handschriften in ungarischen Bibliotheken*, vol. II (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1973), 115, no. 43.

Finally, one may note that among these volumes there are no liturgical books, no manuscripts, and no small format books. Of course, one cannot tell what books went to the Chapter in 1776–1777, and it is also impossible to know whether the Dominicans were able to rescue their most precious, useful or portable books in 1556. The surviving *libri catenati* most likely belonged to the reference library, and the fact that they were fastened to the lecterns may have hindered the friars from removing them easily, if they had to pack and leave in a hurry.

In any case, these eleven volumes constitute the only coherent book collection from medieval Bistrița discovered so far. The fact that they were preserved together, and that, thanks to recent discoveries, their history can be reconstituted, is a happy accident for which scholars must thank Providence and the provident Piarists who, in 1776, saved them from being scattered, and documented their provenance.

Appendix I.

Handlist of Incunabula of Transylvanian Provenance at the Central Piarist Library, Budapest

A. *Incunabula from Bistrița*

1. Inc. 6. Johannes Nider OP, *Sermones de tempore et de sanctis cum quadragesimali*, Strasbourg: Jordanus de Quedlinburg, ca. 1483. “*Sermones Ioannis Nider Ord<inis> Pred<icatorum> Bibliothecae Bi<striciensi> Schola<rum> Pia<rum> donatus Decreto Regio 1777*” (f. a2r).

2. Inc. 7. Leonardus de Utino OP, *Sermones quadragesimales de legibus*, Venice: Franciscus Renner et Nicolaus de Frankfordia, 1473. “*Bibliothecae Bi<striciensi> Schola<rum> Pia<rum> donavit Sua Mai<es>tas 1777*”.

3. Inc. 10. a. Thomas de Aquino OP, *Commentarius in Perihermeniam Aristotelis cum aliis tractatibus*, Venice: Otinus de Luna pro Alexandro Calcedonio, 1496; b. Thomas de Aquino OP, *Commentaria Sancti Thomae super libros metaphysice*, Venice: Petrus Bergonensis, 1502; c. Paulus Soncinas, *Quaestiones in libros Metaphysicae Aristotelis*, Venice: Simon Bevilaqua, 1498; d. Bartolus de Saxoferrato, *Super authenticis*, Nürnberg: Anton Koberger, 1481. “*Hic liber emptus e<st> expensis fr<atr>is Michael<is> Hyero<ni>mi qu<i> p<er>tinet ad conuentu<m> Bistricien<sem> S<anctae> Crucis*” (s. XV); “*Bibliothecae Bi<striciensi> donavit Sua Maiestas Scholaru<m> Piar<um> 1777*” (a, f. a1r).

4. Inc. 12. a. Thomas de Aquino OP, *Summa theologica: Pars tertia, cum additionibus*, Venice: Bernadinus Stagninus, 1486; b. Boethius, *De consolazione Philosophiae cum commentario [Ps.-]Thomae de Aquino*, Nürnberg: Anton Koberger, 1486. "Bibliothecae Bißtriciensi donavit Sua Maie^{tas} 1777".

5. Inc. 13. a. Guillelmus Parisiensis OP, *Postilla super Epistolas et Evangelia*, Speyer: Peter Drach, 1476; b. Albertus Magnus OP, *Sermones de tempore et de sanctis*, Speyer: Peter Drach, ca. 1475. "Conuentus Bistriciensis s^{an}cte crucis ordiⁿⁱs p^{re}dicatoru^m" (s. XV).

6. Inc. 29. Bonifacius VIII Papa, *Liber sextus Decretalium cum glossa Johannis Andreae*, Basel: Michael Wenssler, 1476. "Bibliothecae Bißtriciensis Schola^{rum} Pia^{rum} donavit Sua Maiestas 1777".

7. Inc. 30. Thomas de Aquino OP, *Summa theologica II.1*, Basel: Michael Wenssler, 1485. "Bibliothecae Bißtriciensis Schola^{rum} Pia^{rum} dono datus per Sua^m Maiest^{atem} 1777".

8. Inc. 31. Leonardus de Utino OP, *Sermones quadregesimales de legibus*, Ulm: Johann Zainer, 1478. "Conuentus Bistriciensis ordinis p^{re}dicatoru^m" (s. XV); "Bibliothecae Bißtriciensis Schola^{rum} Piar^{um} dono datus per Sua^m Ma^{jes}t^ate^m <1>777".

9. Inc. 32. Nicolaus de Lyra, OFM, *Postilla super totam Bibliam, cum expositionibus Guillelmi Britonis in prologos S. Hyeronimi et additionibus Pauli Burgensis et correctoriis editis a Matthia Doering, Pars II*, Nürnberg: Anton Koberger, 1481. "Bibliothecae Bißtriciensis Schola^{rum} Piarum doⁿat^{us} per Sua^m Majestate^m 1777".

10. Inc. 33. Gregorius IX Papa, *Decretales cum apparatu Bernardi Parmensis*, Rome: Ulrich Han et Simon Chardella, 1474. "Bibliothecae Bißtriciensis Schola^{rum} Pia^{rum} dono datus per Sua^m Ma^{ies}t^ate^m 1777".

11. Inc. 43. Thomas de Aquino OP, *Quaestiones de duodecim quodlibet*, Nürnberg: Johann Sensenschmidt et Andreas Frisner, 1474. "Bibliothecae Bißtriciensis Schola^{rum} Pia^{rum} dono datus per sua^m Ma^{ies}t^atem <1>777".

B. Incunabulum from Cluj

12. Inc. 36. *Missale Strigoniense*, Venice: Johannes Emericus de Spira, 1495. "Collegii Soc^{ietatis} Jesu Clau^{diopolitani}" (s. XVII?); "Inscriptus iterum Claudiop^{olitani} Collegio S^{ocietatis} J^{esu} 1765"; "Bibliothecae Schol^{arum} Piar^{um} Vaciensium 1805" (fig. 12).

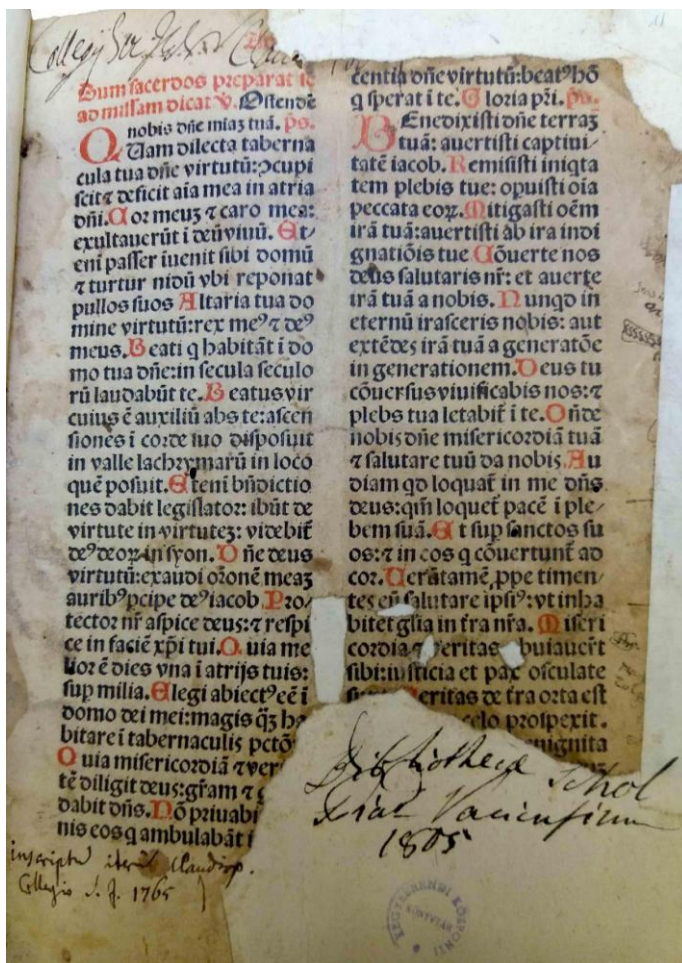


Fig. 12. Inc. 36, ownership notes.

C. Incunabulum donated by a Dominican from Baia Mare

13. Inc. 42. Antoninus Florentinus OP, *Summa theologica Pars II*, Venice: Nicolas Jenson, 1480. “Iste liber est legatus ec<c>lesie Trinitatis siue kathedre predicatorum hungaror<u>m per domi<nu>m pangraciu<u>m predicator<u>m hungaror<u>m Riulid<omi>nar<u>m. Predicatores orate pro eo” (s. XV); “Liber hic donatus est V<enerabili> Collegio Scholarum Piarum Debrecziensi, die 20a septembris 1779 per me Paulum Melizer...” (fig. 13).

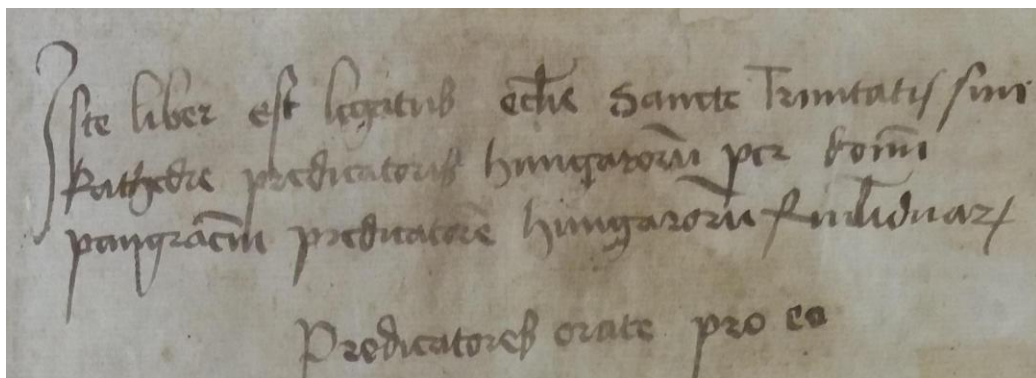


Fig. 13. Inc. 42, ownership note.

Appendix II.

Historia Bistriciensis Domus Scholarum Piarum ab anno MDCCXVII
(Arhiepiscopea Romano-Catolică Alba Iulia, Arhiva de Colecție din Gherla, 317/g/1.a. *Historia domus 1717-1832*, pp. 48-49)

Mensis jam labebatur September [1776] cum collapsum Praetorium Urbis hujus reparandum a Senatu decernebatur. Manum operi adposituri Magistratualis comissio deputata est, ut Cistae, quae in Communitatis cubiculo, inde a tempore defectionis credo Mathiae Teutsch,¹⁵ detinebantur, quoque nec seris clausae, nec alio modo munitae erant reviderentur, ut clare pateat ignorantibus Magistratui, quid in illis contineatur. Excutiuntur itaque Cistae, opercula elevantur, angulus omnis diligenter excutitur, & ecce in duobus libri, ut solet dici catenati, vetustissimi gothici typi, Monasterio Dominicanorum S. Crucis (cujus rudera actu etiam extant) inscripti. In aliis Stolae, & Casulae Sacerdotum Praeci ritus, cum phrigeria auro, & argento intertextae, sed partim vetustate, partim a tineis, & blathis consumptae, cum diversis aliis ad cultum Divinum pertinentibus, reperiatur. Aderant & quinque Calices argentei, boni inaureati, lapidibus variis & figuris pro more veteri exornati, item argentea patena major, quam dicebant in usu fuisse quondam apud Reformatos in porrigenda coena, ceterum verisimilius est eandem aut ad Ecclesiae Dominicanorum, aut ad Cathedrale Baptisterium pertinuisse, siquidem actu etiam in plerisque Ecclesiis in administratione Baptismi similes patenae argenteae videri possint. Thesaurus hic ad Ecclesiam [p. 49] Romano Catholicam pertinens, tametsi viribus omnibus occultatus fuerit, non deerant tamen inter Catholicos bonae & tenerae Conscientiae viri, qui quemadmodum aequae ferebant haereditatem nostram, in alienos

¹⁵ Matthias Teutsch (d. 1541) was the last Catholic parish priest of the city of Bistrița.

versam¹⁶, ita occulte insinuarunt, ut intentio Senatus, qui res ipsas plus omnes offerentibus exponendas decrevit, mos in ipso exordio suffocetur. Quare scriptum ad Episcopum Kolonits¹⁷, inhibito per ipsum facta, rursus ad aulam, licitatio suppressa.

Siquando, hic certe Superior multum aberravit, si enim directe ipse ad Aulam recurisset, Thesaurum omnem specificè perscripsisset, Parohialem Ecclesiam nullo Sacro apparatu, Calice nullo provisam Augustae Theresiae¹⁸ per supplicem libellum exposuisset, procul dubio precibus iustis flexa Domina Clementissima, Thesaurum totum nobis indulsisset, quod resolutione ab Aula ad representationem Episcopi facta, submissa, aliter atque opinati sumus evenit. Ex 5 Calicibus mediocrem nos, alios nobiliores, unum maximum, cui par in Cathedrali non datur Episcopus, libros quoque miseros, eosque mancos tantum, & imperfectos, reliquos Capitulum occupavit.

September [1776] was almost over, when the senators decided to repair the crumbled City Hall. Intending to start the repair works, they set up a committee of magistrates, in order to inspect some trunks, which had lain in the common rooms since – I believe – the death of Matthias Teutsch, and, though they were neither fettered with chains, nor otherwise locked, to reveal to the ignorant magistrate what they contained. The trunks are thus taken out, the lids opened, every angle is diligently examined, and lo, in two of them such books as are called 'chained', printed in ancient Gothic letters, inscribed [with the name of] the Dominican monastery of the Holy Cross (whose ruins are still standing). In other trunks were discovered liturgical robes and chasubles, interwoven with gold and silver, but ruined partly by age, partly by moths and bugs, alongside various other objects for the divine service. There were also five good chalices made of gilded silver, decorated with sundry gems and images, in the old fashion, and also one big silver plate, which they said was used by the Reformed to distribute the eucharist, but most likely belonged to the Dominican church, or to the cathedral baptistry, since indeed one can see such silver plates for the administration of baptism in most churches. Although this treasure belonging to the Roman Catholic Church was hidden by all means, there were men of good and tender will among the Catholics, who also considered that our heirloom had been devolved to others, and thus discovered the secret intention of the Council, which had decreed to sell those things at auction, and this intention was stifled from the very beginning. Thus, they wrote to Bishop Kollonich, he forbade the proceeding, and, back to the city hall, the auction was stopped.

However, the Prior made a great mistake here: if he had written personally to the imperial Court, if he had described in detail the entire treasure, and if he had explained in a petition to the August Theresia that the parish church had no liturgical objects, and no chalice, no doubt that the most merciful Empress, moved by the just petition, would have bestowed the entire treasure on us; but, in the decision communicated by the Court to the Bishop, things did not go as we had expected. From the five chalices, we received a mediocre one, whilst the

¹⁶ Lam 5:2.

¹⁷ Ladislaus Kollonich, bishop of Transylvania between 1774–1780.

¹⁸ Maria Theresia, Empress of Austria between 1740–1780.

more precious, including a great one, without a pair in the cathedral, were given to the Bishop; we received the wretched, incomplete and imperfect books, while the rest were seized by the Chapter.]