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Translating the Royal Gift

King James the VI and I's *Basilikon Doron,* translated sometimes as the royal gift, was a recommended reading in seventeenth century Hungary. The Hungarian translation of the book[1] was regarded as a model to be followed—in writing and in life—by several authors writing in the Hungarian vernacular in the seventeenth century.[2] The Hungarian translation of *Basilikon Doron* is also important as a canonical text of the history of Hungarian literature and political thought. The way a Scottish king's instructions to his son, originally written in late Middle Scots came to be an important item in early modern Hungarian booklists is an interesting issue in itself. In trying to understand the context in which this book surfaces in a Hungarian translation, one possibility is looking at other contemporary translations, regarding them the *con-texts* in the primary sense of the word.

By the time the Hungarian version was published, numerous English, Latin, Dutch, German and French translations, as well as a Swedish one have already come out, along with several other of James's works, mostly in 1603-1604. It has been suggested that the large number of his works published in the continent in a short period of time had been a part of an orchestrated campaign.[3] King James the VI and I inherited the throne of Elisabeth I, one of the longest reigning and most successful monarchs of European history, therefore continental public opinion was also quite curious of the new king. It has also been suggested that James's foreign policy objectives, namely his plan to call an ecumenical council to reunite Christendom motivated the wide-scale continental printings of his books.[4]

James's intentions in writing his works, as well as his understanding of his role as a monarch (the two issues being intimately connected) are important to understanding the fortunes of his works. This is not the least so because most people would not have met his works had he not been king of England and a major player in European politics, even if quite often conspicuous by absence. His intentions and self-perception however did not translate into a dutiful acknowledgement and acceptance of these on part of subjects and readers. On the contrary, the story of James's reign and reception could be cast as a story of a continuous miscommunication and misperception of intentions, including the outbreak of the Thirty Years War: the Bohemian crown was offered to Frederick V, and he accepted it partly on the assumption that James, father

[1] Szepsi Korotz György, *Királyi ajándék*. Oppenheim, 1612.

[2] Szepsi Csombor Márton, author of a moral treatise addressed to Nyári Ferenc, whose tutor he was, lists it among his models, along with Socrates, Aristotle and Seneca (Szepsi Csombor Márton, *Udvari Schola*, Bártfa, 1623.), and Pataki Füsüs János, author of a mirror of princes addressed to prince Bethlen Gábor recommends both James's book to be read and his example of wise government to be followed. (Pataki Füsüs János, Királyoknak tüköre, Bártfa, 1626. There are several further, references in Pataki's book to Basilikon Doron.)

[3] 'Yet the process was so rapid, so widespread, and so focussed that an alternative explanation demands consideration: that the circulation of James's writings across the continent was in some way orchestrated, part of a deliberate campaign to promote James's policies, and his foreign policy objectives in particular.' (Roderick J. Lyall, 'The Marketing of James VI and I: Scotland, England and the Continental Book Trade', *Quærendo* 32/3-4., 204-217.)

[4] W. B. Patterson, *James VI and the Reunion of Christendom*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

to his wife Elisabeth, would intervene. In the years preceding the conflict, desirable foreign policy was intensely debated in England, much to James's annoyance, and *Basilikon Doron* was often quoted by pamphleteers. His writings were also important in shaping his image on the continent, an image fashioned both by the king and his readers, often in quite opposite directions. Translations of his works were one of the battlegrounds on which these efforts were played out.

Basilikon Doron was originally not meant for publication. When it was first printed, in was printed in seven copies, and the printer was sworn to secrecy by James himself. It was however with the king's knowledge and approval that it was published in 1603 in Edinburgh, and he wrote a preface to it apologising to possible English readers if they may be offended by a text not originally written in an English context. By authorising the printing of *Basilikon Doron*, James was offering his English subjects 'a guide to their new king.' This self-fashioning would however only have been successful if the new subjects had actually read the book, which was not the case, argued a modern commentator. Therefore the London edition may have been a success, but it was only due to its concurrence with a coronation, and the copies may have functioned as a "coronation mug."[5]

The same reasons cannot be given for the success of the book on the continent. That James had been crowned king of England could not possibly have been reason enough for selling a number of copies of his work even larger than that of the 1603 London editions.[6] We know that his ambassador in France was involved in the production of Jean Hotman de Villiers's French translation, sending samples of the translation to London for approval.[7] Royal approval however does not make a book popular; and popular it was, as the publisher of the 'authorised' version complained against pirated editions, and attached a copyright statement to his second edition. Given the presence of pirate editions, a concerted exercise in promoting his foreign policy on part of James cannot be considered sufficient explanation either – unless of course we presuppose that the effort was very successful, at least in attracting readership.

Basilikon Doron was a text, and as such, it could be put to many uses. It was often quoted against the king himself.[8] Similarly, translations could be used to cast the king in roles he was expected to assume, or to remind him of those roles. Dedications were central in the process.

Dedicating a translation of *Basilikon Doron* could be a bid for favour, as in the case of a manuscript Italian translation by John Florio, who then became reader in Italian to the queen.[9]

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[5] 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, 36-54.

[6] The first Latin translation for example appeared in London, and it was this edition that was most widely spread in Europe, its surviving editions outnumbering that of the English ones (Craigie op.cit.), although the estimated number of copies of the latter is between 10,000 (Craigie) and 16,000 (Wormald).

[7] James Craigie, ed., *The Basilikon Doron of King James VI.* Vol. II. Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood & Sons Ltd, 1950. 34.

[8] Examples include Thoman Scott, who argued for a pro-Palatinate intervention and against the Spanish match calling James's own works own written words as 'a witnesse agaist himselfe on my behalfe' (P.G. Lake, "Constitutional Consensus and Puritan Opposition in the 1620s: Thomas Scott and the Spanish Match." *The Historical Journal* 25. 4. 1982. 805-825. 815.); the opposition to his attempt at liturgical reform at the General Assmebly of Perth 1618, who quoted his epistle introducing Basilikon Doron against him (Craigie op.cit. 42); Nicholas Fuller quoting his advice to Henry not to empoverish the subjects, and implicitly accusing him that that was what he was doing (Wormald, op.cit. 48.) etc.

[9] *Basilikon Doron overo Istrutioni et animaestramenti della Serenissima Maesta d'Inghilterra, di Scotia, di Francia et d'Irlandia al Prencipe Henrico, suo carissimo figliuolo.* Tradotto dalla lingua Inghlesa nella Italiana da Giovanni

Dedicating the king's book back to him was however a speech act more complex than a bid for favour, even more so in printing, where there was a wider implied audience. A gift leaved the receiver in debt, as James well knew. A recurrent theme in *Basilikon Doron* was Henry's debt to his father,[10] and the wide-scale printing of *Basilikon Doron* in 1603 could also bee seen as a gift of the new king to his subjects, a royal favour to which recipients ought to react with "duty and deference."[11] When they returned the gift, at least some of James's subjects understood all too well how the king was using the royal word. The Welsh, the translator argued, no less loyal than the English and Scottish subjects, moreover the true descendants of the ancient Britons, no less desired "to enjoy so great a benefit as to heare your Maiestie to speak unto them as they might well understand." [12] The translator then presented James as a descendant of Welsh princes, in whom therefore the Welsh subjects had a special interest and claimed special rights. Finally, Robert Holland pointed out that the original addressee of the book, Henry, prospective Prince of Wales, now had the benefit of a Welsh instruction at his disposal, to help him learn the language of his subjects. The aim of the gift to the king was clearly to oblige him to satisfy the expectations of the Welsh. They also took the opportunity to inform him of their views about the qualities desirable in a prince – the main topic of the king's book. If *Basilikon Doron* was offered to the new subjects as a guide to their new king, some new subjects were planning on publicly presenting the king with his book translated, pointing out that the prospective Prince of Wales ought to learn their language, and offering their interpretation of the legend of Brutus.

On the continent, enthusiastic pamphleteers often attributed England the role of leading the international Calvinist movement, and many of those translating James's books looked to him for protection and intervention. This was the case of the Dutch, who were the first to translate him and lead the way in the number of editions. That the Dutch and the Huguenots would pay the most attention to the king of England would probably have much to do with the fact that both sought his help, as did later the other countries that where his works were distributed in the vernacular, the German principalities, Sweden or Transylvania.

The Dutch "framed" James's text by printing with it another. They represented James's religious stance by printing with *Basilikon Doron* the *Negative Confession,* a strongly-worded 1581 Scottish confession, signed by James and his court, which was mainly concerned with repudiating Catholic doctrines.[13] Thus, altough many continental translations were politically

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Florio. MS, cca 1603. Modern edition: Giuliano Pellegrini, *John Florio e il Basilikon Doron di James VI: un esempio inedito di versione elisabettiana*. Università degli Studi di Pisa, Studi di Filologia Moderna 8. Milano: Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore, 1961.

[10] Wortham, 'Part of my taill is yet untolde,' 187.

[11] I have borrowed the phrase from Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption,* 15, where it is used to describe the expected reaction of recipients of favours. Peck treats gift-giving as a social and political practice, a material expression of the idea that mutual benefits bind the commonwealth together.

[12] Basilikon Doron: Or, his Maiesties Instructions to His Deerest Sonne Henrie the Prince: Translated into the true British tongue, by the insustrie and labour of M. Robert Holland, Minister of the Church of Lhandhyfrwr. And The Kings Maiesties Pedigree with a briefe Cronologie concerning the fame: collected and let downe in order by George Owen Harry, Miniser of the Church of Whit-church in Kemmes. London : by Simon Stafford for Thomas Salisbury, 1604. STC (2nd ed.) 14356

[13] Astrid J. Stilma, *A King Translated. James VI & I and the Dutch Interpretations of his Works, 1593-1603*, Amsterdam: Vrije Universitetit, 2005, 18, 198. Most of my knowledge of the Dutch reception is based on this work. I am grateful to Dr. Stilma for providing me with a copy of her small-circulation book. 229-230.

motivated, and political acts in themselves, it was hardly the foreign policy objective of the reunion of Christendom that this translation served.

Some French and German translations were also politically motivated. On January 12, 1604, Georg Michael Lingelsheim, counsellor of Frederick IV and then to Frederick V of Pfalz informed Jacob Bongars, the agent of Henry IV in Heidelberg, that Denaisius was finishing the translation of *Basilikon Doron*, and that the translation was faithful to the original, as opposed to the French one, which did not follow the king's intentions.[14] It is not clear what specific intentions Lingelsheim had in mind; but in the same letter he explained his concerns about the ground Jesuits were gaining in France. A month later he was informing Bongars that the book was in print and that changes proposed were considered, but refused. That one of the most influential figures of Pfalz politics was this closely involved in the production of the book makes it probable that the translation of *Basilikon Doron*, printed in Speyer in 1604 and dedicated to Frederick IV was made at the initiative of the Heidelberg court. Complaining in the same letter about Jesuit influence in France and the unfaithfulness of the French translation also makes it clear that Lingelsheim's interest in the book was the interest of the politician. The disagreement with the line taken by Hotman, who proposed that the book should serve rapprochement with the Catholics, and translated it accordingly,[15] was disagreement over desirable religious policy.

The Hungarian translation came out at Oppenheim in 1612. The translator was a Heidelberg student at the time, and it must not have been difficult for him to come across James's book, as Frankfurt was a centre of distribution of different editions of James's works in different languages.[16]

The beginning of the decade marked the third great upsurge of interest in James on the continent. The first wave we witnessed in his first years as king of England. The Oath of Allegiance controversy then led to a second one, with the controversy reaching its apex in 1607-9.[17] This time the king was personally involved in the continental distribution of his apology and admonition, trying to make sure his argumentation reached its intended audience exactly as he meant it. The third upsurge of interest in James and his works however was one he would rather have done without. By this time he had become the unwilling leader of he Protestant Union, created after the crisis over the Cleves-Jülich succession, in which James himself was hoping to mediate rather than assume a confrontation with the Habsburgs. The marriage between his daughter Elisabeth and Frederick V, the Palatine elector had been widely discussed since 1610,

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[14] *Jacobi Bongarsii et Georgii Michaelis Lingelshemii Epistolae.* Argentorati: Ex Officina Josiae Staedelii, 1660, 177. The translation in question was *Basilikon Doron Oder Instruction und Underrichtung Jacobi deß Erste[n] dieses namens in Engelandt/ Schottlandt/ und Irrlandt Königs/ an Seiner Kön. Mayt. geliebten Sohn Printz Henrichen* : Auß dem Englischen verteutscht. Speyer : Melchior Hartmann, 1604

[15] *Basilikon Doron. Ou Present royal de Iaques Premier roy d'Angleterre, Escoce & Irlande, au Prince Henry son fils: Contenant une instruction de bien regner. Traduit de l'Anglois.* A Paris, Chez Guillaume Auvray, rue S. Iean de Beauvais, au Bellerophon coronné. 1603.

[16] See Lyall, "The Marketing of James VI and I." Pirated French editions of *Basilikon Doron* were printed here, and the Latin was reprinted in three editions in the neighbouring Hanau. By the time the Hungarian edition came out, the two German translations had already been printed in a total of seven editions.

[17] Cardinal Robert Bellarmine denounced the oath required of English Catholics denying the pope the right to depose monarchs. James retorted with the originally anonymous *Triplici nodo, triplex cuneus* (London, 1608.) Bellarmine and Robert Parsons replied, driving James to sending a copy of a *Premonition to all most Mightie Monarchs, Kings, Free Princes and States of Christendom* (London, 1609) to all crowned heads of Europe, with the nuncios making efforts everywhere in trying to convince rulers not to accept it

and formally agreed upon in 1611. Despite James's pacifist and balancing intentions – the Palatine match was supposed to be paired by a Spanish one for Charles –, there were widespread hopes that he would now be pursuing a more militantly pro-Protestant foreign policy, hopes underpinned by the identification of his son Henry with such a policy, Henry being the main supporter of the Palatine match as well.[18] The palatine match raised the interest of Hungarian students in Heidelberg and was greeted by gratularory poems.[19] The Hungarian translation of *Basilikon Doron* contained a dedicatory poem by Molnár identifying James with David, and gave a militant definition of the biblical figure by reprinting among the introductory poems Molnár's translation of Psalm 101, ending with David pledging "I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord."

Much recent interest in translation is connected to studying the effects of colonialism, and the relationships between dominant and less privileged cultures, with the source-language typically belonging to the former, while the target language belonging to the latter culture. This small corpus of early modern translations raises a different possibility: that translation could-be a two-directional process of communication, involving attempts at "talking back", at enlisting the author of the original – or his image at least – to different local agendas. This is typically the case when *Basilikon Doron*, the "royal gift" is translated and re-dedicated to a royal figure, be that James himself or some other holder of political power.

[18] See Simon Adams, "Spain of the Netherlands?" 94-95; Hans Werner, "*The Hector of Germanie, or the Palsgrave, Prime Elector* and Anglo-German relations of early Stuart England: the view from the popular stage", in Smuts, ed., *The Stuarts Courts and Europe*, 124-132; Roy Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales, and England's Lost Renaissance*, Thames and Hudson, 1986, 79. On the hopes of English protestants that the Palatine match would inaugurate a grand anti-Habsburg alliance also Jaroslav Miller, "The Henrician Legend Revived: The Palatine Couple and its Public Image in Early Stuart England," *European Review of History—Revue européenne d'Histoire* 11, No. 3, 2004: 305-331.

[19] Pál Orvos Suri for example, whose name occurs as a respondent in Pareus-led disputations together with several figures we have met as belonging to the networks of Korotz or Pataki, had his gratulatory poem printed in 1613 in Heidelberg. Paulus Orvos Surius, *Solemnitas Hymenaea Nuptiis … Principis D. D. Friderici V. … Et Serenissimae Honestissimaeque Virginis Reginae. Elisabethae Jacobi Magnae Britanniae, Regis &c. Filiae Unicae Sponsae Qvam Auspicatam Quia Cupit, Desiderio Vovet AEviternam Et Nomine Gentis Ungaricae Quae Est Heidelbergae Conceptam Scriptamque, …* Offert Consecratque PAULUS ORVOS SURIUS Ungarus S. S. Theologiae Studiosus Heidelbergae, Typ. Johann. Lancelotti, Acad. Typographi. Anno M.DC.XIII. RMK III 1124; Discussed in George Gömöri, "A memorable Wedding," *Journal of European Studies* 34, no. 3. 222. Suri figures as an 1614 respondent in Pareus's *Collegiorum theologicorum*, (Heidelberg, viduae Jonae Rosae, typis Joh. Georgii Geyderi Acad. typogr. 1620, RMK III 6089s) along with István Fegyverneki, András Prágai, István Varsányi P., Mátyás Jászberényi, János Tállyai Putnoki, Imre Pécseli Király, Mihály Kárászteleki Szilágyi Pintes.