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## **Humanists from the Periphery: Professional Biographies in the Perspective of the Logic of the Field<sup>1</sup>**

The problem of defining the humanism that was characteristic of the Renaissance era has been raised many times, not only in colloquial terms, but also often in research. The dominant perspective views the humanist attitude through the prism of the ideas and ideologies that were proclaimed by humanists themselves and fit into the image of the era as the beginning of our – European – modernity (Burke, 1998, pp. 1–18). Meanwhile, I propose looking at this period through the lens of the logic of the field, inspired mainly by Pierre Bourdieu’s theory. In my text, I will look at the biographical strategies adopted by individual humanists. I argue

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that professional biography, understood as a certain construct that I will try to justify in the introduction, can be a useful tool both in understanding the choices and life paths of individual figures and in defining the specifics of the Renaissance era itself. Secondly, I think that such an approach can be helpful in comparative studies, and the comparative approach is of particular importance precisely in the period of humanism, before the formation of modern ethno-national loyalties. I discuss the research problem thus outlined using the example of biographies of humanists from areas peripheral to the Italian center, from the areas of Istria, Dalmatia and Croatia. I will try to prove that the logic of the field helps both to understand the biographies of selected figures and to create an analytical model. A further step could be to study the center-periphery relationship in the category of not only influence and reception, but also antagonism and rivalry.

## **Biography as a research category**

The concept of humanistic biography is ambiguous, so I need to clarify at the outset its use and, above all, what it is not. I am not dealing with the rhetorical genre of biography, i.e., a narrative depicting the life and achievements of a person. Therefore, I will not deal with the literary biography as a kind of model of creation that belongs to the realm of textual communication; an example of this use of the term is James M. Weiss's excellent work on German humanists (Weiss, 2010). As he wrote in another study, for the humanists biography was 'an instrument for reflecting on the aims and achievements of a burgeoning intellectual culture' (Weiss, 1984, p. 220). Patrick Baker argues that the humanists' focus was reflection on virtue and politics, rooted in the exemplary nature of the particular life and attitudes of the character described, with reflection on the cultural and social context disappearing from view (Baker, 2017). In such a view, biography was an important tool of literary communication and a place for the creation of the concept of *vir illustrissimus*, a model life that becomes an element of self-creation and discussion of the attitude proper to virtue in terms of modern anthropology (Hanink, 2009). This text, therefore, is not directly concerned with a literary discussion or a philosophy of life that are associated with such an understanding of biography as a rhetorical genre with an established tradition.

I treat biography as a concept at the intersection of social history and sociology of science. In my research, I understand it as a category for reconstructing

a group biography, or the professional biography of a certain group. Thus, the goal is to create a certain biographical model that follows from the description of the data and allows us to understand the choices of actors of a certain social group. I think that in the case of humanistic biography this will make it possible to complete the description of this group by reference not so much to declarative or actual ideological content but to a certain relatively repetitive structure of experience, which, on the one hand, frees one from value-laden discourse, and on the other hand, can be a useful comparative tool.

The question of the main research category thus posed needs to be developed. The concept of professional biography fits into the logic of the field that was developed by Pierre Bourdieu. Thus, it refers primarily to the strategy adopted by actors from a particular field who have to relate to the rules of the game in force in this field and, subscribing to them, fight for success. Strategies, therefore, relate more to the issue of capital accumulation and gaining influence, and less to a declarative commitment to one or another ideology and its associated values. This does not mean, of course, that I consider the authors under study to be hypocrites who are using ideas for measurable ends. However, following Bourdieu and his analysis of taste as a socially conditioned category, I think that certain choices and certain developments and actions are assigned to the logic of a given field and condition the processes taking place within it (Bourdieu, 1984). The logic of practice implies the participation of unconscious structures that result from a place in the structure of the field and from pre-discursive forms of cognition that influence the perception of social reality (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). For a certain group with common initial characteristics, it would be possible to create a certain structural model of the strategy of action, as I will try to do in the case of humanists from Dalmatia and Istria, keeping in mind that this will be a model that by definition presupposes individual realizations.

Bourdieu's concept of field logic has been criticized for being overly deterministic. Contemporary approaches in the sociology of science draw attention to the dialectical nature of the functioning of agents within a field. As Zrinka Blažević writes, "There exists a recursive relationship of actors with a given and always historically determined cultural order [...] historical actors are now conceptualized as engaged in dynamic and transformative processes which shape their understanding of reality and constitute their experience" (Blažević, 2011, pp. 55–56). It is important to note, first, the historical condition of the practices of social actors. This means that the model developed does not have universal value and refers to a certain moment in the history of culture. Moreover, it will have value for a certain group and one

can look for local variables that affect its specificity, as I will try to demonstrate in the next section of the text. Secondly, I assume that the agent is predetermined by the logic of the field but also reacts in part consciously to the rules of action and the demands of the game in order to try to find their way. Total determinism would call into question the possibility of changing and transforming the field. The emphasis on strategies, on the other hand, allows us to capture the observable actions of agents and thus grasp the similarities and differences in their decisions. Andreas Reckwitz writes about the routinization of behavior, which seems to me to be the key to model development and, in a further step, to comparative research. Moreover, as Reckwitz notes, by focusing on actions, the pitfalls of the mentalist theory of action can be avoided, and the need to reconstruct psychological motivation – as is characteristic of the psychobiographical account – can be relieved (cf. Reckwitz, 2002).

Professional biography has the character of public biography, which allows it to be put into the perspective of social biography. By this, I mean that it is extremely difficult to reconstruct the life path and personal motivations of actors on the basis of sources from the 15th and 16th centuries. These sources are most often incomplete or even fragmentary, usually coming from outside, for example, from the records of university students, court archives, letters and other non-author sources. Reconstructing an intimate biography would be difficult, if not impossible. However, here I am interested in the social dimension. On the basis of studies and sources concerning selected representative figures, I try to find strategies, that is, significant courses of action, significant choices and nodal points of the life path of individuals. I ask a question about regularities – about tendencies in the construction of the life trajectory of people belonging to the circle of humanists. In this way, I try to answer the question about the possibility of creating a model that determines the specificity of a certain group within the group of educated humanists from the Croatian and Slovenian area.

## **Humanists from the periphery**

Periphery is a relational term. In the historiography of the Humanist era, it carries a value-laden weight, referring to the diffusion of cultural practices understood as imitations of ancient models renewed in Italy. Awareness of the centrality of the Italian world was firmly rooted and realized among both

Italian and external authors, for whom the flourishing of cultural activities on the Apennine Peninsula was a model to follow. Italian university centers marked the highest idealized level of cultural production, primarily textual, and were also decisive places for gaining contacts and building careers. The idealization of Italy as a center of the sciences and arts is evident in the works of Renaissance poets in Northern countries, becoming a permanent site of humanistic discourse (Krzywy, 2011). Italy's influence is often written about in terms of 'radiation', influence, and transmission from the center to the periphery. This suggests a notion of primacy and derivativeness – or even backwardness – that would characterize the extra-Alpine area (cf. Berenger & Simpson, 1994; Burke, 1987). Peter Burke, however, cautioned against overconfidence in the notion of cultural boundaries. The notion of a transalpine renaissance suggests a clear qualitative difference between the North and the South (or rather, Italy), considering both spaces as internally homogeneous, which leads to obvious simplifications (Burke, 2005).

I understand peripherality from the perspective of social practices and the presence (or not) of centers with centralizing potential for an area. I believe that this is a legitimate approach as it makes it possible to take into account the specificity of socio-cultural processes beyond the above-described value-laden dichotomy of North-South, etc. (Falski et al., 2016). A prerequisite for cultural development in the Renaissance was the existence of a strong center of patronage, which created the possibility of cultural development, not only providing the opportunity for intellectual exchange and the resulting synergy, but also absorbing educated cadres in the absence of a modern system of state institutions. Such a center was most often the court of the ruler, as in the case of Medici Florence, papal Rome, but also Hungarian Buda, Jagiellonian Krakow, or the court of a bishop or other church dignitary (Salzburg or Magdeburg). The prerequisite for the effectiveness of the influence of such a center was the concentration of political power in it, which needed an effective governing apparatus and depended on maintaining an appropriate image in line with the model of a prince (ruler, monarch).

This approach helps break down simplistic notions and poses the interesting problem of the borderland as a specific area of practice. Dalmatia, Croatia and Istria can be considered such a borderland space. The situation of this territory was peculiar precisely in terms of centrality and peripherality. Dalmatian cities and islands had definitively been part of the Venetian Republic since 1420 (although Venice had ruled there at various times since

the 11th century), as was the western coast of Istria. Croatia's mainland territory and the north of the country constituted a separate kingdom; however, it had remained in a personal union with Hungary since the 12th century. Superior authority was exercised by a governor (*ban*), while the king resided in Hungary (in Vienna after 1527). Slovenian lands were fragmented into several feudal organisms (the county of Gorizia, the Duchy of Kraina, the free city of Trieste). From the end of the 15th century, the area was vulnerable to Ottoman invasions, and the territory controlled by Croatia gradually decreased, thus causing the centralizing potential of local centers to weaken considerably. What choices did humanists make in this situation and how were their strategies of professional biography shaped? On what did the directions of the trajectories they chose depend?

## Networks

The life of Pietro Paolo Veregerio the Elder (1370–1444) falls in the earliest period of the era known as the Renaissance, so his biography can be said to mark the formation of a certain typical trajectory. He came from the city of Capodistria (Koper), a small port center located at the base of the Istrian peninsula. Capodistria was the seat of a bishop and political control of the city was exercised by the Venetian Republic, but it was not one of the rich and prestigious centers. All the key elements of a humanist biography can be found in Vergerio's biography. The social dimension of his life path can be read as typical of the new social group forming at that time, the humanists. The crucial stage of his biography was the studies he undertook in the most important centers of the Apennine Peninsula. For a citizen of Capodistria, a subject of the Venetian Republic, this was a fairly obvious choice due to the proximity of language and, above all, transportation as well as the prestige of Italian universities. He studied successively in Padua (1385), Florence (1386), Bologna (logic, 1388–89), and Padua (medicine and law, 1390–97); then he studied Greek with Manuel Chrysoloras (1399–1400), before returning to Padua, where he obtained a doctorate of Law in 1495 (Favero, 2018, pp. 10–12). Attention is drawn to the mobility of the young Vergerio – his activity in the key education-related cities of the time. Concern for the quality of education is accompanied by a desire to enter into meaningful relationships and create networks of

acquaintances to accumulate acquired cultural capital. In Florence, this young humanist from Capodistria became a member of the circle around Coluccio Salutati (1331–1406), a Tuscan humanist, chancellor of the Florentine republic, and a leading figure in the local intellectual and political life. He brought Manuel Chrysoloras to Florence, helping to introduce knowledge of Greek into the humanist curriculum; Salutati also patronized many younger activists, among whom it is worth mentioning one of the most prominent, Leonardo Bruni (1370–1444) (cf. Burke, 1998, pp. 27–29). Most important for Vergerio was his acquaintance with Francesco Zabarella (1360–1417), an influential Paduan prelate who taught law in Florence and Padua. Zabarella, a cleric who was named bishop of Florence in 1410 and obtained the dignity of cardinal a year later, had considerable influence in Padua and the papal curia. He helped Vergerio's career in Rome and, despite temporary misunderstandings in 1409–1411, Vergerio obtained the title of Canon in Ravenna through Zabarella's intercession. This allowed him to gain a strong position and participate in the delegation to the Council of Constance (Nemeth & Papo, 2012).

Using Vergerio's example, it is clear how important a network of contacts was to the individual biography. What was at stake was not so much the declarative ideology of an intellectual community and membership in the *respublica litteraria*, a circle of scholars discussing philosophy and culture, but a circle of influential acquaintances who would provide career assistance. Undoubtedly, Marko Špikić is right when he writes about Vergerio's early years: "[Coluccio Salutati] became his associate in the pursuit of the knowledge of antiquity and its renewal in a cohabitation of rhetoric, ethics and history" (Špikić, 2006). The prerequisite for agreement and cooperation had to be a community of interest, conditioned by a similar appreciation of the ancient past and the need to restore its high – exemplary – status. However, Salutati – an influential man who was involved in state affairs – was also chancellor of Florence from 1375 to 1406. As Hankins notes, for Coluccio – as indeed for his most gifted 'disciple' Leonardo Bruni – state affairs stood at the center in terms of not only practice but also political reflection (cf. Hankins, 2012). Coluccio was involved in developing the doctrine of the state by combining ancient models with the experience of a Christian thinker. At the center of it for him was the concept of the republic and the dispute over the understanding of ideal government. It is not my purpose to discuss the concept developed by this Florentine philosopher: I want to point out, first of all, the commitment to public affairs and the model of the committed humanist emerging in

Florence, choosing *vita activa* rather than *contemplativa*. Vergerio followed a similar path, combining the practice of action in the structures of political governance with reflection that falls within the framework of moral philosophy. His famous pedagogical treatise *De ingenius moribus* [*On Good Manners*] is concerned with educating a ruler according to humanistic ideals; at the center of his pedagogical system he placed precisely moral philosophy, “disciplina centrale nel sistema etico e pedagogico umanistico”, and the key category of virtue (*la virtù*), which would be of utmost importance for the next century (Favero, 2018, p. 44). In line with the ideal of the new times, in educating the nobleman he emphasized the formation of both the mind and the body. In his upbringing, he followed in the footsteps of the *arti liberali*, who were supposed to train the ability to think independently, the spirit of freedom, the ability to improve oneself, and, of course, virtue (Favero, 2018, p. 15).

Why did Vergerio choose a career at the court of Sigismund of Luxembourg, spend almost 30 years of his life at the Hungarian court in Buda, and, towards the end of his life, at the bishop’s court in Varad? Nemeth and Papo note that the exact reasons for his decision are unknown, but it is likely that he did not feel secure in Italy (Nemeth & Papo, 2012, p. 78). Already before 1417, his career had faltered. In 1408–09, he fell into disfavor with the entourage of Pope Gregory XII, possibly due to the takeover of Padua by Venice in 1409, and he spent the years 1412–1414 in Capodistria, deprived of his earlier prebends (Revest, 2018, p. 283). His acquaintance with Sigismund, made during the Council of Constance, may have been an opportunity for Vergerio to find a powerful patron-protector and stabilize his living situation at the court of the German and Hungarian king. In the face of uncertainty, a shaky position and a lack of assured income, a position in the royal chancellery brought him stability. As Burke noted with regard to Salutati, “the chancery, an office concerned with the dispatch, receipt and filing of letters, was a place in which humanists had an opportunity to put their ideas into practice, since letters in classical Latin were becoming a way for a government to impress its rivals” (Burke, 1998, p. 27). Vergerio’s decision is fully in keeping with the habitus of the humanist. Knowledge and linguistic competence can be capitalized on and become the basis for achieving higher status in the social hierarchy.

In the field in which Vergerio was active, knowledge of elegant Latin and civil and canon law are just as important as networking and skillful image-making. The value of an individual is attested to by Latin writings, whether they be speeches, panegyrics, editions of the works of prominent authors or, finally,



drama, as in the case of Vergerio, who wrote a Plautian comedy. They are not only a testimony to education but also a sign of status – evidence of the realization of *habitus*. For the ruler, in turn, having a humanist scholar in his chancellery or court also became a status symbol – evidence of the realization of the new ideal of the ruler, which Vergerio himself co-created.

A later generation used an already proven model, with knowledge of which elements of biography were crucial. Another humanist from the Slovenian-Croatian area, Janus Pannonius (1434–1472), belonged to this generation. He came from northern Croatia, although there is some dispute about his birthplace. What is known for sure is that it was somewhere in Slavonia, most likely in the eastern part of the region near today's border with Serbia. His biography allows us to understand certain regularities of professional biography, embedded in the patterns of the culture of the time. Regardless of his declared and probably real fascination with antiquity and his disdain for the world of the time, we can consider Pannonius's life as a typical realization of the aforementioned biography model. What is important to me is the question of what opportunities were available to humanists from a peripheral area, such as in the case of Pannonius. It is necessary to recall the special status of Croatia, Dalmatia and Istria, which are border regions from a political perspective that are divided administratively and lack a clear center.

A major difference with Vergerio is that Janus had an easier start because he had invaluable family support from a high-ranking uncle, János Vitéz (Ivan Vitez, 1408–1472), who was a prominent politician of the Hungarian state. He worked his way up from a Zagreb canon through a job in the royal chancellery in Buda, where he probably met Vergerio. In 1445, he was appointed bishop of Várad (Oradea) and tutor to King János Hunyady's sons, and later archbishop of Esztergom, primate of Hungary, and the second most important person in the state. János supported his nephew from the beginning and helped him create a political career, for which Latin poetry was only a supplement.

The uncle-nephew relationship is an important testimony to the importance given, first, to obtaining and maintaining the importance of family and lineage, and second, to consciously creating biographies in accordance with dominant notions of a successful career. We should be convinced by now of the effectiveness of education in accordance with the model of *humaniora* and *artes liberales*, which – in addition to knowledge and skills – gives above all a strong position in the field, allowing individual actors to compete effectively for positions of power (cf. Waquet, 2004). Education became an element in

the formation of not only virtue and character, but also position and status, the most important tool in the formation of the group's habitus, in which proper upbringing from an early age was crucial. As Marianna Birnbaum, author of what is still the most complete study of Pannonius, puts it, "by the time Janus returned to Várad, Vitéz had his future career in the Hungarian hierarchy mapped out for him" (Birnbaum, 1981, p. 111). Thus, the education and fame of a poet who had mastered Latin perfectly served to accumulate the symbolic capital in order to reach the next rungs of the political hierarchy. The example of Pannonius clearly shows the practical realization of the ideal of education, as described by Vergerio and other humanist pedagogical treatises. Knowledge is a condition and complement to power, not an end in itself; elegance of style translates into professional success, without being (merely) a matter of poetics. A humanist is a *zoon politikon* par excellence.

Pannonius studied in Ferrara and then in Padua (1454–1458), where he earned a doctorate in canon law. Upon his return to Hungary, he was immediately thrust into the cogs of state administration. Several caveats need to be made in this regard. First, it is difficult to strictly separate the state and church apparatuses in that period. Pannonius's uncle served as archbishop of Esztergom (later primate), and thus as head of the church in the Kingdom of Hungary, as well as chancellor of the state. Pannonius was assigned the position of bishop of Pécs, and as bishop he was "a powerful prelate and wealthy feudal lord at the same time" (Birnbaum, 1981, p. 114). He exercised a senior rule over his subordinate territory, combining administrative and judicial power, thus he had a stake in the governance of the state. A position in the ecclesiastical hierarchy was primarily a way of providing a person with a steady income and a stable position when the institutional apparatus of executive power did not yet exist. In the absence of stable and reproducible institutions, only ecclesiastical prebends offered a guarantee of stability and maintenance of social standing. As we recall, Vergerio the Elder's troubles were precisely related to the loss of his lucrative position in the Church and his inability to obtain a proper prebend. Secondly, the state of the 16th century had not yet managed to create an institution with clear criteria for qualification. There were no transparent procedures for recruiting cadres or qualifications that would allow, as ideally in modern times, the creation of a corps of officials responsible for the functioning of the state at the level of the management apparatus. The key to success was either family connections (as in the case of Pannonius) or fitting into a network of influential actors in the field (this is the case of Vergerio and Pannonius).

The years of study at the start of the career seem to be crucial. At later stages of the biography, it became important to form new alliances, seek protectors, and develop one's own networks of dependencies. Pannonius was in a better position than Vergerio; as bishop of a lucrative episcopate and nephew of an influential politician, he could more easily pursue a policy of connections while benefiting from his poetic fame (cf. Birnbaum, 1977).

## **Latin as a sign of competence**

During first period of the Renaissance era, two things had become obvious in order to achieve success: first, education in Italian centers became crucial; second, excellent knowledge of Latin. I believe that Latin should be treated equally as a sign. According to Joanna Rapacka, the use of Latin should be read as a multifaceted sign, depending on the socio-cultural context; for the group studied, mastery of Latin was a sign of humanistic competence, a sign of position and a key element of image building which translated into the creation of support networks and a possible career in management structures (cf. Rapacka, 2001a).

Attitudes toward antiquity are described as an aesthetic and ideological choice; of course, admirers of Rome and Greece cannot be denied the sincerity of their views. However, what draws attention is the discourse of taste, or as some authors, such as Croatian Latinist Darko Novaković, put it, "love for the ancient cultural heritage" (Novaković, 1995, p. 5). For Pannonius, the sign of his choice of cultural orientation became the change of his name from Ioannes to Janus while studying in Ferrara (Perić, 2005, p. 346). After all, a first name is the clearest sign of identity and can also be a carrier of information about ancestry and local affiliation. Although the practice of Latinizing names was common, in the case of Pannonius it was particularly significant as it was a gesture made consciously and probably manifestly. The form "Janus" was less common, and its choice can be read as a step further towards the reception and absorption of antiquity. It is known that Pannonius wrote exclusively in Latin, and no texts from under his pen have yet been found in Hungarian or Croatian.

The love of Latin and antiquity and the study of Latin inscriptions became a sign of belonging to a group aspiring to take power in the field of knowledge and in the field of institutional power. I think it is possible to see in this

tendency a manifestation of taste described as a sign of class membership and an element of habitus, as described by Bourdieu in his work *Distinction: a Social Critic of the Judgment of Taste* (Bourdieu, 1984). The habit of studying “antiquity”, namely material traces of the Roman past, ruins and inscriptions, that was initiated by Petrarch influenced subsequent generations and became one of the markers of membership of the humanist group. Vergerio belonged to the first generation, being, incidentally, one of the people credited with maintaining the cult of Petrarch; he studied the topography of Rome and wrote about the need to recover the memory of the past. According to Špikić, “Salutati became his associate in the pursuit of the knowledge of antiquity and its renewal in a cohabitation of rhetoric, ethics and history” (Špikić, 2006, p. 240). The community of experience and interest creates a peculiar code; it is the source of symbolic signs used in communication and thus the determinant of a community of audience and belonging. Pannonius, through his choice of name – the Latinized form of the name Jan (or János or Ivan) – made an accession to this community. As Golenishchev-Kutuzov noted, this poet-bishop dedicated his hymns “not to the saints of the Catholic Church but to the pagan gods”, and further, “for the poet, Rome was the temple of ancient culture, not the tabernacle of St. Peter” (Goleniszczew-Kutuzow, 1970, pp. 184, 186).

Latin, however, was primarily an applied language. Studies of humanism usually focus on the outstanding humanists and the analysis of works that are special in terms of their aesthetic or content qualities. Meanwhile, the correctness of language and its elegance were of fundamental importance in diplomatic correspondence and in the conduct of the chancellery. It is known, after all, that the correspondence of Salutati, Petrarch or the later Erasmo was of great importance not only as a tool for communication and propagation of ideas, but also as a way of maintaining the network and thus the cohesion of the group. To be in the circle of Erasmo correspondents was a sign of inclusion in the elite group (Lučin, 2004). For a politician, belonging to a circle of correspondents and knowing the high style were important assets. János Vitéz received an equally solid education in Padua and a high standard of Latin. According to a Russian researcher, “a volume of Vitéz’s correspondence, published in 1452, collected, edited and annotated [...] served as a textbook from which young men entering service in the Buda court chancellery learned exquisite Latin” (Goleniszczew-Kutuzow, 1970, p. 175). The prestige of the clerk, of course, translated into the prestige of the court he served. Thanks to his knowledge of Latin – its degree of excellence depended largely on his studies in preparation

for an official career – a humanist could find employment regardless of his place of origin. The fate of humanists from the periphery proves this, while Italian universities mainly provided educated cadres for the entire area under the influence of Latin civilization. Such was the case of Vergerio the Elder, considered a forerunner of “humanism” in Hungary, which radiated farther towards Poland. This is confirmed by the fates of Vitéz and Pannonius, who were born in a province where there were no development opportunities. In later decades, the fate of the spectacular career of Jan Zamoyski, later chancellor, and first politician of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, is a case in point. His studies in Padua became the basis of his career. Of course, individual predispositions must not be forgotten: not everyone like Zamoyski could be elected rector and not everyone had the privilege of giving a speech before the entire university (Łempicki, 1951). The difference in predisposition only confirms the principle of the field. The best predestined individuals build a position through resources valued by all participants in the field: Zamoyski’s position was confirmed by his book on the Roman Senate. It is difficult to find a more ‘humanistic’ subject, after all, which goes back to ancient sources and to a topic central to ancient Rome. Vitéz’s position was confirmed by his correspondence, while Pannonius’s position was confirmed by his poetry. I believe that all these activities – although we will classify some as applied writing, others as artistic – are primarily an expression of the struggle for position in the field and the recognition and capital that goes with it. Even in the circle of reformers who led the project of translating the Bible into Slavic languages, Vergerio the younger gained a strong position and the support of Emperor Maximilian precisely because he was well versed in Latin and could support the less educated in translation work (Esswein, 2016).

There are also examples of biographies which ended in failure despite the apparent respect for the rules of the game. An example is the biography of Paulus Schalichius (Pavao Skalić, Paul Scalich, 1534–1575). He was educated in Vienna, then obtained a doctorate in Bologna and set off on a courtly career at the court of Emperor Ferdinand I. However, he was banished from the court because he used false aristocratic titles. In Tübingen, he converted to Protestantism and went to the court of Prince Albrecht of Prussia, from where he was also exiled after a few years for the same reason as before. Despite later grace, he never returned to the pinnacle of influence (cf. Girardi-Karšulin, 2004; Jembrih, 2004). What does his story teach us? I believe that Schalichius violated the rules of the field of power, which was increasingly restricting access in his times. The author – as is

often claimed – of the first encyclopedia (*Encyclopaediae seu orbis disciplinarum tam sacrarum quam profanarum epistemon*, 1559) probably tried to gain influence too quickly and too obsequiously, but above all he violated the boundaries of the aristocracy's world. We have an example of how the principle of meritocracy clashes with and loses to the principle of birth. Schalichius came from an insignificant family: his father was a poor teacher from Zagreb, so he should have known the limits of his position. The opposite of his attitude is the biography of Vergerio the Elder. Schalichius, on the other hand, was equally low-born and patiently struggled to build up a position, serving particular rulers at successive courts and applying for a prebend. He succeeded, as we recall, in finally obtaining life stability at the court of Sigismund Luxemburg. It can be assumed that in the first period, roughly until the beginning of the 16th century, the social structure was more permeable and allowed for upward mobility, which corresponded to the occupation of higher positions by the lower-born. Meanwhile, in the later period, class barriers became rigid and closed, at least this was the situation in the Kingdom of Hungary and the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. Within the noble class, in turn, stratification was taking place, and the highest positions were reserved for representatives of aristocratic families. The conscious violation of these limits led to the downfall of Schalichius, despite his high and legitimate position in the field of knowledge.

## **Humanism as a field of practice**

Comprehensive comparative research on professional biographies, understood from not the perspective of an individual biography but biography as a social construct, remains to be done. However, I believe that the cited material draws two interesting interpretive paths.

First, looking at the practices of humanists through the logic of the field in the spirit of Bourdieu adds an important aspect to the description of the era. It allows for a more precise grasp of the specifics of the strategies of the emerging social class and treats its aspirations not only as an expression of ideas or beliefs, but also as a means of accumulating cultural capital. Elements important in the layer of ideological declarations, such as the elegance of Latin, worship of Rome, etc., are also worth viewing through the prism of the aspiration for domination, with, for example, the degree of knowledge of

Latin and virtuosity in producing texts in this language constituting a barrier to access. In addition, an important ideological aspect of the humanists was the public man or acting man, and biography was often a consciously created construct. The community of ideals sometimes overshadows the community of practices for which these ideals provided legitimacy. I am also convinced that the study of biographical strategies facilitates comparative research.

Second, and crucial to my text, the logic of the field allows us to better grasp the situation of humanists from the periphery of the scholarly world of the time. Vergerio, Vitéz, Panonnius, Zamoyski and Schlichius created their careers using strategies common to humanists. They created competency resources that were not superfluous to gaining and maintaining a high position. All of them were directed by their life path to Italian universities, which provided not only a solid education but also a kind of certification of status. Activists lacking this, such as Slovenian and Croatian reformers, counted less among their contemporaries, thus their status and opportunities for action were more limited. However, the careers of the figures cited were not in Italy or, as in the case of Vergerio the Elder, were developed outside Italy. Competition in Italy was much greater, while peripheral countries needed educated cadres. In this perspective, the claim of the “common space of the Kingdom of Hungary” as the cultural space of the Magyars, Slovaks or Croats (Rapacka, 2001b) – but also of the Italians or Poles – gains clarity. Humanists from Dalmatia often sought support in the North rather than in Italy, and the most spectacular careers took place precisely in the Hungarian state or the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth (cf. Falski, 2015). The conclusions of the preliminary research suggest that it would be appropriate to undertake research on the relationship between Italy and its peripheries (Dalmatia, Slovenia, Hungary) not only in the (rather ideologized) perspective of shared space, influence and radiation, but also as an antagonistic relationship related to access to the symbolic resources of a common field of practice.

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## **Humanieści z peryferii.**

### **Biografie profesjonalne humanistów w perspektywie logiki pola**

Humanizm może być badany z perspektywy logiki pola, a nie tylko z perspektywy historii idei i wyobrażeń kulturowych. Biografia humanistyczna, badana z perspektywy praktyk społecznych według Bourdieua, jest narzędziem do badania strategii podejmowanych przez poszczególnych aktorów. Biografię rozumiem tu jako specyficzny konstrukt społeczny, a nie jako typowy dla renesansu gatunek retoryczny. Pozwala to na próbę stworzenia modelu interpretacyjnego, który może być pomocny w badaniach porównawczych nad funkcjonowaniem elit kulturowych w okresie humanizmu. W artykule przedstawiam biografie autorów takich jak Petrus Paulus Vergerius Starszy, Janus Pannonius i Paulus Scalichius, którzy pochodzili z obszarów peryferyjnych w stosunku do ówczesnych centrów kulturowych i politycznych. W artykule analizuję ich wybory, których celem było zdobycie znaczącej pozycji wśród ówczesnych elit politycznych. Argumentuję, że doskonałość w posługiwaniu się łaciną i upodobanie do rzymskich zabytków były nie tylko wyrazem wspólnego gustu, ale także znakiem kompetencji niezbędnych do zdobycia i utrzymania pozycji. Perfekcyjna znajomość łaciny była również barierą w dostępie do zasobów danej dziedziny, a badanie spuścizny Rzymu czy kolekcjonowanie antyków umożliwiało tworzenie sieci wspierających mobilność społeczną i karierę. Badane przypadki nie tylko pozwalają zaproponować pewne cechy modelu, ale także skłaniają do spojrzenia na relacje włoskich centrów i niewłoskich peryferii przez pryzmat zarówno wpływów, jak i rywalizacji.

**Słowa kluczowe:** biografia społeczna; humanizm w Słowenii; humanizm w Chorwacji; Vergerius starszy; Janus Pannonius; Paulus Scalichius

## **Humanists from the periphery:**

### **Professional biographies in the perspective of the logic of the field**

Humanism can be studied from the perspective of the logic of the field, developed by P. Bourdieu, and not only from the perspective of the history of ideas and cultural imagery. Humanistic biography, studied from the perspective of social practices, is a tool for studying the strategies undertaken by individual actors. I understand biography here as a specific social construct, not as a typical rhetorical genre of the Renaissance. This allows an attempt to create an interpretive model that can help in comparative studies of the functioning of cultural elites during the humanist period. In the article, I analyse biographies of authors such as Vergerio the Elder, Janus Pannonius and Paul Skalich, who came from areas peripheral to the cultural and political centres of the time. In the article, I analyse their choices to gain an important

position in the field. I argue that excellence in the use of Latin and a predilection for Roman monuments are not only expressions of a shared taste, but they also represent the competence necessary to gain and maintain a position. Perfect Latin is also a barrier to accessing the resources of the field, and researching Rome's legacy or collecting antiquities makes it possible to create networks that support mobility in the field. The three cases studied not only allow some features of a model to be proposed but also prompt looking at the relationship between Italian centres and non-Italian peripheries through the prism of not only influence but also rivalry.

**Keywords:** social biography; Slovenian humanism; Croatian humanism; Vergerio the Elder; Janus Pannonius; Paulus Scalichius

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