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A Corpus of Hebrew-Language Gratulatory Poems by 17th-Century Hungarian Peregrine Students: Introducing the Hebrew Carmina Gratulatoria (HCG) Corpus and Its Research Potentials

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Abstract. This paper discusses a corpus of so-called carmina gratulatoria, or gratulatory poems, composed by 17th-century Hungarian peregrines in Hebrew. The paper argues that this understudied type of text offers a valuable resource for a wide range of fields due to the sociohistorical, cultural, and linguistic information the texts contain.

Keywords: historical sociopragmatics, peregrination, corpus linguistics, Hungarian language and history, carmina gratulatoria

1. Introduction

The goal of this paper is twofold. Firstly, it introduces a corpus of Hebrew-language *carmina gratulatoria*, or gratulatory poems, by 17th-century Hungarian students who peregrinated primarily to the Low Countries and Germany, and, secondly, it outlines the possible ways in which such a corpus could be of use for interdisciplinary research. As carmina gratulatoria represent a community-oriented genre, they offer a wealth of information about the sociocultural setting of their creation. Furthermore, since Hebrew-language carmina gratulatoria practically form – not just in Hungarian peregrination research – a "terra incognita" (Zsengellér 2012: 344), a corpus such as this can have versatile applications for various lines of research.

Carmina gratulatoria are poems marking special occasions, most frequently accompanying dissertations. In this case, the poems were composed by the peers of the respondents, serving the dual purpose of praising both the skills of the author of the dissertation and showcasing those of the author of the poems. While

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the poems can address and relate to the topic of the dissertations, they display diverse topics, representing both Biblical quotes and original material as well.

Even though the peregrination of Hungarian students is a well-researched topic within Hungarian studies (see Szögi 1994.), Hebrew-language poems have curiously remained underutilized, owing largely to a sense of exoticism which Hebrew retained to this day. While Latin and Greek carmina gratulatoria are well known from the period, as these languages were commonly taught and used, Hebrew remained more specialized and less accessible for both 17th-century and modern-day scholars.

The poems can be used as a source of information in two ways: (1) through the explorations of the network of scholars mapped out by the connections between the authors and addressees of the poems and (2) through the linguistic content of the poems. By connecting the social and the historical, the cultural and the linguistic, the individual and the community-wide, the information encoded in the texts and their *Sitz im Leben*, this corpus of Hebrew-language carmina gratulatoria could offer an additional source of information for Hungarian historical sociopragmatics and cultural studies and also for interdisciplinary approaches to peregrination.

The international study of peregrination can also benefit from better understanding this chapter of Hungarian peregrination in the Low Countries in the early modern era. After all, the scale of Hungarian peregrination was significant.

> In Hungary, the case is one of "Peregrinatio continua" of Hungarian students to Southern, Western, and Eastern Europe. Before the Reformation, more went to the South (Italy) and to the East (Poland, Krakow); after the Reformation, more headed to Western Europe (Germany, Switzerland, Netherlands, England) […] to Dutch universities (Leyden, Utrecht, Groningen, Harderwijk, Amsterdam), but especially in Franeker […] the total number of Hungarian students is circa 3,000, and 1,200 of them studied at Franeker [between 1585 and 1811]. (Forró 1980: 1197; translated by the author)

The volume of peregrination is well illustrated by the quote above, and it can be described as an "impressive figure" (Ijsewijn 2017: 4). Nevertheless, it could have been even larger since these numbers are based on official student registers such as the *Album Studiosorum Academiae Franekerensis* (see Postma 1998: 113). These lists only name students who were officially enrolled at particular universities, while visiting students not enrolled are absent from them. Therefore, documents such as carmina gratulatoria could be potentially used to draw a more complete picture of peregrination.

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For some Hungarians, studying abroad could have been the only way to access higher education due to the persecution of Protestants and the dominance of Catholic universities in Hungary. Hungarian peregrination in the 17th century gravitated mainly towards the Low Countries as the Thirty Years War diverted students from Germany and also because Dutch universities had a reputation of religious tolerance (Csorba 2010: 256–261). However, the intellectual and cultural links between the Low Countries and Hungary predate the fallout of the political upheaval of the 17th century, having previously crystallized around significant humanist figures (Bitskey 2010: 45). Nevertheless, it is not irrelevant that, similarly to the Low Countries, Calvinism became the main creed of Protestantism in Hungary as well, where the only permanent university – in Nagyszombat – was Catholic.

In the following, this paper introduces the genre of carmina gratulatoria, a newly compiled corpus of Hebrew carmina gratulatoria and, finally, outlines its research potentials as articulated by the research project centred around the compilation and examination of the HCG corpus (see Götz et al. 2018), which mainly revolve around the historical, literary, cultural, and sociolinguistic potentials of the corpus.

2. The genre of carmina gratulatoria

Carmina gratulatoria are gratulatory poems written for special occasions. We find such poems predominantly composed for disputation ceremonies. In this case, they are written by the peers of the *defendens*, i.e. the graduating student, read out at the *disputatio*, i.e. viva, or thesis defence. While the *opponentes*, arguing against the thesis, and the *praeses* – or promoter, who served as a kind of referee – had to strike a neutral and objective tone, these poems themselves praised the *defendens*, not having formed part of the academic proceedings proper.

The poems in the HCG corpus show tremendous diversity when it comes to their formal properties and content. However, there are certain literary devices which appear frequently, one of which is dedication. Example (1) is from a carmen written by Pál Diószegi Kalmár,[1] addressing Mihály G. Báthori[2] (ירותב לאכימ 'myk'l btwry') from the year 1653, celebrating Báthori's dissertation on the topic of ethics (Disputationum Ethicarum De Religionis Oppositis & Pietate), submitted to the university of Leiden. The defendens is named in the text:

1 Pál Diószegi Kalmár (1628/1629–1663): Protestant pastor, studied at length at the university of Leiden, presenting disputations under the chairmanship of Johannes Coccejus as well (Bozzay 2009).

2 Mihály Báthori G. (1631–1669): Protestant pastor. After his domestic studies, he studied in Utrecht and Leiden thanks to the patronage of Count Ferenc Rhédey (Borsa et al. 2012: 496). In Leiden, he defended his theology thesis under the chairmanship of Johannes Coccejus in 1653 (Bozzay 2009).

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(1) שיאל מכח יערל לאכימ ירותב
to man wise to my friend Mihály Báthori
'To a wise man, to my friend, Mihály Báthori' (RMK III. 1840)

Themes of humanist friendship so prevalent in Latin and Greek publications (see Móré 2015) can be found in these Hebrew-language carmina as well. Characterizing the *defendens* as a man of virtue, wisdom, and scholarship is a very frequent cliché, as seen in (1). *Invocations*, as shown in (2), asking for the *defendens* to be blessed with intelligence, are equally common.

(2) יערל וחי לא המרע
to my friend shall give god shrewdness
'My god give my friend shrewdness' (RMK III. 1844)

Biblical quotations emphasizing the importance of learning and wisdom are similarly present, linking elements of carmina gratulatoria. In fact, many poems can be considered compilations of Biblical passages, modified to fit the context of carmina gratulatoria.

(3) חמשת לא תאז לפנב דביוא
not rejoice this when falling your enemy
ולשכבו לגי אל דבל
when his falling not rejoice your heart
'Do not rejoice if your enemy falls, let your heart not be glad when he stumbles' (RMK III. 1840)

Example (3) presents a pastiche of a passage from the Proverbs (Pro 24: 17) but slightly rearranged – compare it with (4):

(4) לפנב דיביוא חמשת־לא ולשכבו לגי־לא דבל
when your not when his not your
falling enemy rejoice falling rejoice heart
'If your enemy falls, do not exult; if he trips, let your heart not rejoice' (KJV) (Pro 24: 17)

Additionally, these poems could make reference to or comment on political issues, historical and cultural events. In 1652, Tofeus Mihály[3] offered the commemoration seen in (5).

3 Mihály Székelyhidi Tofeus (1624–1684): Transylvanian Protestant bishop; during his peregrination, he studied in Franeker, Utrecht, Harderwijk, London, and Leiden (Gordán 2018).

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(5) דיגנה לודגה דנומגיס סויצוקר תמיו
the ruler the great Sigismund Rákóczi and died
'The great ruler, Rákóczi Zsigmond,[4] died' (RMK II. 774b)

The language of the poems can also reveal what kind of literary resources the authors of carmina gratulatoria were familiar with. While a classical education, complete with Latin and Greek auctors, offered numerous parallels in general and for poems in Hebrew in particular, the Bible served as the main source of literary inspiration. However, on the basis of the linguistic formulation of the poems in the HCG corpus, the resources available to peregrines were not limited to the books of the Hebrew Bible: specific linguistic forms and expressions of post-Biblical language appear as well. This means that these poems can also reveal how extensive the knowledge of the students was not just of Biblical Hebrew but of later Jewish literary traditions as well.

Example (6) references the genre of *pizmon* (וּמזֹפ), a song of praise, and the act of *bəluzma'* (אָמָזוּלְב), the "drinking of spiced wines, whence frolic, carousal" (Jastrow 1996) in a possessive construction using the late Biblical possessive particle *šel* (לש). However, in late Biblical Hebrew, this linguistic form would not have been used yet in such a possessive construction (Biró 2018).

(6) וומזפ תואמזולב-לש
pizmon of drinkings of spiced wines
'wine pizmon' (RMK III. 4182)

The use of post-Biblical grammatical structures and cultural concepts indicates that the knowledge of Hungarian peregrines surpassed Biblical Hebrew. It is well known that teaching Hebrew in Hungary was aided by grammars produced for this specific purpose (Postma 2010: 123–125), but the extent to which post-Biblical Hebrew language and literature were incorporated into the studies of peregrines is not yet satisfactorily understood.

3. The corpus of Hebrew Carmina Gratulatoria (HCG)

The HCG corpus is open-ended, currently comprising 61 carmina gratulatoria (see *Appendix 1*), written predominantly but not exclusively at German and Dutch universities by students of Hungarian origin. The corpus in its current state contains the poems of 53 authors and 41 addressees. Pál Diószegi Kalmár is the author with the highest number of poems (4), and Mihály Tofeus is the most

4 The carmen is published in a volume dedicated to Rákóczi Zsigmond of Felsővadász (1622–1652).

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frequently (6) addressed (see appendices 2 and 3). The most frequent places of origin are Franeker and Leiden (12 each) (see *Figure 1* and *Appendix 4*).

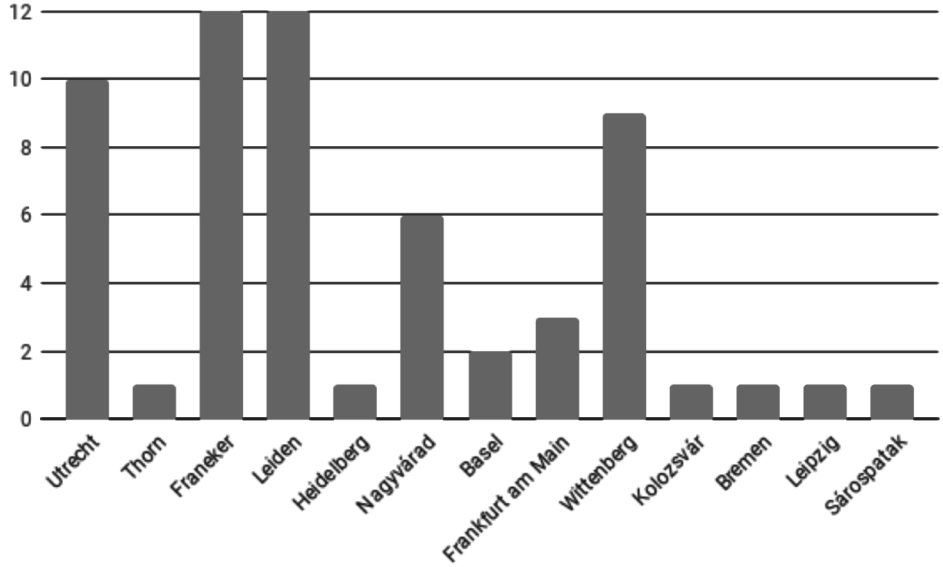


Figure 1. *The number of texts by place of origin*

The texts were manually digitized on the basis of prints. However, due to misprints and errors, several versions of the texts are made available:

(1) verbatim transcript (including misprints and errors),

(2) corrected unvocalized text,

(3) corrected vocalized text,

(4) Hungarian and English translations.

Since the language of the texts is Hebrew, the texts can be unvocalized, meaning that they do not contain the diacritical signs denoting vowels – which can increase the possibilities of interpretation tremendously –, or they can be vocalized, meaning that the prints already contain vowels. Both types of texts can require reconstruction. Typesetters and publishers generally would not have known Hebrew, and therefore errors, such as substituting certain letters for others, can arise simply from the printing process.

While most texts use Hebrew script, five carmina gratulatoria are printed in Latin letters. Interpreting these texts necessitates reconstruction, wherefore these received a Hebrew transcription as well. Although the use of Latin script makes the interpretation of the texts more of a challenge, this also has the advantage of potentially reflecting contemporary pronunciation. Example (7) demonstrates this case.

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(7)	Jevarek	leka	Elohim	
	דרֵבָ֫	הִ֫לְ	מיהִלֹאֶ	
	shall bless	you	god	
	‘God bless you’			(RMNY III 2356)

The Latin script clearly shows that certain conventions of Hebrew, for example, betacism, meaning that the letter bet, i.e. ב (‘b’) is pronounced as [v] following a vowel, was known to the author. While a lack of Hebrew letter types can be the reason why Latin letters were used, the pronunciation does indicate a knowledge of Hebrew.

4. Research potentials

The corpus and its electronic version under construction offer a variety of applications beyond the narrower topic of carmina gratulatoria. With multifaceted annotation (grammatical, pragmatic, intertextual) and extensive analyses, the corpus can support a variety of approaches.

A historical approach seeks to unravel the complex relationships between Hungarian peregrines, including peers and educators. This investigation helps to better understand their activity both internationally and domestically, including well-known personalities of the era. Research into relationship networks has been steadily gaining momentum, especially with regard to album amicorum (Markó 2018). Carmen gratulatoria could serve as a promising resource as the genres of carmen gratulatorium, matricula, and album amicorum represent a resource for the reconstruction of a network of scholars. As Móré (2015: 29) puts it in relation to Hungarian: “[…] dedications and greeting poems delineate a network of relationships, the extent and role of which however has not yet been explored”. This work, albeit in its infancy, shows promise as the combination of alborum amicorum and carmina gratulatoria records can be used to sketch up Hebrew skill-sharing networks (Juhász 2018).

An investigation of the Hebrew skills of the authors complete the historical approach laid out above. Tracing the acquisition and development of Hebrew skills across time and space can enlighten the state of linguistic education in Hungary and the role of Hebrew, which is intimately linked to contemporary views on culture, language, religion, and the status of Hungarian grammar itself. It is common knowledge that Hebrew played a role in Sylvester’s investigation of Hungarian grammar, resulting in shifting the model of description from Latin to Hebrew (Korompay 2012: 338). Therefore, knowledge of and interest in Hebrew are relevant from the point of view of Hungarian as well.

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A literary analysis of poetic devices, rhyme schemes, metre when applicable, etc. not only probes the style of Hebrew carmina gratulatoria but also helps to link the poems to the general literary traditions of the era. It is also part of this analysis to compare the language and style of Hebrew carmina gratulatoria to their Biblical parallels in a bid to identify and separate pastiche and original compositions (see Koltai, 2019).

From the point of view of Hungarian historical sociolinguistics, the most valuable application of this corpus is, as an additional resource, complementing other lines of inquiry with regard to peregrination and the linguistic output of peregrines. Historical sociopragmatics represents a complex avenue of research. A main line of its inquiry concerns the study of how "speakers exploit more general norms to generate particular meanings, take up social positionings, and so on" (Culpeper 2011: 2). This examination seeks to better understand the linguistic and cultural context of the relationships surrounding the creation of carmina gratulatoria, drawing on the peer network and the pragmatic annotation of the corpus.

5. Conclusions

This paper introduced the genre of carmina gratulatoria and a corpus of Hebrew-language carmina gratulatoria composed by 17th-century Hungarian peregrines, outlining possible applications of this corpus. It is the hope of this project that providing richly annotated text versions, including Hungarian and English translations, can support diverse applications for interdisciplinary research, connecting language and culture in a wider historical perspective.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix 1. List of texts

Authors	Place	Date	Identifier
Alistáli Farkas, Jakab	Utrecht	1652	RMK III 1813
Alistáli Farkas, Jakab	Utrecht	1654	RMK III 1904
Antonius, Simon	Thorn	1678	RMK III 2932
Archino, Nicolao/Árkosi Benedek	Frankfurt a.M.	1626	RMK III 1399
Balkányi György	Franeker	1666	RMK III 6503
Báthori G. Mihály	Leiden	1653	RMK III 1842
Baumbach Boldizsár	Heidelberg	1617	RMK III 1196
Becskeházi István	Nagyvárad	1650	RMK II 764
Békés János	Bázel	1674	RMK III 2647
Csekei Pál	Utrecht	1667	RMK III 2401
Csepregi F. Mihály	Franeker	1689	RMK III 3554
Csúzi József	Franeker	1692	RMK III 3728
Debreczeni P. János	Utrecht	1658	RMK III 2022
Debreczeni S. Gáspár	Frankfurt a.M.	1626	RMK III 1399
Diószegi Kalmár Pál	Leiden	1653	RMK III 1840
Diószegi Kalmár Pál	Leiden	1653	RMK III 1844

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Authors	Place	Date	Identifier
Diószegi Kalmár Pál	Leiden	1654	RMK III 1893
Diószegi Kalmár Pál	Leiden	1654	RMK III 1897
Gabriel Trusius	Wittenberg	1676	RMK III 6703
Gyarmati István	Frankfurt a.M.	1626	RMK III 1399
Gyöngyösi A. Pál	Franeker	1700	RMK III 4182
Jenei György	Franeker	1686	RMK III 3389
Jenei Mihály	Nagyvárad	1650	RMK II 768
Kállai Kopis János	Basel	1674	RMK III 2648
Kaposi Juhász Sámuel	Kolozsvár	1702	RMK II 2109
Kaposi Juhász Sámuel	Leiden	1686	RMK III 3402
Kemmel János	Wittenberg	1659	RMK III 2103
Keresztúri G. Bálint	London	1662	SC-Norris 288 J39
Kismarjai Veszelin Pál	Bremen	1625	RMK III 1372
Köleséri Sámuel	Nagyvárad	1650	RMK II 769
Komáromi Csipkés György	Utrecht	1651	RMK III 1790
Laskai Matkó János	Leiden	1630	RMK III 1458
Leusden Johannes	Utrecht	1651	RMK III 1781
Magnus György	Wittenberg	1668	RMK III 2452
Makai György	Nagyvárad	1650	RMK II 765
Mártonfalvi György	Franeker	1658	RMK III 2013
Mártonfalvi György	Utrecht	1656	RMK III 1972
Medgyesi Pál	Leiden	1630	RMK III 1457
Murgaschius János	Wittenberg	1668	RMK III 2448
Nánási L. József	Franeker	1700	RMK III 4178
Patai F. Tamás	Nagyvárad	1650	RMK II 766
Pataki István	Franeker	1665	RMK III 2279
Pilarik András	Wittenberg	1668	RMK III 2448
Pilarik István	Wittenberg	1668	RMK III 2448
Püspöki János	Nagyvárad	1650	RMK II 767
Rácz-Böszörményi János	Leiden	1676	RMK III 2759
Sculteti Gabriel	Leipzig	1678	RMK III 2925
Somosi P. János	Utrecht	1651	RMK III 1782
Szathmári István	Utrecht	1651	RMK III 1780
Szikszai Gergely	Leiden	1630	RMK III 1457
Szikszai Gergely	Leiden	1630	RMK III 1458
Szikszai István	Wittenberg	1598	RMK III 926
Szilágyi Péter	Franeker	1696	RMK III 3988
Szilágyi Péter	Franeker	1697	RMK III 4033
Szőlősi Pál	Franeker	1686	RMK III 3389

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Authors	Place	Date	Identifier
Tatai Sámuel	Franeker	1666	RMK III 6503
Thúri György	Wittenberg	1598	RMK III 926
Tofeus Mihály	Sárospatak	1652	RMK II 774b
Vizaknai Mihály	Leiden	1679	RMK III 2992
Veszprémi B. István	Utrecht	1666	RMK III 2369
Zabeler Jób	Wittenberg	1649	RMK III 1733

Appendix 2. List of authors

Authors	No. of poems
Alistáli Farkas Jakab	2
Antonius Simon	1
Archino Nicolao	1
Balkányi György	1
Báthori G. Mihály	1
Baumbach Boldizsár	1
Becskeházi István	1
Békés János	1
Csekei Pál	1
Csepregi F. Mihály	1
Csúzi József	1
Debreczeni P. János	1
Debreczeni S. Gáspár	1
Diószegi Kalmár Pál	4
Gabriel Trusius	1
Gyarmati István	1
Gyöngyösi A. Pál	1
Jenei György	1
Jenei Mihály	1
Kállai Kopis János	1
Kaposi Juhász Sámuel	2
Kemmel János	1
Keresztúri G. Bálint	1
Kismarjai Veszelin Pál	1
Komáromi Csipkés György	1
Köleséri Sámuel	1
Laskai Matkó János	1
Leusden Johannes	1
Magnus György	1

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Authors	No. of poems
Makai György	1
Mártonfalvi György	2
Medgyesi Pál	1
Murgaschius János	1
Nánási L. József	1
Patai F. Tamás	1
Pataki István	1
Pilarik András	1
Pilarik István	1
Püspöki János	1
Rácz-Böszörményi János	1
Sculteti Gabriel	1
Somosi P. János	1
Szathmári István	1
Szikszai Gergely	2
Szikszai István	1
Szilágyi Péter	2
Szőlősi Pál	1
Tatai Sámuel	1
Thúri György	1
Tofeus Mihály	1
Veszprémi B. István	1
Vizaknai Mihály	1
Zabeler Jób	1
Sum	61

Appendix 3. List of addressees

Addressees	No. of poems addressed
No addressee provided	4
Agnethler Michael	1
Apáti Miklóss	1
Bagosi Márton	1
Bánfihunyadi Márton	1
Bátai György	1
Báthori G. Mihály	1
Becskeházi V. István	1
Bessenyei F. Mihály	1

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Addressees	No. of poems addressed
Christian Trentsch	3
Csúzi Cseh Jakab	1
Debreczeni Ember Pál	2
Debreczeni Gele János	1
Debreczeni K. János	1
Fogarasi Sámuel	1
Helmeczi István	1
Jászberényi Mátyás	1
Jászberényi P. Pál.	1
Kismarjai Veszelin Pál	1
Kochmeister Sámuel	1
Koltay János	1
Komáromi Csipkés György	5
Liszkai István	2
Mártonfalvi György	1
Matkó János	2
Medgyesi Pál	2
Michael Sennert	1
Musae Patakinae iterum ad luctum vocatae	1
Nagyari József	1
Sárfői Mihály	1
Sculteti Gabriel	1
Szántai Pócs István	1
Szathmári István	1
Szepsi Korocz András	1
Szikszai István	1
Szilágyi Márton	1
Thann András	1
Thúri György	1
Tofeus Mihály	6
Vásárhelyi T. M. István	1
Veresegyházi Tamás	2
Zilahi István	1
Sum	**61**

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Appendix 4. List of places of origin

Place of origin	No. of poems
Basel	2
Bremen	1
Franeker	12
Frankfurt am Main	3
Heidelberg	1
Kolozsvár	1
Leiden	12
Leipzig	1
London	1
Nagyvárad	6
Sárospatak	1
Thorn	1
Utrecht	10
Wittenberg	9
Sum	**61**

Appendix 4. Year of composition

Year of composition	No. of poems
1598	2
1617	1
1625	1
1626	3
1630	4
1649	1
1650	6
1651	4
1652	2
1653	3
1654	3
1656	1
1658	2
1659	1
1662	1
1665	1
1666	3
1667	1

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Year of composition	**No. of poems**
1668	4
1674	2
1676	2
1678	2
1679	1
1686	3
1689	1
1692	1
1696	1
1697	1
1700	2
1702	1
Sum	**61**

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