

BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY
LETTERS FACULTY
DEPARTMENT OF HUNGARIAN LITERATURE

PhD Thesis

**„Family Writing of Transylvanian Nobility
from the 16th to the 18th century”**

SUMMARY

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Keywords: Kálnoki family, Kálnoki István, Kálnoki Sámuel, Kálnoki Ádám, Kálnoki Antal, family writing, use of writing, writing practice, letter, diary, calendar, ego-document, manuscripts, Transylvania in the XVIIth-XVIIIth century, Catholic noblemen

Resume

The PhD thesis entitled „Family Writing of Transylvanian Nobility from the 16th to the 18th century” studies the use of writing at the end of the Pre-modern Age based on the personal writings of four members of the Kálnoki family. The Kálnoki family, even if is not one of the best-known noble families from the land of the Seklers, their do appear multiple times in Transylvania’s history, playing their part in the major events of the period. The family members are catholics, and have possessions in the Seklers’ Districts of Miklosvár and Háromszék. The men of the family were, at the end of the XVIth century, members of the military-able part of the Seklers’ community, and served in leading positions of the local administration (captain, Royal judge). The Kálnoki family was part of the group of noble families, mainly of Catholic faith, whose members received nobility titles of *grof* and *baron* in the XVIIth - XVIIIth centuries for serving the princes of Transylvania or the emperor of the Habsburg Empire. These families married among themselves and, in rare cases, with members of the Transylvanian and Hungarian aristocracy, establishing, later in the XVIIIth century family ties even among the members of the Habsburg Royal Court’s influential circles. In the domain’s literature the best known member of the Kálnoki Family is the vice-chancellor of Transylvania in Vienna, Kálnoki Sámuel. A large part of his manuscripts are yet unpublished or were even unknown.

My PhD. Thesis gathers all the personal writings of four of the male family members of the Kálnoki’s. They illustrate four generations and are linked in a father-son relation. The first one, chronologically speaking, is Kálnoki István; his son, Sámuel continues the line passing it to his son, Ádám; the last one of the line that I analysed is the latter’s son, Antal. The biggest part of the texts written by these four noblemen is made of letters, but also a diary (of Kálnoki István), a calendar with many annotations of Kálnoki Sámuel, three testaments (of Kálnoki István, Sámuel and Antal), an addition to the Chronicle of Pethő Gergely (written by Kálnoki Sámuel), two correspondence logs (of Kálnoki Antal) and other notes of smaller length have come down to us. By presenting, contextualizing and comparing these texts I’ve illustrated the features of the writing practice in this family, the customs that were influential for the writing and for the use of written text, and the habits that regulate the attitude towards writing as an activity and towards the written texts.

The starting point of the analysis is that the mentality of the family group, the education of its members and the personal relations among them can be a formative factor of the custom, a function and an explanation of the rarity of this type of writing. It is a known fact in the literature of the issue that, in the XVIIth to the XVIIIth century Transylvania, the personal

documents of self-representation do not appear dispersed throughout the noble class, but concentrated inside certain families and more frequently in the father-son relationship. But this period is not only the age of diaries and memoirs; the intimate/personal written correspondences are as common throughout the whole Europe. One of the important functions of letter-exchange is publicizing oneself. The letter, in the case of individual persons deals with the whole specter of issues associated with the social persona: politics, religion, cultural phenomena, family or economic problems. It is obvious the increasing amount of written documents in the Kálnoki family in the period between XVIIth and the XVIIIth centuries. A written inheritance with various themes and formats was kept between the members of this family, an inheritance which is part of the cultural history, of the history of literature and of the history of events that define this era.

The sources

The sources illustrated by our research are previously unknown or unedited and were to be found in a number of personal or familial collections, located in different archives. My main sources are located not only in the Kálnoki family archive fund (49 Fond Familial Kálnoki) but also in those of other families, like Apor (36 – Fond familial Apor) or Mikes (65/2 – Fond Familial Mikes) from the Covasna County Department of the Romanian National Archives, in Sfântu Gheorghe. From the archive funds of the Cluj County Department of the Romanian National Archives I've gathered the documentary sources from the familial archive funds of the Apor family (317 – Fond Familial Apor) , Lázár (384 – Fond Familial Lázár), Alvinczi (316 / Fond Familial Alvinczi), Béldi (324 – Fond Familial Béldi), Kornis (378 – Fond Familial Kornis), Szentkereszti (432 – Fond Familial Szentkereszti) and also the archive funds from the Kemény (594 – Colecția Kemény József) and Mike (248 – Colecția Mike Sándor) collections. From the Library of the Romanian Academy, Cluj-Napoca Section, the research identified some information due to the documents from the Kemény József Collection.

In Budapest, at the *National Hungarian Archives*, useful materials for the research were identified in the Teleki family collection (funds P. 659, P. 669, P. 1238, P. 1239), Kvassay Family collection (P 444), The Transylvanian Gubernium – The correspondence of Bánffy György (F 35). Also, in the *Manuscripts and Old books Collection of The Széchényi National Library* and in the *Collection of Manuscripts of the Library of the Hungarian Academy*, both from Budapest were found documents of the Kálnoki family. Other documents

were identified in the documents collection of the *Archivio Generale dell'Ordine dei Predicatori* from Rome.

The structure of the thesis

The analysis built on the above mentioned sources is composed of five main chapters.

The first chapter is an introduction in the field and object of study and presents the main starting points of the research and the purpose of the whole work.

The second chapter presents the theoretic mainframe on which the textual analysis was built. In the first part of the chapter a short presentation of the theoretical works on the subject of writing and of orality, illustrating contemporary directions in analyzing these complex themes and the way they were used in my work. In the next sub-chapter I've presented the research on the use of writing that influenced the evolution of my own work. The third sub-chapter shows the types of texts produced by the members of the Kálnoki family. These are: the diary, the calendar annotations, the letter, correspondence journal, and the testament. All these texts can be named ego-documents or memoirs literature. The terms used contain varied practices of using the writing, the texts being tied among them by less rigorous criteria.

The next chapter aims at illustrating the social and religious background the four persons have lived in and produced the texts at the core of our analysis. The main purpose of the chapter was underlining some problems and phenomena that can be linked with the subject of the present work. In this respect I focused the attention on the religious affiliation of seklers' noblemen class and on the social ties among its members.

The fourth chapter contains, after a short presentation of the Kálnoki family history, the essential part of the thesis: the presentation of the four Kálnoki family members and of the habits of their writing. Every one of the analyzed characters, Kálnoki István, Sámuel, Ádám and Lajos, together with their texts make up a sub-chapter. I've considered as an essential part of the analysis the presentation of their living environment, their formation and career and their position in the period's social and historical context in which they lived and produced the analyzed texts, all based on the specialized literature and on the sources found by the bibliographical and archive research. The paper never aimed at presenting in detail the contents of the texts created by these persons, but concentrated on the examination of the texts' type, the way they were written, and how do the authors see themselves through their writing. In the Kálnoki István's case a significant example on the habits of writing is his diary, written during the 1644 campaign of Rákóczi György as ally of the Swedish. In the diary it can be seen a very practical use of writing, both in the parts written in the time of the

campaign and the ones that were continued at home. His testament illustrates his practical nature, dictating only the necessary information. In the case of Kálnoki Sámuel the widest range of writing types were used. His correspondence shows glimpses of his day-to-day life; it contains very personal thoughts, written for his wife, but also reports and orders. The addition to the Chronicle of Pethő Gergely make up a text that targets a whole community and its contents is decided by the community, and with the requirements of the genre. It is discernible a vision on history, specific for Catholic historians and for those at the Imperial Court. But he saw as his obligation to fill in the parts about the Seklers Districts and their administration. The annotated calendar of Kálnoki Sámuel is closely linked with his activity as a vice-Chancellor in Vienna. The written texts show mainly his tasks, the main events at te Court, and the economic background, but meditations or fragments of poetry are texts that weren't written due to an obligation or with a "reminder" role, but bear the marks of contemplation, of imitation and admiration. AN equally mixed composition can be found in his father's diary. His testament gathered all the important events of his life, building himself the image with which he wishes to be remembered by his descendants. The letters of Kálnoki Ádám shows most of all the communication among the family members and the way the information circulates; but his letters sent to Rome can be seen as instruments of self-representation. The letters of Kálnoki Antal show not only his character, the circumstances of his life and the foreign languages he masters, but also are proof, by the large number of letters and notes he left behind, the importance of the regular use of the writing and his grand respect for the written text and for the family documents.

The fifth chapter of the thesis encloses the conclusions. Based on the analysis of the written texts of the family members, one of the main conclusions is that, in almost all cases, the habit and the contents of the written texts are linked with the career and occupations of their producer or at least are a part of the person's everyday use. The exceptions are the letters addressed to a family member and replace the oral communication. We cannot assert that there is a writing habit or practice which ties the family's generation and who influences every time the texts; but we can notice that the texts produced by the members of the four generations are linked to one another and influence each other. The habit of keeping a diary like that of Kálnoki István can be found in the notes written by his son on the same diary, with similar theme and strategy of writing. Father's influence can be found also in the fragments of journeys description, and also in the notes on household and economy from the Kálnoki Sámuel manuscript-calendar. It is also obvious that these texts were influenced by the context in which they appeared: XVIIth century Transylvania, where in almost every noble family

written documents appeared in the form of diaries, memoirs and other notes, general or personal. Above that, the diary or the calendar influenced not only the closest descendants, but, being kept in the family's archives they were read and browsed by multiple generations. Being inherited from generation to generation by the male descendants, in time their role changed. These documents were not only documentary writings, illustrating the daily life of their ancestors, but became a part of the family's patrimony, their possession signaling the persistence of the family. The letters cannot be considered only ways of exchanging information between sender and recipient, but, in many cases they integrated in the life of the sender and his larger family by being able to receive different functions: the information, the orders they contain require a repeated reading, could be valid for a long period of time or as a general truth worth remembering. Also, the letters are the instruments of remembering, the events of the life cycle. The letters, the diary or the calendar have also a posthumous function: can contain information on the place the ancestors had in the local community, data that is essential for constructing and sustaining the family's collective memory. Because of their contents, illustrating the family estates, contracts or loans, these documents can be used as legal proofs, essential for the descendants.

Not only have the contents of the letters tied the families' generations, but also their recipient. Apor Péter receives letters from three of the four members of the Kálnoki family discussed in the present thesis (Sámuel, Ádám and Antal). But because of the different social status of the expeditors, the tone and the redaction of the letters are essentially different.

The testaments also help in connecting the four family members; through them a stable link establishes between the one who writes and the one to whom it is addressed. That's because the writer is testifying and numbering his possessions and distributes them. That has a major influence on the life of the descendants. Also, by naming his descendants, the author integrates them in the family and recognizes them as heirs. In these cases also, the written text gets the role of family patrimonial object, symbolizing the right to the inheritance.

The testaments have a part also in the family cult of memory, because the texts themselves are talking about the authors and their life. It is important to mention that there is a certain textological relation between testaments, relation based also by the general customs of declaring the possessions in that period; but in the Kálnoki family it happens that all three use the same text for declaring the same possession (e. g. the estate from Miklosvár). But beyond this formal resemblance, there are also large differences. The three texts illustrate the time difference between them and they compose in a different manner the text: Kálnoki István has dictated his testament in a very stereotype manner; his son, Sámuel writes an autograph text

which contains also testimonials about himself; and Antal, the younger one, in sync with his time mentality, writes his testament in German and validates it by the signature of a German officer.

Beyond the fact that all the family's texts are talking about the situation and the context for which they were written, more frequently events from the life of the author, the texts are egocentric and self-representative. Regardless of the type of document (accounts about events or reports) and of the recipient (foreign or family member) these texts are written from the viewpoint of the author and present the events from his perspective. The auto-appreciation and the image of himself that the author has or is trying to create are other characteristics which shows the motivations of family writing and the possibility of deciphering from the text both the person's interior features and the societal context in which it was written.

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