

Elements of Modernity in Written Communication in Transylvania A Private Letter from the 16th Century

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THE EARLY use of vernacular in writing remains a challenging, insufficiently investigated topic in Romanian historiography (or for the current Romanian space). Transylvania, in particular, lends itself to this kind of research. Modernity is also characterized by the abandonment of the languages of culture in favor of national languages in written communication. Therefore, the present study proposes a discussion concerning the written vernacular in Transylvania, analyzing a private letter from the 16th century, written in Hungarian.¹

First and foremost, it should be stated that in the Voivodeship of Transylvania written communication was done in Latin,² an international language and

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also the language of the Church and of state institutions. However, Transylvania—and the whole Kingdom of Hungary, for that matter—was a multiethnic region and, while Latin was the official language in written communication,³ it operated alongside German and Hungarian,⁴ even if the latter two had no official status. Thus, it was the vernacular that kept together a community, and communication was overwhelmingly oral. More often than not, the private correspondence was done in the language used on an everyday basis by the members of a given Transylvanian community⁵—German for the inhabitants of the Saxon cities, and Hungarian for the Hungarian nobles and, generally speaking, for those who knew how to write.⁶ This does not necessarily mean that those who could write in German were unable to communicate in writing also in Hungarian, or the other way around, but this is a matter for future research.

One must not overlook the fact that letter writing was governed by a number of rules, even if said letter dealt strictly with personal matters or instructions and was in no way legally binding.⁷ A letter was supposed to have five parts: *salutatio*, *benevolentie captatio*, *narratio*, *petitio*, and *conclusio*.⁸ Apart from these, a document of the *littera missilis* type had to include a date and a signature at the end. More often than not, this was the signature of the author of the letter or of the person sending instructions to a recipient, both situations applying to a private letter. Although most of the *missilis* letters also had a seal affixed, they were not legally binding, as the seals merely indicated the status of the nobleman (private seal), confirming the authenticity of the letter. The private correspondence in Hungarian increased in volume towards the middle of the 16th century, as there were more and more educated nobles, and also due to the adoption of Protestantism.⁹

After this brief preamble, we come to the stated goal of our endeavor, namely, the analysis of a private 16th-century letter. The main reason behind the choice of this letter has to do with the fact that it fits the pattern indicated above. The letter is 30x21 cm in size, written entirely in the Hungarian language, taking up nearly all the available space on the sheet. It is not centered, featuring a blank vertical stripe on the left side, and along the borders the author also left a blank space roughly the size of one or one and a half lines. There are 37.5 lines in total, making it rather long when compared to the other texts falling in the same category, which amount to 11.5 lines,¹⁰ 15 lines,¹¹ or even 25 lines,¹² plus the signature.¹³ Also when compared to other letters, the words seem crammed closer together, the lines are relatively straight, but in some places the letters overlap with those in the previous or the following lines, leading us to believe that the author sought to include as much information as possible on the limited surface of the paper.

There are no indentations or any of the breaks normally associated with today's letters. Instead, this letter abides by the conventions of official document writing: the written text flows smoothly, without any erasures or corrections

likely to indicate the hastiness of the author in conveying his message. While the text seems to have been written at leisure, without any mistakes, bar the occasional thickening of the letters, being quite a visible text, it is not necessarily easy to read, especially for a reader of our time.

The modern features of this letter mainly have to do with the language in which it was written and the signature. It was written in Hungarian by the man sending the letter who, at the end, signed his full name with the mention “in his own hand,” both elements being quite novel in a society still dominated by the classical models, also when it came to the art of writing. Also, the author was writing in the language he normally used in oral communication. It must be said that while for Latin writing¹⁴ there were handbooks that taught the future intellectuals the art of writing and the rules thereof, there was no such thing for the Hungarian language in the 16th century and in the immediately following period. Hence the questions regarding the possible rules or norms abided by those capable of writing in the Hungarian language.¹⁵

In structural terms, the letter under discussion contains all the elements pertaining to the writing of a *littera missilis*.¹⁶

1. SALUTATIO—the first three lines feature the various greetings and forms of address whereby the author expresses his gratitude to the intended recipient, in this case his mother, using a language typical for the family environment:

Thjzthelendw Es En zerelmes: azzonium, Es anjam, Ewrewkre valo alazathos zolgalathom vtan. keuanum the k. Mjynd hazad Nepeuel Egesegeth. Hallanj.

(Honorable and beloved lady and mother of mine, I bring to you my eternal homage wishing good health to everyone in your household).

Following the transcription of the letter, the very first lines reveal a number of visual elements pertaining to 16th century writing in the Hungarian language: in most cases the author writes the vowel *h* after several consonants, such as *t*, *d*, *g*, *c*, in the form *th*, *dh*, *gh*, *ch*, revealing the influence of the spoken language. Also, the vowels *ö* or *ó*, *á*, *é*, *ó*—generally bearing diacritical marks, as featured today in the modern Hungarian language—are altogether missing. Therefore, the author, as well as anyone writing in Hungarian at that time, was forced to find various letter combinations that would evoke the spoken words, hence the oral character of Hungarian. This becomes apparent starting with the very first word: *Thjzthelendw* (honorable) would be currently spelled *Tisztelendő*, but as diacritical marks were not in use with vowels at that time, the two-dotted *y* was used instead of *i* or *j*, and at the end of the word we find a *w* instead of an *ó*. Throughout the text, many connecting words start with a capital letter, which is likely to confuse the reader, as we are not dealing there with proper names.

Besides, proper names and even one's own name were not capitalized at that time, as opposed to the norms of today. Then, two distinct words that should have been written separately are spelled as a single word or, on the contrary, a single word would be split in two. And these are just some of the differences that we could highlight here. Also noticeable is the use of *z* instead of the consonant *s*, while *o* is replaced by *u* or *v*—*zerelmes azzonium*—(szerelmes asszonyom—beloved lady). Here, as well as in other parts of the text, the “yours” formula—*te kegyelmed*—is mostly abbreviated as *.k.*¹⁷ Thus, as stated earlier, there were no clear rules, and those who wrote in Hungarian were largely making their own.

2. BENEVOLENTIE CAPTATIO—this is represented by a segment roughly four and a half lines long, where the author apologizes for the long time passed since his last letter, which was not caused by neglect, but rather by the demanding teaching activities that prevented him from writing to his parents:

Jol lebeth En k. Regultha Egjgeth sem Irta(m), Meljeth krem k. hogh k. resthsegem-nek ne thulajdonjchon Merth thugya Isthen hogj Irta(m) vona de nem lebethe(t) akor, Mjkor valakj oda Menth, Merth azkor lechket olvasthak.

(It is true that I have not written to you for quite a while, but please do not see this as a sign of disregard, for, as God is my witness, I would have written to you but could not, as people went there as the lesson was being read).

3. NARRATIO—this is the longest part of the text, 23 lines in all, where the author asks the mother to convey to the father the message that the son needed money to pay his debts. He lists three such debts. First, to his professor, who comes looking for him on an hourly basis, which is quite stressful, and to whom he has made promises to pay; however, the insistence of the professor seems to suggest that the student has a history of falling behind with his payments. The second person that is owed money—8 florins, as indicated in the text—is a medical doctor, who is also requesting payment. The inference is that the student has had some health problems, which took him to the doctor whose services remained unpaid. The third debt is to the student's landlord, who had actually lent money to the tenant for the purchase of the cloth needed for pants and undergarments, the letter even specifying the type of cloth that had been thus purchased. The student also explains that he would have not incurred this latter debt had it not been for the fact that he had no shirts left to wear, a detail potentially useful to a future socio-anthropological analysis:

De ma Mjnd addjg keresthe(m) Ideth hozza Mjgh ne(m) thalaltham, azzertk krem .k.: Mjnth zerelmes azzonjomath. hog .k. zolyon vramnak hogy: az Mestherrel

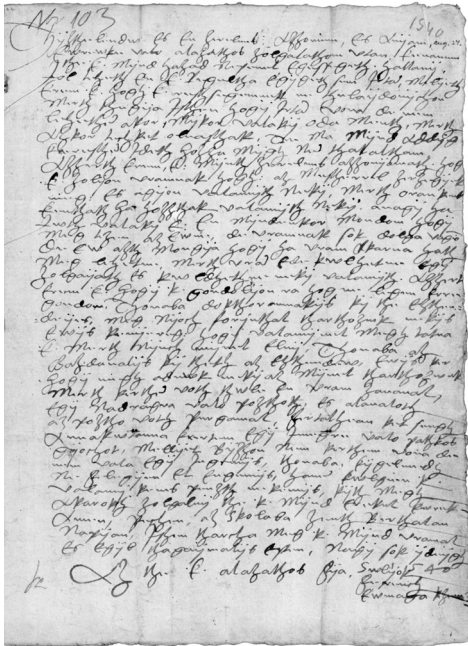


FIG. 1. The letter—recto, Romanian National Archives, Cluj, coll. Gyulai-Kuun Family, ser. 1—Medieval Documents, no. 103, fol 1.

zerzegyjek meg: Es agjjon valamjyth Nekj, Merth oran kent kenthath ba hozzthak valamjyth Nekj, auagj ba Jwth walakj k: En Mjyndenkor Mondom hogj Meg lezen az Ewue; de vramnak sok dolga vagio(n) de Ew azth Mongjya hogj ba vram akar-na bath Meg lehetne, Merth vra(m) Ede kwlhetne Egj zolgajath Es kw ldkethne nekj valamjyth. azzert krem .k. hogj .k. gondoljon ra hog ne legen Erre gondom, Thouaba dokthoromnakjys kj the Ezthen dejes, Meg Njoch forjnthal tharthozwk nekjys Ewjs kenjyereg: hogj valamjuel Megh latna .k. Merth Njynch mjuel Elnj, Thouaba az Gazdanaljs kj theth az Ezthendew. Ewjs ker hogj megh adnwk nekj az Mjuel tharthozwnk Merth kerthe(m) voth thwle En vram zauauual, Egj Nadragra valo pozthoth, Es alauualoth az poztho voth pur-gamal, fertalhean ket sengh annakwtanna kertem Egj Imegre valo pathkos gjochot, Melljet Bjzzon Nem kerthem vona de nem vala Egj Ingemjs .

(I tried and eventually I found the time, and therefore I ask you, beloved lady, to tell the master [the father, our note] that he must come to an understanding with the professor and send him something, because he comes looking for me on an hourly basis, asking whether something had come for him or if someone is about to reach you, and I constantly tell him that he will be paid his due, that the master is quite busy, to which he replies that the master could work it out if he wanted to by simply dispatching a servant with something for him. Therefore I ask you to come up with something that would spare me this additional problem. Quite recently the year has also passed in the relation with my doctor, to whom I still owe eight florins, and he kindly asks you to send him something as he is in dire straits. The year has also passed in the relation with my landlord, and he wants to be paid for, on behalf of my father, I requested from him cloth for a pair of pants and some undergarments, and the cloth was of the Bergamo kind, and then I requested cloth for a shirt, which I would not have done had I had any shirts left.)

4. PETITIO—after the description of the three debts that needed to be paid, in the petitionary section he requests some money for himself, not much, just

enough to get by, as the absolute priority was the repayment of said debts:

thouaba, kÿgelmedb ne felegÿjen El Engemÿs, hane(m) kwlgien .k. valamÿ keues penzth nekemÿs

(Here I kindly ask you to think of me and send me some money).

5. CONCLUSIO—the author expresses his gratitude for the money that is to be sent, resorting mainly to ecclesiastical formulas and also providing the date and location, St. Bartholomew's Day, in Pécs, plus the year—1540:

kÿth Megh akarokh zolgalnÿ the .k. Mÿnd Erekul Ewreke amen, pechen, az Skolaba zenth Berthalan napÿjan, Ishen tharcha Meg .k. Mÿnd vramal Es Egÿb thagajmalÿs Epen, Nagÿi sok ÿdeÿgh 1540.

(wishing to be forever your servant, I wish you Amen, while at the school in Pécs on the day of St. Bartholomew [August 24, our note]. May God bless you and the master [his father, our note] and may the Almighty keep you long in this world, 1540).

The last line includes the signature of the author, which features his full name, plus the mention “by my own hand”—*Az the .k. alazathos fÿia, Swlyok ferench Ewmaga keze(uel)* (Your humble son, Francis Swlyok, by my own hand) —granting authenticity to the letter but no legal value whatsoever, as it is merely a letter sent by a student of the school in Pécs.¹⁸ Notably, the additional formula is also in Hungarian, whereas most letters written directly by their author would feature the Latin formula, *manu propria*. It may be that the author chose to use Hungarian for all the elements of a *missilis* letter which was in fact addressed only to his family, allowing him to dispense with the protocolary elements.

As to the verso, we find a number of texts also written in Hungarian, but by several hands. In the middle of the page we find the expedition formula, written by Francis Sulyok, stating that the letter was addressed to his mother, Klara Kende, Mrs. Stephen Sulyok, details which made it possible to identify the student:

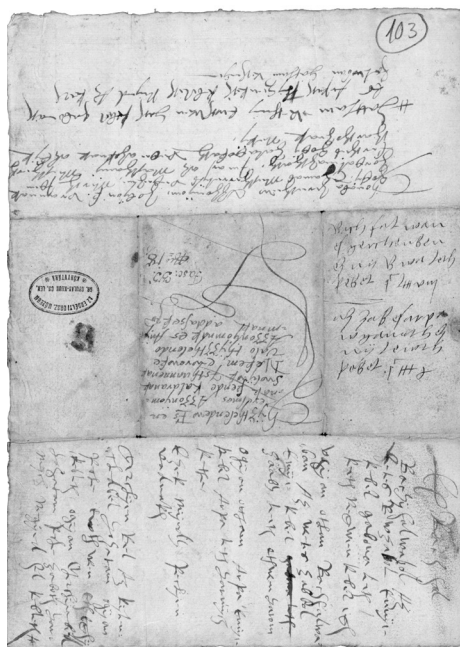


FIG. 2. The letter—verso, Romanian National Archives, Cluj, coll. Gyulai-Kuun Family, ser. 1—Medieval Documents, no. 103, fol 2.

*Thjzthelendew Es en Zerelmes Azzonjom=j=nak kende Kalaranak Swljwkw
Jsthuannnak Nekem ewrewke Valo thjzthelendo Azzonjomnak es Any[a]mnak
addassek etc.*

(To the honorable and by me beloved Lady Klara Kende, Mrs. Stephen Sulyok, this is to be handed to my mother whom I shall forever hold in high esteem, etc.)

On the verso we also see the traces of a seal, most likely a signet ring of the author, indicating that he was of noble origin.

As the sheet was folded, we see how the writing space was divided up, allowing for the later reuse of the blank spaces. The author himself was the first to take advantage of the available space, jotting down on the third part of the page a message seemingly related to the content of the letter. The form of address is identical to the one at the beginning of the letter, the content is also related to a debt to a teacher, this time his current tutor, whom the aforementioned former teacher, whose name was Thomas, had advised to obtain a guarantee from the students who owed him money: *Thovaba zerethew azzonjom, zoljyon k. uramnak hoggy Thomas mestherreljys vegezne merth igen zorgalmazthath, Imar az masthanj mestherth kerteis hoggy zalagokath vege azoknak az kjk tharthoznak nekj.* We believe that the debt had to do with the students' failure to contribute their share of the teacher's wages.¹⁹

For the time being, our research does not concern the matters pertaining to the educational system, but the latter may be important elements of a future investigation. It is therefore possible that the author did not send the letter right after he finished writing it, on 24 August 1540, and thus had the chance to write an additional message to his mother before mailing it. The remaining blank spaces were filled with other notes, all in Hungarian. However, the information pertains to the agricultural field, with references to the harvest of wheat and oats, the tithes, and to the quality of the aforementioned produce. Therefore, the verso of the letter sent by Francis Sulyok was used by another family member, maybe by his father, who made annotations regarding the harvest of wheat²⁰ for reasons that went beyond the mere keeping of records. These additional notes also belong to the category of written vernacular, reflecting another dimension of private life centered on Hungarian as the main element of communication.

Our analysis can really benefit from additional information on the author of the letter and on the period in which it was written. Francis was a member of the old and noble Sulyok family of Szatmár, the son of Stephen Sulyok and Klara Kende.²¹ The family actually originated from Bács-Bodrog County, situated in the southern part of the Kingdom of Hungary, its roots there going back to the

reign of King Andrew II (13th century). There were therefore two branches of the Sulyok family, Francis and his parents belonging to the Szatmár branch,²² where they had significant political clout. Francis's uncle, Blaise Sulyok (the author of the letter was Francis II, given the presence of a homonymous uncle) served for a while as *camerarius* to King Ferdinand of Habsburg, and his father, Stephen II Sulyok, alongside the same Blaise Sulyok, had been the captain of Šabac (Szabács) Fortress on the Sava river, one of the fortresses directly involved in the anti-Ottoman struggle of the Hungarians in the 1520s.²³ Another prominent member of the family was George Sulyok, Francis's uncle on his grandfather's side, who served two terms as bishop of Pécs, between 1526 and 1535, and then between 1537 and 1538, and whose last will and testament of 1537 is still in existence.²⁴ He may have played a role in Francis Sulyok's decision to study in Pécs. Therefore, the author of the letter was a *domidoctus* from the middling nobility who was completing his secondary education in Pécs. He was definitely not attending university, as at that time the old medieval university of Pécs was no longer in activity (it had operated between 1367 and 1390²⁵). He was most certainly enrolled at the chapter school run by the Bishopric of Pécs.²⁶

As to the political context, John Zápolya, one of the two Hungarian kings²⁷ competing for supremacy, died on 21 July 1540. His death caused disarray among his supporters, some of whom went to the side of Ferdinand of Habsburg. Shortly after receiving the news of John Zápolya's death, the then bishop of Pécs, John Eszéki (1539–1541), did the exact same thing and put the bishopric and the town in the service of the Habsburgs. The changing of sides by the bishopric hierarchy may have somewhat affected the student Francis Sulyok (at least from the vantage point of his financial possibilities), as he was a relative of the former bishop, George Sulyok, a supporter of the late king, John Zápolya. There is no information on the precise reasons why Francis was studying at the chapter school in Pécs,²⁸ especially considering the geographic proximity of other chapter schools, those of Oradea or Alba Iulia. Pécs might have been chosen on account of having one of the most prestigious schools in the medieval Kingdom of Hungary, or because of the student's kinship to the former bishop, George Sulyok.²⁹ It is however certain that he was in financial trouble, as stated in the private letter he sent to his parents.

Thus, this letter sent by a son to his mother reveals more than just the simple intimate universe, allowing us to approach several more complex aspects pertaining to the Transylvanian society in the century of transition from the voivodship to the principality, touching upon political life, the educational horizon, and more.



(Translated by BOGDAN ALDEA)

Notes

1. This letter is not presented here for the first time. It has been discussed in Hungarian historiography in several contexts—linguistic, as a source on 16th century writing in Hungarian; historical-educational, approached within the broader topic of the higher school in Pécs—but it has never been investigated in light of its primary purpose: communication. Hence our interest and motivation in analyzing a letter so far disregarded by Romanian historiography. Romanian National Archives, Cluj (hereafter cited as RNA, Cluj) coll. Gyulai–Kuun Family, ser. I—Medieval Documents, no. 103; Béla Pettkő, “A Pécsi iskola történetéhez,” *Történelmi Tár* (Budapest) 10, 3 (1887): 802–803; Bálint Csűry, “Sulyok Ferenc levele anyjához 1540-ből,” *Magyar Nyelv* (Budapest) 24, 5–6 (1928): 215–216; Remig Békefi, *A népoktatás története Magyarországon 1540-ig* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1906), 142–143; Attila Hegedűs, Lajos Papp, *Középkori leveleink 1541-ig* (Budapest: Tankönyv Kiadó, 1991), 523–527.
2. Susana Andea, “Exercițiul scrierii și Cancelaria voievodală din Transilvania (sec. XIII–XIV),” *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie “George Barițiu”* (Cluj-Napoca), 58 (2019): 17–29.
3. Adinel C. Dincă, “Scriitori private din Transilvania medievală în context local și European,” *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie “G. Barițiu”* (Cluj-Napoca), 59 (2020): 361–384.
4. Albert Berger, *Urkunden-Regesten aus dem Archiv der Stadt Bistritz in Siebenbürgen*, vol. 1–3, edited by Ernst Wagner (Köln–Wien: Böhlau, 1986–1995), *apud*. Mária Lupescu Makó, “Lingua franca—Lingua materna. Limbi și comunități în orașele medievale din Transilvania,” *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie “G. Barițiu”* (Cluj-Napoca), Supplement 58: *Cultură scrisă și civilizație în Transilvania secolelor XIII–XIX* (2019): 11–31. The order of this enumeration is not accidental because, if we look, for instance, at the statistical data on the documents kept in the archives of the town of Bistrița for the period 1203–1570, we see that out of a total of 3677 documents, 82% were in Latin, 11% in German, and only 7% in Hungarian. It is precisely towards the middle of the 16th century that we see an increase in the number of texts written in Hungarian, but even so they will account for only 2% of the 542 documents dated between 1541 and 1550. From the following decade, 1551–1560, we have 615 documents of which 9% are in Hungarian, on a par with those written in German, but the majority remained in Latin.
5. László Solymosi, “Anyanyelv és jogi írásbeliség a középkori Magyarországon,” *Történelmi Szemle* (Budapest) 53, 4 (2011): 479–501. The first document known to have been written in German in Transylvania dates from the year 1411. It is a promissory note confirming the debt of a citizen of Sibiu, Martin Chraus, to a citizen of Vienna, following the purchase of some felt. However, in the Kingdom of Hungary the writing in German had started earlier, as we know of documents drawn up in Sopron and Bratislava at the middle of the 14th century. German became the official language of the two towns towards the end of the 14th century, diminishing the importance of Latin. We therefore witness a gradual replacement of Latin writing

with that in German, especially in the western parts of the Kingdom of Hungary. The eastern parts will experience the same process, but only a century later.

6. Jakó Zsigmond, *Írás, könyv, értelmiség—Tanulmányok Erdélytörténelméhez* (Bucharest: Kriterion, 1976), 37–41. The earliest surviving Hungarian text from Transylvania dates back to the year 1507: the testament of Stefan Ródi Cseh, written in his own hand. It is not entirely in Hungarian, as the first lines are in Latin. The value of this document is not merely symbolic, as the first surviving Transylvanian text in the Hungarian language, but quite significant is also the fact that the author wrote it in his hand without the assistance of a third party, such as a scribe.
7. Susana Andea, “Aspecte privind scrierea epistolară din Transilvania (sec. XIV–XVII),” *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie “G. Barițiu* (Cluj-Napoca), Supplement 58: *Cultură scrisă și civilizație în Transilvania secolelor XIII–XIX*, (2019): 33–55.
8. Ibid.
9. Nándor Várkonyi, *Az írás és a könyv története* (Budapest: Széphalom Könyvműhely, 2001), 351–360.
10. RNA, Cluj, no. 192, fol. 2.
11. RNA, Cluj, no. 185.
12. RNA, Cluj, no. 182.
13. There is no rule regarding the length of a letter. The numbers indicated are purely orientational, in order to highlight the length of the analyzed text.
14. Vilmos Fraknói, *A hazai és külföldi iskolázás a XVI. században* (Budapest: Hoffmann and Molnár, 1873), 37–47.
15. Andor Tarnai, “*A magyar nyelvet írni kezdik*”: *Irodalmi gondolkodás a középkori Magyarországon* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1984), 229, 236–238. If before the 15th–16th centuries there was a boundary between the oral and the written, as time went by there was a natural historical evolution in the symbiosis of Latin and Hungarian, to the point where a *litteratus* could also communicate in writing in his spoken language. Still, medieval Hungarian was not a courtly or an ecclesiastical language, as it displayed many features of the daily language, and at the same time we could not call it a common language, as only a small part of the intellectuals could speak and write in Hungarian, chiefly those who held public office. At the end of the 15th century—the beginning of the 16th century we find a significant group of *litterati* among whom Hungarian was the dominant language. Before the end of the 15th century, the number of writings in Hungarian could have been greater if, for instance, the clergymen had been in the habit of jotting down their sermons in Hungarian or if the monks had communicated in writing instead of orally. Besides, the literate nobles could have written their documents themselves instead of delegating this to their scribes or translators. Thus, we see a gradual transition from spoken Hungarian to written Hungarian. The *litterati* who used Latin in school and in their various social positions did not disregard the vernacular. On the contrary, they sought to elevate the Hungarian language and make it equal to Latin.
16. Tarnai, 267. The letter of Aladár Várdai, of 1486, is deemed to be the first known text of the *missilis* type. It includes forms of address and closing, elements of writing considered normal for a nobleman capable of easily writing in Latin.

17. P. Bodrogi Katalin, Daly Ágnes, B. Gergely Piroska et al., *Erdélyi Magyar Szótörténeti Tár*, edited by Attila T. Szabó, vol. 6 (Bucharest–Budapest: Kriterion, Akadémiai Könyvkiadó, 1993), p. 303.
18. Fraknoi, 31, 38, 40–44.
19. Fraknoi, 47. Students had to contribute to the remuneration of the teacher. For instance, at the school in Košice (Kassa) a teacher received an annual salary of 40 florins, the *collaborator* got 16, and the cantor 20 florins. In Levoča (Lőcse), teachers' wages fluctuated considerably during the second half of the 16th century: 40 florins in 1554, rising to 66 florins in 1566, then down to 44 florins 1574 and up again, to 50 florins, in 1587. In Bratislava (Pozsony), in the year 1567 a teacher was paid 25 florins. In the year in question, students had to pay 10 dinars in tuition.
20. *Erdély története*, vol. 1, *A kezdetektől 1606-ig*, edited by Gábor Barta, István Bóna, László Makkai, András Mócsy, and Zoltán Szász (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1986), 455–460. The 16th century saw significant changes in Europe, at both political and economic level, shaping the general development of society: the Ottoman conquests in Europe or the Spanish ones in America. The prices of virtually all goods went up. For instance, the price of wheat saw a four- to sixfold increase between the beginning and the end of the 16th century. In the Kingdom of Hungary, the price of wheat increased by a factor of five between 1520 and 1580. Consequently, information on the harvest of wheat could have been quite relevant of the members of the Sulyok family.
21. József Berey, Sándor Domahidy, György Bodnár, and Aladár Vende, *Szatmár vármegye: Magyarország vármegyéi és városai: Magyarország monográfiája*, edited by Samu Borovszky (Budapest: Országos Monografia Társaság, 1908), 566–614.
22. Berey, Domahidy, Bodnár, and Vende, 605–606.
23. Sándor Szabó, “Régi familiák—A Sulyok család története,” *Honismeret* (Budapest) 48, 3 (2020): 70–73.
24. RNA, Cluj, no. 83, fols 1–2.
25. Remig Békefi, *A Pécsi egyetem* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1909) *passim*.
26. Békefi, *A népoktatás története Magyarországon 1540-ig*, 142–143, 462.
27. Călin Felezeu, “Cadrul politic internațional (1541–1699),” in Ioan-Aurel Pop, Thomas Năgler, and Magyari András, eds., *Istoria Transilvaniei*, vol. 2: *De la 1541 până la 1711*, 3rd edition (Cluj-Napoca–Deva: Academia Română. Centrul de Studii Transilvane; Editura Episcopiei Devei și Hunedoarei, 2016), 13–30; Florin Nicolae Ardelean, *Organizarea militară în Principatul Transilvaniei (1541–1691): Comitate și domenii fiscale* (Cluj Napoca: Academia Română. Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2019), *passim*.
28. Remig Békefi, *A káptalani iskolák története Magyarországon 1540-ig* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1910), 132–139.
29. RNA, Cluj, no. 59. The first to appoint a bishop of Pécs was King Ferdinand of Habsburg; RNA, Cluj, no. 75. The second appointment was made by King John Zápolya.
30. RNA, Cluj, no. 103, fol. 1.

Abstract**Elements of Modernity in Written Communication in Transylvania: A Private Letter from the 16th Century**

The early use of vernacular in writing remains a challenging, insufficiently investigated topic in Romanian historiography (or for the current Romanian space). Transylvania, in particular, lends itself to this kind of research. Modernity is also characterized by the abandonment of the languages of culture in favor of national languages in written communication. Therefore, the present study proposes a discussion concerning the written vernacular in Transylvania, analyzing a private letter from the 16th century, written in Hungarian. This letter, from a son to his mother, reveals more than just the simple intimate universe: the writing allows us to approach several more complex aspects pertaining to the Transylvanian society in the century of transition from the voivodship to the principality, touching upon political life, the educational horizon, and more.

Keywords

written communication, private letter, Hungarian language, Transylvania