

ABSTRACT

THE WRITING HABITS OF THE KÁLNOKI FAMILY IN THE 17TH-18TH CENTURY TRANSYLVANIA

The volume 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 appears multiple times in Transylvania's history and, even if it is not one of the best-known noble families from the land of the Seklers, it plays its role 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 16th century, members of the military-able part of the Seklers' community, and served in leading positions of 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 17th-18th 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 18th century, family ties even with members of influential circles in the Habsburg Royal Court. In the field's scientific 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 A large part of his manuscripts are yet unpublished and some even unknown.

The volume gathers all the personal writings of four of the male family members of the Kálnokis. They illustrate four generations and are linked in a father-son relationship. The first one, chronologically speaking, is Kálnoki István; his son, Sámuel continues the line passing it to his son, Ádám; the last one is the latter's son, Antal. The biggest part of the texts written by these four noblemen is made of letters, but also contain 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), 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 field's scientific literature that, in the 17th to the 18th century Transylvania, the personal documents of self-representation do not appear dispersed throughout the noble class, but concentrated inside or among certain families and more frequently in the father-son relationship. But this period is not only the age of diaries and memoirs, as the intimate/personal written correspondences are also 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 spectre 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 17th and the 18th 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 analysis built on the above mentioned sources is composed of six main chapters, followed by the bibliography and an appendix, which gathers some representative texts written by the family members.

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. 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 analysed characters, Kálnoki István, Sámuel, Ádám and Lajos, together with their texts makes up a sub-chapter. I've considered as an essential part of the analysis the presentation of their living environment, their formation, career and their position in the period's social and historical context in which they lived and produced the analysed texts, all based on the specialized literature and on the sources found by the bibliographical and archive research.

The fifth chapter presents the library of the family, based on an inventory made in 1761, during Kálnoki Antal's life.

The last chapter 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 family members that replace the oral communication. We cannot assert that there is a writing habit or practice which ties the family's generations 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. These documents are not only documentary wri-

tings, illustrating the daily life of their ancestors, but became a part of the family's patrimony and their possession certifies the persistence of the family.

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 show 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.