

The Memory of Writing in the Banatian Municipal Institutions during the 15th–17th Centuries*

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Scripta manent

A SIGN OF literacy and a privilege of the elite, writing has contributed greatly to defining various epochs. Writing is primarily a feature of the urban milieus, while the rural environments complacently tend to stay lodged in orality until late in history. The primary information on document drafting pertained to the discipline of rhetoric. Along with the science of law, the drafting of documents was especially promoted in chapter schools like those from Cenad, Alba-Iulia and Oradea.¹ The knowledge of writing spread increasingly due to the writing of documents and raising awareness of their legal and evidentiary value, so much so that in the late 15th century, the clerical monopoly on the art of writing was no longer a reality.² The major argument is the fact that the urban milieus offered the premises of literacy in almost exclusive fashion. Thus, a study aiming to highlight the schools across the Hungarian Kingdom pointed out the existence of only very few schools in the rural environment, while urban education was much better represented.³ Since then, there have been novel approaches to the degree of literacy and the educational milieu, but major, significant amendments have not been brought as regards the already known data about the rural realities. It was only in the 16th and 17th centuries, with the secularization of the document-issuing institutions and the development of an educational network thanks to the spirit promoted by the religious Reformation that rural schools became an obvious reality, without, however, reaching the educational development level from the urban areas. Since the Middle Ages, an important factor for increasing literacy in the urban milieus had been the presence of ecclesiastical or secular institutions that were traditionally related to the urban environment: episcopal sees, county capitals, judicial seats, etc.

The fact that bureaucracy is an attribute of the modern world does not mean it did not exist, in one form or another, in the medieval and early modern worlds too. Medieval bureaucratic documents, in other words, the documents issued by the administrative,

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comital or royal, but also by the municipal institutions, contribute to conveying quotidian life through the mirror of the case studies they present.

Samples of forms coming from the royal chancery were introduced in use across the territory, different types of chancery documents forming tools that fulfilled their role within the network of communications. The practice of writing was generalized in the 14th century, being adopted in all institutions.⁴ The lingua franca of that period was Latin. Towards the middle of the 16th century, there also appeared documents in Hungarian, and in the 17th century, Hungarian documents represented the majority, only the consecrated formulas from the protocol and the escatocol being written in Latin. In the context of the secularization of writing, there occurred mutations in the municipal institutions as regards the status of those who drafted the documents. For instance, the notary turned from a mere scribe into a key figure among the town officials. He was the one who wrote down, controlled and preserved the written production, both the public one and, partially, the private one of the citizens. He also had the duty of knowing the legislation in force, the official languages and the procedure for drafting a document.⁵

An entity with some degree of autonomy, defined in so many contrasting ways throughout its evolution, from a promoter of trade⁶ to a space of moral and social dilution or a space of otherness, characterized by specific architectural attributes,⁷ the town contains, in essence, human value, the entrepreneurial spirit and the propensity towards self-assertion and hierarchy-construction. The diversity and complexity of the urbanization process were substantially reflected in the terminology designating these localities: *forum*, *oppidum*, *civitas*, *urbs*.⁸ The *oppidum-civitas* metamorphosis has most often been examined in historiography, while the use of these terms in parallel for the same locality has sparked controversy regarding this evolution. It is worth mentioning, however, that the situation of the localities was not homogeneous; hence, the amount of controversy. Documents may also use ambivalent terms for the same locality, without any explanation, probably either as a continuation of a tradition or to explain the higher status acquired at a certain point in time.⁹

The Banatian towns

THROUGHOUT EUROPE, medieval towns enjoyed administrative independence and certain rights and freedoms. In this sense, towns wrote their own corpora of urban laws and statutes, making thus their privileges, freedoms, or limitations public.¹⁰ Their legal status distinguished between various settlements with an urban character: boroughs or towns. The geographical and historical variations between towns in terms of size, function or political and institutional features render the definition of towns particularly difficult. Smaller towns, however, have been a constant characteristic of Europe, being five times more numerous than the other urban settlements put together.¹¹

Beginning in the 14th century, a network of over 800 boroughs and towns developed on the territory of the Hungarian Kingdom.¹² During the next century, in the area south of the Mureş there were identified around 40 such localities with the status

of boroughs.¹³ Similarly with the situation encountered in the rest of the European territory, territorial rulers, institutional identity, commercial characteristics, or the positioning on the traders' routes contributed to the emergence of boroughs/ towns in the Banat too. Only the documents issued by some of them have been preserved, enabling us to conduct an assessment of the writing produced by the municipal institutions.

The main urban centers of the Banat were Timișoara, Caransebeș, Lipova and Lugoj, the only ones that acquired the true attribute of urbanity south of the river Mureș. Mention should be made that most boroughs in the Banat developed in the lowlands of the province. Among the most representative were Cenad, which until 1552 was the center of a Catholic diocese, Carașova, Căvăran, Chery, Recaș, Becicherecul Mare (Zrenjanin today), Frumușeni (Szódi), Marginea or Faget. Typically these urban agglomerations must have been accustomed to the practice of writing economic documents, protocols or deeds related to the citizens' properties, which have not been preserved because of various vicissitudes. Therefore we will only focus on those centers whose written production has survived until today.

In order of importance, the most significant town in the Banat area was Timișoara. Coalescing around the royal city, the borough and then the town gained notoriety in the 14th century, in the context in which, for a period, this was the royal residence of King Charles Robert. In the 15th century, it acquired the status of *civitas* and polarized around it the political, social and economic situation of the Banat lowlands. Here were located the administration of Timiș County and a series of ecclesiastical institutions (the Archdeaconry of Timiș, convents, etc.). From the 15th century documents, we know that here was also a salt pantry, the town being located on the trade route between the Hungarian Pusztas and the Balkan territories. Also, in the next century, it was one of the centers where an educational institution operated, in relation to the spreading of the Reformation south of the Mureș. The rise and development of this European-style town was brutally interrupted in 1552, when the whole of the Plain Banat came under the domination of the High Ottoman Porte. Therefore, despite its importance, there is too little information to shape a coherent image of the medieval town.

Caransebeș was the second town in the Banat in terms of size and importance. Its special character was given by its ethnic, prevalently Romanian structure, one of the few towns of its kind in the Kingdom of Hungary. It was called *civitas nostra regia* and, from the end of the 15th century on, it benefited from the right of Buda at the request of the mayor judge Stephen Stoica.¹⁴ The enforceability of these positive consequences arising from the aforesaid right can be inferred from several consistent references to it as *oppidum*, even in the documents issued under its own seal, being referred to as *civitas* only in the next century. Although the residents of Caransebeș enjoyed many privileges and immunities, including the right of Buda city, as we mentioned before, the town never lost its character as a royal or princely property. This quality became particularly pronounced after 27 September 1615, when the Diets listed the boroughs of Caransebeș, Lugoj and Căvăran among the fiscal assets of the Transylvanian Principality.¹⁵

Lugoj, second in importance after Caransebeș in the mountain area, also began to evolve from the status of a borough, being mentioned as such in the same documents

from the first half of the 15th century.¹⁶ In parallel, in the late 14th century it was referred to as *civitas*, but also as *possessio*.¹⁷ In the mid-16th century, Queen Isabel granted Lugoj the title of *civitas*, together with a heraldic coat of arms representing a wolf sitting on a crown.¹⁸ Although it was, for short periods, the seat of the Ban of Caransebeș-Lugoj, the town was somewhat overshadowed by Caransebeș. In the 17th century, it distinguished itself in particular through its cultural and ecclesiastical activity, hosting a prosperous Romanian Reformed community, as well as an Orthodox one.¹⁹

Lipova was the most representative town in Arad County. Its importance entailed from its geographical location, by the river Mureș, and it flourished commercially, especially because it was a halting place for the waterborne salt-laden boats coming from Transylvania. Mentioned in documents since the beginning of the 14th century, it acquired, under the order issued by John Szapolya in 1529, the right of Buda and all the advantages ensuing thereof. Another important role of this town was that played by religion, an Orthodox diocese²⁰ being based at Lipova, several Catholic convents, as well as various charitable establishments.²¹ In the mid-16th century, the town was occupied by the Ottoman troops for a period of almost 50 years. The defter tax register that remained after the occupation rendered important social, ethnic and religious aspects, which undoubtedly derived, at least partially, from the period prior to the conquest.²² The 17th century documents of donation made by the princes of Transylvania,²³ after the town returned within the frontiers of the Principality, denote its continuing importance within the network of towns.

Căvâran is actually a satellite of the neighboring town, Caransebeș, evolving in a reverse direction compared with the latter. The diminutive appellative with which it was mentioned in 1561, that of *oppidusculi* (small borough),²⁴ may indicate the size of this locality compared to that of its neighbor. Although towards the end of the 16th century, its inhabitants received a reconfirmation of their privileges from Prince Sigismund Bathory, a further reconfirmation requested from the same prince in 1597 was denied and the statute of Căvâran was not changed.²⁵

Carașova, a borough formed around the fortress of Caraș, asserted itself as one of the relatively large settlements in the homonymous county. In the 16th century, its prestige waned to some extent, even though its legal status was that of *oppidum*. The proof that its importance decreased is reflected in the only document that has been preserved, issued by the local authority, a kind of mutual assistance pact with Caransebeș, possibly in the context of the changing political situation in the middle of the 16th century. Conquered by the Ottomans, it maintained its status as a borough for a while, and in the 18th century, the locality was referred to as a village, which was nonetheless one of the most populated across the Banatian territory.

We have also included Recaș among the Banatian urban centers given the surviving document issued by the borough authorities in 1493, even though, throughout its evolution, it was the private property of various noble families of Romanian origin,²⁶ without reaching the status of a town proper.

The urban institution. The documents it issued

THE HISTORY of urban institutions represents, in fact, the coalescence of particular case studies, and if they are convergent, their common characteristics can form a complete picture.

The Banatian urban institutions were essentially the same as throughout the European area, mentioned under various names, specific to the local languages: the mayor, provost, Burgomaster, judge, villic, Graf,²⁷ alongside the municipal council, composed of citizen jurors, and an enlarged council. Their duties can be quite easily grasped and identified, at least in the case of the former two;²⁸ what have not been discussed in historiography are the inter-institutional relations in the administrative hierarchy, i.e. the manner of relating to the institution of the ban or the comes, the relations with institutions that were relatively on the same hierarchical level, the castellans, or, conversely, with the rural institutions from the dependent villages, where applicable. The representative of the town was mentioned in the documents as *iudex suppremus*, *iudex primarius civitatis*, *fō biro*. In principle, he had explicit powers, functions and duties in the town administration—fiscal, judicial, administrative and military; these were also propagated onto the other parts of the institution—the jurors.

The source of heterogeneity and autonomy was the legal status of each individual town, in fact, the quality of the privilege of every borough/ town and the limits of these privileges. One index of the quality of the privilege granted to a town, which may concurrently indicate the manner in which it was seen or “saw” itself through its leaders was the number of jurors who participated in the town assemblies. The privileges granted to certain towns and boroughs also specified the number of jurors available to them; an evolution in this sense may be highlighted, given that while in the 14th century mention was made of 4–6 jurors, in the 15th century their number doubled or tripled, reaching 10–12 citizen jurors.²⁹ This was the name under which there functioned, as an organic part of the urban public authority, *iudices iurati*, *iuratis civibus civitatis*, *caeterisque iudices iurati*, *constituti iudices iurati*, *esküt birák*, *esküt polgárok*. They participated in the judicial seats and took an active part in the decision making process.

As shown in the documents we have identified, there were never more than six jurors mentioned for the towns in the highlands of the Banat, probably by virtue of previous traditions. This was the case of Caransebeș, where only six jurors were always mentioned in all the documents issued by the municipal institution. The situation was similar in Lugoj. At Căvâran there were six active jurors in 1561, the locality being referred to as a small borough, while in 1585 mention was made of 12 jurors who were members of the council.³⁰

In the towns from the lowlands, like in Lipova, for instance, the documents we have consulted indicate the existence of 11–12 jurors,³¹ ever since the first acts issued by the municipal institution, in 1514 (11 jurors) and, respectively, in 1520 or 1525 (12 jurors), most of them being members of the local guilds. Regarding the judge for Lipova, before 1526 only five such characters were mentioned by name, while from 1526 to 1551, when the town was under Turkish rule, two more such judges were mentioned.³² In Timișoara, we can only surmise that such an institutional body consisting of 12 mem-

bers existed, although we have no document issued by the city authorities that might indicate their real number. It is likely that in 1582, the 6 people who countersigned alongside the mayor judge Stephen Herczeg were the jurors of the city, but they were not explicitly mentioned as such.³³ If we take this number as real, then Timișoara had the same representation as Caransebeș, even though its importance was much greater.

The City Council—the centumvirate of the Transylvanian towns³⁴—most likely activated in the towns south of the Mureș, like in the Transylvanian towns, from the 15th century on, with the difference that it never consisted of 100 members, but at most of a number that did not exceed 50.³⁵ The documents did not mention the centumvirate as such, but this institution may be inferred from the formulas *universis senatores*, or *universis consules et ceterisque cives civitatis, varosnak tonacha*. In Caransebeș, in 1579, newcomers to the town were given the possibility/ favor of participating in this expanded council: *universi senatores et hospites*. Similarly, in Căvâran, guests were also co-opted in the locality assembly in 1561, a fact that was mentioned in a document concerning the sale of a meadow.³⁶

The survival of documents was determined both by external factors, natural disasters or armed conflicts, and by internal factors relating in particular to the valorization of the information contained therein. Thus, the kinds of documents issued by urban institutions that we have consulted are limited to three: pledge documents, sale-purchase papers, and testimonies. The town protocols, the one-thirtieth registers (Lipova, Caransebeș) as they are known for Transylvania, were probably destroyed during the Ottoman occupation of the Banat. Only tangentially was reference made to their existence. In the lawsuit filed in 1613 against Stephen Mișca, the former judge of Caransebeș, regarding the manner in which certain sums had been spent, the town protocol was demanded by the court of the ban as evidence.³⁷ The one-thirtieth registers have not been preserved, but, similar to the protocols, there is only a mention of the tricesimators from 1633, so such a document must have been drawn up too.³⁸

Only family archives have survived, given their practical value, especially due to the deeds of ownership. We are referring here to the Măcițaș, Fiath, Găman or Ujhelyi family funds. In the case of Caransebeș, the citizens managed to save a number of letters patent precisely because they were aware of their legal importance; these documents were later deposited in the collections of family archives, especially in the Măcițaș fund, which, after successive relocations, reached the deposits of the County Service of the National Archives. Thus, in an entry from 1688, Petru Călinoiu from Caransebeș noted down on the back of a letter patent from 1532: “When the powerful nation of the Muslims occupied the town of Caransebeș, this letter patent was snatched, in the town square, from under the feet of the Turks by Petru Călinoiu from Caransebeș, who took care of it in time. When, through the generous will of God, Caransebeș was restored to its sons by the brave armies of the High Roman Emperor, Gabriel Varga from Caransebeș asked me to hand him this letter patent.”³⁹ This was not the only letter patent kept in the Măcițaș fund: all of the letters patent of the town known to this day have been preserved in the archive of the same family. An immediate connection will obviously be made to the situation from the end of the 18th century, when the elite community of Caransebeș requested the Court of Vienna that their old traditions should be respected, including the election of the

comes. After several petitions, one of the local nobles, Peter Măciçaș was acknowledged as Comes of Severin. Most likely these letters patent reached the Măciçaș family fund since they were made available to the comes, who was expected to ensure the recognition of the old customs on the basis of these documents.⁴⁰

While in the case of the town by the Timiș other documents were saved through the efforts of some inhabitants, in other urban centers from the Banat the destruction of the administrative archives was quasi-complete because of the Ottoman impact.⁴¹ In Timișoara, for example, only four documentary pieces have been preserved. There are thirteen documentary items from Lipova and five deeds from Lugoj,⁴² two from Căvâran and only one from Recaș and Carașova each. All in all, we have identified an estimated 150 documents issued by the Banatian authorities, including here the copies made in the 19th century by Pesty Frigyes from family archives which are now scattered or destroyed. It goes without saying that 80% of this number related to the activity of the municipal institutions from Caransebeș. Chronologically, around 10% of all the documentary items preserved concerned the medieval period, the rest coming from the 16th and 17th centuries. Thus, for Caransebeș, over 58% of the documents were issued in the 17th century, namely 72, 38% in the 16th century (47 documents) and only four in the 15th century.

A record number of documents were issued by the municipal authorities of Caransebeș over a short period of time, in the years 1551–1552, which may be explained by the political events: the Ottoman troops had just conquered the Plain Banat and exerted pressures over the mountain territory. The subject of the 12 documents is entirely different from all the others: they represent a political correspondence whereby the municipal authorities informed the Transylvanian power of the situation in the territory.⁴³

Regarding the language in which the documents were drafted, as specified in general, the solution adopted was similar in the municipal institutions of the Banat: in the 17th century, documents were written exclusively in Hungarian, while in the second half of the previous century, the two languages, Latin and Hungarian, had been used in parallel. Thus, the titlature and the dating were still rendered in Latin, while the content of the document was written in Hungarian.

Regarding the support on which the documents were written, all the 123 deeds from Caransebeș were drafted on paper; of the eleven identified in Lipova, nine were written on parchment and only two on paper, the documents issued in Lugoj being also written on paper.

The type of documents through which information about the urban institutions can be filtered included, primarily for the area south of the Mureș, deeds of sale-purchase and not, as it happened in the case of the Transylvanian towns, for example, town protocols too.⁴⁴ The documents respected the following structure: the titlature of the judge, the mentioning of the jurors, the transaction itself (sale-purchase, pledge, exchange); then, as a rule, it was mentioned that the terms of the agreement had been made public in three judicial seats and that since there had been no opposition, the letter, reinforced with the town seal, had been confirmed. There are several documents that do not abide by this pattern: in 1544, a document was issued by the entire representative urban authority of Caransebeș, which took the judge's side not only verbally but also by written testimony. Mentioned alongside the judge were, this time, 49 people representing the town

council.⁴⁵ Similarly, the 12 documents issued between 1551 and 1552 were not typical. Since these were reports, the mentioning of the municipal officials was made at the end of the document. Only the judge appeared nominally, though not consistently, the jurors and the council being replaced by the formula *iuratique et universi inhabitatores/ceterique iurati et senatores*.⁴⁶ Another document that does not comply with the customary formulaic structure dates back to 1594, when the same town council, consisting of 21 members, evaluated the activity of the mayor judge, Louis (Lajos) Fiat, giving a verdict in his favor.⁴⁷ Finally, the fourth peculiar deed from Caransebeș was issued in the context of the conflict between the inhabitants of Caransebeș and the Serbs in town, at the beginning of the 17th century.⁴⁸

A sign of authority and recognition, the urban institution had the right to a seal which generally belonged to the town and not to the judge. The right to use the seal was regulated by the central authority under well-defined legislative circumstances only at the beginning of the 17th century, but these regulations essentially resumed a series of articles from the early 16th century.⁴⁹

In Timișoara, the first known seal dates from the document of 1582, from the period during which Stephen Herceg was the town judge. The analysis of its image has led to speculations that this seal was granted to the city in the context of the religious conflicts with the Bogomils in the 14th century. Lipova used a green wax seal, which was particularly visible on documents written on parchment, being hung with differently colored silk cords: red-green, blue-green.

In as early as the 15th century, mention was made that the old seal of the town of Caransebeș was applied to a deed of sale from 1456—*sigillo nostro civitatis antique*,⁵⁰ but the first known seal comes from the year 1503. Without a proper shield, in the seal field one can distinguish, in the upper tier, a Turkish head pierced by a sword, next to the heraldic insignia of the Kingdom of St. Stephen, while in the lower tier, there is the image of a fortress with two towers.⁵¹ It is possible that one of the two seals mentioned was in use at the end of the 16th and throughout the following century. As indicated by the documents, the two were *sigillo maiori civitatis*,⁵² which can be identical with *coreokbik pechete*⁵³ in the documents issued in Hungarian and *varosunk kisebbik pecheti*.⁵⁴ The seal was usually imprinted in green wax, with certain exceptions, for example, during the mandate of Daniel Kun, in 1616, when the wax used for sealing was red.⁵⁵ Although they were among the least important urban centers, both Carașova and Căvâran had the right to a seal, which they used in the documents they issued.

The conclusions that may be drawn regard the possibility of investigating events through the manner of document drafting, the speculation regarding the status of towns following the analysis of the documents issued by the urban institutions and, last but not least, the citizens' awareness of written documents as value-bearers. The—few but not negligible numerically—documents identified, issued by the municipal authority, contain reference data on the institution itself, its legal practices, its institutional profile and inter-institutional relations.



Notes

1. Sigismund Jako, "Începuturile scrisului în păturile laice din Transilvania medievală (Unele probleme noi ale paleografiei latine)," *Studii și cercetări de istorie Cluj* 1–4 (1956): 87.
2. *Ibid.*, 89.
3. Beckefi Remig, *A népoktatás története Magyarországon 1540-ig* (Budapest, 1906).
4. Ana-Cristina Halichias, "Interferența dintre mediolatina de redacție românească, limba maternă a notarilor și mediul lingvistic din Țările Române," *Analele Universității Ovidius, ser. Filologie* 15 (2004): 95–101.
5. Adrian Magina, "Notarii Caransebeșului în secolul al XVII-lea," *Analele Banatului, Serie Nouă, Arheologie-Istorie* 19 (2011): 303.
6. Henri Pirenne, *Orașele Evului Mediu*, (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 2000).
7. Leonardo Benevolo, *Orașul în istoria Europei* (Bucharest: Polirom, 2003).
8. Laurențiu Rădvan, *At Europe's Borders. Medieval Towns in the Romanian Principalities* (Leiden, Boston, 2010), 103.
9. Charles D'Ezlay, *Histoire des institutions publiques hongroises*, vol. II (Paris: Marcel Riviere et Cie, 1963), 248–259; Ladányi Erzsébet, "Libera villa, civitas, oppidum. Terminologiai kérdések a magyar városfejlődésben," *Történelmi Szemle* (1980): 450–475.
10. For the area pertaining to the Hungarian Kingdom, see S. Kolosvári, K. Óvári, eds., *Monumenta Hungariae Juridico-Historica. Corpus Statutorum Hungariae Municipaliū*, vol. I–VIII (Budapest), 1885–1897.
11. S. R. Epstein, ed., *Town and Country in Europe 1300–1800* (Cambridge: University Press, 2001).
12. Pál Engel, *Regatul Sfântului Ștefan. Istoria Ungariei Medievale 895–1526* (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2006). For the 14th century, however, Fügédi Erik in *Kolduló barátok, polgárok, nemesek. Tanulmányok a magyar középkorról* (Budapest, 1981) considers that this figure is erroneous, a fabrication of historiography.
13. Ioan Hațegan, *Habitat și populație în Banat (secolele XI–XX)* (Timișoara: Mirton, 2003), 129.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Szilágy Sándor, ed., *Monumenta Comititalia Regni Transylvaniae*, vol. VII (Budapest, 1881), 281; vol. XI (Budapest, 1886), 80–82, 110.
16. Pesty Frigyes, *Krassó vármegye története*, vol. II/1 (Budapest, 1881), 317.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. Adrian Magina, *De la excludere la coabitare. Biserici tradiționale, Reformă și Islam în Banat (1500–1700)*, (Cluj-Napoca: Centrul de Studii Transilvane 2011), 94–95, 107–110.
20. Marius Diaconescu, "Un episcop sârb la Lipova în 1542," *Arhiva Istorică a României* 1, 2 (2004): 29–30.
21. Márki Sándor, *Arad vármegye és Arad szabad királyi város története*, vol. I (Budapest, 1892), 180–181.
22. Fodor Pál, "Lippa és Radna városok a 16 századi török adoosszeírásokban," *Történelmi szemle* 3–4 (1997): 313–334.
23. Adrian Magina, "Lipova at the beginning of the 17th century. Documentary contribution," in D. Țicu, R. Gräf, eds., *Itinerarii istoriografice. Studii în onoarea istoricului Costin Feneșan* (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane), 297–321.
24. Magyar Országos Levéltár (MOL), R 287 Solyom Fekete Ferenc 1561.

25. Costin Feneșan, "Despre privilegiile Caransebeșului și Căvăranului în a doua jumătate a secolului al XVI-lea," *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie Cluj-Napoca* 20 (1977): 303–311.
26. It was initially owned by the family of Recaș, descending from 14th century refugee boyars from Wallachia. Later it became the property of the families Cerna and Bizere from Caransebeș, then of the family Danffy of Duboz, who were related to the original owners. See Csánki Dezső, *Magyarország történelmi földrajza a Hunyadiak korában*, vol. II (Budapest, 1894); Viorel Achim, "România din regatul medieval ungar și decimele bisericesti. Pe marginea unui act din 'Acta Romanorum Pontificum'," in Viorel Achim, *Banatul în Evul mediu. Studii* (Bucharest: Albatros, 2000); Livia Magina, "La famille Danffy de Duboz," *Banatica* 20/2 (2010): 21–47.
27. John Garrard, *Heads of the Local State: Mayors, Provosts and Burgomasters since 1800* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2007).
28. Dragoș Lucian Țigău, "Aspecte din activitatea prim-juzilor Caransebeșului," in V. Leu, C. Albert, D. Țicu, eds., *Studii bănațene* (Timișoara, 2007), 87–136; Lakatos Balint, "Városi nemesek karánsebesen a 15–16. század fordulóján," *Urbs. Magyar várostörténeti évkönyv* 3 (Budapest, 2008): 55–78.
29. Bácskai Vera, *Városok és polgárok Magyarországon*, vol. I (Budapest, 2007), 139.
30. Costin Feneșan, *Documente medievale bănațene (1440–1653)* (Timișoara: Facla, 1981), 68–69.
31. Petrovics István, "Lippa város igazgatásának és kézműiparának néhány kérdése a késő középkorban," in Bessenyei József, Draskóczy István, eds., *Pénztörténet-gazdaságtörténet. Tanulmányok Buza János 70. Születés napjára* (Budapest, Miskolc, 2009), 292–299.
32. Ibid.
33. Petrovics István, "The burgers of medieval Temesvar/Timișoara in the light of written sources," *Analele Banatului*, Serie Nouă, Arheologic-Istoric 19 (2004–2005): 317–323.
34. On the functioning of the centumvirate in Cluj, see László Pakó, "Rolul Adunării Centumvirilor în activitatea judecătorească a Clujului în cea de-a doua jumătate a secolului al XVI-lea," in Ioan-Aurel Pop, Susana Andea, eds., *Pe urmele trecutului. Profesorului Nicolae Edroiu la 70 de ani* (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2009), 225–238.
35. Pesty Frigyes, *A Szörényi hátság és Szörényi vármegye története* (Budapest, 1878), 233–234. In the document dated 20 September 1544, 49 town representatives were recorded.
36. MOL, R 287 Solyom Fekete Ferenc 1561.
37. Feneșan, *Documente*, 135–141.
38. Ibid., 158–161.
39. The document, dated 5 February 1532 in Sighișoara, was published by Costin Feneșan, "Despre privilegiile Caransebeșului până la mijlocul secolului al XVI-lea," *Banatica* 2 (1973): 157–163. For commentaries referring to the same document, see Costin Feneșan, "Caransebeșul după Caransebeș-note cu privire la destinul nobilimii și orașenimii din Banatul Caransebeșului și Lugojului după anexarea de către Poartă (1658)," *Patrimonium Banaticum* 3 (2004): 85–86.
40. For the complex situation at the end of the 17th century, see Costin Feneșan, "Comitatul Severinului la sfârșitul secolului al XVII-lea," *Tibiscum* 7 (1988): 189–226.
41. Petrovics, "The burgers," 320.
42. Pesty, *Krásso*, 4, 89; Pesty, *A Szörényi*, 3, 239–240, Feneșan, *Documente*; Costin Feneșan, "Banatul Caransebeșului și Lugojului între Habsburgi și Poartă în anul 1552," *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie* (1994), 182–183, 185, 187–188.
43. Feneșan, "Banatul Caransebeșului," 178–197.
44. Feneșan, *Documente*, 6–7.
45. See note 35.
46. Feneșan, "Banatul Caransebeșului," 178–199.
47. Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Könyvtára (MTAK) Kézirattár, Pesty Frigyes gyűjteménye.

48. MOL., F234 Erdélyi Fiscalis Levéltár, fasc. Q, 29.
49. Stephen Werbőczy, *The Customary Law of the Renowned Kingdom of Hungary in Three Parts 1517*, edited and translated by János M. Bak, Peter Banyó, Martin Rady, introduction László Péter (Idyllwild: Charles Schlaks, Budapest: Central European University, 2005), 242–243.
50. Lakatos Balint, “Városi nemesek”, 89–90.
51. Al. Ghidiu, Ion Bălan, *Monografia oraşului Caransebeş* (Caransebeş, 1909), 345.
52. MOL., F 234 Erdélyi Fiscalis Levéltár, fasc. Q, 25.
53. Examples of this kind are found in Feneşan, *Documente*; MTAK, Pesty Frigyes gyűjteménye.
54. MOL., Erdélyi Fiscalis Levéltár, fasc. Q, 16; MTAK, Pesty Frigyes gyűjteménye.
55. MOL., R 287 Sólyom Fekete Ferenc, 1616, 10.

Abstract

The Memory of Writing in the Banatian Municipal Institutions during the 15th–17th Centuries

A subject with manifold meanings, with numerous trails to be explored, the existence of urban settlements has been examined in European historiography on numerous occasions, emphasizing the status, type and value of towns, as well as the situation of the townspeople. What I aim in this study is to highlight the typology and nature of the documents issued by the authorities of the Banatian urban centers from the 14th until the 17th century, when the Banat became a territory belonging to the Ottoman power. Documentary testimonies of this kind reveal not only the immediate reality they present, but also the cultural impact of writing practices in the urban Banat.

Keywords

Town, municipal institution, the practice of writing, the Banat, the 15th–17th centuries