

## THE HUNGARIAN LANGUAGE ISSUE IN HUNGARY AND TRANSYLVANIA BEFORE 1795\*

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**Abstract:** *The Hungarian language issue and neoterism upraised as a consequence the transformation process within the European scholar world as of the political conflicts during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Reasons for that were the criticism of using Latin as a language of education as of erudition, of the lack of knowledge of the broad mass of the population, the Enlightened ideal of general education of all parts of society, and the politics of Germanisation by emperor Joseph II, to name just a few. The bloody suppression of the Jacobin movement (1795), however, caused a deep caesura within the Hungarian erudition as some important Hungarian scholars were sentenced to death. Scholars like Ferenc Kazinczy in the Kingdom of Hungary and György Aranka in Transylvania tried to encourage the Hungarian language through the foundation of societies and of Hungarian-speaking scholarly journals. Though most of them were just ephemeral due to personal, political and financial reasons, they pathed the way for the modernisation of the Hungarian language as of the Hungarian erudition during the 1830's and 1840's. Based on the tree-phase-model of Miroslav Hroch, this paper discusses the Hungarian language issue and neoterism in Hungary and Transylvania in three sections: First, reasons for the beginning of the Hungarian language issue as its modernisation will be considered. The second part treats the foundation of scholarly societies, while the last section focusses on the foundation of scholarly journals.*

**Keywords:** Hungarian erudition, Transylvanian erudition, 18th century, language issue, Ferenc Kazinczy, György Aranka.

About 1800, erudition underwent massive changes throughout Europe due to philosophical and political transformation processes. Most significant was the end of the old Republic of Letters and the raising of a new form of “national” erudition. While the old Republic represented an inclusive concept of erudition, the new one was excluding: By using Latin as *lingua franca*, the Republic of Letters was principally open to every scholar in Europe. Furthermore, it did not know any social or gender distinction. The national erudition, on the other hand, was focussed on local history, geography and nature, and used the vernacular to reach those parts of the *Patria* who could read but did not understand Latin. A primary goal was to promote “national knowledge” and thereby to encourage a sentiment of patriotism.

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The Kingdom of Hungary and the Principality of Transylvania were no exception in this movement. Both being multi-ethnic and polyglot countries, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century several discussions and disputes started about using the local vernacular instead of Latin as the language of education and erudition. This paper deals with the most important aspects of the language issue (dt.: “Sprachenfrage”, hu.: “nyelvkérdés”) of the Hungarian parts of the kingdom and principality before 1795. It seemed, however, reasoned to set the end date of this study with 1795 due to the violent suppression of Jacobin movement or Martinovics conspiracy of this year, which caused a caesura in the history of Hungarian erudition and the loss of some influential Hungarian scholars.

The language issue, in general, followed the concept of Enlightenment to educate all tiers of the nation to gain “useful patriots” (germ. “nützliche Landessöhne” / hun.: “hasznos hazafiak”). And to reach this goal, the scholars had to write the invitation card to the masses – as T. Nairn trenchantly expresses – in a language, they could understand<sup>1</sup>. The most people were in this time monoglot, even those, who were literate. B. Anderson assumes, the number of bilingual or even polyglot people were no higher than today, but it is for sure that the number of those, who could read Latin, was relative to the size of the population very, very small<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, a problem was that all languages – even French, though two hundred years earlier<sup>3</sup> – had not the vocabulary to serve as languages of erudition and science. Consequently, scholars were eager to reform, renovate, innovate and standardise their „mother tongue”, shortly a neoterism took place. In new-founded, though ephemeral societies and journals, Hungarian scholars promoted this movement, which is called in Hungarian “Magyar nyelvújítás”. Furthermore, they created a new form of publicity and spaces of interaction – as A. Debreczeni says – by combining the concept of popularity (“popularitás”, that is popular science or general education) and the traditional high literature (“litteratursság”, from Latin *litterae*, epistle or writing)<sup>4</sup>.

This paper has been divided into three parts: The first part will describe the initial situation, the second section will discuss the organisation of scholarly

<sup>1</sup> See Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain. Crisis and Neo-nationalism*, London, New Left Books, 1977, p. 340.

<sup>2</sup> See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London / New York, Verso, 2006, 38.

<sup>3</sup> See *ibidem*, p. 42, in reference to Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, vol. 1, Chicago, University Press of Chicago, 1961, p. 98.

<sup>4</sup> See Attila Debreczeni, “Litteratursság” és “popularitás. Közelítés a felvilágosodás kori Magyar irodalomhoz” (= “Litteratursság” and “Popularitás”. Approach to the Hungarian Literature in the Period of Enlightenment), in István Bitskey, L. Imre, *Tanulmányok a régi magyar irodalomról* (= Studies about the Old Hungarian Literature), (= Studia Litteraria; 36), Debrecen, a Debreceni Kossuth Lajos tudományegyetemen magyar és összehasonlító irodalomtudományi intézete, 1998, p. 131–150, here p. 134–137, 150. Though Debreczeni is completely right in his considerations about combining both concepts, “popularitás” and “litteratursság” are modern terms and not contemporary.

journals in the light of the Hungarian neoterism. The last part will cover the foundation of scholarly societies for the cause of the Hungarian language. By doing so, the paper is based on Miroslav Hroch's "Three-phase-model", according to which the Hungarian language issue and Hungarian neoterism before 1795 are to be placed in Phase A when scholars created specific elements of a nation for the integration of the masses<sup>5</sup>. Here, the language serves as this integrating element. Phase B (spreading of national consciousness) and Phase C (mass mobilisation and formulating of a political programme) took place in the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most of all in the 1830's and 1840's as the first phase of Magyarisation.

Although the history of Hungarian philosophy and education of the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century in Hungary and Transylvania has been subjects of research since decades<sup>6</sup>, for the time about 1800 a basic overview of the Hungarian language issue is still missing. In addition, the Hungarian neoterism of that time is hardly researched<sup>7</sup>. This current state of research is quite surprising concerning the long tradition in Hungarian literature history to treat this time about 1800 as the time of language and literature debates<sup>8</sup>. This paper will therefore give a first short overview about a pathbreaking time for the Hungarian erudition as for the Hungarian language.

<sup>5</sup> See Miroslav Hroch, *Das Europa der Nationen. Die moderne Nationsbildung im europäischen Vergleich*, (= Synthesen. Probleme europäischer Geschichte; 2), Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005, p. 45–47.

<sup>6</sup> György Kókay, *A magyar hírlap- és folyóiratirodalom kezdetei (1780–1795)* (= The Beginnings of the Hungarian Newspaper and Journal literature), (= Irodalomtörténeti könyvtár; 25), Budapest, Akadémiai kiadó, 1970; Domokos Kosáry, *Művelődés a VXIII. századi Magyarországon*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1983; Zsuzsanna Borbála Török, *Exploring Transylvania. Geographies of Knowledge and Entangled Histories in a Multiethnic Province. 1790-1918*, (National Cultivation of Culture; 10), Leiden / Boston, Brill, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> By now, a research project about the Hungarian neoterism is in preparation. – Yet so far mentionable are: Éva Ruzsiczky, *Irodalmi nyelvi szókincsünk a nyelvújítás korában. Kazinczy tájszóhasználatja alapján*, Budapest, Akadémiai kiadó, 1963; Eva Martins, *Studien zur Frage der linguistischen Interferenz. Lehnprägungen in der Sprache von Franz von Kazinczy (1759–1831)*, (= Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis. Studia Hungarica Stockholmiensis; 2), Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiksell, 1970; Loránd Benkő, *Kazinczy Ferenc és kora a Magyar nyelvtudomány történetében* (= Ferenc Kazinczy and His Time in the History of Hungarian Philology), (= Nyelvtudományi Értekezések; 113), Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1982; Ernő Taxner-Tóth, *Kazinczy és kora (1750–1817)* (= Kazinczy and His Time), Budapest, Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, 1987; Sándor Enyedi, *Aranka György és az erdélyi magyar nyelvvelő társaság* (= György Aranka and the Transylvanian Society for the Cultivation of the Hungarian Language), in: Sándor Enyedi (ed.), *Aranka György erdélyi társaságai* (= The Transylvanian Societies of György Aranka), Budapest, Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1988, p. 9–39.

<sup>8</sup> See Annamária Bíró, *Nemzetek Erdélyben. August Ludwig Schlözer és Aranka György vitája* (= Nations in Transylvania. The Dispute between August Ludwig Schlözer and György Aranka), (= Erdélyi tudományos füzetek; 272), Cluj, Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, 2011, p. 343.

### The language issues of the Hungarian erudition in the 18<sup>th</sup> century

Talking about the Hungarian language issue, firstly, three different traditions of language use can be distinguished, which had its roots in the 150-year-long separation of the Hungarian Kingdom during the Ottoman period: The Western part, which belonged to the Habsburg Empire, used Latin, German and French for administrative as private correspondences<sup>9</sup>. In middle Ottoman part, Turkish as Hungarian were both languages-of-state. Hungarian, however, supposedly served as a language of communication between the Turkish and Hungarian authorities, since there was no Turkish speaking scribe<sup>10</sup> and the Hungarian as the Ottoman sides needed translators. Eastern Hungary and Transylvania formed both a satellite state of the Ottoman Empire, where Hungarian stayed the most dominant language for all occasions<sup>11</sup>.

Though different reasons can be distinguished for the emergent of the Hungarian language issue, one of the most important aspect throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century was the increasing criticism of the usage of Latin as the language-of-state and of education. B. Anderson cuts right to the chase when saying:

"Latin hung on as a language-of-state in Austro-Hungary as late as the early 1840s, but it disappeared almost immediately thereafter. Language-of state it might be, but it could not, in the nineteenth century, be the language of business, of the sciences, of the press, or of literature, especially in a world in which these languages continuously interpenetrated one another"<sup>12</sup>.

This development started, as shall be argued in the following, already in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Using Latin was closely linked to matters of denominations: Most important religious spaces were those of monasteries and their schools. Furthermore, Protestantism played a crucial role in the intellectual life in Hungary and even more in Transylvania. Since the (re-)integration of the Kingdom of Hungary and the (Grand) Principality of Transylvania into the Habsburg Empire, the Viennese Court established the Catholic Church as the regulatory body in the multi-confessional culture of Hungary and Transylvania. Consequently, the whole education sector was under the control of the Catholic Church, even the non-catholic schools.

Thus, the monastery was still one of the most important spaces of erudition and education during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. During that time a lot of scholars worked as monastery teachers and preachers. Regarding the question of language, monastic orders played a decision-making role because every monastic order choose another

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<sup>9</sup> See István Tóth, *Hungarian Culture in the Early Modern Age*, in: László Kósa (ed.), *A Cultural History of Hungary. From the Beginnings to the Eighteenth Century*, Budapest, Corvina, 1999, p. 154–228, here p. 210.

<sup>10</sup> See *ibidem*, p. 210–211.

<sup>11</sup> See *ibidem*.

<sup>12</sup> B. Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

language of education. While the Jesuit order taught its pupils and students in Latin, Piarists and Minims used Hungarian as well ever since a free choice of teaching language was permitted under Empress Maria Theresia<sup>13</sup>. Before that, only Latin was legitimate. The politics of Germanisation of Joseph II. obliged German for a short time.

The discussion about Latin as the only language of education started also in the early 1700's because the young pupils could hardly understand this language. In 1725 Kelemen Mikes, a Jesuit himself complained about the missing language competences of his disciples. They had all high potential of becoming good historians or useful servants of the state if they only knew Latin<sup>14</sup>. In 1760, the főispán and poet Lőrinc Orczy (1718–1789) even dedicated a short poem to this problem:

”If it would be worth, that for nine long years

A School child is wasting his time because of the Latin language

And after graduating might not know more than the ephemeral”<sup>15</sup>.

The ongoing criticism greatly encouraged the schools of the Piarist order in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>16</sup>. In last three decades of this century, the Piarists controlled the largest and most important educational institutions, secondary schools as seminaries (in Győr, Nitra, Vác, Kalocsa, Veszprém, Pest) as academies (Pest, Kalocsa, Vác, Nitra, Carei, Debrecen, Cluj)<sup>17</sup>. The success of the Piarist based on their modern and open-minded approaches: Besides using Hungarian as the language of education, the order offered chances to those children, who did not descend of the high aristocracy<sup>18</sup>. Furthermore, as being a proponent of Thomism, it was much more progressive than the baroque scholastic of the Jesuits<sup>19</sup>. And thanks to its contacts to Italy throughout the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it paved the way for the Enlightenment in Hungary<sup>20</sup>, which ideas the pupils could access in the modern libraries of the Piarist monasteries<sup>21</sup>. Furthermore, the Jesuit order was dissolved in 1776, and the following year, the control of the educational sector was taken from the Catholic church and devolved to the State by the regulation of the *Ratio Educationis*.

<sup>13</sup> See Henrik Marczali, *Magyarország története II. József korában* (= The History of Hungary in the time of Joseph II.), vol. 2, Budapest, Peifer, 1888, p. 395.

<sup>14</sup> See D. Kosáry, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*: “Érdemes-e vajjon, hogy kilenc esztendő / Gyermek deák nyelvért veszjtse az időt / Ki jövőn ne tudjon, hanem csak veszendőt.” – The name of the poem is: “Álom a tudományok jobb rendben való intézéséről” (= Dream about a better-organised administration of studies).

<sup>16</sup> See *ibidem*, p. 108.

<sup>17</sup> See István Gerencser, *A felvilágosodás filozófiája és a XVIII. századi magyar piaristák* (= The Philosophy of Enlightenment and the Hungarian Piarist Order in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century), in “Athenaeum”, vol. 28/4, 1942, p. 347–364, here p. 363.

<sup>18</sup> See *ibidem*, p. 347.

<sup>19</sup> See *ibidem*, p. 348.

<sup>20</sup> See *ibidem*, p. 352.

<sup>21</sup> See *ibidem*, p. 355–356.

The distribution of monastic spaces of erudition and education was visible in Pest and Buda. After the Ottoman Period, both cities underwent a process of rebuilding and repopulation, since the initial situation at the beginning was more than disillusioning: Buda had lost its traditional position as an economic, political and cultural centre within Central Europe, whereas Pest was dilapidated. According to Vera Bácskai, in 1709 Pest had only 168 inhabited residences, but 83 abandoned and 68 collapsed houses<sup>22</sup>. In 1702, on the other hand, Buda had 1.648 registered tax-payers and therefore – if extrapolated –, about 9.000 inhabitants.

Rebuilding and repopulating Pest and Buda was a specific political goal of the Viennese Court, whereby it colonized Buda particularly with German-speaking, Catholic and loyal to the Habsburg Crown settlers. In the former royal city, the baroque architecture of the here dominant Jesuit order characterised the cityscape<sup>23</sup>. In Pest, however, the Piarist and Minims formed a more demure cityscape<sup>24</sup>. Along with the architectonic differences came along, again, the differences in teaching languages. While Latin shaped the education in Buda (and German the daily life), Hungarian continuously grew in popularity in Pest<sup>25</sup>. As a consequence, the aristocrats and intellectuals seek the proximity to the Piarist and Minims and therefore preferred to settle in Pest. Simultaneously, the German settlers created in Buda a particular social milieu. Although they constituted the former missing bourgeoisie, they did not represent an urban educated middle class. In contrast to other German groups in Hungary and Transylvania (e. g. Zipser Germans, Danube Swabians or Transylvanian Saxons), the one in Buda did not create a specific culture or literature. A possible explanation might be the religious confessions of those German-speaking groups: While most of them were of Protestant faith, the Germans in Buda were Catholic and had therefore hardly any tradition of German literature.

In contrast to the rest of the Habsburg Empire, in Hungary and Transylvania, the Protestantism was legit and tolerated. Protestant schools were spread all over the Kingdom and Principality, although the evangelical was more present in the Western parts of Hungary, whereas the Reformed church was more common in the Eastern party of Hungary and Transylvania<sup>26</sup>. Essential lyceums were i. a. in Sopron, Bratislava, Sárospatak, Debrecen, Târgu Mureş or Cluj, whereas secondary schools were in smaller towns like Banská Štiavnica or Košice.

<sup>22</sup> See Vera Bácskai, *Budapest története 1686-1873*, in Vera Bácskai, Gábor Gyáni, András Kubinyi (ed.): *Budapest története a kezdetektől a 1945-ig* (= The History of Budapest from the Beginnings until 1945), (= Várostörténeti tanulmányok; 6), Budapest, Főváros Levéltára, 2000, p. 77–126, here p. 77.

<sup>23</sup> See Lajos Nagy, György Bonis, *Budapest Története. A török kiűzetéstől a marcius forradalomig. 1686–1848* (= The History of Budapest. From Ottoman Siege until the March Revolution), vol. 3, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1975, p. 194.

<sup>24</sup> See *ibidem*, p. 194.

<sup>25</sup> See *ibidem*, p. 195.

<sup>26</sup> See D. Kosáry, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

Depending on the school and town, the teaching language was either Hungarian or Latin. However, it was impossible for Protestants to study in Hungary or Transylvania since there were no Protestant universities, but only Protestant collegia. So many students went abroad to the universities in Germany and the Netherlands. Although some scholars stayed abroad, many of them returned to Hungary and Transylvania and brought a lot of “know-how” along.

Due to the lack of a dominant cultural centre within Hungary during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, smaller and peripheral cultural centres formed all over the kingdom, e. g. Debrecen, Sopron, Bratislava, Nitra, Győr, Pécs or Szeged. Here, Košice must be highlighted as one centre of the Hungarian neoterism: Before the Jacobin conspiracy in 1795, here the so-called *Triász* (the scholar Ferenc Kazinczy, the former Jesuit Szabó Dávid Bároti and the poet János Batsányi) worked to innovate, standardise and promote the Hungarian language as shall be further discussed shortly.

In Transylvania, however, a Hungarian speaking majorities were in in the Northern parts, forming a centre in Cluj. By tradition, Transylvania had a conscience of using Hungarian as a vernacular as a language of erudition. Again, the reason for this was the Protestant denomination of Hungarians living within the former Ottoman satellite state. Ever since the reigning Prince Gábor Bethlen (1580–1629) supported the propagation of the Protestantism as saying the Mass in the vernacular, using Hungarian became a matter of course<sup>27</sup>. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that in Cluj the first “Society for the cultivation of the Hungarian language” (hun.: *A magyar nyelvvelő társaság*) was founded, which will be explained in more detail later.

A significant conflict was caused by the language edict of Joseph II. in 1784, which proclaimed German to be the language-of-state<sup>28</sup>. Different political representatives of different counties spoke against this edict and demanded Hungarian to be the language-of-state, either as the single language or next to Latin. So, from the county of Esztergom, it was called wrongful that in an independent state like the Kingdom of Hungary a foreign should be installed while the Habsburgs allowed their Italian and Belgian lands to use their vernacular<sup>29</sup>. Also, the county of Maramaros claimed Hungarian to be equivalent to other literary languages in Europe while determining the *status quo* of Latin as being the most evolved language<sup>30</sup>.

In general, the progressive politics of Joseph II. were seen as an offend to the Hungarian constitution and the feudal rights of the Hungarian noble families.

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<sup>27</sup> See Katalin Péter, *Die Blütezeit des Fürstentums*, in: Béla Köpeczi (ed.), *Kurze Geschichte Siebenbürgens*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990, p. 302–404, here p. 347.

<sup>28</sup> The still best overview of this conflict gives Marczali’s chapter „A német nyelvnek állami nyelvvé tétele” (= Thesis about the German language as language-of-state); see *ibidem*, p. 384–405.

<sup>29</sup> See *ibidem*, p. 395.

<sup>30</sup> See *ibidem*, p. 396.

Although this problem cannot be discussed here due to its more than complicated nature, it encouraged a Hungarian national movement and a conscience of the Hungarian language. Another issue, which can be just mentioned here as well, was the upcoming national conflicts in Transylvania<sup>31</sup>. Whereas the Hungarian aristocrats were by tradition the political leaders of the Principality, the Saxons and Romanians started to insist on their historical rights. Even though this local limited conflict, it encouraged the national idea of the Hungarians of Transylvania.

Briefly summarized, this section showed that the issue of the Hungarian language was an object of discourses since the early 1700's. Though Latin was the language-of-state of the Kingdom, this did not mean that Latin was the language of communication or in any way a vernacular. Using Latin as communication and print language by scholars was merely a practice of the European Republic of Letters than a proof of a general application of Latin as a language of communication within the Kingdom. As could be seen, there had been a great deal of criticism, which focusses on the fact that Latin was not practical as a teaching language in middle schools. Here, it depended on the monastic order respectively confession, which language was chosen of being a teaching language. However, as can be seen from their support of the Hungarian speaking Piarists and Minims, many of the Catholic aristocrats and scholars, in general, favoured the use of Hungarian.

### **The beginning of Hungarian scholarly journals**

In the time of Josephenism, the first “Hungarian” newspapers appeared both in German and in Hungarian. According to Kókay, the time from 1780 until 1795 was the initial phase of the beginning of a Hungarian speaking press. 1780 was the date of publication of the first Hungarian newspaper called “Magyar Hírmondó” (Hungarian Herald)<sup>32</sup>, which was founded by Mátyás Rát<sup>33</sup> in Bratislava and ran from 1780 until 1788. The end of this first phase marked again the Jacobin movement of 1795<sup>34</sup>. It was a general characteristic of this time that newspapers, journals and – as will be seen shortly – societies had just an ephemeral life-span within the Hungarian Kingdom. It was the same case with German newspapers and scholarly journals, which were written for the readership of this kingdom, like e. g. “Pressburgisches Wochenblatt zur Ausbreitung der Wissenschaft und Künste” (1771–1773)<sup>35</sup>, “Ungrisches Magazin” (1781–1787)<sup>36</sup> or “Merkur von Ungarn” (1786–1787)<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> Concerning the national dispute among scholars, see e. g. A. Biró, *cit. op.*

<sup>32</sup> There was an eponymous paper, which was published in Vienna from 1792 until 1803 by different editors like Görög Demeter (1760–1833) or József Márton (1771–1840).

<sup>33</sup> Mátyás Rát (1749–1810) was an evangelical priest and linguist.

<sup>34</sup> See G. Kókay, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>35</sup> „Bratislaver Weekly Paper for the Spread of Science and Arts”, edited by Károly Windisch (1725–1793) in Bratislava.

<sup>36</sup> „Hungarian Magazine”, edited as well by Károly Windisch in Bratislava.

<sup>37</sup> See *ibidem*, p. 417–420.



Though being named “mercury”, “Merkur von Ungarn” was an early form of a scholarly paper. Its editor Márton György Kovachich (1744–1821) seemed to have chosen German as the language of his paper to reach a broader readership. As today, choosing the language of publication was a strategic question at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. If one published in Hungarian, the readership would just be Hungarian speakers and therefore much smaller than if one published in German, which was a common language across large parts of Europe. Latin, however, was already outshined at this time. Kovachich’s explanation of why he chose German and not Latin or Hungarian, reflects this process:

”[...] in which language and for who had one write a scholarly journal? In Latin? [Though] it was, of course, the language of erudition, but the major part [of the readers] had had no use of this. The Hungarian language is not yet cultivated enough to be a language of erudition, and the major part of those, who knew it, have not the profession [= knowledge, education] to read scholarly journals. [...]

We preferred German instead of Latin, because regarding the new terms, that are unknown to the Latins, it is not possible to write without compulsion, without new words and terminologies, and therefore a pure and good Latin [...]. The German language seemed for us the most proper and most appropriate in our time because it will not only be the dominating one in political causes but in future, in scholarly cases the lectures shall be held in German as well [...]”<sup>38</sup>.

As it can be seen, by choosing German as the language of publication, Kovachich hoped to gain recognition for the Hungarian scholarly achievements. In addition, the first pages of the first issue of “Merkur von Ungarn” was a defence of the history and current state of Hungarian erudition:

”But that it would be so dark here, even during the Middle Ages and even today, as some accuse us of being, is without any reason: we have never been in no way inferior to more than three nations of Europe<sup>39</sup> regarding Enlightenment and

<sup>38</sup> Márton György Kovachich, *Entwurf einer Literaturzeitung für das Königreich Ungarn und dessen Kronländer, welche in der freyen königlichen Haupt- und Residenzstadt Ofen von einigen patriotischen Liebhabern der Litteratur, unter der Aufschrift: Merkur von Ungarn, heftweise monatlich zu 6 Bogen auf das Jahr 1786. herausgegeben wird*, in: Márton György Kovachich, *Merkur von Ungarn, oder Litteraturzeitung für das Königreich Ungarn und dessen Kronländer*, vol. 1 (1–6), Pest, Lettnerische Schriften, 1786, p. 1–21, here p. p. 10–12: “[...] den in welcher Sprache, und für wen hätte man eine gelehrte Zeitung schreiben sollen? in der lateinischen? diese war freylich die gelehrte Sprache, aber der größte Theil hätte davon doch keinen Nutzen schöpfen können. Die ungarische ist weder allgemein noch kultiviert genug für eine gelehrte Sprache, und der größte Theil deren, die derselben kundig sind, hat nicht den Beruf, gelehrte Zeitungen zu lesen. [...]

Die deutsche Sprache haben wir der lateinischen vorgezogen, weil sich in unsern Zeiten von so vielen neuen, den alten Lateinern unbekannen Gegenständen nicht ohne Zwang, ohne neue Wörter und Wendungen, und also nicht rein und gut lateinisch schreiben läßt [...]. Die deutsche Sprache schien uns die schicklichste zu seyn, und sie ist eben unseren jetzigen Zeitumständen auch die angemessenste, da sie nicht nur im politischen Fache herrschende wird, sondern auch im Gelehrten der Vortrag künftig in derselben geschehen soll [...]”

<sup>39</sup> This three nations might be France, England, and Germany.

welfare; but there were also periods of equality; we have a considerable number of writers and artists of several disciplines within our nation, who would not cut a bad figure abroad, but the lack of opportunities to bring to light that, what happens in our literature, was always the reason, they had to stand in the darkness”<sup>40</sup>.

According to this, Kovachich did not choose German because he did not know Hungarian, but because he wanted the world to know about the scholarly achievements of Hungarians. Furthermore, his need to defend his *Patria* was a common characteristic of several folks within Europe at the beginning of their national movement. S. Mitu describes this phenomenon for the Romanians and the so-called “Transylvanian School” as the need to make an enemy image out of the “foreigner”, the “other”, whose primary goal is the defamation of “our” nation<sup>41</sup>. It was the same with the Hungarian language, whose supporters – at least some of them – created the image of the Hungarian nation, culture, and language to be constantly threatened by the surrounding nations. This “threat scenario” became a prominent, though foreign support by Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), who foresaw the extinct of the Hungarian language<sup>42</sup>.

However, Hungarian was never at the risk of extinction<sup>43</sup>, but in fact became more prominent as a print language in the last decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century: During Josephenism, the number of Latin publications fell from 49.9 percent to 38.9 percent, as simultaneously the works in Hungarian increased from 27.4 percent up to 33.8 percent. Also, the German ones grew as well from 16.6 percent up to 23.3 percent<sup>44</sup>. Yet it was still a problem that the language did miss the necessary vocabulary to serve as a language of erudition and science as Kovachich already criticised. In addition, the Hungarian print language was not yet standardised but characterised by different local parlances.

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 2–3: “Daß es aber bey uns, selbst in den mittleren Zeiten, oder auch noch jetzt so finster wäre, wie uns einige vorwerfen, ist wirklich unbegründet: wir haben nie mehreren, als etwa höchst drey Nazionen Europens in der Aufklärung und dem Wohlstande nachstehen müssen; es gab aber auch Perioden, da wir mit ihnen in Gleichgewichte standen; wir können von unserer Nation Schriftsteller und Künstler in verschiedem Fache aufweisen, die unter den ausländischen keine schlechte Figur Machen würden; aber der Mangel an Gelegenheit, das, was bey uns in der Litteratur geschieht, gehörig bekannt zu Machen, war immer die Ursache, saß sie im Dunkeln steckten.”

<sup>41</sup> See Sorin Mitu, *Die ethnische Identität der Siebenbürger Rumänen. Eine Entstehungsgeschichte*, (= Studia Transylvanica; 29), Cologne / Weimar / Vienna, Böhlau, 2003, p. 17–54.

<sup>42</sup> This “prophecy“ was not without criticism by Hungarian scholars, e. g. András Dugonics called him a “German donkey“ and others declared him as the enemy of the Hungarian nation; see János Rathmann, *Die “Volks-“Konzeption bei Herder*, in, Ulrich Herrmann (ed.), *Volk – Nation – Vaterland*, (= Studien zum achtzehnten Jahrhundert; 18), Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag, 1996, p. 55–61, here p. 58.

<sup>43</sup> Although Herder was one of the great minds of his time, one must consider, he did not speak Hungarian and did not do any research in Hungary or Transylvania, so he could not have any insight about the situation of the Hungarian language.

<sup>44</sup> See D. Kókay, *op. cit.*, p. 531.

The central figure of this movement was Ferenc Kazinczy (1759–1831). Born in Érsemlyén (County of Bihar) into a Protestant family, his interest in Hungarian local studies as the Hungarian language developed already during his school time. Already at the age of 16, he wrote a work about the Geography of Hungary, which was published in the very same year (1775). In the following year, he translated the novel “Die Amerikaner” (“The Americans”; in Hungarian: “Az amerikai Podotz és Kazimir keresztyén vallásra való megtérése”)<sup>45</sup>, which his compatriot György Bessenyei composed originally in German. During his studies in Sárospatak (1769–1779), he read ancient Greek and Latin literature and showed a well-developed sense of aesthetics. In 1779, he moved to Košice, then to Eperjes and later to Pest, before he was named district superintendent of the elementary schools of Košice in 1786. Five years later, he was suspended and continued to live just for literature and agriculture. In 1794, he was arrested due to his engagement in the Martinovics conspiracy. While being arrested, he continued his writing works and – as legend has it – should have used rust, melted chocolate, and even his own blood to write. Be as it may, in this time he translated i. a. Goethe, Lessing, Molière, and Sterne. Though condemned to a death sentence, he was freed from prison in 1801. He married and lived in Széphalom (county of Zemplén) until the end of his live in 1831. Albeit his experiences of imprisonment, he was not discouraged but continued eagerly to work for the reformation and innovation of the Hungarian language<sup>46</sup>.

In addition to his efforts to translate and wrote original works in Hungarian, he was highly engaged in correspondence with other Hungarian scholars. More than 5,000 letters to and from him were edited in 23 volumes between 1890 and 1960, which are therefore one of the most important sources for the Hungarian neoterism. However, between the written connection, he had a close personal contact to the former Jesuit, poet and teacher monk Szabó Baróti Dávid (1739–1819), and the poet János Batsányi (1763–1845). At that time (pre-1795), all three lived in Košice and formed the so-called “Triász”.



Fig. 1. Ferenc Kazinczy;  
© Österreichische Nationalbibliothek,  
Bildarchiv Austria

<sup>45</sup> „The Repentance of the Americans Podotz and Kazimir in regard to their Christian faith”.

<sup>46</sup> See E. Martins, *op. cit.*, p. 106–107; Albert Tezla, *Hungarian Authors. A Biographical Handbook*, Cambridge, The Belknap Press & Harvard University Press, 1970, 301–304.

One of their most noteworthy achievements was the edition of the scholarly journal “Magyar Museum”<sup>47</sup>. Despite of its short lifespan (1788–1792), it was of highest significance for the Hungarian language issue as it was the first literary journals in the Hungarian language. Thus, the name “Magyar Museum” was inspired by the German journals “Deutsches Museum”, founded in 1776 by Heinrich Christian Boie<sup>48</sup>.

Therefore, the aim of the “Magyar Museum” was to be a collection of works which were written in Hungarian. Therefore, Bároti, Batsányi, and Kazinczy called in the very first edition of the Magyar Museum upon their compatriots to send in their works if they wish them to be published. Everything was printed as long as it served the idea of the *Patria*<sup>49</sup>. The only exception was that no papers were published which were directed against a person or a religion<sup>50</sup>. It indicates that not religion drew the dividing line within the population like it was in centuries before, but an early national as ethnic concept. However, most favoured were Hungarian poetry:

“Most of all the to poetry devoted writers will have [a place] in our collection because those contribute to the augmentation of our national language the most rectilinearly”<sup>51</sup>.

Furthermore, the “Magyar Museum” called upon scholars and scholarliness to promote and foster the Hungarian language. As useful as Latin may be as a print language, the nation also consists of those, who do not understand Latin and are condemned to live onwards in ignorance<sup>52</sup>. Already twenty years before, the Transylvanian scholar Ferenc Benkő (1745–1816)<sup>53</sup> explained his choice of the Hungarian language as the print language for his “Magyar Mineralogia” (1786)<sup>54</sup>, which was the very first study about minerals written in the Hungarian language, as follows:

“The purpose of our studies is to serve the *Patria*;

To the loyalty belongs this sacrifice”<sup>55</sup>.

His words contain the directive of the upcoming Hungarian local studies: The first and foremost aspiration of scholars be to enlarge the knowledge of the

<sup>47</sup> See for the history of this journal Kókay, *op. cit.*, p. 437–452.

<sup>48</sup> See the letter of Godeon Ráday, which he enclosed to his letter to Ferenc Kazinczy, (02.06.1788): “Batsányi azt javasla, hogy nevezzük *Magyar Museumnak*. Ráday javolja azt, mert ez emlékeztet a’ Német Músemra (= Batsányi suggests that we name it “Magyar Museum”. Ráday recommends this because it reminds of the German Museum).”

<sup>49</sup> See *ibidem*, p. XXI–XXII.

<sup>50</sup> See *ibidem*, p. XXII.

<sup>51</sup> Baróti Dávid Szábo, János Batsányi, Ferenc Kazinczy, *Be-vezetés (= Introduction)*, in, *Magyar Museum*, vol. 1, 1788, p. III–XXIV, here p. XXII; see as well the digital edition by Attila Debreczeni, [http://deba.unideb.hu/deba/magyar\\_museum/index.php?xf=mm\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_o](http://deba.unideb.hu/deba/magyar_museum/index.php?xf=mm_1_1_1_o) (26.12.2017).

<sup>52</sup> See *ibidem*, p. VI–VII.

<sup>53</sup> He is one example of those Protestants, who went for his studies abroad and came back. After having finished his studies Göttingen and Jena (both Germany), he returned to Transylvania and became a cleric and mineralogist in Aiud.

<sup>54</sup> See Ferenc Benkő, *Magyar Mineralogia*, Cluj, Réformatus Kollégium, 1786.

<sup>55</sup> See *ibidem*, p. §1: “Tudományunk’ tzelja Hazánk’ szolgáttya; / A’ szegény Hívségnek tsak ez Áldozattya.”

fatherland. Studying the fatherland is here an act of sacrifice. Patriotism is the reason why he chose Hungarian as the language of his work and not – as it was still common – Latin. The book was written for Hungarians, not for European scholars.

Being a common practice in Europe to take antique art and literature as an example, Kazinczy sometimes even called himself “Orpheus” in his letters<sup>56</sup>. In one letter Ádám Horváth named him “my Arion”<sup>57</sup> what Kazinczy cancelled and replaced by “Orpheus”<sup>58</sup>. This name he chose as his freemasonry name<sup>59</sup>.

In addition, “Orpheus” (1789–1790) was the name of the second scholarly journal which Kazinczy edited. He quitted his work as an editor for the “Magyar Museum” because personal as professional disagreements with Batsányi and founded “Orpheus”<sup>60</sup>. While the “Magyar Museum” was a forum to collect everything that covers a Hungarian topic, “Orpheus” had a special focus on literature. Thus, poetry was not only in favour, but highly demanded as the main issue of the paper was – next to the translation of antique classics as contemporary literature – to publish so-called “Originalgedichte” (German for original poems) or “Gelegenheitsgedicht” (occasional poem). The supporters of the Hungarian neoterism used both German terms to name their self-composed poems due to an equivalent Hungarian term. Only later the term was translated almost word for word into Hungarian (“eredeti munka” = original work). Regarding this, it speaks for itself when Kazinczy called himself “Orpheus”, identifying himself with the greatest singer of Greek mythology.

The intention of those original works was the progression of the Hungarian language by imitating the style of ancient poetry. By doing so, they seemed to follow the idea of the German art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768):

“The only way for us to become great, if possible, even inimitable, is the imitation of the ancients [...]”<sup>61</sup>.

Following this idea, the first edition of “Orpheus” (1789–1792, eight volumes)<sup>62</sup> consisted both of translations as of original works. The very first two pages of this first edition, however, were a French letter along with its Hungarian translation, which the court chancellor of Transylvania Károly Pálffy (1735–1816) wrote to József Péczeli (1750–1792) in May 1787. Péczeli had translated the “Henriade” of Voltaire into Hungarian, wherefore Pálffy is praising his fellow

<sup>56</sup> See e. g. the letter of Ferenc Kazinczy to Márton György Kovachich, (17.01.1790); quoted in KazLev II, p. 9.

<sup>57</sup> Arion was a Greek poet and singer during the 7<sup>th</sup> century B. C.

<sup>58</sup> See letter of Ádám Horváth to Ferenc Kazinczy, (21.01.1790); quoted in KazLev II, p. 10, annotation 1.

<sup>59</sup> See Réka Lengyel, Gábor Tüskés (ed.), *Learned Societies, Freemasonry, Sciences and Literature in 18<sup>th</sup> century Hungary. A collection of Documents and Sources*, Budapest, MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Irodalomtudományi Intézet, 2017, p. 100.

<sup>60</sup> See *ibidem*, p. 105, annotation No. 8.

<sup>61</sup> Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Gedanken über Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerey und Bildhauerkunst*, Dresden/Leipzig, Waltherische Handlung, 1756, p. 3: “Der einzige Weg für uns, groß, ja, wenn es möglich ist, unnachahmlich zu werden, ist die Nachahmung der Alten.”

<sup>62</sup> For the history of this journal see again Kókay, *op. cit.*, p. 466–475.

countryman. By translating this epic poem, which also imitated the antique poetry, “[...] you make it clearly visible how rich our language is, and that it does not indulge in anything for the force of expressions”<sup>63</sup>.

This quote contains three main characteristics of the Hungarian language issue of this time: First, although Pálffy drafted his letter in French, he knew Hungarian and a patriotic feeling for this language. Secondly, translating of foreign literature was a way of expressing the greatness of the own language, and therefore, thirdly, equality of the Hungarian language to other languages is proven.

In addition to the patriotic sentiment of this letter, Pálffy states that this translation enriches the Hungarian Literature and honours the *Patria* (“Vous venez Monsieur, enrichir la Litterature Hongroise d’un Ouvrage qui fera honneur a la Patrie, et qui Vous merite tous les suffrages des Vos-Compatriotes.”)<sup>64</sup>. Furthermore, he promises to show Emperor Joseph II. Péczeli’s work to show the Emperor the progress and talents of his lands<sup>65</sup>. Regarding the conflict about the politics of Germanisation of Joseph II., a statement like this is most likely not without a political undertone. Considering the previous sentences, Pálffy seems to express his support for the Hungarian language issue as the Hungarian language being as suited to serve as language-of-state as much as German is.

As this section showed, before 1795 the centre of the Hungarian neoterism was Košice with Kazinczy as the leader of this movement. Editing the “Magyar Museum” and “Orpheus”, he published the two very first literary journals in the Hungarian language. Most significant is the concept of these journals to be, on the one hand, a collection of every kind of works concerning Hungary and the Hungarians, and on the other hand, to be a forum for everyone who wrote for the Hungarian cause.

### Foundation of scholarly societies

The linguistic efforts of the decades of 1800 promoted the foundation of scholarly societies. Already in 1756 the Transylvanian scholar Péter Bod (1712–1769) demanded such a society for the promotion of the Hungarian language as a language of erudition:

“For this purpose, it would be good to found a society consisting of learned men for the adornment of the Hungarian language, like it already exists in other nations”<sup>66</sup>.

<sup>63</sup> Letter of Károly Pálffy to József Péczeli, (19.05.1787); quoted in *Orpheus*, vol. 1, 1790, p. 11–12, here p. 12: “[...] Vous faites bien voir, combien notre langue est riche, & qu’elle ne le cede a aucun pour la force des expressions.”

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 11–12.

<sup>65</sup> See *ibidem*, p. 12.

<sup>66</sup> Péter Bod, *Az Isten, vitézkező anyaszentegyháza állapotjának, és világ kezdetétől fogva a jelen való időig sokféle változásának rövid Historiája* (= God, the short History of the Manifold Changes the Condition of the Holy Mother Church from the Beginning of the World until present time), Basel, Im-Hof Rudolf János, 1760, p. 8–9: “E végre azért igen jó volna tudós emberekből álló Magyar Tarsaságot a’ Magyar nyelvnek ékesgetésére, mint más Nemzetekben vagyon, fel állítani.” – Another version of this quotation is to be found in S. Enyedi, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

After this demand of Bod, it took almost thirty years until a first attend was made. Again, it was the Triász which tried to realise such a society. Originally the Triász was planned to be a society as a letter of the poet Gedeon Ráday (1713–1792) reveals:

“With great pleasure, I received the letter of Mr [Kazinczy], from which I got with great pleasure that the sirs [Kazinczy, Baróti] plan to found a scholarly society for the progress of the Hungarian language [...]”<sup>67</sup>.

The “Kassai Magyar Társaság” (Hungarian society of Košice) was even founded, but was like the two journals just ephemeral. A similar ephemeral society was “Komáromi társaság” (Society of Komárom) and its journal „Mindenes Gyűjtemény” (All Kinds of Collections, 1789–1792)<sup>68</sup>. More lasting was the simultaneously founded “Society for the Cultivation of the Hungarian language” and the less known “Kéziratkiadó Társaság” (Society for editing manuscripts) in Cluj and Târgu Mureş, both founded by György Aranka in 1791<sup>69</sup>. The cities of the foundations were not without political implication as S. Enyedi emphasizes: The seat of the Transylvanian Gubernium just recently moved from Sibiu to Cluj, and so the state assembly met here, too. Târgu Mureş was, on the other hand, the seat of the royal table, the residence of an academy of law, of a Reformed Collegium and the Family Teleki<sup>70</sup>.

As the name of the first society already indicates, its aim was to promote the Hungarian language, to extend its treasury of word as to build awareness of this language. Like the Triász in Košice, Aranka edited a scholarly journal, which was eponymous to his society. And again, like the concept in Košice, the main aim was:

“[...] 1) [to] translate into Hungarian all kinds of books written about our *Patria*, so that all the sons and daughters of the *Patria* have the opportunity to read them in their own language without learning with pain foreign languages, and that would be the path to the Hungarian national Enlightenment [...]. 2) This society should translate all Greek and Latin authors into Hungarian so that one could become acquainted more easily with these authors”<sup>71</sup>.

Once again, it is to see that the general education of the Hungarian population was the primary purpose of many of the Hungarian scholars. This was,

<sup>67</sup> Letter of Gedeon Ráday to Ferenc Kazinczy, (15.02.1788); quoted in KazLev I, No. 118, p. 165: “Nagy örömmel vettem az Úr leg közelebb írott levelét, mellyből még nagyobb örömmel értettem, hogy a’ Magyar nyelv előmenetelére valamely Tudós Társaságot kívánnának az Urak fel állítani [...]”

<sup>68</sup> See Kókay, *op. cit.*, p. 452–466.

<sup>69</sup> See S. Enyedi, *opt. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>70</sup> See *ibidem*.

<sup>71</sup> Quoted in B. Török, *op. cit.*, p. 51, translation of quotation in S. Enyedi, *op. cit.*, p. 13: “[...] 1-ször: mindenféle hazánkról írt könyveket magyarra fordítson, hogy minden holt, vagy más idegen nyelvnek bajos megtanulása nélkül is minden hazafinak és haza leányainak csak csupán anyanyelvével nyílt útja legyen a magyar nemzeti megvilágosodásra, amelyet legelsőnek tartunk lenni. 2-szor: ennek a társaságnak minden görög és diák írókat magyar nyelvre kellene fordítani, hogy így könyvekben meg lehessen ismerkedni ezekkel az írokkal.”

however, no specific of the Hungarian erudition, but was to be found all over Europe. Already in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, the “Gentleman’s Magazine” stated as its purpose to translate ancient as modern foreign literature into English to make it comprehensible for the monolingual men and women (!) of the Kingdom<sup>72</sup>.

To translate the classical literature of the ancient world should train the sense of aesthetics. It was part of the concept of Winckelmann: The ancient art and literature was the highest state of the art, the epitome of “beauty”. Having a sense of aesthetics was as at least as important as knowing the ancient authors and a requirement to imitate them.

And as in other parts of Europe, in Hungary and Transylvania so-called “Lesekabinette” or “Lesegesellschaften” (reading societies) were founded. Again, the German term was used to name this kind of – more or less – loose societies in lack of a Hungarian term. One organised reading society existed in Pest about 1790, which is hardly known today. As R. Lengyel and G. Tüskés assume, between 1787 and 1789 Ferenc Verseghy drafted the regulations of this society, but the society may have been founded long before<sup>73</sup>. Though the regulations were drafted in German, the members were of a German- and Hungarian-speaking background<sup>74</sup>. This is mentioned to emphasize again that educating and studying societies were not by nature divided into linguistic or ethnical groups, but could also follow an including concept like this reading society of Pest. The same is to say about the coffee house culture which became popular about 1800 in Hungary and Transylvania, too.

Again, all those societies were of a short lifespan, whereas the thirteen year-long activity<sup>75</sup> of the Aranka-society for the cultivation of the Hungarian language had a lifespan about average. However, it was not the best time to found scholarly societies. Ever since the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 and the Jacobin conspiracy in Hungary in 1795, the Viennese Court considered all kinds of meetings like that to be of a conspiratorial nature. So, emperor Franz II. warned his brother Palatin Alexander Leopold (1772–1795) in 1792:

“I have to inform you, that there are contemptible individuals with you, who like to sic pagans as townfolk but I do not tolerate this, and if you or I will ever catch one, he shall be well chastised”<sup>76</sup>.

Leopold, on the other hand, confided to his brother his worries about the spreading of French revolutionary ideas within the societies and coffee houses:

<sup>72</sup> See Titia Ram, *The Gentleman’s Magazine in het Engelse literaire veld (1731–54)* (= The Gentleman’s Magazine and the English literary World), in, *Tijdschrift voor Tijdschriftstudies*, 1, 2012, p. 18–24, here: 22.

<sup>73</sup> R. Lengyel, G. Tüskés, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

<sup>74</sup> For the list, see *ibidem*, p. 110–111.

<sup>75</sup> See S. Enyedi, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>76</sup> Letter of Ferenc II. to Palatin Alexander Leopold, (13.11.1792), quoted in Sándor Malyusz, *Lipót Főherceg Nádor iratai* (= Writings of the Archduke Palatine Leopold), Budapest, Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1926, p. 563: “[Ich] muss dich avertiren, dass es Hundsfuth giebt, die an Bauern und Bürgern bey euch hetzen möchten, allein ich leide es nicht und wenn du einmal oder ich einen fangen werden, so soll er recht gezüchtiget werden.”



“A few days ago I learnt that a club is held in Pest, which purpose shall be to raise the townsfolk and peasantry; secondly, I heard also complaints of different people, how it is spoken about the French language in the coffee houses [and,] that it is even toasted on the health of the Frenchmen”<sup>77</sup>.

It is, therefore, no wonder, the Aranka’s society for the cultivation of the Hungarian language encountered several obstacles by the Viennese Court as the state assembly. Already before this, official levels prevented Miklós Révai’s plans to found a language society<sup>78</sup>. Probably this is the reason why György Aranka founded his societies not as official institutes, but as “trial societies” (“próbatársaság”)<sup>79</sup>. This general suspicion did not only focus Hungarian societies but on scholarly get-togethers of every kind in every part of the Habsburg Empire. So, according to Marlies Raffler, the Styrian “Leseverein” (reading society) was planned to be found as part of the Joanneum, today the Universalmuseum of Styria in Graz, in 1817 by nobody less than the emperor’s brother Archduke Johann. Still, it had to be named “erweiterte Leseanstalt” (extended library) to avoid suspicion<sup>80</sup>.

The societies of Aranka as the one in Košice were three examples of first attempts to organise scholarly societies, which already followed the idea of a new national erudition, although “national” is here defined through the same language. Though this approaches like others, here not mentioned approaches were merely ephemeral, they are to be seen as an important intermediate step on the way for the foundation of stable societies, institutes, and academies as the Hungarian Academy of Science in 1825. The reason for the ephemeral live-span of this societies are, on the one hand, the general suspicion of any scholarly get-togethers by the official site, and on the other hand, personal reasons, financial problems or lack of readership. However, while one society, one journal and one newspaper after the other vanished, it is to emphasize that there was a strong sense of community within the Hungarian erudition. This community was not held together by actual societies or physical spaces for meeting, but by letters as the enormous correspondence of Kazinczy proofs. Therefore, it is to agree with A Debreczeni result that “virtual community was the society of the scholarly patriots”<sup>81</sup> which formed the integrative element of Hungarian erudition and neoterism<sup>82</sup>.

<sup>77</sup> Letter of Palatin Alexander Leopold to emperor Franz II., (03.12.1792); quoted in *ibidem*, p. 573: “Ich habe schon vor einigen Tagen erfahren, das in Pest ein Klub<sup>77</sup> gehalten wird, welcher zum Gegenstand die Aufwieglung der Bürger und des Landesvolkes haben soll; zweitens habe ich auch von verschiedenen Leuten Klagen gehört, wie man in den Kaffeehäusern über die französischen Sachen spricht, dass sogar in einem derselben auf die Gesundheit der Franzosen getrunken worden ist.”

<sup>78</sup> See S. Enyedi, *op. cit.*, p. 14–20.

<sup>79</sup> See *ibidem*, p. 21.

<sup>80</sup> Marlies Raffler, *Bürgerliche Lesekultur im Vormärz. Der Leseverein am Joanneum in Graz (1819–1871)*, (= Rechts- und sozialwissenschaftliche Reihe; 6), Frankfurt am Main / New York, Peter Lang, 1993, p. 93, 97.

<sup>81</sup> A. Debreczeni, *op. cit.*, p. 149: “A ’tudós Hazafiak’ virtuális közössége volt az a ’társulás’ [...]”

<sup>82</sup> See *ibidem*.

### Abstract

This paper tried to give an overview about the discourses about the Hungarian language issue in the last decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was shown, that the discussion about the use of Latin existed since the (re-) integration of the Hungarian Kingdom into the Habsburg Empire. Due to the subordination of the educational sector under the supervision of the Catholic Church until the *Ratio Educationis* of 1777, Latin was the dominant language in middle schools as in universities, wherefore continuing criticism was expressed by Hungarian scholars as aristocrats because the middle school students hardly understood the teaching sessions. It was not until 1759 that Maria Theresia allowed a free choice of the language of education. From this moment on, Hungarian was a language of teaching, too.

However, the choice of language continued to depend on denominational and monastic orientation. The Jesuits preferred a Latin education and erudition, whereas the Piarist's, Minims' and the Protestant schools, and scholars tended to use Hungarian. Consequently, many Catholic Hungarian noblemen sought the vicinity of the Piarist and Minims. Moreover, the trench between the Jesuits and the other orders was most visible in Buda and Pest.

The politics of Germanisation by Joseph II. amplified the language issue. Albeit his decision to make German the legally binding language of the whole empire did not intend to offend or even extinct any other language of the empire, the Hungarians felt threatened. Thus, the Hungarian language issue and neoterism were highly encouraged by scholars as by politicians who were critical of Joseph II.

In this time, several scholarly approaches tried to found scholarly societies, journals and newspapers to cultivate the Hungarian language. Most noteworthy are the efforts of Ferenc Kazinczy and his Triász and their journals "Magyar Museum" and Orpheus in the Kingdom of Hungary, as of György Aranka and his society and eponymous journal for the cultivation of the Hungarian language in Transylvania.

However, these examples showed as well that "national" in this case is not to be misunderstood with the ethnic approaches which arose simultaneously. Here, Hungarian was merely defined by a common language. Though all these approaches were just ephemeral, they raised awareness of the Hungarian language and paved the way for the development of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most of all the making of Hungarian as the language-of state.