

EPIGRAPHIC SCRIPTS FROM ROMANESQUE TO EARLY RENAISSANCE IN MEDIEVAL AND PRE-MODERN TRANSYLVANIA

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Abstract: *The author brings a welcomed overview regarding the epigraphic writing in Transylvania from the 14th to the 16th century, with a detailed approach on the historical context and the morphology of these monumental scripts.*

Keywords: epigraphic writing, Romanesque majuscule, gothic majuscule, gothic minuscule, early humanistic minuscule

The epigraphic scripts from Transylvania are studied here in comparison with those of some East-Central European areas, like Croatia, Bavaria, the Palatinate, Lower Austria, Carinthia and Burgenland, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland. Transylvanian epigraphic monuments generally followed the evolution of the monumental palaeography from Italy and Germany, with other major influences of diverse nature, like Hungarian, Flemish or Polish. The study addresses the main issue of distinguishing the degree and extent in which these influences appeared and the pathways of their transmission. Already noted for the Gothic period, the transmission of artistic forms and iconographic programs followed either the Italian route, through Dalmatia, Istria Peninsula, Slovenia and Austria, or the German route, from the south German areas, transformed by Bohemian artists, through Slovakia, mainly at Levoča, and Transylvania. The spread and transmission of inscriptions forms and types are not unitary, depending on local realities; both in number and gender the epigraphic situation differs from one area to another.

The epigraphic research in this study has been conducted in a threefold manner: in order to analyze scripts in their formal development, to achieve their periodization and to establish the typical traits of each period or school¹. To this was added the knowledge of the conditions in which script types and forms appear in certain places and on certain objects. The research has led to several approach ways with a broad spectrum². Writing is not only a means of communication, but

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¹ This study is a revised and partially augmented version of some chapters of the study published more than one decade ago: I. Albu, *Forme de scriere în epigrafia transilvăneană în context central-european (sec. XII-XVII)*, in: “Studia Universitatis Cibiniensis”. Series Historica, vol. I, Sibiu, 2004, p. 114-154.

² Jakó Sigismund; R. Manolescu, *Scrierea latină în evul mediu (infra: Jakó-Manolescu, Scrierea latină)* București, 1971, p. 109sq.; P. Ladner, E. Gamillscheg, H.-G. von Mutius, K. Brisch, *Schrift*. In: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, VII 1559-1565; H. Haarmann, *Universalgeschichte der Schrift*. Frankfurt –

also an expression of the human appetite to shape forms. Monumental writing or script is intended to be utilitarian and decorative as well; thus, it becomes an object of art *per se*, being always related to an architectural or artistic object, to a tombstone, a shrine etc.

The display of epigraphic texts has a major importance since it usually follows severe rules, so that the epigraphic carrier (support/endorsement) was considered a unit, an entity which includes both inscriptions drafted and drawn up following a specific formulary as well as images or representational symbols. From the point of view of the layout of the text a great importance was attributed to the lining and the brim on margins or in the field itself, suitable for geometrical, floral or other decorations. Image and text of monuments of all kinds, especially funerary slabs or epitaphs, and liturgical objects have been conceived simultaneously since the text is supposed to enforce the image and viceversa.

Romanesque majuscule

After the Carolingian reform, scripts show a progressive disintegration of the previous proportions and harmonic forms. The increasing number of uncials, irregularities and the exaggerate use of ligatures are the main characteristics of the Romanesque capitalis. It is noteworthy that the Romanesque majuscule originates in the Carolingian capitalis, nevertheless with the use of uncials, elements evolved less from *scriptura monumentalis /capitalis quadrata* but mainly from *scriptura actuarial / capitalis rustica*³.

Most of Romanesque majuscule letters are narrow shaped with long shafts (*hastae*) and short oblique strokes. *C* is often angular, *E*, *F* and *I* beyond the line, whereas *O* gets oval or angular shape. One of the most illustrative examples from the German area is the figural tomb plate of the antiking Rudolf von Schwaben in Merseburg (†1080, fig. 1)⁴, with an inscription in Romanesque majuscules in the frame, where the letter morphology evidences the main features, among them narrow letters, frequent enclaves and ligatures. In the 11th – 12th centuries, the letter shapes are more harmonious, resembling the “quadrata”, nevertheless the angular morphology of some letters, like *C*, *S* and rhombic *O*, is quite frequent. A decrease in

New York 1990; B. Bischoff, *Paläographie des römischen Altertums und des abendländischen Mittelalters* (=Bischoff, *Paläographie*) Berlin, 1979; H. Foerster, *Abriss der lateinischen Paläographie*, ed. II, Stuttgart, 1963; J. Stiennon, G. Hasenohr, *Paléographie du Moyen Age*, Paris, 1973; I. Albu, *Inschriften der Stadt Hermannstadt aus dem Mittelalter und der frühen Neuzeit* (infra: Albu, *Inschriften*) Sibiu - Heidelberg, 2002, p. LII-LX.

³ G. Bernt, *Capitalis quadrata – Capitalis rustica*, in: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, II, 1983, 1472-1473.

⁴ Cf. E. Schubert, *Epigraphik und Kunstgeschichte – Die Grabplatte Königs Rudolfs von Schwaben im Merseburger Dom*, in: *Epigraphik 1982. Fachtagung für mittelalterliche und frühneuzeitliche Epigraphik*, Klagenfurt 1982, ed. W. Koch (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Klasse. Denkschriften 169) Wien 1983, p. 87-100, il. 1. – R. M. Kloos, *Einführung in die Epigraphik des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit* (infra: Kloos, *Einführung*), Darmstadt, 1980, p. 124.

the use of uncials has been noticed for the period after the year 1000, yet uncial forms are still in use for the letters *D*, *E*, *H* and more rarely for *M*⁵. These forms will be taken over engagingly in the time of the Gothic majuscule. A new letter, *W*, appears in the 11th century, consisting of two *V* letters⁶. There are thus two major directions of the scripts evolution in this period: capital and uncial, but we find elements that can be referred to as pseudouncials, especially in the case of letter *A*. Quite often ligatures occur in the letter groups *TE*, *CI* (enclave), *RA* (overlay of certain stroke constituents), which makes some inscriptions difficult to decipher. Characteristic examples are the inscription of the Willigis Gate from the year 1009⁷ and the inscription for Wignandus from 1048, both in the St. Stephen Cathedral in Mainz. Oscillating letter size, deviations from the lower line of the script row, from vertical shafts, unsure bows, excessive up- and downstrokes of the median letter constituents, like in letter *E*, are common, especially in the case of less accurately and skillfully designed inscriptions⁸. Forms of this type also occur on the former tombplate of the Hungarian Queen Gisela (†1054?, fig. 2), the widow of Saint-King Stephen, who leaves Hungary in 1045, accompanying Emperor Henry III to Passau, where she joined the Niedernburg convent as its abbess⁹. The earliest testimonies of the Romanesque majuscule in Hungary with mostly classical shapes are the epigraphic fragments on the Zalavár stones, dated back in the 11th century (1070-1080, fig. 3)¹⁰.

The Romanesque majuscule is quite rare in Transylvania. In the church from Luncani (Aranyosgerend / Gerend, Cluj), documentary attested since 1176, a stone panel on the northern choir wall above the sacristy door (1299, fig. 4)¹¹ already shows forms strongly contaminated by the evolution towards the Gothic majuscule.

⁵ Cf. the inscription on the northern Romanesque tympanon of the southern portal of the Worms cathedral, from 1165?, where the image of Christ is explicated by a text in uncials: “*Ego sum via, veritas et vita*” (Io. 14,6) – *DI 29 / Worms*, nr. cat. 23, il. 9.

⁶ Kloos, *Einführung*, Darmstadt, 1980, p. 123-124.

⁷ *Die Deutschen Inschriften*, hg. von den Akademien der Wissenschaften in Berlin, Düsseldorf, Göttingen, Heidelberg, Leipzig, Mainz, München und der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien (further: *DI*), Mainz, nr. 5.

⁸ R. Fuchs, *Eine Urkundeninschrift aus Heßloch (Landkreis Alzey-Worms)*, in: “Mainzer Zeitschrift. Mittelrheinisches Jahrbuch für Archäologie, Kunst und Geschichte”, Mainz, 87/88, 1992/93, p. 381-384.

⁹ A. Uzsoki, *Die Echtheit des Grabes der ungarischen Königin Gisela in Passau*, in: *Bayern und Ungarn. Tausend Jahre enge Beziehungen. Südosteuropa-Studien* 39 (1988), p. 13-22, il. at p. 19; <http://www.stadtarchaeologie.de/projekte/grabungen/gisela>; I. Albu, *Memoria epigrafică în Europa Centrală și de Sud-Est (evul mediu și epoca premodernă)* (= I. Albu, *Memoria epigrafică ...*) Sibiu, 2014, p. 254-256, 272-274.

¹⁰ Tóth Sándor, *A keszthelyi Balatoni Múzeum középkori kőtára*, in “Zalai Múzeum”, 2, 1990, p. 164-165, nr. 24, 25; Várady Zoltán, *Summary of the epigraphic examinations performed on stonecarved inscriptions made in the Medieval Transdanubia*, in: “Specimina Nova Pars Prima, Sectio Mediaevalis III” (red. Font Márta), Pécs, 2005, p. 7-8.

¹¹ IS·TAM · CAMERAM · EDIFI·CA·VIT·/ STE·PHA(NV)S · SA·CERDOS · ANNO · D(OMIN)I·M°/·CC°/·XC°/·IX°

The inscription has been partially read and transcribed, since the number *IX^o* in the 4th row on the left, under the century number, has been omitted¹². The sculptor used no less than six shapes for the letter *A*, each time with different forms, as well as for the letter *M*, first as a Byzantine uncial, the capital, inherited from the Romanesque majuscule, and thirdly, in two cases, uncial with a baseline. *D* appears in two cases uncial and once capital, whereas the letter *T* is twice designed as an uncial with differing shapes, and once as a capital. The letter *E* appears twice as a capital with a slightly splayed upper stroke, once as an uncial with its bow enclosed by a hairline and then epsilon shaped, constructed of two bows. *C* is twice designed as a Romanesque majuscule, thus with a capital shape, and once with its bow enclosed by a hairline, similar to the Gothic majuscule type. *N* appears in the very same word both as a capital and an uncial, whereas *S* displays twice a doubled spine and as an ending letter, for the abbreviation of the parson's name, *STE·PHA(NV)S*, it also shifts to the form of an abbreviation sign.

A further inscription laid over the southern portal of the same church, clearly dated also in 1299, shows similar forms, apparently carved by another craftsman (fig. 5)¹³. The script shapes are already almost completely indebted to the Gothic majuscule, only the capital *V* prompts Romanesque reminiscences.

Gothic majuscule

The relationship between the Gothic scripts and the Gothic style is expressed by the fact that in the 12th century, still before the occurrence of the first ogival vaulted architectural works, Gothic letter forms and shapes were already in use. Because the continent's oldest Gothic architectural monuments are located in Normandy, researchers assumed a close connection between art and script development and thus thought this province must have been the cradle of the new scripts and forms of writing. Other examples show that the place of origin of

¹² Different reading variants with the omission of the last two digits in: Fr. Müller, *Die kirchliche Baukunst des romanischen Styles in Siebenbürgen* (infra: Müller, *Die kirchliche*) Viena, 1858, p. 191; Orbán Balázs, *A székegyföld leírása. történelmi, régészeti, természetrajzi sa? népismeii szempontból*, Pest, 1871, V, p. 130; Entz Géza, *Középkori építészetünk munkaszervezetének kérdéséhez*, in: "Archaeologiai Ertesítő", 79 (1952), p. 148-149; Virgil Vătăşianu, *Istoria artei feudale în ţările române, Bucureşti (Vătăşianu, Istoria)* 1959, p. 121; Entz Géza, *Erdély építészete a 11-13. században*, Kolozsvár, 1994, p. 96, il. 29; Doina Paula Doroftei, *Inscriptiile în limba latină din bisericile României, din perioada 1290-1850, cu privire specială asupra bisericilor maghiare din Transilvania* (infra: Doroftei, *Inscriptiile*) Bucureşti, 2013, p. 145-147.

¹³ ANNO · D(OMI)NI · M^o · CC^o · / XC^o · NONO · SAVLVS · / ARCHIDIACO(NVS) · DE / TORDA · PETRVS · CO/MES · FILII · SA(M)SONIS · / NICOL//A(VS) · FILI(VS) / E(IVS)DEM · // · P(ETRI) · EDI/FICAVR//V(N)T · ECC(LESI)AM / IN HONO//RE · BEA/TE · ELIZA//BETH/AE. The last two letters of the text, the genitival ending in the last row, slightly worn out, have not been noticed by previous editors, cf. Entz Géza, *Középkori építészetünk munkaszervezetének kérdéséhez*, in: "Archaeologiai Ertesítő", 79 (1952), p. 148-149, pl. XXVI/1; Vătăşianu, *Istoria*, 1959, p. 121; Entz Géza, *Erdély építészete a 11-13. században*, Kolozsvár, 1994, p. 96, il. 28; Doroftei, *Inscriptiile*..., p. 147-148.

Gothic script should not be sought in Normandy, but in England of the times after 1066. The spread of Gothic scripts was augmented by its reception in the Parisian schools of Notre Dame, St. Victor and St. Genevieve. The students at the University of Paris seem to have been those who have disseminated so quickly the Gothic script all over the Latin writing area in Europe¹⁴.

The Gothic majuscule is the main epigraphic script in the 13th and 14th centuries. The tendencies of the early Gothic scripts are still obvious in this time in the design of the letters and their reciprocally enclosing shapes. Since 1230 a great part of the inscriptions show an already established majuscule in Central Europe, with its main features, like various open letters that are closed with a covering stroke (*Abschlußstrich*), an element whose presence is seen as an attributive terminological criterion for the new script¹⁵. Uncial *E* seems to be the earliest letter defined as such, followed by uncial shapes in the construction of the letter *A*¹⁶. The script forms appear earlier in the construction of the versals and initials of manuscripts, nevertheless in the epigraphic field a decisive turning point seem to have been the activity of master Nicholas of Verdun who made use of the new forms for the first time around 1181 at the altarpiece in the Klosterneuburg Monastery. A further example is the round copper votive panel of the Our Lady's altarpiece from 1188 in the Brunswick (Braunschweig) Cathedral¹⁷.

The Gothic majuscule becomes dominant in Hungary, Slovakia and Transylvania especially in the third quarter of the 14th century. The funerary plate of the canonical of Strigonium, Vilmos, dated in the first half of the 13th century (fig. 6)¹⁸ or the tomb plate of cardinal Robert de Somercote (†1241, fig. 7)¹⁹ still confirm strong reminiscences of the Romanesque majuscule. Several funerary plates belonging to the 14th century show elaborated features of the Gothic majuscule, like the funerary plates of Elisabeth (†1362)²⁰, Andreas (†1374, fig. 8)²¹, of Jacob's mother (†1376)²² and Abel (mid-14th century)²³ from Košice, where *N* and *E* are designed as uncials, whereas *G* has a rolled in tail (*cauda*).

¹⁴ Jakó-Manolescu, *Scrierea latină*, p. 124sq.

¹⁵ Kloos, *Einführung*, p. 129sqq.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, pl. 7, p. 130.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 131.

¹⁸ L. Varga, P. Lövei, *Funerary Art in Medieval Hungary (infra: Varga-Lövei, Funerary Art)*, in "Acta Historiae Artium Hungariae" (infra: AHA), Budapesta, 1990-1992, XXXV, fasc. 3—4, il. 7.

¹⁹ Koch, *Epigraphische Bemerkungen zu den spätmittelalterlichen Grabdenkmälern in der Stadt Rom*. in: "Epigraphik", 1982, p. 80, fig. 3.

²⁰ Varga- Lövei, *Funerary Art*, il. 12

²¹ *Ibidem*, il. 9.

²² *Ibidem*, il. 10

²³ *Ibidem*, il. 11.

The funerary plates of comes Laurentius de Longocampo from Câmpulung (after 1300, respectively the first quarter of the 14th century, fig. 9)²⁴ and of Pantaleo (†1337, fig. 10) incised in the southern facade of the evangelical church in Bistrița²⁵, inscribed in mature Gothic majuscules, are clear evidence of this type of epigraphic script and of the way it was adapted in Transylvania and Wallachia. However only few such monuments in Transylvania survived the tooth of time. The letter morphology attests sculptors who were mastering their skill in the epigraphic patterns of the time. The tombstone of Bishop András Szécsi (†1356, fig. 11)²⁶, in the Alba Iulia Cathedral, also confirms an elaborated Gothic script similar to that of the funerary plates of comes Laurentius and Andreas from Košice (†1374). *A* is pseudouncial, while *E*, *N* and *M* show uncial forms. *M* is sometimes built of a circle and a bow, in the manner of the Greek letter σ , so on the funerary plate of comes Laurentius. On the tombstone of Andreas from Košice even letter *T* is treated as an uncial. Noteworthy are the strong crescent thickenings of the bows and particularly robust spurs which are characteristic features of the letter shapes.

The main category showing Gothic script belongs to bronze bells and baptismal fonts from Transylvania. The inscription of the former bell in the church from Cloașterf can be recovered from a facsimile, which shows obstinate Romanesque reminiscences: “CHAMPANA † SANCTI · GEORGII · TETRA · GRAMATON · M · I · 8Σ”²⁷. *C* has the shape of a *licium*, of a straight angle, where the lower part of the letter is missing. *G* is angular, a form already present in the epigraphy of the Carolingian majuscule²⁸. *A* has a covering upper beam stroke and median stroke, *M* is shaped of two angles with overlapping oblique median strokes. *T* is designed like in minuscule scripts with a bent middle stroke heading to the right. *E* and *H* are uncial. *R* evidences an upwards curved *cauda* and a bow rooting in the shaft under the upper line. *O* is almond-shaped. The features of the script are embedded in a transition period towards Gothic shapes and thus the bell can be dated in the latter half of the 13th century. An already mature Gothic majuscule show the

²⁴ Emil Lăzărescu, *Despre piatra de mormânt a comitelui Laurențiu și câteva probleme arheologice și istorice în legătură cu ea*, in *SCIA*, 4 (1957), p. 109-126; Th. Nögler, *Ansiedlung der Siebenbürger Sachsen*, București, 1979, fig. XX; Ioan Albu, *Lespedea funerară a comitelui Laurențiu din Câmpulung*, in: *Studia Varia in Honorem Professoris Ștefan Ștefănescu Octogenarii*, Cristian Luca and Ionel Căndea (eds.), București-Brăila, 2009, p. 123-176.

²⁵ V. Vătășianu, *Istoria*, p. 164, fig. 143; Idem, *Studii de artă veche românească și universală*, București, 1987, p. 26; Drăguț, *Arta gotică în România (infra: Drăguț, Arta gotică)*, București, 1979, p. 271sq., fig. 301; Livia Varga, *Neudeutung der Bistritzer Grabplatte*, in *Beiträge zur Siebenbürgischen Kunstgeschichte und Denkmalpflege*, München, 1983, p. 70-77; I. Albu, *Memoria epigrafică...*, p. 249-251.

²⁶ Varga-Lóvei, *Funerary Art*, il. 13.

²⁷ Fr. Müller, *Die kirchliche Baukunst des romanischen Styles...*, p. 193, facs. 2; E. Sigerus, *Kirchenburgen*, p. 14; Walter Horvath, *Siebenbürgisch-sächsische Kirchenburgen-baugeschichtlich untersuchund dargestellt. Zweite, verbesserte Auflage*, Sibiu, 1940, p. 10-12; Vătășianu, *Istoria*, p. 600-602; Drăguț, *Arta gotică*, p. 122sq.

²⁸ Cf. Kloos, *Einführung*, p. 121.

bell of the church in Reci (Alba), dated around 1400 (O REX GLORIE VENI CUM PACE)²⁹ as well as two bronze objects in Sibiu, a bell (fig. 12)³⁰ and a baptismal (fig. 13)³¹, which shows almost capital shapes with slightly curved strokes.

Liturgical objects from the 14th century also bear inscriptions in Gothic majuscules, often on an enameled background, such as the chalices from Cisnădioara³², Șelimbăr³³, Hamba, Gușterița, Șeica Mare³⁴, Alțina, Turnișor, Săcădate, Cisnădie and Marpod³⁵. The well-proportioned letters are treated in embossed relief on a hammered background and manifests features of a mature Gothic majuscule, which remained in use until the 16th century, as on the chalices from the churches of Prejmer³⁶ and Dupuș³⁷.

The retable from Boian (ca. 1470) includes an inscription in late Gothic majuscule on the *Annunciation* panel, in the speech scroll with the Marianic greeting of Archangel Gabriel³⁸. Uncial *E* in epsilon shape and *A* with evidenced upper stroke are characteristic. Such forms also display the invocative inscriptions in the sacristy of the Virgin Mary Church in Sibiu from the year 1471, where the contamination with the new Humanistic capitalis is evident³⁹. Late forms also shows an inscription in Baia (Moldavia) from the year 1481 with a text engraved in two rows, with oblique *M* leaned onto the shaft of *I*⁴⁰.

The pulpit of the Hill Church (Biserica din Deal, 1480) in Sighișoara⁴¹ also displays an inscription with mature Gothic script features evidenced by pseudouncial beam-stroked *A*, as well as uncial *D* and *M*.

There was a tendency to often use Gothic majuscules as versals in numerous inscriptions, even in later times, when the Gothic minuscule became dominant.

²⁹ Fr. Müller, *Zur älteren siebenbürgischen Glockenkunde*, in: "Archiv des Vereins für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde" (=AVSL), 4/2 (1860), p. 186.

³⁰ Albu, *Inschriften*, nr. cat. 2, il. 2.

³¹ *Ibidem*, nr. cat. 8, il. 6.

³² Roth, *Kunstdenkmäler aus den sächsischen Kirchen Siebenbürgens. I. Goldschmiedearbeiten.* (=Kdm.) 2 vol., Sibiu, 1922, nr. 17, pl. 13/1; Vătășianu, *Istoria*, p. 178, fig. 161; *800 de ani de biserică a germanilor din Transilvania, Catalogul expoziției (=800 de ani)*, ed. Thomas Nægler, Heidelberg, 1991 nr. 93.

³³ Roth, *Kdm.*, nr. 19, pl. 13/2; Vătășianu, *Istoria*, p. 178; *800 de ani*, nr. 94.

³⁴ Roth, *Kdm.*, nr. 16, 537; Vătășianu, *Istoria*, p. 178-180, Drăguț, *Arta gotică*, p. 305sq., fig. 334sq.

³⁵ Cf. *800 de ani*, nr. 95-101.

³⁶ Roth, *Kdm.*, nr. 33; Vătășianu, *Istoria*, p. 452; Drăguț, *Arta gotică*, p. 312, fig. 341.

³⁷ Roth, *Kdm.*, nr. 85; Vătășianu, *Istoria*, p. 869; Drăguț, *Arta gotică*, p. 317, fig. 344.

³⁸ *GRATIA PLE(NA)* - Drăguț, *Arta gotică*, p. 291, fig. 321; C. Firea, *Arta polipticelor medievale din Transilvania (1450-1550)* (*infra*: Firea II), Cluj-Napoca, 2010, II, p. 70-76.

³⁹ Albu, *Inschriften*, nr. cat. 12, il. 8.

⁴⁰ N. Iorga, *Pietrele de mormânt ale sașilor din Baia*, in "Buletinul Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice" (*infra*: "BCMI"), XXIV (1931), p. 2 (text) and fig. 2, p. 1; Vătășianu, *Istoria*, p. 338, fig. 294; *Inscripțiile medievale ale României, Orașul București* (=Inscripțiile medievale ale României), red. Al. Elian, I. București, 1965, p. 502sq., nr. cat. 608, fig. 81.

⁴¹ Drăguț, *Arta gotică*, il. 58.

Relevant examples are the Crucifix from the Chapel of the Cross in Sibiu, carved by Petrus Lantregen in 1417 (fig. 14)⁴², the Marianic inscriptions in the Virgin Mary Church in Sibiu (1431, fig. 15)⁴³, the funerary plates of Georg Hecht (1496, fig. 16) in Sibiu⁴⁴ and Valentin Procop (1500) in Baia or the stone panel with the coat of arms of Johannes Alzner (1502, fig. 17)⁴⁵, above the portal of the Sibiu parish house, which all show a variety of decorative versals. Similar features are to be found on some inscriptions in the Hungarian area of the time, like on the funerary plate of Petrus Junkher (†1504, fig. 18), in the Virgin Mary Church in Buda⁴⁶.

Gothic minuscule

Since the Carolingian Reform minuscule had prevailed in the utilitarian scripts. As a book script, the Gothic minuscule developed from the Carolingian minuscule since the late decades of the 11th century, rapidly spreading in the next century. Especially highlighted texts and parts of text as initials, titles, epigrams, image explicitations and labels – were reserved for majuscule scripts, having as such a more solemn and representative role. For the transposition of minuscules, as a book script in the four line system, in the two line system, penmen had to find an artistically satisfying manuscript variant in order to please their patrons and costumers. Since the beginning of the 15th century, minuscule scripts largely follow the narrow pattern of *textura* (*textualis formata*, respectively *textus quadratus*)⁴⁷. It took a long time until the new script succeeded in structuring its morphology. One of the earliest inscription in Gothic minuscules was inscribed on the funerary monument of the archbishop of Mainz, Peter von Aspelt (†1320)⁴⁸.

In medieval Hungary and Transylvania, the transition to the new script occurred between 1360-1380⁴⁹, and it became prevailing towards the late 15th century, when the Renaissance capitalis made its way into epigraphy. The evolution of the Gothic minuscule can be detected in the Transylvanian space since the late 14th century to the end of the first decade of the 16th century, when the Renaissance capitalis as a concurrent script starts to challenge, compete and then push away the Gothic minuscule. Mostly bells were among the first objects in

⁴² Albu, *Inschriften*, nr. cat. 4, il. 4.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, nr. cat. 7, il. 5.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, nr. cat. 18, il. 9.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, nr. cat. 23, il. 13.

⁴⁶ Varga-Lövei, *Funerary Art*, fig. 48.

⁴⁷ B. Bischoff, *Paläographie*, p. 163sqq.

⁴⁸ *DI 2 (Mainz)*, nr. cat. 33.

⁴⁹ Engel-Varga-Lövei, *Grabplatten von ungarischen Magnaten aus dem Zeitalter der Anjou - Könige und Sigismunds von Luxemburg*, in "Acta Historiae Artium" (= "AHA"), Budapest, 30 (1984), p. 35, il. 1; Varga-Lövei, *Funerary Art*, p. 127, fig. 19.

Transylvania inscribed with the new letters, like the Night Bell (1411, fig. 19) in Sibiu, worked by Johannes de Wertheim⁵⁰.

The Crucifix of the Cross Chapel (1417, fig. 14) in Sibiu, carved by the Austrian sculptor Petrus Lantregen, bears the inscription referring to the author in Gothic minuscules with versals in majuscules⁵¹. A similar morphology display the inscriptions identifying the figures of the Evangelists painted on the quadrilobes of the polyptych altarpiece in Mediaş. The funerary plate of Bishop Andrea Scolari (†1426, Oradea) bears an inscription in the frame in Gothic minuscules in bilinear scheme with up- and downstrokes⁵².

A Gothic minuscule with precise strokes on bronze objects belonging to the workshop of master Leonhardus or master Jacob is indebted to the two lines scheme and is characterized by precisely carved vertical strokes (*hastae*) and strong quadrangles, whereas the proportions are however partly irregular. The bronze baptismal fonts in the Parish Church in Sibiu (1438, fig. 13) and in the Church in Sighişoara (1440) with inscriptions in Gothic majuscules and versals in Fraktur already indicate mature forms. In the first half of the 15th century, the morphology of the letters is situated at the level of a mature Gothic minuscule already contaminated by the *textura*. These features belong to a transition period detectable especially in the use of sharp angled *v*, whereas towards the end of the century this letter in triangular, displaying three pins in its lower part. Such types are known in Germany in the latter half of the 14th century, a century later the letter *v* having a broken or rounded peak point, such as in the inscriptions of the Three Virgins Einbede, Warbede and Willebede (*Dreijungfrauenstein*) in the Worms Cathedral (1430)⁵³. The new tendency appears at the two stone consoles with Marianic inscriptions of the Virgin Mary Church in Sibiu (1431, fig. 15), which in its irregular letter forms and artistic fashion goes back to a local workshop⁵⁴. The limited space determined the usage of severe abbreviations and less usual suspensions. The master of the Marianic consoles of Sibiu reduced the up- and downstrokes of the shafts (*hastae*) and arches, expressing a tendency to obey to the two-line scheme. Except for letters *d* and *l* as well as the abbreviation and diacritic signs, the minuscules carved in relief are held in the inner margin of the inscription banderoles (speech scrolls). The letters *b*, *k* and *s* longa are inscribed on the median line. The broken upper arch of letter *a* surpasses the superior margin, in the similar

⁵⁰ Albu, *Inschriften*, nr. cat. 3, il. 3.

⁵¹ V. supra.

⁵² P. Lővei, *Sírkővek, sírkőtöredékek*, in: *Váradí kötöredékek: Szobortöredékek építészeti faragványok, síremlékek az egykori Biharvámegeyi és Nagyváradí Múzeum gyűjteményéből*, Budapest (ed. Kemy Terézia et al.), 1989, p. 170, 183-183.

⁵³ *DI 29/Worms*, nr. 222, il. 54.

⁵⁴ Albu, *Inschriften*, nr. cat. 7; Idem, *Inscriptiile marianice de la portalul vestic al Bisericii Fecioarei Maria din Sibiu*, in: "SUCSH", V (2008), p. 81-119; Idem, *New Interpretations of the Marianic Consoles in the Church of the Virgin Mary in Sibiu*, in "Brukenthal. Acta Musei", IX, 2, 2014, p. 225-244.

manner of the versals. *G* is originated in the gothic minuscule and is also held in the median segment of the inscription. Elaborated *textura* forms can be found at the inscription on the funerary plate of Petrus Berzevici (†1433, fig. 20) in Brezovica (Slovakia).⁵⁵ The features of the bas-relief carved letters are not so evolved, if compared to the *textura* used later in the inscriptions on the banderole of the pilaster capital in the Knights Hall in the Castle of Hunedoara (1452)⁵⁶ or on the inscription scroll of the coat of arms belonging to Johannes Geréb de Vingard (1461) on the western facade of the church in Vingard⁵⁷. Gothic minuscules in V-incised technique displays the tumba of Johannes Miles (around 1450) in the Alba Iulia cathedral⁵⁸, with the three main features: shaft breaking, bow linking and identical treatment of the shafts. The inscriptions of the painted banderoles in the Benedictine monastery Hronsky Svaty Benadik (1427, Slovakia)⁵⁹ and in Mălâncrav (before 1469)⁶⁰, as well as the master inscription of the mural painting in Sibiu (1445, fig. 21)⁶¹ show similar forms, nevertheless strongly influenced by calligraphic book-hands.

Mostly serial production objects, like *vasa sacra* and *vasa non sacra* (monstrances, chalices and *patenae*) once inscribed in Gothic majuscules also become a predilect domain of the new script orientation in the 15th century. An illustrative piece is the chalice from Toarcla (Braşov)⁶².

The latter half of the century brought along changes in the evolution towards *textura*. Elaborated forms and features are to be found at the inscriptions of the scenes in the cycle of *Liber generationis Jesu Christi*, painted in Maria Saal (Austria, 1499, fig. 22)⁶³, whose letters take on a knotty character in the shape of a grid. The figure of the Evangelist Matthew on the vault of the Church “on the Hill” (*Bergkirche*, Sighişoara) is accompanied by a twisted *rotulus* with explicatory

⁵⁵ Varga-Lóvei, *Funerary Art*, fig. 23.

⁵⁶ Vătăşianu, *Istoria*, p. 273; Gündisch—Krasser—Streitfeld, *Dominium, Kirche und Burg von Weingartskirchen*, in: *Studien zur Siebenbürgischen Kunstgeschichte*, Bucureşti, 1976, p. 162, Il. 64; Drăguţ, *Arta gotică*, p. 107.

⁵⁷ Gündisch Gustav, Krasser Harald, Streitfeld Theobald, *Dominium, Kirche und Burg von Weingartskirchen*, S. 134-192 in vol. *studien zur Siebenbürgischen Kunstgeschichte*, Köln, u.a., (1976), p. 164, Il. 46.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, il. 66.

⁵⁹ Drăguţ, *Arta gotică*, p. 237sq., il. 275-280.

⁶⁰ G. and O. Richter, *Siebenbürgische Flügelaltäre. Kulturdenkmäler Siebenbürgens* (=Richter, *Siebenbürgische*), I, im Auftrag des Arbeitskreises für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde, ed. Christoph Machat, Thaur bei Innsbruck, 1992, p. 46-57, il. 10-11 and pl. VII; Drăguţ, *Arta gotică*, p. 247, il. 287.

⁶¹ Albu, *Inschriften*, nr. cat. 9, il. 7.

⁶² Roth, *Kdm*, p. 56, pl. 34; *abvs aem rr* (for *ave Maria*), and also in uncials for *u* în *mus* (*Maria Jesus*).

⁶³ Fr.W. Leitner, *Die Inschriften im Langhausgewölbe von Maria Saal. Ein Beitrag zur Darstellung der frühhumanistischen Kapitalis in Kärnten*, in: “Epigraphik”, (1982), p. 63-76, fig. 1-4.

inscription painted in textura and dated <1>483⁶⁴. A similar morphology is evidenced by the inscription on a paneling fragment from Cristian (Braşov) dated in the same year⁶⁵. Sacred objects worked in metal also display textura features, like the chalice in Săcădate⁶⁶, the reliquary monstrance (*ostensorium*) and chalice in Cislădie⁶⁷, as well as the chalices from Buneşti⁶⁸, Brădeni⁶⁹, Şeica Mică⁷⁰, Rodbav⁷¹, Viişoara⁷², Ghinda⁷³, Hosman⁷⁴, Prejmer⁷⁵ and Dupuş⁷⁶. The pieces are characterized by a mature Gothic minuscule in the shape of textura with broken hastae and quadrangles, including the letter *v*. The epigraphic text often refers to the Marianic greeting (*Ave Maria gratia plena*), like on the chalice from Buneşti⁷⁷.

Towards the end of the 15th century the script on the latest altar objects casted in Gothic minuscule shows larger interspaces which tend to surpass the bilinear scheme, although the four line system is still anchored in the bilinear scheme. For the reception of the new forms and shapes in the silver- and goldsmith art representative remain the chalices from Dupuş⁷⁸ and Cislădie⁷⁹, casted at the beginning of the 16th century, one of the latest pieces among sacred objects. It displays a strongly relieved Gothic minuscule with broken hastae and quadrangles.

These forms have been transmitted by craftsmen also in Moldavia. In the funerary epigraphy, two tombplates from Baia, dated in the late 15th century, respectively in 1500, display a mature Gothic minuscule carved in relief in bilinear scheme, including versals in majuscules⁸⁰.

Late Gothic majuscules carved in a decorative manner shows the funerary plate of Georg Hecht (before 1493, Sibiu, fig. 16) which correspond to the features

⁶⁴ V. Marica-Guy, A. Moraru, *Implicațiile stilistice ale unei picturi sighişorene din prima jumătate a secolului al XVI-lea*, in: "Studii și Cercetări de Istoria Artei" (= "SCIA"), Bucureşti, 26 (1979), p. 18, fig. 5.

⁶⁵ Brukenthal Museum, Nr. Inv. M 5156/4102 with the inscription "Hoc opus fecit · fieri · honorandus · dominus · Stephanus · de noua civitate · Anno · domini · millesimo quadringentesimo octogesimo tercio ·"

⁶⁶ Roth, *Kdm.*, p. 11, pl. 15/3.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 5, pl. 9—10; p. 59, pl. 48.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 19sq., pl. 18; Drăguţ, *Arta gotică*, p. 313, fig. 342.

⁶⁹ Roth, *Kdm.*, p. 22., pl. 23.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 61., pl. 37/2.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, pl. 37/3.

⁷² *Ibidem*, pl. 49.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 50., pl. 50.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 14., pl. 20/4.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, nr. 33; Vătăşianu, *Istoria*, p. 452; Drăguţ, *Arta gotică*, p. 312, fig. 341.

⁷⁶ Roth, *Kdm.*, nr. 85; Vătăşianu, *Istoria*, p. 869; Drăguţ, *Arta gotică*, p. 317, fig. 344.

⁷⁷ Roth, *Kdm.*, p. 19sq., pl. 18.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 59, pl. 34.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 38sq., pl. 41. - 800 de ani, nr. 111.

⁸⁰ *Inscripțiile medievale ale României*, nr. 609, 610.

of the script on the tombplates of Ioan Mikola (†1471, Cluj)⁸¹, Ambrus Szántói (†1483, Strigonium, fig. 23)⁸² and Simon Verebély (†1493, Eger)⁸³. The quadrilinear scheme evidences long prolongations of the shafts. When evident, in the case of the letters *d*, *g*, *s*, *h*, *y*, the up- and downstrokes go beyond the margins of the frame. Ligatures are scarce, limited to the letter group *or*, in order to favor monumentality, as in many inscriptions designed in a mature Gothic minuscule. The cauda of *a* shows a left oriented broken hasta. The rounded versal *M* corresponds the proportions of the minuscules, whereas *C* displays a fragmented bow with a leaping flame in its upper part. Analogous shapes are attested on the funerary plate of Petrus Junkher (1504) in Buda⁸⁴.

The gridded letter structure is more and more weakened, as in the inscription on the coat of arms of parson Johannes Alzner (1502, Sibiu, fig. 17), once with the use of late Gothic minuscule hands influenced by Pre-Fraktur scripts. Most of the shafts (hastae) anchored in the four line scheme display inconsistent and shifting heights. A tendency towards rounded shapes, the bowed flame of the letter *h* and decorative haulms of versals and of the letter *q*, closed *a*, *c* with covering right stroke, prolongation of *d* are common features. The inscription on the polyptych altarpiece in Dupuș (1522)⁸⁵, shows formal analogies with the features of the late Gothic majuscule borrowed from manuscript book-hands.

Gothic minuscules in a trilinear scheme, with hardly noticeable downstrokes, are the features of the script on the funerary plate of Prince Mihnea (1510, fig. 24)⁸⁶ and of a tombplate in the Black Church in Brașov dated in 1511 (fig. 25)⁸⁷. The spaced script contains few ligatures. The versal *S* displays a widened body provided with a broken double bow, *p* with broken bow cutting the shaft in the lower segment, *l* and *b* with forked upper hastae, *a* with flameless broken shaft, whereas *e* is open, lacking the median stroke, in the shape of a *c*. Siculi serve as truncation abbreviation signs.

The inscription on the wooden door in the Brukenthal Museum, originally in the Altemberger House in Sibiu (ca. 1500, fig. 26), is illustrative for the evolution of the Gothic minuscule and its predilect usage in German inscriptions. The late Gothic minuscule is inlaid in the upper register of the door in the marquetry technique and presents pre-Fraktur influences: *w* is sharp consisting of two

⁸¹ Ștefan Pascu, Viorica Marica, *Clujul medieval*, București, 1969 il. 55 and V. Drăguț, *Dicționar enciclopedic de artă medievală românească*, București, 1976, il. p. 230.

⁸² Varga-Lövei, *Funerary Art*, p. 146, fig. 42.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, p. 146, fig. 45.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, fig. 48.

⁸⁵ Richter, *Siebenbürgische Flügelaltäre*, p. 105-113, il. 42-48.

⁸⁶ Albu, *Inschriften*, nr. cat. 25, il. 14.

⁸⁷ Chr. Gusbeth, Fr. Hermann, *Die Grabsteine in der Westhalle der ev. Stadtpfarrkirche in Kronstadt*, in *Programm des ev. Gymnasiums A.B. zu Kronstadt*, 1885/86, Brașov, 1886, p. 21, fig. IX.

overlapping *v*, borrowed from the capital script, *a* is higher than the rest of the minuscule letters, in the shape of a *d*. Similar is a later inscription on the choir stalls in the Church “on the Hill” in Sighișoara, dated in 1523⁸⁸. The wooden panel in the Old Townhall of Sibiu, now in the Brukenthal Museum (1545, fig. 27)⁸⁹ displays clear and regular mature Gothic minuscules with versals in Fraktur.

Early humanistic minuscule

The early humanistic capitalis is defined at first as a parallel script to the humanist minuscule, which originates in a predilection to add ornamentation or decorative traits to handwriting and inscriptions⁹⁰. The Gothic traces of the transition scripts to the Renaissance capitalis, the early humanistic script elements, are marked by the use of *A* with overlapping horizontal stroke, uncial *G* with curled cauda, *M* with vertical parallel hastae and withdrawn middle part, thin diagonal stroke of *N*, *R* with upwards projected cauda, *X* with inflected arm, *E* in the shape of an epsilon and the lack of spurs.

Medalists like Antonio Pisano (Pisanello) and Matteo de Pasti, from the middle of the 15th century and artists like Andrea Mantegna, Lorenzo Ghiberti, Luca della Robbia and especially Leone Battista Alberti prepared the evolution of the script. Up to the end of the 15th century, the Italian epigraphy had been completely reformed in favor of the Renaissance capitalis. Since then it developed through a comprehensive and attentive study of the constructive elements and proportions of the ancient Roman monumental script towards the elaborate forms of the mature Renaissance. The letter spurs are also treated on basis of classical models.

In the North of the Alps, one of the earliest, best known and most skillful patterns of the transition from the Gothic majuscule to the Renaissance Capitalis can be found in the inscriptions of the altar of Gent worked by the brothers van Eyck. For the German speaking area, the Council of Basel (1431-1449) seems to have fulfilled a major intermediary role⁹¹. The funerary slabs of two participants in

⁸⁸ *Kbl.* 33 (1910) 78sq.; Albu, *Die Inschriften am Hermannstädter Alten Rathaus*, in: “BCMI”, 8 (1997), p. 33sq.; Albu, *Inschriften*, nr. cat. 22, il. 12.

⁸⁹ Reissenberger Ludwig, *Überreste der Gothik und Renaissance an Profanbauten in Hermannstadt*, Hermanstadt, 1888, p. 504; Straußenburg, *Beiträge zur siebenbürgischen Wappenkunde*, in: “AVSL”, 3. F., vol. 16, Köln-Wien, 1981, p. 61; Fabini, *Gotik*, p. 242, nota 24; Fabritius-Dancu, *Spaziergang*, nr. 39; Albu, *Die Inschriften am Hermannstädter Alten Rathaus*, p. 34sq.; Albu, *Inschriften*, nr. cat. 34, il. 17.

⁹⁰ Regarding early humanistic capitalis, cf. B. Bischoff, p. 146; R. Fuchs, *Übergangsschriften Diskussionsbeitrag*, in: “Epigraphik”, (1988), p. 331—336; W. Koch, *Zur sogenannten frühhumanistischen Kapitalis (Diskussionsbeitrag)*, in: “Epigraphik”, (1988), p. 337-345; R. Neumüllers—Klauser, *Epigraphische Schriften zwischen Mittelalter und Neuzeit, Grundsatzreferat*, in: “Epigraphik” (1988), p. 315—328; M. Steinmann, *Überlegungen zu “Epigraphische Schriften zwischen Mittelalter und Neuzeit” (Diskussionsbeitrag)*, in: “Epigraphik”, (1988), p. 329sq.

⁹¹ Cf. M. Steinmann, *Die humanistische Schrift und die Anfänge des Humanismus in Basel*, in “Archiv für Diplomatik”, 22, 1976, p. 376-437, pl. III.

this council attest for the first time in lapidary writing the tendency to reform the majuscule scripts⁹². The master is unknown; however, we know that one of the artists who worked in Southern Germany in this time was Hans Multscher, whose art roots in the aulic art of the western European centers from the Netherlands, Northern France and Burgundy.

These script forms enter Transylvania around the last quarter of the 15th century and remain timid until the middle of the next century. The humanistic capitalis is most commonly used for the inscriptions of retables, which indicates the transmission chain of the new script brought along by the artisans of the time from southern Germany and Austria. The script appears thus in the pictorial medium, implying a strong decorative role.

The invocative inscriptions (“MARIA” and “I(E)H(SV)S”) on the central pillar of the sacristy in the Sibiu parish church, achieved in 1471, as the year carved in stone indicates (fig. 28), reveals strong reminiscences of the Gothic majuscule, however the features of the early humanistic capitalis are already present⁹³. The parish house in Cluj also bears an interesting inscription which mixes Gothic majuscules with humanistic capitalis⁹⁴, an invocation alongside the initials of the donor, parson (*plebanus*) Gregorius Slewning, and the year 1477 (fig. 29). The double shapes of *M*, *E* are striking.

However, even bells were often provided with inscriptions in early humanistic capitalis with apart, often confusing shapes rooted in the patterns of the Gothic majuscule. As such, the bell from Viișoara (Domald), probably cast in the early 16th century (fig. 30)⁹⁵ shows an *L* of angular shape with oblique downstroke, *V* of quadrilateral or classic shape provided with beam stroke, *M* closed with a bottom stroke, *E* mostly uncial, whereas *A* resembles an *M* provided with a beam stroke. The bell from Slimnic, dated in 1518, bears an inscription displaying a mirrored *S*, uncial *D* and *E* of epsilon but also capital shape. Certain letters are strongly bent to the right (*N* and *P*)⁹⁶. The bell in Leliceni (Harghita, 1511)⁹⁷ combines early humanistic capitals with gothic minuscules in a free manner. The inscription on the bell in Armășeni (1542)⁹⁸ presents *nodi* of the hastae and oblique downstrokes of the letters *I* and *N*, as well as almond-shaped *O*.

⁹² The funerary plates of the Milanese Archbishop Bartilomeo La Capra († 1433), in the Basel cathedral, and bishop Cuntzo of Olmütz († 1434), in the Ulm cathedral. The former presents almost pure capital forms, with alonged letters, spurs and thickened bows. The latter still retains Gothic shapes.

⁹³ Albu, *Inscripții*, nr. cat. 12, il. 8.

⁹⁴ Balogh, *Az erdély Renaissance*, I (1460-1541), Cluj, 1943, p. 256, il. 49.

⁹⁵ Müller, *Glockenkunde*, p. 226; Balogh, *op. cit.*, p. 337; E. Benkő, *Erdély középkori harangjai és bronz keresztelődencéi*, Kolozsvár, 2002, p. 254, nr. 83 dates the bell in the 13-14th Century, therefore belonging to the Gothic majuscule.

⁹⁶ Müller, *Glockenkunde*, p. 225; Balogh, *op. cit.*, p. 338; Benkő, *op. cit.*, p. 356, nr. 345.

⁹⁷ Doroftei, *Inscripții*, p. 144-145.

⁹⁸ Doroftei, *Inscripții*, p. 26sq.

Regarding the reception of the early humanistic capitalis, the inscription on the chalice from Slimnic⁹⁹, dated at the beginning of the 16th century, displays an *M* constructed with oblique shafts and the median segment on the line base, in a similar manner to the letter construction on the funerary plate of (1499, fig. 31)¹⁰⁰. Noteworthy is the letter *E* in the shape of an epsilon, designed from two overlaid bows, a reminiscence of the Gothic majuscule shapes and possibly an influence of Italian versals borrowed from the chancellery script, which were predilectly used in the transition phase towards the humanistic capitalis.

The name initials carved on the stone coat of arms of the royal *judex* Johannes Lulay (1510-1520, fig. 32)¹⁰¹, in the Lulay-Hermes House, display an *I* with hollow *nodus* and ornamental constructions inspired from the phytomorphic decorations of the *caudae* and marginal strokes. The entire ornamentic seems to have been borrowed from the Italian models around 1510-1520¹⁰².

A mural inscription (fragment) dated in the early 16th century from Sâncrăieni (Harghita, fig. 33)¹⁰³ is written in a peculiar early humanistic capitalis, especially *H* derived from the minuscule script, with a *nodus* on the former hasta of *M*, and on *T*.

The tombplate of Stephanus Wayda Chechy (Csehi Vajda Istvan) dated in 1500 (fig. 34) from Cehu Silvaniei (Szilágycseh)¹⁰⁴ also displays usual forms of the early humanistic capitalis, with an *M* in the shape of *H* and a median segment like a *T*, the letter *E* in epsilon shape, *N* with hollow *nodus*, and specular *N*. Similar forms are present on the funerary plates of Gregorius Bethlen (Beclean / Bethlen, 1500, fig. 35)¹⁰⁵ and Thomas Gereev (Gereeu / Gyerő) de Szamosfalva, initially in the Franciscan Church in Cluj, now in the National Transylvanian History Museum in Cluj, dated between 1500-1510 (fig. 36)¹⁰⁶.

The tombal plate of János Veres (†1510), situated in the southern side of the triumphal arch of the church in Sfâraș (Farnas / Farnos, Sălaj, fig. 37)¹⁰⁷, displays a field in three registers, with a Gothic motif in the upper one, a Renaissance rosette (rose flower) in the lower register and a shield in the middle. The plate is distinct

⁹⁹ Roth, *Kdm.*, nr. 126, pl. 65; Vătășianu, *Istoria*, p. 876; Drăguț, *Arta gotică*, p. 320, fig. 349; *800 de ani*, nr. 115.

¹⁰⁰ Albu, *Inschriften*, nr. cat. 21, il. 11.

¹⁰¹ G. Seivert, *Die Bruderschaft des heiligen Leichnams in Hermannstadt*, in: "AVSL", 10 (1872), p. 317; P. Beșliu-Munteanu, *Archäologische Forschungen im Hermeshaus (Gewerbeverein) von Hermannstadt*, in: "ZSL", 4 (1991), p. 155, pl. IV/B3; Albu, *Inschriften*, nr. cat.29(†), il. 15.

¹⁰² Cf. chapters "Inchriftenträger und -Arten" in *DI*, passim.

¹⁰³ Orbán, II, 1869, p. 36; Doroftei, *Inscripții*, p. 194.

¹⁰⁴ Balogh, *op. cit.*, p. 285, il. 58.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 219, il. 57.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 262-263, il. 65; P. Lövei, *Posuit hoc monumentum pro aeterna memoria: Bevezető fejezetek a középkori Magyarország síremlékeinek katalógusához*, Budapest, 2009, il. 1160.

¹⁰⁷ Balogh, *op. cit.*, p. 226, il. 76; Bunyitay Vincze, *A váradi püspökség története*. III. Nagyvárad, 1884, p. 407-408, XXIII. Tábla. The author dates the plate in 1500, interpreting the rosette in the lower corner as *O*.

from an epigraphical point of view by its relief carving technique in early humanistic capitalis, whereas most inscriptions of the time were V-incised. In the same church, a slab originating from the lintel, with the inscription *IESVS - MARIA*, also has similar features, detectable in the shape of the letter *A*¹⁰⁸.

An inscription laid in the northern portal of the Lázó Chapel in Alba Iulia (1512)¹⁰⁹ and the funerary plate of the royal treasurer Stephanus Thelegdi (Tileagd / Mezőtelegd, †1514), dated 1507-1514 (fig. 38)¹¹⁰, show very evolved features towards the Renaissance capitalis. The tombplate must have been carved in the lifetime of the deceased, only the two first digits of the year date being present, and displays very elegant forms of a late stage of the early humanistic capitalis, especially initials, combined with Renaissance capitalis.

Slightly later forms appear in the inscriptions of the tombplates of Jodocus (Sebeş, 1500, fig. 39) and of Johannes Baccalaureus de Byrthalben (†1526, Biertan, fig. 40), where the passage to the Renaissance capitalis is obvious.¹¹¹ The shape of the epigraphic characters on the latter tombplate display features of an elaborate early humanistic capitalis, a parallel tendency to the humanistic minuscule, originated in decorative and ornamental lettering needs. Gothic reminiscences of transition scripts towards the Renaissance capitalis, yet belonging to the early humanistic capitalis are evidenced on the tombplate of Johannes de Byrthalben by the shapes of the trapezoidal *A* with prolonged obliques under the base-line, without the usual upper closing line, of the uncial *G* with curled cauda, whose worn out lines can still be perceived, *M* with slightly oblique shafts and withdrawn median segment, the thin and waved diagonal stroke of the letter *N*, the upward tail of the open *R*, so that its bow and tail do not rest on the shaft. Likewise is carved the letter *B* whose bows are spaced out from the shaft. *E* appears in the shape of an epsilon included in the body of the letter *D* in *DEBITV(M)*, otherwise it is treated as capitalis. *H* is provided with an upwards curved scoop of the median bar and *I* displays a rightward hollow *nodus* in *DO(MIN)I, CAR(N)IS*, as well as the latter *I* in *HO(NORA)BILIS*, further a left oriented *nodus* in *DEBITV(M)* and in the initials on the shield. A hollow scooped *I*, a similar pseudonodus, appears in the digit *1* in the dating field. However the classical capital *I*, a plain shaft, occurs in *BIRTH(ALBENSIS)* alongside *I longa (J)* in *HO(NORA)BILIS*. In general, the letters lacks spurs, except for the shafts of *H*, the lower end of the *R* stem and the upper shaft of *D*. The letter *S* as well as the digit *5* are slightly leaned leftwards. Digit *2* shows the shape of a *Z*, whereas digit *6* – designed in *petit* is partially included

¹⁰⁸ Balogh, *op. cit.*, p. 226-227, il. 72.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 234.

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 271, il. 70; Lövei, *op. cit.*, il. 448-449.

¹¹¹ Gündisch-Streitfeld, *Die Grabsteine der Mühlbacher evangelischen Stadtpfarrkirche*, p. 83–85, il. 29; I. Albu, *Lespedea funerară a plebanului Johannes Baccalaureus de Byrthalben (†1526)*, in: "SUCSH", VI (2009), p. 95-116; Idem, *Die Grabplatte des Plebans Johannes Baccalaureus de Byrthalben (†1526)*, in: "Forschungen zur Volks- und Landeskunde", 2012, nr. 55, p. 58-86.

in 2. More elaborate shapes of the early humanistic capitalis displays the funerary plate of pastor Stephanus Kalmus (†1528, Sighișoara)¹¹².

The inscriptions on retables painted in the last quarter of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th century are predilectly written in early humanistic capitalis, such as the polyptych panels of the altarpieces in Dupuș 1 (1475-1477)¹¹³, Armășeni (1523)¹¹⁴, Băgaciu (1518)¹¹⁵, Biertan 1 (1483)¹¹⁶, as well as a diptych volet (shutter), whose likely provenance is Hunedoara (ca. 1475-1480)¹¹⁷. The painted inscriptions on the polyptych in Dupuș, *The Crowning with Thorns*, on Jesus' collar and tunic hem, and on the *Easter* panel, show very elaborate early humanistic minuscules, with *E* in epsilon shape, specular *N*, characteristic features similar to those in the inscriptions of *Liber generationis* mural painting in Maria Saal (1499, fig. 22). Slightly later forms appear in the inscription of the polyptych in Băgaciu (1518). The predella of the *Descent of the Holy Spirit* polyptych in Leliceni (Harghita)¹¹⁸, dated by its inscription in 1510 (fig. 41), also reveals letters provided with almond-shaped *nodii*.

Two church pews in Bistrița, dated in 1508 and 1516¹¹⁹, bear inscriptions carved in relief under the crowning, both showing elaborate forms of the early humanistic capitalis. The inscription on the eight seats *stallum* in the southern side of the church choir in Bistrița, with the name of the carpenter Magister Anthonius, mixes the humanistic script with a decoration heavily indebted to the late Gothic style. Severe letter inclusions are frequent in both inscriptions, *H* provided with hollow upwards retracted nodus, *F* and *E* with haulm like decorative middle stroke, angular *C*, an *A* almost like in the Gothic majuscule, and mirrored *N*, as in most epigraphic testimonies of the time. The inscriptions of the polyptych retable in Sibiu (1519 / 1545, fig. 42)¹²⁰ substantiate dense ligatures and specular letters with inclusions and insertions, restless and confuse writing models. *I* in the *titulus* also displays a hollow *nodus*, whereas *N* is mirrored. Rhombi terminated in quadrangles serve as abbreviation signs.

A late comeback to letter inclusions, otherwise noticeable elsewhere in the Central European epigraphic space¹²¹, utilized in order to spare the writing space,

¹¹² I. Albu, *Memoria epigrafică...*, p. 41.

¹¹³ Firea II, p. 131-141.

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 22-30, il. 5, 11.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 31-39.

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 47-65.

¹¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 176-179.

¹¹⁸ Balogh, *op. cit.*, p. 305sq, il. 211-213; Firea, II, p. 199-206, il. 8-9.

¹¹⁹ Reissenberger, *Kdm.*, II, nr. 8; F. Hofstädter, *Der Chorstuhl des Benedictus de Bethleem in der Bistritzer Stadtpfarrkirche* in: "Kbl." 1913, p. 101-103; Roth, *Kunst*, p. 43, 149; Balogh, *op. cit.*, p. 216, 324 sq., il. 254.

¹²⁰ Albu, *Inscripții*, nr. cat. 28; Firea, II, p. 299-310, il. 1, 9, 11.

¹²¹ *DI 29 (Worms)*, Nr. 524 din 1596, Il. 139, *DI 38 (Bergstraße)*, Nr. 148 din 1563 and Nr. 153 din 1565.

and to letter upper horizontal strokes (*siculi*) provided with a *nodus* can be noticed in the so called *local capitalis* of the late 16th century, as on the funerary plate of priest Petrus Wolf (Lupinus) and his former wife Anna, born Stiffbauer (1594/1597, Sibiu, fig. 43)¹²².

All these features talk rather about a deliberate retention or reminiscence of old epigraphic directions with strong decorative traits and about the urge to spare as much writing space as possible in the inscription field. Therefore, from this perspective, in the Transylvanian area, the so-called early humanistic capitalis is less a transition script and rather an immanent synchronic compensation interfering with the Renaissance capitalis.



Fig. 1. The figural tomb plate of the antiking Rudolf von Schwaben in Merseburg (†1080), apud E. Schubert, *op. cit.*, il. 1.



Fig. 2. The funerary plate of Queen Gisela (†1054?), D. Asenkerschbaumer: http://www.stadtarchaeologie.de/projekte/grabungen/gisela/pop3_4.htm



Fig. 3 a-b. Fragments with inscriptions, Zalavár (1070-80), photo: <http://muvtor.btk.ppke.hu/romanika/DSC10441.jpg>; <http://muvtor.btk.ppke.hu/romanika/zvarke.jpg>

¹²² Albu, *Inschriften*, nr. cat. 108, il. 53.



Fig. 4. Inscription on the stone quadre in the choir of the church in Luncani / Cluj (1299), apud Entz, *Erdély építészete...*, il 29.



Fig. 5. Inscription above the southern portal of the church in Luncani / Cluj (1299), apud Entz, *Erdély építészete ...*, il 28.



Fig. 6. Funerary slab of the canonical of Strigonium, Vilmos, first half of the 13th century, apud Lővei, il. 244.



Fig. 7. Funerary plate of cardinal Robert de Somercote, Rome (†1241), apud Koch, *Epigraphische Bemerkungen*, fig. 3.



Fig. 8. Funerary slab of Andreas, Košice (†1374), apud Varga-Lövei, *Funerary Art*, il. 9.



Fig. 9. Funerary plate of comes Laurentius de Longocampo (after 1300), photo Carmen Oprescu.



Fig. 10. Funerary plate of Pantaleo in Bistrița (†1337).



Fig. 11. Funerary plate of Bishop András Szécsi (†1356), Alba Iulia, apud Varga-Lövei, *Funerary Art*, il. 13.



Fig. 12. The inscription of the bell "Stundenglocke", St. Mary Church in Sibiu.



Fig. 13. Baptismal in the choir of the St. Mary Church in Sibiu (1438).



Fig. 14. Inscriptions on the crucifix in the Chapel of the Cross in Sibiu, sculpted by Petrus Lantregen in 1417



Fig. 15. Marianic inscriptions, St. Mary Church in Sibiu (1431)



Fig. 16. Funerary plate of Georg Hecht (1496), Sibiu.



Fig. 17. Stone panel with the coat of arms of Johannes Alzner (1502), parish house, Sibiu.



Fig. 18. Funerary plate of Petrus Junkher (†1504), Virgin Mary Church, Buda, apud Varga-Lővei, *Funerary Art*, fig. 48.



Fig. 19. The Night Bell (1411), Sibiu



Fig. 20. The funerary plate of Petrus Berzevici (†1433), Brezovica (Slovakia), apud Varga-Lövei, *Funerary Art*, fig. 23.



Fig. 21. Master inscription of the mural painting in Sibiu (1445).



Fig. 22. Inscriptions of the scenes *Liber generationis Jesu Christi*, Maria Saal / Austria (1499), apud Leitner, *Die Inschriften im Langhausgewölbe von Maria Saal*, fig. 1-4.





Fig. 23. Funerary plate of Ambrus Szántói (†1483), Strigonium, apud Varga-Lővei, *Funerary Art*, p. 146, fig. 42.



Fig. 24. Funerary plate of voivode Mihnea (1510), Sibiu.



Fig. 25. Funerary plate in Braşov (1511), apud Gusbeth-Hermann, *Die Grabdenksteine*, p. 21, fig. IX.



Fig. 26. Wooden door in the Brukenthal Museum, originally in the Altemberger House in Sibiu (ca. 1500).



Fig. 27. Wooden panel in the Old Townhall of Sibiu (1545).



Fig. 28. The invocative inscriptions, sacristy of the Sibiu parish church (1471).

Fig. 29. Inscription in the parish house, Cluj (1477), apud Balogh, il. 49.



Fig. 30. The bell in Viișoara (Domald), beginning of the 16th century, apud Balogh, p. 337.



Fig. 31. Funerary plate of Nicolaus Proll (1499), Sibiu.



Fig. 32. Initials of the name of the royal judge Johannes Lulay (1510-1520), Sibiu.



Fig. 33. Mural inscription (fragment) in Sâncrăieni (Harghita), beginning of the 16th century, apud Doroftei, p. 194.



Fig. 34. Funerary plate of Stephanus Wayda Chechy (1500), Cehu Silvaniei (Szilágycseh), apud Balogh, il. 58.

SEPVIVRA IGREGI
 JOMVA IGREGORIDE BETHLEN
 ...MO O
 MVAIANUSIMOCVMGENTESVM O

Fig. 35. Funerary plate of Gregorius Bethlen (1500), Beclean, apud Balogh, il. 57.



Fig. 36. Funerary plate of Thomas Gereev de Szamosfalva (1500-1510), Cluj-Napoca, apud Lövei, il. 1160.



Fig. 37. Funerary plate of János Veres (†1510), Sfăraș (Sălaj), apud Bunyitay, pl. XXIII.



Fig. 38. Funerary plate of the royal treasurer Stephanus Thelegdi (Tileagd / Mezótelegd, †1514), dated 1507-1514, apud Lővei, il. 449.



Fig. 39. Funerary plate of Jodocus (1500), Sebeş, apud Gündisch-Streitfeld, *Die Grabsteine der Mühlbacher* ..., p. 83—85, il. 29.



Fig. 40. Funerary plate of Johannes de Biertan (1526), Biertan.



Fig. 41. Predella of the *Descent of the Holy Spirit* polyptych in Leliceni / Harghita (1510), apud Firea, il. 8-9.



Fig. 42. The inscriptions of the polyptych in Sibiu (1545), apud Firea, p. 308, il. 1.



Fig. 43. Funerary plate of priest Petrus Wolf (Lupinus) and his former wife Anna, born Stiffbauer (1594/1597, Sibiu).

