Preface

János Sylvester's life and work

János Sylvester's work (c. 1504 – before 1552) is of innovative significance in the development of the Hungarian language approach and the grammatical literature. From the aspect of Hungarian literal and cultural history, it is especially important that Sylvester worked on the improvement of his mother tongue in Erasmus' and Luther's spirit with a scientific exaction. According to our present knowledge, he edited the first systematic Hungarian grammar, *Grammatica Hungarolatina*, published in this volume.

There is a document known since the 16th century according to which the Hungarian humanist poet, Janus Pannonius, working in the second half of the 15th century, prepared a Latin–Hungarian grammar. Later on, this work was mentioned again and again, and there were some in the 18th century who claimed to have seen Janus Pannonius's grammar with their own eyes. The debate on his possible authorship has gone on for a long time in Hungarian literature. However, no proof has appeared on the basis of which we could conclude that the lost or hidden Latin–Hungarian grammar assigned to Janus Pannonius is not really his work. Based on the available data, we can assume that in the second half of the 18th century specimens of an old bilingual grammar were known which were not those of János Sylvester's *Grammatica Hungarolatina*. Still, until we have unequivocal proof of an earlier, similar work, we must consider Sylvester the author of the first Hungarian Grammar.

Few details are known of János Sylvester's life. We know exactly from *Grammatica Hungarolatina* that he was born in Szinérváralja, in East Hungary's Szatmár county (Seini, Rumania). He probably completed his secondary studies in the urban school of the nearby mining city, Nagybánya (Baia Mare, Rumania).

He enrolled in the University of Cracow in 1526, where he met for the first time the numerous manifestations of the language approach of European humanism. As is well-known, the most important works of the different grammatical trends were published one by one in Cracow. Sylvester himself contributed to the editions of grammatical publications, which we will describe later.

Sylvester's first known literary work was issued in Cracow. *The Rosarium Celeste Virginis Mariae...* includes two Latin poems. The distichs of the first poem tell Virgin Mary's life based on the rhythmical prayers written about Virgin Mary's delights and originating in the Middle Ages. The second poem is the story of Saint Clement of Rome written in Sapphoic lines.

In 1529, Sylvester enrolled in the University of Wittenberg and took lectures from Melanchthon. From 1534 on, he lived in West Hungary, Sárvár, in the house of his patron, Tamás Nádasdy, and taught in the elementary school of the small settlement. He was probably in Wittenberg for the second time at some point between the end of 1534 and the beginning of 1536. This is proven by – among others things – the numerous common features of *Grammatica Hungarolatina* and the Latin–German grammars widely available there at that time.

Sylvester started to translate the New Testament into Hungarian in the middle of the 1530s. For the printing of the work, Tamás Nádasdy established a workshop in Újsziget, near Sárvár. *Grammatica Hungarolatina* was its first publication in 1539, a "prestudy" to the great task, the Hungarian New Testament.

Sylvester not only created the first theoretical system of the Hungarian language, but as a translator he also showed how to recreate the sacred texts in his mother tongue keeping in mind the severity of the humanists' Bible criticism. He worked on the grounds of Erasmus's Greek–Latin edition. The greatest result of his linguistic interest is that after the earlier partial translations he was the first to prepare a complete Hungarian New Testament. The work came to light in Sárvár-Újsziget in 1541.

From the aspect of printing history, its special significance is that it is the first book produced in Hungary in the Hungarian language. For Hungarian literary history, it is extremely important that Sylvester wrote a preface to the whole work and to certain parts in Hungarian distichs. After the earlier primitive mother-tongue expression of some lines, these are the first longer, prosodically perfect Hungarian metrical poems of literary value. From the explanations attached to the translation, the discussion titled "Testimony about such verbs (=words) that are not understood in their own contexts (=in their own, first meaning)" is of high value from the viewpoint of critical history. Sylvester here discourses on the metaphoric way of expression; he considers this figurative language the value of the contemporary Hungarian love poetry consisting of flower songs that are textually almost unknown today.

Sylvester embodied the Erasmian idea of the "homo trilinguis". Making use of his skills in sacred languages, he joined the University of Vienna upon Tamás Nádasdy's recommendation. He was a professor of Hebrew from 1543, and Greek from 1546 until 1550. His Latin poems were published: his elegy against the Turks (1544), his poem personalizing Vienna (1546), the epitaph of Queen Anna (Anna Jagello, wife of the Hungarian king, Emperor Ferdinand I) (1548),

the lament of Jesus resurrected (about 1550), the lament of faith (1551). There are no other data available about his life and death.

János Sylvester's linguistic works

At the University of Cracow, Sylvester belonged to the famous English humanist, Leonard Cox's Erasmian circle. In Hieronymus Vietor's press, he also collaborated on editions of grammatical manuals. His first work of this kind was to prepare the Hungarian interpretations of a basic Latin grammar. Its basis, the Latin *Rudimenta* is an extract of Donatus's *Ars Minor*, which was edited by the Lüneburg school professor, Christianus Hegendorphinus (Christian Hegendorff). The heart of the booklet is the discussion of the eight traditional parts of speech. The rules are illustrated with examples taken from the classic Latin authors and the Bible. From the viewpoint of grammatical literature in national language, the German, Polish and Hungarian interpretations are especially important. Most of the time, these are paradigms parallel to Latin and sometimes terms in national language.

The idea of the four-language edition originated with the printer, Vietor, as he tells it in his commendation. The commendation is addressed to Georgius de Logkschau (Georg von Logau), the counsel and ambassador in Poland to Ferdinand I. The German amendments surely came from Hegendorff. The author of the Polish interpretations must have been Vietor himself, and the Hungarian parts were surely written by János Sylvester. He says so in his recommending poem attached to the end of the work. It is especially interesting to observe Sylvester's first experiences when he compares his mother tongue to Latin. He calls the Hungarian language "Paeon". The name "Paeon" for a nation was identified with the Pannons by the Byzantine grammarians. It is common knowledge that in the Roman age a part of the later Hungary belonged to the province of Pannonia. Sylvester excuses himself for the rudeness of the name "Paeon" in case it hurts the ears of those accustomed to the clarity of Latin:

> Quandoquidem Rhomana phrasis, non semper aperte
> Accipit externum, in flexibus, illa, sonum,
> Paeonicum si forte tuas offenderit aures,
> Errori lector candide parce precor.

This is worth noting because in his later working periods Sylvester self-consciously praises the virtues of the Hungarian language. In *Grammatica Hungarolatina* for instance, he even argues with Melanchthon who claimed that the article only existed in Greek and German. Sylvester proudly emphasizes that Hungarian surpasses Latin in this respect because it also uses articles.

On the last page, the Hungarian *Our Father* and *Hail Mary* strengthen the Hungarian elements of the four-language *Rudimenta* of Cracow from 1527. From the three national languages, long coherent texts can be read only in Hungarian in the publication. The booklet is especially significant to Hungarian literary history because it is the oldest known presswork which contains a coherent Hungarian text.

Sylvester's second grammatical work, a collection of conversations adapted to schoolchildren's intellectual level, also belongs to the type of textbooks spread in elementary Latin education. In 1527, Vietor published several works of this kind. One of them, the rector of Nürnberg, Heyden Sebald's work entitled *Puerilium colloquiorum formulae*, includes Hungarian translations of the conversations as well as German and Polish. This is also surely Sylvester's work, just like the Hungarian interpretations of the *Rudimenta* published some months before. This publication also closes with a Latin recommending poem in which Sylvester generally depicts the usefulness of knowledge with humanist commonplaces. Even if he does not refer to his own role in the birth of the work, we have no reason to suppose that the writer of the recommending poem is not the same as the author of the Hungarian versions of the conversations. The comparison of the lingual characteristics of the *Puerilium colloquiorum formulae* and the *Rudimenta* also confirms Sylvester's authorship.

What makes the Hungarian text especially valuable is that it does not insist on following the Latin sample, but interprets the conversations in different situations quite freely. In this way, it truly reflects the living language usage and expressions from the first half of the 16th century. Thus, it is a precious document not only for linguistics but also for cultural history.

Puerilium colloquiorum formulae had several further editions. We know about three other Cracow editions of the four-language version: from 1531, 1535, and 1552 – and it is absolutely possible that others might turn up. For use in Hungarian schools, it was published many times in different towns. Approximately 15 versions of it are known or can be assumed; the latest from about 1800. There are some that only include the Latin and Hungarian conversations. Sylvester's outdated expressions were later updated to more modern ones. The phonetic phenomena were also altered such as the í-tendency typical of Sylvester's dialect. The material was formed according to the needs of the nations living in the territory of historical Hungary: there is for instance a Latin–German–Czech version as well. The Czech edition was adapted for the Protestant Slovakians of Upper Hungary who used the language of the Bohemian Czech Bible-translation as literary language.

Grammatica Hungarolatina

Parallel to the discussion of Latin grammar, in this work Sylvester attempted to methodically elaborate the regularities of his mother tongue as well. It is easy to see that his endeavors are connected to the best humanist traditions. As is well-known, on the initial level of a humanist Latin education Alexander de Villa Dei's *Doctrinale* was replaced by Donatus's elementary compendium throughout Europe. Fixing the regularities of vulgar languages is in close connection with Latin grammars. The development of the grammatical literature of national languages is an exciting chapter in the history of linguistics.

Simultaneously with the humanist culture of Latin, attention turned more and more toward the national languages all over Europe during the 15th and 16th centuries. For exigent language use, the norms were searched for in the classic authors' texts and in the Latin grammarians' summaries. Certain humanists aristocratically and loftily considered national languages barbaric, but others accepted the reality of mother tongue communication, and they tried to harmonize the use of national languages with the new educational intentions. This was justified by practical needs as well: the scientific Latin was not suitable for everyday tasks. Besides administration, mother tongue played an increasingly strong role in literature and linguistics as well, national identity was expressed by its judgement. This is why the cultivation of national languages was considered important. Regarding vernacular languages, the apologetic voice became more and more panegyric. The Italian humanists' example was followed also in the areas north of the Alps. Being grammatical meant the means to measure the value of national languages, thus, the possibility to describe the language grammatically. For the systematization of vulgar languages, Latin grammar was the example. As a result of the parallel elaborations, came the realization that certain national languages could not be adjusted to Latin in all respects. The formation of the grammars of living European languages and the recording of language norms started with listing the regularities related to unique features. The development of grammatical literature effectively contributed to the birth of language standards.

As a result of the detailed examination of medieval Latin teaching, it is clearly visible how the road lead from Latin grammatical comments to the systematization of vulgar languages into national languages. In the beginning, the Latin material was accompanied by only Latin explanations. Later, however, to circumscribe the parts to be enlightened, not only Latin synonyms were used, but some expressions in national language also appeared. This created the frame in which mother tongue explanations gradually transcended the limits of a simple comment. This happens when certain mother tongue expressions appear not only as arbitrary or accidental substitutes for Latin synonyms but the Latin text can be read in an exact mother tongue translation.

As we can see, Sylvester's first grammatical works are Hungarian amend-

ments to Latin–German manuals. In education in German language areas, mother tongue had its biggest role in the Donatus editions. The ways in which mother tongue could better serve the understanding of Latin were shaped in the first decades of the 16th century. Regarding the relationship of national language and Latin, two ideas can be distinguished in the education.

The most outstanding humanists – such as Rudolphus Agricola or Melanchthon – supposed that mother tongue could be a suitable aid in studying Latin, but only at the beginning. The examples in national languages are useful on an elementary level but the aim is to make Latin the language of communication in education as soon as possible. For a highly educated humanist the most important thing is to perfectly express himself in Latin both in writing and speaking, this is why he must get used to speaking Latin as early as possible in school. Therefore, the German examples serve exclusively the better understanding of Latin: they mostly appeared in the paradigms or as interpretations of certain words. It was not considered important to word the rules in German.

According to the other theory, mother tongue is not only an aid to studying Latin. The representatives of this trend strove to teach the students the system of their own language parallel to the acquisition of Latin grammar, and make them able to describe the system in German as well. These aims were realized best in the bilingual Donatus editions, so the parallel Latin–German Donatus editions are considered the direct antecedents to the grammars elaborating the German language in German.

According to István Szathmári, in the second quarter of the 16th century there were three ways to the discovery of the Hungarian language – similarly to that of other vulgar languages. The Hungarian explanations, examples and paradigms attached to Donatus's Latin grammar mark the first way; the rules worded during translation are the second; and the third is the use of the mother tongue in scholarly education. As a result, students could not only more easily acquire Latin grammar, but also the rules of the Hungarian language.

Thanks to the Cracowian printer, Hieronymus Vietor, the Polish and Hungarian interpretations were annexed to Hegendorff's work among the innumerable Latin–German Donatus editions. From the treatments in national language, the complete grammatical systems of neither the Hungarian nor Polish languages are visible, but it is still extremely important that they, like the German, also appear parallel to Latin. Thus in the 1527 *Rudimenta*, the systematization of Hungarian also began alongside the two other living languages used in Central Europe, for the time being adapted to the Latin grammar categories.

In his parallel Latin–Hungarian grammar, *Grammatica Hungarolatina*, János Sylvester was already striving for the complete systematization of his mother tongue. The only sample at our disposal does not contain a syntax. The question has arisen whether the solitary sample is incomplete. There are assumptions that a syntax might have been connected to it which has been lost. This can be concluded from two allusions in the available text which refer to

the second book. However, there has also arisen the explanation that Sylvester mechanically included these allusions, taken from one of his models, but did not write a syntax.

In our opinion, the existing specimen is complete. The "Liber secundus" is first mentioned after the second possible grouping of the main parts of grammar (orthographia, prosodia, etymologia, syntaxis). Sylvester refers to the division explained earlier (littera, syllaba, dictio, oratio), and he emphasizes that the two groupings are closely connected: "Quae superioribus ita sunt cognatae, ut ab illis separari nullo modo possint. Orthographia enim litterarum est, prosodia syllabarum, etymologia dictionum, syntaxis orationum. De quibus singulis consilium non est hoc loco agere, sed de orthographia tantum, et quidem quoad eius fieri potest, brevissime. Si quis plura his hac de re desiderat, legat ea, quae secundo tractantur libello." (On page 33 in the present edition.)

He specifies that he only talks about orthography at a given place (hoc loco) and those wishing to know more should read what the second book discusses. This means that the second book contains the parts succeeding orthography.

At the end of the part about orthography, Sylvester also refers to the second book. In the first part, some prosodic questions are mentioned as well (accentus). After some examples, the author continues as follows: "Dictionum quippe accentum unicuique natura in patrio sermone, absque ullis praeceptis suppeditat. Exempla peregrinarum harum vocum copiosa ex libro secundo, quem nominatim huic rei dicavimus, peti cum possint, nullis hic nos usi sumus exemplis." (On page 35 in the present edition.) So as for the accent of certain words in mother tongue everybody can rely on his or her own natural language instinct, no rule is needed. Numerous examples referring to foreign languages are offered in the second book, which is exactly about the accent and pronunciation of certain words.

It is doubtless that there is neither a "Liber primus" nor "Liber secundus" internal title within the text. Nevertheless, both cited allusions clearly reveal that by the second book Sylvester means the material following orthography (and prosody discussed with it), and from that he means the information about certain words (dictio). This is morphology (etymologia), the discussion of the certain parts of the speech (partes orationis), or, in our thinking today, that of the word categories. This is contained within the major part of *Grammatica Hungarolatina*. Thus, we have no reason to presume a lost syntax, because Sylvester's two allusions to the second book refer to the thoroughly elaborated morphology.

From a culture historical aspect, we have to emphasize that János Sylvester's activity perfectly corresponds to the language cultivating endeavours of contemporary Europe. We have briefly referred to the development of the grammatical literature of national languages. On the basis of *Grammatica Hungarolatina* we can see that, thanks to János Sylvester in the first half of the 16th century, the Hungarian language exactly fit into the process by which the systematizations of different national languages were born one by one out of a scientific need, leaning on, but inexorably breaking away from the guidance of Latin grammar.

The earlier editions and the literature
of Grammatica Hungarolatina

From the original edition of the work, the presswork made in Sárvár-Újsziget in 1539, one single sample is known, which is kept in Budapest, in the National Széchényi Library. (Its reference is RMNY 39). Between 1808 and 1997, the modern transcription of the text was published four times by two editors, twice the facsimile of the original presswork was also issued. (See the *Bibliography*.) Zoltán Éder (*Sylvester Grammatikájának utóéletéről, On the Afterlife of Sylvester's Grammar*, Bp., 1990) mentions an 1807 edition as well, edited by Ferencz Kazinczy. Éder was probably mislead by incorrect bibliographic data. The 1807 seems improbable because in Kazinczy's letters of that year there is not a word about Sylvester's grammar but he often mentions it from August of 1808 on. It is hard to imagine that if the efforts going on for years had finally brought a result, Kazinczy would not have reported on it. He also speaks about the edition of 1808 in his *Pályám emlékezete (Memories of my Career)*. Furthermore, it could not be accidental that in the preface of the 1808 edition Kazinczy writes the following about his earlier plan: "I can finally see my wish coming true, and I am hastening to publish it so that we can have for the second time what time has, with envy, taken away from us". If the work had been published between 1539 and 1808, he should have called the last edition the third one.

Besides the editions of the text, the Hungarian translation must also be mentioned. (See the *Bibliography*.) The 16th-century presswork is difficult to read; it has lead to many misunderstandings. The text editions were not made with a critical demand, and they contained several errors. The facsimiles as such are not appropriate for the right reading; they were published in small numbers and, indeed, are hardly available. This is why the present edition of the work is justified.

To survey the literature of *Grammatica Hungarolatina*, Piroska Lilla Nagyné's *Sylvester János bibliográfia (Bibliography of János Sylvester)*, published in 1987, is indispensable since it summarizes the entries so far. From the earlier literature, we must mention by all means János Balázs's monograph (*Sylvester János és kora, János Sylvester's Life and Age*, Bp., 1958). Balázs's results are mostly correct today as well, however, in the light of more recent research they would need amendments or modifications at some points. From the viewpoint of linguistics history, Sylvester's work is the most thoroughly summarized by István Szathmári (*Régi magyar nyelvtanaink és egységesülő irodalmi nyelvünk, Our Old Grammars and Uniting Literary Language*, Bp., 1968, 69–139.) The literature relating to *Grammatica Hungarolatina* after 1987 is collected in the bibliography attached. From the viewpoint of research history, Zoltán Éder's study referred to above is of special importance.

About the present edition

The original presswork does not contain chapter titles. The beginnings of the main parts are signed by figurative initials. The recommending poems and the recommending letter is followed by the general introduction and the summary of Hungarian spelling, and then by Donatus's eight parts of speech. For higher transparency, we have marked the bigger units with Roman numerals, and have given the names of the eight parts as chapter titles. These are put into pointed brackets.

A significant part of the work is devoted to the different examples of inflection. Similarly to many other old works, in the original presswork the paradigms often appear in continuous text. The editions of *Grammatica Hungarolatina* up to now have used this solution. However, we differ from this practice in the present edition, and we give the paradigms in the form of charts. This makes the material much more transparent, and it is simpler for studying the presented grammar system. Where Sylvester organized the paradigms into charts, he often only gave their endings, the last syllable or syllables. We restore these to the complete form, again for the sake of easier tractability.

The text of *Grammatica Hungarolatina* is mostly in Latin and the use of capitals is rather inconsequential. When transcribing, we keep in mind the language use and the essential spelling characteristics of the age. Thus, in our edition the names of nations and their derivatives (Graeci, lingua Graeca, Graece), the months, and the word Christianus are always written with capitals. In other cases, we have standardized the text according to the Latin spelling used today in Hungary. We write the ranks and functions with small letters although Sylvester used capitals (Princeps, Dux, Comes, Ban). The grammar categories (nomen, verbum) are also written with small letters in continuous text. For the sake of the uniform typographical appearance, we proceed similarly in the charts and the derivative examples of the paradigms. We keep the parts wholly written with capitals if the aim of Sylvester's typographical emphasis is to accentuate the important feature of the content. Also adapting to the spelling used today in Hungary, we transcribe the word "litera", consistently written with one *t* by Sylvester, to "littera".

We do not highlight or differentiate between the orthographical variants in the Latin text. The letters and connections of letters not used today are changed to their present correspondent. The abbreviations are written out in full and the punctuation is implicitly complete, except for the cases when Sylvester made up whole sentences into the form of charts, where we have abandoned punctuation.

The treatments that serve the better understanding of the text are put into pointed brackets. This method seemed most reasonable in the derivative charts. For example, Sylvester often neglected to mark the time and mode of verbs. For the reader today, the system is much clearer if the information needed for

identification is there before the paradigms, strictly adjusting to Sylvester's grammatical concept.

For the study of the Hungarian elements, the mother tongue sections are especially important. These are published letter-perfect, including the punctuation marks not used today. In the Hungarian texts, we have not changed the original punctuation. We followed the author also in the use of capitals and small letters, except for the charts of paradigms for the typographical reason mentioned above.

In the Greek text, we supplement the missing accents. For the editing of the Hebrew texts, we owe our thanks to Pál Németh who implicitly corrected the typesetting errors of the original presswork.

There is no need for a complicated textual critical system, because there is only one edition of *Grammatica Hungarolatina*, which was edited by the author. Consequently, there are no essential text variations to be regarded. In the case of corrected printing mistakes, we give the original text and marginal remarks of the original presswork in the footnotes. We also publish the sources of the citations in the text in our footnotes.

The explanations following the text mostly contain data needed for the identification of personal and geographical names not considered commonly known. We also attach short explanations to the features connected to the circumstances of the forming of *Grammatica Hungarolatina* and to other areas of Sylvester's work.

As the first known systematized Hungarian grammar, *Grammatica Hungarolatina* plays a very important role in the history of Hungarian linguistics. Its detailed presentation cannot be considered the task of this edition because in that case we would need to attach long linguistic discussions to almost each word of the text. The bibliography appended can serve as a starting point for orientation in the further literature of both Hungarian and European linguistics history.

<div align="right">István Bartók</div>