



# TRUST, AUTHORITY, AND THE WRITTEN WORD IN THE ROYAL TOWNS OF MEDIEVAL HUNGARY

By Katalin Szende

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This book is the first comprehensive overview of how written administration was established in the royal towns of medieval Hungary. Using the conceptual framework of trust and authority, the volume sheds light on the growing complexity of urban society and the impact that the various uses of writing had on managing this society, both by the king and by the local magistrates. The present survey and analysis of a broad range of surviving sources reveals that trust in administrative literacy was built up gradually, through a series of decisive and chronologically distinct steps. These included the acquisition of an authentic seal; the appointment of a clerk or notary; setting up a writing office; drawing up town books; and, finally, establishing an archive from the assemblage of collected documents.

Although the development of literacy in Hungarian towns has its own history, the questions posed by the study are not unlike those raised for other towns of medieval Europe. For instance, both the gradually increasing use of various vernaculars and the controversial role of writing in Jewish-Christian contacts can be meaningfully compared with similar processes elsewhere. The study of Central European towns can therefore be used both to broaden seemingly disparate research frameworks and to contribute to studies that take a more general approach to Europe and beyond.



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements  
Abbreviations  
List of Figures and Tables

## Introduction

On This Volume  
Trust and Authority  
Literate Mentalities  
European Frameworks

### 1. Setting the Scene

Whose Literacy? Urban Development and Urban Society in Medieval Hungary  
Pragmatic Approaches to Pragmatic Literacy  
Sources and Scholarship

### 2. In the First-Person Plural: Civic Literacy and Communal Identity

Royal Charters and Urban Identity  
The Beginnings of Civic Literacy  
Civic Literacy and Places of Authentication  
*Formulae*  
and Community  
The Municipal Seal: the Matrix of Identity  
Communal Concerns: The Contents of Early Municipal Documents  
Conclusions: Trust in Charters

### 3. From Charters to Books and Back

The Institutionalisation of Writing Offices  
Municipal Books as Instruments of Civic Governance  
The Material of Town Books: The Use of Paper in Administration  
The Contents of Municipal Books: Thematic Differentiation  
Outlook 1: The Beginnings of Pragmatic Literacy in Craft Guilds  
Outlook 2: Town Chronicles and Municipal Literacy  
Conclusions: Trust in Municipal Books

### 4. Language and Literacy

Language on the Research Agenda  
Why Not Monolingual?  
Areas of Urban Life Where Language Became an Issue  
Medieval Urban Language Use in the Light of Sociolinguistic Research  
Conclusions: Trust in Language

### 5. "in cartula scribere faciat" – The Uses of Writing between Christians and Jews

Legislation on Jews and Literacy – A Chronological Overview  
Records of Urban Administration as Sources on Jewish-Christian  
Conclusions: Trust in Writing between Christians and Jews

### 6. From Charters to Archives

Variations on Archives  
The Advent and Advantage of Civic Archives: Storage and Safekeeping  
Binding Records: The Example of Sopron  
Using Civic Archives  
Conclusions: Trust in Archives

## Final Conclusions

### Appendices

Appendix 1: Gazetteer of Names of Towns in the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary Discussed in the Book  
Appendix 2: Regnal Years of the Kings of Medieval Hungary  
Appendix 3: Documents Issued by Civic Authorities in Hungary, (1244) 1255-1305  
Appendix 4: Earliest Mentioning of Municipal Notaries (up to 1400)  
Appendix 5: The Earliest Preserved Charters of Bishops' Towns (Issued by the Municipality)  
Appendix 6: Municipal Books Started before 1500

### Bibliography

### Index