

NŐI SZEREPKONSTRUKCIÓK A MAGYAR  
REFORMÁCIÓ KORÁBAN

FEMALE ROLE CONSTRUCTIONS IN THE AGE OF THE HUNGARIAN  
REFORMATION

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ÖSSZEFOGLALÁS

A 16. századi magyar történelem tele volt traumákkal. A mohácsi csata, az ország két, majd három részre szakadása, az oszmán jelenlét a hagyományos társadalmi struktúra felbomlását és számos társadalmi szerep átalakulását okozta. Ebben a helyzetben a férfiakra a korábbinál több katonai és politikai feladat hárult, a nők gyakran megözvegyültek. Ezek olyan körülményeket teremtettek, amelyek hatására átértékelődtek és sok esetben kibővültek a hagyományos női szerepek. Sokszor az élet maga hozta létre az új helyzeteket, máskor pedig a nők találékonysága, személyisége tolt ki a szerepek korábbi határait. A klasszikus anyai és gazdasági feladatok mellett a nők megtanultak írni és olvasni, ugyanis a Bibliáolvasás mindenkinek szóló programja ennek utat nyitott. Magyarországon akkoriban nem léteztek leányiskolák, a nőket a nemesi udvarokban oktatták, de egyre inkább bővítették teológiai ismereteiket is. A tanulmányban bemutatott nők Magyarország északkeleti részén éltek, amely felváltva Erdélyhez és a Királysághoz tartozott. Férjeik aktív katonai szolgálatot teljesítettek, és ők is gyakran részt vettek a várvédelemben. Ezek a nemesasszonyok a teológiai kérdésekben is önállóan döntöttek, életük számos pontján kezdeményezői voltak akár a férjük felekezetváltásának, akár zsinatoknak. Hagyományos feladataik mellett mindhárman korábban számukra ismeretlen területeken is aktívak voltak, és például zsinatok szervezésével, iskolák alapításával, férjeik mecénási feladataival vagy politikai tárgyalásokkal foglalkoztak. A kora újkori változásokat az is jól mutatja, hogy a hagyományos női szerepek és a társadalmi normák megsértése ellenére cselekedeteiket a társadalom pozitívan fogadta, és azok megmaradtak a történelmi emlékezetben.

ABSTRACT

The Hungarian history of the 16th century was full of trauma. The Mohács disaster, the division of the country into two, and then three parts, the Ottoman presence caused the disruption of the traditional structure of society and the fragmentation of many social roles. In this situation, men were burdened with many responsibilities outside the home, women were almost widowed, and these facts created conditions for them that caused them to reevaluate and expand their traditional roles, many times new situations were brought by life itself, other times it depended on the ingenuity of the women themselves, their personalities. In addition to the classic maternal and economic duties, women learned to read and write, and the reformation program on general reading of the Bible gave these activities an argumentative basis. Girls' schools did not exist in Hungary at that time, women were educated at noble courts, but increasingly they expanded their knowledge in theological issues as well. The women presented in the study lived in northeastern Hungary, which alternately belonged to

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Transylvania and Royal Hungary. Their husbands performed active military service, and they were often involved in this area as well. These nobles also acted independently in the field of theology, there were many examples of this in their lives. In addition to their traditional duties, all three also got involved in previously unknown areas and devoted themselves, for example, to organizing synods, founding schools, patronage duties of their husbands or political negotiations. The new conditions of the time are also shown by the fact that, despite the violation of traditional female roles, the violation of social norms, their actions were perceived positively by society and preserved in historical memory.

Kulcsszavak: nők szerepe, magyar, reformáció, társadalmi szerepek, nők, özvegy

Keywords: women's roles, Hungarian, Reformation, social roles, women, widow

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The Reformation brought about numerous changes in the intellectual outlook of the period, including attitudes toward women. By radically rejecting monasticism, the reformers eliminated from among women's possible life paths the vocation of the unmarried woman as a divinely sanctioned calling. Female roles in Europe were transformed in many respects precisely as a result of the direct and indirect effects of the Reformation.<sup>1</sup> The reasons for this transformation included not only theologically grounded objections to monasticism, but also a rejection of the Marian ideal, which had profoundly shaped the medieval Christian ethos of womanhood. Because Mary's role was fundamentally reinterpreted in comparison to medieval conceptions, those role models that had entered medieval understandings of female identity through the figure of Mary were necessarily lost as well. Virginity was a defining attribute of Mary, and thus remaining unmarried could constitute a legitimate life path within the framework of the Church; indeed, by the later Middle Ages, it was clearly regarded as superior to married life.<sup>2</sup> This image was reinforced by female saints, the overwhelming majority of whom came from among nuns, or distinguished themselves by consciously rejecting marriage and its associated worldly pleasures, such as Saint Catherine of Alexandria, Saint Barbara, Saint Catherine of Siena, and Hungary's own Saint Margaret.<sup>3</sup>

Having thus rejected the aforementioned models of female roles, the Reformation was compelled to seek new ones. These were found in the

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<sup>1</sup> FAIRCHILD, Cissie: *Women in Early Modern Europe 1500–1700*, Pearson Education, Harlow, 2007, 193.

<sup>2</sup> KATUS, László: Várurnők és apácák. Nemesasszonyok a középkorban, *Rubicon* 12, no. 6, 2001, 11–15. URL: [http://www.rubicon.hu/magyar/oldalak/varurnok\\_es\\_apacak\\_nemesasszonyok\\_a\\_kozepkorban](http://www.rubicon.hu/magyar/oldalak/varurnok_es_apacak_nemesasszonyok_a_kozepkorban) Last Accessed: 05-01-2019.

<sup>3</sup> ABBOTT, Elizabeth: *A cölibátus története*, Pécs, 2009.

Old Testament, rediscovered by the reformers, specifically in Proverbs (31:10–31). This passage, known as the “Ode to a Woman of Strength” lends itself to multiple interpretations; in the early modern period, it served as the foundation for constructing the roles of housewife, mother, household manager, and wife.<sup>4</sup>

“A woman of strength who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not harm all the days of her life. She seeks wool and flax and works with willing hands. She is like the ships of the merchant; she brings her food from far away. She rises while it is still night and provides food for her household and tasks for her female servants. She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard. She girds herself with strength and makes her arms strong. She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night. She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle. She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy. She is not afraid for her household when it snows, for all her household are clothed in crimson. She makes herself coverings; her clothing is fine linen and purple. Her husband is known in the city gates, taking his seat among the elders of the land. She makes linen garments and sells them; she supplies the merchant with sashes. Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her happy; her husband, too, and he praises her: “Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.” Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her a share in the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the city gates.”

Martin Luther and John Calvin, in comparison to their contemporaries, proved innovative in many respects in their attitudes toward women.<sup>5</sup> Numerous reflections by Luther on women have survived, including views that at times contradict one another, clearly illustrating the intellectual transformations taking place in this regard during the period.<sup>6</sup> Luther’s marriage to his wife, Katharina von Bora, exemplified a relationship

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<sup>4</sup> As Steven Ozment has observed, Protestantism was not the first intellectual movement to defend the institution of marriage. OZMENT, Steven: *When Fathers Ruled. Family Life in Reformation Europe*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1983, 6. Quoted in: MAGYAR, Balázs Dávid: Luther és Kálvin felfogása a házasságról és a családi életéről, *Confessio* 40, no. 4, 2017

<sup>5</sup> FRIEDENTHAL, Richard: *Luther élete és kora*, Budapest, 1970, 522–523.

<sup>6</sup> CSEPREGI, Zoltán et al (eds.): *Luther Márton: Asztali beszélgetések*, Luther Kiadó, Budapest, 2014, 414.

marked by considerable mutual freedom and respect<sup>7</sup>, and the will of the Wittenberg reformer—in which he granted his wife full authority over his property—was highly unusual for the time. Calvin’s marriage differed fundamentally from Luther’s, as the ailing reformer had primarily sought a caregiver; nevertheless, their relationship ultimately became a true partnership, and after his wife’s death, the widowed Calvin recalled Idelette de Bure as his most perfect companion.<sup>8</sup> Calvin’s commentary on the Book of Genesis likewise undeniably reinterpreted the role of woman: “He lost, therefore, one of his ribs; but, instead of it, a far richer reward was granted him, since he obtained a faithful associate of life; for he now saw himself, who had before been imperfect, rendered complete in his wife. [...] Moses also designedly used the word built, to teach us that in the person of the woman the human race was at length complete, which had before been like a building just begun.”<sup>9</sup> Calvin’s understanding of women reflects the fundamental duality of Reformed thinking on this issue. In interpreting the biblical text, reformers concluded that man and woman were equal before God in their creation; at the same time, however, they preserved the traditional social roles previously assigned to men and women.<sup>10</sup>

Despite this clear shift in comparison to medieval conceptions of women, the intellectual outlook of the period continued in many respects to reflect earlier attitudes. Indeed, by challenging the monastic way of life, the Reformation in fact reduced women’s available life choices.<sup>11</sup> Within Protestant communities, the primary sphere of a woman’s life remained the family, where the traditional triad of mother, wife, and household manager defined her role.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, for centuries views such as the following persisted: “By nature, woman is weaker and more fragile in character than

<sup>7</sup> “God has provided for him, for He has given him such a wife,” whom he valued “more highly than the Kingdom of France or the Republic of Venice, for she remained steadfast in her faith, conducted herself honorably, and faithfully managed the household.” In: LUTHER, Márton: op. cit. 2014, 70, 92.

<sup>8</sup> KINGDON, Robert – WITTE, John: *Sex, Marriage, and Family in John Calvin’s Geneva, Grand Rapids*, Eerdmans 2005.; BÉZA, Theodor: *Kálvin János élete*, Kálvin Kiadó, Budapest, 1998, 26.: “I have been bereaved of the best companion of my life, of one who, had it been so ordered, would not only have been the willing sharer of my exile and poverty, but even of my death. During her life she was the faithful helper of my ministry. From her I never experienced the slightest hindrance.”

<sup>9</sup> ROBINSON, Marilynne: *A gondolkodás szabadsága*, Budapest, 2018, 20.

<sup>10</sup> GÁNÓCZY, Sándor: A nő – Kálvin tanítása és a mai keresztény gondolkodás szemszögéből, *Confessio* 26, 2002, no. 2, 90–97.

<sup>11</sup> MAGYAR, Balázs Dávid: Házasság és válás a kora-újkorban Genfben, *Theologiai Szemle új folyam* 58., 2014, no. 3, 141–155.

<sup>12</sup> MAGYAR, Balázs Dávid: Portraits of Genevan Family Life in John Calvin’s Sermons on the Ephesians, in HUIJGEN, Arnold – SELDERHUIS, Herman J. (eds.): *Calvinus Pastor Ecclesiae*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016. 375–386.

man. She is more prone to immoral behavior, excessive curiosity, and talkativeness.<sup>13</sup> At the same time—even in a subordinate role—she can serve as an indispensable helper to her husband both in everyday life and in matters of faith.” According to Luther, a woman became an important member of the Protestant community above all by bearing children<sup>14</sup> and raising them in the spirit of the Gospel.<sup>15</sup> This, in turn, required the education of women. Thus, despite enduring prejudices inherited from the Middle Ages, female literacy and learning gradually gained importance.<sup>16</sup> In schools and Protestant congregations, women became exemplars of Christian morality and, to the glory of God, learned to read and write so that they might themselves read the Bible translated into their mother tongue, or consult devotional literature.

In comparison to the Middle Ages, the disappearance of monasticism as a viable life path within the confessions of the Reformation placed greater emphasis on the family<sup>17</sup> and the hierarchical structure of the household. Within this strictly regulated and closed system, women were required to conform to the expectations imposed upon them by both the Church and society. Motherhood gained an intrinsic value in Protestant thought; indeed, it was primarily through motherhood that a woman’s worth was defined. A telling example of this can be found in the recurring trope of funeral orations delivered for Zsuzsanna Károlyi, the first wife of Prince Gabriel Bethlen of Transylvania, in the seventeenth century. The princess’s children died in infancy, so she herself never became a mother. Yet motherhood was regarded as an essential component of her role, and thus most funeral sermons referred to her as *genetrix patriae*, reinforcing her maternal identity through various rhetorical elements. These included references to her deceased children in the funeral oration, as well as evocations of her longing for motherhood. Since Zsuzsanna Károlyi was presented as the ideal type of the Reformed woman, her maternal identity was

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<sup>13</sup> PUKÁNSZKY, Béla: *A nőnevelés története*, Budapest, 2013, 54.

<sup>14</sup> “...zum dritten ist ein Weib geschaffen, dem Mann zu einem geselligen Gehülfen in allen Dingen, besonders, Kinder zu bringen” LUTHER, Martin: Ein Sermon vom ehelichen Stand, in: HOFMANN, Franz (ed.): *Pädagogik und Reformation von Luther bis Paracelsus*, Volk und Wissen, Berlin, 1986, 61–65.

<sup>15</sup> GAUSE, Ute: Reformation und Körperlichkeit am Beispiel von Luthers Genesisvorlesung, *Evangelische Theologie* 78, 2018, 41–47.

<sup>16</sup> Luther: „Wollte Gott, eine jegliche Stadt hatte auch eine Mädchenschule, darinnen des Tages die Mägdlein eine Stunde das Evangelium hörten.” LUTHER, Márton: op.cit. *Ein Sermon*, 69.

<sup>17</sup> GAUSE, Ute: Durchsetzung neuer Männlichkeit? Ehe und Reformation, *Evangelische Theologie* 73, 2013, 326–338.

emphasized even though she had been denied the opportunity to fulfill the role of mother.<sup>18</sup>

The reconfigured female role constructions described above took shape over the course of the seventeenth century. The sixteenth century, by contrast, was in every respect a period of formation, constant change, and the dissolution of earlier roles in Hungarian history. Not only did the ongoing processes of confessionalization unsettle members of Hungarian society, but political and military events also produced a crisis of national identity. The defeat at the Battle of Mohács and the subsequent division of the kingdom into two and then three parts disrupted both institutional and social structures. The battle itself and the internal conflicts that followed fragmented the political elite, while the teachings of the Reformation further intensified social polarization. Existential and political uncertainties also undermined the stability of social roles. Continuous warfare led to a higher proportion of male mortality and prolonged absences of men from their estates. This imposed increased burdens on women, while simultaneously creating opportunities for them to expand and reconstruct traditional female roles. During the “transitional” decades of the sixteenth century, the societies of northeastern and eastern Hungary were particularly exposed to military incursions, and control over these territories frequently shifted among Hungarian kings, Transylvanian princes, and the Ottoman Empire. By the 1550s, the local nobility had become active supporters of the Reformation. Although historiography has acknowledged the role of noblewomen—wives and widows—as patrons of the Church alongside male landowners, their involvement has not been recognized to the extent warranted by their actual influence. These women, often compelled to act independently, played central roles in contemporary events.

Women were present from the very beginning of the Reformation's spread in Hungary. At the royal court in Buda, it was Queen Mary of Hungary, the wife of King Louis II, who received and gathered around her those priests and theologians sympathetic to the ideas of Erasmus and Luther.<sup>19</sup> Although Mary of Hungary cannot be regarded as either a Lutheran or an Erasmian, her unusually independent engagement with religious questions already signaled the transformation of female roles in the emerging era. In the disintegrating country, following the Battle of Mohács and subsequently the Ottoman occupation of Buda, much of the southern territories came under Ottoman rule, while the northeastern and eastern regions found themselves in an uncertain position between the emerging Principality of Transylvania and the remaining Kingdom of Hungary

<sup>18</sup> BALOGH, Judit: A protestáns női étkosz megalkotásának kísérlete a 17. századi Erdélyben, *Credo* 25., 2019, no. 1–2, 87–96, 91.

<sup>19</sup> RÉTHELYI, Orsolya et al. (eds.): Mary of Hungary, Widow of Mohács. The Queen and her Court. 1521–1531, *Exhibition Catalogue*, History Museum, Budapest, 2005, 308.

under Habsburg control. The situation of each region profoundly affected society. Existential uncertainty and pervasive fear made local populations more receptive than before to religious questions, including the teachings of the Reformation. At the same time, the male members of society were absent from their families more frequently than ever due to ongoing military conflicts. This created a new situation for families and specifically for women. Most monasteries had fled the region in response to the wars, and thus monastic life became largely inaccessible to the local population, even independently of the Reformation's opposition to monasticism.

### Anna Báthory of Somlyó

In 1545, the first Protestant synod of the Hungarian Reformation in Erdőd was in fact held under the patronage of a noblewoman, Anna Báthory of Somlyó.<sup>20</sup> The synod had originally been convened by her husband, Gáspár Drágffy of Béltek, one of the most prominent aristocrats of the region, who had married Anna, the daughter of Stephen Báthory, Voivode of Transylvania, in 1529.<sup>21</sup> Although the Somlyó branch of the Báthory family was the junior line, given that the Ecsed branch had, by the sixteenth century, produced numerous palatines and judge royals, the extent of its estates placed it among the most powerful noble families.<sup>22</sup> Following the defeat at Mohács, a dual monarchy emerged within the former Kingdom of Hungary under the rival rule of Ferdinand I of Austria and John Zápolya, effectively dividing the country geographically. It was during this period that the Somlyó branch of the Báthory family began its rise to prominence. The most important role in this ascent was played by Anna's father, Stephen Báthory, who served as deputy voivode under John Zápolya and captain of the castle of Mukachevo, and later held the office of Voivode of Transylvania between 1529 and 1534.<sup>23</sup> Of his eight children, Anna was already an adult when his youngest child, Stephen—later King of Poland and Prince of Transylvania—was born in 1533.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> BUDAI, Ézsaiás: *Magyarország története*, Debrecen, 1814, 110.; BARÁTH, Béla Levente: Adalékok az Ecsedi Báthoriak 16. századi patrónusi tevékenységéhez és Nyírbátor reformációjához, *Egyháztörténeti Szemle* 9., 2008, no. 2., 26–52.; KOVÁCS, Dóra: Az ecsedi Báthoriak és a reformáció, in BÓDAI, Dalma – VIDA, Bence (eds.): *Paletta II. Koraijkor-történeti Tudományos Diákkonferencia*, Budapest, 2015, 177–178.

<sup>21</sup> PETRI, Mór: *Szilágy vármegye monographiája*. Kiadja Szilágy Vármegye Közönsége. 1901. I., URL: <https://mek.oszk.hu/04700/04750/html/4.html> Last Accessed: 05-04-2019.

<sup>22</sup> SZABÓ, Sarolta – C. TÓTH, Norbert: *Az ecsedi Báthoriak a XV–XVII. században*. A Báthori István Múzeum kiadványai, Báthori István Múzeum, Nyírbátor, 2012.

<sup>23</sup> HORN, Ildikó: *Báthory István*, Budapest, 2019, 6.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* 7.

According to historical research, Anna Báthory was married three times, but she first encountered the teachings of the Reformation through her second husband, Gáspár Drágffy of Béltek. Drágffy was a member of a family of Romanian origin that possessed extensive estates in the Szilágyság region. His father, János Drágffy, had served as judge royal and as lord-lieutenant of the counties of Middle Szolnok and Kraszna; he also held the offices of Master of the Stewards in 1510 and Master of the Cupbearers in 1513.<sup>25</sup> He had married Anna Váradi before 1506, and their first son, Gáspár Drágffy, was born in 1506, followed by Boldizsár in 1507.<sup>26</sup> Three years after his father's death, in 1529, the eldest son, Gáspár, married Anna Báthory of Somlyó, one of the eight children of the Voivode of Transylvania. The couple had two sons, György and János. In 1530, Gáspár Drágffy was appointed lord-lieutenant of Kraszna and Middle Szolnok counties. During the 1530s, the couple became acquainted with the teachings of the Reformation<sup>27</sup> through several preachers belonging to the first generation of reformers. Among them were the influential Mátyás Dévai Bíró, Mihály Siklósi, András Batizi, and Demeter Derecskei, who encountered Gáspár Drágffy and his wife Anna Báthory while he was lord of Sátoraljajjhely.<sup>28</sup> According to church historical tradition, the conversion of the Drágffy couple must have taken place no later than 1530–1531, since thereafter Demeter Derecskei was able to preach Luther's teachings freely in Erdőd, the family's principal estate, and in the surrounding region.<sup>29</sup> In 1878, Kálmán Kiss wrote: "Several reforming figures frequented the court of Gáspár Drágffy, particularly after 1536 rather than before 1530. Having taken them under his protection and patronage, he allowed them to reform both his estates in Szatmár County and those in the Szilágyság. However, it cannot be determined with certainty which of these reformers [András Batizi, Demeter Derecskei, etc.] and at what time succeeded in winning over Gáspár Drágffy and his family to the Reformation."<sup>30</sup> By the late 1530s, therefore, not only had the aforementioned counties of the Szilágyság become committed to the Reformation, but they had also

<sup>25</sup> PETRI, M.: op. cit., *Szilágyság vármegye*, II. 367.

<sup>26</sup> Some scholars, however, maintain that Gáspár Drágffy was born only in 1516, in which case he would obviously have married at a later date. SIPOS, Gábor: *Reformata Transylvania. Tanulmányok az erdélyi református egyház 16–18. századi történetéhez*, Kolozsvár, 2012, 13.

<sup>27</sup> BUDAI, É.: op.cit., *Magyar Ország*, 108.

<sup>28</sup> FEJÉR, György – VASS, László (eds.): *Tudományos Gyűjtemény*, Vol. 2, 1818, no. 5, 11.

<sup>29</sup> Although numerous works of church history published as early as the early modern period mention Demeter Derecskei, virtually nothing is known about his person. SIPOS, Gábor: Derecskei Demeter, a Partium reformátora, in SIPOS, G.: op.cit., *Reformata Transylvania*, 13–22.

<sup>30</sup> KISS, Kálmán: *A szatmári reform. egyházmegye története*, Kecskemét, 1878, 76.

gained a powerful aristocratic patron who, according to most sources, actively protected those preaching Lutheran doctrine and showed genuine interest in their teachings.<sup>31</sup> Gáspár Drágffy himself, perhaps as a result of the reformers' influence, had already come into persistent conflict with the cathedral chapter of Várad from 1532 onward.<sup>32</sup>

By the late 1530s, the Drágffy couple had surrounded themselves with reformers and subsequently offered refuge to Mátyás Dévai Bíró, known as the "Hungarian Luther," who became a pastor in Debrecen in 1544.<sup>33</sup> He was among the Protestant ministers who participated in organizing the first Hungarian Protestant synod<sup>34</sup> in Erdőd.<sup>35</sup> Twenty-nine preachers were invited to the synod, and its original patron was Gáspár Drágffy.<sup>36</sup> Following the magnate's death in January, however, his widow, Anna Báthory, assumed this role.<sup>37</sup> From that point onward, she not only continued to follow developments within the Church closely, but also became an increasingly active participant in its affairs, while fulfilling her maternal responsibilities. After her husband's death, she also became the legal guardian of their two sons, representing them in all legal matters.<sup>38</sup> Alongside the traditional role of mother, many widows in this period were compelled by the conditions of continuous warfare to assume their

<sup>31</sup> This intense interest can indeed be demonstrated in the case of several magnates, for example Gábor Perényi, lord of Sárospatak; however, in most instances patrons remained passive, allowing the market towns on their estates to invite clergy of their own choosing. PÉTER, Katalin: *A reformáció: kényszer vagy választás?*, Budapest, 2004. 108–117.

<sup>32</sup> According to a letter issued by the cathedral chapter of Várad on the Friday before Pentecost in 1532, Seraphin Mindszenti, acting on behalf of Gáspár Drágffy, protested against Mihály Kusalyi Jakcsi's attempt to take possession of Cseh on the basis of a charter of judgment, together with representatives of the cathedral chapter and the king, without summoning the neighboring landholders. The judge of Cseh, however, had them driven away by the peasants. The conflict persisted over the following years and became permanent. PETRI, M.: op. cit. *Szilágy vármegye*, I. 533–534.

<sup>33</sup> SIPOS, G.: op. cit. *Derecskei Demeter*, 19.

<sup>34</sup> VÉGH, Zsuzsanna: A reformáció előzményei és kezdete Ung vármegyében, *Egyháztörténeti Szemle* 6, 2005, no. 2, 80–97.

<sup>35</sup> KISS, K.: op. cit. *A szatmári református*, 107.

<sup>36</sup> PÁPAI PÁRIZ, Franciscus: *Rudus Redivivum seu Breves Rerum Ecclesiasticarum Hungaricarum juxta et Transylvanicarum inde a prima Reformatione Commentarii*, Cibinii, 1684, b 10r–b 10v. Quoted in VARGA, András: *Molnár Gergely, Melancthon magyar tanítványa*, Dissertationes Ex Bibliotheca Universitatis De Attila József Nominatae, 7, Szeged, 1983, 46, URL: [http://acta.bibl.u-szeged.hu/31928/1/dissert\\_bibliotheca\\_007\\_003-075.pdf](http://acta.bibl.u-szeged.hu/31928/1/dissert_bibliotheca_007_003-075.pdf), Last Accessed: 08-01-2019.

<sup>37</sup> BARÁTH, B. L.: op. cit. *Adalékok az Ecsedi Báthoriak*, 26.

<sup>38</sup> PETRI, M.: op. cit. *Szilágy vármegye*, I. 535.

husbands' responsibilities, and it appears that they did so with increasing confidence. Anna Báthory was one of these energetic, capable, and devoted widows. Until her son György reached legal majority in 1555, she also held the office of lord-lieutenant in the counties previously administered by her husband. After the year of mourning, she married again to another Protestant nobleman, Antal Homonnai Drugeth. This confessionally conscious marital choice likewise reflects a determined woman who expanded the boundaries of her prescribed social role, at a time when most magnates had not yet explicitly committed themselves to the Reformation. Since a charter dated November 2, 1546 already refers to Antal Homonnai Drugeth as the guardian of Anna Báthory's children, the marriage must have taken place earlier that same year.<sup>39</sup> At this time, Homonnai Drugeth became not only the guardian of Anna Báthory's two sons from her first marriage, but also lord-lieutenant of Kraszna and Middle Szolnok counties. He appears to have died around 1548, as a conscription from 1549 once again lists Anna as a widow.<sup>40</sup> This active mother and patron of the Church remarried in 1550, this time becoming the wife of György Báthory of the Ecsed branch of the Báthory family.<sup>41</sup> According to historical tradition, György Báthory became a follower of Protestant teachings under the influence of his wife. Although his active support of the Reformation can be documented only from the 1550s onward, it is clear that he belonged to a regional circle of magnates who either supported, or at least did not oppose, the spread of Reformed teachings.<sup>42</sup> It is certain that Anna Báthory was the first of the two to embrace Protestantism, and that at the time of György's conversion, his brothers still resisted Protestant ideas.<sup>43</sup>

Of the three Báthory brothers, András and Miklós supported the Habsburg cause, while György belonged for most of his adult life to the

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<sup>39</sup> Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (hereinafter: MNL OL), A 57. 2. k. 168–169.

<sup>40</sup> MNL-OL A 57. 2. k. 200–201.

<sup>41</sup> BARÁTH, B. L.: op. cit. *Adalékok az Ecsedi Báthoriak*, 26–52.

<sup>42</sup> In addition to György Báthory, Péter Perényi, Ferenc Bebek, Gáspár Drágffy, István and Gábor Roski, Antal Homonnai Drugeth, Imre Homonnai Drugeth, and probably András Báthory Szaniszlófi also signed the agreement concluded at Sárospatak on February 14, 1542, in which magnates of the Upper Tisza region who supported the Reformation movement entered into an alliance for their mutual protection. See KARÁCSONYI, J. – KOLLÁNYI, F (eds.): *Egyháztörténeti emlékek a magyarországi hitújítás korából*, IV. 1542–1547, Budapest, 1909, 6. Although none of the members of this group was a militant opponent of the reformers, it cannot be stated with certainty that this agreement had an explicitly confessional character.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 29.

party of John Zápolya.<sup>44</sup> András Báthory (Bonaventura) served as a military commander, Voivode of Transylvania, and judge royal,<sup>45</sup> and as late as 1549 he clearly acted as a patron of the Catholic Church.<sup>46</sup> In his capacity as captain-general, acting under royal commission, he persecuted Gáspár Drágffy—Anna Báthory’s first husband—and Mátyás Dévai Bíró, one of their preachers, both of whom supported the Reformation.<sup>47</sup> The advancement of György’s career began unquestionably only after his marriage. His wife brought with her substantial estates and the offices associated with them, enabling him to emerge from the shadow of his brothers. In 1555, György, Anna Báthory’s son from her first marriage and by then her only surviving child, died; consequently, in the summer of 1556, in addition to the lord-lieutenant title of Szatmár and Szabolcs counties, György Báthory assumed the offices of lord-lieutenant of Kraszna and Middle Szolnok counties as well.<sup>48</sup> Based on the events reconstructed from surviving sources, Anna appears to have been the more proactive of the two, and this was likely true in matters of ecclesiastical patronage as well.

By the mid-1550s, the court of György Báthory and Anna had become a refuge for Protestant preachers. They supported many members of the circle of Péter Méliusz Juhász, including Méliusz himself—later bishop of Debrecen—and the preacher Péter Somogyi of Vágsellye, whose studies

<sup>44</sup> BÁN, Imre: A Báthoriak a régi magyar irodalomban, in DÁM László (ed.): *Tanulmányok Nyírbátor és a Báthori család történetéhez*, Nyírbátor, 1986, 59.

<sup>45</sup> PÁLFFY, Géza: Kerületi és végvidéki főkapitányok és főkapitány-helyettesek Magyarországon a 16–17. században. Minta egy készülő főkapitányi archontológiai és „életrajzi lexikonból”, *Történelmi Szemle* 39, 1997, no. 2, URL: [https://epa.oszk.hu/00600/00617/00001/tsz97\\_2\\_palffy\\_geza.htm](https://epa.oszk.hu/00600/00617/00001/tsz97_2_palffy_geza.htm), Last Accessed: 06-04-2019. Accordingly, between March and December 1542 he served as “captain-general of the Transdanubian parts of the Kingdom of Hungary” (supremus capitaneus partium regni Hungariae Transdanubianarum; Kreisoberst jenseits der Donau); from 1542 to 1552 he held the office of captain-general of the Cisdanubian territories, and between 1553 and 1556 he served as captain-general of the Transcistibiscan region.

<sup>46</sup> KARÁCSONYI, János – KOLLÁNYI, Frigyes – LUKCSICS, József: *Egyháztörténeti emlékek a magyarországi hitújítás korából*, Budapest, 1912, V., 170–171.

<sup>47</sup> A letter dated February 12, 1544, signed by Ferdinand of Habsburg and Miklós Oláh, indicates that, in his capacity as captain-general, he was tasked with “restraining” Gáspár Drágffy and Mátyás Dévai Bíró. KARÁCSONYI – KOLLÁNYI: op. cit. *Egyháztörténeti emlékek*, 340. WERTNER, Mór: A Báthoryak családi történetéhez (Egy genealógiai táblával), *Turul* 8., 1900, 15.

<sup>48</sup> WERTNER Mór: A Báthoryak családi történetéhez (Egy genealógiai táblával.) *Turul* 8. (1900) 15.

at Wittenberg<sup>49</sup> they helped finance.<sup>50</sup> During the 1550s, they served as patrons of all Protestant synods held in the region. This tradition was undoubtedly continued under the influence of Anna, who had already acted as a noble patron of the first synod in Erdőd. The synods held in Óvár in 1554 and the second synod in Erdőd in 1555 also convened on the couple's estates. At these synods, a more or less established ecclesiastical structure emerged in the form of the Lutheran Church District of the Szatmár region. The influence of György Báthory and Anna is clearly demonstrated by the fact that their court chaplains were chosen as leaders of this church district, which represented the first Protestant ecclesiastical organization to operate in the Hungarian language.<sup>51</sup> The Óvár synod in 1554 was already attended by eighty-eight ministers, and Demeter Thorday, pastor of Óvár, was elected as their leader. He had already been present at the first synod in Erdőd and was almost certainly a trusted associate and protégé of Anna Báthory.<sup>52</sup>

In the years that followed, the influence of the other major branch of the Reformation, the Swiss tradition, became increasingly pronounced in the region. Demeter Thorday himself gravitated toward this more radical direction; however, his patrons at that time remained aligned with Lutheranism, and thus at the second synod of Erdőd in 1555 a more moderate preacher was elected as head of the district. It may be assumed that the synod held in Csenger in 1570 was also held under the patronage of the Báthory family.<sup>53</sup> Although it is not known precisely when the Báthory couple became supporters of the Calvinist tradition, their son, Stephen Báthory, later recalled in his will that his mother had been a committed adherent of the Swiss Reformation.<sup>54</sup> According to this testament, drawn up in 1603, Stephen Báthory of Ecsed, the last male member of the family and the son of György Báthory of Ecsed and Anna Báthory of Somlyó, did not name his father as his model in matters of the Reformed faith, but rather his mother, who had also administered the Protestant school located on her Erdőd estate in this same devoted Reformed spirit.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>49</sup> BOTTA, István: Melius Péter ifjúsága. A magyarországi reformáció lutheri és helvét irányai elkülönülésének kezdete. *Humanizmus és reformáció* 7., Budapest, 1978. 88–89.

<sup>50</sup> BARÁTH, B. L.: op. cit. *Adalékok az Ecsedi Báthoriak*, 32.

<sup>51</sup> KISS, Áron: *XVI. században tartott magyar református zsinatok végzései*, Budapest, 1881, 27–28.

<sup>52</sup> KISS, K.: op. cit. *A szatmári református*, 653.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 656.

<sup>54</sup> KOVÁCS D.: op. cit., *Az ecsedi Báthoryak*, 189.

<sup>55</sup> VADÁSZ, Veronika: *Ecsedi Báthory István végrendelete 1603*, Fiala filológusok füzetek. Korai újkor. 1., Szeged, 2002.

**Eulália Massay, Wife of Gáspár Mágochy**

Another fascinating, though more background figure of the period was Eulália Massay, wife of Gáspár Mágochy. As is typical in the case of early modern women, it is her husband's life that is documented in greater detail. The Mágochy family appears to have had military ancestors active in Baranya and southern Hungary at the beginning of the sixteenth century.<sup>56</sup> Mágochy's father had yet been referred to as Márton Porkoláb and served as castellan of Gyula in 1493;<sup>57</sup> Mágochy himself, however, pursued an exceptional career, which he also began as a frontier soldier. He served as castellan of the fortress of Gyula under Captain Ferenc Patóchy between 1549 and 1552, and again between 1553 and 1558.<sup>58</sup> His first wife, Anna Patóchy, the captain's daughter, facilitated the advancement of his career.<sup>59</sup> In addition to his military talents, Mágochy possessed considerable commercial acumen and became involved early in the wine trade.<sup>60</sup> He first became captain of the castle of Gyula, later acquired substantial estates in Abaúj and Torna counties,<sup>61</sup> and through these holdings was appointed lord-lieutenant of Torna County. At the height of his military career, he was named captain of the fortress of Eger in 1563.<sup>62</sup> This elevated him into the ranks of the leading magnates of northeastern Hungary, alongside the Báthory family of Ecsed. In 1573, he took the castle of Mukachevo in mortgage for 42,000 florins, which demonstrates the considerable wealth he had accumulated by that time. In addition to his own economic activities, this was also facilitated by his role as executor of the will of János Alaghy and later as guardian to his children.<sup>63</sup> From the 1570s onward, he was considered one of the barons. Following the early death of his first wife, he married Eulália Massay of Haraklány while still in Gyula.<sup>64</sup> Her family belonged to the Protestant community of the region, and her sister was Margit Massay, who had raised her son, Péter Pázmány, as a Protestant; however, following her early death, he converted to Catholicism under the influence of his

<sup>56</sup> VERESS, Endre: *Gyula város oklevéltára 1313–1800*, Budapest, 1938, 28–29, 35, 39, 49.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 169, 189, 197–199., 205–206, 239.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. 185.

<sup>60</sup> HANGAY, Zoltán: *Rákóczi Zsigmond kora társadalmában*. Kandidátusi értekezés, 2013.

<sup>61</sup> MNL-OL A 57. 3. k. 554–555.

<sup>62</sup> Urbáriumok és összeírások a Magyar Országos Levéltárban. (Urbaria et Conscriptioes), Budapest, 2009, DVD Arcanum, Registrata, UC 4:48.

<sup>63</sup> MNL-OL E 148. Magyar Kamarai Levéltár, Nova Registrata Acta.) fasc. 354. Nr. 43.

<sup>64</sup> FÁBIÁN, Gábor: *Arad vármegye leírása, históriai, geographiai és statisztikai tekintetben*. I. Rész., Buda, 1835, 28.

stepmother.<sup>65</sup> During these years, the Massay family was among the most important patrons of the school in Gyula, providing financial support to teachers and even scholarships to students. At that time, Gyula was one of the significant centers of the Reformation, where renowned pastors and teachers such as István Szegei Kis and Demeter Szikszai Fabricius were active, as was Demeter Sibolti<sup>66</sup>, tutor to Eulália Massay, who served the family between 1551 and 1557.<sup>67</sup> Among the women of the Massay family, Ágnes, Eulália's sister, was likewise a supporter of the Reformation and even composed religious verse, which was preserved in the hymnbook of the Lutheran preacher and poet Péter Bornemisza.<sup>68</sup> The Protestant education of the young woman and her close association with prominent reformers demonstrate an intellectual independence similar to that of Anna Báthory. Likewise, the pastors associated with the family, as in the case of the Báthory household, named both husband and wife as their patrons. It may therefore be assumed that Eulália Massay encountered the teachings of the Reformation before her husband, Gáspár Mágóchy.<sup>69</sup>

Since Gáspár Mágóchy and his wife had no children who survived to adulthood, they assumed guardianship over children from their extended family and social circle. In this case, the capable and intelligent soldier Gáspár Mágóchy managed the family's affairs himself, while Eulália Massay's responsibilities centered primarily on estate management and ecclesiastical patronage. These duties, however, she appears to have carried out with greater independence than had previously been customary. Her name appears independently among those who supported the publication of the works of Péter Méliusz Juhász, Reformed bishop of Debrecen.<sup>70</sup> Like György and Anna Báthory, the couple sympathized with the Helvetic branch of the Reformation and invited ministers of that persuasion to serve on their estates. One such figure was Pál Thuri Farkas, who became pastor of Abaújszántó, one of their estate centers, in 1570.<sup>71</sup> At that time, Thuri Farkas and his colleague István Kopátsi were subject to ongoing attacks from Lutheran nobles and clergy. According to historical tradition,

<sup>65</sup> Several members of the Massay family were significant landowners in Bihar and Békés counties and were known as supporters of the Reformation on their estates.

<sup>66</sup> SZABÓ, András: Mágócsy Gáspár és udvara, in R. VÁRKONYI, Ágnes (ed.): *Magyar reneszánsz udvari kultúra*, Budapest, 1987. 264–266.

<sup>67</sup> KARÁCSONYI, János: *Békés vármegye története*, Gyula, 1896, III, 91–92.

<sup>68</sup> SZABÓ, András: Istenes versek 16 századi magyar nőköltőktől, in BAJÁKI, Rita – BÁTHORY, Orsolya (eds.): *A nők és régi magyarországi vallásosság*, Budapest, 2015, 300.

<sup>69</sup> VERESS, E.: op. cit., *Gyula város*, 496.

<sup>70</sup> SZABÓ, A.: op. cit. *Istenes versek*, 294.

<sup>71</sup> KISS, Lajos: Mágócsy Gáspár tuteurságának útja és a református egyház térnyerése Alaghy János lutheránus várnagy Abaúj vármegyei birtokain, *Egyháztörténeti Szemle* 18, 2017, No. 2, 8.

it was not the lord himself, Gáspár Mágóchy, but rather his wife, Eulália Massay, together with Zsófia Patóchy, wife of György Bebek, who took a firm stand in their defense.<sup>72</sup> Following the death of Eulália Massay, Gáspár Mágóchy married once more, taking Anna Horváth of Zaránd as his wife, whom he mentioned in his will of 1573; his second wife must therefore have died prior to that date.

### Anna and Sára Sulyok of Lekkse

The Sulyok family of Lekkse maintained kinship ties with numerous Hungarian aristocratic families, including the Török family of Enying,<sup>73</sup> who were among the earliest supporters of the Reformation. Anna and Sára were the daughters of Balázs Sulyok and Erzsébet Pethő of Gerse. The family originally held estates in southern Hungary, in Bács-Bodrog and Somogy counties.<sup>74</sup> In his youth, Balázs Sulyok had served as a soldier on the southern frontier of the kingdom and came under suspicion following the fall of Belgrade in 1521.<sup>75</sup> He married into the Pethő family of Gerse, lords of Tátika Castle in the Balaton Highlands. From this marriage, three daughters were born: Anna, Krisztina, and Sára. Fleeing the Ottoman advance, the family first relocated to Egyházasszentgyörgy on the southern shore of Lake Balaton, and in 1544 moved further east<sup>76</sup> to Szatmár County in northeastern Hungary. Anna first married Mihály Muthnokoy and, following his death, in the spring of 1553 became the wife of János Balassi of Gyarmat and Kékkő; their son was Bálint Balassi, one of the most significant Renaissance poets of Hungary. Krisztina married György Bocskai of Kismarja, and their son was Stephen Bocskai, Prince of Transylvania. Sára, for her part, married István Dobó of Ruzska in 1550.<sup>77</sup>

Little is known about Anna's first marriage, but it is certain that she had already shown interest in the teachings of the Reformation following her first husband's death, as Bishop Pál Szondy, vicar of Esztergom, repeatedly forbade her from attending mass and even barred her from entering the church. She became acquainted with the Lutheran preacher, playwright, and poet Péter Bornemisza, and it was perhaps under his influence that she embraced Protestantism. Here again, it may be assumed that she adopted the new confession earlier than her second husband, János Balassi.

<sup>72</sup> ZOVÁNYI, Jenő: *A reformáció Magyarországon 1565-ig*, Budapest, 1921, 416–420.

<sup>73</sup> BESSENYEI, József: *Enyingi Török Bálint*, Magyar Történelmi Társulat, Budapest, 1994, V.

<sup>74</sup> NAGY, Iván: *Magyarország nemes családai családfákkal és nemzedékrendi táblákkal. 1857–1868*, X, 402–408.

<sup>75</sup> ZAY, Ferenc: Az Landorféjrvár elveszésének oka e vót, és így esött, in BITSKEY, István (ed.): *Magyar emlékirók 16–18. század*, Budapest, 1982, 10–13, 58.

<sup>76</sup> BESSENYEI J.: op. cit. *Enyingi Török Bálint*, 227–228.

<sup>77</sup> SZABÓ, András: Az ismeretlen kismarjai Bocskai család, *Publicationes Universitatis Miskolcensis. Sectio Philosophica* 13., 2008, No. 2, 170.

It is certain that during her second marriage<sup>78</sup>, between 1563 and 1565, Bornemisza served as tutor to their son, Bálint Balassi, who had been born in 1554. Péter Bornemisza remained court chaplain to the Balassi family until 1569, but his connection was clearly not to the lord of the estate, but rather to the wife, who not only welcomed him into her husband's household but also supported the publication of his works.<sup>79</sup>

Sára Sulyok of Lékse married István Dobó, captain of the fortress of Eger and later celebrated as the hero of Eger, in October 1550. Their wedding was conducted according to Catholic rites, and for at least three or four years thereafter neither Sára Sulyok nor István Dobó converted to Protestantism. During these years, however, Sára's sister Anna became increasingly familiar with the teachings preached by Péter Bornemisza and likely introduced her sister to them, as both of their names appear among the principal patrons of Bornemisza's *Tragoedia* in 1558.<sup>80</sup>

Sára Sulyok of Lékse was only fifteen or sixteen years old when she married István Dobó, who was already in his forties. At his side, she became an active woman who significantly expanded the conventional boundaries of female roles. Their wedding took place in Eger according to Catholic rites, officiated by the bishop of Vác.<sup>81</sup> Their first child, a son named Ferenc, was born the following year.<sup>82</sup> Nothing is known of Sára's daily life in Eger during these early years; it is likely that her attention was fully occupied by early motherhood. During the Ottoman siege of Eger in 1552, István Dobó sent his wife and young son to the family estates in Ung County, where Sára assumed responsibilities as mistress of the household and estate manager alongside her maternal duties. In 1553, the family moved to Transylvania when Dobó was appointed Voivode of Transylvania. His demanding administrative responsibilities likely occupied much of his attention, and his wife was once again required to assume multiple roles. She fulfilled her responsibilities as a wife—another child was born from their marriage—while also managing her household and raising her children in an unfamiliar environment. Her most significant responsibilities arose when her husband was imprisoned by Queen Isabella Jagiellon at Gherla in November 1556. For his wife, who was still barely 20 years old at the time, this opened up the opportunity to act independently. She was responsible not only for her maternal duties but also for managing their noble household during Dobó's captivity. Sára Sulyok and her children

<sup>78</sup> Anna married János Balassi in 1553 and lived with him until her death in 1573.

<sup>79</sup> PIRNÁT, Antal: *Kiadatlan tanulmányok*, Budapest, 2018, 42.

<sup>80</sup> BORNEMISZA, Péter: *Tragoedia magyar nyelvenn, az Sophocles Electraibol...* (Kolofon: Viennae Avstriae. Octauo calend: Iunij. 1558). RMKI 35 – RMNy 144 – VD 16 ZV 22964.

<sup>81</sup> CSIFFÁRY, Gergely: *Ruszkai Dobó István életrajza*, Rudabánya, 2014.

<sup>82</sup> GERVERS-MOLNÁR, Vera: *Sárospataki síremlékek*, Budapest, 1983, A Pálóczi és a Dobó család leszármazási táblázata.

were assigned residence at Beszterce (Bistrița), where, in addition to overseeing her household, she organized and prepared her husband's escape.<sup>83</sup> During the ten months in which István Dobó and his brother-in-law, János Balassi, were imprisoned, their wives were permitted to visit them and smuggled in the tools necessary for their escape, organizing the entire operation. Sára Sulyok even used her own inheritance to finance the preparations, secure tolerable living conditions for the prisoners, and bribe the necessary intermediaries. Her conduct during her husband's imprisonment in Transylvania significantly expanded the conventional boundaries of women's roles, demonstrating an independence of action and decisiveness far beyond traditional norms. István Dobó ultimately escaped on November 6, 1557, with his wife's assistance, lowering himself by rope from the castle walls.<sup>84</sup> Following his escape, Sára Sulyok herself remained in captivity under Queen Isabella Jagiellon, first at Cluj and later at the fortress of Deva.<sup>85</sup> Dobó himself held his exceptionally courageous wife in the highest esteem, as he expressed in his will, dated November 26, 1558, at Végles Castle: "...I do hereby approve and confirm the provisions made in favor of my most beloved consort, the noble Lady Sára Sulyok. Moreover, since my aforesaid most beloved consort, out of her love toward me, did endure with me hardship and captivity, and bore at my side such grievous misfortune; and when in former years we both fell into the captivity of Queen Isabella, she thereby lost the goods left to her by her parents, namely her gold and silver possessions; and furthermore, before I was by divine aid delivered from that same captivity, she did suffer harsh imprisonment at Kolozsvár and thereafter at the fortress of Déva, together with our common children—an ordeal exceedingly heavy for one of the female sex—and did bear the same in great misery... my most dear consort..."<sup>86</sup>

István Dobó, himself counted among the bravest soldiers and fortress captains of his age, thus regarded his wife as having endured an imprisonment that was exceptionally harsh for a woman, and more generally as having conducted herself with remarkable strength in many areas of her life "for a woman." The respect and esteem Dobó held for his wife are likewise clearly evident from the language of his will. This respect may also have contributed to the fact that Dobó, previously a committed Catholic<sup>87</sup>, gradually moved closer to the Reformation during the 1560s, together with his brother, Domonkos Dobó, and that their son, Ferenc, likewise became

<sup>83</sup> CSIFFÁRY, G.: op. cit. *Ruszkai Dobó*, 59.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. 60.

<sup>85</sup> NAGY, Gábor (ed.): *Magyar história 1526–1608*, Debrecen, 1998, 203. Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Heves Megyei Levéltára (hereinafter: MNL-HML), V-1/d/4/36. Eger város tanácsának iratai. Vegyes iratok. (Miscellanea)

<sup>86</sup> MNL-HML V-1/d/4/36. Eger város tanácsának iratai. Vegyes iratok. (Miscellanea)

<sup>87</sup> As captain of the fortress of Eger, István Dobó had earlier persecuted those who preached Lutheran doctrine.

a patron of Protestant preachers. Sára Sulyok herself supported Protestant institutions not only alongside her husband but also independently, for example as a patron of the Reformed College of Sárospatak.<sup>88</sup>

### Summary

The sixteenth century was a traumatic period in Hungarian history. The dual election of kings following the defeat at Mohács and the subsequent division of the country into two and then three parts disrupted traditional social structures and established patterns of social roles. In this context, continuous warfare imposed increasing burdens on men, while many women were widowed at an early age. This situation created opportunities for women to reinterpret traditional gender roles, sometimes out of necessity, and at other times through their own initiative and strength of character.

Alongside their traditional roles as mothers and household managers, increasing numbers of women learned to read, and many also to write. The Reformation's emphasis on Bible reading provided an intellectual and theological foundation for female education. Although no formal schools for girls yet existed in the Kingdom of Hungary, daughters in noble households could learn to read and write, and many became well informed in theological matters. The counties of northeastern Hungary frequently shifted political allegiance, alternately falling under the authority of Transylvania or the remnants of the Kingdom of Hungary. The husbands of the noblewomen discussed above were all actively engaged in military service, which in itself created greater scope for female agency. These three noblewomen, however, were not only active in managing estates and households but were also well informed in theological matters and capable of independent action. Although all three continued to fulfill traditional female roles, they also assumed initiative in areas such as organizing synods, founding and managing schools, exercising ecclesiastical patronage, and participating in political negotiations. The fluid and unsettled conditions of the period are reflected in the fact that their departures from conventional gender norms were received positively by their contemporaries, and their proactive spirit was preserved in historical memory.

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<sup>88</sup> ERDÉLYI, János (ed.): *A Sárospataki Ref. Főiskola háromszázados ünnepe július 8-án*, Sárospatak, 1860, 110.