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NŐI SZEREPKONSTRUKCIÓK A MAGYAR  
REFORMÁCIÓ KORÁBAN

FEMALE ROLE CONSTRUCTIONS IN THE AGE OF THE HUNGARIAN  
REFORMATION

Judit Balogh

Eszterházy Károly Katolikus Egyetem

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 életről, *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., *Szilágy 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>

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<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.

# MÁRTÁK ÉS MÁRIÁK

Világi devóció és szerzetesi jámborság a 17. században

## MARTHAS AND MARYS

Lay Devotion and the Piety of the Poor Clares in the Seventeenth Century

Angelika Orgona

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### ÖSSZEFOGLALÁS

Márta és Mária bibliai példázatának keretében ágyazva a tanulmány azt vizsgálja, miként őrződött meg és öröklődött tovább a katolikus női identitás a protestáns uralom alatt álló Erdélyi Fejedelemségben. A ruszcai Kornis család három nemzedékének nőalakjait felidézve arra törekszik, hogy bemutassa a nők nélkülözhetetlen szerepét a felekezeti identitás továbbadásában. A katolikus kegyesség, a jótékonyosság, az imádságok, a felekezethez fűződő szokások és a szentképek tisztelete nemzedékről nemzedékre hagyományozódtak a családokban. A hagyományos társadalom keretei között a nők nem rendelkeztek valódi választási szabadsággal; életük alakulását nem saját döntéseik, hanem körülményeik határozták meg. Katolikus nőkként két hagyományos modellt testesítettek meg: hol Máriát, hol Mártát követték, de mindig igyekeztek hittel, hűséggel és alázattal viselni a rájuk rótt "kereszteket", és így teljesíteni be Isten akaratát.

### ABSTRACT

Framed by the biblical paradigm of Martha and Mary, this study analyzes how Catholic female identity was preserved and transmitted within a Protestant-ruled Principality of Transylvania. By recalling female figures of three generations of the Kornis family of Ruszka, it seeks to demonstrate the indispensable role women played in the preservation of confessional identity. The practices of Catholic piety, charitable activities, prayers, religious customs, and the veneration of holy images were all transmitted within the framework of family life through successive generations. Women did not enjoy genuine freedom of choice within the framework of traditional society; the course of their lives was determined not by their own decisions but by the actual circumstances of their family. As Catholic women, they embodied two traditional models: at times following Mary, at times Martha, yet always striving to bear the "crosses" laid upon them with faith, fidelity, and humility, and thus to fulfill the will of God.

**Kulcsszavak:** női jámborság, vallási identitás, nemesi családok hálózata, klarisszák, kora újkori Erdély

**Keywords:** female piety, confessional identity, noble family networks, Poor Clares, early modern Transylvania

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“Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at Jesus’s feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks, so she came to him and asked, ‘Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her, then, to help me.’ But the Lord answered her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things, but few things are needed—indeed only one. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.’”<sup>1</sup>

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This study presents female figures from three generations of the Kornis family of Ruszka, Transylvania. The first generation is represented by Kata Keresztúry, a woman who was drawn to the life of the secluded nuns from childhood, and who ultimately ended her life in a convent as a broken widow. The second female figure discussed is her daughter, Borbála Kornis, for whom no other path remained open than to embrace a religious vocation. The third generation is examined through Borbála’s nieces, Kata Kornis, Anna Kornis, and Krisztina Kornis—their aunt, being a nun and seeking a successor, wished to receive them into the convent as her spiritual “daughters,” but all three of them ultimately found fulfillment in marriage and family life.

The Kornis family of Ruszka, who adhered to the Roman Catholic faith from the Báthory period onward, had to face numerous challenges under the rule of Protestant princes, when they were reduced to the status of a religious minority. Although the foundations of the family’s religious identity were laid by the male heads of household—through the Catholic upbringing of their children—the steadfastness and devotion of the wives, mothers, and professed religious women, the “Marthas” and the “Marys,” truly made it possible for the Kornis family not merely to preserve the Catholic faith but also to transmit it onward as an exemplary legacy to subsequent generations.

By recalling female figures of three generations, this study seeks to demonstrate the indispensable role women played in the preservation of cultural identity—and within it, religious affiliation. The practices of Catholic piety, charitable activities, prayers, feast days and everyday rituals, religious customs, and the veneration of holy images were all transmitted within the framework of family life through successive generations of women. Women also provided a moral model for subsequent generations—whether through the choice of the nun’s life or through the embrace

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<sup>1</sup> This study was prepared with the support of the HUN-REN–ELTE Nemesi Emigráció és Emlékezet (1541–1756) – Forrásfeltárás és Kritikai Szövegkiadás Kutatócsoport (Research Group on Noble Emigration and Memory, 1541–1756: Source Exploration and Critical Text Editions). Luke 10:38–42 (NRSVue)

of a sacramental life in the world—and thus contributed in a decisive way to the survival of communal identity.<sup>2</sup>

### The Catholic Heritage of the Maternal Line

To understand the confessional commitment of the female members of the Kornis family, we must look back to the Báthory period. It was then that the Kornis and Keresztúry families of Ruszka formed an alliance, sealed by the marriage of Kata Keresztúry and Boldizsár Kornis. This union did not only bring together the interests of two noble families but also, through the network of kinship ties, reinforced their attachment to the Catholic faith. The two fathers, Kristóf Keresztúry and Gáspár Kornis, were long-time comrades-in-arms: both belonged to the military elite that supported Sigismund Báthory and was led by István Bocskai. The bonds among the members of this group were further strengthened through marriages.

Kristóf Keresztúry has already been well known to scholars of the Báthory period; newly uncovered sources, however, provide insight into his family connections and shed light on the motivations behind the Kornis–Keresztúry marriage. From a young age, the nobleman served Stephen Báthory, and at the Battle of Hadad he saved his life. In 1573, with his ancestral nobility reaffirmed, he received a grant of arms from Báthory, which highlighted not only his military deeds but also his merits in overseeing various construction projects and in economic affairs as prefect of the Dés Chamber.<sup>3</sup> A major milestone in his career was his appointment in 1578 as *ispán* of the salt chamber of Torda, followed in 1587 by his captaincy of the important frontier fortress of Kővár. From 1595 he served as a councillor and lord lieutenant of Kolozs County.<sup>45</sup> Between 1596 and 1598 he was chief steward to Maria Christierna, Princess of Transylvania.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> LEHTSALU, Liise – MORAN, Sarah – EVANGELISTI, Silvia: Introduction. Perspectives on Women's Religious Activities in Early Modern Europe and the Americas, *Journal of Early Modern History*, 2018, Special Issue: 1–7.; EVANGELISTI, Silvia: *Religious Women, Mystic Journeys and Agency in Early Modern Spain*, op. cit., 9–27.; BOULDIN, Elizabeth: "A Good Martha?" *Female Leadership and Domestic Life in Radical Pietistic Communities*, op. cit., 28–48.; LEHTSALU, Liise: *A Welcome Presence: The Custodial Activities of Third Order Women Religious in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Italy*, op. cit., 49–66.

<sup>3</sup> Mária Krisztierna fejedelemasszony oklevele [Charter of Princess Maria Christierna], August 15, 1598, MNL OL P 1870 Rhédey Family Archive, box 29, series 2, item 31.

<sup>4</sup> BALOGH, Jolán: Későrenaissance kőfaragó műhelyek. VIII. közlemény, *Ars Hungarica*, 8., 1980/2, 249.; KÁDÁR, József: *Szolnokdoboka vármegye monographiája*, VI, Dés, 1904, 310–312.

<sup>5</sup> TRÓCSÁNYI, Zsolt: *Erdély központi kormányzata*, A Magyar Országos Levéltár Kiadványai, III. Hatóság- És Hivatalörténet 6., Budapest, 1980, 309.

<sup>6</sup> LÁZÁR, Miklós: *Erdély főispánjai (1540–1711)*, Budapest, 1889, 34.

Numerous Jesuit sources also attest that the committed Catholic councillor, together with Kőrösy Ilona, his “beloved companion,” stood by the members of the order in decisive moments and in the most difficult times as well.<sup>7</sup> When the Jesuit father Antonio Possevino arrived in Transylvania, Kristóf Keresztúry was among those who accompanied him and guided the priest in the prince’s game preserve at Szilágysomlyó. In 1586, when the plague reduced the number of monks to less than half, he admitted five Jesuits within the walls of Kővár, which offered secure refuge from the epidemic. He had Father György Törös buried on his own estate at Szentbenedek, in the newly constructed family vault, and had a church built beside his grave.<sup>8</sup> In 1588, the year of the Jesuits’ expulsion, he also received the gravely ill János Leleszi, the former tutor of Sigismund Báthory.<sup>9</sup> As a patron, he likewise financed the publication of Gergely Vásárhelyi’s highly significant translation of Canisius’ work, which was published in Kolozsvár at the Heltai press.<sup>10</sup>

Information on Keresztúry’s estates and family relations is provided by the will he drew up shortly before his death.<sup>11</sup> The testament mentions two estate centers: the castle at Szentbenedek in Inner Szolnok County (today Mănăstiera, Romania), which he had received as a princely grant in 1573—and from which he derived his noble byname—and the noble manor at Györgyfalva in Kolozs County. He appointed his wife, Ilona Kőrösy (Keoreosy), as administrator of his properties and named his only child, Katalin, as his heir.

His wife, Ilona Kőrösy of Sámson, was descended from a landowning family in Mid-Szolnok County and, under the influence of Jesuit

<sup>7</sup> KESERŰ, Bálint (ed.): J. Argenti iratai 1603–1623 Veress Endre gyűjtésében. Giovanni Argenti jelentései a magyar ügyekről, *Adattár XVI–XVIII. századi szellemi mozgalmaink történetéhez* 7, Szeged, 1983, VI.

<sup>8</sup> LUKÁCS, Ladislaus, S.I. (ed.): *Monumenta Antiquae Hungariae II. (1580–1586)*, Romae, 1976, 409, 967, 970–971, 987, 1021–1022.; LUKÁCS, Ladislaus, S.I. (ed.): *Monumenta Antiquae Hungariae III. (1587–1592)*, Romae, 1981, 896.; LUKÁCS, Ladislaus, S.I. (. ed.): *Monumenta Antiquae Hungariae IV, Romae, 1987, 603.*; BIRÓ, Vencel – BOROS, Fortunát: *Erdélyi katolikus nagyk*, Kolozsvár, 1941, 28–30.

<sup>9</sup> *Monumenta Antiquae Hungariae III*, 484.

<sup>10</sup> VÁSÁRHELYI, Gergely: *Catechismus, az az Canisius Pétertől iratot keresztyeni tudomannac rövid summája...*, Claudiopoli, Anno Domini 1599. (RMK I. 312.); cf. HOLL, Béla: Vásárhelyi Gergely pályája, *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 87, 1983, 150–162.

<sup>11</sup> Keresztúry Kristóf végrendelete [Last Will and Testament of Kristóf Keresztúry]. Kolozsmonostor, May 16, 1599 (transcript: January 8, 1611). Romanian National Archives, Cluj County Directorate (ANR DJC), Fondul Familial Kornis 378, 345, No. 5.

missionary activity, converted from the Calvinist faith to Catholicism.<sup>12</sup> One of her brothers, Ferenc Kőrösy<sup>13</sup> (1569–1603), likewise served as a member of the order: he became a teacher at the College of Gyulaféhevár in 1598 and later held the office of vice-rector at the College of Kolozsvár from 1599 to 1603. Keresztúry's will also bears witness to strong religious commitment. He bequeathed his movable property to the Transylvanian fathers of the Society of Jesus. The possibility was also raised that his only daughter and heir, Kata, would continue her life as a nun, since she felt a vocation for a life dedicated to God.<sup>14</sup> In that event, he would have allotted a substantial portion of his wealth to collateral relatives on both his own and his wife's side.<sup>15</sup>

The possibility of entering a convent thus stood before Kata as a real alternative; yet in the end, neither the widow nor her daughter chose this path. The surviving letters of Boldizsár Kornis and Ilona Kőrösy shed light on the background to this decision and the motivations behind the marriage. Michael the Wallachian voivode, having assumed the princely throne, began to harass "Kristóf deákné" on her estates, exploiting the vulnerable position of the widow left without protection. As a recent widow, Ilona needed support, and the Kornis family, well established in the voivode's court, were able to assume the role of patrons. From the time of his betrothal to Kata Keresztúry, Boldizsár Kornis protected his future bride's estates as his own against the property-hungry Orthodox monks (*kalugyers*).

Marriage at the side of a successful man promised happiness and security for the young woman. Nothing foreshadowed either the bloody political intrigue or the personal tragedy that would leave a deep mark on the family's history for generations. Kata Keresztúry, who as a young maiden gave her hand to an energetic and influential man rather than entering a convent, was forced to seek refuge behind cloister walls twenty years

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<sup>12</sup> BALÁZS, Mihály – KRUPPA, Tamás – LÁZÁR, István Dávid – LUKÁCS, László (eds.): *Jesuita okmánytár 1/1–2*. Erdélyt és Magyarországot érintő iratok. 1601–1606. [Jesuit Document Collection 1/1–2. Documents Concerning Transylvania and Hungary, 1601–1606.] Introduction by Mihály Balázs. Szeged, 1995. Docs. 66 and 189/1.

<sup>13</sup> VARGA, Júlia: *Katolikus közép- és felsőoktatás Erdélyben a 17. századtól a 19. század közepéig*, PhD diss., Budapest, 2007, 57, URL: <https://doktori.btk.elte.hu/hist/vargajulia/dissert.pdf>, Last Accessed: 21-11-2025.

<sup>14</sup> Keresztúry Kata végrendelete [Last Will and Testament of Kata Keresztúry], Kolozsmonostor, July 8, 1624. ANR DJC, FF Kornis 378/234, No. 2.

<sup>15</sup> According to contemporary rumor, Kata Keresztúry had a dowry worth more than one hundred thousand florins. Aloiso Radibrad to David Ungnad, Gyulaféhevár, July 31, 1600, in SZÁDECZKY, Lajos (ed.): *Historiai forgácsok: Regesták Mihály vajda történetéhez. IV., Magyar Történelmi Tár, 3. ser., 7. vol.*, Budapest, 1884, 456.

later—a broken widow with a tarnished reputation, and a posthumous daughter.

### **The Widow's Path to the Convent**

From the ten-year marriage of Kata Keresztúry and Boldizsár Kornis, we have records of three children who survived to adulthood: Ferenc, István, and Borbála. Boldizsár did not live to see the birth of his daughter; he had been implicated in a conspiracy against Prince Gabriel Báthory and perished in the ensuing confrontation. During the nighttime raid at Szék on March 24, the prince's men killed Boldizsár's half-brother, György Kornis; Boldizsár himself was wounded and captured, while their youngest brother, Zsigmond, fled to Hungary. In early July 1610, after making a confession under torture, Boldizsár was beheaded in Kolozsvár.

The assassination attempt at Szék entered historical memory under the name “the conspiracy of the cuckolded husbands.” Decades later, it also became part of the shared family memory, in which it is recounted that Prince Gabriel Báthory had attempted to rape Boldizsár Kornis's wife at the castle of Radnót. Whether the act was actually consummated or merely attempted remains unknown; the remark attached to the story—‘a sorrowful memory mingled with shame’—points rather to a family trauma spanning generations.<sup>16</sup> The prince's visit to Radnót took place in early March 1610, and the little girl was born nine months later, at the end of that year. Understandably, the mother emphasized the child's legitimacy in the surviving documents.<sup>17</sup> Based on our present knowledge, however, the mystery cannot be resolved: we do not know who was in fact the father of the posthumous Borbála.

In the summer of 1610, Kata Keresztúry was left a widow with two young sons and pregnant with her third child. Her burdens were further compounded by the fact that husband's execution entailed the total confiscation of their wealth; she lost not only her husband's estates but also her own holdings, and was forced to flee Transylvania with her family.

Kata Keresztúry and her brother-in-law—Zsigmond Kornis, the only surviving brother—did not only seek and receive financial support from the Habsburg court but were also able to mobilize their network of relatives in western Hungary. This network later proved effective even after their return to Transylvania. One of its members was Ferenc Forgách, bishop of Nyitra (1596–1607) and later archbishop of Esztergom (1607–1615), who had known the Kornis family since his youth, having studied together with Boldizsár Kornis at the Jesuit gymnasium in Pułtusk.<sup>18</sup> His younger brother, Zsigmond Forgách (II) (1565–1621), who served as judge royal

<sup>16</sup> ANR DJC, FF Kornis 378/131. 14r.

<sup>17</sup> ORGONA, Angelika: op. cit. 2020, 43.

<sup>18</sup> ORGONA, Angelika: *Unikornisok Tündérországbán. A ruszkai Kornisok Erdélyben (1546 k.–1648)*, Budapest, 2014, 157–164.

(1606–1608, 1610–1618), master of the treasury (1608–1610), and captain general of Upper Hungary (1609–1618), also became related to the Kornis family through his second wife, Katalin Pállfy.<sup>19</sup> Both Forgách brothers played an important mediating role for Zsigmond Kornis in his dealings with the Viennese court, as well as with the Hungarian clergy and the Vatican;<sup>20</sup> surviving sources also demonstrate that they provided particular support to Kata Keresztúry and her orphaned children. In December 1613, Zsigmond Forgách intervened on behalf of the widow in the matter of her former debts.<sup>21</sup> The following year, he supported Kata Keresztúry's petition before the Szepes Chamber, in which she requested financial assistance for the elementary studies (*artes liberales*) of her school-aged sons; the chamber granted a monthly allowance of 80 florins.<sup>22</sup> In 1616, Zsigmond Forgách invited Kata Keresztúry to the funeral of Cardinal Archbishop Ferenc Forgách, who had died unexpectedly.<sup>23</sup>

In 1613, following the accession of Gabriel Bethlen to the throne, the family returned to Transylvania.<sup>24</sup> Zsigmond's aim was to obtain guardianship over the children, in hope of the associated financial advantages. After the Diet lifted the proscription imposed on the exiles,<sup>25</sup> the extended family—Zsigmond with his wife, his sister-in-law, and the three orphaned children—settled at Radnót, on the confiscated estate of Boldizsár Kornis. The castle and lordship of Radnót had originally been a patrimonial estate, which may have provided Zsigmond with a legal basis to reclaim the property for himself, taking advantage of his superior position over the

<sup>19</sup> SZABÓ, András Péter: Egy felső-magyarországi katolikus főúr pengeélen. Forgách (III.) Zsigmond levelezése I. Rákóczi György erdélyi fejedelemmel (1644–1645), *Collectanea Sancti Martini, A Pannonhalmi Főapátság Gyűjteményeinek Értesítője*, 2, 2014, 291–342.; TUSOR, Péter: Forgách Zsigmond katolizálása (Egy római misszilis [irodalom]történeti forrásértéke), in IMRE, Mihály et al. (eds.): *Eruditio, virtus et constantia. Tanulmányok a 70 éves Bitskey István tiszteletére*, 2, Debrecen, 2011, 640–645.; HORN, Ildikó: Nemesi árvák, in PÉTER, Katalin (ed.): *Gyermek a kora újkori Magyarországon, Társadalom- és Művelődéstörténeti Tanulmányok*, 19., Budapest, 1996, 51–90, 87.

<sup>20</sup> Forgách Ferenc bíboros Kornis Zsigmondnak. Nagyszombat, 1612. szept. 8., Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (MNL OL) P 437 2. b. no. 44.

<sup>21</sup> Forgách Zsigmond Keresztúry Katának, Szeben, 1613. dec. 19. ANR DJC, FF Kornis 378/250. No. 28.

<sup>22</sup> MNL OL E 249. Benigna Mandata, April 10, 1614. N. 18.

<sup>23</sup> Forgách Zsigmond Keresztúry Katának, Komját vára, 1615. október 28. ANR DJC, FF Kornis 378/250. No. 29 Himmelreich's invitation addressed to the Abbot of Pannonhalma was published in: SÖRÖS, Pongrác: Meghívó Forgách Ferencz temetésére, *Századok*, 39, 1905, 779–780.

<sup>24</sup> Kornis Zsigmond kérvénye, Gyulafehérvár, 1614. márc. 13., ANR DJC, FF Kornis 378/250. No. 3

<sup>25</sup> Medgyes, 1614. márc. 14., ANR DJC FF Kornis 378/680, No. 50–55.

widow and the orphans, while leaving only a smaller portion of the estate to his sister-in-law and the children.<sup>26</sup>

While the widow struggled with her brother-in-law over the possession of Radnót, she also became involved in a confessional conflict with Prince Gabriel Bethlen. The dispute arose over the emoluments of the preacher in Radnót. The *quarta* and the *sabbatalis* had been instituted by Prince Gabriel Báthory for the support of the Reformed minister, but the Catholic patroness, upon returning to her former estate, refused to tolerate a Reformed clergyman in Radnót and therefore withheld these payments. This was possibly also influenced by her reduced financial circumstances, which required her to manage her resources far more cautiously than before, when she had possessed the entire estate. However, the matter eventually reached the Reformed princely court, and Keresztúry incurred the anger of Gabriel Bethlen.<sup>27</sup>

The prince's anger foreshadowed more serious consequences. His wrath also signaled the unexpected turn of events that would ultimately decide the struggle between the widow and her brother-in-law over the possession of Radnót. In the autumn of 1616, as a result of a temporary loss of favor, Bethlen confiscated the estate from Zsigmond Kornis. He ordered the new owner, his loyal chancellor Simon Péchi, to pay 3,000 florins to Kata Keresztúry and her orphaned children in compensation for relinquishing the property. The widow was granted only a half-year reprieve, in view of the approaching winter.<sup>28</sup> In the spring of 1617, they were required to vacate the property, at which point Péchi was prepared to pay the stipulated sum.<sup>29</sup> Kata Keresztúry, however, renounced 500 florins on the condition that the chancellor secure from the prince a *nova donatio*, that is, a new grant by which she might recover her own inherited estates, including the *caput bonorum*, Szentbenedek.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> "...I set aside a portion of the Radnót estate for my sister-in-law, and assigned one part of it for the maintenance of the children." Zsigmond Kornis to Kristóf Borbély of Arnót. Radnót, May 25, 1614. ANR DJC FF Kornis 378/37, No. 4.

<sup>27</sup> Bethlen Gábor Keresztúry Katának. Segesvár, 1616. október 31. ANR DJC FF Kornis 378/37, No. 11.

<sup>28</sup> Bethlen Gábor Keresztúry Katának. Kolozsvár, 1616. december 2. ANR DJC FF Kornis 378/37, No. 14.; Péchi Simon Keresztúry Katának. Kolozsvár, 1616. december 2. ANR DJC FF Kornis 378/37, No. 16.; Bethlen Gábor Keresztúry Katának. Várad, 1616. december 28. ANR DJC FF Kornis 378/37. No. 18.; Péchi Simon Keresztúry Katának. Várad, 1616. december 28. ANR DJC FF Kornis 378/37. No. 20. Péchi Simon Keresztúry Katának. Gyulafehérvár, 1617. április 3.

<sup>29</sup> ANR DJC FF Kornis 378/37, No. 22.

<sup>30</sup> Bethlen Gábor nova donatioja Keresztúry Kata és az árvák: Ferenc, István és Borbála számára. Gyulafehérvár, 1617. május 20. ANR DJC, FF Kornis 378/629. No. 16; Kávásy Gergely elismervénye, Gyulafehérvár, 1617. május 26. ANR DJC, FF Kornis 378/629. No. 14.

By the spring of 1618, an agreement between the widow and her brother-in-law regarding the future of the orphans had begun to take shape.<sup>31</sup> In her will, the widow stipulated that if her posthumous daughter Borbála, then about eight years old and already placed in a convent by her mother, were to take a perpetual vow of virginity at the age of fifteen, half of her inheritance was to be given in money to the convent, while the other half was to be divided equally among her agnatic brothers. The testament also raised the possibility that one of the sons might pursue an ecclesiastical career upon completing his studies. The widow had originally intended the elder brother, Ferenc, for the apostolic life (see below). At the time, the boys, aged nine and eleven, were studying at the Jesuit gymnasium in Nagyszombat<sup>32</sup>, while the eight-year-old Borbála had been placed in the convent of the Poor Clares in Pozsony. Their mother therefore appointed certain patrons as their guardians in western Hungary who had already supported her and her orphaned children in previous years and whose residences were closer to the towns of Lower Hungary where the children were living: Zsigmond Forgách, who that same year had been elevated to the office of palatine, István Pálffy, and Gáspár Horváth of Vegla.<sup>33</sup>

In 1624, the fate of the orphans took another turn. The changes that occurred in the family that year reveal a clear causal connection. The decision—likely not sudden but formed gradually over the years—compelled both the widow and her brother-in-law to make concessions in order to restore the economic and social standing of the House of Kornis. This new family strategy unfolded in the following steps.

1. Kata Keresztúry did not remarry, and thus all her inherited and acquired estates passed to her children.
2. Her daughter Borbála took a perpetual vow of virginity at the age of fifteen, eliminating the need to provide her with a marriage portion and ensuring that her inheritance would not pass into another family.
3. Kata Keresztúry, revising her earlier testament, drew up a new will in which she appointed Zsigmond Kornis as *curator* and *defensor*, that is, guardian and protector of the estates. She then

<sup>31</sup> Kornis Zsigmond és Kornis Boldizsárné egyezsége. Tasnád, 1618. márc. 1. ANR DJC, FF Kornis 378/646. No. 2.

<sup>32</sup> A receipt from Kristóf Goda, the landlord, has survived in relation to this. Nagyszombat, 1618. júl. 26. ANR DJC, FF Kornis 378/63. No. 1 Unfortunately, neither of them appear in the Nagyszombat repository, because those particular years are missing. FAZEKAS, István – KÁDÁR, Zsófia – kökényesi, Zsolt – Ternovác, Bálint (eds): *A nagyszombati jezsuita gimnázium diáksága*. Anyakönyvi adattár (1616–1772), Budapest, 2019.

<sup>33</sup> Keresztúry Kata végrendelete. Esztergomi káptalan (Nagyszombat), 1618. január. 31. Fejedelmi megerősítése: Gyulafehérvár, 1618. április 24. MNL OL F1 Libri Regii 52–53.b.; ANR DJC FF Kornis 378/629. No. 18.

left Transylvania and herself entered the Poor Clare convent in Pozsony.

4. 4. Zsigmond Kornis—now serving as lord lieutenant of Bihar County and as one of Bethlen's generals—assumed guardianship of the boys, restoring the family's damaged prestige and strengthening its economic position.<sup>34</sup>

The widow's entry into the convent was motivated not only by material considerations. The spiritual dimension must also be taken into account. From childhood, Kata Keresztúry had experienced and later deepened, within her husband's family, the faith, religiosity, and confessional commitment she had inherited from her parents—something she herself referred to in her orally declared last will before the convent of Kolozsmonostor: “from an early age, by the inclination of her nature, she had approved of the contemplative life devoted to divine meditation.” According to Catholic belief, relatives who embraced the ecclesiastical vocation became intercessors for their family before God<sup>35</sup>, regularly praying for the forgiveness of the sins and the salvation of both living and deceased kin. Finally, within the walls of the distant convent, in the company of her daughter, she found spiritual peace and refuge from the rumors that questioned her honor and her daughter's legitimacy.

As a resident of the Pozsony convent, Kata Keresztúry's responsibilities extended beyond the service of God; she was also expected to maintain contact with the Catholic minority in Transylvania and to gather information. Although her letter to István Erdélyi has not survived, the recipient's reply reveals that the widow sought his support for her son Ferenc, who had by then reached adulthood and chosen a secular career, and that the Transylvanian Catholic nobleman complied with this request. Namely, it is likely that István Erdélyi mediated the marriage of Ferenc Kornis to his ward, Kata Wesselényi, who was the half-sister of Erdélyi's wife, Krisztina Mindszenti. After her husband's death, Krisztina Mindszenti married István Csáky and also played a role in the exchange of information and in the delivery of letters sent from Szentbenedek.<sup>36</sup>

The correspondence maintained with the convent resident also addressed the condition of Catholicism in Transylvania. István Erdélyi, who had overseen the reconstruction of the Kolozsmonostor church, reported on the completion of the altar and on the successful missionary

<sup>34</sup> Keresztúry Kata végrendelete [Last Will and Testament of Kata Keresztúry], Kolozsmonostor, July 8, 1624. ANR DJC, FF Kornis 378/234, No. 2.

<sup>35</sup> The expression originates from Csáky Mária Franciska, a Poor Clare nun in Pozsony: “I remain your intercessor before God.” Csáky Anna Franciska Kornis Ferencnek. Pozsony, 1653. nov. 11. ANR DJC Mike Sándor Gyűjtemény, Col. Pers. Mike Sándor 248, (hereinafter: ANR DJC CMS) No 926.

<sup>36</sup> Csáky Anna Franciska Kornis Ferencnek, Pozsony, 1655 szept. 1. ANR DJC CMS 248/970.

work of the Jesuit fathers. He also informed Kata Keresztúry that István Móry<sup>37</sup>, a Jesuit missionary priest in Karánsebes, had converted the sons of the late Farkas Kamuthi, Balázs and Miklós, who subsequently donated their spacious noble residence in Karánsebes, located in a central position, along with its appurtenances, to the Jesuit fathers György Bujtúl and István Móry, thereby contributing to the construction of a Catholic church.<sup>38</sup> The elderly and ailing Erdélyi also sent candle wax to the widow so that she might pray for him—not for the prolongation of his life, but for a “blessed death.”<sup>39</sup>

Kata Keresztúry died in 1629 at the Pozsony convent.<sup>40</sup> Her life shows striking parallels with that of her friend Anna Wesselényi (1584–1649).<sup>41</sup> Both were widowed—yet while Anna could live in freedom, Kata was compelled by circumstances on a path that, in her case, led to the convent. Their daughters, Borbála Konstancia Kornis and Anna Franciska Csáky, were fellow nuns among the Poor Clares in Pozsony.<sup>42</sup> The close relationship between the two widows and the two nuns was further reinforced by the marriages between the Wesselényi and Kornis families and between the Csáky and Kornis families.

### The Posthumous Daughter

Borbála Konstancia, the sister of Ferenc Kornis, entered the Poor Clare convent in Pozsony at the age of eight in 1618 and took her perpetual vow of virginity at the age of fifteen in 1624.<sup>43</sup> Our knowledge of her daily life

<sup>37</sup> István Móry (1576–1632), a Jesuit father, served as a pastor between 1623 and 1632, primarily based in Kolozsmonostor, and in 1632 became head of the mission. Cf. *Catalogi personarum et officiorum Provinciae Austriae S. II. 1601–1640*. Coll. et ed. Ladislaus Lukács. Romae, Institutum Historicum S. I., 1982.

<sup>38</sup> Molnár, Antal: *Jezsuita misszió Karánsebesen (1625–1642)*, *Történelmi Szemle* 41, 1999, 127–156, 140.

<sup>39</sup> Erdélyi István Keresztúry Katának, Gernyeszeg, 1628. július 4. ANR DJC CMS 248/423.

<sup>40</sup> The exact date of her death remains uncertain; in 1629, Abbess Katalin Kondé already referred to her as deceased. Kondé Katalin Kornis Ferencnek, Pozsony 1629. szept. 16. ANR DJC CMS 248/442.

<sup>41</sup> Wesselényi Anna Dóczy Andrásnak, Szentbenedek, 1619. jan.20. MNL OL E 173 Dóczy, 1. cs. No. 260–261.

<sup>42</sup> Wesselényi Anna's biography: DEÁK, Farkas: *Wesselényi Anna özv. Csáky Istvánné (1584-1649) életrajza és levelezése*, Budapest, 1875.; HORN, Ildikó: Csáky Anna Franciska és a pozsonyi klarisszák, *Aetas* 7, 1992, 28–43.; PAPP, Klára: Az erdélyi Csákyak, *Erdélyi tudományos füzetek*, 273., Kolozsvár, 2011.

<sup>43</sup> Keresztúry Kata végrendelete. Esztergomi káptalan (Nagyszombat), 1618. január. 31. Fejedelmi megerősítése: Gyulafehérvár, 1618. április 24. MNL OL F1 Libri Regii 52–53.b.; ANR DJC FF Kornis 378/629. No. 18.; Keresztúry Kata végrendelete. Kolozsmonostor, 1624. július 8. ANR DJC, FF Kornis 378/234. No. 2.

in the convent derives primarily from the eighteenth-century history of the order by Jenő Kósa,<sup>44</sup> as well as from her own surviving letters, which allow us to reconstruct at least an outline of her convent life.

The Poor Clare community in Pozsony underwent significant changes during the first half of the seventeenth century. Following the Bocskai uprising, German-speaking nuns from Austria arrived at the convent and introduced stricter regulations in the spirit of the order's reform.<sup>45</sup> In 1618, Dominican nuns who had fled from Nyúl Island—first to Várad and then to Nagyszombat—also relocated to Pozsony, bringing with them the relics of Margaret of Hungary.

The Poor Clares were forced to abandon their convent from time to time. During Gábor Bethlen's attack in 1619, they fled to Vienna, where, according to the history of the order, they were lodged in a secular residence, "at the house of the royal stables." They returned only in 1623, and by that time it was exclusively the Hungarian nuns who came back.<sup>46</sup> Under the direction of the Marian provincial, Father Ferenc Vég, the convent was thus reshaped into an institution that was Hungarian both in language and spirit. With the support of Péter Pázmány and his successor, Imre Lósy, archbishop of Esztergom, a new convent was constructed between 1633 and 1640 at a cost of 60,000 florins.<sup>47</sup> During the construction, the nuns resided in the neighboring parish house. On January 16, 1638, Ferdinand III, Holy Roman Emperor dined with the Poor Clares in the company of the empress and his younger brother, the future Leopold I.

In the spring of 1645, the community faced danger once again. George I Rákóczi, in alliance with the Swedes, laid siege to the coronation city. It was at this time that Borbála Konstancia Kornis wrote her letter to Ádám Batthyány, signing it in her capacity as abbess of the convent. In this

<sup>44</sup> Szent Ferencz Atyánk Rendén lévő Boldog Asszony Provinciájának Megyéjében Szűz Szent Klára Szerzetében élő Szűzek Klastromának kezdete, Néhai és Mostani Állapottja. Amint az említett Provincianak Archivumából a Szűzek Conventeinek Protocollumbul és egyéb Irásokbul és Könyvekbül Deák nyelven egybe szedte, és az után említett Szűzek kedvéért Magyar Nyelvre fordította P. Eug. Kósa (Kósa Jenő OFM Prov. Mar.). 1768. Eszt. Magyar Ferences Könyvtár, Kézirattár, 017217. MaNDA Hungarian National Digital Archive: [https://en.mandadb.hu/tetel/414919/Szent\\_Ferencz\\_atyank\\_renden\\_levo\\_Boldog\\_Asszony\\_provincia-janak\\_megyejeben\\_Szuz\\_Szent\\_Klara\\_Szerzeteben\\_elo\\_szuzek\\_klastrominak\\_kezdetenehai\\_es\\_mostani\\_allapottja](https://en.mandadb.hu/tetel/414919/Szent_Ferencz_atyank_renden_levo_Boldog_Asszony_provincia-janak_megyejeben_Szuz_Szent_Klara_Szerzeteben_elo_szuzek_klastrominak_kezdetenehai_es_mostani_allapottja) Last accessed: 04-12-2025. (Hereinafter: KÓSA, Jenő: *Rendtörténet*)

<sup>45</sup> KARÁCSONYI, János: *Szent Ferencz rendjének története Magyarországon 1711-ig*, II., Budapest, 1924, 524–525.

<sup>46</sup> KÓSA, Jenő: *Rendtörténet*, 14r–15v; HORN, Ildikó: op. cit. *Csáky Anna Franciska*

<sup>47</sup> KÓSA, Jenő: *Rendtörténet*, 16 r–v; FAZEKAS, István: A katolikus egyház helyzete és intézményrendszere a kora újkori Pozsonyban, *Történelmi Szemle* 60, 2018, 201–213.

role, she appealed to the captain general of Transdanubia for assistance, as the safety of the convent's residents was under threat. If necessary, the nuns intended to seek refuge on the Batthyány estate at Némétújvár, from which they might, should circumstances require, flee onward to Croatia or return to Pozsony once the situation had stabilized.<sup>48</sup> According to the history of the order, part of the community ultimately found refuge in the convent adjoining the newly established Church of the Holy Trinity in Zagreb, while others fled to Győr, from where they were able to return home after a few days. By 1650, Borbála was already singing in the convent choir together with eighteen of her fellow nuns.<sup>49</sup>

The route of flight taken by the Poor Clares of Nagyszombat followed a similar pattern. During the attack of Gabriel Bethlen on September 7, 1619, they first withdrew to the Batthyány family estate at Némétújhely, then to Zagreb, and finally to Vienna, from which they were able to return to Nagyszombat only in 1622. During Rákóczi's campaigns, in 1644 they fled to Kismarton, and in 1645 once again to Ádám Batthyány's Transdanubian estate, the castle of Rohonc.

The nun living in the convent maintained contact with her Transylvanian family through correspondence. She wrote regularly to her brother Ferenc and to her uncle Zsigmond. After the death of her mother, Kata Keresztúry, in 1629, letters and gifts remained the primary link between her and her family.<sup>50</sup> These missives were intended to substitute for the experience of personal visits: "My gracious patron and dear father, I would not wish to miss this good opportunity to visit Your Lordship through this humble letter."<sup>51</sup>

A recurring element in Sister Konstancia's letters was her concern for her own well-being and for the health of the recipient. In keeping with ecclesiastical convention, she began her letters with an invocation—"Jesus, Mary, Saint Clare"—and regularly included intercessory prayers for her family members. Shortly before the death of Zsigmond Kornis, she addressed a deeply emotional letter to her uncle, expressing her concern

<sup>48</sup> Kornis Borbála soror abbatissa, és az egész convent Batthyány Ádám dunántúli főkapitánynak, Pozsony, 1645. márc. 15. MNL OL P 1314 Batthyány, X 7435, mf. 4852. nr. 27236.

<sup>49</sup> KARÁCSONYI, János: op. cit. *Szent Ferencz rendjének története* II., 526.

<sup>50</sup> Kondé Katalin Kornis Ferencnek. Pozsony, 1629. szept. 15. Pozsony 1629. szept. 16. ANR DJC CMS 248/442.

<sup>51</sup> Kornis Borbála Konstancia Kornis Ferencnek. Pozsony, 1648. szept. 17. ANR DJC CMS 248/860.; Cf. ERDÉLYI, Gabriella: Stepfamily relationships in autobiographical writings from seventeenth-century Hungary, in Warner, Lyndan (ed.): *Stepfamilies in Europe, 1400-1800*, London – New York, 2018, 146–167.; For a comprehensive overview, see: DEL LUNGO CAMICIOTTI, Gabriella: Letters and letter writing. *Early modern culture: An introduction, Journal of Early Modern Studies*, 2014, Volume, 17–35.

over his illness: “I have heard in these days of Your Lordship’s illness, which has caused me no small sorrow, and for which I have prayed to my God, that He might comfort Your Lordship.” In contrast, when writing of her own health, illness, or her sense of approaching death, she spoke with striking composure: “I do not trust in a long life.” She addressed her uncle as “my dear father” and “my patron,” openly expressing her affection and attachment: “There is no greater joy in the world for me than to hear that Your Lordship is in good health and to receive your gracious letter.” Although Zsigmond’s letters to Borbála have not survived, in his will he referred to her as “my poor nun sister, Lady Borbála Kornis.” He bequeathed to her one hundred gold pieces and three hundred florins and instructed that prayers be said for him in the convent.<sup>52</sup>

Family ties were reinforced not only through letters but also through the exchange of gifts. Borbála Konstancia requested from her brother Ferenc and from her *ángy*—that is, her sister-in-law, Kata Wesselényi—materials for convent handiwork and for a domestic altar, including gold or silver thread, as well as fur skins and glove linings.

The Poor Clare convent in Pozsony consciously sought to ensure that the presence of particular noble families would continue from generation to generation. In the Kornis family of Ruszka, the circle of prospective nuns was effectively limited to the daughters of Ferenc, since the third sibling, István, had become a Jesuit. It is certain that the family intended the eldest daughter, named Borbála after her aunt, for the vocation of the nuns; the choice of name itself suggests that the decision had been made even before her birth. The most ardent supporter of this plan was Borbála Konstancia herself, who repeatedly urged both her uncle Zsigmond and her brother Ferenc to place the child in the convent even in the event of her own early death.<sup>53</sup>

She evidently sensed that her time in this world was limited. The family, however, did not anticipate that the firstborn daughter, destined for the convent, would depart this life sooner than expected: Borbála fell victim to an epidemic in 1651, together with her younger brother Ferenc. Borbála Konstancia herself returned to her Creator two years later, in 1653.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Kornis Zsigmond végrendelete, Papmező, 1641. febr. 2. ANR DJC, FF Kornis 378/652. No. 11–21.

<sup>53</sup> Kornis Borbála Konstancia Kornis Ferencnek. Pozsony, 1648. szept. 17. ANR DJC CMS 248/860.

<sup>54</sup> Csáky Anna Franciska Kornis ferencnek. Pozsony, 1653. nov. 11. ANR DJC CMS 248/926.

**“In every state there is a cross to bear..”<sup>55</sup>**

With the deaths of the two Borbálas, a new chapter began in the history of the relationship between the convent in Pozsony and the Transylvanian Kornis family. The role of intercessor was assumed by Anna Franciska Csáky, who was related to the family and maintained regular contact with her sister-in-law Krisztina Mindszenti, the wife of István Csáky, master of the treasury, and the stepsister of Kata Wesselényi. Her first surviving letter addressed to Ferenc Kornis dates from late fall 1653. At that time, the next daughter in line, Kata, had been betrothed to János Haller of Hallerkő. Their marriage took place on April 22, 1654, and thus the next girl designated for a religious vocation became Anna, then about ten years old. Appealing to the attraction of companionship among children, Anna Franciska Csáky informed the family that a daughter of similar age belonging to László Révay would soon arrive at the convent. The emphasis of her letter, however, rested on respecting the “last wish,” for the deceased Borbála Konstancia had carried this wish with her “before God.”<sup>56</sup>

The following year, the abbess of the convent, Erzsébet Zsuzsanna Bercsényi, presented the family with special devotional gifts intended for private piety. She sent an *Agnus Dei* both to Ferenc Kornis and his wife, and gave the now-married Kata “a small picture,” that is, a devotional image. A more substantial gift in the form of a book was presented to the school-aged boy Gáspár. Among the most valuable gifts was likely the ornament intended for the young girl Anna, who had been invited to enter the convent. The *Agnus Dei* medallions—cast from wax of the Easter candle and often set in precious metal frames, depicting the Lamb of God and originating from papal blessing—held not only religious but also material value.<sup>57</sup>

The convent’s residents frequently sent handcrafted devotional objects to their relatives and benefactors. Baroque devotional images were held in great reverence both in churches and in private homes. The frames were embroidered by the nuns with precious metal or silk thread, sometimes adorned with gemstones or pearls, and occasionally they even contained hidden relics.<sup>58</sup> The *Agnus Dei* medallions and devotional images were used not only for private devotion but also for protective purposes, placed near beds or cradles, or affixed above the headboard.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Csáky Anna Franciska Kornis Ferencnek, Pozsony, 1655. szept. 1. ANR DJC CMS 248/970.

<sup>56</sup> Csáky Anna Franciska Kornis Ferencnek. Pozsony, 1653. nov. 11. ANR DJC CMS 248/926.

<sup>57</sup> Bercsényi Erzsébet Zsuzsanna, Pozsony, 1654. szept. 16. ANR DJC CMS 248/946.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Soós, Sándor: *Apácamunkák. 17–20. század*, Esztergom, 2006.

<sup>59</sup> VISKOLCZ, Noémi – ZVARA, Edina – KISS, Erika – KIRÁLY, Péter (eds.): *Esterházy Pál és Thököly Éva iratai*, Budapest, 2024, Nr. 85, 191.

In 1655, Anna reached the age of twelve and thus became legally eligible for a definitive decision regarding her future.<sup>60</sup> The convent's residents perceived from both the family's silence and reports conveyed through their relative Krisztina Mindszenti that Anna, as well as her younger sister Krisztina, were intended for marriage.<sup>61</sup> At this point, Anna Franciska Csáky, a relative of the Kornis family endowed with exceptional verbal ability and emotional intelligence, sent a lengthy letter to Ferenc. It was carried from the Franciscan convent in Csík to Nagyszombat by friars traveling for ordination, in response to a message that Ferenc had conveyed through Krisztina Mindszenti.<sup>62</sup> In her letter, the nun listed the names and offices of the convent's members and even provided brief and perceptive characterizations. The list had been prepared at Ferenc Kornis's request, so that he could gain an accurate picture of the convent's personnel. Anna Franciska Csáky undertook this detailed work in order to support her principal argument: the case for placing the young Kornis girl in the convent. However, by this time she was already aware—through mediation by Mrs. Csáky herself—that Ferenc had “given” the girl to a certain “young lord Prini [Perényi],” that is, had promised her in marriage. Thus the “information center” of the Poor Clares in Pozsony had learned of the planned Kornis marriage already two years before the wedding; Anna was eventually married in 1657 to Baron Gábor Perényi, lord lieutenant of Abaúj and Ugocsa Counties. Consequently, Anna Franciska Csáky could only refer to the possibility—now deferred to a distant future—that one of the daughters born from this Perényi marriage might someday be offered by the family to the service of God.

Anna Franciska Csáky then addressed Ferenc in his capacity as patron of the convent. She counted on assistance in the form of red and blue silk remnants from garments being prepared for the wedding, which could be used to frame devotional objects and *Agnus Dei* medallions. She also requested gold- or silver-threaded silk with a droplet pattern (“*rác tafota*”) for decorating her domestic altar. The letter further reveals that Ferenc Kornis was indebted to the convent: he was expected to settle the cost of Borbála Kornis's “silver cup,” likely a liturgical vessel used for communion. The reciprocal nature of the relationship is clearly reflected in a remark linking the anticipated payment of the debt with the prayers of the nuns: “perhaps the father will come here, if the plague subsides; we shall not fail to offer our prayers for my poor lady.”

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<sup>60</sup> WERBŐCZI, István: *Tripartitum*, 111th title. [https://www.staff.u-szeged.hu/~capitul/analecta/trip\\_hung.htm](https://www.staff.u-szeged.hu/~capitul/analecta/trip_hung.htm) Last Accessed: 30-11-2025.

<sup>61</sup> Bercsényi Erzsébet Zsuzsanna Kornis Ferencnek. Pozsony, 1655. aug 28. ANR DJC CMS 248/969.

<sup>62</sup> Csáky Anna Franciska Kornis Ferencnek, Pozsony, 1655. szept. 1. ANR DJC CMS 248/970.

In addition to prayers, the nuns also offered small gifts to their secular associates. On a previous occasion, Anna Franciska Csáky had sent Ferenc a special rosary, which he reported in his reply to have received with great joy. Only now did she reveal its origin: it had been the final gift of her younger brother, László Csáky.<sup>63</sup> Her brother, elected judge royal in 1649, died suddenly in 1654; in 1655 an investigation was launched under suspicion of poisoning, though without result.<sup>64</sup> László Csáky was buried near his sister in the Franciscan church in Pozsony.<sup>65</sup> The family itself believed in the poisoning theory, as reflected in Anna Franciska's words that her brother had been "cruelly killed by poison administered by envious men." She recalled the events with emotion, trusting in divine justice: "Had it not been permitted by God, they would have had no power over him, and the great God reserves their punishment for Himself. Amen."<sup>66</sup>

Historians continue to seek an answer as to who may have been responsible for the poisoning. It is certain that László Csáky and his brother were politically opposed to the Rákóczi family and were also in conflict with Miklós Zrínyi, who sympathized with George II Rákóczi, in part due to rivalries over property.<sup>67</sup> Whether it was intentional that the rosary was given specifically to Ferenc Kornis remains uncertain. Did the gift carry a hidden message, or did it simply recall earlier familial, political, and personal ties between the noblemen? Only further research into the relationship between Ferenc Kornis and the Csáky brothers may answer this question.

The most important part of Anna Franciska Csáky's letter is the meditation in which she reflects on the differing burdens and sufferings of ecclesiastical and secular life in order to support her argument. She saw in the going blind of one of her fellow nuns and in her own deafness sufferings ordained by divine will: "whatever is given to us, we must drink it; in every state there is a cross to bear, bitterness, and suffering, and the arrows of this world penetrate everywhere." This passage responds to an earlier, now-lost letter from Ferenc Kornis, in which he had lamented that he was "burdened by the heavy crosses of this world... had he known this so well, perhaps he would have withdrawn earlier and taken up the cowl." Anna

<sup>63</sup> A brief summary of his career: BARTA, M. János: "...valamely Istenét, vallását, Királyságát és hazáját igazán szerető nemes ember..." *Egy 17. századi főnemes, gróf Csáky István országbíró pályaképe.*, Budapest, 2021, 31–35.

<sup>64</sup> A brief summary of his career: BARTA, M. János: "...valamely Istenét, vallását, Királyságát és hazáját igazán szerető nemes ember..." *Egy 17. századi főnemes, gróf Csáky István országbíró pályaképe.*, Budapest, 2021, 31–35.

<sup>65</sup> MIKÓ, Árpád – PÁLFFY, Géza: A pozsonyi ferences templom késő reneszánsz és korai barokk síremlékei, *Művészettörténeti Értesítő* 54, 2005, 319–348., 335–336.

<sup>66</sup> Csáky Anna Franciska Kornis Ferencnek, Pozsony, 1655. szept. 1. ANR DJC CMS 248/970.

<sup>67</sup> PAPP, Klára: op. cit. *Az erdélyi Csákyak*, 52–53.

Franciska Csáky turned these very words back upon him, arguing that if he so keenly felt “the cross of the world,” then he should be more willing to offer his daughter to religious life rather than to worldly existence. Sensing that she had gone too far, she softened her words with an apology, appealing to family ties, longstanding acquaintance, and her own goodwill.

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“Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her”—thus Anna Franciska Csáky quoted the words of Jesus Christ.<sup>68</sup> The story of Mary and Martha is, in essence, a parable of choice: it contrasts two fundamental forms of divine service—the active life, engaged in the affairs of the world, and the contemplative life. The parable presents inward reflection and attentiveness to God as superior to worldly service.

The women discussed in this study, although they possessed their own aspirations and visions of the future, did not yet enjoy genuine freedom of choice within the framework of traditional society; the course of their lives was determined not by their own decisions but by the actual circumstances of their family. As Catholic women, they embodied two traditional models: at times following Mary, at times Martha, yet always striving to bear the “crosses” laid upon them with faith, fidelity, and humility, and thus to fulfill the will of God.

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<sup>68</sup> Luke 10:41–42 (NRSV<sup>ue</sup>)

## „HIDAK A HATALOMBAN”

Rokoni összefonódások és női közvetítők  
Brassó 18. századi városvezetésében

### “BRIDGES OF POWER”

Kinship Ties and Female Intermediaries in the Urban Administration of  
Eighteenth-Century Kronstadt<sup>1</sup>

Andor Nagy

Eszterházy Károly Katolikus Egyetem

### ÖSSZEFOGLALÁS

A tanulmány a 18. századi Brassó városvezetésének rokoni alapú hatalmi struktúráit vizsgálja, különös tekintettel a női ágakon keresztül érvényesülő politikai befolyásra. A kutatás kimutatja, hogy a városbírói és városgazdai tisztségek nem elszigetelten, hanem több generáción átívelő családi hálózatok részeként működtek, ahol számos vezető család – például a Seuler, Draudt, Herrmann, Filstich vagy Fronius – tartósan jelen volt a hivatali pozíciókban. A vizsgált házassági mintázatok rávilágítanak arra, hogy a nők házasságkötései stratégiai szerepet játszottak az elitesoportok közötti kapcsolatok fenntartásában, s gyakran „híd”-szereplőként kötöttek össze különböző rokoni blokkokat. A hálózatelemzésen alapuló módszer feltárja a kapcsolati struktúra szerkezetét, a tisztségviselők közti rokoni távolságokat és a hálózat szempontjából fontosabb pozíciókat betöltő személyeket. A dolgozat következtetése alapján Brassó vezetése önreprodukáló, zárt elitet alkotott, amelyben a rokonsági hálózatok és a női közvetítők meghatározó szerepet játszottak a hatalom átörökítésében.

### ABSTRACT

The study examines the kinship-based power structures of eighteenth-century Braşov's (Kronstadt; Brassó) urban leadership, with particular attention to the political influence exercised through female lines. The research demonstrates that the offices of city judge and city administrator did not function as isolated institutional roles, but as parts of multi-generational family networks in which several leading families—such as the Seuler, Draudt, Herrmann, Filstich, and Fronius lineages—maintained a continuous presence. The analysed marriage patterns reveal that women's marriages played a strategic role in sustaining connections between elite groups and often served as “bridges” linking different kinship blocs. The methodology based on network analysis uncovers the structure of these relational patterns, the degrees of kinship distance between officeholders, and the individuals occupying key positions within the network. The study concludes that Braşov's leadership formed a selfreproducing, closed elite in which kinship networks and female intermediaries were essential in the transmission of power.

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Kulcsszavak: rokonsági hálózat, női közvetítők, házassági stratégia, városi elit, történeti hálózat kutatás

Keywords: kinship network, female intermediaries, marriage strategy, urban elite, historical network analysis

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## Introduction

The present study examines whether patterns can be identified in the transmission of political power through familial and kinship ties—particularly along female relational lines—in the urban administration of eighteenth-century Kronstadt (present day Braşov). Previous research suggests that the city administration did not function as an isolated institutional system, but rather as part of an interwoven kinship network extending across multiple family branches.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, this study analyses which families occupied the most important municipal offices during the century and whether coalitions based on kinship networks can be identified that were capable of preserving their political influence over the long term. If such groups can be delineated, it becomes possible to determine which women, through their marriages, linked different power blocs and which individuals played the roles of informal “bridges” between distinct segments of the elite.

Following a brief methodological introduction, the study is divided into two major thematic sections. The first examines the institutional and personnel structure of the urban administration and the dynastic patterns of office-holding, while the second focuses on the intermediary role of women, marriage strategies, and the functioning of kinship networks in order to reveal the social context of political influence.

## Methodology

In order to conduct this study, it was first necessary to reconstruct the personnel composition of the eighteenth-century urban administration of Kronstadt. The primary sources for this reconstruction were the official registers compiled by Friedrich Stenner<sup>3</sup> and Gernot Nussbächer<sup>4</sup> (1939–2018). To map the kinship relations among these individuals, I relied on Erich Jekelius’s (1889–1970) nine-volume genealogical synthesis, *Genealogie Kronstädter Familien*, which provides a detailed and reliable overview of Kronstadt’s families.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> NAGY 2021: 235–252, NAGY 2024: 130–160.

<sup>3</sup> STENNER 1916.

<sup>4</sup> NUSSBÄCHER 1999.

<sup>5</sup> JEKELIUS 1965. Detailed genealogical charts of the families under examination were prepared using the GenoPro software.

The collected data were organized into a relational database, which enabled not only the systematic classification of individuals and relationships but also the application of network analysis methods.<sup>6</sup> Kinship distance was measured using the indicator of path length (number of steps), defined as the number of kinship and marital connections between individuals. In calculating these distances, both descent and marital relations were taken into account: direct family ties (parent–child, spouses) corresponded to a distance of one step, while more distant kinship relations were separated by multiple steps.<sup>7</sup>

Within the framework of network analysis, I define “bridges” as individuals or relationships that connect otherwise distinct family groups and whose removal would significantly weaken the structure of the kinship network.<sup>8</sup> Through their marital and kinship ties, these “bridge” actors served as informal intermediaries between family blocs, thereby influencing the functioning of the relational network.

## 1. The Personnel Composition of the Eighteenth-Century Urban Administration

### 1.1 Dynastic Patterns of Office-Holding

Following the methodological overview, the first step of the analysis is to examine who occupied the principal municipal offices during the eighteenth century and what patterns can be observed in the succession of office-holders. Accordingly, the following section analyses the personnel composition of the most important offices held by Kronstadt’s eighteenth-century urban governing elite.<sup>9</sup> The analysis focuses on two key offices: the town magistrate (*judex, Stadtrichter*) and the town steward (*villicus, Stadthann*), which represented complementary positions of unequal prestige. The town magistrate served as the principal holder of the city’s legal, political, and administrative authority, while the town steward was responsible for overseeing economic affairs and urban infrastructure.<sup>10</sup> The available sources reveal a clear pattern: the town magistrate was typically selected from among former town stewards,<sup>11</sup> and those who attained

<sup>6</sup> The data on office-holders and their spouses are presented in the Appendix. More on the methodology: Nagy 2019: 80–86, Nagy 2024: 21–28.

<sup>7</sup> BARABÁSI 2016: 75.

<sup>8</sup> BARABÁSI 2016: 79–80; SZÁNTÓ–TÓTH 2011: 8.

<sup>9</sup> My earlier research has examined the advancement strategies of Kronstadt’s leading Saxon families and the extent of familial interconnections between ecclesiastical and secular offices between 1650 and 1750. See: Nagy 2024.

<sup>10</sup> MÜLLER 1941: 29–30, 40–42.

<sup>11</sup> See the chronological register of municipal office-holders compiled by the Kronstadt archivist and historian Gernot Nussbächer (1939–2018): NUSSBÄCHER 1999: 286–293.

the office of town magistrate never returned to lower-ranking positions. The career trajectory was thus unidirectional, reflecting both the closed nature of this power structure and the hierarchical prestige associated with municipal offices.

### **The Town Magistrates**

During the eighteenth century, a total of thirty-one town magistrate elections were held in Kronstadt. Among those who occupied the office, eighteen individuals are known to have previously held the position and re-elected later (see Table 1 of the *Appendix*). This suggests that certain families were able to secure sustained and repeated representation within the urban leadership; moreover, some dynasties succeeded in preserving their influence in municipal politics across multiple generations. In order to assess this hypothesis, it is necessary to examine kinship relations more closely.

A natural starting point is the investigation of kinship ties among individuals bearing the same family name. In this respect, two families merit particular attention, as several of their members held the office of town magistrate in Kronstadt during the century: the Draudt family provided two office-holders, while the Seuler family provided three.

In the case of the Draudt family, Georg (1661–1728) and Joseph August (1737–1798) are particularly noteworthy. Genealogically, they were related; however, their connection cannot be described in terms of conventional kinship categories. According to the “step” metric introduced above, the relational distance between them amounts to six steps (based on the date of *Appendix*, Table 3), which indicates a relatively distant kinship tie.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the connection is worth noting: it confirms both the existence of a familial link and the fact that the two Draudt town magistrates were connected only through a more remote kinship.

The three members of the Seuler family who held the office of town magistrate in the eighteenth century likewise require closer examination. Genealogical analysis shows that the distance between Bartholomaeus Seuler (1649–1715) and Lucas Seuler (1661–1735) is two steps, which in this case corresponds to a sibling relationship. The distance between Bartholomaeus (1649–1715) and Johann Traugott Seuler (1697–1757) is three steps, indicating an uncle–nephew relationship. Between Lucas (1661–1735) and Johann Traugott (1697–1757), however, the distance is only one step: father and son consecutively occupied the highest municipal office.<sup>13</sup>

Overall, it is evident that both the Draudt and Seuler families were present in the office of town magistrate across multiple generations, and

<sup>12</sup> The ID identifiers in *Appendix*, Table 3 are cross-referenced in *Appendix*, Tables 1 and 2.

<sup>13</sup> JEKELIUS VIII. 44–46.

that during the eighteenth century several individuals from these families repeatedly assumed leadership of the city.

### The Town Stewards

In the case of the town stewards, thirty-eight elections were held during the eighteenth century, and a total of twenty-three individuals held the position in this period (*Appendix*, Table 2). Compared to the office of town magistrate, the position of town steward exhibited considerably more frequent personnel rotation and a higher incidence of returning office-holders. By contrast, the town magistrateship demonstrates greater stability and longer, less interrupted terms of office.

When the data in the tables are analyzed by family affiliation, sixteen families can be identified in connection with both offices. Among the town stewards, six families had multiple members who held the office during the century: these are the *Seuler* (Bartholomaeus, Lucas and Johann Traugott), the *Draudt* (Georg and Johann), the *Fronius* (Michael and Michael Traugott), the *Tartler* (Valentin and Andreas), the *Closius* (Martin and Martin Gottfried), as well as the *Herrmann* (Georg and Georg Michael Gottlieb) families. This pattern suggests, on the one hand, that the distribution of office was not random but was reserved for a relatively closed elite circle. It further implies that these positions were often concentrated within the same kinship networks.

In the case of the Seuler family, the same individuals appear whose kinship relations were discussed above in connection with the town magistrates. Within the Draudt family, only a more distant kinship tie—approximately six relational steps—can be identified.<sup>14</sup> Among members of the Fronius family, a four-step kinship relationship can be established.<sup>15</sup> In the case of the Tartler family, three steps separate the relevant individuals, corresponding to an uncle–nephew relationship.<sup>16</sup> For the Closius<sup>17</sup> and Herrmann families, direct father–son relationships can be demonstrated.<sup>18</sup>

The results presented above therefore suggest that the families in question maintained their influence within the city’s leadership on a long-term basis and across multiple generations. Furthermore, whereas in the case of the town magistrates only two families—the Seuler and the Draudt—were able to preserve their position over an extended period, among the town stewards a broader pattern of familial continuity can be observed.

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<sup>14</sup> Johann, moreover, may be described—through family connections—as the grandson of the father of Georg’s brother-in-law. See: JEKELIUS II. 94–99.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Traugott was related to Michael on his paternal side as the son of Michael’s nephew. See: JEKELIUS III. 74–91.

<sup>16</sup> Andreas Tartler was the nephew of Valentin. See: Jekelius VIII. 97–121.

<sup>17</sup> JEKELIUS II. 22–34.

<sup>18</sup> JEKELIUS IV. 53–60.

The following table summarizes these observations:

Office	Frequency of Office-Holders over a Hundred-Year Period	Number of Distinct Individuals Holding the Office over One Hundred Years	The number of each family
Town magistrate	31	18	16
Town steward	38	23	16

Table 1: The Proportion of Personnel Changes in Leading Offices in Kronstadt (Eighteenth Century)

### 1.2 The Temporal Dynamics of Office-Holding

The age of those occupying leading municipal offices provides important insight into the trajectory of official careers and the patterns of elite recruitment within the city. It is therefore appropriate to examine the age distribution of individuals holding the two principal offices. Town stewards assumed office at an average age of fifty,<sup>19</sup> while town magistrates began their tenure somewhat later, at an average age<sup>20</sup> of fifty-six<sup>21</sup>—figures that correspond well to the broader social patterns of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Kronstadt.<sup>22</sup> This indicates that the office of town steward was typically held by experienced, mature men; no individual under the age of forty appears among them. By contrast, the town magistrateship was generally accessible only to older individuals enjoying greater authority and prestige. The age difference also reflects the hierarchical structure of urban power: the office of town steward in many cases served as preparation for the role of town magistrate.

Taking all this into account, the dynamics of elite office-holding are clearly reflected in the number of years served. Based on the cumulative data, town stewards in Kronstadt held office for approximately five years on average, though significant variation can be observed between individual

<sup>19</sup> The youngest town stewards—such as Andreas Tartler (42), Georg Rheter (43), and Christoph Seewald (46)—appear in the mid-eighteenth century, which may signal a generational shift and the gradual rejuvenation of the elite. Most town stewards, however, entered office between the ages of forty-eight and fifty-five, for example Georg Czako (49), Martin Schneeweiss (52), Valentin Tartler (51), and Lucas Seuler (55). The oldest was Petrus Hiemesch, who assumed the office of town steward at the age of seventy-two, considerably older than his peers.

<sup>20</sup> Among the town magistrates, the youngest was Johann Gottlieb Wolff Wentzel, who entered office at forty-three, while the oldest were Georg Jeckel and Lucas Seuler, both of whom assumed office at the age of seventy-two.

<sup>21</sup> In the case of individuals who held office in multiple terms, the date of their first accession to office was taken as the basis.

<sup>22</sup> NAGY 2024: 96.

careers. The length of terms varied considerably: the shortest mandates lasted only a single year (for example in 1728 and 1763), whereas the longest cumulative periods of service, including interrupted terms, extended to twelve or thirteen years. The two most notable examples are Georg Czako, who served three separate terms totaling twelve years as town steward, and Georg Michael Gottlieb Herrmann, whose total tenure amounted to thirteen years. Most town stewards, however, served between three and six years.<sup>23</sup>

Four town stewards—Georg Czako, Lucas Seuler, Paul Chrestels, and Christoph Neidel—returned to office on multiple occasions. Their individual terms lasted two to three years on average, separated by intervals of similar length. As noted earlier, this pattern suggests that the office of town steward was handled in a rotational system: responsibility for the city’s economic administration appears to have circulated among members of the council. Among them, Georg Czako and Lucas Seuler stand out for the number of their repeated terms.

Among the town magistrates, the pattern of recurrence is even more pronounced: five individuals—Georg Draudt, Stephan Filstich, Samuel Herbert von Herbertsheim, Joseph Traugott Schobel, and Michael Traugott Fronius—held the judgeship in more than one, interrupted terms. The most striking case is that of Stephan Filstich, who became head of the city in five distinct periods between 1714 and 1736, with shorter intervals in between. Georg Draudt served four separate terms, Herbertsheim three, while Schobel and Fronius each returned twice to the city’s leadership.

## 2. Women as Intermediaries within the City’s Power Relations

### 2.1 Marriage Patterns in the Urban Elite of Kronstadt

An examination of marriage patterns within the governing elite sheds light on how the institution of marriage was embedded in the power and kinship structures of eighteenth-century Kronstadt society. It is therefore instructive to analyze the average age at which office-holders and their wives entered into marriage.

The first wives of town stewards and town magistrates married at an average age of seventeen, a figure that corresponds closely to contemporary social norms and reflects the traditional marriage pattern of the period.<sup>24</sup> The youngest bride was fourteen and the oldest twenty, indicating relatively narrow age variation. The small standard deviation—approximately

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<sup>23</sup> This raises the question of why some shorter one- or two-year terms ended so quickly. Did they reflect temporary substitutions or transitional arrangements within the council? The family and administrative historical sources examined here do not provide an explanation.

<sup>24</sup> NAGY 2024: 88.

1.7 years—suggests that the timing of marriage within this social stratum was fairly uniform.

By contrast, the officials who were later elected town steward and/or town magistrate entered their first marriages at an average age of twenty-four to twenty-five. Here, too, variation was limited, only 1.9 years, again pointing to a relatively standardized marital age within this social group. The youngest man married at twenty, the oldest at twenty-nine.

It is nevertheless worth examining the youngest and oldest marrying office-holders more closely. Marriages contracted at a very young age likely served to facilitate the beginning of a career, while unions formed at a more advanced age—often following remarriage—may have aimed at consolidating political positions and renewing a family's social embeddedness.

Among eighteenth-century officials in Kronstadt, the youngest town steward at marriage was Georg Rheter (1709–1757), who married in 1729 at the age of twenty. His bride, Martha Boes (1714–1747), was only fifteen at the time. Relatively little information survives in contemporary family-historical sources concerning the Boes family. The prominent family member chronologically closest to the marriage date is Thomas Boes (1642–1712), who served for more than two decades as a senator of the Kronstadt magistracy until his death.<sup>25</sup> Since no other socially prominent individuals can be identified among Martha Boes's direct ancestors, it may be cautiously assumed that, through Thomas Boes, she belonged to a senatorial family within the urban elite. This may explain why Georg Rheter—who at the time of his marriage held no municipal office himself, although his father, Petrus Rheter (†1725), had served on the city council from 1711 until his death<sup>26</sup>—chose a wife from the Boes family. The union may have proved advantageous to both parties: Georg Rheter strengthened his social standing through connection to a family embedded in the city council, while for Martha Boes the marriage provided access to official circles and reinforced her social prestige.

A similar pattern may be observed in the case of Johann Traugott Seuler von Seulen (1697–1757). In 1723, at the age of twenty-six, he married Sara Chrestels (1706–1772), who was seventeen at the time. Both the Seuler and the Chrestels families belonged to the leading circles of the city administration; the marriage thus clearly served to reinforce political influence within an existing network. Here, too, the young wife functioned as a “bridge” connecting kinship branches: through her, the Seuler family—whose members held medical and councilor offices—and the Chrestels family were drawn into a closer alliance. A genealogical reconstruction of the relevant members of the Chrestels family reveals clearly discernible ties not only with the Seuler family, but also with the Igel and Draudt families.

<sup>25</sup> STENNER 1916: 17.

<sup>26</sup> Petrus Rheter (†1725) served as a member of the Kronstadt city council from 1711 until his death. See: STENNER 1916: 113.

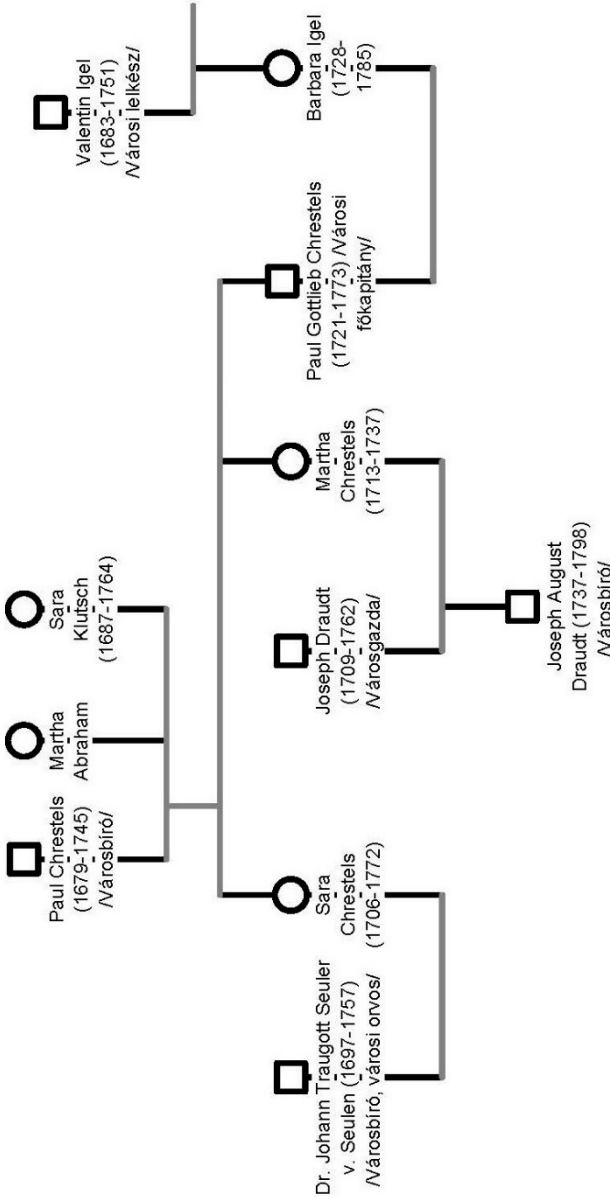


Figure 1: A segment of the Chrestels family genealogy, illustrating kinship interconnections with the Seuler, Igel, and Draudt families

A third illustrative example is the marriage of Simon Petrus Schnell (1729–1794) and Anna Maria Scheipner (1753–1826), contracted in 1770.<sup>27</sup> At the time, the groom was forty-one and the bride only seventeen—one of

<sup>27</sup> Jekelius VII. 123.

the most pronounced age differences of the period. This disparity may be explained by the groom's atypical career trajectory. Schnell completed theological studies at the University of Jena as a candidate in theology and, upon returning home, initially pursued an ecclesiastical path, teaching as an adjunct at the Honterus Gymnasium. However, subsequently he opted for a secular career and entered the service of the town council, where he was serving as town secretary (*Sekretär*) at the time of his marriage. His career then progressed steadily: vice-notary (*Vize-Notär*) from 1776 to 1778, councilman (*Senator*) from 1781 to 1785, and town steward from 1786 to 1790.<sup>28</sup>

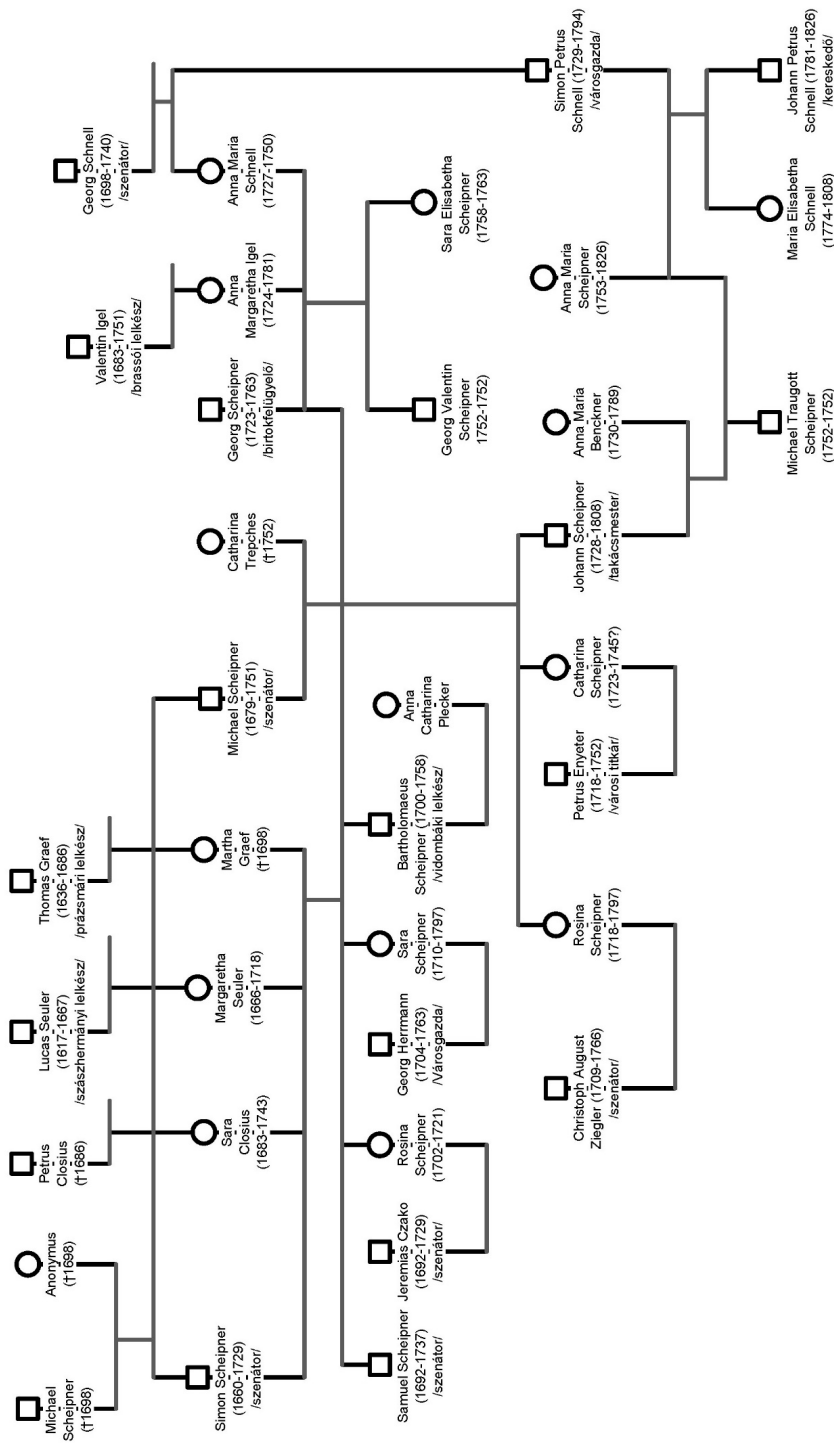
From the perspective of marriage strategy, the family backgrounds of both parties merit closer consideration. Anna Maria descended from the Scheipner family of Kronstadt. Her father, Johannes Scheipner (1728–1808), was a cloth merchant and master weaver (*Tuchmacher*) who himself belonged to a branch well embedded in the urban elite: her grandfather, Michael Scheipner (1679–1751), had served multiple terms as senator. Numerous office-holders can also be identified within her extended kinship network. Simon Scheipner (1660–1729)—Anna Maria's great-uncle—served as senator for more than three decades, while Samuel Scheipner (1692–1737) held both the office of *Stadthauptmann* (city captain) and that of senator. Two of Anna Maria's great-aunts, Rosina Scheipner (1702–1722) and Sara Scheipner (1710–1797), were likewise connected to the governing elite through their marriages: their husbands served as senators, and in the case of Georg Herrmann (1704–1763), as town steward. Another eighteenth-century branch of the family, represented by Bartholomaeus Scheipner (1727–1744), also demonstrates sustained council presence, further indicating the Scheipner family's deep and enduring integration into Kronstadt's patrician elite.<sup>29</sup>

The Schnell family on the groom's side possessed a similarly distinguished background. Over several generations, its members occupied leading municipal offices; both Simon Petrus Schnell's father and grandfather were members of the Kronstadt senate, demonstrating the family's lasting presence within the city's political elite. The marriage may thus be interpreted as the union of a theologically educated municipal official and a young patrician woman, in which the familial backgrounds of both parties mutually reinforced one another. It likely contributed to Simon Petrus Schnell's social and official advancement, ultimately facilitating his rise to the office of town magistrate.

Figure 2: A Segment of the Scheipner Family Genealogy

<sup>28</sup> See: SZABÓ–SZÖGI 1998: 407. nr. 3507.; STENNER 1916: 129.

<sup>29</sup> STENNER 1916: 121–122.



advanced age. One of the most striking examples is Stephan Filstich (1657–1737), who entered into his third marriage at the age of seventy-four with Anna Maria Herrmann (1679–1744), then fifty-two years old.<sup>30</sup> Both parties were widowed at the time, a common circumstance within the urban elite. Through this union, two previously prominent families—the Filstich and the Herrmann—were once again linked. The marriage may thus be interpreted as an instrument for ensuring social stability and continuity of power.<sup>1</sup>

A similarly notable age difference may be observed in the marriage of Bartholomaeus Seuler (1649–1715) and the same Anna Maria Herrmann (1679–1744), contracted in 1710, when the groom was sixty-one and the bride thirty-one years old. The Herrmann family again appears as a key actor: through this alliance, the Seuler household—which had produced several physicians and municipal leaders—strengthened its kinship ties with another office-holding dynasty.<sup>31</sup> The thirty-year age gap reflects contemporary social practice: the comparatively young age of women facilitated relational mobility, while for men remarriage functioned as a means of political and economic repositioning.

Among members of the city council, Michael Enyeter (1711–1784) also remarried at an advanced age, entering a second marriage at fifty-eight with Theresia Neffi (†1810). Although the bride's age is unknown, the sources suggest that the union was based on a widowed alliance.

Another example is Martin Closius (1686–1752), who contracted his first marriage at the age of twenty-six with Catharina Greissing (1694–1768). Later in life, however, he was still married while serving as town magistrate at the age of sixty-two. His case illustrates how, over the course of long official careers, the social background of a wife could play an important role in sustaining a man's political position and preserving the family's rank. Catharina Greissing, a member of a prosperous burgher family, entered the urban patriciate through marriage—representing a typical example of female social mobility.

In the case of Georg Draudt (1661–1728), marriage records indicate that he contracted his first union at the age of twenty-two and likely remarried later in life. Within his lineage, the family name recurs across generations, suggesting that the female members and marital alliances of the Draudt family linked multiple office-holding dynasties, particularly the Rheter and Seuler branches. This continuity clearly demonstrates that marriages contracted by aging men functioned as deliberate instruments for reinforcing familial networks.

The examples discussed above indicate that, through marriage, families of the urban elite created durable and multidirectional kinship alliances. The Rheter–Boes, Seuler–Chrestels, and Schnell–Scheipner unions

<sup>30</sup> JEKELIUS III. 12.

<sup>31</sup> JEKELIUS IV. 57.

all demonstrate that marriage served as an important mechanism for political embeddedness, social advancement, and the construction of “bridges” between elite groups. Particularly striking is the role of women from the Herrmann, Scheipner, Seuler, and Draudt families, who through their marriages connected multiple patrician branches and, as relational brokers, contributed to the maintenance of the power network. The practice of late (re)marriage further reinforces this pattern: the Filstich–Herrmann and Seuler–Herrmann unions clearly illustrate that marriages contracted at an advanced age also functioned as deliberate political and kinship alliances.

**2.2 The Adjacency Matrix of the Urban Elite of Kronstadt**

An intriguing question concerns the degree of kinship proximity between town magistrates and the individuals who simultaneously held the office of town steward.<sup>32</sup> The combined examination of these two leading positions sheds light not only on the functioning of the local elite, but also on the manner in which marital ties reinforced political positions—that is, how familial and political influence became intertwined within the urban elite.

If the (shortest) kinship distances between town magistrates and town stewards in Kronstadt are examined—through the adjacency matrix—it becomes evident that these distances cluster into clearly distinguishable groups (measured in steps). This structure reveals both the configuration of kinship entanglements and the internal density of relationships within the political elite (see Table 2 and Table 3 of the *Appendix*).

Step	Number of relationships
1	2
2	15
3	18
4	44
5	50
6	89
7	56
8	46
9	29
10	2

Table 2: Distribution of Town Magistrate–Town Steward Relationships by Number of Steps<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> The pairings of town magistrates and town stewards are presented in Tables 1 and 2 of the *Appendix*.

<sup>33</sup> The adjacency matrix (*Appendix, Table 3*) lists each relationship twice; however, each pair was counted only once in the calculations.

First, it is important to emphasize that in every case some form of kinship relationship can be identified between the individuals holding the two leading offices. When relational distances are examined in ascending order, it becomes evident that direct, one- to two-step relationships are relatively rare. Only two one-step connections can be identified, and both originated through spousal or widowed remarriage ties. In the cases of Bartholomaeus Seuler and Stephan Filstich, as well as Michael Fronius, the kinship linkage resulted from the remarriage of widowed wives. In both instances, the same individual—Anna Maria Herrmann (1679–1744)—occupied the intermediary “bridge” position within the network. There are fifteen two-step relationships, typically reflecting recurring relational patterns such as *son-in-law–father-in-law*, *grandfather–grandson*, *stepfather–stepson*, or ties created through a *wife’s* or *mother’s previous spouse*. This also indicates that the most immediate familial entanglements between town magistrates and town stewards were relatively uncommon and did not characterize the general pattern of the kinship network.

At three to five steps of relational distance, collateral ties mediated primarily through marriage dominate (e.g., son- and father-in-law, other in-law connections, and multigenerational descendant chains). This pattern suggests that the urban elite of Kronstadt consciously built its marriage strategies upon broader kinship and social circles, avoiding overly close familial interconnections.

Six-step and more distant kinship ties reflect the multi-generational, long-term entanglements of the office-holding elite, constructed primarily through multiple indirect marital and collateral pathways. This pattern indicates that the urban elite of Kronstadt did not operate as closed consanguineous “clans,” but rather as a system of loosely yet durably interconnected family networks.

From the perspective of women’s history, this is particularly noteworthy, since the overwhelming majority of relationships were created through marital pathways (e.g., *wife*, *father-in-law*, *brother-in-law*, *husband of a niece*, etc.). The pattern confirms the earlier assumption that marriages and remarriages within the office-holding elite functioned as important instruments for maintaining and expanding political coalitions. The statistical distribution—the rarity of direct one- to two-step ties and the predominance of four- to six-step or even more distant relationships—suggests that the urban elite of Kronstadt consciously avoided excessively close blood kinship while simultaneously relying intensively on multigenerational, marriage-mediated networks.<sup>34</sup> As a result, leadership within the city came to be shaped not merely by individual families but by interwoven family

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<sup>34</sup> Between 1650 and 1750, precise information is available for 483 marriages in Kronstadt. Among these, only five percent involved a kinship relationship between the spouses. See: NAGY 2024. 85.

blocs, within which female kinship lines functioned as strategically significant “bridges.”

### 2.3 The Kinship Network of the Leading Urban Elite of Kronstadt

Thus far, the examination of kinship relations within the urban elite of Kronstadt has relied on genealogically based adjacency matrices. The following section presents a visual representation of this matrix using the tools of network analysis, in order to render the relational patterns of the eighteenth-century local power elite more transparent. The research was based on the author’s own compiled kinship database concerning families of Kronstadt during the period under study, as noted in the methodological section. From this database, the shortest relational paths among the forty-four designated officials’ wives were identified. The resulting nodes and edges formed a smaller “subnetwork” reflecting the internal relational patterns of the urban elite. Data processing and visualization were conducted using the Gephi software, enabling the identification of kinship entanglements as well as the most significant individuals—that is, relational centers—within the network.

The examined network (see Figure 3) consists of 456 nodes and 723 kinship ties, demonstrating that the kinship web of Kronstadt’s elite extended far beyond the immediate family circles of municipal office-holders. Extended kinship ties—spouses, collateral relatives, and in-laws—were all part of the social fabric that ensured the embeddedness of the local elite. The network’s average degree was 3.171, meaning that each individual was connected, on average, to three others through kinship ties. This relatively low value suggests that the kinship network did not form a dense, tightly closed system, but rather consisted of several more loosely interconnected family groups.

The network’s diameter is 14, meaning that the two most distant individuals are separated by fourteen relational steps.<sup>35</sup> This relatively high value reflects the network’s long-chain character, typical of kinship structures composed of multiple subsystems. The large diameter indicates that the community under examination did not function as a single, tightly interwoven “extended family,” but rather as several kinship blocs connected only through longer relational chains.

The average path length is 6.92, indicating a moderate level of cohesion: members of the community were not isolated, yet neither did they form a densely interconnected elite.

Among the nodes with the highest degree are Simon Scheipner and Marcus Fronius, alongside several similarly well-connected individuals, including a number of women, such as Martha Seewald and Martha Jeckel.

<sup>35</sup> The diameter value expresses which individuals within an urban community are connected to each other by the longest chain among the shortest kinship pathways relative to others. REINHARD 1979: 27; BARABÁSI 2016: 75–78.

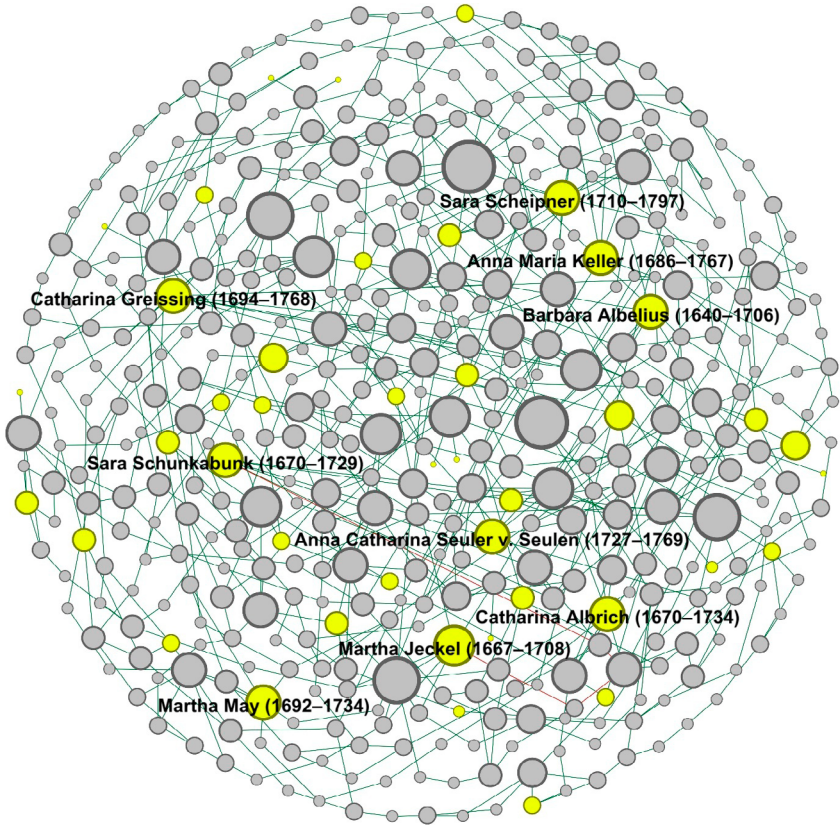


Figure 3: The kinship network among the wives of town magistrates and town stewards in Kronstadt (eighteenth century)

Based on their high degree values, these actors occupied central “bridge” positions within the network and played a significant role in connecting different family groups within the elite of Kronstadt.

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that the kinship network of the eighteenth-century urban elite of Kronstadt was hierarchically structured and organized around several central families. The relationships among leading office-holders and their wives did not form a single homogeneous elite but rather a set of partially overlapping, partially autonomous family subnetworks. Based on the average degree and path length values, the elite of Kronstadt constituted a moderately closed community in which a limited number of highly connected individuals ensured the cohesion of the social network. Kinship ties thus played a key role in the self-reproduction of the urban elite and in the maintenance of its position of power.

## Conclusion

The results of this study clearly demonstrate that the functioning of Kronstadt’s eighteenth-century urban administration was deeply permeated by a power structure grounded in kinship relations. Political positions within the urban elite—particularly the offices of town magistrate and town steward—were not isolated institutional roles but components of a multigenerational and closely interconnected network of office-holding families. The dynamics of office-holding, the recurrence of office-holders, and the patterns of office rotation all indicate that leading families (Seuler, Herrmann, Filstich, Draudt, Fronius, among others) were able to maintain their political influence in a stable and enduring manner.

The analysis of the kinship network—based on the reconstruction of 456 individuals and 723 relationships—demonstrates that the urban elite did not operate as a closed, homogeneous “family clan,” but rather as a system of interconnected subnetworks. The network’s average degree (3.171) and average path length (6.92) indicate a moderately dense but not fully closed structure: longer relational chains and multiple levels of marital pathways ensured permeability among families. The most central individuals—including several female nodes—occupied “bridge” positions between family blocs and contributed significantly to the cohesion of the elite.

These findings are closely connected to women’s marriage and remarriage patterns. Women typically married at a young age, while their husbands already possessed established social positions. Marriage thus represented not only the fulfillment of familial roles for women, but also entry into political and economic networks. Female kinship lines—serving as mediating and connective channels—were of fundamental importance in the reproduction of urban power relations. Anna Maria Herrmann stands out as a prominent example: through her multiple marriages, she connected different family groups and facilitated the formation of long-term power alliances.

The analysis of marital strategies demonstrates that in nearly every generation the governing elite consciously constructed its kinship ties. Direct one- or two-step kinship was rare; instead, four- to six-step relational distances created through marriage predominated, indicating that families avoided excessive endogamy while placing strong emphasis on long-term, multigenerational relational embeddedness. Political power in the city was therefore not concentrated in the hands of a single closed family, but rather distributed among several coordinated family blocs—with women usually being responsible for maintaining relations between them.

In summary, the findings show that the eighteenth-century leadership of Kronstadt functioned as a self-reproducing patrician elite, in which kinship networks—primarily through marriage—served as the principal instruments for acquiring and retaining political office. Women played

a fundamental, though formally non-office-holding, role in this system: they shaped, connected, and sustained the relational networks. The transmission of urban power, therefore, cannot be understood without taking into account female kinship lines and marital strategies.

### Appendix:

**Table 1: Town magistrates and their spouses in Kronstadt (eighteenth century)**

	Fér-jID	Husband	Year in office	FeleségID	Wife	Year of marriage
1	1765	Andreas Rheter (1648–1707)	1701–1707	2198	Martha Henrich (1660–1734)	May 5, 1680
				5050	Sara Günther (†1679)	August 12, 1674
2	1216	Georg Jeckel (1635–1708)	1707–1708	17	Barbara Albelius (1640–1706)	July 22, 1691
				1339	Catharina Mühlmann (†1690)	unknown
3	2067	Bartholomaeus Seuler (1649–1715)	1709–1710	1402	Anna Maria Herrmann (1679–1744)	November 4, 1710
				2077	Catharina Neunachbar (1660–1708)	unknown
4	725	Georgius Draudt (1661–1728)	1711–1714; 1718–1719; 1721–1721; 1724–1727	4122	Martha Blum (1665–1718)	February 28, 1683
5	783	Stephan Filstich (1657–1737)	1714–1717; 1720–1720; 1722–1723; 1728–1732; 1734–1736	1402	Anna Maria Herrmann (1679–1744)	April 11, 1731
				1322	Martha Honter (1668–1691)	July 5, 1682
				2748	Sara Schunkabunk (1670–1729)	February 17, 1692

6	1414	Dr. Lucas Seuler (1661–1735)	1733–1733	42	Catharina Albrich (1670–1734)	May 31, 1690
7	2171	Samuel Herbert von Herbertsheim (1693–1747)	1737–1740; 1743–1744; 1746–1747	4379	Anna Rosina Winkler (1700–1735)	unknown
				2933	Justina Gottmeister (1695–1757)	July 29, 1736
8	446	Paul Chrestels (1679–1745)	1741–1741; 1745	3942	Sara Klutsch (1687–1764)	November 19, 1705
				3940	Martha Abraham	unknown
9	510	Martin Closius (1686–1752)	1748–1749	1133	Catharina Greising (1694–1768)	October 13, 1712
10	2161	Christoph Sewald (1696–1754)	1749–1754	5353	Susanna Orbez (1695–1754)	July 27, 1741
				5352	Susanna Wolff (1685–1741)	unknown
11	2073	Dr. Johann Traugott Seuler v. Seulen (1697–1757)	1754–1757	448	Sara Chrestels (1706–1772)	July 28, 1723
12	2215	Andreas Tartler (1714–1773)	1758–1769	3494	Agnetha Binder (1721–1787)	unknown
13	2833	Joseph Traugott Schobel (1719–1783)	1770–1778; 1781–1783	518	Martha Closius (1732–1801)	May 17, 1773
				2922	Anna Catharina Seuler v. Seulen (1727–1769)	July 22, 1742
14	765	Michael Enyeter (1711–1784)	1778–1781	4140	Martha Schnell (1714–1768)	November 14, 1735
				4141	Theresia Neff (†1810)	November 28, 1769
15	2384	Michael Traugott Fronius (1727–1799)	1783–1786; 1790–1799	1807	Martha Christina Rheter (1731–1787)	January 28, 1750

16	2296	Joseph August Draudt (1737–1798)	1786–1789	4101	Anna Elisabetha Weidner (†1802)	May 22, 1764
17	1565	Johann Gottlieb Wolff Wentzel (1746–1820)	1789–1790	1811	Justina Elisabetha Rheter (1752–1791)	June 30, 1756
18	2468	Georg Franz Clompe (1747–1828)	1799–1822	3500	Johanna Elisabetha Dürr (1762–1829)	January 19, 1780

**Table 2: Town stewards and their spouses in Kronstadt (eighteenth century)**

	Fér-jID	Husband	Year in office	Fele-ségID	Wife	Year of marriage
1	2067	Bartholomaeus Seuler (1649–1715)	1697–1698; 1700–1703	2077	Catharina Neunachbar (1660–1708)	unknown
				1402	Anna Maria Herrmann (1679–1744)	November 4, 1710
2	725	Georg Draudt (1661–1728)	1704–1708	4122	Martha Blum (1665–1718)	February 28, 1683
3	783	Stephan Filstich (1657–1737)	1709–1710	2748	Sara Schunkabunk (1670–1729)	February 17, 1692
				1322	Martha Honter (1668–1691)	July 5, 1682
				1402	Anna Maria Herrmann (1679–1744)	April 11, 1731
4	582	Georg Czako (1661–1726)	1710–1715; 1718–1720; 1723–1725	2198	Martha Henrich (1660–1734)	May 16, 1708
				2030	Martha Jeckel (1667–1708)	July 30, 1684

5	1414	Dr. Lucas Seuler (1661–1735)	1716–1717; 1721–1722; 1726–1727	42	Catharina Albri- ch (1670–1734)	May 31, 1690
6	964	Michael Fro- nius (1675– 1728)	1728– 1728	1402	Anna Maria Herrmann (1679–1744)	January 9, 1716
				727	Anna Christina Draudt (1685– 1715)	June 23, 1700
7	1490	Martin Schne- eweiss (1677– 1734)	1729– 1731	2629	Martha May (1692–1734)	unknown
8	2206	Valentin Tart- ler (1680– 1734)	1731– 1734	3492	Anna Maria Kel- ler (1686–1767)	June 8, 1723
				2029	Anna Maria Raab (†1723)	July 26, 1706
9	698	Johann Draudt (1679–1733)	1731– 1733	2612	Margaretha Mankesch	June 21, 1704
10	446	Paul Chrestels (1679–1745)	1732– 1733; 1735– 1735	3942	Sara Klutsch (1687–1764)	November 19, 1705
				3940	Martha Abraham	unknown
11	2710	Christoph Ne- idel (1688– 1742)	1736– 1738; 1741– 1742	3743	Margaretha Schnell (1698– 1777)	May 23, 1730
				319	Anna Euphro- sina Bogner (†1730)	May ??, 1730
12	510	Martin Clo- sius (1686- 1752)	1738- 1740; 1745	1133	Catharina Greissing (1694– 1768)	October 13, 1712
13	2161	Christoph Se- ewald (1696- 1754)	1742– 1744	5352	Susanna Wolff (1685–1741)	unknown
				5353	Susanna Orbez (1695–1754)	July 27, 1741

14	2073	Dr. Johann Traugott Seuler v. Seulen (1697-1757)	1746–1751	448	Sara Chrestels (1706–1772)	July 28, 1723
15	1806	Georg Rheter (1709-1757)	1752–1755	2920	Martha Boes (1714–1747)	July 12, 1729
				2917	Justina Seuler v. Seulen (1732–1778)	April 24, 1748
16	2215	Andreas Tartler (1714-1773)	1756–1757	3494	Agnetha Binder (1721–1787)	unknown
17	1380	Georg Herrmann (1704-1763)	1758–1763	2104	Sara Scheipner (1710–1797)	October 27, 1728
18	512	Martin Gottfried Closius (1715-1770)	1762–1769	2704	Sara Regina Neidel (1733–1792)	November 22, 1752
				2601	Johanna Igel (1720–1751)	April 10, 1741
19	4390	Petrus Hiesmesch (1691-1764)	1763	4403	Sara Rebecca Gundhart (1711–1770)	?? ??, 1727
				4402	Maria Repser (†1723)	unknown
20	765	Michael Enyeter (1711-1784)	1770–1778	4140	Martha Schnell (1714–1768)	November 14, 1735
				4141	Theresia Neffi (†1810)	November 28, 1769
21	2384	Michael Traugott Fronius (1727-1799)	1778–1781	1807	Martha Christina Rheter (1731–1787)	January 28, 1750
22	1384	Georg Michael Gottlieb Herrmann (1737-1807)	1784-1786; 1790-1799	6602	Susanna Sophia Heidendorf (1743–1780)	September 5, 1764
23	3108	Simon Petrus Schnell (1729-1794)	1786–1790	2117	Anna Maria Scheipner (1753–1826)	May 2, 1770

**Table 3: The shortest kinship distance between town magistrates and town stewards in Kronstadt (eighteenth century)**

ID	446	510	582	725	765	964	1216	1380	1384	1414	1490	1565	1765	1806	2067	2073	2161	2171	2206	2215	2296	2384	2468	2710	2833	3108	4390
446	0	4	5	5	6	5	6	7	7	3	7	6	4	4	5	2	6	5	6	8	2	6	8	7	3	7	7
510	4	0	5	6	9	6	6	4	5	4	7	6	4	5	6	4	5	4	3	6	3	6	8	3	2	8	7
582	5	5	0	6	6	4	2	4	5	5	6	5	2	3	5	5	8	7	6	7	4	5	9	3	6	6	7
725	5	6	6	0	6	2	4	4	5	5	8	3	5	5	4	4	8	8	5	8	6	6	9	6	4	6	4
765	6	9	6	6	0	7	7	8	8	9	5	7	7	7	9	8	6	10	9	7	7	5	8	9	9	9	8
964	5	6	4	2	7	0	2	6	6	4	6	5	6	6	2	5	6	6	7	9	6	4	8	6	4	4	6
1216	6	6	2	4	7	2	0	5	6	6	6	7	4	5	4	6	6	6	7	8	6	4	8	4	6	4	7
1380	7	4	4	4	8	6	5	0	1	4	8	7	6	7	4	5	7	7	2	5	6	6	8	4	4	6	8
1384	7	5	5	5	8	6	6	1	0	4	8	8	7	7	4	5	8	7	3	6	7	6	8	5	5	6	8
1414	3	4	5	5	9	4	6	4	4	0	6	4	5	3	2	1	6	3	6	9	5	5	9	6	3	7	6
1490	7	7	6	8	5	6	6	8	8	6	0	8	6	6	6	6	8	8	8	5	7	8	5	8	8	7	9
1565	6	6	5	3	7	5	7	7	8	4	8	0	4	2	6	5	7	5	6	9	7	4	7	8	6	9	2
1765	4	4	2	5	7	6	4	6	7	5	6	4	0	2	7	6	7	6	6	8	3	4	9	5	5	8	6
1806	4	5	3	5	7	6	5	7	7	3	6	2	2	0	5	4	5	4	8	9	5	2	9	6	5	8	4
2067	5	6	5	4	9	2	4	4	4	2	6	6	7	5	0	3	6	5	6	9	6	6	9	6	4	6	6
2073	2	4	5	4	8	5	6	5	5	1	6	5	6	4	3	0	7	4	5	8	4	6	10	7	2	8	7
2161	6	5	8	8	6	6	6	7	8	6	8	7	7	5	6	7	0	9	6	8	6	3	8	7	7	8	5
2171	5	4	7	8	10	6	6	7	7	3	8	5	6	4	5	4	9	0	7	6	7	6	9	7	4	8	7
2206	6	3	6	5	9	7	7	2	3	6	8	6	6	8	6	5	6	7	0	3	6	7	6	6	4	6	7
2215	8	6	7	8	7	9	8	5	6	9	5	9	8	9	9	8	8	6	3	0	9	7	3	9	7	9	7
2296	2	3	4	6	7	6	6	6	7	5	7	7	3	5	6	4	6	7	6	9	0	5	8	6	3	9	8
2384	6	6	5	6	5	4	4	6	6	5	8	4	4	2	6	6	3	6	7	7	5	0	9	6	7	6	6
2468	8	8	9	9	8	8	8	8	8	9	5	7	9	9	9	10	8	9	6	3	8	9	0	9	9	8	5
2710	7	3	3	6	9	6	4	4	5	6	8	8	5	6	6	7	7	7	6	9	6	6	9	0	5	7	6
2833	3	2	6	4	9	4	6	4	5	3	8	6	5	5	4	2	7	4	4	7	3	7	9	5	0	7	6
3108	7	8	6	6	9	4	4	6	6	7	7	9	8	8	6	8	8	8	6	9	9	6	8	7	7	0	7
4390	7	7	7	4	8	6	7	8	8	6	9	2	6	4	6	7	5	7	7	7	8	6	5	6	6	7	0

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# A REFORMÁTUS ASSZONYOKRA KÉNYSZERÍTETT UTOLSÓ KENET

A haldoklás felekezeti rítusai a 18. századi erdélyi  
grófnő, Bethlen Kata ego-dokumentumaiban

THE EXTREME UNCTION FORCED UPON REFORMED WOMEN  
Confessional Rites of Dying in the Ego-Documents of the Eighteenth-  
Century Transylvanian Countess Kata Bethlen

Gergely Tamás Fazakas  
Debreceni Egyetem

## ÖSSZEFOGLALÁS

A „hosszú reformáció” három évszázada alatt a vallási szertartások közötti különbségek nem csupán a temetések alkalmával és a halottak megemlékezése során nyilvánultak meg; Európa különböző régióiból származó számos példa azt is bizonyítja, hogy maga a halálos ágy is a vallási viszályok színterévé vált. Jelentős feszültség keletkezett, ha a haldoklás során alkalmazott szertartás eltért a haldokló vagy a búcsút vevők vallási hagyományaitól. Ez különösen igaz az utolsó kenetre, amennyiben ezt a katolikus szentséget haldokló protestánsoknak is megadták. Jelen tanulmányomban ezt a vallási feszültséget vizsgálom, elsősorban a 18. századi erdélyi grófnő, Bethlen Kata (1700–1759) önéletrajzi dokumentumainak elemzésével. Álláspontom szerint a haldoklás rituáléinak növekvő jelentőségét a hatalmi politika és az egyházi politika kontextusában is értelmezni lehet, és a felekezeti elemek egyre nagyobb szerepe részben ennek a fejleménynek a fényében érthető meg.

## ABSTRACT

During the three centuries of the “Long Reformation,” differences in religious rites were manifested not only on the occasion of funerals and in the commemoration of the dead; numerous examples from various regions of Europe also show that the deathbed itself became a site of religious strife. Significant tension arose if the rite employed during the process of dying diverged from the religious traditions of the dying person or those bidding them farewell. This is particularly true of the Extreme Unction, insofar as this Catholic sacrament was administered to dying Protestants. In the present study, I examine this religious tension, primarily by analyzing the Ego-documents of the eighteenth-century Transylvanian countess, Kata Bethlen (1700–1759). I argue that the growing significance attached to the rituals of dying can also be interpreted in the context of power politics and ecclesiastical policy, and that the increasing prominence of denominational elements may in part be understood in light of this development.

Kulcsszavak: Bethlen Kata grófnő, egodokumentumok, 18. századi Erdély, rekatolizálási törekvések, haldoklás vallási szertartásai, utolsó kenet

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Keywords: countess Kata Bethlen, Ego-documents, eighteenth-century Transylvania, re-Catholicization efforts, religious rituals of dying, Extreme Unction

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During the three centuries of the “Long Reformation,”<sup>1</sup> differences in religious rites were manifested not only on the occasion of funerals and in the commemoration of the dead; numerous examples from various regions of Europe also show that the deathbed itself became a site of religious strife. The roots of this can be found in the writings of Luther, which introduced practices differing from Catholic tradition.<sup>2</sup> Significant tension arose if the rite employed during the process of dying diverged from the religious traditions of the dying person or those bidding them farewell. This is particularly true of the Extreme Unction, insofar as this Catholic sacrament was administered to dying Protestants. In the present study, I examine this religious tension, primarily by analyzing the Ego-documents of the eighteenth-century Transylvanian countess, Kata Bethlen.

### Religious Struggle for the Dying

Following the Reformation, a dying person might feel their spiritual salvation threatened by an end-of-life rite performed in a manner inconsistent with their own religious tradition; furthermore, the body could lose the right to be interred in a cemetery appropriate to one’s faith. Thirdly, all of this affected the religious identity of those left behind—the family and the wider community. From their perspective, a death and burial conducted with the *proper* rites could reinforce their affiliation. Conversely, *improper* practice could cause distress and make the perceived threat to the survival or spread of the religion believed to be true palpable. Fourthly, the methods of dying and burial articulated in the sermons and funeral orations of various liturgical and paraliturgical occasions—as well as those described in manuscript and printed works, such as *artes moriendi*—could exert an influence on every person who would one day depart. These texts offered a model to be followed for their own eventual dying and funeral. This was often supported by the argument that the further fate of the soul might depend on whether the rites performed during the death throes were deemed correct or practiced wrongly, as well as on burial in the appropriate ground. These texts also emphasized that one must prepare for death throughout

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<sup>1</sup> For the term of “long Reformation” see TÓTH, Zsombor: Religious Persecution, Exile and the Making of the Long Reformation (1500–1800) in Royal Hungary, *Philobiblon*, 25, 2020, nr. 2, 205–225; Tóth, Zsombor: Understanding Long Reformation in Eastern Europe: The Case of Hungarian Puritanism Revisited, *Journal of Early Modern Christianity*, 7, 2020, nr. 2, 319–341.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. NGIEN, Dennis: The Art of Dying: In Luther’s Sermon on Preparing to Die, *The Heythrop Journal*, 49, 2008, nr. 1, 1–19.

the entirety of life, in accordance with one's own religious teachings.

When researching this topic in Hungary, it is worth basing one's approach on those perspectives that take into account the religious differences in the perception of death following the Reformation. In international literature, several scholars have accounted for the confessional differences and tensions regarding the process of preparation for death and the rituals surrounding the dying. They also dealt with the ritual differences in the burial of dead bodies and the conflict over the place and manner of burial.<sup>3</sup>

Following the Reformation, in the power struggle between Catholics and Protestants it became an increasingly important question whether, according to the beliefs of the adherents of a given religion, the soul of the dying person would reach heaven, and how the performance of the deathbed ritual appropriate to one's own confession—or, conversely, activities contrary to it, including conversion in the final hours before exspiratio—could later be demonstrated. For Catholics, this meant that the person died after receiving the sacraments of Confession, Holy Communion, and Extreme Unction; for Protestants, it most often meant precisely the opposite: that the dying person passed away while keeping these rites at a distance, spending their final hours receiving the Lord's Supper, meditating,

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<sup>3</sup> WUNDERLI, Richard – BROCE, Gerald: The Final Moment before Death in Early Modern England, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 20, 1989, nr. 2, 259–275; CRESSY, David: *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion and Life Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England*, OUP, Oxford, 1997; HOULBROOKE, Ralph: *Death, Religion and the Family in England, 1450–1750*, OUP, Oxford, 1998; COX, Margaret (ed.): *Grave Concerns: Death and Burial in England, 1700–1850*, York, Council for British Archaeology, 1998; KOSLOFSKY, Craig: *The Reformation of the Dead: Death and Ritual in Early Modern Germany, 1450–1700*, Palgrave MacMillan, Basingstoke, 2000; GORDON, Bruce – MARSHALL, Peter (eds.): *The Place of the Dead – Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, CUP, Cambridge, 2000, 131–148; HARDING, Vanessa: *The Dead and the Living in Paris and London, 1500–1670*, CUP, Cambridge, 2002; MARSHALL, Peter: *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England*, OUP, Oxford, 2002; TANKARD, Danae: The Reformation of the Deathbed in Mid-Sixteenth-Century England, *Mortality*, 8, 2003, nr. 3, 251–252; MARSHALL, Peter: Angels Around the Deathbed: Variations on a Theme in the English Art of Dying, in MARSHALL, Peter – WALSHAM, Alexandra (eds.): *Angels in the Early Modern World*, CUP, Cambridge, 2006, 83–103; REINIS, Austra: *Reforming the Art of Dying: The Ars Moriendi in the German Reformation, 1519–1528*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2007; RYRIE, Alec: *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain*, OUP, Oxford, 2013, 460–468; RASMUSSEN, Tarald – FLÆTEN, Jon Øygarden (eds.): *Preparing for Death, Remembering the Dead*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015; BOOTH, Philip – TINGLE, Elizabeth (eds.): *A Companion to Death, Burial, and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, c. 1300–1700*, Brill, Leiden–Boston, 2021.

and praying. Such pressure was perhaps applied more forcefully and more frequently—though not exclusively—to women: on the one hand to those who were dying, and on the other hand to women following childbirth or confined to their sickbeds. In these situations they were regarded as weaker not only because of their gender but also because their physical condition rendered them particularly vulnerable.<sup>4</sup>

In the present study, I argue that in mid-eighteenth-century Transylvania the growing significance attached to the rituals of dying can also be interpreted in the context of power politics and ecclesiastical policy, and that the increasing prominence of denominational elements may in part be understood in light of this development.<sup>5</sup> Recent church-historical scholarship has become less inclined to describe the period beginning around the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—namely the history of Hungary and Transylvania after their liberation from Ottoman rule—by means of the concept of a “bloodless Counter-Reformation”. Rather, it is more appropriate to narrate this process as one in which the Catholic clergy and the absolutist state power continued to act in alliance with one another throughout the eighteenth century, following a logic similar to that underlying the Protestant persecutions in late seventeenth-century Hungary. What changed in their approach was that they now sought, more tactically and over the longer term, to alter the confessional balance in Hungary and Transylvania to the detriment of Protestants. Even when decrees were issued that in principle were intended to protect Protestants, the secular and ecclesiastical authorities formulated secret instructions in the background—measures that in practice contributed to the obstruction of Protestant religious practice. During this period, particularly from the second third of the eighteenth century onward, it became increasingly common to compel the Protestant party in mixed marriages to sign a letter of obligation, and likewise to force other Protestants to convert by coercive means. Over the course of the eighteenth century it became ever clearer to Protestants that it was far easier to achieve success in every respect as a Catholic. This period of Protestant persecution lasted until 1781, when the

<sup>4</sup> Cf. BECKER, Lucinda: *Death and the Early Modern Englishwoman* Ashgate, Aldershot, 2003.

<sup>5</sup> The methods of dying have already been examined by Hungarian scholars, but denominational aspects were less studied in early modern Hungarian and Transylvanian context. Cf. S. SÁRDI, Margit: *Ars moriendi és a meghalás gyakorlata*, in: PÓCS, Éva (ed.): *Lélek, halál, túlvilág*, Balassi, Budapest, 2001, 474–487; MATKÓCSIK, Attila: „A haldoklás teátruma” – Erdély haldokló gubernátora, *Kharón: Thanatológiai Szemle*, 9, 2005, nr. 1–2, 74–118; KÖKÉNYESI, Zsolt: „Vég nélkül való Nagyság”: Reprezentáció és önkép a 18. századi főúri halotti beszédekben, *Aetas*, 31, 2015, nr. 1, 162–183; V. LÁSZLÓ, Zsófia: *Példás asszonyok: Női szerepek változása a protestáns halotti beszédek tükrében, 1711–1825*, Ráció, Budapest, 2020.

*Edictum Tolerantiale*—truly significant from the perspective of religious policy—was issued, and until the Diet of 1790–1791, which adopted Article XXVI placing Protestants under the protection of the constitution.<sup>6</sup>

### A Brief History of Extreme Unction

In what follows, I focus on one of the most distinctive Catholic elements among the rites of dying that can be interpreted from a confessional perspective. The administration of the sacrament of Extreme Unction required close bodily contact during the anointing of the individual senses; moreover, according to eighteenth-century source texts, it could even involve a form of penetration, since the giving of the consecrated host made it possible for the priest to place his fingers into the mouth of the dying person. A comprehensive study of this *sacramentum* from the perspective of church and ritual history in Hungary and Transylvania is still lacking. The ethnographic literature concerning the beliefs associated with receiving this sacrament is likewise rather limited.<sup>7</sup>

Earlier international scholarship emphasized that in European Christianity Extreme Unction became widespread as an element of the ritual of dying in the thirteenth century.<sup>8</sup> It was defined and regulated more thoroughly by the decrees of the Council of Trent (1545–1563), which placed it within the sacrament of the *viaticum*, following confession and communion. This prescription was further clarified and formalized by the

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<sup>6</sup> DIENES, Dénes: Tartható-e még a vértelen ellenreformáció fogalma?, in CSORBA, Dávid (ed.): *Vértelen ellenreformáció*, KGRE, Budapest, 2020, 13–19; TÓTH, Zsombor: Vértelen ellenreformáció: persecutio incurenta? Egy lehetséges értelmezés a hosszú reformáció kontextusában, in CSORBA (ed.): *Vértelen, op. cit.*, 21–34; ERDÉLYI, Gabriella: Confessional Identity and Models of Aristocratic Conversion in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Hungary, *Social History*, 40, 2015, nr. 4, 473–496. – See also previously written monographs and studies, for instance: ZOVÁNYI, Jenő: *A magyarországi protestantizmus története 1895-ig*, Attraktor, Máriabesnyő–Gödöllő, 2004 [the monograph was written in 1948]), vol. 2, 91–108, 130–146; TRÓCSÁNYI, Zsolt: Az ellenreformáció Erdélyben 1711-től a felvilágosult abszolutizmus kezdetéig, *Theologiai Szemle*, 22, 1979, nr. 4, 219–226.

<sup>7</sup> The lack of ethnographic research on this field in Hungary is mentioned by TÁNCZOS, Vilmos: A moldvai csángók népi vallásosságának kutatása, in: S. LACKOVITS, Emőke – SZŐCSNÉ GAZDA, Enikő (eds.): *Népi vallásosság a Kárpát medencében*, 7, Székely Nemzeti Múzeum – VMML, Sepsiszentgyörgy–Veszprém, 2007, vol. 2, 311–338.

<sup>8</sup> ISAMBERT, François-A.: Les Transformations du rituel catholique des mourants, *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 20, 1975, nr. 1, 89–100; cf. LEWIS, Nicola Denzey: *Apolytrosis* as Ritual and Sacrament: Determining a Ritual Context for Death in Second-Century Marcossian Valentinianism, *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 17, 2009, nr. 4, 525–561.

*Rituale Romanum* approved in 1614 by Pope Paul V (1605–1621). This regulation also declares that the order of the rites and the place of Extreme Unction within that were of great importance: „In quo illud in primis ex generali Ecclesiae consuetudine observandum est, ut si tempus et infirmis conditio permittat, ante Extremam Unctionem Poenitentiae et Eucharistiae Sacramenta infirmis praebeantur”. The order accepted after the Council of Trent—and since 1614—(Confession, Holy Communion, Extreme Unction) was expanded by Pope Benedict XIV (1740–1758) in the bull *Pia mater*, issued in 1747, in the chapter *de articulo mortis*, with prayer, the *commendatio animarum*, and the granting of plenary absolution.<sup>9</sup>

The prescriptions of the *Rituale Romanum* were harmonized with Hungarian practice by Péter Pázmány in his capacity as Archbishop of Esztergom. He sought to integrate these regulations with the traditions preserved in ritual books (*rituale*-type liturgical manuals), which transmitted inherited practice. Beyond the strictly liturgical elements, these also reflected local traditions concerning extra-liturgical ceremonies, including the administration of the sacraments.<sup>10</sup> As a result, the *Rituale Strigoniense* was created, and beginning with its 1625 edition it treated the sacrament of Extreme Unction in considerable detail.<sup>11</sup> Early modern believers were even less familiar with, and accepted to a far lesser degree, the sacrament of Extreme Unction than that of sacrament of Confirmation. In 1626, during visitations conducted within the Archdiocese of Esztergom at Pázmány's instruction, archdeacons reported not only the absence of Confirmation but also the unfamiliarity with Extreme Unction. For example, records from the Archdeaconry of Sasvár note that in several churches

<sup>9</sup> Cited by ISAMBERT, *Les Transformations*, op. cit., 91. – The sacrament, which was called *extreme unction* (lat. *extrema unctio*) in the *Rituale Romanum* (1614), was only renamed the *anointing of the sick* (lat. *unctio infirmorum*) in the new ritual by Pope Paul VI (1963–1978), and reinterpreted theologically: *Ordo Unctionis Infirmorum eorumque pastoralis curae* (Typis polyglottis vaticanis, Roma, 1972). – Recent edition, with an introduction to the history of the sacrament: *Ordo Unctionis Infirmorum eorumque spiritualis curae* (S. Sabina, Roma, 2008). – Cf. ISAMBERT, *Les Transformations*, op. cit., 91–92.

<sup>10</sup> RÁJNER, Lajos: *A rituále-kérdés Magyarországon*, Nagy S., Budapest, 1901.

<sup>11</sup> PÁZMÁNY, Péter (ed.): *Rituale Strigoniense*, typ. Soc. Jesu, Pozsony, 1625 (RMNy 1346). See: *De sacramento extremae unctionis*, 77–85. Critical edition: VARGA, Beniamin (ed.): *Rituale Strigoniense*, Argumentum, Budapest, 2015, 51–79, URL: <https://vallastudomany.elte.hu/sites/default/files/kiadvanyok/MRH/RitStrig.pdf> – Critical edition of the rituale (1560), before it was reformed by Pázmány: VARGA, Benjámín (ed.): *Obsequiale Strigoniense, 1490–1560*, ELTE BTK, Budapest, 2016, for the unction: 50–51. – Cf. VARGA, Benjámín: *Magyarországi rituálék az újkorban, 1625-től*, MA-thesis, ELTE, Budapest, 2012, URL: [http://vallastudomany.elte.hu/sites/default/files/Magyarorszag\\_i\\_ritualek\\_az\\_ujkorban\\_1625-.pdf](http://vallastudomany.elte.hu/sites/default/files/Magyarorszag_i_ritualek_az_ujkorban_1625-.pdf)

the Holy Oil used for Extreme Unction was entirely lacking. According to the report, parish priests excused themselves by claiming that they had no need for it, since the sick and dying were not accustomed to receiving Extreme Unction anyway. The same account indicates that some people were not even aware of the existence of the sacraments of Confirmation and Extreme Unction.<sup>12</sup>

Not only immediately after the introduction of the *Rituale Strigoniense*, but even during the nearly century-long period following the 1620s, the actual spread of the administration of Extreme Unction proceeded slowly. In Hungary the consolidation of the decrees of the Council of Trent was delayed until the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Only from that time onward was it possible to convene comprehensive reform synods in the territories formerly under Ottoman rule, as well as in the Transylvanian diocese revived from 1716, and to issue the *statutos* associated with them.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, a number of Latin treatises dealing with the subject of Extreme Unction had already been accessible earlier. Evidence for this can be found, for example, in the seventeenth-century catalogues of the Jesuit library in Nagyszombat (Trnava, present-day Slovakia).<sup>14</sup>

### The Re-Emergence of Catholicism in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Transylvania

In Hungary and Transylvania the implementation of the Tridentine principles in practice—through the series of reform synods and the reconstruction of the parish network—took place in parallel with the gradual erosion, from the end of the seventeenth century onward, of the Protestant religious liberty and confessional peace previously guaranteed by law. At the Diet of 1681, Article XXVI regulating the so-called articular places was adopted, restricting Protestant religious practice to two settlements in each county. Since the central part of Hungary was still under Ottoman rule at that time, the law could in practice apply to only eleven of the thirty-one counties.<sup>15</sup> Although the law formally reaffirmed the Peace of Vienna of 1606, its clause preserving “the rights of the landlords” could be

<sup>12</sup> FRANKL (FRANKÓI), *Vilmos: Pázmány Péter és kora, Ráth, Pest, 1869, vol. 2, 253–254. Cited by: BÁRTH, Dániel: Szempontok a bérnökös történeti néprajzi vizsgálathoz, Néprajzi Látóhatár, 16, 2007, nr. 3–4, 191.*

<sup>13</sup> See BÁRTH, Szempontok, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> Books of Robertus Bellarminus (1590), Jacobus Keller (1616), Joannis del Castillo (1646), Franciscus Amicus (1650), Rodericus de Arriaga (1655), Georgius Gobat (1664), and Hermannus Horst (1690). See FARKAS, Gábor Farkas (ed.): *Magyarországi jezsuita könyvtárak 1711-ig, Nagyszombat, 1632–1690, vol. 2, Scriptum, Szeged, 1997, 44, 69, 158, 179, 230, 238, 254.*

<sup>15</sup> MÁRKUS, Dezső (ed.): *Corpus Iuris Hungarici. Magyar Törvénytár. Az 1657–1740. évi törvények, Franklin, Budapest, 1900, 284–287.*

interpreted by Catholic landowners to mean that the religious practice of their serfs fell solely under their authority—thus effectively contradicting the very essence of the reaffirmed law, namely the freedom of Protestant worship guaranteed in the Peace of Vienna.

After 1681, and especially following the expulsion of the Ottomans, from the 1690s onward, Protestant religious practice was increasingly suppressed in more aggressive ways. In Transylvania, which in the seventeenth century was still predominantly Protestant and under Reformed princely rule, the resettlement of the Jesuits began in the 1690s, followed by the reorganization of the Catholic bishopric. The legal framework of the Habsburg absolutist church policy aimed at curbing Protestant religious practice—following the Protestant persecutions, show trials, and galley slavery of the 1670s—was established through several decrees at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries. These included the reaffirmation of the provisions of the Diet of 1681 in 1687, as well as the stricter decree issued in 1691 by Leopold I, Holy Roman Emperor and King of Hungary (1657–1705), known as the *Explanatio Leopoldina*. After a few years of relative freedom for Protestants during the Rákóczi's War of Independence (1703–1711), further absolutist measures detrimental to Protestant interests were introduced. In Transylvania—governed independently of the Kingdom of Hungary and administered directly from Vienna as a separate province of the Habsburg Empire from 1690 onward—these measures were enacted at the Diet convened in 1712; in Hungary they were adopted at the Diet of 1714–1715. The *Carolina Resolutio I and II* (1731 and 1734), issued by Charles VI (1711–1740), applying to both Hungary and Transylvania and intended to settle religious conflicts, in fact contributed to the further strengthening of the Catholic Church and the weakening of Protestant denominations. These decrees entrusted the supervision of the religious practice of *acatholici*—as well as the approval of their participation in political life—to the discretion of the monarch, the landowners, and in Transylvania the Catholic-dominated governing body known as the *Gubernium Transylvanicum*. The religious decree issued in 1742 by Maria Theresa (1740–1780) reaffirmed the measures introduced by her father.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> KÖBLÖS, József: A pápai reformátusok küzdelmei a szabad vallásgyakorlatért a XVIII. század elején, *Acta Papensia*, 1, 2001, nr. 1–2, 66–69; MAKKAI, László et al. (eds.): *History of Transylvania*, vol. 2, *From 1606 to 1830*, Columbia UP, New York, 2002, 517–521, 569–577, 599–600; DIENES, Dénes, *Carolina Resolutio*, in: KÖSZEGHY, Péter (ed.): *Magyar Művelődéstörténeti Lexikon*, Balassi, Budapest, 2004, vol. 2, 12–13; SHORE, Paul: *Jesuits and the Politics of Religious Pluralism in Eighteenth Century Transylvania*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2007; KURUCZ, György: A Carolina Resolutio és a protestáns vallásgyakorlat, in GUDOR, Botond et. al. (eds.): *Egyház, társadalom és művelődés Bod Péter (1712–1769) korában*, KGRE–L'Harmattan, Budapest, 2012, 11–24; BARÁTH Béla Levente: Az I. Carolina

From the perspective of the present study, it is particularly noteworthy that from the time of the *Carolina Resolutio* onward it was permitted in both Hungary and Transylvania for Catholic priests to administer Extreme Unction even to Protestants.<sup>17</sup> Partly as a consequence of this regulation, the papal bull mentioned above—concerning the blessing and indulgence granted to the dying—was printed in Buda in 1748 on the basis of the 1747 Roman edition. It was also published in Eger sometime in the early 1760s.<sup>18</sup>

### Countess Kata Bethlen (1700–1759) and her Ego-documents

The Bethlen family of Bethlen was a prominent Reformed noble family in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Transylvania, possessing considerable prestige and extensive estates as well as producing numerous influential politicians. Many members of the family also engaged in noteworthy literary activity. Two examples may be mentioned among those Bethlens who held the office of chancellor during the era of the principality and later under the *Gubernium*: the historical writings of János Bethlen (1613–1678), and the autobiography and numerous other works by count Miklós Bethlen (1642–1716). Their example may also have provided a familial model for countess Kata Bethlen—the granddaughter of the former and the niece of the latter.<sup>19</sup>

Kata Bethlen maintained an extensive correspondence, published a prayer book (*Védelmeső erős pais* [*Protective Strong Shield*], Sárdi Press, Szeben [Sibiu, present-day Romania], 1751?, 1759?), and wrote an autobiography. Most of the latter text—edited by her former court chaplain Péter Bod—was also published in print, most likely in a small number of copies (*Gróf bethleni Bethlen Kata életének maga által való rövid le-írása* [*A Short Description of the Life of the Countess Kata Bethlen by Herself*], Sárdi Press, Szeben [Sibiu, present-day Romania], 1759?).<sup>20</sup> The continuation of the

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Resolútiótól a türelmi rendeletig, in GÁBORJÁNI SZABÓ, Botond (ed.): *Egyházak és egyházpolitika Magyarországon és Erdélyben a 18–19. században: A Carolina Resolútiótól az 1848. évi XX. törvénycikkig*, TTRE Gyűjtemények, Debrecen, 2016, 11–16.

<sup>17</sup> KECSKEMÉTI, Károly: *La Hongrie et le réformisme libéral – Problèmes politiques et sociaux, 1790–1848*, Centro di ricerca, Roma, 1989, 246.

<sup>18</sup> *Benedicto et indulgentiae plenariae in articulo mortis impertiendae...*, Nottensteinin, Buda, 1748; *Bulla Benedicti papae XIV de benedictione in articulo mortis impertienda...*, Bauer, Agria, [early 1760s].

<sup>19</sup> JANKOVICS, József: A bethleni Bethlenek szerepe Erdély íráshasználatában, in GÁBOR, Csilla et al. (eds.): *Nyelv, lelkeség és regionalitás a közép- és kora újkorban*, Egyetemi Műhely, Kolozsvár, 2013, 384–391.

<sup>20</sup> For the problem of the publishing and circulating process of Bethlen's autobiography and her prayer book, see my recent study: FAZAKAS, Gergely Tamás: Árva Bethlen Kata önreprezentációi, in HORVÁTH, Iván et al. (eds.): *Magyar*

printed text has survived only in manuscript form: two separate, unconnected fragments copied by Péter Bod, and a further fragment—constituting the direct continuation of the latter—written in Kata Bethlen's own hand.<sup>21</sup> Bethlen most likely composed the retrospective portion of her autobiography in 1744, reviewing her life up to that point, after which she continued to write approximately once a year. The printed section of the autobiography extends to the year 1751, while the manuscript fragments contain entries up to early 1754. She continued to write or dictate further Ego-documents (meditations, confessional statements of faith, and wills) until 1759.

At the age of seventeen, Kata Bethlen was married to her stepbrother, count László Haller (1697–1719), who came from a prominent Catholic family in Transylvania. Despite the mixed marriage, she retained sufficient freedom to remain in her own confession, resisting repeated attempts to convert her. Of their three children, two survived: Pál Haller, baptized as a Catholic, and Borbála Haller, baptized as Reformed but converted at a young age. After the early death of her husband in the plague epidemic of 1722, the Haller family raised both children from childhood onward under strong Catholic influence—with both ecclesiastical and political support. Over time they became even emotionally estranged from their mother, and their relationship deteriorated.<sup>22</sup> After three years of widowhood, Kata Bethlen married a Reformed aristocrat, count József Teleki of Szék (1675–1732). However, all three of the Reformed children born from this marriage died at a young age. At the age of thirty-two Bethlen became a widow for the second time. From that point onward she attempted to independently administer both her own estates and those that had remained in her possession after the death of her second husband.<sup>23</sup> In her writings, she frequently reflected on her widowhood—in

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*irodalomtörténet*, Gépeskönyv, Budapest, 2020–2022, URL: <https://f-book.com/mi/index.php?chapter=1209FAZAARVA>

<sup>21</sup> The three manuscript fragments of Bethlen's autobiography are stocked in Erdélyi Református Egyházkerület Központi Gyűjtőlevéltára (EREKGy), Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca, present-day Romania), A8 (Árva Bethlen Kata hagyatéka / Legacy of Kata Árva Bethlen). – Description, first edition: MARKOS, András: *Árva Bethlen Kata Vallástétele és Önéletírásának kiadatlan töredékei*, *Református Szemle*, 57, 1964, nr. 4, 308–323; MARKOS, András: *Bod Péter és Árva Bethlen Kata*, *Református Szemle*, 62, 1969, nr. 4, 339–357; cf. FAZAKAS: *Árva Bethlen Kata önreprezentációi*, op. cit.

<sup>22</sup> ERDÉLYI, Gabriella: *Confessional*, op. cit., 479, 482, 489–490.

<sup>23</sup> Kata Bethlen's recent biography: BATORINÉ MISÁK Marianna: *Árva Bethlen Kata grófnő (1700–1759)*, in TANÁSZI, Árpád (ed.): *„A tisztességes hírnév örökös vagyok” – A múlt a jövő forrása: A bethleni Bethlenek*, Erdélyi Református Egyházkerület Igazgatótanácsa, Kolozsvár, 2023, 74–85; her biography and the historical context in English: ADAMS, Bernard: *The Life of Countess Kata Bethlen*: Introduction,

her own and her contemporaries' terminology, her "orphanhood." On the one hand, she described its personal dimensions in detail. On the other hand, in her autobiography, prayer book, correspondence, meditations, confessional writings, and wills she represented her "orphanhood" as an allegory of the persecution of the Reformed Church by Catholics—as a form of Protestant martyrdom.<sup>24</sup> Kata Bethlen's autobiography was most recently interpreted by Gabriella Erdélyi as "a narrative of religious constancy, and of non-conversion amid the dangers of her religiously mixed marriage," and "in the context of re-Catholicization efforts and propagandistic battles in eighteenth-century Transylvania."<sup>25</sup>

### The Threat of the Ritual of Extreme Unction in the Writings of Countess Kata Bethlen

In what follows, I examine those passages of Kata Bethlen's autobiography and several other Ego-documents (her prayers, wills, and meditations) that testify—within the context of the confessional persecutions and coerced conversions of the middle third of the eighteenth century—that the power struggle between the Catholic and the Reformed confessions was fought not only "for lordship over souls,"<sup>26</sup> but also over the bodies of the dying.

#### 1.

On April 4, 1746 Kata Bethlen composed a "confession of faith." This text—an unusual case among her Ego-documents—has survived both in her autograph manuscript and in a copy made by her court chaplain, Péter Bod.<sup>27</sup> In response to accusations made by her adult children, who were themselves of Catholic faith, Bethlen carefully refutes the charge that she was a "heretic." She then proceeds to formulate at length and with precision—perhaps with Bod's assistance—the "formula of my true faith and religion," outlining the most important elements of Trinitarian theology.

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in *A Short Description of the Life of the Countess Kata Bethlen by Herself*, transl. ADAMS, Bernard, Shaun Tyas, Donington, 2004, 1–9.

<sup>24</sup> FAZAKAS, Gergely Tamás: „tetszett az Úristennek [...] a gyámoltalan árvák seregébe béírni”: Bethlen Kata önéletírása és az özvegyek reprezentációjának kulturális hagyománya a kora újkorban, in BALÁZS, Mihály – GÁBOR, Csilla (eds.): *Emlékezet és devóció a régi magyar irodalomban*, Egyetemi Műhely, Kolozsvár, 2007, 259–278; FAZAKAS, Gergely Tamás: Árvaság és mártírium: A gyámoltalan özvegy mint a református egyház metaforája a 17–18. században, *Studia Litteraria*, 51, 2012, nr. 3–4, 198–231.

<sup>25</sup> ERDÉLYI: Confessional, op. cit., 474 (quotation above), 482, 489–494.

<sup>26</sup> *A Short Description of [...] Kata Bethlen*, op. cit., 63. (ch. 158.) 1.

<sup>27</sup> EREKGy, Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca, Romania), A8 (Árva Bethlen Kata hagyatéka / Legacy of Kata Árva Bethlen). – Bod served as court priest to Kata Bethlen in Olthévíz from 1743 to 1749. See: VERES, László: Bod Péter olthévízi élete és szolgálata, 1743–1749, in *Egyház, társadalom és művelődés*, op. cit., 142–157.

Her aim was to demonstrate her “true Reformed faith,” and that she had never “wavered” in it.<sup>28</sup>

If Kata Bethlen was indeed so steadfast, why did she find it necessary in 1746 to make such a formal declaration of her faith, and why had she already addressed similar issues two years earlier in her autobiography and letters? Most likely in order to demonstrate that she was in no way affiliated with the religion of the Antitrinitarians. Although the accusation may have had some relevance because of the Unitarian faith of her maternal ancestors from the Borsai Nagy family, Kata Bethlen herself was far removed from Unitarian belief. Throughout her life she remained faithful to the Reformed confession; indeed, on her own estate at Olthévíz<sup>29</sup> she even attempted, at times forcefully, to convert Unitarians to the Reformed faith.<sup>30</sup> More importantly, however, being associated with Unitarianism carried serious risks in the context of Habsburg and Catholic policy after the *Carolina Resolutio* (1731/1734). Namely, in these decades the treatment of Unitarians as heretics and the efforts to marginalize them intensified in Transylvania even more strongly than those directed against the Reformed. It was in this context that the treatise *Gondolatok az Árius-eretnekség Erdély fejedelemségéből kiirtásáról* [Thoughts on the Eradication of the Arian Heresy from the Principality of Transylvania] was written.<sup>31</sup>

The text cited above, written by Kata Bethlen in 1746, concludes with the statement: “This is my declaration concerning my faith and religion made with a good conscience; in this true faith I wish to live; *in this I wish to die*.”<sup>32</sup> In this text she does not elaborate on the concrete manner of dying according to the “true faith,” that is, according to the Reformed confession. Yet it most likely refers to what she states explicitly in several later writings cited below—namely, that she wished *not to die according to Catholic rites*.

<sup>28</sup> Bethlen Kata vallástétele (April 4, 1746), in TONK, Sándor (ed.): *Árva Bethlen Kata írása és kora*, Erdélyi Református Egyházkerület, Kolozsvár, 1998, 29–32.

<sup>29</sup> Hoghiz, present-day Romania. – The village belonged to Nagy-Küküllő County in the eighteenth century.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. ILKEL, Ildikó: Bethlen Kata térítése, in *Emlékezet és devóció*, op. cit., 367–371; VERES: Bod Péter, op. cit.; GESZTELYI, Hermina: *Textusok és textílek: Az erényes nő műveltsége a 17–18. században*, TTRE Közgyűjtemények, Debrecen, 2021, 118–133.

<sup>31</sup> *History of Transylvania*, op. cit., vol. 2, 569–572; TRÓCSÁNYI: Az ellenreformáció, op. cit., 223–224; GÖNCZÖL, Andrea: *A védekezés retorikája: Szövegszervező eljárások unitárius vitáiratokban a 18. század derekán*, PhD-thesis, Szegedi Tudományegyetem BTK IDI, Szeged, 2014, URL: [doktori.bibl.u-szeged.hu/2161/1/DOKTORI%20DISSZERTACIO.pdf](http://doktori.bibl.u-szeged.hu/2161/1/DOKTORI%20DISSZERTACIO.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> Bethlen Kata vallástétele (April 4, 1746), in TONK (ed.): *Árva Bethlen Kata*, op. cit., 32. (italics mine)

## 2.

In a supplication dated February 15, 1751—later published in Kata Bethlen's prayer book—the following passage appears: "Take care, merciful God, also of my body that shall return to dust; appoint the place and hour of my dissolution among people with whom I have worshipped You in this life in one true faith and religion. Do not permit, dear Father, that my mortal remains be defiled by a sacrament imagined by strangers; rather, let even those who judged me to have no true faith or religion behold in me the delightful and precious anointing of Your Holy Spirit."<sup>33</sup> The expressions mentioned in this prayer ("a sacrament imagined by strangers"; "the delightful and precious anointing of Your Holy Spirit") most likely refer to her desire to avoid the Catholic ritual of dying, and thus particularly the sacrament of Extreme Unction.

## 3.

A more detailed reflection by Kata Bethlen dates from the spring of 1752 and survives in the manuscript portion of her autobiography, in the second manuscript fragment copied by Péter Bod. In this passage, as well as in letters<sup>34</sup> she sent around the same time, Bethlen writes about her serious illnesses, the possible prospect of her death, and later her recovery. In this context she recalls the following: „For often when, even in a healthy condition, I have pondered my last end and my being alone, oh, what bitter torments that has brought me: with many bitter sighs I have besought my God to set beside me in my solitude persons of one faith and religion with me, so that *when I depart into the world of shades ceremonies contrary to my religion may not be performed.*"<sup>35</sup> The autobiographer records that her Reformed brother Sámuel Bethlen and his wife Klára Nemes "were with me day and night during this long illness," and that the Reformed minister of Fogaras, Mihály Jantsó, was likewise present during her suffering.<sup>36</sup> Despite this, Kata Bethlen feared that if she were to be dying, no well-wisher of the Reformed faith might be present beside her. Instead, only her Catholic children—Pál Haller and Borbála Haller—and her son-in-law Pál Teleki might be at her side, leaving her helpless body exposed to Catholic rites:

"I said that I had often been anxious that if my illness took a turn for the worse and only they were with me they would place the extreme

<sup>33</sup> BETHLEN, Kata: *Védelmesző erős pais*, [Sárdi], [Szeben], [1751?, 1759?], 70–71.

<sup>34</sup> Letter to Teleki László, Fogaras, May 14, 1752.; Letter to Teleki László, Szeben, June 16, 1752. LAKATOS-BAKÓ, Melinda (ed.): ÁRVA BETHLEN, Kata: *Levelei*, Erdélyi Református Egyházkerület, Kolozsvár, 2002, 111–115.

<sup>35</sup> *A Short Description of[...] Kata Bethlen*, *op. cit.*, 97. (ch. 219d.) (italics mine)

<sup>36</sup> From Kata Bethlen's letter of May 14, 1752, it is revealed that Jantsó informed László Teleki of her illness. ÁRVA BETHLEN, Kata: *Levelei* (ed. LAKATOS-BAKÓ), *op. cit.*, 111.

unction in my mouth; but now by the grace of the Lord I did not fear that, as my dear brothers were beside me. To that they uttered a great oath that they would not desire to do that, but their priests would do it, as there are enough examples of a poor person dying, and the extreme unction being placed in the mouth of a man no longer aware of the world. And I said that I knew that it would not harm my soul: but let them see and hear from me that I was brought up and had always lived in the true faith established on Christ, and in that true faith I desired to leave this world while memory persists on how a person in that true faith and religion is laid to rest. For I swore to God that I had never had the slightest disposition toward any other religion but my own true faith and religion, for which I glorify my gracious Father. At that they [Kata Bethlen's son and daughter] swore powerfully that they would not permit even their priests [to place the extreme unction in her mouth], if it was in their power. I believed their binding oaths, and it brought peace to my mind."<sup>37</sup>

In this passage Bethlen makes it clear she did not fear that the Catholic ritual might "harm her soul" if it were forced upon her during her dying moments. A similar formulation appears in the preface written in the same year, 1752, by the Lutheran pastor of Győr, János Sartoris, who introduces a new edition of Mihály Ács's *Boldog halál szekere* [*The Chariot of Happy Death*], an *ars moriendi* first published in 1696: "And even if there were no opportunity for that, and those standing beside you sought to embitter your heart with condemnations and make your death dreadful, do not grieve over it. The Holy Spirit can preserve you even without this, by bringing to your mind the word you have heard during your life (John 14)."<sup>38</sup>

Although Kata Bethlen did not feel that her spiritual salvation was endangered, the text nevertheless suggests that she feared the possibility that the Haller relatives might impose Catholic practices upon her during her dying moments—especially Extreme Unction—and also the threat that might follow her death: the possibility of a Catholic burial. This may be inferred partly from the fact that she lists similar contemporary cases as examples in her autobiography, and partly from the fact that she returned repeatedly to this issue in several of her wills written during the 1750s, as will be discussed below.

#### 4.

Shortly before—or perhaps at the very beginning of—the illnesses she experienced in the spring of 1752, Kata Bethlen composed a will on March 1. In it she does not address the circumstances of her dying but rather makes

<sup>37</sup> *A Short Description of [...] Kata Bethlen, op. cit.*, 98. (ch. 219g.)

<sup>38</sup> Ács, Mihály: *Boldog halál szekere*, Siess, Sopron, 1752, B6r. – The 1700 and 1708 editions of Mihály Ács's book *Boldog halál szekere*—which did not yet contain the quoted preface—were found in Kata Bethlen's library. MONOK, István et al. (eds.): *Erdélyi könyvesházak, 1563–1757*, vol. 3, Scriptum, Szeged, 1994, 24, 42.

provisions for her burial, stipulating that she must be buried wherever “the bodies of those who have died blessedly in the same true faith and religion as mine” are laid to rest; she adds that she does not care where this may be.<sup>39</sup> She further requests that two of her Reformed brothers, Sámuel Bethlen and Imre Bethlen, arrange her burial rather than her Catholic children. Her distrust of them is concealed in the formal language of the document; she justifies the decision merely by stating that her children are unfamiliar with Reformed burial practices.<sup>40</sup> Because the will also contains a highly detailed confessional summary of Trinitarian theology, it may be assumed that she sought not only to guard against a Catholic funeral oration but also to defend herself in advance against possible accusations of heresy, particularly association with Unitarianism.<sup>41</sup>

## 5.

About half a year before her death, a further text of Bethlen dated December 17, 1758 survives in which the countess—by then suffering from increasingly severe illnesses—expressed her fear that her approaching death and subsequent burial might be overseen not by Reformed co-religionists (her brothers) but by Catholics, namely her children. In a writing entitled “elmékedése utolsó órájáról” [Meditation on Her Final Hour] she writes: “I have already seen many Christian people who, before their death, lost their speech and spent long periods without any sensation. Blessed God, in such a state what might not those around a person do to such a person!”<sup>42</sup> The detailed description in this passage of the possible weakening and loss of consciousness during the process of dying appears to be connected with a formulaic expression found in Bethlen’s wills and characteristic of testaments more generally: the emphasis on the testator’s soundness of mind. She stresses that she is *fully conscious* and, in that state, declares her wish that her dying and eventually deceased body be subjected to the rites and burial *practices of her own confession*. In such cases she also seeks to authenticate her capacity by affixing her own signature beneath texts recorded by a scribe but presumably dictated—at least in part—by the testator herself.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> BENCZÚR, Gyuláné (ed.): *Széki gróf Teleki József özvegye Bethleni Bethlen Kata grófnő írásai és levelezése, 1700–1759*, Grill, Budapest, 1922–1923, vol. 2, 559.

<sup>40</sup> *Op. cit.*, 560–561.

<sup>41</sup> *Op. cit.*, 557–558.

<sup>42</sup> Bethlen Kata elmékedése utolsó órájáról, in TONK (ed.): *Árva Bethlen Kata, op. cit.*, 193.

<sup>43</sup> See Kata Bethlen’s wills of March 1, 1752; August 18, 1757; November 28, 1758; May 13, June 6, June 11, 1759; and her letter to the *Gubernium Transylvanicum* of June 11, 1759. BENCZÚRNÉ (ed.): *Bethlen Kata grófnő írásai, op. cit.*, vol. 2, 557, 566, 580, 582, 587; TONK (ed.): *Árva Bethlen Kata, op. cit.*, 199; LAKATOS-BAKÓ (ed.): *Árva Bethlen Kata Levelei, op. cit.*, 188–189.

In the following section of this meditation, Kata Bethlen also recalls a frightening example of coercion directed against a particular woman. She writes about an incident that had occurred decades earlier, when Borbála Huszár, the wife of the Reformed noble János Nemes, fell mortally ill. At that time the woman's Catholic daughter from her first marriage, Borbála Torma, wife of István Haller, entered the room of the dying woman and excluded from it the Reformed children born of Borbála Huszár's second marriage, Domokos Nemes and Mátyás Nemes—that is, her own half-brothers. After this, “she secretly brought in the priest, and when her mother—already speechless and near death—lay there, *he anointed the inside of her mouth with Extreme Unction*. Not satisfied with this, she broke a loaf into small morsels in a little box and put them into [the dying woman's mouth].” In her text, Kata Bethlen refutes an accusation that had once been made against the woman, arguing that Borbála Huszár's recently deceased sons, Domokos and Mátyás Nemes, together with their servants, had themselves testified that the woman had in fact never become a “papist.” Kata Bethlen also records that it was precisely because of this fabricated accusation that Domokos Nemes—the son who had been excluded from the room during his mother's dying moments—became furious. When he realized that the priest was attempting to force Extreme Unction into his mother's mouth, he “wanted to break in” to the room. Bethlen further recalls that the desperate son caused a scandal at Borbála Huszár's funeral as well: “in his great agitation he wanted to set the house on fire while the priest was preaching over his mother,” repeatedly calling the priest a liar during the ceremony and shouting that when his dying mother could no longer speak, Extreme Unction had been forced into her mouth.<sup>44</sup>

Kata Bethlen recounts another case in this same meditation. A certain General Lenturus served as commander in Kronstadt (Braşov, present-day Romania); he himself was Reformed, while his wife was Catholic. When Lenturus was dying and had lost the power of speech, “the Jesuits of Kronstadt anointed the inside of his mouth with Extreme Unction, [and then] went joyfully to his wife to say that [before his death] he had become a papist, and they buried him in the Jesuit's church”. After recounting this episode, Bethlen—fearing something similar might happen to her—addresses God in prayer, asking that He protect her from the possibility of a Catholic deathbed ritual: “Preserve also my body that shall turn to dust, that they may not anoint my mouth with Extreme Unction. [...] I have written this so that, not knowing the place or hour of my passing, nor who will be beside me in that hour, and seeing that in many cases indignities are done to people in their final moments merely in order to bend the weak by such examples. I ask therefore every Christian brother who shares with me the one true faith, the true Reformed religion, not to believe—nor to be

<sup>44</sup> Bethlen Kata elmékedése utolsó órájáról, in TONK (ed.): *Árva Bethlen Kata, op. cit.*, 193–194.

scandalized—if those of another religion should say anything false about me. For I was born into the true Reformed religion founded on Christ, I was raised in it, I have spent my whole life in it, and I remain in it now, at a time when I do not know in the morning whether I shall live to evening, nor in the evening whether I shall live to morning.”<sup>45</sup>

With this testament-like meditation, Kata Bethlen attempted to prevent a possible future misinterpretation: even if, because of weakness during her dying moments, such a violent penetration—namely Catholic domination over her helpless body at the hour of her death by forcing upon her the sacrament of Extreme Unction—were to occur, posterity should nevertheless know that she had not received the Catholic sacrament by her own decision. The countess may also have feared Extreme Unction because her Catholic relatives might afterward boast that on her deathbed she had abandoned her Reformed faith—a claim that, given the exemplary Reformed life she consciously cultivated,<sup>46</sup> could have been particularly discouraging for her co-religionists.<sup>47</sup>

## 6.

Kata Bethlen did not rely only on examples involving others when describing the coercion applied by Catholics to Protestant dying persons; she also drew on her own experiences. In the retrospective portion of her autobiography written in 1744, she recalled an episode from her youth, dating to 1718, when she herself faced a real danger of coercion from her husband's Catholic relatives. In the incident narrated by Bethlen roughly twenty-five years later, however, the issue was not the administration of Extreme Unction, since she was not dying. Rather, she remembered an attempt to force her conversion when, after giving birth to her twin sons, she became severely weakened and, confined to bed for a long period, found herself in a particularly vulnerable and dependent position. At that time, the Catholic Haller relatives „asked him [the husband of Kata Bethlen] [...] if there might be any hope in my regard, that he might be able to make me leave my religion. He replied that he had observed no inclination in me. At that, one and another instructed him what he should do with me, the more speedily to change my mind. Oh my God, Thou hast strengthened

<sup>45</sup> *Op. cit.*, 194.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. NAGY, Márton Károly: A példázattá írt élet, *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, 115, 2011, nr. 6, 689–705.

<sup>47</sup> A later example: The month before her death, on June 5th, 1759, Kata Bethlen wrote a letter to her son, Pál Haller, informing him that she forbade him from making arrangements for her own upcoming funeral. She made a will about this on June 6th, and on the 11th she informed the *Gubernium Transylvanicum* about her decision. LAKATOS-BAKÓ (ed.), *Árva Bethlen Kata Levelei, op. cit.*, 186–189; Bethlen Kata pótvégrendelete eltemettetéséről, in TONK (ed.): *Árva Bethlen Kata, op. cit.*, 199–200.

me against all these! Taking advantage of her relationship, the wife of István Kornis, my kinswoman Borbára Gyerőfi, gave him this counsel for my harassment: Dear brother-in-law! Now that she is in childbed treat my young kinswoman harshly, as her mother is now dead and she has none to turn to, and her brothers are far away; do nothing to please her; when Your Honour sees that she wishes to sleep, make a great noise; do not ask whether she has eaten, or better let her not be served from the table, let her come there herself, but say little to her, show your ill humour, do not ask in the morning whether she has slept well, etc. If she asks: Why is Your Honour so ill humoured? you must answer: I have cause enough to be ill humoured, and shall never be otherwise until you leave your religion. That is the best way to the conversion of my young kinswoman, and I was so converted by my poor husband László Gyulaffi. The other kinsfolk, too, supported this counsel and assured him that he should so do and all would be well.<sup>48</sup>

### Some Additional Eighteenth-Century Examples of the Threat of Extreme Unction

There are also Catholic accounts from mid-eighteenth-century Hungary from which—perhaps contrary to their will—it can be inferred that Auricular Confession, Holy Communion, and Extreme Unction were forced upon dying Protestants. For example, when the Reformed mother of Dávid Fáy, who had converted to Catholicism around 1730 and later became a Jesuit missionary, lay dying, her other son László Fáy allowed only Catholic relatives and the physician-priest György Bíró to approach her bedside. László hoped that by hearing the teachings “whispered into her ear,” his mother would finally come to a better understanding, and that the sacrificial life of his brother would thereby bear fruit. (Dávid had undertaken missionary journeys to South America and India and frequently prayed for his mother’s conversion.) The relatives urged the dying woman that, “since she already regarded the Roman Catholic Church as the only true one, [...] she should acknowledge that outside this Church there is no other salvation church.” According to the reports of Fáy Dávid’s fellow Jesuits, the pleas of the Catholic relatives—together with the persistent persuasion and a small ruse by György Bíró (who secretly placed a Marian medal under her pillow, which supposedly produced wondrous feelings in the dying woman without her knowing the cause)—eventually succeeded. The woman began devoutly kissing the medal, confessed her sins, summoned the relatives, and recited the Catholic profession of faith.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup> *A Short Description of [...] Kata Bethlen, op. cit., 24. (ch. 31.)*

<sup>49</sup> TÓTH, Sándor Attila – TÓTH, Sándor Máté: Rekatolizáció és katolikus hitvédelem a 18. századi Osztrák-Magyar Jezsuita Rendtartományban, in KÓNYA, Péter (ed.): *Rekatolizáció, protireformáció a katolícka reštaurácia v Uhorsku*, Vydavateľstvo Prešovskej Univerzity, Prešov, 2013, 21–22. – One more example: In 1719, Jesuits established a mission in the territory of the Archdiocese of Esztergom, and the

The Reformed church historian Ferenc Balogh interpreted another well-known event of the period as follows. The Lutheran pastor and superintendent Daniel Krman, who had been imprisoned because of his religion, “after eleven years of captivity as a confessor of the faith drew near to death. Two Jesuits appeared in the prison of the dying man, seeking to compel him to adopt the Roman Catholic religion. When they failed, they forcibly stuffed the host into the mouth of the old man as he lay in the final throes of death, but he died on September 17, 1740, without swallowing it. The Jesuits, however, spread the rumor that Krman had converted to Catholicism in his final hour.”<sup>50</sup>

According to the diary of Ferenc Gyulai, a similar case occurred during the dying moments of Guido von Starhemberg, a Lutheran lieutenant. His commanding officer and the chief priest attempted by every means to convert him to the Catholic faith, yet the lieutenant resisted.<sup>51</sup> Thus, alongside conversion attempts that achieved their goal, one must also take into account those which clearly—or at least plausibly—did not end successfully from a Catholic perspective.

### A Reformed Ritual at the Bedside of a Catholic Dying Person

An important passage in Kata Bethlen’s autobiography reveals the opposite direction of the denominational practices surrounding the dying discussed so far. In 1719 it happened that Kata Bethlen remained alone with her husband, László Haller, who was suffering from the plague and nearing death at only twenty-two years of age. According to Bethlen’s retrospective recollection written some twenty-five years later, everyone else—including Catholic relatives and even a passing monk—was afraid to care for the contagious patient. As a result, the situation developed in such a way that Bethlen, remaining beside him, accompanied her Catholic husband through his dying process according to the practices of her own Reformed faith.

“I dismissed others from the house, only a noblewoman and [the] old woman remaining with me, and prayed with him myself. On the Tuesday after dinner until dawn on Wednesday he did not sleep, but prayed after me without ceasing; I caused him to confess properly that he desired

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Bishopric of Vác. The Jesuit Annals report a case similar to the one cited above, from an unnamed settlement: Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Aust. 176, f. 88–89. (I am grateful to Orsolya Száraz for the information.) – For a similar incident that happened in Kisvárd, a hundred years earlier, in 1629, see: TÓTH, István György: Olasz misszionáriusok a 17. századi Magyarországon, *Századok*, 135, 2001, nr. 6, 1331.

<sup>50</sup> BALOGH, Ferenc: *A magyar protestáns egyháztörténet irodalma*, Városi nyomda, Debrecen, 1879, 24.

<sup>51</sup> MÁRKI, Sándor (ed.): *Gróf Gyulai, Ferenc naplója 1703–4*, MTA, Budapest, 1928, 130, 171. Quoted by: S. SÁRDI: *Ars moriendi*, op. cit., 480.

salvation through the perfect satisfaction and intercession of Jesus Christ alone, putting away all confidence in his own merit and the prayers of saints. This continued until dawn. After sunrise he had such fantasy that he knew no one. On the Wednesday evening János Haller [the brother of László] arrived; but by then he was aware of no one, and his heart was greatly affected by fits. On the Thursday morning, as the sun rose, he called out with a great ringing voice, and proclaimed: I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of Heaven and Earth. *At that he straight away died, without any Papist office.*<sup>52</sup>

From this passage it is clear that Kata Bethlen herself considered it more important that her husband receive a ritual consistent with her own confessional affiliation and personal convictions than that the practice correspond to the dying man's religion. This section of the autobiography, which was published in print, conveyed to readers the author's claim that despite the coercive attempts directed against her, it was not she who became Catholic; rather, her husband departed this life according to the Reformed practice of dying.

A few additional cases are known that resemble Bethlen's attempt, in which members of the Reformed confession sought to impose their own ritual upon dying Catholics. In his monograph, Zsombor Tóth provides two examples. The first concerns the Reformed Mihály Cserei, who believed that the Catholic István Apor—whose *familiaris* and secretary Cserei was—appeared to be declining both physically and mentally “and might therefore be persuaded to convert”. The second, “a milder but similar example of the same mentality, is provided by János Komáromi, who had Imre Thököly, a Lutheran who had secretly converted to Catholicism under pressure from French Jesuits, pray in the Calvinist manner.”<sup>53</sup>

## Conclusion

When reading the eighteenth-century Ego-documents analyzed in this study—and others like them—it is always necessary to take into account the religious affiliation of both the author and the surrounding environment. One must also attempt to reconstruct not only the intentions behind the narrated events but also the aims and purposes that shaped the act of writing itself, in order to be able to draw more accurate conclusions about the possible bias of the reports. Further research should therefore examine a larger corpus of texts in order to survey the history of denominational practices surrounding dying in Transylvania and Hungary, especially the spread of Extreme Unction within the broader political, cultural, and social context of eighteenth-century Catholic expansion. Beyond the

<sup>52</sup> *A Short Description of [...] Kata Bethlen, op. cit.*, 28. (ch. 41–43.) (italics mine)

<sup>53</sup> TÓTH, Zsombor: *A kora újkori könyv antropológiája. Kéziratos irodalmi nyilvánosság Cserei Mihály (1667–1756) írás- és szöveghasználatában*, Reciti, Budapest, 2017, 205.

autobiography, prayers, wills, confessional declarations, and letters of Kata Bethlen, the investigation should also incorporate similar writings by other contemporary male and female authors, as well as texts belonging to additional genres: Catholic and Protestant sermon literature and *ars moriendi* texts, *canonica visitatio* records, synodal decrees, and other documents. Alongside approaches grounded in historical anthropology and rhetorical analysis, a broader interpretive framework for such investigations may be provided by the interconnected perspectives of the history of piety and theology, as well as cultural and ecclesiastical history.



## KIÉ LESZ AZ ÁRVAHÁZ?

Mária Terézia alapítványa a debreceni árvaház létrehozására  
és egy évszázadnyi vita annak felekezeti jellegéről

### WHO SHALL HAVE THE ORPHANAGE?

Maria Theresa's Foundation for the Establishment of Debrecen Orphanage  
and a Century of Controversies concerning Its Confessional Character<sup>1</sup>

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### ÖSSZEFOGLALÁS

1760-ban Debrecen városa 30 000 forint kölcsönzött a királyi kincstárnak a Poroszország elleni háborúval kapcsolatos kiadások fedezésére. Tizennégy évvel később a város úgy döntött, hogy ezt a kölcsönt ajándéknak tekinti Mária Terézia számára. A nagylelkű ajándék azonban a város ellen fordult, amikor a császárnő úgy döntött, hogy a pénzt egy katolikus árvaház alapítására fordítja egy markánsan kálvinista városban. Figyelembe véve a lakosság kálvinista többségét, nem határozta meg egyértelműen az intézmény vallási céljait, ami végtelen konfliktusokhoz vezetett a nevelőotthonban élő gyermekek vallási hovatartozása tekintetében. Egyrészt a városi hatóságok azt állították, hogy Mária Terézia minden helyi árvát gondoskodni akart, vallási hovatartozástól függetlenül. Másrészt a katolikus Oradea püspökség és a helytartói tanács az intézmény katolikus jellegét védte. A vitát a bécsi bíróságnak kellett volna rendeznie, azonban a Magyar Királyság vallási és politikai helyzete miatt a bíróság évtizedekig halogatta a döntést. Az alapító okirat kétértelmű megfogalmazása és a bécsi bíróság habozó hozzáállása miatt az alapítvány csak 85 évvel a létrehozása után kezdte meg tevékenységét.

A tanulmány a debreceni árvaház alapításával és vallási meghatározásával kapcsolatos vita alakulását vizsgálja a Magyar Királyságban a vallási kapcsolatok és az árva gyermekek intézményi gondozásának fejlődése kontextusában.

### ABSTRACT

In 1760, the town of Debrecen loaned 30,000 florins to the Royal Treasury to cover the expenses related to the war against Prussia. Fourteen years later, the town decided to consider this loan a gift to Maria Theresa. However, a generous gift turned against the city itself when the empress decided to use the means for the foundation of the Catholic orphanage in a strikingly Calvinist town. Taking into consideration the Calvinist majority in the population, she did not define the institution's confessional

<sup>1</sup> This work was supported by the Slovak Research and Development Agency under the contract No. APVV-24-0509, Confessionalization of Hungarian/Slovak society in 19th century and by grant VEGA 2/0025/25 Transformations of the Hungarian aristocracy in the 18th and 19th centuries. Social and economic power, changes in cultural values. Author works at Institute of History SAS.

objectives clearly, which resulted in endless conflicts in terms of the religious belief of its foster children. On one hand, there was a municipal authority maintaining that Maria Theresa intended to take care of all local orphans regardless of their confession. On the other hand, the Catholic Bishopric of Oradea and the Lieutenantcy Council defended a Catholic character of this institution. The dispute was to be resolved by the court in Vienna; however, due to the religious and political situation in the Kingdom of Hungary, the court was postponing the ruling for decades. Ambiguous wording of the foundation charter and the hesitant approach of the Viennese court caused the foundation to commence its activities only 85 years after it had been established.

The study examines the course of the dispute over the establishment and confessional definition of the orphanage in Debrecen in the context of the development of religious relations and institutional care for orphaned children in the Kingdom of Hungary.

**Kulcsszavak:** Debrecen, Confessionalization, 18th-19th century, Orphanages, Care of orphans, Religious disputes

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In 1760, the town of Debrecen loaned 30,000 florins to the Royal Treasury to cover the expenses related to the war against Prussia. Fourteen years later, the town decided to consider this loan a gift to Maria Theresa. However, a generous gift turned against the city itself when the empress decided to use the means for the foundation of the Catholic orphanage in a strikingly Calvinist town. Taking into consideration the Reformed majority in the population, she did not define the institution's confessional objectives clearly, which resulted in endless conflicts in terms of the religious belief of its foster children. On one hand, there was a municipal authority maintaining that Maria Theresa intended to take care of all local orphans regardless of their confession. On the other hand, the Catholic Bishopric of Oradea and the Lieutenantcy Council defended a Catholic character of this institution. The dispute was to be resolved by the court in Vienna; however, due to the religious and political situation in the Kingdom of Hungary, the court was postponing the ruling for decades. Ambiguous wording of the foundation charter and the hesitant approach of the Viennese court caused the foundation to commence its activities only 85 years after it had been established.

### **Maria Theresa's decision to establish an orphanage in Debrecen within the context of the religious situation in the town**

The town of Debrecen became a "bastion" of Calvinism in the Kingdom of Hungary in the 1560s and maintained this status, even though political and power circumstances started changing in favour of the Catholic Church in the course of the 17th century. Only the Calvinist Church was

allowed to operate in the city, whereas the other churches, despite being permitted by the law, could not establish their ecclesiastical or educational institutions in the town. Furthermore, their faithful were not allowed to settle down in the town and obtain town rights. As Debrecen was under Ottoman rule until 1687, neither restrictions against Protestants enforced by the state power after 1669, nor legislation passed by the Hungarian Diet between 1681 and 1687 wielded any influence on the town's religious landscape. Once the town had been liberated from the Ottomans, the state power started gradually weaken the previously monopolistic position of the Calvinist Church. During the reign of both Charles VI and Maria Theresa, Debrecen specifically became a target of recatholization effort of the state, as the centre of Hungarian Calvinism, as well as one of the richest and most populous towns in the Kingdom of Hungary. In 1717, a royal commissariat was established in the city to enforce this policy.<sup>2</sup>

Debrecen faced the last wave of major recatholization effort in 1770 – 1777 when the office of a royal commissary was held by József Vecsei and Miklós Forgách. Based on M. Forgách's recommendations, Maria Theresa issued a mandate on November 8th, 1774, commanding to take several measures aimed, for instance, at enhancing the status of the yet marginalized Catholic Church in the town, or at ensuring all the prerogatives of this denomination as the state church. According to clause 32 of the mandate, all poor orphans and abandoned children that the city was in charge of were to be raised in accordance with the Catholic faith. Clause 53 confirmed that the empress had accepted the offered 30,000 florins as a gift from the city, and allocated the money to the foundation of the orphanage serving Debrecen and its surroundings. Interests ensuing from the capital were to be invested and further capitalized on, until a sufficiently big budget to found an institution would be put together. The municipal authority was obliged to allocate one of its plots of land beyond the town walls for the future orphanage that had been previously delimited by the Royal Commissary M. Forgách as building plots for impecunious Catholic burghers. The project, together with the orphanage blueprints, was to be presented to the sovereign for her approval.<sup>3</sup> In August 1776, Maria Theresa issued another mandate, responding to objections of Debrecen's representatives, which revised or supplemented some of the provisions of the

<sup>2</sup> GYÖRI, János L. Reformiertes Kollegium Debrecen: Die Bedeutung des reformierten Kollegiums Debrecen für Politik und Kultur in Ungarn vom 16. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert. In FATA, Márta – SCHINDLING, Anton (ed.). *Calvin und Reformiertentum in Ungarn und Siebenbürgen: helvetisches Bekenntnis, Ethnie und Politik vom 16. Jahrhundert bis 1918*. Münster: Aschendorff, 2011, p. 241-245.

<sup>3</sup> ZIMMERMANN, Károly. Debreczenben a' catholicismus. In *Religio és Nevelés*, 1846. 2. éfv., 16. sz., p. 125-126; Emlékirata a debreczeni rom. kath. egyházközségi bizottmánynak, a debreczeni árvatartó pénzalap ügyében. Debreczen: Nyomatott a város könyvnyomdájában, 1870, p. 3-5.

1774 decree. Firstly, the town objected to the upbringing of orphaned and abandoned children; however, Maria Theresa confirmed her decision that all the children dependent on charity and provided for from the town's public resources were to be brought up in the Catholic denomination. The municipal authority demanded that the non-Catholic children be received at the orphanage, too. The empress stated that the capital of 30,000 florins donated by the city was to be used to establish an institution for poor orphans, of the Catholic denomination in particular. However, she conceded to admitting also non-Catholic children, provided these children *"would be entrusted in its care."*<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, it is obvious that Maria Theresa, bearing in mind the existence of a Calvinist majority in the city, did not define the religious dimension of the institution on purpose. It was an untypical decision, as in the case of foundations, their founders always clearly characterized confession-wise target groups of their charitable or educational activities. As a ruling to establish the Debrecen orphanage was passed with an extensive package of recatholization measures and bearing in mind that contemporary Hungarian orphanages followed certain confessional goals, we can almost certainly exclude the option that the Viennese court would intend to establish an institution where Calvinist orphans would be admitted without a concealed or openly declared intention to convert them to the Catholic Church. Although later interpretations have repeatedly doubted this premise, in my opinion, a unified Catholic upbringing was the given due to the statute concerning the mandatory Catholic upbringing of all children dependent on public charity. Despite unclear definitions of some of Maria Theresa's mandates, we may assume on the basis of other preserved documents that in the late 1770s, representatives of both state power and the town of Debrecen clearly perceived the orphanage as a Catholic educational institution. For instance, the municipal authorities as well as the elected community stated in their response to questions of the royal commissary from August, 19th, 1777, on adherence to the empress' orders, namely in respect to the clause 41: *"It has been impossible to commence the construction of the orphanage for Roman Catholic, as the interests ensuing from the capital of 30,000 florins have not increased sufficiently, and we have been unable to fulfill royal request yet."*<sup>5</sup>

### **Confessional and recatholization objectives of the first orphanages in the Kingdom of Hungary**

Institutionalized care for orphans started evolving in the Kingdom of Hungary in the late 18th century when the first four orphanages, three private (Kőszeg, Sopron, Oradea) and one royal (Tomášikovo), were established. In contrast to countries west of the Kingdom of Hungary, where

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, p.. 6-7.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, p. 7-8.

orphanages emerged within the measure to eliminate beggary or to support manufacturing production, the reasons for establishing such institutions in the Kingdom of Hungary were mainly confessional. As numerous Christian denominations were able to legally operate in the country, the institutional care for orphaned children became an inseparable part of confessional conflicts. Due to the religious and political situation in the country, all the above-mentioned orphanages were founded as Catholic. Thus, the priority of their upbringing was to keep children (especially those of converted parents) in the Catholic faith or bring them to this faith. Contrary to institutions established in alignment with mercantilism, with “upbringing” focused mainly on work in manufacturing, Hungarian orphanages emphasised religious and general education.<sup>6</sup>

In order to support the elementary school reform that had been facing numerous setbacks in the Kingdom of Hungary, the court in Vienna classified orphanages within the network of elementary schools. Such a concept is rather specific not only within the Habsburg monarchy but also in the whole of Europe. According to school act *Ratio educationis* from 1777, in the centre of each of the *nine* school districts, an orphanage was to be established along a four-class municipal (normal) school, together with a *preparandia* (teachers training institute), and boys in the institutional care were supposed to primarily focus on future employment as teachers at elementary (primary) schools.<sup>7</sup> For orphanages to fulfill goals as expected by the state power, Maria Theresa commanded to prepare a general direction that would help organize and manage all existing as well as newly established institutes in the country. The draft was prepared by the Lieutenancy Council councillor and curator of royal orphanage Ferenc Balassa. The council discussed the proposal on April 4th, 1780, and forwarded it to the Viennese court without further objections. However, Maria Theresa did not approve the proposal until her death in November 1780, and it later became outdated within the context of the reforms of her successor, Joseph II. Despite this development, Balassa’s direction became for several decades a fundamental framework for the existence and activities of orphanages in the Kingdom of Hungary. The document also reflects changing views of the state power representatives on confessional objectives of orphanages at the end of Maria Theresa’s reign. Balassa decreed

<sup>6</sup> For more detailed history of first Hungarian orphanages see KUŠNIRÁKOVÁ, Ingrid. *Za bránami sirotincov: počiatky ústavnej starostlivosti o osirelé deti v Uhorsku*. Bratislava : VEDA vydavateľstvo SAV; Historický ústav SAV, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> MIKLEŠ, Ján – Novacká, Mária. *Ratio educationis 1777 a 1806*. Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1988, p. 74. -here, the original edition of RE (available on web: [https://books.google.sk/books?id=AS2JoAEACAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=sk&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.sk/books?id=AS2JoAEACAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=sk&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false)) as well as a Hungarian translation (Mészáros) could be used/mentioned.

that a confession different from the Catholic denomination no longer posed an obstacle for a child to be admitted to the orphanage. Non-Catholic children were also future citizens of the country, and therefore, it was not desirable to deny them the needed education. In the contemporary context, Balassa interestingly maintained that the cohabitation of protestant children with the Catholic community could help in overcoming religious intolerance, which would serve the interests of the country and its inhabitants. Therefore, in Balassa's view, admitting children to orphanages in order to convert them or force them to do so was to be strictly prohibited. On the other hand, he accepted that chaplains could discreetly indoctrinate children with the basics of the Catholic faith.<sup>8</sup>

In contrast to Maria Theresa, Joseph II did not consider orphanages educational, but exclusively charitable institutions. Besides, after the Patent of Toleration, the recatholization dimension of their existence disappeared. In accordance with his own idea concerning efficient, organized care for the poor, he ordered the reorganization of the royal orphanage and its relocation from Senec to Bratislava in 1785. After the transformation, there were only 50 boys entrusted in its care, while the remaining children were allocated to foster families for an annual fee. In 1787, the sovereign ordered to merge all other Hungarian orphanages with this institute, together with a part of the endowment intended for the care for orphans. As a result, the capacity of the facility increased to 410 places, with 80 in institutionalized care and 330 in foster care. Passing this decision, Joseph II unprecedentedly violated previously untouchable regulations of the founding charters of the foundations. He at least respected the original confessional delimitation, and all places in the institutional and foster care were left for orphans of Catholic confession, although without priority acceptance of those converted. On the other hand, the children entrusted to foster families remained without any religious or general education that were so much emphasised by the founders of the first Hungarian orphanages.<sup>9</sup>

### **Unrealized project of the Debrecen orphanage from 1784**

Decrees from 1785 and 1787 posed a striking contradiction to the concept of institutionalized care for orphaned children from the reign of Maria Theresa, even though Joseph II had first continued the policies of his predecessor. In 1780 – 1783, he paid major attention to the normal elementary school at the Senec orphanage. He also allocated funds to establish an institute in Pécs and ordered to open the orphanage in Debrecen. At the end of 1783, the building had already been purchased and furnished, and

<sup>8</sup> This document is interpreted according to a copy stored in Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár - Országos Levéltár (hereinafter only MNL OL), C 67 Departamentum litterario-politicum 1773 – 1848, 1780, Miscel. n. 13.

<sup>9</sup> KUŠNIRÁKOVÁ, *Za bránami sirotincov*, p. 220-225.

the director of the school district of Oradea Joseph Haller, started working on the project. On January 5th, 1784, he presented the Lieutenancy Council with a document, referring mainly to the example of the Tomášikovo (!) orphanage<sup>10</sup>. The text confirms that he was familiar with Balassa's general direction. This inspiration is apparent in a part related to the confession of admitted children in particular. Fully aligned with Balassa, Haller also recommended admitting orphans from "*tolerated confessions*", as they could also become useful citizens of their homeland, and cohabitation of children of different denominations "under one roof" could contribute to overcoming religious conflicts in the country. The inmates were to attend public schools in the town, which was presented by Haller as an "insurance policy" of sorts against forceful conversion of Protestant children to "*true belief*". Haller also referred to the Patent of Toleration when maintaining that Protestant children were to be enabled to attend their own services on Sunday. Although Haller presented the facility as supraconfessional, without any recatholization objectives, the orphanage built according to his project was a Catholic institution, where the Protestant children were only tolerated, although then at least formally shielded against the pressure to convert.<sup>11</sup> The project presented by J. Haller was probably never even discussed by the Lieutenancy Council, as in the meantime, the sovereign's ideas on the care for orphaned children had changed significantly. During next autumn, J. Haller appealed in vain to the state power representatives that the building had remained vacant and unused. There were already some indications that the orphanage would not be established at all, and the building would be repurposed. In the end, the Lieutenancy Council commanded the city of Debrecen by the official notification from December 13th, 1785, referring to the order of Joseph II, to rent out the building of orphanages of Transtisza district court, as long as the town would not find "*another suitable place*."<sup>12</sup> The district court remained in the building intended for the orphanage for almost eight decades, and thus, the foundation of the orphanage was postponed accordingly. Joseph II's attitude to the establishment of the Debrecen orphanage represents one of numerous examples of how much his reforms lacked concept and thorough thinking.

### **Institutional care of orphaned children in the Kingdom of Hungary in the long 19th century**

The general orphanage in Bratislava, similarly to other Josephian projects, did not survive its creator and was dissolved shortly after the emperor's death. The royal orphanage was preserved in the form obtained after the

<sup>10</sup> The royal orphanage founded in 1763 in Tomášikovo, was relocated to Senec in 1780.

<sup>11</sup> MNL OL, C 80 Departamentum foundationum saecularium 1783 – 1848, 1784, f. 8.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, 1785, f. 8.

transformation in 1786, mainly due to financial reasons. Places in the institutional care were reserved for boys of a noble origin or a particular family background, who were thus predestined to further study. Other children were placed in foster care or as apprentices in workshops. The country's financial difficulties reflected in funding of the facility; therefore, the number of children placed in institutional and foster care was gradually decreasing. After a huge fire in Bratislava in 1800, the orphanage relocated to Győr, where it ceased to exist, de facto in 1809, and de iure in 1815. Revenues from its capital were used for scholarships for children of both genders. Due to the lack of an appropriate building, the Oradea orphanage was not renewed, and therefore, only the foster care was financed from its resources. Facilities in Sopron and Kőszeg were renewed in their original setup, and in accordance with their confessional targets, they kept emphasising the religious education of the children. Also based on the Act n. 23/1791 and 26/1791, all the foundations and orphanages maintained the same confessional affiliation and were still reserved for Catholic children or potential converts.<sup>13</sup>

When Leopold II died in 1792, the period of enlightened reforms was over in the Habsburg monarchy, as well as the state's interest in conceptual management of care for the poor, including the care for orphaned or abandoned children. As the state power lost its interest, both church and lay elites stopped almost completely participating in foundations and support for these facilities. In the first half of 19th century, only three orphanages were established and run by the Catholic Church (namely in Veszprém, Pécs, Žilina), intended for orphans of Catholic confession, or converts (Veszprém). The founder of the orphanage of Žilina, Joseph Vurum, Bishop of Nitra, considered a violation of "*universal principles of Christian charity*" to exclude Protestant children from the facility. Patrons of private endowments could also accept Protestant children, however, they had to cover the expenses for their religious education.<sup>14</sup> Apart from clearly Catholic orphanages, also the first town orphanages (Bratislava, Győr, Pest) were founded in the Kingdom of Hungary in this particular period. They accepted children of all the legal Christian denominations, with neither concealed nor open intention to convert them. Although these facilities presented themselves as supraconfessional, due to the confession of the majority of their inmates, connection to Catholic Church or a chapel, church calendar and fasting practice, they may be considered Catholic institutions.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> KUŠNIRÁKOVÁ, *Za bránami sirotincov*, p. 110n., 151n., 226-230,

<sup>14</sup> In reality, this condition posed almost insurmountable obstacle, as there was no Lutheran Church community in Žilina, and thus a priest would need to commute from one of neighbouring villages.

<sup>15</sup> For more detail see KUŠNIRÁKOVÁ, Ingrid. Ústavná starostlivosť o osirelé deti v prvej polovici 19. storočia. In KUŠNIRÁKOVÁ, Ingrid – MANNOVÁ, Elena (ed.).

As an example of the Debrecen orphanage shall demonstrate below, a debate concerning the advantages and disadvantages of institutional and foster care for orphaned children, which emerged in the German lands in the 1760s, was also present in the Kingdom of Hungary during the whole 19th century. Both sides maintained basically similar arguments throughout the decades, and constantly repeated them. The institutionalized care opponents first suggested that foster care is cheaper and more efficient. The orphanages were criticized due to a high mortality rate as well as quality of the provided care. Bearing in mind the origin and expected future of their inmates, the facilities should not have spoiled them by abundance and comfort. In addition, the critics claimed children leaving institutions lacked necessary skills and industriousness; therefore, craftsmen did not like accepting orphanage boys for their apprentices, and girls often failed as maids and ended up as prostitutes. On the contrary, a foster family could develop an individual child; they could learn from an early age to distinguish good from evil, and were naturally motivated to work. The institutional care proponents argued that foster families, because of their social background and material circumstances, did not guarantee any upbringing or education, and there was always a risk they would use the entrusted children as a source of cheap labour. The level of provided care was questioned as well, as many families lived in health-threatening dwellings. Criteria for foster families were fairly low, and basically, anyone who had requested the children usually got them.<sup>16</sup>

Although it may have seemed that the trend was heading towards supraconfessional Christian facilities, the opposite turned out to be the reality. Within the renewal of religious life after the fall of Bach absolutism, representatives of Protestant church congregations, as well as Jewish religious communities, started addressing an issue of founding their own confessional orphanages. A necessity to establish such facilities was aptly described in an article *Ueber evangelische Waisenhäuser* in the *Evangelisches Wochenblatt* magazine, defending an idea to establish a joint Protestant institution in Pest. To paraphrase this argumentation, God did not and shall not abandon a single poor orphan, although nobody knows how many had already abandoned him. Protestant orphans in the Kingdom of Hungary usually did not lack bread, but religious upbringing, and therefore, they often lost their faith. The article rejected concerns related to building a shared facility for orphans of Lutheran and Calvinist denominations by stating that “*Christian love is a sufficiently solid and wide pillar to construct a*

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“*Zabránit' bahnu morálneho rozkladu*” : starostlivosť o osirelé deti v Uhorsku/na Slovensku do roku 1945. Bratislava : VEDA, vydavateľstvo SAV, 2020, p. 149-167.

<sup>16</sup> Interpreted according to Schmid, Karl Adolf. *Encyklopädie des gesammten Erziehungs- und Unterrichtswesens (...)*. Gotha: Verlag von Rudolf Besser, 1875, p. 242n; BESSER, Leopold. *Beiträge zur Waisenhaus-Frage*. Berlin: Verlag von Julius Springer, 1863, p. 29n.

*common work upon – a memorial for German and Swiss reformers.*<sup>17</sup> While the article referred to a future Protestant orphanage in Pest only in a very poetic and careful manner, with respect to the foundation of a similarly oriented institution in Vienna, the newspaper openly welcomed the idea as it would offer salvation for Lutheran orphans via Christian upbringing. The editorial board maintained the time was right “*to rectify substantial damage that has been caused in our countries in the last 70 years by allowing the majority of Lutheran orphans to be lost for our precious church.*”<sup>18</sup>

Real development in terms of institutional care for orphaned children in the Kingdom of Hungary commenced in the last three decades of the 19th century, when 70 new facilities were established across the country. It was a rather unusually rapid growth, as between 1749 and 1870, there were no more than 30 orphanages founded.<sup>19</sup> Apart from social and economic reasons, contemporary secularization and the dismantling of the residues of the confessional state of the early Modern Age substantially aided the development of orphanages. Legislation of the Hungarian government related to schooling, marriages, and the upbringing of children from the cross-confessional marriages was creating new conditions, for existence and operation of the Catholic Church in particular, which reacted by increasing activity in education, health, or social care. Other confessions active in the country were also attempting to establish and run their own educational, health care, or charitable facilities. Furthermore, this process, sometimes also labelled the second confessionalization, included increased interest of ecclesiastical and secular elites in founding confessionally defined orphanages that provided their inmates with upbringing and education in accordance with their expectations.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the progressing secularization of society, even in the late 19th century, confession was perceived as an important feature of self-identification of an individual, and religion was considered a basis for upbringing and educating children. All the orphanages, regardless of their founder or confessional affiliation, emphasised religious and moral education of their inhabitants, while expecting them to fulfill duties related to the worship practice. This practice (everyday prayers, attendance at services, receiving

<sup>17</sup> Ueber evangelische Waisenhäuser. In *Evangelisches Wochenblatt*, 2, 1. 4. 1858, n. 13, p. 199-200.

<sup>18</sup> Die christlich-evangelische Waisenpflege in Oesterreich. In *Evangelisches Wochenblatt*, 4, 22. 11. 1860, n. 47, p. 762.

<sup>19</sup> *Statistisches Jahrbuch für Ungarn 1888. Magyar statisztikai évkönyv 1888.* Buda: Országos Magyar Kir. Statisztikai Hivatal, 1890, p. 200-207; *Ungarisches statistisches Jahrbuch.* Neue Folge VI., 1900. Budapest: Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 1902, p. 371.

<sup>20</sup> KUŠNIRÁKOVÁ, Ingrid. Ústavná forma zaopatrenia osirelých detí v kontexte nacionálnych a konfesijných zápasov druhej polovice 19. storočia. In KUŠNIRÁKOVÁ – MANNOVÁ, “*Zabrániť babnu morálneho rozkladu*”, p. 180-181.

sacraments, and observing fasting), as well as the culture of feasts and commemorative events were usually adapted to the dominant confession at a particular facility, and children of minor confessions were exposed to direct or indirect pressure to change their denomination. In a predominantly Catholic country, Catholic orphanages were continuously perceived as a tool to recatholicize non-Catholic orphans. In the case of the Protestant or Jewish facilities, religious objectives took precedence over charitable ones. Elites of these confessions favoured own orphanages in order to provide orphans upbringing and education in accordance with the confession in order to prevent their growing up in the Catholic environment, which could lead to their converting.<sup>21</sup>

### **Conflicts concerning the definition of the orphanage of Debrecen in the context of religious situation development in the Kingdom of Hungary, in the early 19th century**

The Patent of Toleration issued by Joseph II and the Act n. 26/1791 represented a significant, albeit only the first, step to full freedom of worship. Although the Protestants obtained the right to worship and practice their beliefs, the Catholic Church had maintained its prerogative as the state religion. However, some of the provisions under the Act n. 26/1791 were perceived as unacceptable, even though the Protestants saw this legal norm only as a beginning of the journey towards reclaiming the religious freedom as guaranteed by the Treaties of Vienna (1606) and Linz (1645). On the other hand, the trend set by the state power was quite the contrary. Numerous contradicting issues were being solved in favour of Catholics thanks to the sovereign's decrees or official notifications issued by the Lieutenancy Council, where prominent positions were held by the Catholic episcopate.<sup>22</sup> Legal as well as everyday practice conflicts were related mainly to circumstances and conditions of contracting mixed marriages, closely interconnected confessional affiliation, and religious upbringing of potential children from these marriages. A duty to participate in the six-week-long instruction, which was required for a person wishing to convert to Protestantism, was often misused by Catholic priests to pose various obstacles and cause delays.

Protestant church representatives objected against violation of their rights by petitions addressed to either the sovereign or the palatine. They did not present these petitions to the diet, as it was not deemed tactical, due to concerns that once the religious issue had been discussed at the diet, the Catholic majority would abuse this situation to preserve the status quo or even enforce further restrictions against non-Catholic churches and

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem, p. 184-191.

<sup>22</sup> ŠOLTÉS, Peter. Občianske zrovnoprávenie alebo náboženský indiferentizmus? Problém zmiešaných manželstiev v kontexte sekularizácie Uhorska v 30. a 40. rokoch 19. storočia. In *Forum Historiae*, 2015, vol. 9, n. 1, p. 41-42.

their worshippers. The topic of position and rights of Protestant worshippers was first discussed by the diet as late as 1830, under the influence of the legal emancipation of Irish Catholics in Great Britain. However, the Upper chamber swept the religious agenda off the table and postponed it for the following diet. During the sessions of the diet in 1832 – 1836 and 1839 – 1840, a widely acceptable model of churches functioning in the society and the regulation of their mutual relations became one of the crucial topics of discussions of both chambers. The Lower chamber of the parliament presented a proposal of an act on the freedom of worship for Protestants, but the so-called long diet (1832 – 1836) did not pass the legislation due to the rejection of the Upper chamber, and subsequently due to obstructions posed by the court in Vienna. A compromise approved by both chambers as well as the Viennese court was only achieved by the diet opened by Emperor Ferdinand V on May 18th, 1843. However, the Act n. 4/1843-44 did not mean full emancipation of all Christian denominations in the country; this took place only at the revolutionary diet in 1848. The Catholic Church lost its status as the state religion as well as a legally superior or more advantageous position to other Christian denominations by the Act n. 20/1848.<sup>23</sup>

A brief description of the religious situation in the Kingdom of Hungary since the Hungarian Diet approved the Patent of Toleration in 1791 until the emancipation of Protestant churches in 1848 reveals that the court in Vienna, aided by Hungarian conservative forces, including Catholic dignitaries, staunchly defended the prerogatives of the Catholic Church as the state religion. Simultaneously, while considering the domestic political stability and religious reconciliation in the country, the court had to at least formally insist on observing the legal rights of Protestants, and respect growing demands of emerging liberal opposition concerning religious (as well as civil) equality. This ambivalent approach of the Viennese court was fully reflected in a decision process concerning the confessional affiliation of the foundation, which was determined by Maria Theresa in 1774 for an orphanage in Debrecen.

After 1789, or 1790 respectively, turbulent development hit the Habsburg monarchy, together with the whole of Europe. Therefore, the issue of the Debrecen orphanage foundation remained insignificant for a long time. The Lieutenancy Council had sporadically revisited this topic; however, the authorities in the Kingdom of Hungary and Vienna were pressurized by Oradea Bishop Joseph Vurum<sup>24</sup> to tackle it more thoroughly only as late as 1826. According to the balance sheet of the Debrecen

<sup>23</sup> For Hungarian Diet agenda on the position of Protestant denominations in the country see: HORVÁTH, Michael. *Fünfundzwanzig Jahre aus der Geschichte Ungarns von 1823-1848*. Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1867.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph Vurum (1763 – 1838) – bishop of Székesfehérvár (since 1816), Oradea (since 1821) and Nitra (since 1827).

magistrate, presented to the Lieutenancy Council in the same year, the foundation of Maria Theresa was already valued at 125,202 florins. As the orphanage already owned the building, the Lieutenancy Council ruled that this sum was sufficient to establish and run the orphanage. By an official notification from April 10th, 1827, the Council ordered the magistrate of Debrecen to coordinate with the Bishop of Oradea and prepare a project and budget for 14 Catholic orphans, and subsequently present these documents at the council for approval. The municipal authority objected, though, that they had found no reference in decrees of Maria Theresa that would exclude orphans from being admitted to the orphanage on the basis of their confession. Therefore, they asked the Lieutenancy Council that all city inhabitants would profit from the foundation, as loyal subjects of their sovereign. The Lieutenancy Council responded with an official notification from August 1827, which rejected the town's petition, referring to clauses 32 and 53 of their order from January 26th, 1775, and insisted on the Catholic character of the orphanage. Since the town did not respond, the order was reissued on April 28th, 1829, and again on March 30th, 1830. The official notification from September 21st, 1830, threatened to suspend the wages of the municipal body representatives and commanded them to present the required documentation within the period of 15 days. The municipal authority obliged, although simultaneously, the town representatives decided to take advantage of the presence of Emperor Francis II at the diet and, via their diet delegates, ask him to terminate the council's decision, as it contradicted the will of Maria Theresa. The emperor was petitioned to run the foundation in accordance with the original purpose. Since the sovereign departed from the diet prematurely, the delegates submitted their petition to the Hungarian Chancellor Adam Reviczky, who forwarded the document to the Hungarian Court Chancery in Vienna. In addition, the municipal authority of Debrecen informed the Lieutenancy Council in a letter from December 4th, 1830, about the petition and demanded that the council maintain the status quo until the decision was announced.<sup>25</sup>

The Hungarian Court Chancery reacted to the petition by requesting conflict-related information from the Lieutenancy Council.<sup>26</sup> The council responded extensively on March 1st, 1831, referring to mandates of Maria Theresa from 1774 and 1776, which concerned the establishment of the orphanage and religious education of city orphans. They used the mandates to argue that the orphanage was exclusively intended for orphans of the Catholic creed; however, the facility could also admit non-Catholic children if "*such children were entrusted in its care.*" The municipal authority of Debrecen objected not only to the confessional definition of the

<sup>25</sup> MNL OL, A 39 Acta generalia 1770 – 1848 (hereinafter only as A 39), 1830: 14 067, 1831: 3764.

<sup>26</sup> MNL OL, A 39, 1830:14 067.

orphanage, but also against institutional upbringing of orphaned children as such. Destitute, tutorless children were placed in foster care by the city, and such a decision was also proposed for Maria Theresa's foundation. In this manner, expenses for building reconstruction as well as overhead costs would be eliminated, and thus, by preserving resources, even more children could be supported. Furthermore, any religious discrimination would be avoided as well. Secondly, the municipal authority argued that the district court resided in the building intended for the orphanage, and there was no other building suitable for this purpose in the city. The Lieutenancy Council considered these arguments a mere obstruction, aiming to terminate the orphanage establishment. As the council deemed it its duty to ensure the will of founders was fulfilled, it instructed the royal commissary in the town and the Bishop of Oradea to oversee the establishment of the orphanage that would raise children in the Catholic faith, more so that the orphans placed in foster care to non-Catholics, which could threaten their Catholic affiliation. Although the magistrate presented the required documentation, it kept opposing the establishment of the orphanage. They used an opportunity when the sovereign attended the diet in Bratislava and instructed their representatives to present their petition to the emperor. The Lieutenancy Council concluded its report by stating that Maria Theresa's decrees clearly declare that the orphanage was intended for Catholic orphans, and non-Catholic orphans were to be accepted only under the condition of mandatory Catholic education. The council recommended rejecting the petition of Debrecen's magistrate as unsubstantiated. The royal commissary was to be commanded to complete the process, with the assistance of the Bishop of Oradea.<sup>27</sup>

The conflict concerning the confessional character of the Debrecen orphanage became a part of the Hungarian Court Chancery agenda on April 9th, 1831. Charles Pauly, a clerk in charge of this issue, agreed with an interpretation of the Lieutenancy Council, as well as three other councillors, namely Thaddeus Kussevich, Bishop Johannes Horvath, and Gabriel Keglevich. Other councillors of the office presumed that the decree concerning mandatory Catholic education of children dependent on public charity could not be connected with religious education in the orphanage. The councillors maintained that the mixed committee that had been assessing proposals of Commissary M. Forgách for solving the political and economic agenda of the city, recommended the sovereign to accept the offered 30,000 florins and use these resources to establish an orphanage. However, neither the protocol issued by the committee nor the mandate of Maria Theresa from November 1774 stated that the facility should serve only Catholic orphans and exclude non-Catholic ones. Referring back to the decree of Maria Theresa concerning the establishment of an independent

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<sup>27</sup> MNL OL, A 39, 1831 : 3764.

spital in the city, the Debrecen magistrate proposed in 1775 that the same approach should be applied in the case of the orphanage, and for Catholic and Protestant children, separate facilities would be set up. The state power reacted by ruling that the capital was to be used to establish the institution for Catholic orphans; however, non-Catholic orphans could be accepted once they had been “entrusted” to the orphanage. The majority of the councillors interpreted this decision in the manner that there had been no ruling concerning the establishment of a separate facility for non-Catholic orphans, and their admittance to the orphanage was not conditioned by the mandatory Catholic education. If Maria Theresa’s mandate from 1776 had not excluded the non-Catholic orphans from being admitted to the facility, the supraconfessional character of the institution would have been supported also by the Act n. 26/1791, stating that in order to preserve religious peace in the country, the current proprietary situation within foundations was to be respected. In reality, it meant the Catholic foundations were kept by Catholics and non-Catholic ones by non-Catholics, always in accordance with provisions of their founding charters or with the will of their founder. Since the Protestants had freely used the foundation of Maria Theresa for many years, the majority of councillors of the Hungarian Court Chancery, also bearing in mind “new” religious legislation, considered it impossible or unsuitable introduce Catholic education of non-Catholic orphans *ex post*. Following the example of military academies or an institute for children with impaired hearing in Vác, they proposed to establish an institution in Debrecen where children could be raised according to the confession of their parents.<sup>28</sup> The Hungarian Court Chancery forwarded the file to Emperor Francis II, who postponed his decision in this respect indefinitely.

Due to an absenting decision of the sovereign, the Hungarian Court Chancery had to repeatedly revisit the issue of the confessional definition of the Debrecen orphanage. The bishops of Oradea, supported by the Lieutenantcy Council, requested to establish, from the foundation of Maria Theresa, the facility intended exclusively for Catholic orphans or with mandatory Catholic education. The opposing party, the municipal authority of Debrecen, insisted on financing institutional care of orphans regardless of their confession. Both conflicting parties maintained basically the same positions throughout the years. The Hungarian Court Chancery persisted in its stance, despite the refusal of the Viennese court and Hungarian conservative circles, on the emancipation of Protestant denominations from the Catholic Church. Until 1845, the chancery repeatedly urged the sovereign to decide on the matter in accordance with their proposal from April 1831.<sup>29</sup> Curiously, once the Act n. 4/1843-44, had been passed and

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>29</sup> Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (hereinafter only ÖStA HHStA), Staatsrat, 1835: 6034, 1836: 848, 1836: 3865, 1837: 5764, 1838:

improved the status of Protestants in the country, while relations between Hungarian Catholic episcopate and the court in Vienna was going sour, the Hungarian Court Chancery significantly changed their opinion, even though it shall be noted that personnel structure of the office did not substantially alter in 1844 – 1845, and in both cases a Titular Bishop Anton Karner was in charge of this issue.

László Bémer was appointed the Bishop of Oradea in 1843. Once he probably got more acquainted with the situation in his bishopric, he appealed to the Lieutenantcy Council in summer 1844 to reject in alignment with the Act n. 23/1791 and § 12 Act n. 26/1791, the petition of the Debrecen municipal authority to extend Maria Theresa's foundation to Protestant orphans. He interpreted the Lieutenantcy Council's official notifications from January 26th, 1775, and September 9th, 1776 as follows: Maria Theresa established her foundation solely for the Catholics of Debrecen, specifically for their impoverished orphans. The Lieutenantcy Council passed the request to the sovereign, and referred to their own petition from 1830 to require the emperor to "pull the foundation intended for Catholic orphans out of its current state of uncertainty" and to order to set up this controversial orphanage in accordance with the will of its foundress. A Hungarian Court Chancery councillor and clerk in charge of this issue A. Karner proposed to the sovereign to rule concerning the bishop's request in accordance with the chancery's petition from April 9th, 1831, and the board of the chancery approved his proposal at the meeting on August 16th, 1844.<sup>30</sup> A year later, in autumn 1845, Bishop of Oradea, L. Bémer, addressed yet another request to the Lieutenantcy Council related to the orphanage of Debrecen, stating that on August 25th, 1845, an infant school was established in Debrecen, attended by 23 children of Calvinist creed aged 4 to 6 years old. Bémer criticized the fact that although Catholic burghers participated in its establishment and the facility was to be supra-confessional by the order of the municipal authority, in his opinion, there was no hope that there would be a Catholic teacher employed there, nor Catholic children admitted to it, to be raised and educated in their faith from an early age. The bishop proposed to set up a Catholic infant school within the Catholic orphanage, created from the foundation of Maria Theresa. In addition, he urged the state authorities to ban Catholic children from being admitted to the newly-established town infant school. At the proposal of the clerk A. Karner (!), the Hungarian Court Chancery stated in their stance to the bishop's petition that Maria Theresa's will to establish a "Catholic orphanage" in Debrecen had remained unfulfilled, since the municipal authority of Debrecen that was in charge of the foundation,

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4383, 1838: 5073; MNL OL, A 39, 1835: 13518, 1835: 15449, 1837: 12 820, 1838: 12624.

<sup>30</sup> ÖStA HHSa, Kabinettsarchiv Staatsrat, 1844: 4380; MNL OL, A 39, 1844: 12 530.

paying no heed to the will of the empress nor valid legislation, wished to accept also Protestant orphans. The controversial issue was presented to the emperor, together with the view from the Hungarian Court Chancery, on April 9th, 1831, and the decision was exclusively up to him. In contradiction to the petition from 1831, which the chancery itself referred to, they claimed that the bishops of Oradea zealously demanded of the sovereign to liberate the foundation from an illegal request of the Debrecen municipal authority, and the pleas had been passed by the chancery to the emperor in 1837, 1837, and 1844. The chancery repeated the procedure again, as there was a threat for the foundation to be split, which would be illegal as well as dangerous for all the Catholic endowments in the country. The Hungarian Court Chancery, “*out of responsibility for administration of pious endowments*”, thus asked the sovereign to confirm, in accordance with the will of Maria Theresa, that the foundation was intended for Catholic orphans and decree to use it to provide for them. This amended opinion of the Hungarian Court Chancery’s members did not change the stance of the Viennese court, though, as it kept abstaining from any decisions, and subsequently dropped the file *ad acta*.<sup>31</sup>

### **Francis Joseph I and his decision to split the foundation**

The revolutionary years 1848 – 1849 and pertaining events, yet again marginalized the issue of the Debrecen orphanage establishment. According to contemporary press, it was first re-addressed by János Csorba, a burgo-master of Debrecen, in 1854. His petition to the Viennese court has not been preserved; however, it may be assumed that he might have proposed to the state authorities to establish a facility for both Catholic and Protestant orphans. Most probably, the proposal left no significant impact on the court’s next actions. After decades of hesitations and postponements, the Viennese court finally passed a decision on the orphanage of Debrecen in 1859, shortly after the Protestant Patent had been issued (on September 1st, 1859), in accordance with the contemporary politics towards the Protestant denominations in the Kingdom of Hungary. Emperor Franz Joseph I decreed to establish the facility on December 8th, without further delay, and admit orphans of all Christian denominations: Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist, and ensure appropriate religious education to all.<sup>32</sup> Similar to the Protestant Patent, this decree did not meet the expectations of the Viennese court nor calmed down the tense situation related to Hungarian Protestant churches. The decision to accept Protestant orphans at the orphanage in Debrecen did not put an end to decades lasting conflicts concerning its confessional definition.

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<sup>31</sup> ÖStA HHStA, Staatsrat, 1845: 6645; MNL OL, A 39, 1845: 18355.

<sup>32</sup> Szűcs, István. *Szabad királyi Debreczen város történelme: A legrégibb időktől I. Rákóczy György fejedelem haláláig*. Debreczen : Szerző, 1871, p. 1044-1045.

The mandate of Franz Joseph I from 1859 removed the greatest obstacle to the orphanage establishment; however, it did not target how the orphanage should be set up and run. These questions were to be answered by a committee chaired by the Governor of the North Bihar County, Márton Váradi Szabó, established on January 19th, 1860, by the administrative district of Oradea (department of the Lieutenancy Council in Oradea). There were other members of the committee, namely Oradea canon and Titular Bishop Miklós Fogarassy, a representative of royal and imperial financial administration, Károly Csáthy, and a burgomaster, János Szőlóssy. A town councillor, Gyula Leidenfrost, was appointed its correspondence clerk. The committee met on June 5th and July 3rd, 1860, to conclude that it served no purpose to raise children of various confessions in one facility and thus proposed to split the foundation as an inevitable solution. The burgomaster J. Szőlóssy suggested dividing the capital of the foundation into half, regardless of the number of respective worshippers, with equal shares for both Catholics and Protestants of both denominations. The existing building was to be given to the Catholics, whereas the plot of land was to be given to the Protestants. The newly established foundations were to remain under the administration of the town of Debrecen. Representatives of both confessional parties were to prepare statutes of their institutions and present these documents to state authorities for an approval. The orphanages were to be primarily intended for children from Debrecen, while vacancies could be offered to orphans from the countryside, with a priority for villages closer to the town. The sovereign approved the committee's recommendations on January 5th, 1861, and the city was notified via a decree issued by the Hungarian Lieutenancy on August, 14th, 1861. Due to the division of the foundation's property, a special committee was to be set up, chaired by an appointed councillor of the Hungarian Lieutenancy. The decree was, in addition, sent to the Superintendent of the Reformed Church, Péter Balog, instructing him to prepare a project for the orphanage, together with an Lutheran Church Superintendent Károly Máday. Subsequently, they were to send the proposal to the Lieutenancy for approval.<sup>33</sup>

During the process of discussing the foundation and manner of the Debrecen orphanage, Emperor Franz Joseph I issued the October Diploma, which initiated significant constitutional and administrative changes in the whole monarchy, the Kingdom of Hungary, as well as the town as such. The municipal authority of Debrecen, appointed by the state authorities, was replaced by elected autonomous bodies that considered the split of Maria Theresa's foundation into a Catholic and Protestant

<sup>33</sup> SZÜCS, *Szabad királyi Debreczen város történelme*, p. 1044-1045; Sz. k. Debreczen város árvái javára Mária Terézia ő felsége által alapított árvatartó pénztár ügyének jelenlegi állása s történelmi előadása. In Hortobágy, vol. 1, n. 12, 18. 7. 1862, p. 91-95; *Emlékirata*, p. 20n.

part a violation of the town's rights. In an extensive filing from October 2nd, 1861<sup>34</sup>, the town council objected against the very composition of the committee which had proposed the division of the foundation to the sovereign. The town authorities did not consider J. Szőlőssy and Gy. Leidenfrost, appointed by the state power, to be legitimate representatives of the town which was also attested by the fact that they had agreed with a solution that had contradicted a long-term stance held by Debrecen. While the town council maintained that the town was not represented in the committee, the Bishopric of Oradea was unwarrantedly represented. According to the town's interpretation, the foundation was intended for town orphans, and not orphans of a particular confession. The further existence of the orphanage was to be decided by the state authorities in cooperation with the local government, entitled to represent all the confessions in the town. If, theoretically, the whole issue had been addressed from a confessional point of view, representatives of local non-Catholic churches should have been invited to participate in negotiations; however, this did not occur. Based on this reasoning, the town concluded that a decree based on recommendations of the illegally assembled committee was to be terminated. The final solution of the 85-year-long conflict was to be built upon a proposal issued by the constitutionally elected city administration.

The next part of the filing included the town council's own "legal opinion" concerning foundation circumstances as well as its confessional definition. The town argued that its representatives offered the capital of 30,000 florins as a "*sacrifice to the homeland*" and not a personal gift for the sovereign. The fact that Maria Theresa entrusted the administration of the foundation to the town supposedly served as proof of this statement. Within the existing legal or constitutional framework, the municipal authority could not donate money, and then, the sovereign could not use the money contrary to the law, in this case, by establishing a facility exclusively for one confession, at the expense of the others. The town provided the sovereign with 30,000 florins to be "*at her disposal*"; however, according to this interpretation, it did not mean she was free to use the funds at her will to establish an institute for Catholic orphans. A notion "*at her disposal*" was to be understood and interpreted within a constitutional framework, and therefore, Maria Theresa could use the funds only in accordance with the valid legislation. If, purely hypothetically, Maria Theresa had been able to use the money freely, the town representatives doubted that she would have wished to trigger (justifiable) outrage of the Protestant majority in the city while having established a foundation for Catholic children exclusively. In addition, the municipal authority yet again repeated the argument that no official document pointing to the sovereign's intention to establish an

<sup>34</sup> The filing of the city council from 2. 10. 1861 was published in segments in a local periodical *Hortobágy*. *Hortobágy*, vol.1, n. 12, 18. 7. 1862, p. 91-95, 13. sz., 25. 7. 1862, p. 99-102, 14. sz., 1. 8. 1862, p. 107-109.

orphanage solely for Catholic orphans had been preserved since the time when the foundation had been set. Her will was subsequently twisted, in the opinion of town representatives, due to the religious bigotry of “*dark past times*”. Therefore, they maintained, with a lack of discovered sources confirming the orphanage was clearly intended for children of a particular confession, or confessions respectively, it was obvious that all the Debrecen orphans could be admitted to the facility, regardless of their confession.

The proposal from the “*anti-constitutional period*” ruling that the foundation should be split between Catholic and two Protestant confessions did not only contradict the will of the foundress but also the numerous representations of individual confessions in the town and the numbers of their orphans. Otherwise, some children in need would be rejected due to their confession, or their church would have to take care of them. Should the foundation stay undivided, all the orphans could be taken care of. Should the foundation be split among individual confessions, the only just criterion was to be a number of worshippers of respective churches. The city representatives deemed it unacceptable that other confessions had been omitted at the division, namely, Jews, Greek Catholics, and Orthodox faithful. Besides, there were more Greek as well as Orthodox Catholics than Lutherans, and they constituted the poorest layers of the population; thus, they were more dependent on charity. The town authorities believed that the committee members favoured some groups of the population at the expense of other groups, or they were unable to “*abandon binding shackles of confessionalism*.” Therefore, the “*constitutionally elected*” administration was obliged to attain the termination of this proposal and promote a solution that would be aligned with principles of religious equality, as declared by the emperor, too. This was to be achieved only if the original objective of the foundation were renewed, aiming at all Debrecen orphans, regardless of their confession. With a reference to “*all Debrecen orphans*”, the town denied the opinion of the committee that the foundation had also been intended for orphaned children from neighbouring villages. The town representatives maintained that the mandate of Maria Theresa from November 1774 was translated incorrectly, and Latin words *vicinae partes* did not refer to neighbouring villages, but extensive wastelands around Debrecen.

The filing of the Debrecen town council concluded with a proposal on how the foundation of Maria Theresa should be used sensibly and justly. Although Debrecen representatives criticized exclusively the committee that had suggested the division of the foundation and thoroughly avoided any criticism towards Franz Joseph I, who had approved the committee’s proposal, they did not abstain from reproaching Maria Theresa. In their opinion, the presented argumentation clearly demonstrated that the sovereign established the town foundation to provide for orphans of Debrecen. As town authorities were best aware of local circumstances as well as the

needs of local orphans, it was the “*queen’s duty*” to demand from the Debrecen representatives to prepare a proposal on how to utilize the foundation, and not to order an establishment of an orphanage by unclear definitions that had resulted in almost a century of lasting conflicts. Since Maria Theresa failed to meet the obligation, the town assumed this responsibility. As multiple times before, the presented proposal rejected the very idea of founding an orphanage and argued in favour of foster care for orphaned and abandoned children. They considered such care cheaper and more efficient, as while saving the costs necessary to operate an orphanage, it enabled them to provide for more children. Allegedly, experience confirmed that institutional care could mark children negatively for life, and life in an orphanage was unbearable for poor children in particular. Although they rejected the committee as well as its proposals, they agreed with the opinion that raising children of various confessions in one facility is impossible without endangering their religious sentiments. With respect to a long-term practice of placing children in foster families, they maintained that it yielded better and cheaper results than institutionalized education. Children could grow up in a family-like environment, and there were checks in place to ensure that, should the children be neglected, they would be taken away from their foster parents and placed elsewhere. Thousands of Debrecen children were brought up in this proven practice, and later became skillful craftsmen, or even distinguished personalities.

An extensive file concluded with a statement that the foundation belonged to the town and thus it was to be administered by the town; the state was to intervene only in a limited manner. Help was to be provided regardless of the confession, but only to orphans from the city, and children were to be rather entrusted to foster families than placed in a newly established institution. The foster families were obliged to provide upbringing and care appropriate for their age and social status. Such a solution was deemed the most suitable and just, as the help and support could be provided to all the orphans in the city. As they summed up, Maria Theresa would also certainly wished for meeting the objectives of her foundation after 85 long years.

### **A conflict concerning the character of the Debrecen orphanage as part of the public debate**

The filing to the sovereign on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1861, was published in segments in the local periodical *Hortobágy* during the following summer. Therefore, an administrative issue gradually became a part of the public discourse. The “Catholic party” reacted at the end of 1862 with an article in the weekly *Religio*. Its author started with a short historical digression, emphasising that Maria Theresa intended to establish a Catholic orphanage in Debrecen. However, a Protestant (Calvinist) municipal authority was trying to modify the objectives over a long period to transform it into

a supraconfessional town orphanage fund. A decision to split the foundation into a Catholic and Protestant part was interpreted as a demonstration of brotherly love from the Catholic side, which was received by the town of Debrecen with objections instead of thankfulness. The article's author stated that although the filing from October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1861, was prepared by a "constitutionally" elected administrative body, its content was full of lies as well as claims contradicting the existing legislation of the Kingdom of Hungary. In his interpretation of the Tripartitum, rulers of the Kingdom of Hungary were entitled and had the power to donate the state property or use it for charitable purposes. Quite the contrary, it was the town that failed to adhere to the Acts n. 23 and 26/1791, when it attempted to use Maria Theresa's funds at their will, and amend the original objective of the foundation. If the city was truly trying to explain the history of the foundation, they should have mentioned Maria Theresa's decree concerning mandatory Catholic education of all children reliant on public charity, as well as her mandate from 1776, which decreed to establish a facility for Catholic orphans in Debrecen, and the 30,000 florins provided by the town to be used for this very purpose. The author concluded that party (confessional) interests could lead even the authorities adverting to their constitutional origin, astray, from the road of truth and justice. The filing addressed to the sovereign by the Debrecen town council was not based upon the constitution of the Kingdom of Hungary, but rather on "modern liberalism" that had twisted actual historical right.<sup>35</sup>

In 1869, the town commenced an initiative to present the conflict concerning Maria Theresa's foundation at the Hungarian Diet, and thus it yet again resonated in the public space. For this occasion, the city prepared an extensive proposal, objecting against "unlawful division of the orphan fund and a violent transfer of its part (valued at approximately 140,000) to the custody of the Bishopric of Oradea." The document was also published in print.<sup>36</sup> The Roman Catholic church committee, established to found and run the orphanage, responded by printing a brochure.<sup>37</sup> The text quoted in

<sup>35</sup> Előleges nyilatkozat a debreczeni „Hortobágy” című hetilap 12., 13., 14. számában megjelent ily fölratú cikkekre/Oral statement on this issue appeared in three parts in the weekly published periodical *Hortobágy*: Sz. k. Debreczenváros árvái javára Mária Theresiaó Fölsége által alapított árvarattó pénzttár ügyének jelenlegi állása s történelmi előadása. In *Religio*, 1862, 2. félév, 52. szám, p. I-IV.

<sup>36</sup> *Az 1869-dik évi ápril hó 20-dikára hirdetett Országgyűllés Képviselelházi írományok*, III. kötet. Pest: 1870, p. 195; *Az 1869-dik évi ápril hó 20-dikára hirdetett Országgyűllés Képviselelházi naplója*, IV. kötet. Pest: 1870, p. 357. I have not managed to find an issue of this print as of now, however, it may be presumed the city cited the same or similar arguments as in its filing to the sovereign on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1861.

<sup>37</sup> *Emlékirata a debreczeni rom. kath. egyházközségi bizottmánynak, a debreczeni árvarattó pénzttalap ügyében*. Debreczen : Nyomatott a város könyvnyomdájában, 1870.

both the Latin original and Hungarian translation excerpts from the Lieutenancy Council's official notifications from the 1770s as well as from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, which were related to the establishment of an orphanage in Debrecen. Documents were picked and interpreted in order to provide a confirmation for Maria Theresa's intention to establish a Catholic orphanage in Debrecen and to point to confessional obstructions posed by the town when it came to fulfilling the will of the foundress. The foundation division into a Catholic and Protestant part was presented as the obligingness of the Catholic side to share with their Protestant fellow faithful half of their righteous property. Authors of the file doubted the frequently repeated argument of their counterparts that the division was unlawful, as the decision had been made during the anti-constitutional period, as at the same time, many lawful rulings had been passed and numerous contracts concluded, and it was impossible to terminate or declare null and void all of them retrospectively. Besides, the split of the foundation was confirmed by the emperor as an heir and a successor of Maria Theresa.

The next part of the file argued against the claim of the town representatives that the preferred foster care for orphaned and abandoned children was more apt and efficient than institutional care. The file authors maintained that maybe in the past, it had been possible, even right, to place children for a minor fee in poor families. After a mandatory, six-year-long school education, the foster care system turned out to be dysfunctional, though, even detrimental to the correct upbringing of children. For 20 to 30 florins annually, a foster family could not provide a child with board, clothing, or school supplies. Thus, it was questionable whether these children were not further abused to work or even forced into beggary. Furthermore, the authors questioned whether the foster families could be inspected sufficiently in order to avoid negligence towards entrusted children. On the contrary, they considered the upbringing of children in the Debrecen orphanage (established in 1863) transparent and publicly inspectable, therefore any negligence was out of question. They did not deem the foundation division unjust, although there were 38,000 reformed worshippers in the city and only five thousand Catholics. They simply did not believe that their sharing with their "brothers in faith" (!) should reflect numbers nor legal entitlement. When the foundation had been set up, there were no Jews nor Greek Catholics in the city yet; therefore, the authors of the file believed they had no claims in this respect.

They also refused a statement that Maria Theresa's decision to establish a Catholic orphanage in Debrecen questioned her true maternal care for impoverished orphans in any respect, as Catholic confession was the state religion at the time of the foundation. The orphans reliant on public charity were to be naturally brought up in the Catholic faith. Maria Theresa herself was a devoted Catholic, and during her reign, the Debrecen Catholics were rather poor and left to their own devices. In the rich town

of Debrecen, orphans of the reformed confession always found sufficient support, and the town was also later obliged to provide an appropriate volume of funds. Besides, Hungarian kings were entitled to utilize the state property for charitable objectives, and Maria Theresa was free to use the money given by the town of Debrecen.

Once these documents and the foundation circumstances had been investigated in an “unbiased manner”, the committee concluded that Maria Theresa aimed at establishing a Catholic orphanage in Debrecen. She permitted to accept also non-Catholic children, although only under the condition of mandatory Catholic education. The magistrate of Debrecen, therefore, considered the foundation purely Catholic and kept attempting to change this setup. They perceived an idea to provide for all abandoned orphans equally as a beautiful and noble concept, and therefore wished for it to be implemented in practice, wherever necessary. Provided the foundation was intended for a specific confession, and its confessional character was altered without their founder or appointed caretaker being made aware of this situation, it was considered a law violation. However, in the case of the foundation for Debrecen orphanage, the foundress clearly outlined its targets in 1776. Besides, the sovereign, as her heir and successor, decided about the division, in agreement with the Bishop of Oradea, representing both the Debrecen Catholics and the town council. The file authors maintained that it would be hardly possible to come up with a more splendid and convenient way to preserve peace than to split the foundation into the Catholic and Protestant parts. Therefore, they expected that once the issue was revised, after an impartial assessment of the presented charters and arguments, the split would be approved by the current constitutional government.

### **Establishing Debrecen orphanages**

Town representatives' objections against the division of Maria Theresa's foundation that were presented to both the sovereign and the Hungarian Diet, did not further influence the next development of the foundation. As the town refused to enforce the emperor's ruling, a royal commissary was sent to Debrecen in June 1862 to execute the division of the foundation. The commissary divided the capital of 237,620 florins and 40 kreutzers into two halves. In addition, apart from the money, the Catholics obtained the house that had been purchased for the orphanage by the city in 1780, while the Protestant confessions were given its plot of land. Protestant churches representatives who were hoping for the emperor's change of heart did not accept their part, which was subsequently still supervised by the town.<sup>38</sup> On the contrary, once the almost eighty-year-long conflict was formally concluded, the Catholic party immediately proceeded to establish its own orphanage. A committee chaired by the town parish priest Károly Huzly

<sup>38</sup> SZÜCS, *Szabad királyi Debreczen város történelme*, p. 1045.

was appointed by the diocese Bishop of Oradea, Ferenc Szaniszló, on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1862, with the aim to set up and operate the orphanage. The facility was ceremonially opened on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1863. The committee ran the institution autonomously, only presenting the Bishop of Oradea with annual reports and balance sheets.<sup>39</sup> Apart from the Catholic orphanage, which accepted inmates of both genders, an orphanage for girls opened in the city in 1869. This facility was established and operated by a female charitable association. Despite the lack of defined confessional affiliation, the girls were almost exclusively Calvinist.<sup>40</sup> The last orphanage to open in Debrecen in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was one of four land orphanages for children of teachers, established in accordance with the Act n. 43/1891.

The town authorities that were left with the part of the foundation that had been allocated to the Protestants, used the interests from the obtained capital to finance foster care, as it remained favoured over the institutionalized care for orphaned children. Deepening confessional rifts in the society of the Kingdom of Hungary finished shared town administration of this fund after three decades. Representatives of reformed churches, allegedly due to the flourish of the Catholic orphanage, requested their share of the foundation from the town. The municipal magistracy agreed, although only under the condition that it could maintain its influence on the administration. However, the municipal council decided in August 1893 to split the so-called Protestant orphan fund between both local Protestant churches, proportionally in accordance with the numbers of their worshippers and with no conditions. The monetary fund valued at almost 300,000 florins was subsequently divided with the emperor's consent on January 1st, 1894. Debrecen Reformed church representatives announced in the press that by this division, they would obtain funds to establish a "unique" orphanage within the whole country, and started putting aside a part of the annual revenue from the obtained capital to cover future construction costs.<sup>41</sup> However, this concept never materialized.

## Conclusion

Since Maria Theresa allocated 30,000 florins to establish an orphanage in Debrecen, to 1894, when the second half of the foundation was split between two Protestant churches in the city, the form of government

<sup>39</sup> *Debrecen katolikus múltja és jelene*. Szerk. Liszt Nándor, Sümegey József. Debrecen : A Szt. Imre jubileumi váradí egyházmegyei bizottság, 1930. p. 62-65.

<sup>40</sup> *A Debreczeni Nőegylet alapszabályait, kormányzatát, a gyűjtő-ívek eredményét s a tagok betűrendes névsorát tartalmazó könyvecske 1869. évről*. Debrecen: Debreceni Nőegylet, 1869.

<sup>41</sup> Protestáns árvaházak Debreczenben. In *Protestáns Egyházi és Iskolai Lap*, 1893, 36. évfolyam, 31. szám, 3. 8. 1893, p. 493; A debreceni református árvaalap. In *Protestáns Egyházi és Iskolai Lap*, 1894, 37. évfolyam, 36. szám, 6. 9. 1894, p. 574-575.

gradually transformed from an absolutist monarchy to a constitutional system. Besides, the position of Protestant churches significantly changed in the Kingdom of Hungary – first, they were marginalized, albeit allowed; to later become tolerated, and subsequently equal to the Catholic Church in 1848. On the other hand, the positions of the involved parties concerning the conflict over the definition of the orphanage’s confessional affiliation remained unchanged. Confessional interests remained more crucial than interests of orphaned children and care that was to be provided to them.

# KALÁSZATOK / CATCHES

IMAKÖNYV, FÖLDI ÉS ÉGI SZERELEM

PRAYER BOOK, EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY LOVE

Dénes Dienes

Sárospataki Református Hittudományi Egyetem

*“O Lord God, my heavenly Father! I humbly beseech Thee, grant that Thy Word, which hath now been proclaimed unto me, may have increase within me, since Thou hast sent it forth for this very purpose, that it should not return unto Thee void. Cause that those holy Words may be the power of God unto the salvation of my soul. Do Thou Thyself guide my heart unto the accomplishing of that good unto which Thou hast now stirred me. Clothe me with strength to follow after a holy life; establish me in true doctrine, that it may be the rule and measure of my life. Pour also into my heart obedience and love toward my teachers, that I may receive them with all honor as Thy messengers, even as those who watch over my soul. Bring forth, O Lord, that golden time wherein true doctrine shall reign upon this Earth, that we may all be prophets of God, taught of God. Amen.”*

The domestic Puritanism that emerged in Hungary in the seventeenth century and fostered personal piety, drawing also upon impulses from pietism, remained present in the history of Hungarian Protestantism over a remarkably long period.<sup>1</sup> It continued to exert its influence in popular piety even after theology had come to be shaped by rationalism, and as a result the Protestant intelligentsia in Hungary, pursuing its own distinctive path toward deism, sought the possibilities of a “reasonable faith.”<sup>2</sup> This long-term

<sup>1</sup> On the theological background and practical piety: WALLMANN, Johannes: *A pietizmus*, translated by Szabó, Csaba, Kálvin János Kiadó, Budapest, 2000. DIENES, Dénes: „Melyeket én az én Uram Jézus Krisztusomtól tanultam...” A református kegyesség jellemző vonásai a 18. században Magyarországon, SRTA, Sárospatak, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> *It is necessary that our faith be reasonable; but it is also necessary that our reason be religious.* Ferenc Kazinczy quotes Pál Sipos, professor at Sárospatak, in a letter addressed to Sipos himself, dated November 22, 1809. In: *The Complete Works of Ferenc Kazinczy. Electronic critical edition*, Debrecen University Press, 2016–2022. (DOI: 10.5484/Kazinczy\_Ferenc\_muvei)

continuity was significantly reinforced by a century and a half of persecution, which both strengthened fidelity to confessional commitments and cultivated the inner demands and outward opportunities of personal devotion. The destruction of the institutional forms of Protestant free religious practice proved counterproductive to the efforts at Catholicization, for it encouraged the creation of spaces for devotional practice without a minister, particularly in the form of domestic devotions, and intensified the demand for private devotional exercises.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the pressures of recatholicization, the efforts of Protestant churches in the field of education proved successful, as literacy—or at least the ability to read—reached increasingly broader segments of peasant communities in certain regions of the country. This was characteristic of congregations within the Cistibiscan Reformed Church District that possessed the right of so-called public religious practice. Many purchased Bibles, and even more acquired prayer books or devotionals.<sup>4</sup> Within peasant culture, the very concept of a book was, for a long time, associated almost exclusively with these works. It was for this reason that the mother of “Petike,” in Mihály Vörösmarty’s poem, could tell her sorrowful little son: “Here, this Bible is for you, don’t be sore!” In earlier centuries, when people in this milieu engaged in reading, they turned to the Bible, a prayer book, or a hymnal, besides the almanac.

Borbála Kováts did the same from her childhood onward. She was in possession of the 1804 edition of *Liliomok völgye* [The Valley of Lilies]. This work originally written by Johann Gerhard and titled *Meditationes Sacrae*, had been translated and published under this title by the Transylvanian nobleman József Inczédy. Its popularity is demonstrated by the fact that it went through seven editions within half a century, the 1804 edition being the seventh in sequence.<sup>5</sup>

We are able to situate Borbála Kováts geographically only within very broad limits. Since her book long languished in the duplicate collection, it is not known when or from where it came to Sárospatak; it appears certain only that it originated from one of the congregations of the Cistibiscan

<sup>3</sup> SZIGETI, Jenő: A házi istentisztelet puritán gyökerei, in PILIPKÓ, Erzsébet (ed.): *Népi vallásosság a Kárpát-medencében 8.*, Laczkó Dezső Múzeum, Veszprém, 2013, 286–297. MOLNÁR, Ambrus: A hajdúhadházi Szent Emberek és Szent Asszonyok Társasága, in TÜSKÉS, Gábor (ed.): „Mert ezt Isten hagyta...” *Tanulmányok a népi vallásosság köréből*, Magvető, Budapest 1986, 418–443.

<sup>4</sup> DIENES, Dénes: op. cit., 2000, chapter “„Óh én édes könyvem”, Tanúságtevő tulajdonosi bejegyzések.” FEKETE, Csaba: Imádságtörténeti mozzanatok. Buzgó imádságok és áhitatos könyörgések, in SZELESTEI N., László (ed.): *Lelkiségtörténeti számvetés, Pázmány Irodalmi Műhely. Lelkiségtörténeti tanulmányok*, Pázmány Péter Katolikus Egyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kar, Piliscsaba, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> IMRE, Mihály: Johann Gerhard 18. századi hazai recepciójának néhány jellemzője, *Studia Litteraria* 2013 3-4., 391.

Reformed Church District.<sup>6</sup> In any case, there was a girls' school in the parish where she lived in the late eighteenth century, and Borbála learned not only to read but also to write. She may have received the prayer book while still a schoolgirl, for she recorded her first ownership inscription on the *recto* of the blank page at the end of the volume in faltering childish letters: *Kováts borbála*. She must have been diligent, for she made steady progress in writing, and she must have engaged in writing frequently thereafter, as her handwriting shows continuous development. Later, when she resolved to reaffirm her ownership of the book, she did so in a practiced hand, casting her declaration into verse.

Kováts Borbála, who possesseth this book,  
 She hath purchased it for the comfort of her soul:  
 That thereby her heart might find consolation,  
 Until she should enter into the Kingdom of her Redeemer.  
 Until she should attain that pure blessedness,  
 Where the Lord Christ Himself reigneth.  
 That the shed Blood of Jesus  
 Might be the restful recompense of her weariness.

There can be no doubt that Borbála Kováts was raised in the spirit of that piety which is also reflected in *Liliomok völgye*. The condition of her book likewise clearly demonstrates that its owner handled its pages regularly—indeed, as the saying goes, she “read it to tatters.” In the course of this use, the prayer book became almost her companion, with which she shared her secrets. For the third time, she recorded her attachment to the volume, both at the beginning and at the end of the book, employing a formula customary in the period.<sup>7</sup>

Kováts Borbála, who possesseth this book,  
 Her name therein she writeth as witness true.  
 If it should stray, O my beloved friend,  
 Restore it to my hand, for it is mine own rightful good.

With this beloved book, as with a friend who keepeth secrets, she might entrust the guarded and hidden things of her heart.

Lamentation, love, sorrow, and pain—  
 My heart grieveth for thee forever, my angel.

<sup>6</sup> Today the volume is preserved in the Great Library of Sárospatak. IV. a. 826.

<sup>7</sup> This was a common form not only in books but also on other objects of personal use. P. SZALAY, Emőke: *Magyar népi kerámia a Déri Múzeumban I.*, Debrecen, 2002. On the books: SCHELHAMMER, Zsófia: *Barátaink, a könyvátok, Szeged várostörténeti és kulturális folyóirat*, 2021. 10. 25.

Bitter wounding, yet comfort also, O great Heaven,  
There yet abideth in my heart hope concerning thee.

The following note conveys somewhat the same mood:

To live in this world is pure delight  
For one in whose eyes Heaven itself may smile.

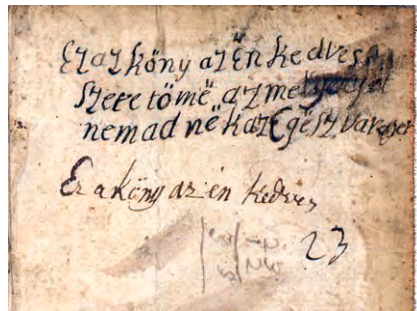
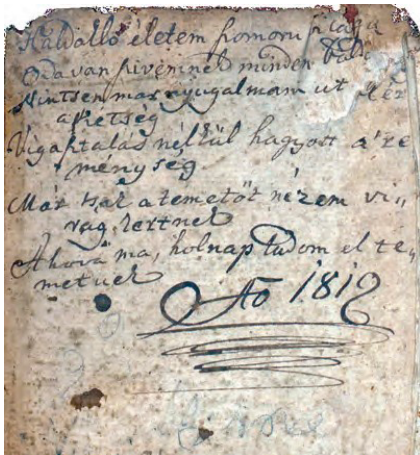
However, the continuation turns into bitter hopelessness:

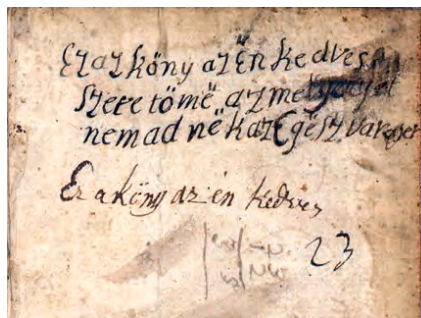
There is no remedy for love,  
No happiness for the wretched,  
No hope for the dying—  
For all these, the grave alone may be their end.

And the final entry, to which she also affixed a date, deepens this bitter hopelessness still further.

The sorrowful world of my dying life—  
All the happiness of my heart is gone,  
I have no rest now; doubt hath overtaken me,  
Hope hath left me without consolation,  
Now I behold the grave alone as a garden of flowers,  
Where today or tomorrow I know I shall be laid to rest.  
*Anno 1812.*

As a devoted reader who embellished her letters and showed clear signs of a love of writing, Borbála Kováts most certainly encountered other reading material besides her prayer book. She may have heard love folk songs, from





which she could have learned lyrical elements and subjective turns of phrase.

It is possible that, inspired by these, she herself attempted to compose verse. At the same time, we cannot exclude the possibility that her lines were inspired by personal experience—perhaps by unfulfilled love—and that she

shared her sorrow with her beloved prayer book.

In formal terms, her poems may also have been influenced by *Liliomok völgye*, which contains ten engravings closely connected to the themes of the meditations.<sup>8</sup> Beneath each engraving, a four-line verse summarizes the essence of a given chapter. In terms of stylistic features, alongside folk songs, these too may have served as models for Borbála Kováts.

In my view, it can be excluded that Borbála Kováts's entries should be interpreted within the framework of bridal or nuptial mysticism. As evidence, let us compare them with the ones in the book of Anna Tóth, a copy of *Szentekek hegedűje* [The Fiddle of the Saints], published in Kolozsvár in 1762.<sup>9</sup>

This hymnal by Benjámín Szőnyi came into her possession in 1766, as is evident from the ownership inscription: “Tóth Anna kedves könyve, 1766. 12 Martij, empt(us) marj. 3.” (Anna Tóth's dear book, 1766.12 Martii, bought for 3 Máriás.)<sup>10</sup> It is of particular interest that she employed a Latinized form in recording the purchase. Is it possible that the possessory inscription is not in her own hand? However, on the inner side of the rear binding board, an entry may be read that is most certainly in Tóth Anna's hand. The handwriting suggests that of a child: “This boo (sic!) is my dear beloved's, which I would not give for the whole city.” (!) It is likewise possible that the ownership inscription is of later date, when Anna already held the pen with a steady hand, and it is likely that she had by then learned certain Latin formulae. In that case, it may be that the young girl encountered the bridal mysticism of Reformed pietism already during her elementary schooling. In her book, which shows signs of frequent use, the second stanza of the first hymn in the chapter entitled “Advent Hymns” begins thus:

<sup>8</sup> BENKŐ, Tímea: Megigazulás – megszentelődés – új életben járás. A marosvécsi református templom mennyezetének ikonográfiai programja, *Studia Doctorum Theologiae Protestantis* 3, 2012, 143–157.

<sup>9</sup> Sárospatak, Nagykönyvtár, S. 970.

<sup>10</sup> Three Máriás corresponded to 1 forint and 2 dénár. IVÁNYOSI-SZABÓ, Tibor: A „kongó” nevű pénz forgalma Kecskeméten, *Történelmi szemle*, 1981, 288.

Behold, the Bridegroom cometh;  
My soul, go thou forth to meet Him,  
Seek thy rest as one poor and needy,  
Within His bosom rich.

The final stanza of the “Hymn of a Maiden” is even more explicit:

My future estate,  
My entering into marriage,  
I commit wholly unto Thy Majesty.  
O Jesus, my spiritual Bridegroom,  
Thee above all do I seek,  
With the five virgins I stand ready.

It may be stated with confidence that Anna Tóth’s “dear beloved,” in the sense of bridal mysticism, was Jesus Christ. Beyond this testimony, this pious young woman also left to posterity an embroidery pattern, which she preserved—perhaps not by chance—in her “dear book,” and which she most certainly made with her own hand. It is not impossible that she embroidered it upon the kerchief that she gave as a gift to her earthly betrothed.



ÁCS PÁL: HŐSÖK ÉS HŐSÉNEKEK.

A magyar hősköltészet Zrínyi előtt. HUN-REN  
Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont, Bp. 2024.

Pluhár Enikő

Debreceni Egyetem

Ács Pál *Hősök és hősénekek* című monográfiája históriás énekek elemzésével foglalkozik. A megelőző szakirodalom többsége némileg lenézte ezt a műfajt, évszázados hagyomány vonta kétségbe esztétikai értéküket, mert ezek az énekek nem feleltek meg a saját korukban elfogadott, majd a későbbi irodalmi ízlésnek. Verselésük és szerkezetük egyszerű, kezdetleges, ezért sokan irodalomnak sem tekintették. Az utóbbi időszakban azonban egyre több olyan tanulmány és monográfia született a témában, amelyek különböző szempontokat figyelembe véve értékes versanyagként foglalkoznak a XVI. század irodalmának ezen regiszterével.

Ács Pál műve hat esettanulmányt tartalmaz, amelyek közül öt szól históriás énekekről, egy pedig egy epiko-lírai karakterű vallásos énekről, a *Szent László-énekről*. Az első és az utolsó fejezet a műfajra és a vizsgálódás módszereire vonatkozó elméleti kérdéseket mutatja be. Az ezekben felmerülő szempontok kötik össze az esettanulmányokat, teszik a monográfiát egységes egészzé.

A históriás ének fogalma nehezen meghatározható, sokat alakult az irodalomtörténet-írás során. Ács Pál nem fejt ki részletesen a műfaj definiálásának történetét, de ismerteti a históriás énekek megközelítésében felmerülő legfontosabb szempontokat. A XVI. századi históriás énekek kutatásának kiindulópontja Toldy Ferenc a magyar irodalom történetét áttekintő monográfiája.<sup>1</sup> Ács Pál a műfajfogalom fejlődése szempontjából hivatkozik Pap Balázs *Históriák és énekek* című könyvére,<sup>2</sup> valamint előzményként említi a Seláf Levente által vezetett, a formai jegyek vizsgálatára fókuszáló kutatási projektet, melynek keretében 2023-ban megjelent *A históriás ének: poétikai és filológiai kérdések* című online kötet.<sup>3</sup>

A históriás énekek csoportosítási lehetőségeivel kapcsolatban Ács utal Pirnát Antal, Vadai István és Pap Balázs felosztásaira. (42–43.) Pirnát Antal a fikció szempontjából tett különbséget a szövegek között, szembeállítva egymással a *res gesta*, „lőtt dolgok” leírását tartalmazó históriát, valamint

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<sup>1</sup> *Toldy Ferenc: A magyar költészet története az ősidőktől Kisfaludy Sándorig.* (Második, javított kiadás egy kötetben.) Pest. 1867.

<sup>2</sup> *Pap Balázs: Históriák és énekek.* Pécs. 2014.

<sup>3</sup> *A históriás ének: poétikai és filológiai kérdések.* Szerk. Seláf Levente. Bp. 2023. f-book.com/book/2023/A-historias-enek-kerdesek, letöltés 2025. dec. 04.

a fabulát, melyben *res ficta*, „költött dolog” jelenik meg.<sup>4</sup> Vadai István a *res gesta* és a *res ficta* fogalmát egy skála két végpontjaként értelmezte, amelyen a valósághoz közelebb helyezkednek el a bibliai tárgyú, távolabb a regényes históriák, a történeti tárgyú énekek pedig az előző kettő között állnak. A műfaj – ahogyan ezt Ács Pál is hangsúlyozza (275.) – a fikcionalitás felé mozog, ezért ezt a skálát Vadai fejlődési sornak nevezte. Hozzátette, hogy a szerzők nem tettek ilyen különbséget, mert az alkotói módszer ugyanaz volt: idegen nyelvű forrást fordítottak magyar nyelvre. Hangsúlyozta az eltérést a forrás fordítása és az események elbeszélése között, ezért Tinódi más módszerrel keletkezett, a jelenkori történekekről beszámoló énekeit nem tartotta beilleszthetőnek ebbe a sorba.<sup>5</sup> Vadai István és Pirnát Antal megállapításaiból kiindulva Pap Balázs a közvetlen szerzői fikciót vizsgálta. Fogalmi rendszerében a XVI. századi epikus szövegek abban az esetben *históriák*, ha a fordító vagy másoló nem tett hozzá a saját képzeletéből származó információkat, és *énekek* akkor, ha „a történetet is szerzője eszelte ki”.<sup>6</sup> A *Répertoire de la poésie hongroise ancienne* (RPHA) online adatbázis ezzel szemben a világi elbeszélő históriákon belül helyezi el a fiktív és a nem fiktív históriákat, tehát a szövegekben található fikciót vagy annak mértékét nem tekinti a históriás énekek definitív jegyének.

Ács leírja, hogy a hősepika jellemzőit, „az epikus hős feltalálását”, „a hősiesség kort”, valamint „a hősiesség éthoszt” tartja fontosnak a históriás énekek meghatározása során. Ezért nem számít tehát a sok ragrím vagy a bárdolatlan stílus, hiszen nem a formai jegyek adják a hősepika kritériumait. A szerző a műfaj több aspektusát figyelembe véve a műfaj egészére vonatkozó leírást kíván adni. Az eddigi szakirodalomnál pontosabban határozza meg a tárgyalt szövegcsoportot, melynek megnevezésére a „hősi témájú históriás éneket” (20.) tartja a megfelelő kifejezésnek.

Ács említi, hogy eltérő vélemények vannak a históriás énekek orális gyökereinek kérdéséről. Úgy gondolja, van átmenet a szóbeli és az írásbeli alkotói módszerek között, a két, látszólag egymással szemben álló irányt összeegyeztető felfogáshoz csatlakozik. A XVI. századi históriás énekek írásbeli, művelt szerzői az oralitásból „merítették anyagot”, de műveik már nem a szóbeli kultúrához tartoztak. A históriás énekek képezik tehát a szóbeliségből az írásbeliségbe való átlépést, a köztes lépcsőfokot a számunkra ismeretlen énekanyag, a „hegedősök” énekei, valamint a jól felépített és megszerkesztett eposz között. Hermann Zoltán a középkori kommunikatív műfajokról alkotott jaussi fogalmi rendszerbe beilleszthetőnek tartja azt, hogy Ács az eposzi hagyomány előzményének „valamiféle politizáló és

<sup>4</sup> Pirnát Antal: Fabula és história. ItK. 88. (1984) 137–149.

<sup>5</sup> Vadai István: 1554: Megjelenik Tinódi Sebestyén Croniciája. In: Magyar irodalomtörténet. Szerk. Horváth Iván et al. Bp. 2022. f-book.com/mi, letöltés 2025. dec. 04.

<sup>6</sup> Pap B.: Históriák és énekek i. m. 51–58.

ideologikus hősének-, krónika-, vallási kultuszszöveg-hagyományt<sup>7</sup> tekint, kiemelve a performatív jelleget, az előadói módszert, valamint a befogadói formát. Ács Pál egy közösségi médiumként meghatározott, irodalom előtti költészet darabjairól beszél, amelyek a professzionális énekmondás alkotói módszerének termékei. A szerzők ismerték az orális kultúrát, és az énekek célja még mindig az előadhatóság volt, azonban tudatosan, írásban komponált műveket hoztak létre, amelyeket nyomtatásban terjesztettek. Forrásaikból a szövegek átültetése, „kreatív adaptáció” (48.) eredményeként hozták létre a másodlagos oralitás darabjait.

A monográfia fejezetei olyan hősöket tárgyalnak, akikről „hosszabb 15–16. századi magyar epikus hősénekek szólnak”. (20.) Árpád vezér, Szent László, Bánk bán, Toldi Miklós, Kinizsi Pál és Szondi György alakja köré épül az esettanulmányokat tartalmazó hat fejezet. Ennek a felépítésnek a mintája Jacques Le Goff *Középkori hősök és csodák* című kultúrtörténeti műve (2005.),<sup>8</sup> melyben szintén egy-egy hős áll a fejezetek középpontjában. A hat éneket Ács Pál is több oldalról közelíti meg, kutatásaiban ugyanis megjelenik az emlékeztörténet, a kultusztörténet, az irodalomtörténet, illetve az úgynevezett „képzelettörténet” vizsgálata is.<sup>9</sup> A szerző leírja válogatásának kritériumait, és jelzi, hogy kiegészíthető lenne a sor még több XV–XVI. századi történetmondó költeménnyel. A hat alak a teljesség igénye nélkül alkotja a legismertebb magyar hősök sorát. (22.)

Az egyes esettanulmányok alapját a hős és a hőskultusz, illetve az abból kibontakozó irodalmi mű összekapcsolása adja. A fejezetcímeket végigolvasva is egy-egy hőstípus megnevezését láthatjuk. *A honfoglalók* című, *Pannóniai éneket* elemző első esettanulmány annyiban tér el ettől a koncepciótól, hogy élén egy hőcsoport szerepel, melynek tagja az énekekben megjelenő hét vezér, valamint a közülük kiemelt, a honfoglalás vezetőjeként számon tartott Árpád.

Abban a tekintetben a monográfiában nem egyedülálló a *Pannóniai énekről* szóló elemzés, hogy vannak más fejezetek, amelyekben szintén nem csak egyetlen hős képezi a vizsgálódás tárgyát. Például Valkai András *Bánk bán*-historiájával kapcsolatban a címszereplő mellett Gertrudist is meg kell említeni, akinek a pilisi apátságban emeltek síremléket, a kenyérmezei diadalról szóló történetek esetén pedig Kinizsi Pál mellett Báthori István erdélyi vajda is fontos szereplő. Ács Pál meggyőzően érvel amellett, hogy a szövegek Báthori István erdélyi vajda fogadalmi ajándékával és kápolnájával összefüggésben keletkeztek. Ebben a két fejezetben Ács Pál a művészettörténet tárgykörébe tartozó emlékeket is bevon a vizsgálódásba,

<sup>7</sup> *Hermann Zoltán*: Hősök és hősénekek. Buksz 36. (2024) 2. sz. 139–144.

<sup>8</sup> *Jacques Le Goff*: Középkori hősök és csodák. Ford. Lőrinszky Ildikó. Bp. 2012.

<sup>9</sup> A „multidiszciplináris látásmódrá” Tóth Tünde is felhívja a figyelmet recenziójában. *Tóth Tünde*: Ács Pál: Hősök és hősénekek: A magyar hősköltészet Zrínyi előtt. In: Doromb: Közköltészeti tanulmányok 12. Szerk. Csörsz Rumen István. Bp. 2025. 607–612. [www.reciti.hu/2024/8831](http://www.reciti.hu/2024/8831), letöltés 2025. dec. 13.

amelyek Bánk bán és Kinizsi mellé emelnek egy-egy velük ellentétes viszonyban álló hőst.

Szent László nem mint cselekvő hős határozza meg a róla szóló fejezetet, nincs szó a Szent László-kultusz mozgalmas legendáiról. A *Szent László-ének* a már említett epiko-lírai karakterű vallásos ének. Több érv hozható fel a történelmi énekek közé sorolása mellett, hiszen egy hősnak állít emléket, kiemeli néhány fontosnak tartott tettet, és emlékezetének megőrzését tűzi ki céljául. Vannak azonban olyan jellemzői is, amelyek eltérnek a történelmi énekektől. Annál erőteljesebb a líraisága, kevésbé hangsúlyos benne a történetmesélés, fontosabb a hős dicsőítése és magasztalása. Ács Pál ezt az egykori váradi székesegyház látványelemeire vonatkozó utalások alapján azzal magyarázza, hogy az ének egyházi funkciót látott el, zárandokének volt. A *Szent László-ének* Ács Pál szerint „lelki értelemben vett hőstörténet”. (119.)

Ács Pál Bánk bánnal, majd Szondi Györggyel kapcsolatban fejt ki azt a megítélését, hogy az énekek szerzői az eposzok felé mozdultak el azzal, hogy hőst, ráadásul magyar hőst állítottak történetük középpontjába. (127–128.) Toldi Miklós és Kinizsi Pál herculesi hősök, az „erős ember” típusába tartoznak. Toldi a halállal folytatott, félelem nélküli küzdelemben válik herculesi hőssé, Kinizsi Pál pedig a törökök ellen küzdő, rettenthetetlen katona, aki a fogai között tartott török hullával járt győzelmi táncot, Bonfini elbeszélésében veszi fel a görög hős jellemzőit. Amennyiben dominánsabb Ács fejezetében a hős tetteinek, jellemének elemzése, párhuzamba hozható eposzi hősökkel, akkor az ének is könnyebben kezelhető az eposzok szintjén. Ebből következik, hogy a jellemteremtés teszi az eposzok szintjén elemezhetővé az énekeket.

A szövegek keletkezésének történelmi kontextusát és földrajzi aspektusait megfigyelve Ács Pál kiemeli, hogy a szerzők az értéktelennek tartott jelennel szembeállított múltból emeltek ki példákat a kortársak számára. A monográfiában tárgyalt énekek közül egyedül a Szent Lászlóról szóló íródott Mátyás uralkodása alatt, 1470 körül. A monográfia további öt fejezetének énekei a XVI. században keletkeztek. 1526 után különösen fontossá vált az egységes ország eszményképe, melyre mint elveszett értékre tekintettek vissza a Habsburg-párt és a Szapolyai-párt vetélkedése során. A vizsgált történelmi énekek szinte kivétel nélkül kapcsolódnak Erdélyhez valamilyen módon. A XVI. századi, aranykorba való visszavágyódás kontextusában értelmezhetőek az idealizált, rendíthetetlen és erős hősök, akik bátran szembenéznek a fenyegetésekkel, legyen szó a török veszélyről vagy a Habsburg elnyomásról.

Ahogy Ács már az első fejezetben kitér rá, az epikus mű által feldolgozott esemény önmagában a történelem alakulását tekintve nem feltétlenül jelentős. (27–28.) Az eposzokhoz hasonlóan a történelmi énekekben elbeszélte eseményeket, valamint azok hőseit sem a következmények, hanem a kultusz, illetve annak részeként az epikus mű tette naggyá. A kultusz

alakulását tárgyalja Ács Pál a fejezetekben, arra azonban nem tér ki, hogy vajon mitől függött annak kialakulása és fennmaradása, milyen feltételek teljesültek ezeknél a ma ismert történeteknél, amelyek az elfeledetteknel esetleg hiányoztak.

Az esettanulmányokat összeköti a művészettörténeti szempont erőteljes bevonása a vizsgálódásokba. Minden fejezetben megjelennek emlékhelyek, tárgyi emlékek, illetve a helyhez való kapcsolódás. Több esetben válik ezek vizsgálata az elemzés szerves részévé. A *Pannóniai énekről* szóló fejezetben Ács Pál a hely, a Dés elnevezéséből következtet az ének keltekezési helyére és idejére, a kenyérmezei ütközetről szóló énekekről pedig bebizonyítja, hogy inspirációik a kenyérmezei emlékkápolna és a loretoi fogadalmi ajándék, egy történethez tartozó, különböző helyen található emlékhelyek lehettek.

A kultuszok és az emlékezhelyek szoros kapcsolata mutatkozik meg az illusztrációkban is. A szövegekhez kapcsolható tárgyak, helyszínek képi ábrázolása megjelenik a könyvben. Amennyiben ez nem lehetséges, analógiák, hasonló funkciójú tárgyak, fényképek, alaprajzok egészítik ki a szöveget, teszik könnyebben elképzelhetővé, érthetővé a leírtakat. A borító szintén jól ábrázolja az irodalmi szövegek erős művészettörténeti kötődésének a monográfiában történő hangsúlyozását. Kinizsi nagyvázsonyi tumbájának fedlapja szimbolizálja a nagy hősök már csak töredékesen megmaradt alakját, a síremlék pedig a rájuk való emlékeztést.

Ács Pál fejezeteiben hangsúlyosan jelenik meg az énekek recepciótörténetének vizsgálata a kortárs reflexióktól egészen a XIX. századig. A bevezetésben azt olvashatjuk, hogy a történetek nagy részének a szüzséje, valamint a „rejtettebb narratív sémák”, (41.) a formulák is ismerősen hangzottak a befogadók számára, így a „ráismerés” lehetett a meghatározó élményük. Ehhez a megállapításhoz ugyan hiányzik a történeti alátámasztás, viszont valójában nincsenek adataink, információink arról, hogy ténylegesen kik hallgatták az énekeket, illetve miről voltak ismereteik. Erősebbek voltak a helyi kultuszok az egyetemeseknél, ezért távolabbi vidékekhez kötődő, hasonló történetelemeket aligha ismertek az egyszerű emberek. Ugyanakkor azt láthatjuk, hogy a váradi kötődésű *Szent László-ének* országos elterjedtségét dunántúli kódexek bizonyítják, a *Toldi népszerűségéről* pedig nótajelzések mellett a címadás tesz tanúbizonyságot. Ács Pál utal krónikákra, legendákra és mesékre, amelyek továbbadták a történetek szüzséjét, emellett értesülhettek a kor aktuális eseményéről, Ali basa hadjárataról is.

Ács Pál a XIX. századot, azon belül pedig kiemelten Arany Jánost választotta referenciális pontnak. Már a bevezetésben Arany *Zrínyi és Tasso* című tanulmányában kifejtett szemléletére reflektál, majd a *Naiv eposzunk* című esszé, illetve *A magyar nemzeti versidomról* című tanulmány alapján, Arany állításaiból kiindulva tér vissza a históriás énekek meghatározására és megítélésére. Igazat ad Arany lenéző értékítéletének, hiszen a históriás

énekek a XVI. századi irodalomesztétika mércéinek sem feleltek meg. Mindemellett az Arany által mutatott példa követésére biztat, mert Arany is foglalkozott általa költészet előtti költészetnek tartott szövegekkel, mégis a műfaji és esztétikai kritériumok számonkérése helyett a művekben rejlő érték felfedezésére helyezte a hangsúlyt. Ács konklúziója szerint az oly sokszor lenézett históriás énekek irodalmi értéke abban rejlik, hogy elmozdulást jelentenek a fikciós irodalmi tárgy felé. Ezáltal pedig Zrínyi eposzának előzményét is jelentik.

## FRAKNÓI VILMOS EMLÉKKÖNYV

Fraknói Vilmos (1843–1924) püspök, történész, a Magyar Tudományos Akadémia főtitkárának emlékezete (Collectanea Vaticana Hungariae I/24). szerk. Tusor Péter és Kanász Viktor, Fraknói Vilmos Római Történeti Kutatócsoport – BTK Moravcsik Gyula Intézet, Budapest–Róma, 2024. 912 oldal. ISBN: 978-963-308-504-2.

Aigner Jenő

Magyar Tudományos Akadémia

A kötet Fraknói Vilmos halálának 100. évfordulójára készült, méltó emléket állítva a magyar történetírás és egyháztörténeti kutatások egyik legkiválóbb alakjának. A szerkesztők elsődleges célja az volt, hogy a tudós főpap gazdag életművét a legfrissebb kutatások alapján, nemzetközi kontextusban, multidiszciplináris aspektusból mutassák be, melynek véleményünk szerint maradéktalanul megfeleltek. Fraknói Vilmos (1843-1924) történetíró, váradi kanonok, arbei címzetes püspök és a Magyar Tudományos Akadémia főtitkára volt. Ürményben született, zsidó származású, ám később kikeresztelkedett családban. Iskoláit Nagyszombaton, Esztergomban és Pesten végezte. 1865-ben szentelték pappá, majd tanárként tevékenykedett. A Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum könyvtárának őre lett és az Akadémia főtitkári posztját is magáénak tudhatta. Később Rómában magyar történeti intézetet alapított. Elsősorban középkori egyház és diplomáciatörténettel foglalkozott, hatalmas életművet hagyva az utókorra a 15-17. századi magyar történelemből. Élete során meghatározó kutatásokat végzett főleg olasz és osztrák levéltárakban, nagy szorgalommal közölve a magyar vonatkozású anyagokat. Munkássága során számos tudományos periodikát szerkesztett, valamint a vatikáni magyar okmánytár köteteit és Mátyás király levelezéseit is kiadta.

A kötet célja az volt, hogy Fraknói életművét átfogóan, kritikus szemlélettel, a rendelkezésre álló források alapos feldolgozásával bemutassák, hangsúlyt helyezve a magyar történetírásban, a vatikáni kutatásokban és a tudományos életben betöltött szerepére. A mű három fő tematikus egységre tagolható:

1. Fejezetek a Fraknói-biográfiából: Itt azok az életrajzi tanulmányok kaptak helyet, melyek Fraknói családjáról, annak háttéréről, származásáról, valamint a tudományos és egyházi pályafutásáról értekeznek, egészen a halálig követve a pozitivisták történetíró életútját. Itt olyan történészek tollából olvashatunk tanulmányokat, mint Tusor Péter, Kanász Viktor, Rétfalvi Balázs, Sági György, Balla Tünde, Lakatos Attila, Hőgye Attila, Cziráki Csongor, Ress Imre. Az utóbbi az egykori császárvárosban élő szerző számára különösen releváns témát dolgozott fel, bőséges adatokra

támaszkodva, Fraknói és az osztrák állampolgárság kísértése címmel. A jeles szakemberek által írt publikációk azt a benyomást keltik az olvasóban, hogy Fraknói történetírói munkásságának és egyházi karrierjének túlságosan hangsúlyos szerep jutott, a püspök családi-magánéleti tevékenységének rovására. Ez természetesen abból is fakadhat, hogy Fraknói tudományos szerepvállalásának forrásbázisa nagyobb teret engedett annak szélesebb körű feldolgozására.

2. Történeti, tudományos életút: Lényeges kiemelni, hogy ez a kötet fő erőssége, amelyhez hozzájárulhatott a fellelhető források bősége, valamint az, hogy a szakmai közönség elsősorban erre fókuszál. A történetírói, tudományszervezői és forrásfeltáró tevékenység elemzése, a magyar középkorkutatás és kora újkori kutatás megalapozásának a bemutatása jellemzi ezt a fejezetet, amely források sokaságára támaszkodva nyújt betekintést a fentiekben megfogalmazottakra. Fraknói tudományépítő munkásságát Tusor Péter tollából ismerhetjük meg, kellő alaposítással. A püspököt, mint a magyar medievisztika megalapozóját Rácz György kitűnő tanulmánya helyezi új megvilágításba. Az egyháznagy kora újkori kutatásait Fazekas István dolgozta fel, míg Fraknói tudományos vitáiról Orsós Julianna értekezett figyelemreméltó tanulmányában.

3. Itália, Róma, Vatikán: A harmadik tematikai egység Fraknói nemzetközi kapcsolatrendszerét tárja fel, a római–magyar történeti iskola és a vatikáni forrásfeltárás európai jelentőségét helyezi előtérbe. Ez a fejezet tartalmazza a legtöbb újdonságot, kevésbé vagy egyáltalán nem ismert adatokat felsorakoztatva Fraknóin kívül Óváry Lipót, Fejérpataky László, Kollányi Ferenc, Lukcsics József és Veress Endre életével és munkásságával kapcsolatban, ami további erőssége az egyébként is magas színvonalat képviselő kötetnek. Különösen a Rómer–Fraknói levelezést emelném ki, amely rávilágít a két kiváló tudós közötti kapcsolatra, a korszak társadalmi érintkezéseinek mindennapjaira. A kötet relevanciáját nem lehet megkérdőjelezni, hiszen kiemelkedő a magyar és a nemzetközi történettudomány számára, ugyanis Fraknói munkássága a pozitivistá történetírás, a vatikáni kutatások és a tudományos intézményépítés egyik alappillére.

A kötet tanulmányai a legújabb levéltári kutatásokra, alapos és precíz forrásfeltárásra és kritikai elemzésre támaszkodnak. Ismert dolog a szakmai publikum előtt, hogy a szerzők valamennyien a magyar egyháztörténet, történetírás, könyvtártudomány és a vatikáni kutatások elismert szakértői, ami eleve elővetítette a kötet kedvező fogadtatását, sikerességét. A szerzők Fraknói gazdag életművét nem csupán hazai, hanem nemzetközi kontextusban is értelmezik, ami a külföldi (főleg olasz és osztrák) szakmai közönség számára is komoly érdeklődésre tarthat számot. Tény, hogy a szerzők hasznosították a korábbi Fraknói-kutatások eredményeit, ugyanakkor

új forrásokat, eddig a kutatók számára sem ismert, vagy kevésbé ismert dokumentumokat is feltártak, amely tovább erősíti a kötet hazai és nemzetközi beágyazottságát. A vaskos kötetben szerepel egy részletgazdag életmű-bibliográfia, amely ötszáznál is több tételt sorol fel, valamint korabeli sajtószemle, fényképtár és kronológia is helyet kapott.

Lényeges kiemelni, hogy a kötet több tanulmánya új vatikáni levéltári anyagokat közöl, melyek a nagy püspök kutatói módszereit és nemzetközi kapcsolatait tárja fel. A tudománymetriai elemzés tekintetében kijelenthető, hogy a Fraknói-életmű tudománymetriai vizsgálata egészen új megközelítést kapott a magyar történetírásban. A fotók és egyéb képi ábrázolások széleskörű alkalmazása további pozitívumokat jelent a kötet megítélése során. A Fraknóiról fennmaradt ábrázolások, fényképek, karikatúrák, szobrok, érmék, filmhíradó részletek a vizuális források sokszínűségéről árulkodnak. Mégis úgy vélem, hogy a mai kiadványok jobban építenek a képanyag mennyiségére, ami főleg a laikus olvasókat hozza közelebb az ábrázolt személyhez, korszakhoz.

Elmondható, hogy a szerzők interdiszciplináris módszert alkalmaztak: forráskritikai, történeti, tudománymetriai, művelődéstörténeti és intézménytörténeti elemzések egyaránt szerepet kaptak és meghatározzák a kötet arculatát. A tanulmányok nagyobb része primer forrásokon alapul, levéltári anyagokat használ, Fraknói magánlevelezésére vagy publikációira épül. A tudományos apparátus kiváló, a lábjegyzetek alaposak, részletesek, a hivatkozások pontosak, az egész kiadványt átfogó bibliográfia jellemzi. A kutatási eredmények megbízhatóak, ugyanis a tanulmányok szerzői állításukat alapos forráskritikával támasztották alá. A tudományos hitelesség nem szenved csorbát, mert a források sokszínűsége, a korabeli sajtóanyag bevonása, a levéltári anyagok biztosítják azt. A tanulmányok érvelése logikus, a szerzők következetesek, nem kerülnek ellentmondásba. A kötet szerkezete áttekinthető, világosan elkülönülnek a tematikai egységek. A szerkesztők nagy érdeme, hogy a tanulmányok egymásra épülnek, mégis önállóan olvasva is értelmezhetőek.

A kéziratok stílusa egyértelműen tudományos, ám helyenként nehézkesnek mondható. A mű megfelel a szakmai közönség magasabb elvárásainak, ám a laikus olvasók számára nehezebben emészthető lehet. A kötet mentségére szolgáljon, hogy mindkét tábor elvárásainak lehetetlen megfelelni. Ez a kötet a szűkebb értelemben vett szakmának íródott és nem ismeretterjesztő kiadványként látott napvilágot. A könyv szerkezete kiválóan mondható, a három fő rész tematikusan és kronologikusan is jól tagolt. A függelékkel főleg a korszak kutatói forgathatják nagy haszonnal. A forrásbázis rendkívül széles skálán mozog. Magyar és nemzetközi levéltári anyagok jellemzik, valamint a püspök saját publikációi, korabeli sajtóanyagok, tudományos viták és vizuális források. A hivatkozások, bibliográfia és a forráskritika is a szakmai élvonalhoz tartozást bizonyítja. A könyv jól olvasható, a tördelés áttekinthető, a betűtípus választása megfelelő. A kötés

azonban hagy némi kívánnivalót maga után. Hiába sorozati kíváncsi, egy ilyen vaskos, nagy terjedelmű kötet esetében érdemesebb lett volna a ragasztott papírkötés helyett keménytáblás változatban gondolkodni.

A kötet erősségei közé tartozik a tudományos megalapozottság, a források sokasága, az interdiszciplináris szemlélet és az innovatív módszertan. Szintén a kötetet erősíti az átfogó életrajz és bibliográfiai apparátus, a jó szerkesztés és a logikus szerkezeti felépítés, valamint a nemzetközi kontextusba helyezés és a külföldi jelentőség hangsúlyozása. A gyengeségek jóval csekélyebben vannak jelen és főleg a kötés minőségére, valamint arra korlátozódnak, hogy a magas szakmai minőség miatt a laikus olvasók „elveszíthetik a fonalat”. Esetleg annyi még megemlíthető, hogy Fraknói személyes életútja, magánélete nem kapott elegendő teret, főleg tudományos tevékenysége áll a középpontban.

Össességében bátran kijelenthető, hogy a Fraknói Vilmos Emlékkönyv a magyar történetírás és egyháztörténetírás egyik kiemelkedő, valódi tudományos értékkel bíró összefoglalása. A szerzők igazi érdeme a magas szintű felkészültség mellett az, hogy Fraknói életművét sikeresen integrálták az európai tudományosságba, kijelölve a lehetséges új kutatási irányokat is. A kötet nem csupán összegezi, hanem újra is értelmezi a püspök munkásságát, tevékenységét, ami a tudományos közösség számára elsődleges fontossággal bír. A mű a szakmai közönség számára íródott, laikus olvasóknak túlságosan részletes, nehezen emészthető lehet. Össességében azonban elmondható, hogy a mű sikeresen képviseli a történettudományokat a hazai és nemzetközi szinten.

## JÁRATLAN UTAKON LÁBAM ELŐTT MÉCSES A TE IGÉD, ÖSVÉNYEM VILÁGOSSÁGA

Járatlan utakon Amerikában. Szociális testvérek az Egyesült Államokban és Kanadában az 1920-as években. Szerk. *Petrás Éva – Schlachta Boglárka Lilla*. Barankovics István Alapítvány, Gondolat Kiadó, Budapest, 2025. ISBN: 978-963-556-653-2

Szecsei Péter

Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem

Újságcikkek, tudósítások, levelezések. Mind olyan dolgok, amelyek lehetővé teszik a visszaemlékezést és a reflexiót. A *Slachta Margit írásai* sorozatban megjelent, immár ötödik<sup>1</sup> kötet Petrás Éva és Schlachta Boglárka Lilla szerkesztésében Slachta Margit és a Szociális Testvérek Társasága amerikai kötődésének kezdeteit mutatja be. Ehhez Slachta Margit amerikai útjairól beszámoló korabeli cikkeket, a Szociális Testvérek Társaságának Krónikájában megjelent *Amerikai leveleket* és azok visszhangjaként keletkezett írásokat, valamint Slachta Margit *Elkapott sugarak* című munkáját használja fel. A kötet ennek megfelelően három fő részből áll, amelyeket Németh Emma szociális testvér – a Társaság korábbi magyarországi elöljárója – és a szerkesztők előszava<sup>2</sup> és Máté Anita *A Szociális Testvérek amerikai letelepedése* című bevezető tanulmánya<sup>3</sup> előz meg. A három fő szerkezeti egységben közölt írásoknak a jelentősége leginkább abban van, hogy általuk a Szociális Testvérek Társasága amerikai letelepedésének kezdeteibe nyerhetünk bepillantást, az előszók és a bevezető tanulmány ehhez rajzolja meg a tágabb történeti kontextust. A kötet a jogtörténet szempontjából is érdekes lehet, mert az első nemzetgyűlési képviselőnő életútjáról nyújt adalékokat. A könyv könnyebb használhatóságát és a tartalom átláthatóságát a kötet végén lévő függelék segíti, amely az *Amerikai levelekben* és az *Elkapott sugarakban* szereplő települések elhelyezkedését ábrázoló térképet is

<sup>1</sup> Slachta Margit beszédei a magyar parlamentben. Szerk. *Petrás Éva – Schlachta Boglárka Lilla – Szabó Róbert*. Bp. 2021.; Slachta Margit a sajtó nyilvánosságában: válogatott írások róla és tőle, 1908-1949. Szerk. *Petrás Éva – Schlachta Boglárka Lilla*. Bp. 2022.; Járatlan utakon a Lélek vezetésével: Tanulmányok a Szociális Testvérek Társasága magyarországi történetéből. Szerk. *Petrás Éva*. Bp. 2023.; Időablakok: Válogatás a szociális testvérek második világháborús feljegyzéseiből, dokumentumaiból. Szerk. *Petrás Éva*. Bp. 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Németh Emma: Előszó. In: Járatlan utakon Amerikában. Szociális testvérek az Egyesült Államokban és Kanadában az 1920-as években. Szerk. Petrás Éva – Schlachta Boglárka Lilla. Bp. 2025. 7–10.

<sup>3</sup> Máté Anita: A Szociális Testvérek amerikai letelepedése. In: Járatlan utakon Amerikában i. m. 13–36.

tartalmaz. A kötetben megemlített szociális testvérekről névtár és névmutató is készült, amely Takács Anita a Szociális Testvérek Társaságának magyarországi előljárónak köszönhető. A szerkesztők lábjegyzetek formájában további ismeretekkel, érdekes adatokkal látják el az olvasót; például az eseményeket, helyszíneket részletezik.

Máté Anita bevezető tanulmánya az amerikai magyar emigrációra vonatkozó korabeli statisztikai adatokat is felsorakoztat, például a felekezeti megoszlásukra és vallásgyakorlásukra nézve. A szerző ahhoz is támpontokat ad, hogy megértsük, a kivándorlók egy része miért nem csatlakozott egyházközséghez. A magyarok lelki gondozásával összefüggésben továbbá kitér a magyar női szerzetesrendek amerikai letelepedésének előzményeire, kezdeteire, a viszontagságokat vállaló szerzetesek erősfeszítéseire. Emellett áttekinti a kezdeti sikereket: szól előadásaiokról, oktatási tevékenységükről, háziipartermék-kiállításaiokról és vásáraiokról; tevékenységük amerikai és hazai fogadtatásáról.

Az első, Slachta Margit amerikai útjairól szóló cikkek gyűjteményét tartalmazó rész Margit testvér *Mentsük meg a hazának a külföldre szakadt magyarokat!*<sup>4</sup> című írásával kezdődik, amely azért különösen fontos, mert az ebben leírt gondolatok és tervek adják a Szociális Testvérek amerikai tevékenységének, és így ennek a kötetnek is a vezérfonalát. Margit testvér írásának apropóját az a tapasztalati tény adta, hogy úgy találta, a Magyarország határain kívül élő magyarok nem szerveződnek, nem alakítanak ki zárt közösségeket, látszólag nincs szükségük lelki gondozásra, mint a többi nemzet külföldön élő tagjainak. Találgatja, mi lehet az oka annak, hogy a külföldön élő magyaroknak nem volt fontos, hogy hangoztassák magyarságukat és megőrizték nemzeti identitásukat – például gazdasági és szociális szervezetekbe tömörülés útján – a befogadó ország népei között? Margit testvér két tendenciát vázol fel, melyek választ igyekeznek adni ezekre a kérdésekre. Az egyik az egyéni emberre, a másik pedig a nagycsaládra vonatkozik. Egyfelől, a nagyváros az odakerülő egyének magukkal hozott hagyományait elhalványítja, kultúrájának lényegét a lélek mezejéről a külsőségek felé fordítja. Másfelől, Rónai Mária Paula testvér levelének tanúsága szerint a 40 éve a kanadai vidéken élő magyar parasztok (külső hatások és sokkok hiányából eredően) teljesen megőrizték magyarságukat és ősi öntudatukat. A Margit testvér által szorgalmazott külföldi magyar misszió afelé tesz lépést, hogy sikerüljön megmenteni a hazának minél több magyart, aki külföldön él. Igazi megmentésre a nagyvárosokban élő külföldre szakadt magyaroknak van szükségük, mert az ő esetükben az esetleg magukkal hozott magyar kultúrából fakadó felfogásukat elfedheti a nagyváros pora, elvakíthatja hamis fénye. Margit testvér leírja, hogy szerinte a lelki épség feltétele az anyagi boldogulásnak is. A lelki épséget pedig szorosan összekapcsolja a missziós tevékenységgel: ennek egyik

<sup>4</sup> Slachta Margit amerikai útjairól. In: Járatlan utakon Amerikában i. m. 39–43.

feladataként és eredményeként tekint a külföldi magyarok lelki épségének megtartására. Ehhez kötődően a külföldre került magyarok tekintetében felhívja a figyelmet, hogy a lelki épséggel nem rendelkező emberben nincs meg az energia, amivel a nehézségeket legyőzi, pedig ez lenne a feltétele az új lét megteremtésének. Paula testvér levele alapján azonban az „otthoni paraszt” legyőzi a nehézségeket és megtartja magyarságát és abból merít erőt is. Nem csoda, hiszen aki magyar, és ismeri saját kultúráját és annak valós erejét, az mindenhol magyar tud maradni. Talán ez a tartós, gazdag magyar kultúra és az abból származó erő az oka, hogy a Paula testvér által említett „otthoni parasztnak” más kultúrára nincs szüksége. A Szociális Testvérek kiemelt szándéka az, hogy katolikus magyarnak tartsák meg az Amerikába és Kanadába települteket. Ez a misszió elsősorban arra alkalmas, hogy a külföldön (Amerikában) élő magyarok, akik nehéz helyzetbe kerültek, kapjanak segítséget. A Slachta Margit amerikai útjairól szóló egybegyűjtött újságcikkek Margit testvér nagy sikeréről számolnak be; egyikük kiemeli, hogy az általa végzett tevékenység azért is jelentős, mert megismerteti a világgal Magyarországot és történelmét.

A kötet második része a Szociális Testvérek Társaságának Krónikájában megjelent *Amerikai levelek* szövegét adja közre, ami a Szociális Testvérek levelezéseiből származó anyagot jelent. Ezzel mutatkoztak be a világnak. Az ebben az összeállításban található levelek jó része érinti a megszokottól eltérő életrend, az utazások, az anyagi források csekélysége és eleinte a nyelvtudás hiánya miatti nehézségeket. Ugyanakkor kitűnik belőlük, hogy szeretetteljes és őszinte megnyilvánulásaik az általuk imáikban sokszor megszólított Szentlélek erejével áthidalják a nyelvi akadályokat. A viszontagságok leküzdésében nagymértékben segítette őket hivatástudatukból eredő elszántságuk is. Leírják benyomásaikat, terveiket, ötleteiket; szükség esetén tartják egymásban a lelket. Vozáry Hedvig a Közösséghez címzett levelében megjegyzi: „*Itt Szent Kristóf az autózás védőszentje. Tőle várunk autót.*”<sup>5</sup>

A kötet harmadik része Slachta Margit *Elkapott sugarak* című írásgyűjteményét tartalmazza. Ezek nem Jézus napsugarai, nem is a csillagösvény, hanem olyan élmény-szemelvények, melyeket Margit testvér alkalmasnak tartott arra, hogy csokorba szedve őket másokhoz egy kis derűt juttassanak. Azt tükrözik, hogy ő milyenek ismerte Amerika lelkületét; az otthoniaknak biztatásul, az amerikai honfitársainak figyelemfelhívásként szánta gyűjteményét. Arra kéri őket, lássák meg mindennapjaikban az ilyen sugarakat, vegyék észre, hogy „*süt a nap.*” Mert „*az a nap nem is az égen ragyog, hanem az emberek lelkében él. De fög-e élni abban, aki észre sem veszi?*”<sup>6</sup> Ha valaki az örömet a maga lelkében, és ezeket a sugarakat a mindennapjaiban felismeri, akkor fénylenek és másokra is ráragyognak, de ha nem ismeri fel, valóban elvesznek. Mert akinek van, annak adatik, és bővelkedik, akinek

<sup>5</sup> Amerikai levelek. In: Járatlan utakon Amerikában i. m. 114.

<sup>6</sup> Elkapott sugarak. In: Járatlan utakon Amerikában i. m. 221.

pedig nincs, attól még az is elvétetik, amije van. *„De a fényforrás ott van, és amint egy kis lehetőséget kap, sugarai előtörnek. (...) [B]ár ne törne le azokból egyet sem az élet kegyetlensége s bár mindegyik úgy ragyoghatna ott a magyar élet egén, ahogy az a lélek titokzatos belső világában megszületett.”*<sup>7</sup>

A kötet segítségével felidézhetjük egy alkotó erőtlől vezérelt építkezés folyamatát, melynek ismerete minden érdeklődő olvasónak, de leginkább a történettudomány kedvelőinek, valamint az egyháztörténet és az amerikai történelem kutatóinak válik a javára.

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<sup>7</sup> Uo. 284.

## A KORA ÚJKORI NŐI DISKURZUS LEHETŐSÉGEI

Női tapasztalat a hosszú reformáció kontextusában, szerk.  
Gesztelyi Hermina, Móré Tünde. Reciti, Budapest, 2023.

Antal Teréz

Eszterházy Károly Katolikus Egyetem

Gesztelyi Hermina és Móré Tünde szerkesztésében egy olyan tanulmánykötetet olvashatunk, amely kísérletet tesz arra, hogy „meghalljuk” a kora újkori nők hangját, amit sokszor csak férfiakon keresztül közvetítve és közvetve ismerhetünk. A kötet a 2022. június 14-én a Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Irodalomtudományi Intézetében működő Centre for Reformation Studies és az MTA BTK „Hosszú Reformáció” Lendület Kutatócsoport által megrendezett műhelykonferencia előadásainak tanulmányokká bővített változata. Az ott elhangzott tíz előadás közül hét szerepel benne. Ennek a tanácskozásnak a célja az volt, hogy a kutathatóság és a forrásadottságok módszertani problémáján keresztül vizsgálja meg a női tapasztalat szerepét a reformáció hosszú folyamatának során. A kora újkor változásai vallási és társadalmi téren is jelentősen hatottak a nők szerepére és megjelenésükre a vallási és társadalmi diskurzusokban, hiszen a teológia, az egyházszerkezet, a kegyesség reformációja mellett a társadalmi szerepvállalások is megújultak. A gyűjtemény több szempontból közelít az adott téma felé. Egyrészt olvashatunk a nőkkel kapcsolatos egyházi gondolkodás reformációt követő átalakulásáról, másrészt azokról a társadalmi és kulturális kontextusokról, melyek során az adott diskurzusok megformálódtak.

A tanulmányok különböző forrásokra és módszertani megközelítésekre épülnek. A szerzők egyháztörténeti, irodalomtörténeti, valamint kultúrtörténeti szempontból vizsgálják a nőkkel kapcsolatos 16–18. századi értekezéseket. A tanulmányok egyik erőssége, hogy többféle forrástípust használnak. A forráselemzések teszik lehetővé, hogy a korszak nőképe a kötetben ne csak általános szinten jelenjen meg, hanem a konkrét társadalmi és vallási szempontok is figyelmet kapjanak. Érzékelhető, hogy a szerkesztés során nem lineárisan követhető, egységes narratívát akartak a szerkesztők létrehozni, hanem éppen az eltérő forrástípusokon keresztül szerették volna az olvasónak bemutatni a kora újkori női diskurzus lehetőségeit. A kötet nagyon sokrétű, ezért az olvasás során fontos lehet az egyes fejezetek külön vizsgálata, viszont nem tekinthetünk el azokösszefüggéseitől sem.

A nyitótanulmányban Tóth Zsombor kritikai élel vizsgálja a téma kutathatóságát. Azt gondolom, megalapozottan állíthatjuk, hogy ez az írás adja meg azt az értelmezési irányt, amelyhez a kötet többi része kapcsolódni

tud. Itt vezeti be a szerző a „hosszú reformáció” fogalmát, amely évszázadokon átívelő folyamatra irányítja rá a figyelmet. Hiszen a vallási megújulás hatása nem egy időpillanat volt, nem egy időben és helyen történt meg minden társadalmi rétegben és régióban, hanem jelentős eltérésekkel. Tóth a nagyjait Cserei és a bethleni Bethlen család nőtagjainak íráshasználatát vizsgálja, rávilágítva arra a paradoxonra, hogy a nők hangja gyakran csak a férfiek, egy család férfitagja vagy tagjai által mediálva maradtak fenn. Az előbb említett két erdélyi nemesi család esete különösen szerencsés a vizsgálat szempontjából, hiszen az adott időszakot jól dokumentálták, és a forrásokból rekonstruálható a családi írásbeliség keretein belül a női íráshasználat. A fennmaradt dokumentumok segítségével láthatjuk, hogy a nők nemcsak magánlevelezést folytattak, hanem fontos szerepük volt a családi ügyek intézésében is. Megfigyelhető, hogy a generációk előrehaladásával nem feltétlenül fejlődik lineárisan az írástudás a nők körében, hiszen a katolikus Cserei Judit képzetesebb és akár latinul is értő és írni tudó volt a 17. század végén (15–16. o.), mint a korban később és akár tehetősebb generációk fiatalabb női tagjai.

Ez bizonyítja, hogy a női írásgyakorlat nem kizárólag a kultúra eszköze volt, de adott esetekben a cselekvésé is, mely sokszor a nők kényszerhelyzetéből adódott. Hiszen a férfiak távolléte, bármilyen okból is (háború, politika) olyan helyzetet teremtett a nők számára, amikor részt kellett venniük a döntéshozatalban, vagy át is kellett venniük annak egy részét. Kimutatható, hogy a női íráshasználat intenzitása a feladatokkal egyenesen arányosan növekedett. A tanulmányokból jól látszik, hogy mennyire specifikus körülményekhez köthetőek az adott kutatási és értelmezési folyamatok. Ezért amikor vizsgálatot végzünk, fontos az összes körülményt figyelembe venni, nemcsak magát a forrást, hanem az adott körülményeket is.

A kötet másik jellemző vonala a haldokláshoz, halálhoz kapcsolódó szövegek elemzése. Gyulai Éva Nagylucsei Dóczy Zsuzsanna gyermekágyi, vajúdás közben írt búcsúlevelét dolgozza fel 1596-ból, melyet férjéhez írt. A kötet talán legérzékenyebb és legösszetettebb része ez az elemzés, hiszen az egyén, a vallás, a kultúra és a kor morális elvárásai itt jelennek meg látványosan, kortárs reflexió formájában. Maga a levél, melyben a nő szembenéz a halállal, egyfelől személyes vallomás, teológiai szempontból viszont sorselemzés, mely a keresztény kontextusba emelve elemezhető és értelmezhető. A személyes elemek figyelembevétele különösen értékes a kutatás folyamán, hiszen ezek ritkán dokumentált aspektusait mutatják be a kora újkori létnek. A tanulmány azonban felhívja a figyelmet arra a tényre is, hogy ezek a források sokszor csak másolatban maradtak fenn, ezért akár stilizálás is átmehtettek, vagyis az értelmezés folyamatában figyelembe kell venni a közvetettség problematikáját. Gyulai Éva tanulmánya az apró részletek erejével válik élővé: Dóczy Zsuzsanna alakján keresztül láthatjuk az anyát, aki felkészül 12. gyermekének születésére, de egyben már elkészíti a saját halotti ruháját, hiszen tart a gyermekágyi komplikációktól (42. o.).

Móré Tünde tanulmánya Országh Ilona és Sembrey Fruzsina személyét vizsgálja a halotti beszédek elvárásrendszerének tükrében. E szövegekben a hangsúly a jámborságon, az erkölcsi tisztaságon és a családban betöltött női szerepeken van, tehát a halotti beszédekben inkább ideáltípust láthatunk, mint egyéni életutakat.

Papp Ingrid a nők által betöltött szerepet kutatja a biblikus cseh nyelvű művekben. A protestáns és katolikus nevelés tekintetében kitér a felekezeti különbségekre és hasonlóságokra. Ebben a tanulmányban figyelhetjük meg, hogy milyen belső ellentmondások, eltérések érzékelhetők a gyakorlati lelkivezetés és a homiletikai normakövetés rendszerében, valamint a hiteles történések összekapcsolódása során, és ezáltal rekonstruálható a női diskurzus folyamata az evangélikus prédikátorok íráshasználatán keresztül.

A mű harmadik szerkezeti egysége nyelvtörténeti és irodalmi aspektusokat vizsgál a nőnevelés tágabb kérdéskörén belül. A kora újkori nevelési elvek és gyakorlatok befolyásoló tényezői annak, hogy a nők hogyan és miként „szólhatnak meg”. Hernády Judit Erzsébet a panasz- és vigasztalódás költészetét, Gesztelyi Hermina pedig Wesselényi Kata imádságait elemzi. Petrőczy Éva és H. Kakucska Mária pedig európai kontextusba helyezik a kutatásaikat, előbbi Lobkowitz Poppel Éva és Lady Mary Wortley Montague gyógyítói és oltásügyi tevékenységének összehasonlító vizsgálatával, utóbbi pedig Juan Luis Vives nőnevelési elveinek bemutatásán keresztül. Megfigyelhetjük az olvasás során a nők családi és háztartási szerepek keretein belül meghatározott szerepét, másrészt azokat az új lehetőségeket, amelyek az oktatás vagy az egyházi közösségek életében betöltött aktívabb részvétel lehetőségét mutatják be számukra. Láthatjuk, hogy a személyes érdeklődés alapján írt szövegek és a nevelési traktátusok elsődlegesen a szabályozásra törekednek és ismételten előkerülnek az idealizált női alak legfőbb erényei, melyek annak az értékrendszernek a részei, ami a női identitást elsődlegesen vallási és családi szerepekhez köti. A nőnevelés nem volt egységes, ahogy ennek bizonyosságát H. Kakucska tanulmánya is megmutatja. Különbségek figyelhetők meg a földrajzi elhelyezkedés, a felekezeti hovatartozás és a társadalmi hierarchiában elfoglalt helyzet szerint. Természetes, hogy a különböző társadalmi rétegekhez tartozó nők esetében más-más szempont volt hangsúlyos. Így a nemesi családokban az írásbeliség fontossága a műveltség és kultúra irányába tolódott, míg az egyéb rétegek estén a gyakorlati készségek domináltak.

A tanulmánykötetben a szerzők nemcsak történeti források elemzésére törekednek, hanem a nőkkel kapcsolatos beszédmódok kritikai vizsgálatára is, ami a legnagyobb erőssége a feldolgozásnak. Tóth Zsombor óva int a kora újkori szövegek anakronisztikus, retrospektív feminista olvasatától. Hiszen a teológiai diskurzus és hagyomány úgynevezett gender-szempontokat nem érvényesít és nem alkalmaz. (28. o.) A kötet szerzői is így tesznek: a nőket a saját koruk, a 16–18. század teológiai és

társadalmi elvárásainak megfelelően elemzik, és nem erőltetik rájuk a mai modern nőképet. Jelentős eredmény, hogy a kötet a női szerepek vizsgálatát szélesebb kontextusba helyezi el. Ebből láthatjuk, hogy maga a reformáció nem egységesen, hanem különböző regionális és felekezeti változatokban jelent meg, és a nőkkel kapcsolatos diskurzusok is sokfélék.

A kötet borítóképe megfelelő választás, vizuális analógiaként is értelmezhető az olvasás során. Jan Vermeer *Hölgy levelet ír szobalányával* című (1670 körül) festményének részletén ugyanis a tollat fogó nőalak kapcsolódik a tanulmányok központi kérdésköréhez, a női íráshasználathoz és önkifejezéshez. A festmény megjeleníti a női írásbeliséget, a kommunikáció és a társadalmi szerepek közti érzékenységet is. Vermeernél a levélírás motívuma több mint egyszerű mindennapi tevékenység, inkább a női kommunikáció szimbolikus terét jelenti, utalva a nem nyilvános térben történő megszólalásra és a női diskurzus közvetettségére is. A festmények alakjai között megjelenik a társadalmi alá- illetve fölérendeltség. A háttérben, a falon látható bibliai jelenet pedig a hosszú reformáció keretében vizsgálódó tanulmányok morális, illetve vallási szempontjaira is vonatkoztatható.

*A kora újkori női diskurzus lehetőségei* című kötet megmutatja és be is bizonyítja számunkra azt, hogy a múlt asszonyai nem voltak némák, még ha hangjukat sokszor csak a férjek és más férfiak elbeszélésein, egy könyv margóján, vagy temetési prédikáción keresztül hallhatjuk meg. Életvitelük, küzdelmeik és intellektusuk részét képezik kulturális örökségünknek. A reformáció nőképe összetettebb módon jelenik meg előttünk a tanulmányokon keresztül és általuk árnyaltabb képet tudunk alkotni történeti kutatásaink során. Az egyes részeknek külön-külön is nagy jelentősége van, de együtt olvasva az elemzéseket komplex képet kaphatunk a kora újkori női diskurzusról, annak töredezett és kontextusfüggő voltáról.



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