

ISTVÁN MONOK

## THE BÁNFFY FAMILY'S COURT IN ALSÓLINDVA AND ITS BOOK CULTURE



THE PROTESTANT churches in the period of their establishment and consolidation in the Western part of Hungary owed a lot to the intermarrying and closely affiliated aristocratic families. This area calls for special attention from the point of view of church history because the organizational separation of Protestant churches did not start until the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and ended at the Synod of Csepreg (1612). In addition to the Zrínyis, the Nádasdy, Istvánffy, Batthyány, Thurzó and Révay families, it was up to the Bánffy family of Alsólindva to influence the changes in religion to keep it away from extremism while maintaining all the institutions of cultural life. Since there is no contemporary list left of the Bánffy library, their book culture can only be described through studying the history and the publications of the publishing house they patronized as well as examining the Protestant intellectual circle of their court.<sup>1</sup>

The ancestors of the Bánffy family arrived in Hungary in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The family soon rose and members held important offices by the end of

the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> The genealogy details the branches of (Alsó)Lindva and Bolondóc. In the Alsólindva branch the bearer of the highest office is János Bánffy who held the title of Palatine from 1530 up to his death in 1534. His son, István Bánffy (1522–1568)<sup>3</sup>, Lord Chief Justice and the Chief Bailiff of Zala county (1560–1568) was Protestant. His grandson, Miklós Bánffy (1547–1593)<sup>4</sup>, Supreme Cupbearer became a pillar for the Protestant church in the region. Similarly to other aristocratic families in Hungary, Kristóf, the head of the family (1577–1644) at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century who became Chief Bailiff of Somogy and Zala counties (1622–1643) while holding the position of Keeper of the Treasury and later Supreme Cupbearer, converted to Catholicism. Literature states that the conversion to Catholicism took place in 1598 when he called Simon Bratulich, a Paulian friar to his court<sup>5</sup>. In spite of the fact that Kristóf had 12 children from his two wives he survived all of them. With him the branch of Alsólindva died out.<sup>6</sup> Alsólindva was acquired for a short

1 The most useful publications for studying the history of the Bánffy family of Alsólindva are the following: Elek Séllyei: *Alsólindvai Bánffy nemzetség naplója*. In: *Tudománytár*, Új folyam 5. év. Kötet. Buda, 1841. 252–260., 321–325. (SÉLLYEI 1841); Sándor Horváth: *Alsólendva múltja és jelene*. Alsólendva, 1942. (HORVÁTH 1942); József Németh: *Lendva kulturális és irodalmi jelentősége*. In: *Naptár '87*. Murska Sobota, 1986; Béla Tantalics: *Lendva kulturális emlékei a 16. század második feléből. Kulturne znamenosti Lendave v drugi polovici 16. stoletja*. Zalaegerszeg, 1988. (TANTALICS 1998); György Kulcsár: *Az halálra való készületről rövid tanóság*. Introduction by Tibor Fabiny. Bp., 1990. Ráday Gyűjtemény; Ferenc Tőke: *Spira doktor hitelhagyása. Szigeti győzedelem*. Introduction by Ferenc Tőkei. Bp., 1996. Eötvös József Kiadó (Eötvös Klasszikusok, 9) (TŐKEI 1996); Lajos Bence: *A XVI. századi irodalom és nyomdászat*. Muratáj, 2000. 177–182; Ildikó Hubert: *Kulcsár György az alsólindvai prédikátor*. Lendva, 2001, Galéria-Múzeum Lendva (HUBERT 2001).

2 Iván Nagy: *Magyarország családai czímerekkel nemzedékrendi táblákkal*. I. kötet, Pest, 1857. 160–162. (reprint: Bp., 1987, Kossuth Kiadó; electronic edition (CD-ROM) Bp., 1999, Arcanum Kiadó).

3 Married to Magdolna Guthi Ország.

4 He was married to Orsolya Zrínyi. His daughter Anna became János Révay's wife.

5 HORVÁTH 1942. 36–41.

6 His first wife was Anna Mérey and the second was Ilona Draskovich. HORVÁTH 1942. 36.

period by Ferenc Nádasdy but after his decapitation and the confiscation of his property (1671) the Esterházy family took it over.<sup>7</sup> In the meantime the Bolondóc branch of the Bánffy family also died out with the death of the Protestant László Bánffy, Master of the Royal Horses and Lord High Commissioner (died in 1584) following the early deaths of his sons (1569–1579).<sup>8</sup>

Paul Eber's *Calendarium historicum* was published several times in Wittenberg and enjoyed popularity in Protestant circles. Many surviving copies show that, like the Bible, these were used to record important events in people's family life. István Bánffy who converted to Protestantism bought a copy published in 1551 and from then for generations events in their families and the ones close to them were recorded in it, often from memory. It became a source of information for the period between 1522 and 1617 for the study of this family and also for the age they lived in. Unfortunately the original is lost so only the text published in 1841 is known today.<sup>9</sup> Books from the Bánffy Library have also been lost but it is very likely that they must have possessed copies of the ones published in Alsólindva as well as the books dedicated to members of their family or written in their court.

In 1571 István Báthori prohibited the publication of Protestant books on his estates. This was the year when Rudolf Hoffhalter came of age and moved his press to Alsólindva, owned by Miklós Bánffy.

In 1574 Hoffhalter was ordered to leave upon Maximilian II's decree and was taken in by György Zrínyi in Nedelic.<sup>10</sup> Four publications are known from the years in Alsólindva, of which three were teachings written by György Kulcsár, the minister at the court<sup>11</sup> while the fourth one was a chronicle of the victory at Szigetvár written by Ferenc Tőke. There is no copy left of this latter work.<sup>12</sup>

Most probably György Kulcsár was originally from Slavonia. His family fled the Turks and moved to the North to Zala, he himself to Northern Hungary.<sup>13</sup> He was appointed as schoolmaster (magister) in Miklós Bánffy's house on August 28, 1573. He, however, experienced his stay in Alsólindva as an "exile". The school he taught in must have been there since the 14<sup>th</sup> century as a parish building.<sup>14</sup> Four Protestant teachers preceded him there according to the diary of the Bánffy family: György Rácz of Orbona (from 1544?), András Zuhodolyi, Farkas Bakács of Szentgyörgyvölgy and István Beythe.<sup>15</sup> The latter was a teacher there between 1559 and 1564, then moved to Sárvár to the Nádasdy family for a short time. In 1565 he was called back to Alsólindva as a minister where he stayed until 1574 when he moved to Sopron and then to Németújvár.<sup>16</sup> His successor was György Kulcsár as a minister in Bánffy's court until his death in 1577.<sup>17</sup> Mention must also be made of Ferenc Tőke who lived in Alsólindva between 1553 and 1556. Whether he was a schoolmaster or a minister is not known<sup>18</sup> but he wrote two of his

7 HORVÁTH 1942. 36-41.

8 Pál died in 1576 and János in 1594.

9 SÉLLYEI 1841.

10 The most recent summaries based on Gedeon Borsas's fundamental study (*Rudolphus Hoffhalters Typographie in der gegend von Mur und Drau*. Vjesnik Bibliotekara Hrvatske, 1968. 26–34) are the following: Judit V. Ecsedy: *A könyvnyomtatás Magyarországon a kéziszajtó korában 1473–1800*. Bp., 1999, Balassi Kiadó, 62–63., and Judit V. Ecsedy: *A régi magyarországi nyomdák betűi és díszei 1473–1600*. Bp., 2004. Balassi Kiadó (Hungariae Typographica I.) 91–98.

11 RMNy 319: *Az halálra való készületről rövid tanosság*; RMNy 320: *Az ördögnek a penitencia tartó bűnösselel való vetekedeseiről*; RMNy 334: *Postilla*.

12 RMNy 321: *Historia obsidionis regiae, Sygeth*.

13 The most complete summary of his life with bibliography and translations in Slovenian and German: HUBERT 2001.

14 TANTALICS 1988. 15.

15 SÉLLYEI 1841., HORVÁTH 1942. 24–25.; TANTALICS 1988. 15.

16 ÚMIL 227. (Heltai János).

17 Apart from them the only known Protestant minister active in Alsólindva was János Gál, still at work in 1616. Cf. HORVÁTH 1942. 28.

18 TANTALICS 1988. 21–25.; TŐKEI 1996. (with complete bibliography).

books there. One of them was most probably published by the Hoffhalter press (*Historia obsidionis regiae Sygeth*),<sup>19</sup> while the other one (the story of Francesco Spira) came out as a part of Péter Bornemisza's hymn-book in 1582.<sup>20</sup>

When listing the intellectuals living in Alsólindva mention must also be made of Gáspár Ráskai who visited the Bánffy family between 1551–1552. It is here he wrote his story of the brave Francesco and his wife (*Egy szép história az vitéz Fransiscoroul és az ő feleségéről*) which was later published in Debrecen in 1574.<sup>21</sup> Another intellectual who is thought to have stayed in Alsólindva is Nicholas Mednienski who is also mentioned as “rector Beckoviensis” and secretary to László Bánffy in the collection entitled *Libellus exercitiorum poeseos scholasticorum* by the Lutheran teacher Valentius Mader of Trencsén.<sup>22</sup>

Apart from the above-mentioned books, the Bánffy Library must have had copies of the books dedicated to various members of the family. The relationship between the Bánffy family and Péter Bornemisza is also worth noting. Bornemisza mentions the support he received from László Bánffy and his wife Borbála Somy in the first part of his five-volume book (*Postilla*),<sup>23</sup> while he dedicated the second volume to them.<sup>24</sup> One of the first suc-

cesses of the Fifteen Years' War was the battle at Gyurgyevó on October 30, 1595. Péter Pellérdi, the major-domo of Zsigmond Báthori, the Prince of Transylvania gave a description of this victory in a letter addressed to an aristocrat in Hungary. The letter was published in Németújvár in 1596 by the Joannes Manlius press dedicated to Kristóf Bánffy, the master of Alsólindva, the neighbouring castle.<sup>25</sup>

In every aristocratic court there were a number of ‘familiares’ and bailiffs in charge of directing the farms. The cultural pattern was laid down for them by the aristocratic family and they themselves bought books depending on their financial means and personal inclination. It was a good marker of the intellectual level of the aristocratic court if there were some literate bailiffs around the aristocratic family. Several examples can be cited, such as György Perneszi<sup>26</sup> or Ákos Csányi<sup>27</sup> at the Nádasdy court, or István Jóna<sup>28</sup> at György Zrínyi's court. Tamás Komlós of the village called Böde in Zala county was such a major-domo for László Bánffy. One of Komlós' books survived in the Franciscan library of Németújvár: Alexander de Villa Dei: *Doctrinale, cum commentariis Hermanni Torrentini...* Venetiis, 1519, printed by Petrus Lichtenstein for Urban Keym, a merchant of Buda.<sup>29</sup>



19 RMNy 321; TÖKEI 1996.

20 RMNy 513; TÖKEI 1996.

21 RMNy 344; TANTALICS 1988. 16-21.

22 RMNy 611.

23 Sempte, 1573 RMNy 333.

24 Sempte, 1574 RMNy 355.

25 RMNy 785.

26 His booklist from 1560: *Magyarországi magánkönyvtárak, I: 1533–1657*. Ed.: András Varga. Bp.-Szeged, 1986 (ADATTÁR 13.) 13–14.

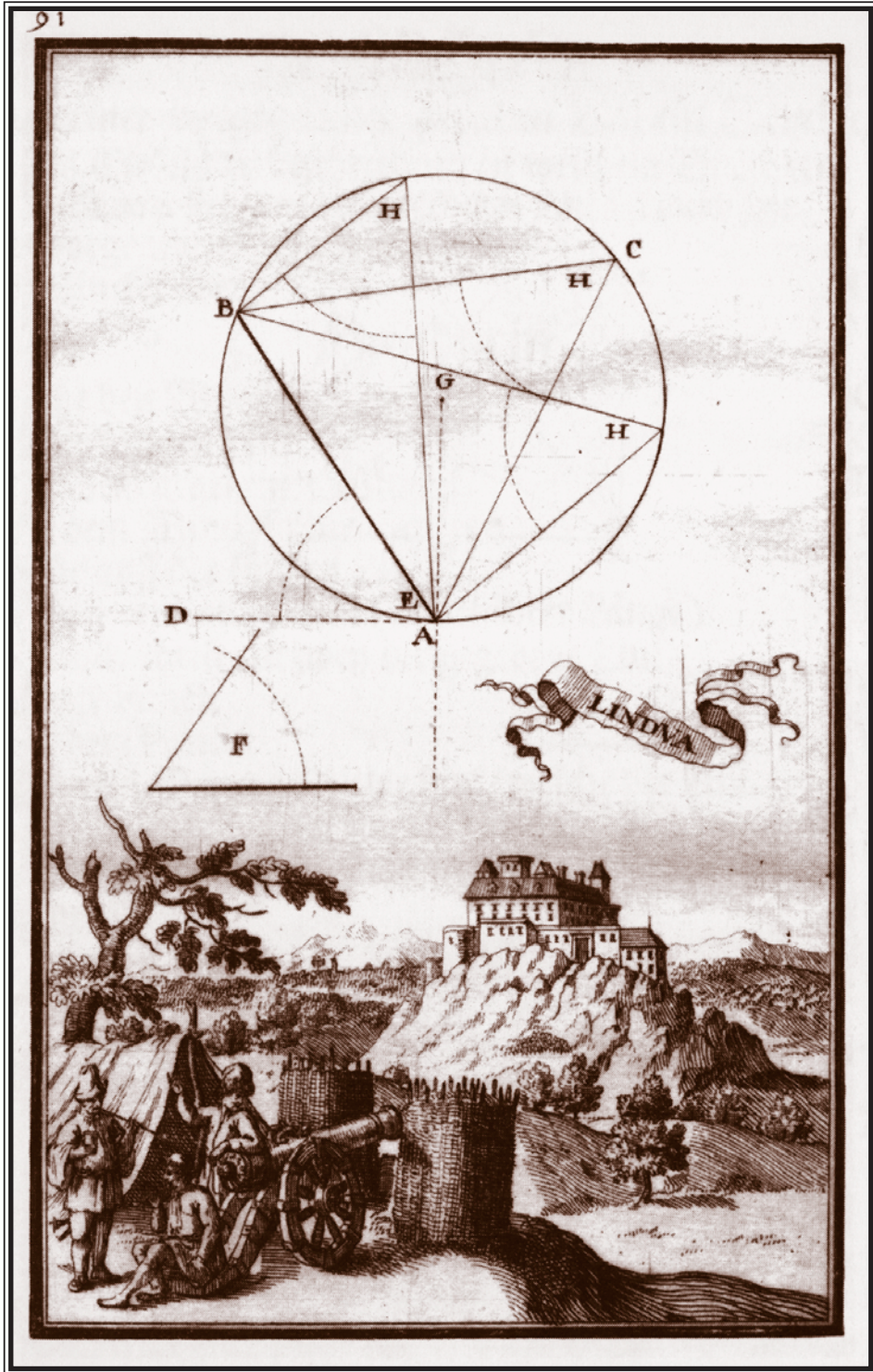
27 Sándor Óze: *500 magyar levél a XVI. századból. Csányi Ákos levelei Nádasdy Tamáshoz 1549–1562*. I–II. kötet. Budapest, 1996, Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum.; cf. Elemér Májusz: *A Nádasdy levéltár magyar levelei 1531–1549*. Levéltári Közlemények, 1923; Géza Istványi: *A magyar nyelvű írásbeliség kialakulása*. Budapest, 1934; László Papp: *Magyar nyelvű levelek és okiratok a XVI. századból*. Budapest, 1964. (Nyelvtudományi Értekezések.44.)

28 Of his 15 books cf.: *A Bibliotheca Zriniana története és állománya – History and Stock of the Bibliotheca Zriniana*, written and edited by Gábor Hausner, Tibor Klaniczay, Iván Kovács Sándor, István Monok, Géza Orlovsky, ed. Tibor Klaniczay. Budapest, 1992. Argumentum-Akadémiai Kiadó. (Zrínyi Könyvtár 4.)

29 Güssing, Franziskanerkloster 3/130



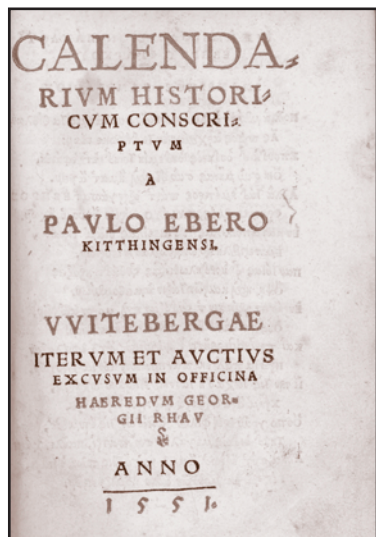
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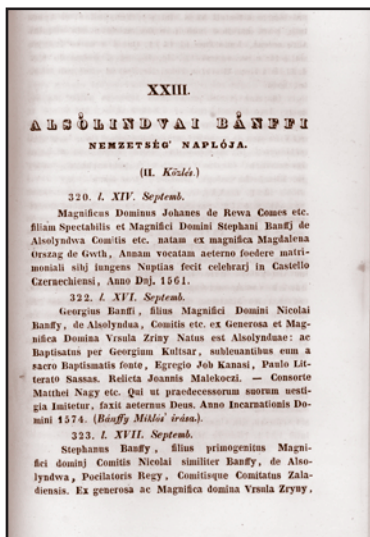
## DESCRIPTION OF THE EXHIBITS

1. **ALSÓLINDVA**, Copper engraving, 170×115 mm (Justus van der Nypoort) Burckhard von Birckenstein, Anton Ernst: *Ertzherzogliche Handgriffe dess Zirckels und Limials*. Wien, 1686, Johann Van Ghelen. OSZK App. H. 1217

2. **EBER, PAUL**: *Calendarium historicum. Wittenbergae, in officina haeredum Georgii Rhau, 1551, 8°, OSZK Ant. 7557*

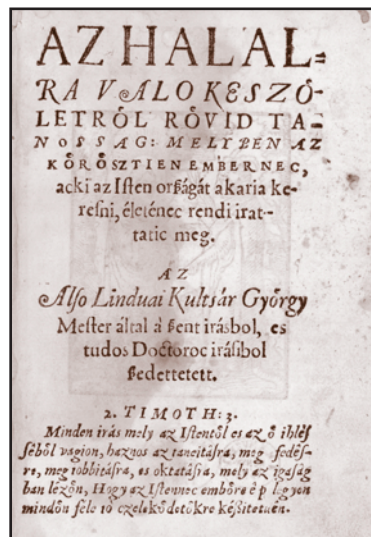


Paul Eber, one of the classics of the Protestant philosophy of history at Wittenberg, published an almanac every year where lessons in history and teachings mingled with traditional elements of a calendar. Many copies of these almanacs served as album amicorum, Stammbuch or family diary. The members of the Bánffy family recorded the most important family events in an almanac published in 1551, some from memory often decades after the event had taken place. Unfortunately the original copy has been lost. First it was kept at the town parish in Légrad, then at the National Museum in Budapest.



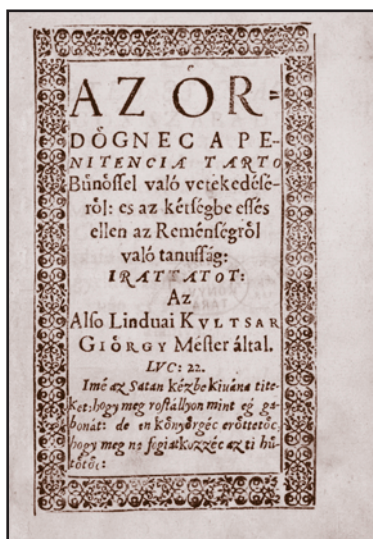
3. **ELEK SÉLLEYEI**: *Alsó-lindvai Bánffy nemzetség naplója. Tudománytár. 9. kötet, 1841. OSZK copy*. The original of the Bánffy family's diary is lost (See item 2) but the text is known through Elek Sélleyei's publication.

4. **GYÖRGY KULCSÁR**: *Az halálra való készletről rövid tanosság ... Lyndvae, Rudolf Hoffhalter, 1573, 8°, RMNy 319, OSZK RMK I. 96*



Lutheran meditations on the preparation for death. György Kulcsár was a Protestant teacher, and later a minister who dedicated this piece to *Nicolao Banfi de Alsolindva*. There is a chapter on eternal happiness and damnation at the end of the book addressed to the readers (*Ad lectorem*).





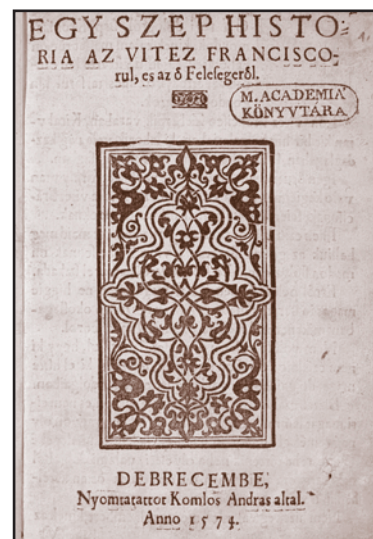
5. GYÖRGY KULCSÁR: *Az ördögnek a penitencia tartó bűnösével való vetekedéséről es az kétségbeesés ellen az reménységről való tanusság.* Also Linduán, Rudolf Hoffhalter, 1573, 8°, RMNy 320, OSZK RMK I. 97

Lutheran meditations in the form of a dialogue between the tempter and the sinner. It is dedicated to the members of the Zrínyi family, György, Kristóf and Miklós. The book is a translation of Urbanus Rhegius's *Dialogus inter satanam et peccatorem poenitentem*. Frankfurt am Main, 1545, published by Peter Braubach.

6. GYÖRGY KULCSÁR: *POSTILLA, az az evangéliomoknak, mellicket esztendő által a kereszténec gyöleközeteibe szoktat olvasni es hirdetni, prédicatio szerint való magyarázattia ...* Also Lyndvan, Rudolf Hoffhalter, 1574, 4°, RMNy 334, OSZK RMK I. 114

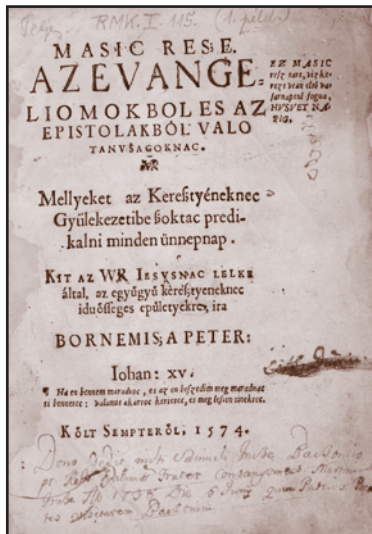


A Lutheran collection of sermons and commentary on the books of the Bible. The author dedicated his book to Miklós Bánffy. It enjoyed great popularity in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. New editions: Bártfa, 1579 (RMNy 426), and Bártfa, 1597 (RMNy 793).



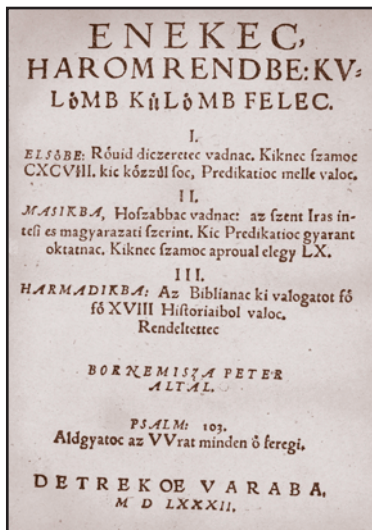
7. GÁSPÁR RÁSKAI: *Vitéz Francisco históriája.* Debrecembe, 1574, Komlós András, 4°, RMNy 344, MTAK RMK I. 108

Gáspár Ráskai was a nobleman, probably the son of the Chief Bailliff of Nógrád, Gáspár Ráskai (? –1526) who died at the battle of Mohács. Gáspár Ráskai, jr. lived at the Bánffy's court in Alsólindva between 1551 and 1552. It is here that he translated the romance of the brave Francisco (a courtly tale well-known in Europe) from Latin into Hungarian.



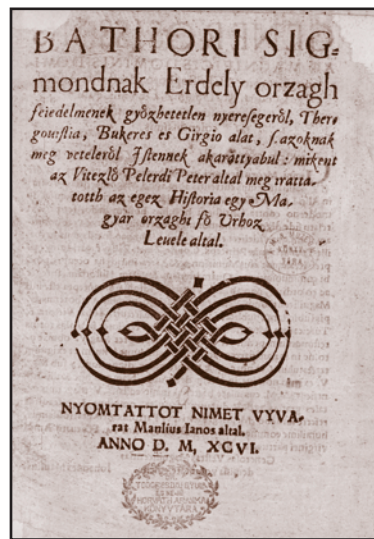
8. PÉTER BORNEMISZA: *Masic része az evangeliomokból es az epistolakból valo tanvsagoknac ... Sempte, 1574, typis Bornemisza, 4°, RMNy 355, OSZK RMK I. 115*

Péter Bornemisza (1535–1584), one of the most influential writers of the Lutheran church in Hungary in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, dedicated his epistles to Borbála Somi, the wife of László Bánffy de Alsólindva.



9. ENEKEK HAROM RENDBE ... *Rendeltettek Bornemisza Peter által. Detrekoe, 1582, typis Bornemisza, 4°, RMNy 513. Our copy is a facsimile.*

One of books of Ferenc Töke who lived in the court of the Bánffys between 1553 and 1556. The history of Francesco Spira is known in Hungary only from this 16<sup>th</sup> century edition. Spira was an Italian scholar in jurisdiction who became a Protestant but later was forced to reconvert to Catholicism. God, however, punished him for his lack of steadfastness.



10. PÉTER PELLÉRDI: *Bathori Sigmondnak, Erdely orzagh fejedelmének győzhetetlen nyeresegeről Thergouistia, Bukares es Girgio alat ... historia ... Nimet Vyarat, 1596, Johannes Manlius, 4°, RMNy 785, OSZK Sztripszky I 1838/45* Péter Pellérdi, Báthori's major-domo, gives an eye-witness account of the battle against the Turks at Gyurgyevó (October 30, 1595) in his historical epistle. The printer dedicated the book to Kristóf Bánffy.



11. ALEXANDER DE VILLA DEI; *Torrentinus, Hermannus, comm.: Doctrinale ... Venetiis, 1519, Petrus Lichtenstein für Urban Keym in Buda. – Grammatica Venetiis, 1509, Petrus Lichtenstein für Johannes Pap (in Buda). 4° Güssing OFM 3/130*

It is characteristic of the intellectual level of the court in Alsólindva that the intendant of the court, Tamás Komlós of Böde in Zala county owned the collection which survived. Komlós's inscription: "Suo Jure possidet me Thomas Komlós de Bewde ... Prefectus Bonorum Magistri Domini Ladislai Banffy de Alsolyndua"





FERENC NÁDASDY, WITHOUT DATE, OSZK APP. M. 391 – COPPER ENGRAVING