

The „last native king”. John Sigismund Zapolya in the Transylvanian literature of 1570s

The paper investigates the ways of commemoration of John Sigismund Zapolya (Hung. Szapolyai, 1540-71), the elected King of Hungary and Prince of Transylvania, in the Transylvanian literature written or published in the first decade after the ruler's death. Taken into account are texts of various genres and partly also for different readers: the Latin humanist epic of a Transylvanian Saxon author Christian Schesaeus, the popular poetic chronicle by András Valkai, poetry of Demeter Csanádi, Johannes Sommer and commemorative work by Jan Gruszczyński, a Polish nobleman at Transylvanian service in the 1560s. Analyzed in the historical and cultural context of the new Transylvanian state, the texts reveal a considerable role of defining its historical identity and tradition, a goal the authors in question tried to achieve by creation of an positive image of the deceased young sovereign – seemingly not very suitable for a literary figure of a heroic ruler. The interpretations of his life and reign, frequently based on the idea of Fortune/Fate, merged with political (supporters of Gáspár Bekes in the early 1570s like Csanádi and Valkai, later on antagonists of the Habsburgs and followers of the ruler of Hungarian origin) and confessional (Protestant, in case of Valkai, Csanádi and Sommer – Unitarian) motivations. As a result, the study gives an detailed insight in the beginnings of the separate Transylvanian historical memory, closely connected with the Hungarian tradition and enriched with Polish-Hungarian references, both historical (Jagiellonian kinship of John Sigismund) and actual (reign of Stephen Báthory).