

Pioneer Hungarian Women in Science and Education. Edited by Réka M. Cristian and Anna Kérchy.

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Pioneer Hungarian Women in Science and Education is an astounding portrait collection of the lives and works of outstanding Hungarian women scholars born before 1945. It follows in the footsteps of such publications as *Nők a magyar tudományban* [Women in Hungarian Science] issued in 2010. The volume gives us a glimpse of the world of pioneering women scientists and educators in historical Hungary. Its aim is to give female academics, both past and present, more visibility. At the same time, it is also an encouragement to women of all ages to chase their dreams and desires with passion, as this is how memorable goals are fulfilled. As the book is in English, it addresses a wider reading audience, encouraging foreigners to discover these Hungarian scholars.

The editors chose to include the period from the second half of the nineteenth century to the end of the World War II. This timeframe is significant as it is in this period that women first appear in Hungarian higher education. The editors also found it important to introduce female scholars who lived, worked, and attracted significant attention for their academic achievements in their home country. The extraordinary women included in the book were active in a vast variety of scientific disciplines, with archaeology, mathematics, chemistry, musicology, and medicine among them. Each entry begins with a portrait of the scholar we are to meet: this wise editorial touch brings the scholars closer to the readers. As a thoughtful addition, at the end of each chapter we find a list of recommended further readings if we wish to find out more about these women.

The book is divided into ten chapters with a total of thirteen biographies. In the first chapter, Béla Pukánszky's study takes us to see the fundamental efforts of Teréz Brunszvik and Blanka Teleki in making education available for more women, which was by no means an easy enterprise. In the Hungary of the last decade of the nineteenth century, a decent woman's place was still in the home with her family,

as highlighted by several historical excerpts. In the second chapter, introduced by Réka M. Cristian, we learn about the first Hungarian female archaeologist: Zsófia Torma. Considering that at Torma's time archaeology was still an emerging field, her achievements are even more notable. The next chapter is the biography of astronomer Berta Degenfeld-Schomburg written by Katalin Kéri. A tribute to Vilma Hugonnai, Sarolta Steinberger, and Margit Genersich, Hungary's first female physicians, is offered by Éva Bruckner. Since in the latter half of the nineteenth century medicine was still strictly reserved for men, women's contribution to the medical field is extremely remarkable.

Thanks to Zsuzsanna Arany's research, we then move on to learn about Valéria Dienes, the first woman with a university doctorate in Hungary. Dienes contributed both to academia and the arts: she certainly was a woman of many talents, including philosophy, translation, and dancing. The life of Maria Dudich Vendl, the first Hungarian female mineralogist, who contributed to the study of morphological crystallography, is explored by Andrea Varga. The botanist Vera Csapody is introduced by Larisa Kocic-Zámbó. Csapody enriched botany with a legacy of 11,200 scientifically accurate drawings and watercolors, that we can find in the *Icones Pictae Planarum* today. Péter Gábor Szabó introduces the life of Rózsa Péter, Hungary's first female mathematician: a queen among the many kings in 'the queen of sciences' as mathematics is often jokingly referred to. Anna Dalos writes about Margit Prahács, a prominent figure in the realm of musicology. Prahács went against the typical female stereotypes of Hungary's Horthy era by dedicating her life to her studies. She was inspired by Teréz Brunszvik: hers is a perfect example of how powerful women can empower each other. In the last chapter, Magdolna Hargittai draws our attention to Ilona Banga's achievements in biochemistry. As Hargittai points out, her role as an assistant to Albert Szent-Györgyi has been much underrated.

As stated by its editors, *Pioneer Hungarian Women in Science and Education* is part of an ongoing project in the celebration of women's history and scholarly achievements. Indeed, a study that carefully collects and analyses the life and work of the first female academics in Hungary is essential. The book is hopefully the first volume in a series where more will follow: it is a space that brings together not only women scholars but those who believe it is necessary to remember the names of the pioneers who paved the way for science to be accessible for all, regardless of gender or financial background. Their sacrifice was great, as we can see, for example, in a painting that shows Blanka Teleki's captivity. The pain they endured to reach their goals should not be forgotten. Moreover, the women presented in the book invite us to critically question the social construct of femininity: is there only one way to be feminine? Do women really lose their femininity when they decide to pursue their goals outside the fields a male-dominated society deems adequate for them?

Finally, we have to remember that pioneering women are not just figures from the distant past. They are very much part of our present, and for their contribution to science and general social development, they truly deserve recognition.

