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## Poverty or not? : economic aspects of the mendicant friaries in medieval Transylvania

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Hereditas Monasteriorum 3, 111-133

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2013

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

## Poverty or not? Economic aspects of the mendicant friaries in medieval Transylvania

The significance of monasticism was probably at its greatest and most varied within western Christianity during the Middle Ages. Its history was in essence a continuation of the Eastern and Western monasticism of late antiquity, and it laid the foundations for the great orders of the high and late Middle Ages, which shaped the course of history. Monasteries and communities of clerics and hermits set the tone in the spirituality of the whole church, in education and art, in the transmission of culture, in agriculture and the social structures, in fact, they formed a basis in these fields. Over and above this, they were participants in the political life of kingdoms and principalities, to an extent which varied with time and place.

The reason for choosing the life of a monk was the idea of divine vocation, a kind of charismatic talent for ascetic concentration. The models for this way of life were the apostles and the communities of the early church on the one hand and the future, as then conceived, on the other. It was rooted in the desire to be as close as possible both to the pattern of behavior common in Christ's own times and to his eternal kingdom, which was considered not to be of this world<sup>1</sup>. However it neither could, nor should have any great significance whether this was an achievable goal. Monas-

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1 There is a large literature on this subject. As leading on the theme, see C. BROOKE, *The age of the cloister. The story of monastic life in the middle ages*, Mahwah, NJ, 2003, pp. 1–28; C. H. LAWRENCE, *Medieval monasticism. forms of religious life in Western Europe in the middle ages*, London-New York, 1989<sup>2</sup>, pp. 1–13; R. W. SOUTHERN, *Western society and the Church in the middle ages*, Harmondsworth, 1970, pp. 13–24, 261–264; J. SORABELLA, *Monasticism in Western Medieval Europe*, [in:] *Heilbrunn timeline of art history*, New York, 2000, [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/mona/hd\\_mona.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/mona/hd_mona.htm) (originally published October 2001, last revised March 2013) (accessed: 9 June 2013); A. LABATT, Ch. APPELYARD, *Mendicant Orders in the medieval world*, *ibidem*, [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/mend/hd\\_mend.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/mend/hd_mend.htm) (published October 2004) (accessed 9 June 2013); P. LEVI, *The frontiers of paradise. A study of monks and monasteries*, New York, 1987; P. RANFT, *Women and the religious life in premodern Europe*, New York 1996; H. DEY, E. FENTRESS (eds.), *Western monasticism ante litteram. The spaces of monastic observance in late antiquity and the early middle ages*, Turnhout, 2011, hear especially H. DEY, *Bringing chaos out of order. New approaches to the study of early western monasticism*, pp. 19–42. Further reading: G. CONSTABLE, *Medieval monasticism. A select bibliography* (Toronto medieval bibliographies, 6), Toronto, 1976.

2 R. N. SWANSON, *Religion and devotion in Europe, c. 1215–c. 1515*, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 1–21; G. TELLENBACH, *The Church in Western Europe from the tenth to the early twelfth century*, Cambridge-New York, 1993, pp. 101–103; K. SZÁNTÓ, *A katolikus egyház története*, vol. 1, Budapest, 1983, pp. 36–64, 101–129; E. HERMANN, *A katolikus egyház története Magyarországon. 1914-ig* (Dissertationes Hungaricae ex historia Ecclesiae, 1), München, 1973, pp. 14–46.

ticism occasionally reflected an ancient Christian attitude of protest against those fellow Christians and their institutions which had allowed themselves to become too concerned with the things of this world<sup>2</sup>.

One main concern of monasticism is the contact between monasteries and the world and with monasticism's effects on the world. The monastic tradition involves the history of foundations and founding families and of monastic possessions, donors and donations, and the acquisition, preservation, and exploitation of property. Thus, it implies charters and *scriptoria*, relations with princes and nobles in the immediate vicinity or further afield, and with bishops and other monasteries. Great consideration should be given to the role of abbots, to their origins and to their actions inside and outside their monastery. The study of liturgy, monastic customs, and religious attitudes has thrown light on the life of monasteries.

With all monastic benefaction, the primary motive was that of safeguarding the soul of the benefactor and the souls of his relatives. The merit that accrued to an individual through prayer and good works could be transferred to other people, and not only to the living, but also to the dead. This concept played a crucial role in medieval religious practice. To found and endow a community of monks was to ensure for the donor an unceasing fund of intercession and sacrifice which would avail him and his relatives both in life and after death. This concern was associated with the belief that people could, and should, make amends – and in a practical sense, give satisfaction – for their sins<sup>3</sup>. Repentance attracted divine forgiveness, but without satisfaction it was not enough; as in the Germanic *comitatus* and Norman feudal system, compensation must be paid to the wronged party and in the case of sin, the wronged party was God. The idea of restitution was fostered by the early medieval penitential, whose system in part explains the eagerness of rulers, nobles and communities to found and endow monasteries. A gift to a monastery was in and of itself a meritorious act, which might remit a long period of penance. More importantly, the monks, through their penitential life of continual prayer and fasting, acted as surrogates for their benefactor; they performed the act of contrition on his behalf<sup>4</sup>.

Besides these spiritual advantages, the patron of a monastery hoped to obtain temporal benefits from his foundation. The royal and noble dynasties used monasteries to provide sinecures for members of their families (especially younger sons) who could not otherwise be assisted. In the main, personal piety and social convenience were the twin primary motives that prompted rulers to encourage monasticism in

3 For sin as a problem at the crux of both medieval theology and the judicial system, see T. WILEY, *Original sin. origins, developments, and contemporary meanings*, New York, 2002, pp. 76–89; R. N. SWANSON, *Religion and devotion*, pp. 18–22, 28, 193–194, 328–330; G. R. EVANS, *Law and theology in the middle ages*, London, 2002; J. R. GINTHER, *The Westminster handbook to medieval theology*, Louisville, KY, 2009.

4 A. HASTINGS, A. MASON, H. PYPHER (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought. Intellectual, spiritual, and moral horizons of Christianity*, New York-Oxford, 2000, pp. 432–433; C. H. LAWRENCE, *Medieval monasticism*, pp. 67–68; P. RIHOJET, *The unifying power of moving pictures in late medieval and renaissance Umbria*, A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of doctor of philosophy in the Department of History of Art and Architecture at Brown University, Providence, 2008, pp. 321–333.

their dominions, but they were not the only ones. There were also wider considerations of public policy. The monasteries of the eastern region of the Hungarian Kingdom called Transylvania had an important role in the conversion of the Cumans and Romanians from Orthodoxy to Catholicism<sup>5</sup>. The choice of the Hungarians to adopt Western Christianity had already been made by the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

### Monastic settlements in medieval Transylvania

During the Middle Ages seven religious orders belonging to the monastic, mendicant and eremitical movements were established in Transylvania: the Benedictines, the Cistercians, the Premonstratensians, the Dominicans, the Franciscans, the Austin Hermits, and the Paulines<sup>6</sup>. All these orders, but most notably the Franciscans and Dominicans, spread at a rate hitherto unseen by other orders. At the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century these seven orders had built fifty-one monasteries, friaries and nunneries<sup>7</sup>. In my analysis I shall deal only with the mendicant friaries that received some specific donations or benefited from testaments<sup>8</sup>. At the beginning, I intend to give a brief description of the specifically Hungarian traits of these orders, their place of settlement, the kind of activities they promoted and the belongings and incomes they were granted by the founders and donors. The place is known in the case of every friary, but the foundation charters, manorial records and records of perambulations are missing almost in every case. As for the settling places all friaries were situated on the main commercial routes, such as the most important water ways (Mureş/Maros, Someş/Szamos), the amber road used since ancient times (Oradea/Várad/Grosswardein – Meseş/Meszes – Cluj/Kolozsvár/Klausenburg – Turda/Torda/Thorenburg – Alba Iulia / Gyulafehérvár / Weissenburg) or the road leading from Po-

5 E. FÜGEDI, *A koldulórendek elterjedése Európában és Magyarországon*, [in:] A. HARI (ed.), *Koldulórendi építészet a középkori Magyarországon. Tanulmányok* (Művészettörténet – műemlékvédelem, 7), Budapest, 1994, p. 18.

6 The Teutonic Order, settled for just seventeen years in the Hungarian Kingdom in Transylvania was not included in this analysis. They are extensively discussed H. ZIMMERMANN, *Der Deutsche Orden im Burzenland. Eine Diplomatiscche Untersuchung* (Studia Transylvanica, 26), Köln-Wien, 2000; H. GLASSL, *Der Deutsche Orden im Burzenland und im Kumanien (1211–1225)*, "Ungarn-Jahrbuch", 3, 1971, pp. 23–49; J. LASZLOVSKY, Z. SOÓS, *Historical monuments of the Teutonic Order in Transylvania*, [in:] Zs. HUNYADY, J. LASZLOVSKY (eds.), *The crusaders and the military Orders. Expanding the frontiers of medieval latin Christianity* (CEU Mediaevalia, 1), Budapest, 2001, pp. 319–336.

7 The distribution of foundations order by order may be indicated by the following schema, in which the first number indicates a monastery or friary, and the second indicates a nunnery or convent: Benedictines (3; 1), Cistercians (1; 1), Premonstratensians (3; 2), Dominicans (9; 5), Franciscans (16; 3), Austin Hermits (3; 0), and Paulines (4; 0). Only the certain foundations had been taking into account. See also: M. LUPESCU MAKÓ, *A Domonkos Rend középkori erdélyi kolostorainak adattára*, "Történelmi Szemle", s.n. 46, 2004, pp. 339–384; B. F. ROMHÁNYI, *Kolostorok és társaskáptalanok a középkori Magyarországon. Katalógus*, Budapest, 2000; A. A. RUSU, N. SABĂU, I. BURNICHIOIU, I. V. LEB, M. LUPESCU MAKÓ, *Dicţionarul mănăstirilor din Transilvania, Banat, Crişana şi Maramureş*, Cluj-Napoca, 2000.

8 The following friaries cannot be included in our investigation because of the paucity of sources: Odorheiu Secuiesc/Székelyudvarhely (Dominican), Tălmaciu/Talmács, Bojtor, Cuişeş/Kövesd, Haţeg/Hátszeg and Braşov (Franciscan).

land to Buda and towards Transylvania. With regard to the trading routes, some of the friaries are on the Mureş (Vinţul de Jos/Alvinc/Unter-Winz – Dominican, Alba Iulia – Dominican, Austin Hermits, Târgu Mureş/Marosvásárhely – Franciscan), others on the Someş (Cluj – Dominican, Franciscan, Dej/Dés/Desch – Austin Hermits), and one lies on another river (Turda – Austin Hermits, on the Arieş/Aranyos). Finally, eleven other friaries (Vinţul de Jos – Dominican, Sighişoara/Segesvár/Schässburg – Dominican, Sebeş/Szászsebes/Mühlbach – Dominican, Mediaş/Medgyes/Mediasch – Franciscan, Orăştie/Szászváros/Broos – Franciscan, Bistriţa/Beszterce/Bistritz, Braşov/Brassó/Kronstadt and Sibiu / Szeben / Hermannstadt<sup>9</sup>) were lying on the Saxon land on important commercial and military routes leading south towards the Balkans and Constantinople. Some of these settlements were the most important market places of Transylvania, such as Sibiu and Braşov<sup>10</sup>.

The relationship between the settling places of the orders and commerce is even more remarkable when the privileges of each friary are considered. For instance, in 1310 the Virgin Mary Austin Hermit monastery of Dej received a privilege from King Charles I for transportation of salt<sup>11</sup>. According to the royal charter the monastery was given two cubes of salt for each cart transporting salt from Ocna Dejului/Dé-sakna to Dej. The Austin Hermit friars also had permission to sell it freely on the Ocna Dejului, Dej, Satu Mare/Szatmárnémeti or in other markets.

An interesting picture develops if we take into account the choice of settling areas for each house, order by order. Out of those eight Dominican friaries included in our analysis, two, those of Vinţul de Jos and of Alba Iulia, were situated on the most important river of Transylvania, the Mureş, playing an important role in the salt trade. Besides this, Alba Iulia was the center of the Transylvanian bishopric. Another five friaries (Braşov, Cluj, Sibiu, Sighişoara, Sebeş) lay on important commercial and military routes. Furthermore, Sibiu was also the ecclesiastical center of the Transylvanian Saxons. Of course, the arrival of the Dominicans was not directly connected to the presence of these commercial roads, but the towns and market towns, which emerged on the roads and their inhabitants, could ensure the necessary social and economic basis for the Dominicans and the mendicant orders in general<sup>12</sup>. We can also add that

9 Bistriţa, Sibiu and Braşov are represented by two mendicant friaries (Dominican and Franciscan).

10 The early general chapters of the mendicant orders repeatedly dealt with the choosing place of the new houses. A good overview of this subject is offered by C. H. LAWRENCE, *The Friars. The impact of the early mendicant movement on western society*, London-New York, 1994, pp. 80–81, 102–108. See also A. VAUCHEZ, *Spiritualitatea evului mediu occidental*, Bucureşti, 1994, pp. 153–155.

11 *Anjou-kori oklevéltár = Documenta res Hungaricas tempore regum Andegavensium illustrantia 1301–1387*, vol. 2: 1306–1310, ed. G. KRISTÓ, Budapest-Szeged, 1991, no. 1004. Salt played an important role in the economic life of the Hungarian Cistercians as well: L. LÉKAI, *A ciszterciek. Eszmény és valóság*, Budapest, 1991, p. 307. For the salt trade in Hungary, see A. KUBINYI, *Königliches Salzmonopol und die Städte des Königreichs Ungarn in Mittelalter*, [in:] W. RAUSCH (ed.), *Stadt und Salz. Im Auftrag des österreichischen Arbeitskreises für Stadtgeschichtsforschung* (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Städte Mitteleuropas, 10), Linz (Donau), 1988, pp. 36–41. Recently, the salt donations as alms in late medieval Hungary was analyzed by B. F. ROMHÁNYI, *A só mint alamizsna a későközépkorban*, "Orpheus Noster", 4, 2012, pp. 7–17.

12 E. FÜGEDI, *A koldulórendek elterjedése*, pp. 15–20.

all friaries except three were settled on the Saxon land. However, it is obvious that the Dominican Friars had chosen their setting place wisely, since their settlements coincided with the most important commercial centers of the period<sup>13</sup>.

While the Dominicans preferred to settle in “traditional” centers, namely large towns, the Franciscans accepted friaries in market towns and even villages as well. Half of the Transylvanian Franciscan houses were built in smaller or less important towns and villages under seigneurial authority. In this, they seem to have accommodated themselves more to the exigencies of Hungarian society, which preferred “family monasteries” such as that of the Jakcs family in Coșeiu/Kusaly, Losonci Dezsőfi in Suseni/Marosfalu or Farkas of Herina in Bistrița<sup>14</sup>. The other half of the Franciscan friaries were in the aforementioned important Saxon and Székely towns. The three big Saxon centers, Sibiu, Brașov and Bistrița, dominated the passes leading to the Romanian voivodates (Wallachia and Moldavia). The active trade with the two Romanian voivodates was one of the major reasons for the growth of Transylvanian towns, mostly Sibiu and Brașov<sup>15</sup>. The other important Saxon town, Bistrița, had already gained control over the Polish route through Moldavia in 1368<sup>16</sup>. Although the merchants from these towns conducted dynamic business with the Romanian voivodates, they seldom went east<sup>17</sup>. Saxon tradesmen preferred to go west, particularly

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13 On the relation between the urban development and mendicant orders, see E. FÜGEDI, *La formation des villes et les ordres mendiants en Hongrie*, “Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations”, 25, 1970, pp. 966–987. The Hungarian version of this article appeared two years later: IDEM, *Koldulórendek és városfejlődés Magyarországon*, “Századok”, 106, 1972, pp. 69–94. In writing these articles Fügedi not only applied Le Goff’s hypothesis for the Hungarian situation, but also added new points of view, such as the role of the hospitals in the urbanization process. J. LE GOFF wrote on the same theme: *Apostolat mendant et fait urbain dans la France médiévale: L’implantation des ordres mendiants*, “Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations”, 23, 1968, pp. 335–352; IDEM, *Ordres mendiants et urbanisation dans la France médiévale*, *ibidem*, 25, 1970, pp. 963–981.

14 We are not referring here to the so-called “clan monasteries” (e.g. Mănăstireni/Magyargyerőmonostor, Herina). Here, the explanation of this term is the following: monasteries, which were founded by nobles on their property but not with the primary purpose of serving later as burial places, as was the case with the clan monasteries.

15 Sibiu and Brașov received a staple right which obliged Polish and German merchants on their way to Wallachia to sell their most sought-after merchandise, broadcloth, to the tradesmen of Brașov and Sibiu: the later were then able to resell the goods in Wallachia. In the same way, foreign merchants were obliged to trade on the Brașov and Sibiu markets the merchandise, agricultural produce or livestock, which they had bought in Wallachia. More recently the issue of international trade of Transylvania, including the merchant activities and privileges of Sibiu and Brașov during the 16<sup>th</sup> century was discussed by M. PAKUCS-WILCOCKS, *Transylvania and its International Trade, 1525–1575*, “Annales Universitatis Apulensis. Series Historica”, 16, 2012, pp. 173–182. For the role of Sibiu in the oriental trade of Transylvania see Eadem, *Sibiu – Hermannstadt: Oriental Trade in Sixteenth Century Transylvania* (Städteforschung. Reihe A, Darstellungen, 73), Köln, 2007.

16 M. DAN, S. GOLDENBERG, *Bistrița în secolul al XVI-lea și relațiile ei comerciale cu Moldova*, “Studia Universitatis ‘Babeș-Bolyai’. Historia”, 2, 1964, pp. 74–75.

17 Regional trade between Wallachia and Moldavia, the two Romanian principalities and southern Transylvania is discussed in R. MANOLESCU, *Comerțul Țării Românești și Moldovei cu Brașovul, secolele XIV–XVI*, București, 1965, pp. 104–143 and IDEM, *Relațiile economice ale Țării Românești cu Sibiu la începutul secolului al XVI-lea*, “Analele Universității C.I. Parhon București”, 7, 1956, pp. 207–259.

to German cities, especially after King Louis I exempted them from the staple right of Buda. Of their two usual routes the first went through Košice/Kassa to Bohemia and Poland, and finally to Danzig; the other through Buda, and from there, either to Wien – Regensburg – Basel or to Zara and Venice. Franciscan friaries were also settled in other Saxon towns such as Mediaș and Orăștie. Although they were far from the three big centers mentioned earlier, they lay on significant routes.

An interesting case is that of Cluj, which enjoyed the presence of both Dominican and Franciscan friars. Both foundations were late compared to the majority of the orders' foundations, operating from the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Cluj, with its mixed Hungarian-German population, was the only town able to compete with the Saxon towns. Since it lay on the crossroads of commercial routes leading to Transylvania from the rest of Hungary, Cluj controlled their traffic; its German inhabitants, leading at first an agrarian way of life, played an important role in the evolution of Transylvania's urban burgher economy and society. Its vicinity to two important salt centers of Transylvania, Turda and Dej, also played an important role not only in the life of the town, but also in that of the friars. Later, in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the town played a key role in commerce. Both main roads to the West, the Via Košice and the Via Oradea, began here<sup>18</sup>. The spectacular development of Cluj made it possible for the most important and biggest Franciscan friary to emerge there, as far as the number of friars was concerned. The Dominican friary was likewise the largest and most populated of its kind.

The Austin friars represent an interesting case concerning the relationship between settlement and orders. All three priories founded by the Austin Hermits in Transylvania were situated in towns, more precisely in the Hungarian towns, namely Dej, Turda, and Alba Iulia. Situated on important commercial, military and ancient Roman roads (Turda and Alba Iulia), they had a continuously growing urbanized character. On the other hand, Dej and Turda gained importance as salt-chamber centers, while Alba Iulia was important as the center of the Transylvanian bishopric and that of the Alba/Fehér county. The geographical location of the town (at the junction of the two rivers, Mureș and Ampoi/Ompoly) and its richness in natural resources (salt, gold, and iron) allowed a spectacular development throughout the Middle Ages. Its dock on the river Mureș made possible for the town to play an important role in the salt and wood trade. Thus, it is not surprising that the two orders characterized by their careful choice of setting places<sup>19</sup>, namely the Dominicans and Austin Hermits, had built friaries there.

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18 S. GOLDENBERG, *Clujul în secolul XVI: producția și schimbul de mărfuri* (Biblioteca istorică, 4), București, 1958, especially chapters fourth and fifth dealing with the trade of Cluj in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the economic orientation as well as the commercial routes of the town between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.

19 We have already referred to the settling politics of the Franciscans and Dominicans based on Fügedi's article. We can add that the Austin friars' monasteries in Hungary were settled (with a few exceptions) in towns, more precisely in mining towns: E. FÜGEDI, *Koldulórendek és városfejlődés*, pp. 70–71. The difference that became evident in the later centuries of the Middle Ages was mainly due to the different history on the one hand of the Dominicans and Austin Hermits and on the other hand to the Franciscans after the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century.



However, the settling place of the different monasteries was not the only factor to influence the fortunes of the religious houses of Transylvania. Political reasons also had a significant impact. And one of the major political goals was proselytizing. As early as the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Dominicans started their campaign to convert the Cumans, whose first bishop was to be a Hungarian Dominican<sup>20</sup>. So for the Dominicans Transylvania was attractive because it provided a good opportunity to carry out their missionary work.

The Mongol invasion, oddly, did not stop the spread of foundations begun by the mendicant orders<sup>21</sup>. Although their friaries were also victims of the invasion, their development remained rapid and spectacular. Besides the Dominicans and Paulines, who had arrived in Transylvania before the invasion, by the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century they were joined by the Franciscans and Austin Hermits, who also started to build monasteries. By the time of the Turkish invasions of the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century, which coincided with the observant movement of both Dominicans and Franciscans, twenty-four houses had been founded<sup>22</sup>. Yet, even before the Mongol invasion, the Dominicans had already started to decline, as Erik Fügedi has argued in his article. King Béla IV's daughter Margaret's consecration excluded the princess from the marriage politics of the time. This act of the Dominican brothers of Buda influenced the fate of the entire Dominican Order in Hungary: they lost the support of the ruler, to be slowly replaced by the Franciscans<sup>23</sup>. Nonetheless, this interpretation of Fügedi does not fit the Transylvanian province. Fügedi applied this analysis to the whole Hungarian Kingdom, but a carefully analysis shows why it is not applicable to Transylvania. The Dominicans proceeded at a steady pace in the next century, founding two friaries in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and two in the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, while the Franciscans built only two friaries during the whole 14<sup>th</sup> century.

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20 The first bishop, Theodoric of the newly created Cuman bishopric by Robert, archbishop of Esztergom belonged to the Dominican Order. *Erdélyi okmánytár. Oklevelek, levelek és más írásos emlékek Erdély történetéhez = Codex diplomaticus Transsylvaniae. Diplomata, epistolae et alia instrumenta litteraria res Transsylvaniae illustrantia*, ed. Zs. JAKÓ, vol. 1: 1301–1339 (Publicationes Archivi Hungariae Nationalis, 2, Series fontium, 40), Budapest 1997, nos. 150–151. For details regarding the Cuman bishopric, see N. KANUZ, *A milkói püspökség, "Magyar Sion"*, s.n., 5, 1867, pp. 401–415; L. MAKKAI, *A milkói (kún) püspökség és népei*, Debrecen 1936; I. FERENT, *A kunok és püspökségük*, Budapest, 1981.

21 For the impact of the Mongol invasion on foundation-movement of the mendicant orders, see E. FÜGEDI, *A koldulórendek elterjedése*, pp. 15–18.

22 For the Dominican and Franciscan observant movements, see A. HARSÁNYI, *A Domonkos rend Magyarországon a reformáció előtt*, Debrecen, 1938, pp. 29–75; J. KARÁCSONYI, *Szt. Ferencz rendjének története Magyarországon 1711-ig*, vol. 2, Budapest, 1924, pp. 310–326. About the role of the Hunyadi family in promoting the observant movement in 15<sup>th</sup> century Transylvania, see M. LUPESCU MAKÓ, *King Matthias and the Mendicant Orders in Transylvania*, [in:] A. BÁRÁNY, A. GYÖRKÖS (eds.), *Matthias and his Legacy. Cultural and Political Encounters between East and West*, Debrecen, 2009, pp. 323–338, and EADEM, *Domonkos rendi obszerváns törekvések Magyarországon*, [in:] V. DÁNÉ, T. OBORNI, G. SIPOS (eds), *"...éltünk mi sokáig két hazában..." Tanulmányok a 90 éves Kiss András tiszteletére*, Debrecen, 2012, pp. 253–274.

23 E. FÜGEDI, *Koldulórendek és városfejlődés*, pp. 69–95.



The end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century can be seen as the end of the first flourishing period for the Dominicans in Transylvania, since in the 15<sup>th</sup> century there were no new foundations. Their place as the largest order was taken by the Franciscans and Paulines. The explanation for this situation can be found on the one hand in the settlement politics of the Dominicans and on the other in the new expectations of Transylvanian society towards its internal socio-economic development, which were not recognized by the order. By the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century the Dominicans had already built friaries in all the important towns and market towns of Transylvania. The urban areas were already overpopulated from this point of view, and this, coupled with their reluctance as a traditional mendicant order to move into the countryside, made the halt in the creation of new foundations inevitable. In contrast, the Franciscans recognized that foundations made in villages, using the vernacular in preference to Latin, offered the only way forward for the order's development and for its ultimate survival<sup>24</sup>. This coincided with the nobles' desire to have monasteries built on their land. Thus, it is not surprising that the most flourishing period for the Franciscans in Transylvania was the 15<sup>th</sup> century. This second flourishing period was also marked by the influence of the observant movement of the order. They played an important role in the conversion of Romanians and Ruthenians<sup>25</sup>.

Although several reasons why these orders founded monasteries in Transylvania have been mentioned, it is clear that their main aim was to spread a new type of religious life and also to gain economic support for this. How well they could do so depended on the local circumstances. While religious reasons played a part in the motivation of nobles and communities in assisting in the foundation process, the political reasons were often much more important. Having language and writing skills, the friars could participate in the lay administration of counties, in the judicial system, and in education<sup>26</sup>. In this period, especially from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onward, we can find

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24 It is significant that seven out of the 15<sup>th</sup> century foundations of the Franciscan order were in villages (Șumuleu Ciuc/Csíkсомlyó, Albești/Fehéregyháza, Suseni/Marosfalfalu, Coșeiu/Kusaly, Teiuș/Tövis, Cuișed/Kövesd, and Hațeg/Hátszeg).

25 It is worth to mention that three out of the ten Franciscan friaries, which appeared in the charters for the first time in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Hațeg, Suseni and Coșeiu, were Observants and had proselytization as their primary purpose. For the prozelyting work of the Franciscans, and of the mendicants in general among Romanian Orthodox, see C. DOBRE, *Preaching, Conversion, Ministering and Struggling against Hussites. The Mendicants' Missionary Activities and Strategies in Moldavia from the Thirteenth to the First Half of the Fifteenth Century*, "Revue des études sud-est européennes", 42, 2004, pp. 71–86; A. CIOCILȚAN, *Prope Turcos et inter Scismaticos. The Monasteries of the Mendicant Orders in Wallachia (14<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> Centuries)*, "Historia Urbana", 17, 2009, pp. 5–23.

26 In many cases the friars appeared as witnesses or in different judgment processes to confirm the resolution with the seals of the friary. In 1295 Stephan, the prior of the Austin Friars and Theodor, the Dominican prior of Alba Iulia are mentioned as the witnesses of the donation made by Zerias, the son of Nicholas of Beldiu to the Transylvanian bishopric. The two priors corroborated with the friaries' seals the donation act: *Erdélyi okmánytár*, vol. 1, no. 534. Similarly, in 1306 the Dominicans of Alba Iulia transcribed Pope Clement V's charter, corroborating it with the seal of the priory: *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol. 2, no. 93. In 1308–1309, during the legal action initiated by Gentilis, papal legate against Benedict, Transylvanian bi-

a great number of qualified friars who had studied in western universities (Vienna, Cracow, Padua, Bologna, and Paris)<sup>27</sup>.

Giving a general outline of Transylvanian mendicant monasticism in the Middle Ages with its specifically Hungarian characteristics, we cannot forget that their development was only due to the devotion and piety of the founders and donors. Their donations made it possible, at least, for these orders to built friaries, to take part in missionary activity, and, last but not least, to fulfill their ecclesiastical duties. By donating properties, fisheries, forests, and different objects for church services, donors created a functional reciprocity, an unwritten but well-understood contract under which the donor both offered and received certain benefits. These benefits were primarily spiritual. On the other hand, based on these movable and immovable properties the friars developed a certain kind of economic activity and they have been involved in the economic circulation of the smaller region in which they lived. It is the aim of this paper to contribute to a broader and more complex understanding of the relationship between mendicant orders and different economic activities in the medieval period based on a very clearly limited group of written sources, that of the testaments and donations.

### The sources: testaments and donations

It is well known that most of the available written medieval sources consist of documents referring to the right of possession. These have been best preserved, as serious interests were connected to them, the right of possession of one or more properties depending on them. Fortunately, besides the documents conveying the restricted view of the right of possession, there were other sources as well, whose emergence was motivated by other factors. Their value lies in their distinct character. Their significance is even increased by the fact that a smaller number of these documents has

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shop, Peter, Dominican vicar and Stephen, the prior of the Austin Friars of Alba Iulia were charged by the legate with important duties: instituted investigations, called in instance, and informed about the situation *Acta legationis cardinalis Gentilis*, [in:] *Monumenta Vaticana historiam regni Hungariae illustrantia = Vatikáni magyar okirattár*, vol. 1: *Collectorum Pontificorum in Hungaria. Pápai tizedszedők számadásai 1281–1375*, part 2: *Acta legationis cardinalis Gentilis. Gentilis bíbornok magyarországi követségének okiratai 1307–1311*, ed. L. FEJÉRPATAKY, Budapestium, 1887, pp. 154–177.

27 S. TONK, *Erdélyiek egyetemjárása a középkorban*, Bukarest 1979, pp. 36–59; B. F. ROMHÁNYI, *A koldulórendek szerepe a középkori magyar oktatásban*, [in:] K. SZENDE, P. SZABÓ (eds), *A magyar iskola első évszázadai (996–1526) Az "1000 éves a magyar iskola" országos program Győri kiállítása*, Győr, 1996, pp. 35–40; M. LUPESCU MAKÓ, *Domonkos iskoláztatás a középkori Erdélyben*, "Református Szemle", 96, 2003, pp. 844–853; B. IVÁNYI, *A Szent-Domonkos-rend római központi levéltára*, "Levéltári Közlemények", 7, 1929, pp. 18–27. Many of these friars gone to study in abroad are known namely: "frater Bartholomeus Danielis de Corona" studied at Perugia (1486): 80/a, "frater Urbanus" from the Beszterce friary studied theology at Paris (1488): 158/b, "frater Marcus de Transilvania" graduated at university of Cracow with an extra "scholarship" (1488): 157/b, "frater Paulus Nysz de Septem Castris" studied theology at Perugia (1488): 157/b, "frater Andreas Fabri" of Segesvár friary studied at Rome (1496): 114/a, "frater Joannes Crisostomus" was a "baccalaureus" of Perugia university (1497): 85/b, "frater Blasius de Coluswar" and "frater Simon de Cinbino (!)" studied at Padova (1498): 86/a, etc.

been passed down to posterity. A distinct part of them are the testaments reflecting on the end of a person's life. The interest of Western historians has turned towards the research of testaments especially in the last four decades. Besides the exploration of the various areas of everyday life, the increased interest is due to the fact that the researchers have realized: the testaments may serve as a basis to answer a series of questions of social and economic history, the study of which has recently come into the foreground. Because of the scarcity of the source material the Transylvanian testaments have not been subjected to examinations similar to those recently undertaken on English, French, Italian and German examples<sup>28</sup>. Moreover, the Transylvanian testaments were used in a small compass to shed light on a series of questions on the social and economic history of the mendicant friaries. However, in the past years a few studies on testaments and donations have appeared, emphasizing the state of the communities' properties; the friars' living environment, and their contribution to the exchange of material and spiritual goods in medieval Hungary, including Transylvania<sup>29</sup>.

Examining the bequests, it can be concluded that among the goods considered valuable the most diversified objects were donated, which formed one of the most important material component of everyday life, and so they played a considerable role in the process of inheritance division. The heirs were nominated based on individual choice, and more often by following determined, almost ritualistic patterns. The wide circle of the beneficiaries involved relatives, church institutions as well as poor people, the last two interpreted as donations offered to provide the salvation of the soul of the deceased person. Concerning the goods certain regulations were also included in the testaments. Special rules applied to the ancient goods of the family, which were inherited by spouses and lineal offsprings. The same limitations did not apply to the acquired properties<sup>30</sup>.

What the testament eventually contained did not depend on legal restrictions but rather on the purpose of the whole act. The written testament was created due to the fact that the testators intended to allot from their fortune, besides their relatives by

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28 For an overview of the literature on the economic activities of the mendicant orders see the annotated bibliography compiled by F. CYGLER, *Bibliographie raisonnée commentée*, [in:] N. BÉRIOU, J. CHIFFOLEAU (eds.), *Économie et religion: L'expérience des ordres mendiants (XIII<sup>e</sup>–XV<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Collection d'histoire et d'archéologie médiévales, 21), Lyon, 2009, pp. 23–36. This collection of essays itself is an attempt to offer a comprehensive portrait and outline of the complexity surrounding one of these research themes: the issue of the mendicant friars' economic experience in the late Middle Ages.

29 For a bibliographical account and assessment of contemporary research status on the material running and mendicant orders in medieval Central Europe see M.-M. DE CEVINS, *Les travaux sur les ordres mendiants en Transylvanie médiévale au regard des tendances actuelles de la recherche européenne*, "Studia. Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai, Historia", 56, 2011, pp. 1–26.

30 Recently Gy. KOVÁCS KISS, *Végrendeletek Kolozsvár város levéltárában*, [in:] J. PÁL, G. SIPOS (eds.), *Emlékkönyv Csetri Elek születésének nyolcvanadik évfordulójára*, Kolozsvár, 2004, pp. 258–267 has carried out a research on when and for what purposes the citizens from Cluj from the age of principality made will.

right, also to some other people and institutions that were important in their lives, especially to the church. It was not necessary to enlist the goods which fell to the lineal relatives, but for security reasons it was advantageous. The testator and the surviving relatives also had a proof of the way the rules were complied with.

If we want to use the testaments for purposes other than their original function, namely for the study of the economic life of the bequeathed friaries, first we have to consider the shortage coming from the source material. It is obvious that the written sources did not cover the whole object material. In most testaments, especially in the case of wealthier people, the mention of the personal property was secondary to the details referring to sums of money and estates. The value of the personal property was at the basis of selection. The lower limit to be considered differed from testator to testator according to their wealth and standards. That is why those gifts, which meant the marginal cases of appreciation with testators of different social position, are of special interest: some “still” mentioned them, others “no longer” did. Besides personal finances there were a lot of other factors which determined the mentioning of an object, e.g. the number of relatives, the material devices that best suited the different – especially church – institutions. In such donations “piety and merchandise cunning, community aim and personal ambition” manifested at the same time<sup>31</sup>. The other group of sources, that of the donations, will be used in a broader sense than its value in the diplomatic language, which means any document dealing with land and goods.

Thus, it is the aim of this paper to continue to enrich the situation of the mentioned research tendency in a small way by examining the gifts of the wills and donations made to the mendicant friaries of Transylvania. The donated objects vary immensely as far as typology and value are concerned. Anything from land and fishponds to various objects for the church service, to different sums of money could be donated. Each type of donation enjoyed a period of popularity in time. However, this paper contains mainly my conclusions regarding only three parts of the real estate donations given to the mendicant religious institutions of Transylvania. Each category (land, fishpond, mill) will be illustrated with some examples from the two major categories of sources used for this research. It is clear, that the results of the analysis of the given immovable properties to the friaries can be used not only for a better knowledge of the material culture of this religious institutions or for the donation and testamentary practice of the time, but they also can help us to chart the goods of the friaries. Having this data we can make further analysis regarding the economic situation of the friaries, what kind of property each friary had and how they could manage these goods in order to have a prosperous life.

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31 E. MAROSI (ed.), *Magyarországi művészet 1300–1470 körül* (A magyarországi művészet története), Budapest, 1987, vol. 1, p. 158.

### *Item lego... bequeathing material running*

In the first category of objects given to the friaries that is the landed properties, we may include possessions, estates, parts of possessions and estates, plots of serf lands (socages), meadows and pasturages. Occasionally, a charter specifies whether the donated land was arable or cultivated land. For example, in a donation from 1378 made to the Virgin Mary Dominican friary of Sighișoara Ladislas, the son of noble Emeric Ebesfalvi donated among others eighteen acre of arable land in Prod/Pruden village<sup>32</sup>. In Nicholas Bethlen's testament from 1498 the properties donated were described as three plots of serf land in Hetiur/Hétúr/Marienburg, whereof two were populated and one was desert<sup>33</sup>. Another kind of land donated was the farm or the estate ("praedium") which appeared rather frequently among the bequeathed items. For instance, I can evoke the cases of Simon Clomp and Christian Rod, both burghers of Brașov. Their donation made in 1464 to the Saint Peter Dominican friary of Brașov described very precisely the kind of the donation, namely a "praedium" as well as its settlement<sup>34</sup>. In some cases we even know the value of the donated property. In 1502, when the literate Albert Maray drew up his testament he specified that he gave to the Holy Cross Dominican friary of Bistrița where he chose a burial place the St. Martin possession worth 300 golden florins<sup>35</sup>. After two years King Vladislas II instructed the convent of Cluj-Mănăștur/Kolozsmonostor as one of the two places of authentication in Transylvania to delegate its representative in order to enroll the friars in the property received<sup>36</sup>. Although there were small contradictions at the investiture, the Preacher friars finally gained the possession. Surprisingly, in 1509 the same community of friars through their delegates, Gregory and Anton, expressed their wish to sell the Saint Martin possession to the voievode of Transylvania, Peter Szentgyörgyi and Bazini for only half of the price worth at the time of donation<sup>37</sup>. We can only make suppositions concerning the reason for selling. Whether the Dominican friars were so much obligated to the voievode for his benefits, mentioned in the act, that they were satisfied with the price? Or, the friars made initially a wrong evaluation of the possession and now they received the real offset of the estate? It might be as

32 *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen*, vol. 2: 1342 bis 1390. Nummer 583 bis 1259, ed. F. ZIMMERMANN, Hermannstadt, 1897, no. 1101 [<http://germa229.uni-trier.de:3000/catalog/933> (accessed: 9 June 2013)].

33 *A kolozsmonostori konvent jegyzőkönyvei (1289–1556)*, ed. Zs. JAKÓ (A Magyar Országos Levéltár kiadványai, 17), vol. 2: 1485–1556, Budapest, 1990, no. 3094. The document was published in *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte des Kisder Kapitels vor der Reformation und der auf dem Gebiete desselben ehemals befindlichen Orden*, ed. K. FABRITIUS, Hermannstadt, 1875, pp. 118–120 with wrong date.

34 "[...] quoddam praedium [...] in fine civitatis [...] in clino montis castris alias Burchhals dicto situatum [...] et [...] piscinam parvam inter duos muros et inter murale civitatis in latere portae Swarczgas versus castrum et castro contiguam [...]" – *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen*, vol. 6: 1458–1473, ed. G. GÜNDISCH, Hermannstadt, 1981, pp. 162–163.

35 Budapest, Magyar Országos Levéltár, *Diplomatikai Levéltár* (henceforth: MOL, DL), 22550.

36 *Ibidem*, 65192.

37 *Ibidem*, 21900.

well that, as one can suggest, from the beginning the friars wanted to sell the property, but not obtaining the requested price, they expected the proper time<sup>38</sup>. In other donations it was specified that only some parts of a possession were to be given. For instance, in 1482 Peter and Sofia Sombori before going in pilgrimage to Rome made their common last will and testament. According to this, the Sombori couple gave to the Dominican friary of Cluj their parts of Jimbor/Szászsombor/Sommer possession together with the fishpond from that place<sup>39</sup>. Benedict Túri was much more generous with the Preachers from the same town. In 1501 he donated them four parts of the Tureni/Túr possession, one of these being pawned for 290 Hungarian florins, the fishpond called Túritó (Túr Lake) and a mill on the mentioned lake. The donation was made on the stipulation that Benedict Túri had to pay 1790 golden florins to the Dominicans, if he alienates the given parts<sup>40</sup>. Considering the high sum fixed for alienation it seems that the Friars Preachers from Cluj gained a well worthy property. The observation is even more relevant if we take into consideration that on the same day Benedict Túri stipulated that the part of the Ceanu Mic/Túrcsán possession, which he gave to his sister, Clara should be also given to the Dominicans from Cluj, if her sister did not renounce to the filial quarter<sup>41</sup>. We have no information how Clara, Benedict's sister acted, but it is certain that after twenty years, in 1521 the old Benedict Túri left his part of the Ceanu Mic estate with all its dependencies to the Dominican friars of Cluj. The stipulation, that the kinship can hold again the mentioned goods only after the disbursement of 600 florins to the friars may permit us to think that in fact the donation was an indirect bounty<sup>42</sup>. For one reason or another Benedict Túri's family did not take advantage of re-exchanging the part of the Ceanu Mic possession, thus, in 1536 the Dominicans sold the part of the Ceanu Mic possession bequeathed them by Benedict Túri for 600 florins to Gregory Koppándi, canon of Alba Iulia and Sebastian Nagy of Pata, castellan of Szentmihályköve castle<sup>43</sup>. It seems that the other donation made by Benedict Túri in 1501 to the Dominicans, the Tureni possession with the fishpond and the mill generated an almost three decades long conflict between the Túri family, the friars and the neighbours. Although after many attempts the friars' investiture in Tureni possession was finally successful, the Preachers had to face the old enemies' perseverance. In 1527 the Túri family tried to alienate the Tureni possession with the fishpond and the mill<sup>44</sup>. Two years later a neighbour, Ambrose Koppándi made a similar gesture<sup>45</sup>. Finally, almost at the same time when the Dominican friars

38 B. F. ROMHÁNYI, *Domonkos kolostorok birtokai a későközépkorban*, "Századok", 144, 2010, p. 399.

39 *A kolozsmonostori konvent*, vol. 1: 1289–1484, Budapest, 1990, no. 2342.

40 *Ibidem*, vol. 2: 1485–1556, Budapest, 1990, no. 3215.

41 *Ibidem*, no. 3216.

42 MOL, DL, 36872.

43 *A kolozsmonostori konvent*, vol. 2, no. 4559; *Egyháztörténelmi emlékek a magyarországi hitújítás korából*, vol. 3, eds. V. BUNYITAY, R. RAPAICS, J. KARÁCSONYI, Budapest 1906, pp. 79–80.

44 *A kolozsmonostori konvent*, vol. 2, no. 4199.

45 *Ibidem*, no. 4280.

of Cluj sold the Ceanu Mic possession, in February 1536, they changed the Tureni estate, the fishpond and the mill with Coasta/Gyulatelke. Since the earlier holder of that possession was the Transylvanian bishop John Statileo, the Dominicans also gained the incomes of the episcopal tithes of Coasta<sup>46</sup>. We can hardly understand what the Preachers gained with this change. But it is certain, that along with the estate of Coasta and the tithes, the Dominicans from Cluj received a manor house as well<sup>47</sup>. The Holy Cross Dominican friary of Bistrița received in 1523 also parts of a possession. The donator, Demetrius Porkoláb's widow Justine Bongárti, was even more motivated to enrich the friars with the parts of Sălcuța/Fűzkút possession, since her late husband was buried in the Dominican church<sup>48</sup>. Sometimes we have only indirect information concerning donations. Thus, in 1524 when Michael of Jakcs occupied a part of the Valea Pomilor/Mocsolya property, the Franciscans of the Coșeiu friary entered a protest claiming that the incriminate part was donated to them by the late Denis, bishop of Oradea. Rarely, friars or nuns can be identified between donators. It is the case of Dorothy Hédervári, the widow of Bartholomew Drágfi of Beltiug/Béltek, who living in the Franciscan Coșeiu house made at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century several donation to the religious community to which she belonged. Thus, in 1507 Dorothy Hédervári, a Third Order Franciscan nun buys two plots of serf land (one inhabited, and another desert) for 200 Hungarian golden florins with the intention that after her death the possessions will be inherited by the Franciscan nuns of Coșeiu. If the seller's family is displeased with the transaction, they can demand it but only after the reimbursement of the 200 florins<sup>49</sup>. One year later, the Third Order nun Dorothy, living next to the Holy Trinity friary in Coșeiu, made a generous donation to the Franciscan nuns who accepted her in their community. Also entire possessions and parts of possessions situated in Inner-Szolnok county were received by the Franciscan nuns<sup>50</sup>.

As Benedict Túri's case might suggest, donations did not always have a restful fate. Sometimes the heirs, the kinship or the neighbours contested the testaments, and long litigations with uncertain outcome were started. As an example we can evoke the case of Nicholas of Ocna Sibiului/Vízakna, the Transylvanian vice-voivode. Formulating his last will in 1465 the vice-voivode did not presume that his bequeath to the Dominican friary of Sighișoara, consisting in half of his Albești/Fejéregyháza/Weiskirchen possession with a mill, but without the manor house on the possession will generate an almost sixty years long trial in which the Vizaknai family, the Preacher friars from Sighișoara, and even Matthias King were involved<sup>51</sup>.

46 *Egyháztörténelmi emlékek*, vol. 3, pp. 75–76.

47 In 1540 the Dominican friars of Cluj pawned the Coasta possession, but without the manor house (*ibidem*, p. 494).

48 MOL, DL, 28702.

49 *A kolozsmonostori konvent*, vol. 2, no. 3428.

50 *Ibidem*, no. 3469.

51 *Ibidem*, vol. 1, nos. 1676, 1687, 1821, 2304; *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen*, vol. 6, pp. 218–220; MOL, DL, 17897, 26409. See also B. F. ROMHÁNYI, *Domonkos kolostorok*, pp. 398–399.



Examining the land donations, it is clear that until the end of 14<sup>th</sup> century land was missing from the gift-list made to the friaries. Moreover, it is also characteristic for this period that there are no donations of real estate of any other kind either, such as fishponds, forests, or manor houses. These are characteristic for a later period, namely the 15<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. This situation reflected very well people's perception of wealth. In Hungary, the conception of land as the most important element of wealth remained constant throughout the whole Middle Ages. Thus, when people made donations to monasteries, they offered their most valuable assets, namely land. We can also observe that the friars owned land properties mostly transitionally, even if that transitional period lasted for several decades. Until the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century the existing friaries received mostly an income of cash, different sums of money or objects, salt and mills. Looking for the reasons which conducted to this situation of the donations, several explanations could be given. One is presented in the medieval written sources from Transylvania. Starting from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, we are facing an increasing number of charters, followed by an abundance of data concerning the mendicant orders. Compared to the Arpadian-age, when the friaries are mentioned mostly indirectly, starting with the Sigismund and Hunyadi era a huge number of different types of written sources are produced.

Another explanation may be found in the history of the orders and those of the secular clergy. This was a flourishing period for the mendicant and hermit orders. A significant number of their houses were founded in this period. Each foundation was accompanied usually by a real estate donation. It may be observed that the royal donors' place, characteristic for the Benedictine foundation of the Arpadian-age had been taken by the nobles. Furthermore, their requests continued to concern the peace of their souls and the soul of their family members, but now the kind of prayers they requested were specified, and sometimes conditions were stipulated for donations. On the other hand, if we examine the donations made until the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, we can easily observe that the main beneficiaries are the Transylvanian chapter and the bishopric. As Zsigmond Jakó proved<sup>52</sup>, this was the period when a "battle" was carried out for the properties between the three major ecclesiastical institutions of Transylvania: the Transylvanian bishopric, the Transylvanian chapter and the Benedictine monastery of Cluj-Mănăştur, the last two being at the same time the only places of authentication in Transylvania. Due to generous donations, until the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century these religious institutions succeeded to establish their power based on real estate donations. Beyond that the regulation of the mendicant orders which interdicted them to have immovable properties was far the most important reason for the lack of these kinds of donations. Thus, it is not surprising that in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when the papacy permits mendicants to hold properties, the number of real estate donations increased.

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52 Zs. JAKÓ, *Az erdélyi püspökség középkori birtokairól*, [in:] I. RÁCZ (ed.), *Szabó István emlékkönyv*, Debrecen, 1998, pp. 136–157.

The second group of donated objects is made up of fishponds. Although they began to appear on the lists of the donated objects in the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the flourishing period for donations of fishponds was the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The number of fishponds donated was high, being almost as frequent as land donations. In acquisition of fishponds, the Dominicans occupied the first place. They were followed by the Franciscans and the Austin Friars. Usually, the mendicant friars received populated fishponds. This is the case of the already mentioned Nicholas of Ocna Sibiului, who donated in his last will formulated in 1465 to the Dominicans of Cluj a fishpond near Sic/Szék<sup>53</sup>. At other times the friars enjoyed only the fish from the fishponds. This happened in 1471 when Andrew of Toldal/Toldalag made his testament. In his will he donated the Toldal property together with a mill and a fishpond to the Paulines of Sâncraiu de Mureş/Marosszentkirály. He specified that the Paulines had to give fish from the fishpond to the Friars Minor of Târgu Mureş and Suseni/Marosfalu as well<sup>54</sup>. Another interesting case is that related to the donations of the Wass brothers. In 1477 three brothers from this middle noble class Transylvanian family donated their parts from the Sucutard/Szentgotthárd fishpond to the Dominican friary of Cluj mentioning that the fourth part was donated earlier to the same friary by their late brother John. All of them made this donation for the peace of their souls<sup>55</sup>. From the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century several testators bequeathed fishponds to the Virgin Mary Dominican friary of Sighişoara. Among the generous testators was Laurence Müssen, the juror of Sighişoara and his wife, who donated a fishpond and a meadow<sup>56</sup>, and Andrew, the parish priest of Sighişoara who donated a fishpond with fish, a few acres of meadows in Daneş/Dános/Dunesdorf and another one in Hetiur, as well as one pasturage in Daneş<sup>57</sup>. In many cases in last wills and testaments fishponds were granted as mass foundations. Under this title the Saint Cross Dominican friary of Bistriţa received at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century two fishponds in Viile Tecii/Ida/Grosseidau and another one in Archiud/Erked. We rarely have information on the administration of the fishponds, but the donation from Viile Tecii is an exception. It was stipulated that along with the fishponds two plots of land for the fishponds' keepers should be granted as well<sup>58</sup>. Maybe in this case it is worth to mention the donators' name. Thomas and Nicholas Farkas of Herina were members of the middle Transylvanian nobility and for many decades they appeared as the constant patrons of the Dominicans. From this point of view it is not surprising that Thomas Farkas of

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53 MOL, DL, 28274.

54 *Székely oklevéltár*, ed. K. SZABÓ, vol. 3: 1270–1571, Kolozsvár, 1890, p. 93 [[http://adatbank.transindex.ro/html/alcim\\_pdf5296.pdf](http://adatbank.transindex.ro/html/alcim_pdf5296.pdf) (accessed: 16 July 2013)].

55 MOL, DL, 28633.

56 K. FABRITIUS, *Zwei Funde in der ehemaligen Dominikanerkirche zu Schässburg*, "Archives des Vereines für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde", 5, 1861, pp. 5–6.

57 *Egyháztörténelmi emlékek*, vol. 1: 1520–1529, eds. V. BUNYITAY, R. RAPAICS, J. KARÁCSONYI, Budapest, 1902, pp. 24–25.

58 *A kolozsmonostori konvent*, vol. 2, no. 2807.

Herina was the founder of the Virgin Mary Dominican nunnery of Bistrița and in his testament ensured that the nuns shall want for nothing. Therefore, he gave them the Mihăești/Szentmihálytelke possession except one part, the Szentmihálytelkitó fishpond and two parts of the mill with three wheels from the same lake<sup>59</sup>. It is almost sure that the donator in acting so was strongly motivated by the fact that one of his daughters entered the community of the Dominican nuns and another relative, Nicholas Farkas' granddaughter was also among the nuns at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>60</sup>.

The Erdélyi of Șintereag/Somkerék family played the same role for the Dominicans of Cluj as the Farkas of Herina family to the Dominicans of Bistrița. In this case the principal donator was John Erdélyi, but occasionally also his wife, Justine is mentioned with him. At the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, John Erdélyi, a wealthy noble from Transylvania donated for the peace of his soul among others two fishponds to the Dominican friary from Cluj. If the first one, that from Jucu/Zsuk did not cause any problems<sup>61</sup>, the second one, the fishpond from Gădălin/Kötelend generated a legal dispute a few decades long. Sometime before 1496 John Erdélyi donated to the Preachers of Cluj the fishpond from Gădălin bought from Stephen Suky. In 1496 John Erdélyi, due to a legal dispute, had to renounce to the Gădălin possession, but the new owner was not to interfere with the friars' possession of the fishpond, not even in time of flood when the water of the lake spilt in Gădălin<sup>62</sup>. As we can presume John Erdélyi did not forget the Dominicans when he formulated his last will sometime before 1509. He donated the Gădălin fishpond to the Dominican friaries from Cluj and Bistrița under the reservation that they paid the tithe to the parish priest of Jucu and they will not construct a mill on the lake<sup>63</sup>. It is noteworthy how carefully John Erdélyi acted with the fishponds' donations. Similarly to the Gădălin fishpond clause, at the donation of the Jucu fishpond the same thing is stipulated: the Preacher friars of Cluj promise that they will not construct a mill on the lake against Erdélyi's and his successors' wish<sup>64</sup>. Acting in this way, John Erdélyi was mindful of the parish priest' and of his family interests, but also considered the benefits of the mill owners from the neighborhood. On the other hand it seems that the common tenure of the Dominican friaries from Cluj and Bistrița regarding the Gădălin fishpond generated many discussions between these two mendicant institutions. At one point, the Preacher friars of Cluj gave up the fishpond for a certain sum of money<sup>65</sup>. In 1527, the Dominican friars of Bistrița acted in the same way, selling the Gădălin fishpond to the sons of Stephen Suky for

59 *Ibidem*, nos. 3187, 3195.

60 M. LUPESCU MAKÓ, *A Domonkos Rend*, p. 354.

61 MOL, DL, 74249.

62 *Ibidem*, 36833; *A kolozsmonostori konvent*, vol. 1, no. 2985.

63 MOL, DL, 74335, 74336.

64 *Ibidem*, 74249.

65 It happened before September 1525. See *A kolozsmonostori konvent*, vol. 2, no. 4120.

100 florins<sup>66</sup>. Although the story of this fishpond does not end here<sup>67</sup>, it seems that at this point the circle was closed. The Gădălin fishpond, belonging to Stephen Suky in the second part of the 15<sup>th</sup> century was acquired by John Erdélyi at the end of the same century. After a few decades, the sons of Stephen Suky redeem the fishpond from the Dominican friary of Bistrița, whom it was donated by John Erdélyi.

As in the case of land donations, it seems that the friars aimed to acquire all parts of fishponds if they received them segmental. When in 1524 Paul Kötél made his last will on his sickbed, he declared that half of the fishpond near the walls of the town (e.g. Cluj), in the place called Harmadvölgy belonged to the late Stephen Monostori, who also left his part to the Dominican friars from Cluj<sup>68</sup>. The holders of the other half of the fishpond, namely the testator Paul Kötél and his relative had adopted very rapidly a common viewpoint, that of bequeathing to the same friary the second part of the fishpond. This act deserves our attention for at least two reasons. First, the last will of Stephen Monostori is among those few cases of peasant testaments which have survived in medieval Transylvania. Then, we find out that the testator, Paul Kötél intended to make this donation earlier, but he was threatened by the judge of Cluj with decapitation and the confiscation of his goods and the judge refused to accept Kötél's earlier avowal made in front of two witnesses<sup>69</sup>. Acting in this way, the magistrate made an attempt to keep the real estate properties of the Cluj burghers under the town's authority<sup>70</sup>. The same reason explains the commanding presence of the market town of Sic. In 1525, Sic through its legal council objected to the donation made by the late Stephen Gyulai, the salt chamberlain of Dej who testamentary left to the Austin Friars of Dej the fishpond called Kodoritó situated near the market town. Peter, the legal counselor argued that Gyulai bought the fishpond from the Kodori kinship illegally, because based on the vicinity law the town had priority at the selling process. Thus, the buying act and then the donation of the Kodoritó fishpond have to be considered invalid. Besides the intention of the market town of Sic to keep the properties of the town's inhabitants under the control of the town, it is worth to mention the argumentation used by Peter, the delegate of the town. He called the king's attention that ratifying the testamentary disposition of Gyulai e.g. the donation of Kodoritó fishpond from Sic to the Austin Hermits of Dej, the services owed to him will suffer default<sup>71</sup>.

66 *A kolozsmonostori konvent*, vol. 2, no. 4198.

67 See *ibidem*, nos. 4206, 4263.

68 *Ibidem*, no. 4060.

69 *Ibidem*, no. 4060.

70 About the conflicts between town's authorities and mendicant friaries regarding the immovable property see J. RÖHRKASTEN, *The Mendicant Houses of Medieval London. 1221–1539* (Vita regularis, 21), Münster, 2004, pp. 293–297.

71 *A kolozsmonostori konvent*, vol. 2, no. 4111. The beginning of this story was around two decades ago. When in 1504 George Kodori sold for 500 florins to the Austin Hermits of Dej the three parts of the fishpond from Sic belonged to him and his brothers, from a certain point of view he was forced to act in this way. He underlined that these parts of the fishpond were already donated by Stephen, the salt vice-cham-

We have also cases when only the fishpond place was donated. That is the case of the already mentioned Nicholas of Bethlen's testament, when this influential noble donated three fishpond places in Hetiur village<sup>72</sup>. We were prone to believe that the friars accepted any donation that was made to them. Christopher Giger's case contradicted this supposition. In 1488 this burgher from Sighișoara intended to donate a fishpond place to the local Dominican friary. After a careful deliberation the friars declined the offer for it returned little profit<sup>73</sup>.

The third group of donated objects is made up of mills. The case of the mills is similar to that of the fishponds. As a donated item, the mill began to appear in testaments and donations around the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In 1342 Nicholas Cresche, a burgher from Brașov and his wife, Margaret donated to the St Peter and Paul Dominican friary of Brașov half of their mill for the needs of the friars. Praying for them and for their parents' souls, the Dominicans also received one butt of grain for each mass held<sup>74</sup>. Another interesting case is that of the Austin Hermits from Dej. In the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century they already had in their possession at least two mills. In October 1351 a selling transaction was made between the Virgin Mary Austin friary from Dej and a certain Folkus, burgher from the same town. The Austin friars sold their mill with two wheels constructed on the Szalka stream which was donated them earlier through John Nagy's testament for the peace of his soul. The friars motivated their selling act with the difficulties which their friary had to face it and with their poverty. They also explained that the ten marks received from the selling will be used to repair the run-down levee of their mill with three wheels constructed on the river Someșul Mare/Nagy-Szamos<sup>75</sup>. In the already mentioned donation from 1378 made to the Virgin Mary Dominican friary of Sighișoara Ladislav, the son of noble Emeric Ebesfalvi gave among others a quarter of a mill in Prod village<sup>76</sup>. The flourishing period for donations of mills was the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The beneficiaries were mostly the Dominicans, followed by Franciscans and Austin Hermits. The situation had changed by the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In that period the Dominicans and

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berlain of Dej to the Austin Friars for his peace of soul, although they were in his possession only in pawn. A long legal action started between Kodori and the Austin Friars, which finally ended with a compromise. Kodori renounced to the fishpond, while the friars, by paying the "donated" parts, mutually admitted that the late Stephen salt vice-chamberlain do not have the right to donate the fishpond by his testament (*ibidem*, no. 3304. See also nos. 3060, 3115).

72 *Ibidem*, no. 3094.

73 K. FABRITIUS, *Zwei Funde*, p. 7.

74 *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen*, vol. 1: 1191 bis 1342. Nummer 1 bis 582, ed. F. ZIMMERMANN, Hermannstadt, 1892, no. 571 [<http://germa229.uni-trier.de:3000/catalog/554> (accessed: 13 July 2013)].

75 *Erdélyi okmánytár*, vol. 3: 1340–1359 (Publicationes Archivi Hungariae Nationalis, 2, Series fontium, 47), Budapest, 2008, no. 624.

76 *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen*, vol. 2: 1342 bis 1390. Nummer 583 bis 1259, ed. F. ZIMMERMANN, Hermannstadt, 1897, no. 1101 [<http://germa229.uni-trier.de:3000/catalog/933> (accessed: 13 July 2013)].

Franciscans received the same number of mills, while the Austin Hermits only one. The only case of a mill donation to the Austin Friars from the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century is the donation redacted in 1507/1508, when presbyter Thomas donated his mill with three wheels on the river Arieş to the Austin Friars of Turda<sup>77</sup>. As we can observe, in most of the cases it was specified what kind of mill was donated: with two or three wheels, and the name of the river or lake which held the mill. We have also cases when the value of the mills was specified. From the aforementioned selling act we know that a mill with two wheels was worth ten marks. In the late Middle Ages it became frequent that the income of mills was spent for the needs of the community of friars. This is the case of John Lázár of Szentanna, who stipulated in his testament redacted in 1549 that the Friars Minor of Târgu Mureş got one third from the half part of the incomes of the Miceşti/Kisfalud mill, while the nuns from the same town the other two parts<sup>78</sup>.

Research on the economic activity of the mendicant orders started to become popular with historians studying monastic life in the Middle Ages only in these last decades, so there is little bibliography on the topic. However the fact that there were and are running vast methodological attempts for research such as the MARGEC project, which go past the factual exchange of information and suggest viable methods to reveal the details regarding the economic activity of the mendicant orders of Central Europe in the Middle Ages should be considered an important step. How fruitful these trends of research will be depends on the joint use of both written and archeological and architectural sources. And another thing: further use of the proposed methods depends greatly upon the state of the local sources, in our case of the Transylvanian sources. We consider that at this moment written sources are still the most reliable helpers in the research of this topic. Therefore the paper hereby made an attempt to make an outline of the economic activity of the mendicant orders of Transylvania using the written sources of the age. Out of these sources the medieval testaments and donations were chosen for detailed study and it was attempted to use the data received at the greatest possible extent in the paper hereby. Chronological distribution of the information is unequal. Until the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century data are scarce, while from that moment on the amount of useful pieces of information, which can be analyzed, increases considerably. Which also means that the partial conclusions we have formulated regarding this topic refer in fact to the late Middle Ages (the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century). Already at the beginning of the research process it was taken into consideration that we work mostly with indirect data on the topic. Since the testaments and donations reveal mainly the object and purpose of the donations and not on the character or type of economic activity. Among other things this also means that we have exact data on the *possessions* obtained by the monasteries by testaments or donations. Therefore if we wanted to

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77 MOL, DL, 30254.

78 *Székelly oklevéltár*, ed. K. SZABÓ, vol. 2: 1520–1571, Kolozsvár, 1876, p. 1 [[http://adatbank.transindex.ro/html/alcim\\_pdf6063.pdf](http://adatbank.transindex.ro/html/alcim_pdf6063.pdf) (accessed: 15 July 2013)].

study how these possessions were farmed, used and what kind of economic activity they were subjected to we needed to accept conclusions based on parallels and pre-suppositions as well. From among the real estate properties present in the donations possessions of land, fishponds and mills were considered, since these were donated in the greatest number. In all we managed to gather data on one third of the mendicant monasteries of Transylvania. In this group the Dominican convents are the most relevant, followed by the Franciscans and the Austin Hermits.

So we have no general data on how the possessions were used. In several cases the monasteries owned the possessions for a long time, in other cases it is obvious that the friars sold the donation. Fishponds and mills were rarely sold, since these were real estate properties that provided a steady income for the friars. Donations were not always owned peacefully by the friars. Family members, neighbours or even local communities (e.g. the town) involved the friars in law suits that could last for decades, for they felt their rights or interests threatened by the donation given to the friars. This meant an expense in money and energy on behalf of the friars, but on the other hand they could use the litigated real estate property until the end of the law suit. Besides litigations, the friars sold or exchanged the donations received earlier if their (economic or other) interests dictated that. Or sometimes – as there were examples stated here as well – they refused the donation offered, after long deliberation. It is also obvious that they primarily accepted real estate proprieties helping directly their survival, obeying thus also the regulations of their order. Therefore, despite the relatively high number of donations (at some monasteries like the Dominican monasteries of Sighișoara and Cluj or that of the Austin Hermits in Dej) these religious communities never became the rich land owners like the Benedictine monasteries used to be. And considering the matter from this point of view we can even say that thus they managed to preserve the spirituality of the mendicant orders.



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Hereditas Monasteriorum  
vol. 3, 2013, s. 111–133

## Ubóstwo czy dostatek? Ekonomiczne aspekty działalności klasztorów mendykanckich w średniowiecznym Siedmiogrodzie

### Streszczenie

Badania nad działalnością gospodarczą mendykantów zaczęły zyskiwać na popularności dopiero w ostatnich dekadach, toteż bibliografia dotycząca tego zagadnienia pozostaje niewielka. Za wielki krok naprzód należy uznać szeroko zakrojone metodologiczne próby badań (zarówno przeszłe, jak i bieżące), takie jak projekt MARGEC, które wykraczając poza znaną faktografię, proponują obiecujące metody dotarcia do szczegółów dotyczących działalności gospodarczej mendykantów w średniowiecznej Europie Środkowej. Próbując wpisać się w ten nurt badawczy, autorka analizuje zapisy testamentowe i donacje na rzecz klasztorów mendykanckich na obszarze Siedmiogrodu, zmierzając do ukazania miejsca mendykantów w gospodarce średniowiecznej. Po naszkicowaniu dziejów fundacji mendykanckich w Siedmiogrodzie oraz wskazaniu na wyraźne w nich wpływy węgierskie, analizuje trzy najczęściej występujące tu rodzaje nadań nieruchomości na rzecz poszczególnych klasztorów. Badania nad przekazanymi klasztorom majątkami nieruchomymi służą nie tylko lepszemu poznaniu ich kultury materialnej oraz ówczesnych praktyk związanych z nadaniami i zapisami testamentowymi, ale także nakreśleniu mapy dóbr klasztornych. Dysponując tego rodzaju danymi, będzie można prowadzić dalsze badania nad sytuacją gospodarczą klasztorów i ustalić, jakiego rodzaju własnością dysponowały i jak nią zarządzały.

### Słowa kluczowe

zakony żebracze, mendykanci, gospodarka klasztorów mendykanckich, dochody klasztorów mendykanckich, dominikanie, franciszkanie, Siedmiogród, Cluj, Bistriţa, testamenty, nadania

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Hereditas Monasteriorum  
vol. 3, 2013, p. 111–133

## Poverty or not? Economic aspects of the mendicant friaries in medieval Transylvania

### Summary

Research on the economic activity of the mendicant orders started to become popular with historians studying monastic life in the Middle Ages only in last decades, thus there is little bibliography on the topic. However the fact that there were and are running vast methodological attempts for research such as the MARGEC project, which go past the factual exchange of information and suggest viable methods to reveal the details regarding the economic activity of the mendicant orders of Central Europe in the Middle Ages should be considered an important step. Thus, it is the aim of this paper to continue to enrich the situation of the mentioned research tendency in a small way by examining the gifts of the wills and donations made to the mendicant friaries of Transylvania and to contribute to a broader and more complex understanding of the relationship between the Transylvanian mendicant orders and different economic activities in the medieval period. Giving a general outline of Transylvanian mendicant monasticism in the Middle Ages with its specifically Hungarian characteristics, we analyze the three most frequent types of real estate donations given to these religious institutions of Transylvania. It is clear that the results of the analysis of the given immovable properties to the friaries can be used not only for a better knowledge of the material culture of these religious institutions or for the donation and testamentary practice of the time, but they also can help us to chart the goods of the friaries. Having this data we can make further analysis regarding the economic situation of the friaries, what kind of property each friary had and how they could manage these goods in order to have a prosperous life.

### Keywords

mendicant orders, friars, economy of mendicant convents, income of mendicant convents, Dominicans, Franciscans, Transylvania, Cluj, Bistrița, testaments, donations