WRITTEN SOURCES REGARDING PAULINE MONASTERIES IN MEDIEVAL TRANSYLVANIA

Corina HOPÂRTEAN¹

Abstract: The order of Saint Paul the First Hermit, also known as the Pauline, and sometimes Paulite order, emerged during the first half of the 14th century as a mendicant order, settling in rural areas. Having been the only monastic order developed within the Hungarian realm, its importance for the royal policy is not to be questioned, especially during the reign of King Louis the Great. Its rural location is somehow a reason for the scarcity of written accounts, along with the most important consequence of centuries passing by, namely the destruction and disappearance of almost all architectural remains. This paper focuses on emphasizing a series of written sources, mentioning Pauline monasteries in medieval Transylvania as a first step in our research within this field of research.

Key words: Pauline monasteries, Transylvania, Middle Ages, written sources.

1. Introduction

The monastic landscape of the Middle Ages was beginning to sense a shift in its history starting with the turn of the 13th century (Frank, 1979, p.86). This new page in its history was being determined by the rise of the mendicant orders, the Dominicans and the order of St. Francis. It was a shift reflected in the monastic ideal. In the decades to come, others followed. Those that are of interest for our paper, are the ones who brought together hermit communities in medieval Hungary and formed what was to be known as the Order of St. Paul the First Hermit. This Hungarian monastic order rejoiced over the support of all social strata, but mostly that coming from the nobility and the royalty, represented by king Charles Robert (1308-1342) and his son, Louis the Great (1342-1382). (Romhány, 1999, p. 16) Not without efforts, the order received its papal approval in 1308 and was placed under the Rule of St. Augustine. (Romhányi, 2012, p. 53; Bencze, 1991, p. 415)

Recent research has shown that the network of Pauline monasteries was a steady one. It had a constant growth and its decline was a consequence of the battle of Mohács in 1526 (Romhányi, 2015, p. 34). The exact number of Pauline monasteries that once existed as such in medieval Transylvania is yet to be established. Some numbers were given, either by means of Hungarian or Romanian historiographic approaches, but one might notice an inconsistency that increases the degree of difficulty when walking this particular research path of where and when.

¹“Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu, corinahopartean@yahoo.com.
Our paper is thought not as a way of describing the order’s history or its *modus vivendi*. In the following, our aim is to render a set of medieval documents issued in regard to the Pauline monasteries in Transylvania.

2. Primary Sources

The primary or written sources regarding issued documents on the topic of the Order of St. Paul the First Hermit in medieval Transylvania chosen for this paper are Romanian, German and Hungarian historiographic samples. In the following we are going to summarize the main information concerning the efforts that led to publishing these particular document editions.

During the last decades of the 19th century, after completing his studies in Vienna, Franz Zimmermann returned to Sibiu and became the head of the National Saxons’ Archive. Thus, he saw the opportunity of starting a project, a collection of documents, together with other researchers, that came to be known as *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen*. The work of the first researchers’ group was continued. By 1991, seven volumes were published, thus opening, during an entire century, new possibilities in the field of medieval Transylvanian diplomatics (Jakó, 2000, p. 116).

*Documenta Romaniae Historiae* is a project which started over more than fifty years ago. A particular series was developed for each of the three historic Romanian regions. Series C was dedicated to Transylvania. By 2014, with the 16th volume coming into being, the documents regarding this region, which once started with the year 1075, came to be encompassed within the series’ documents up to the year 1384. At present, the team dedicating hard work in continuing this decade long project is based in Cluj-Napoca, consisting of renowned researchers of the Institute of History ‘George Barțiu’.

The last group of documents, cited in this paper, is the so called *Codex Diplomaticus Transsylvaniae*. This particular document edition was started in 1997 due to the efforts of Jakó Zsigmond. The four volumes that resulted spanned over 17 years. Sadly, the project coordinator passed away while working on the third volume. Nevertheless, even the fourth one was based on Zsigmond’s manuscript. The documents encompassed within these four volumes extend over a time frame between 1023 and 1372.

One might ask why we have chosen these particular document editions and the question would be more then entitled. First of all, the topic of the Order of St. Paul the First Hermit was not that debated within the Romanian historiography, resulting thus in a lack of information. Second of all, we started researching those document editions that are at hand and which make reference to our topic of interest. A future stage in our research will involve those documents issued within the order, which are to be found at the National Archives in Budapest.

3. Written Sources

3.1. Written Sources regarding Pauline Establishments

It shouldn’t come as a surprise that king Louis I. of Hungary was one of the order’s main supporters. He always struggled to improve the order’s situation and was the one that managed to bring the relics belonging to St. Paul the first hermit from Venice to Budapest (Török, Legeza & Szacsvay, 1996, p. 43) and shelter them within the confines of the St.
Lawrence monastery, the order’s headquarters and a place of pilgrimage as well. He was the one, who ordered in 1363, that a Pauline monastery was to be built in Maramureș (DRH C, vol. XII, p. 119, nr. 142).

Two decades later, in 1384, Goblin, the Transylvanian bishop established a cloister in Alba Iulia. (DRH C, vol. XVI, p. 438, nr. 326) Researches showed that it was not exactly in what we know as current day Alba Iulia, but in its vicinity, in the village of Tăuți. Nonetheless, it might seem that the monastery in Tăuți could have been built even sooner: by 1299, the Pauline hermits were the owners of the domain of Micești. Later on, this particular Pauline monastery was also the beneficiary of a papal indulgence, in 1402, and of support given by the priest Blasiu from Cojocna, so that a new chapel could have been erected, dedicated to St. Catherine of Cojocna (Rusu, 2000, p. 259). Other sources place the beginning of the monastery in Tăuți in 1379 (Neagu, 2014, p. 292). Be that as it may, establishing a Pauline monastery close to the bishopric seat in Alba Iulia should not come as a surprise taking into consideration the royal support given to bishop Goblin and the latter’s approval and compliance of both papal and royal authority and policy.

The Romanian historiography or document editions do not encompass specific details regarding orders of establishing Pauline monasteries. Nonetheless, other Pauline monasteries are mentioned as already functioning and appear within written sources in relation to other matters. A document from 1369 mentions the Pauline monastery in Bărăbanț on the occasion of settling the borders between three estates: Bărăbanț, Micești and Șarda (DRH C, vol. XIII, pp. 568-569, nr. 368). If the monastery’s existence occurs in the Latin text when mentioning the ‘heremitarum sancti pauli’, one cannot state the same when reading the Romanian translation (DRH C, vol. XIII, p. 569, nr. 368). The monastery was established as such on the premises of a former one. This renewal is traced back to 1376, at which point it was dedicated to the Holy Virgin (Rusu, 2000, p. 48).

Fig. 1. The villages of Tăuți and Bărăbanț as shown in the Josephinian Land Survey

3.2. Written Sources Regarding Donations to Pauline Monasteries

The order’s benefactors were, on the one hand, the Hungarian royalty and on the other, the rural nobility. Whether the former or the latter, the donations consisted in land, vineyards, mills or even already functional ecclesiastical structures. An example in this respect is a document issued in May 12th, 1358, where King Louis I. of Hungary reissued
that an order from 1355 concerning a donation to the Pauline monastery in Diosgyőr (NE Hungary). The donation consisted in this case in the proprietary rights upon a mill and Andrew, the Transylvanian voivode, the bishops of Cenad, Oradea and Transylvania were cited as witnesses (DRH C, vol. XI, p. 273, nr. 271). In 1384, Mary, queen of Hungary, issues a confirmation of land being donated to the order of St. Paul the first hermit, namely the donation of the Varhel domain. It seems that the document is a confirmation of a former one from 1376. According to both documents, the domain of Varhel was donated to the Pauline order by Ştefan, the former Transylvanian voivode, and his son, Ladislau. The purpose of this donation was to give the monks the needed place for a new cloister. This was to be dedicated to the Holy Virgin (DRH C, vol. XVI, p. 541, nr. 387).

The nobility was always a supporter of mendicant orders and gave them their support, because mendicant orders made it a rule that their architecture withheld from any opulence or lavishness. It was therefore not that big of an effort on behalf of the noble families to support mendicant orders and in our case, Pauline monasteries in rural areas. This support can be traced back in most of the order’s provinces, in nowadays Croatia or Slovenia. In medieval Croatia, the members of the Frankapan family ere an important benefactor for the Pauline order. Over time, several family leaders made donations to the St. Nicholas monastery within the Istra-Vinodol vicariate (Bertović, 2014, pp. 17-18). Support received by Pauline monks from noble families can be traced back also in Transylvania. The order received a stone church located on a hilltop and forests for its settlement in Sâncraiu de Mureș (Mureș county) (Codex Diplomaticus Transsylvaniae, 2014, p. 328, nr. 836). Toth János and Bwlgar László were the patriarchs of their families and owners of the domain thus had jointly decided to make the donation to the Pauline order. Together with the stone ecclesiastical structure, the Paulines residing there also received arable lands and forests (Bencze, 2015, p.12).

3.3. Written Sources regarding Conflicts with Pauline Monasteries

The relationship between the nobility and the Pauline monks residing in the vicinity of their domains was not always non-conflictual. Even though most noble families were willing to make donations and support the rural presence of monastic orders, exceptions were also registered. The Pauline monastery in Păuca (Sibiu county) was first mentioned in a document issued in 1418 (UB, vol. IV, p. 78, nr. 1844). The document was issued by Pope Martin V. and mentions both the Pauline monastery with its ecclesiastic stone structure dedicated to the Holy Virgin and one Ladislaus, priest in Dobring. The monastery was a short lived one. Its existence spanned over just 30 years, before being taken over by the Order of St. Francis. Nevertheless, the Kereky family owning the land neighbouring the monastery were the cause for some unpleasantries towards the monks. Even if the conflict between the Kereky family and the monks took place after the Pauline monastery supposedly was transferred to the Order of St. Francis, the documents still name the monks residing there as Pauline ones. The written sources accounted an episode of trespassing. It seems that some members of the Kereky family and their known associates overran the monastery’s pastures and forests and even attacked one of the monks within the confines of the monastery. Blasius, the Transylvanian voivode, was the one to rule the payment of a 1000 guilders fine as a punishment for this deed (UB, vol. VII, p. 30, nr. 4023).
3.4. Written Sources regarding the Entrance within the Order

Other mentions regarding the Pauline order tell us about new members. There had been cases where clergymen renounced their status and entered the order as simple monks. Therefore, the decisions of Benedict, the archdeacon of Pankota (Arad county) and Tristianus, an archdeacon as well, were documented. The former took on the white cloth of the Paulines in 1359 and the latter in 1364 (DRH C, vol. XI, p. 428, nr. 415; DRH C, vol. XII, p. 428, nr. 410). In the case of Benedict, it was Pope Innocence VI. That named another person to take over the position of archdeacon. In the case of Tristian, the king himself took over the domains that were owned by the archdeacon and gave them as a reward for his services to one Mihail, his sons and brothers as a reward for his loyal service towards the crown. One of his cousins was the provost of Oradea, thus part of the donation went back to the clergy.

4. Conclusions

The attempt to trace back documented proofs regarding the Pauline presence in medieval Transylvania comes not without difficulty. If we are to set aside for a moment the results of archaeological researches, taking into consideration that these as well are only a few, and focus only on the documents mentioning Pauline monasteries, churches or premises, soon we can observe a scarcity within the document editions at hand, namely the ones chosen for this study. Nonetheless, the cited documents bring a series of information and come to fill a gap, or to lay down a foundation on this topic.

We have tried to group the documents chosen and to establish some common traits between them. As we were able to see, decisions taken in relation with Pauline matters were taken either by the Hungarian royalty, by bishopric authority or later on, in judicial matters, by the voivode. The king being the greatest landowner in the kingdom had at his disposal the means to support the Paulines and transfer them properties once owned or desired by noblemen, thus outlining potential conflicts. On the other hand, in most cases, noblemen were also amongst the order’s benefactors. The order, being a mendicant one, was not that expensive to support.

The order’s popularity soon grew. As we were able to observe, clergymen holding high dignities went on to renounce these and embrace the white cloak and to become Pauline monks. Other personalities were also members of the Pauline Order, even if that was thought of as an honour. King Matia of Hungary and his mother were to become great
supporters of the Paulines and were members of its fraternity (Romhányi, 2013, p. 5). As such they were emphasizing their patronage and support.

The episodes portrayed in these documents are pieces of a puzzle, filled up at some extend by recent studies. The order’s archive is kept at the National Archives in Budapest. Our goal is to continue solving this puzzle with information found in the order’s archive and thus to link the information already obtained with the one that is not to be found in our country.

References

Primary sources


Secondary sources


