

PhD theses

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**THE HISTORY OF THE SERVITE ORDER IN HUNGARY BETWEEN  
1867 AND 1950**

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## I. Significance of the theme, historiographic antecedents

The history of the Servite Order has not been written up from a scientific point of view in our country. The aim of my work is erecting a monument to the memory of an unfairly forgotten monastic order, because their history in Hungary is an important part of the church history and the understanding of the Hungarian monastic life. The monks can be found in almost all world religions, thus the Buddhists, the Muslims and the Orthodox Christians have a great respect for their monks as well. The monasticism is appeared in the Protestant religion, too.

The Catholic monasticism is a very manifold phenomenon and it has a lot of varied customs. More than 600 male orders are operating today in the numerous countries of the world. Only the Franciscan Order could show considerable activity on the territory of our country because of the Turkish occupation in Hungary and the other monastic orders had been withered or disappeared. The Protestant Reformation had set back this way of life and particular vocation too. The freshly settled down or surviving religious orders had been standing on weak legs in other aspects and the actions and decrees of Emperor Joseph II had made them in disadvantageous position almost to this day. Several orders had been disbanded and the Servites had lost the half of their monasteries. The monastic orders had found their places with difficulty in the age of the Enlightened Absolutism and their numbers had been stagnant. In the first place it is the cause why there existed only 23 male orders in 1950 despite the relatively favourable period of the Dualism and the Horthy regime. If we take a look to the data almost hundred years earlier, it is clear it had been a fine development for a relatively short period as well. The monastic orders were registered in the end of the 1846 year and then 11 male orders and 6 female orders, furthermore two other orders with Greek Orthodox liturgy were operated altogether. The Servites were the third smallest order, but they preceded the illustrious Dominican Order and the Carmelites. So we can say the spreading of the monasticism is far scantier in our country than in Western Europe, especially compared to the southern Catholic regions in the area. The historical science has worked up adequately the history of the Hungarian monasticism, but the Servites have been left out, however we could better understand and elaborate the history of the monastic life in Hungary if we know their history.

There has not been published any comprehensive work about the history of the Hungarian Servites and it is such a condition that presented a big problem during the research. Member of the Order, Father M. Anzelm Wimmer wrote relatively lot of it, but he was a spiritual

writer and not a historian, so his works just sometimes connect to the history of the Servites. He tried composing the history of the Order in Hungary, but then he abandoned it and inserted the finished material as an appendix under the title 'A szerviták magyar földön' at the end of his book, 'Benizi Szent Fülöp és kora'. It is a very short work with altogether 30 pages and it does not indicate its sources; much part of it concerns the illustrating of the pastorate activity and the author transferred a great deal from another important source, which is titled 'Emlék-lapok a Budapesti Szervita Konvent 200 éves fennállásának örömnepére' (Budapest, Szent István Katolikus Műintézet Könyvkiadója 1889) in relation to the history of the monastery in Pest. It is an important source of information about the Order, however it is a historical elaboration of a single cloister. Due to the date of the publishing the work presents the history of the undoubtedly most significant Hungarian monastery, but it does before my studied period. All in all the volume contains no more than 33 pages. Father M. Fülöp Ángyán's work, titled 'Máriaremetei kegyhely' deals with the age before the Servites rather and it is a historical volume about a single monastery too with altogether 24 pages. Especially its illustrations are meaningful, and we can call it more popular science than historical opus. Among the books about history of the monasteries we call the following piece a significant writing: 'Fogolykiváltó Boldogasszony tisztelete és Makkos Mária' (Budapest 1947) by Géza Ernő Varga. It describes the construction history of the Church and Cloister in Makkosmária mentioning the activities of the Servites. Definitely modern historical work was created only in German and it concerns the monastery of Loretto (Dr. László Stefan: Loretto im Burgenland, Eisenstadt, 1994), but this monastery is beyond the scope of my research, because Emperor Joseph II had closed up it. The comprehensive historical works of monastic orders devote just one or two pages to the history of the Servite Order and we can collect superficial information from these sources. Among them I would highlight the following works:

- György Balanyi: A szerzetesség története. Budapest, Szent István Társulat 1923.
- A szerzetes rendek egyetemes történelme különös tekintettel a magyar-s erdélyországi szerzetesség jelen létállapotára. II. vol. Pest, 1867. Edited by Antal Arzén Karcsú
- A Katolikus Magyarország II. vol. Budapest 1902. Edited by Dr. János Kiss, Dr. János Sziklay
- Mária Puskely: Kétezer év szerzetessége Szerzetesség- és művelődéstörténeti enciklopédia II. vol. Budapest, 1998.
- Tamás Gömbös: A szerzetes és lovagrendek címerei és viseletei, Budapest, 1993.

- Magyar Katolikus Almanach II. vol. A magyar katolikus egyház élete 1945-1985 Budapest, 1988. Edited by Dr. László Turányi
- Országos Katolikus Névtár II. szerzetesi kötet Budapest, 2001.
- Károly Szöllőssy: Az Osztrák-Magyar Monarchia összes szerzetes rendjeinek történeti és statisztikai rajza, különös tekintettel azok irodalmi és tanügyi működésére Arad 1878.

## II. The fundamental sources and the subject of the research

As the above described, short historiographic overview is showing we can not reconstruct the history of the Order based on these works, since these writings mutually derive from each other. Thus I had to begin the research exploring the primary sources and it made heavier by the dispersing of the Order's Archives in 1950.

The biggest part of the research consisted finding and writing up of the relatively scarcely literature and materials from the corresponding archives. Therefore I had to restore information fragments and place-names based on contemporary Latin language records and documents many times then I had to compare them to subjects of other archives. It was not infrequently involved considerable efforts, since I had to select the authentic information from three or four data of the special bibliography more than once. Generally the ubiquitous mistakes are based upon former, inaccurate statements or misinterpretations of observations. The investigation on the spot had been played an important role in the research as well. I made some visits to the Servite churches and monasteries. Also I obtained access to the former cloister in Máriaremete, which is currently a social welfare home and I took some photos on the spot.

The first and most important archives are unofficially operating in the monastery of the Servite Order in Eger and it is regard as the record office for the Order. Having the Servites convinced themselves of the future destruction of their transported record office, they tried hiding anything they could and fortunately the most of the carried away letters and documents has been persisted. Talking of that we can draw valuable information about the events from a book (Györgyné Vix: A szerzetesi könyvtárak sorsa Magyarországon 1950-1952. Budapest, 1997) and thus we become aware of the fact that a lot of experts had worked at the sorting of the documents. The most of the confiscated books and files were classified and transported to the appropriate places, although several theological books were actually destroyed. The evacuation of the Servites' monastery had been executed in short order, since a new

institution was about to move its place, so the documents were transported quickly and they were arranged later.

A section of the documents for the Order had been carried in bulk to Pannonhalma and these files got back to the Servites in Eger, where the only one monastery of the Servites stands in today. The papers were arranged by a Belgian Father, who hardly could speak Hungarian, so he put the documents into various files by date or name alone. It was an essential point of view to select the personal and monasteries files and issues regarding provincials into the category of 'Provincial' papers during the sorting. The 'Sisters' papers contains information about the female members of the Order, but it is a meagre material, so supposedly the province of the sisters had got a separate archive in the seat monastery, but I do not know anything about it and I was looking for it without avail. About 20 percents of the archives of the monastery in Eger was organized, but fortunately the most of the unorganized papers are outside of my studied period.

The other – bigger and older – sections of the monastery's archives got to the stock of *Budapest Fővárosi Levéltár* (Budapest City Archives), where experts sorted and entered in catalogue them. It is an easily accessible source of documents. The most part of the documents from the monastery in Pest and the Servites' Head of Province in Hungary from the period 1696-1948 are researchable. It is contained in 23 boxes, but unfortunately the archives have got very scarce information about the other cloisters. It is clear that the materials from Eger and Budapest came from the same place of origin: the archives of the former seat monastery in Budapest.

I would lay emphasis on the documents in *Prímási Levéltár* (Primate Archives) of Esztergom as important archives for the Servites, where we can find the records of canonica visitation, the correspondences of the Order, the Archdiocesan Vicariate and the archbishops regard to the most important issues as well the applications of the Order.

The documents from *Székesfehérvári Püspöki és Székeskáptalani Levéltár* (Archives of Episcopate and Chapter-house in Székesfehérvár) contain the historical sources of Makkosmária and Máriaremete, since the local diocesan bishop exercised the right of the ordinary in the churches of the diocese.

From the same perspective we can reckon the *Veszprémi Érseki és Káptalani Levéltár* (Archives of Primate and Chapter-house in Veszprém) as a valuable information source: there are files regard to Sur and Csatka settlements, record of evidences for canonica visitation and correspondences of the prefects. It is important the *Győri Egyházmegyei Levéltár* (Diocesan Archive in Győr) for the historical exploration of Fraknó, Lajtaszék and Loretto – the two latter had been liquidated by Joseph II. The *Egri Főegyházmegyei Levéltár* (Archdiocesan Archives in Eger) contains remarkable information for the elaborating of the history of monasteries in Eger and Törökszentmiklós. Also the *Szeged-Csanádi Egyházmegye Püspöki Hivatala* (Episcopal Office for Diocese Szeged-Csanád) possesses the material of diocesan archives and it provides information about the history of an all-boys boarding school in Makó.

The *Szombathelyi Egyházmegyei Levéltár* (Diocesan Archives in Szombathely) may contain documents on the dissolved cloister of Vát, although I did not study them, since they are beyond my researching period and the files regard to the dissolution can be found in the *Magyar Országos Levéltár* (State Archives of Hungary) in Budapest. The State Archives are important, since they contain the documents from the Archives for the Council of Governor-General and they have got remarkable registers for the numerical ratio of the orders. It is noteworthy that the *Magyar Rádió Archívuma* (Archive for the Hungarian Radio) are preserving the Servite Father's broadcasting speeches and that the *Pest Megyei Levéltár* (Pest County Archives) are containing the legacy of Dezső Rexa, who researched the whole archives of the Servite Order as a renowned archivist and he published intriguing data. At last I mention that the *Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára* (Historical Archives of The Hungarian State Security) is keeping very interesting and shocking documents for the last period of the Order.

Besides the archives the various schematisms are containing a lot of information. The Servites published their bounded schematisms for the Order in the form of booklets. We can learn a lot of data about the members of the Order between 1857 and 1906 from the schematisms of the Order. These booklets were published in almost every year and they reported important statistical data of the Province of the Order in Austria-Hungary. Then the Province of the Order covered eight monasteries. We can get to know when and where was born a given monk, when got an access to the Order, when took his eternal pledge and when was ordained in the specific cloister. In the first chapters of the booklets we can read information about the General of the Order, the Prior Provincial and the office-holder prefects. The basic data of the

monasteries were recorded too, for example the year of the foundation and the name of the founder, along with the data and the names of the monks who lived in the cloister. In the end comes the summary of the numbers for the members of the Order and the data of the deceased. The chronologically list of the Prior Provincials can be found on the last page. Besides the schematisms of the Order the circulars of the provincial electoral meetings detail the members of the order and their residences, too.

Another large set of the schematism concerns the registers of a diocese and they also recorded the active monks in the given diocese, usually in the deanery where their cloister stood. We can happen upon this kind of schematisms in the National Széchenyi Library too, although the fullest schematisms are in the Cathedral Library in Esztergom regard to the Servites.

The monks had made comprehensive nation-wide registers too, but I just accentuate the importance of the register titled 'A magyarországi latin és görög szertartású világi és szerzetes római katolikus papság névtára', compiled by Gyula Pilinyi.

The third large set of sources is the contemporary newspapers, for example the 'Vasárnapi Újság', 'Magyar Kurír' and many more journals, but among them the most important was the 'Áve Mária' that had been published by the Servites for seven years. They started their proper journal in the year of the Eucharistic World Congress in 1938 and it had been published until 1944. Their purpose was a monthly, but they issued only four or six copies in a year.. These newspapers are very important, because almost all issues contained information about the past and the present of the Order, which has become history since.

The fourth set of data comprises the search for the Servites relics provided by other authors. Mapping these sources always involves a lot of gaps, thus we can not reach the completeness in this area. It is difficult to underline one or two books among the many remarkable and useful volumes. We can pick out a lot of things from the details of the history for the monasteries in Eger and Pest – for example the above mentioned Dezső Rexa's writings about Budapest are very useful.

I tried to present how far-reaching activities produced by a relatively small monastic order. Unfortunately I could not prove the existence of the Servite schools. However it does not falls within the time frame of my research, so I accepted the outcomes of the former publications. The Servites had been maintaining an all-boy boarding school of Makó, a field-hospital and a pharmacy, putting on the map some shrines, organizing people's mission, building new churches and monasteries, taking participation in developing parishes, ministering for the farms. These were their most important activities. They created their Third Order and they

contributed to the foundation of a Hungarian female congregation for the Servites. New forms of the Worship of Mary were developing in their shrines, like the worship of the Virgin Mary with special reference to her seven sorrows and the devotion to the Mother of the Sorrows. However these events were occurred during the Baroque Age, so I did not discuss about it more intensively. By determining the activities of the Order I tried pointing out the fact that the Servites had been getting in touch with many social classes by their shrines. Very large numbers of visitors arrived to the shrines: more than 100,000 people were involved in it by the most conservative estimates and this number could rise above a half million.

Since the primary subject of my research is the male branch of the Servite Order, so I did not study the female branch thoroughly, although I tried present their activities and outline their history briefly, but comprehensively

Of course my research points beyond both the designated scope of age and the Servite Order inadvertently. Since no one wrote about the history of the Order before, I considered important to elaborate their roughly outlined history in the period before the Dualism at least. However the age after the dissolution is important, because such facts have been came to light during the research that revealing completely new knowledge about the illegal activity of the whole Hungarian Catholic monasticism, including the Servites. These facts provide the better understanding of the Order's history. The analysis of these documents was not occurred until this day from the point of view of the Servites and I tried fill up these gaps in my current treatise.

### III. Major statements of the dissertation, new scientific results

The Servites were among the smaller monastic orders in Hungary. Our country was the most eastern province of the Order. The Servite Order itself is not such a small order in the world: they have got two provinces of order in Italy and their number exceeds the widely known Order of Saint Benedict's. Statues of four well-known saints stand in the alcove below the dome of the Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome and two saints are Servite. They are Saint Juliana Falconieri (b. 1270, d. 1341) and Saint Philip Beniz (b. 1233, d. 1285). The highest office of the Servite Order is the Prior General's and his seat is the central monastery of the Servites, the San Marcello of Rome. The Servites, the Order of Friar Servants of Mary (O. S. M.) cover with a network the whole world, since they have got monasteries in Europe (Austria, Germany, Belgium, England, Scotland, Ireland, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Hungary), in the Americas (Canada, United States of America, Mexico, Jamaica, Columbia, Venezuela,



Brasilia, Uruguay, Chile and Argentina), in Africa (Tanzania, Mozambique, Swaziland, Lesotho and South Africa), in Asia (India and Burma) and also in Australia. Particularly important are the communities of Servites in the United States of America and Mexico. The Servites celebrated their 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1983 and their history is a remarkable one.

The Hungarian monasteries of the Servite Order always had been constituted a part of a bigger unit and the universal Catholic Church. The Order of the Servites is a monastic order sanctioned by the pope. It was proved that the monasticism makes the Catholic Church more colourful phenomenon, because the monastic orders as independent institutions complete the pastoral work of the parochial clergy in the dioceses. The Servites have been living in Hungary since 1644. Although Joseph II closed up their three cloisters, the order survived this trial too. The friars had been working on in the surviving other three monasteries, including in Fraknó until the Peace Treaty of Trianon: then the monastery of Fraknó detached from Hungary during the adjustments of the frontiers. The pastoral work is not so spectacular than a school, hospital or any other social institute, but essentially this activity is the primary mission of the church. Although the history handles this issue like a stepchild, it might be give an answer how the historians were not concerned with the Servites. In a social perspective not to be dismissed lightly the fact that the Catholic believers often visited their shrines and thus the Servites got connected to the major part of the Hungarian population. Although the Servites numbered a few and they maintained the shrines not alone, they represented a special sort of spirituality, which inspired the interior designs of many churches and the titles of the temples in the Baroque Age. They inspired the spreading of the Madonna statues with heart pierced by seven daggers.

According to an assumption the Order did not tried to join in actively the social work – but it is not true. The history of their field-hospital totally has been forgotten. The all-boy boarding school of Makó is the evidence for the other kind of services of the Order besides the maintaining of the shrines. The Order possessed a widespread movement of the Third Order with more than 1500 members.. The laymen had connected closely to the Order and the monks laid emphasis on their spiritualities and the so called Scapulare Movement contained more people. The male branch of the Order beneficially had contributed to the creating of the female congregation, which worked very actively in the field of the social work in Hungary. They had got schools, kindergartens, remand-homes, alms-houses for the old people and orphanages.

The Order tried to fulfil its mission to the last, as evidenced by the process of construction in Makkosmária in 1950.

They had got eight monasteries at the time of the dissolution, including four shrines and they planned to build a new one in Mount Péter in Budapest.

A lot of new and intriguing issues have been brought up during the writing of the dissertation, but I have to omit to reveal these issues because of the finite extent of the work and the time consuming researches. The early Hungarian history of the Order and the detailed elaboration of the Sisters' history would be deserved to pay attention to them as well.

#### IV. Publications related to the topic:

*A szervita rend története Makón.* In: Egyháztörténeti Szemle. 2007. 2. issue. p. 100-112.

*A szervita rend meglepedése Makkosmárián a rend feloszlásáig.* In: Fejezetek a tegnapi világból. Tanulmányok. Az ELTE BTK Történelemtudományok Doktori Iskola kiadványa. 2009. p. 247-264.

*A szervita rend hadikórháza Pesten 1914-1918 között.* In: Budapesti Szemle.

#### V. Presentations related to the range of subjects for the dissertation:

*A szervita rend meglepedése Makkosmárián a rend feloszlásáig.* The presentation was issued on the Conference named 'Még-e előre, fajzatom?' avagy kandeláberek a magyarság útján a 19–20. században', organized by the Loránd Eötvös University History PhD School, Modern and Contemporary Hungarian History Programme on June 16 and 17, 2008.