

Ditta Szemere

**EVERYDAY LIFE AND LITERACY:
FEMALE OBSERVANT MONASTERIES IN LATE MEDIEVAL ITALY AND
HUNGARY**

MA Thesis in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies

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Ditta Szemere

(Hungary)

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Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

Chair, Examination Committee

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I, the undersigned, **Ditta Szemere**, candidate for the MA degree in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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Abstract

The thesis concentrates on the role of the nuns in the religious cultural life after the Observant reform of the mendicant orders in Central Italy (Umbria) and Hungary. The first two observant Poor Clare convents of Umbria, in Perugia and Foligno, were the most active centers of high-profile literary activities in the fifteenth century. Similarly, in Hungary there were two important female monasteries—in Óbuda and in the Margaret Island—where Franciscan and Dominican nuns copied in the scriptorium. These communities' life and work are well-documented and many scholars have studied these convents respectively, but the present research aims to provide a complex view of the everyday life and work of the nuns after the Observant reform in these two very different historical context as Italy and Hungary in the fifteenth century. The objective of the research is to gain a better insight into the social and historical background of religious literacy, female religious life and its organizational structures in the pre-modern era, and to offer a comparative view between Italy and Hungary.

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Introduction

“Io che scrivo, dilectissime sorelle presente e future, vi do’ questa exortatione et ricordo, a ciò che sempre siate vigilante ad osservare la purità de questa sancta regula e povertà estrema, acciò che el Signore non mandi qualche flagello...”¹

“Én édes Krisztinám, igen szép az könyv, mire nem fizetsz?”²

The topic of the Observant movement usually fills volumes with complex analyses and it is still very fashionable among scholars of the Christianity in the Late Middle Ages. After profound studies on this field of research I find, however, that these two sentences above define the essence of the Observance perfectly. The first one is from an Umbrian chronicle written by sr. Caterina of Osimo in the Poor Clares monastery of Foligno; she writes the events of the reform of her community in order to encourage every future nun to follow the Rule—and to avoid the anger of God. This is the essence of the Observant reform: a local initiative of an enthusiastic community which wishes to return to the original way of life of the order by putting in focus again the question of poverty and the regulations of the monastic order. This personal religious endeavor was the starting point of a huge movement Europe-wide which shaped significantly religion and culture. The second sentence is from a Hungarian nun from the Dominican nunnery of the Margaret Island, she asks for payment for a book she copied for her companion. In contrast with the first sentence, this one shows the success and the limits of the Observant movement: success as the vernacular translations of religious texts brought the non-Latin speaking nuns closer to the personal experience of monastic spirituality; however with the limitations of the local social context, stronger than the reform ideas of poverty. The fact

¹ [I who write, beloved present and future sisters, I give you this exhortation and reminder to be always vigilant to observe the purity of this saint Rule and extreme poverty, so that the Lord will not send any scourge...] (My translation) Angela Emmanuela Scandella, ed., *Ricordanze del monastero S. Lucia osc in Foligno* (Santa Maria degli Angeli: Ed. Porziuncola, 1987), 23.

² [My sweet Christine, this book is pretty nice, why don't you pay?] (My translation) *Codex Gömöry*, 237:5–7.

that both cited copyists are women and both were writing in vernacular shows one important consequence of the reforms: the increasing female writing activity inside the scriptorium of the nunneries.

In this thesis I will examine with more detail the Observant movement and its consequences in two Italian and two Hungarian monasteries with the focus on how it shaped everyday life and female literacy. This comparative analysis serves to shed more light on the Observant reform both in a local level and generally. The comparison of Italy and Hungary might seem strange, however these quite different countries were connected in many ways in the Late Middle Ages, therefore the similar phenomena of the Observant Reform in two different contexts is worth a deeper analysis. Previous comparative studies showed that the Observant movement had several independent origins from which it became a general ideal with local solutions. Specific researches among Italy and Hungary argued that the Hungarian observance is not only the pure continuation of the Italian movements, but has its own characteristics shaped by the contemporary Hungarian reality: the Hussite movement, the war against the Ottoman Turks, the strict social structure of the feudalism, etc.³ The main purpose of the thesis therefore is the examination of the differences and similarities of the Italian and Hungarian female Observant reforms in order to establish a general pattern and identify local characteristics based on aspects usually present in scholars' researches.

The main connection between Hungarian and Italian mendicant monastic reality regarding the reform movement is the writing activity of the nuns. However, the number of sources and survived codices from the two countries are very different: the hundreds of codices from Umbria cannot be compared to the fifty-some Hungarian manuscripts. Not only the number of the sources differs in the two countries, but also their genre: from the Italian

³ Francesca Bartolacci and Roberto Lambertini (eds.), *Osservanza francescana e cultura tra Quattrocento e primo Cinquecento. Italia e Ungheria a confronto* (Rome: Bibliotheca Academiae Hungariae, 2014).

monasteries several narrative sources survived together with economic records and legal documents, while the Hungarian material lacks the narrative sources and had limited number of documents from the other two categories as well. For this reason the comparative analysis will necessarily contain more information from the Italian material. My aim with the comparison therefore is to place the fragmentated Hungarian sources in a context based on the Italian narrative. This comparison will lead to a clearer view to understand which events described in the Hungarian sources are part of a general pattern, and which are the consequence of local characteristics. My research method will consist in analyzing and comparing primary sources. I intend to concentrate on the common nuns instead of focusing on saints or significant artists, in order to present the literary activities of a women's community. As an interdisciplinary approach is essential to present the role of the complex network system in the religious literacy of the nuns, I will use the methodology and perspective of multiple disciplines such as philology and social and cultural history. The research intends to shed light on the effects of the Observant reform in these female religious cultural centers and in the formation of the vernacular literature. The objective of the research is to gain a better insight into the social and historical background of religious literacy, female religious life and its organizational structures in the pre-modern era, and to offer a comparative view between Italy and Hungary.

In the first chapter I will present the main subjects of this research, the four female monasteries of the two most important mendicant orders, the Dominicans and the Franciscans. I chose these monasteries because their situation in religious life, their position in the urban community and the social status of their members are very similar, therefore the comparison will show the other differences, more important from the point of view of the reform itself. The first chapter also indicates the most important primary sources regarding the singular communities. In the second chapter I will provide a general background of the Observant

reform and I will underline the common pattern present in most reform movements of Europe which promoted the observance. The third chapter is the core of this thesis as it presents the Observant reform of Italy and Hungary in a comparative way with a focus on the nuns' everyday life and writing activity.

Chapter 1—Female monasteries in Italy and Hungary

In thirteenth-century Italy the penitential movement of women increased significantly and many female communities (called *religiosae mulieres*) were formed. The phenomenon was not concentrated only to Italy but was typical also in Western Europe, however, in different geographical areas it had a different character. These women created a problem in the ecclesiastical system and the papacy with the direction of Cardinal Ugolino tried to integrate them into the structure of the Church in order to give a legal basis to the new communities and to maintain control over female religiosity. At the end of the century the direction of female communities was in the hands of male monasteries: in Central Italy the Franciscans had the strongest influence. In this way, female monastic life was formed simultaneously with the birth of the Franciscan order.⁴ The first female communities imitated the model of Clare's life and chose poverty, that is, a way of living without owning property. Cardinal Ugolino, starting from 1216, was responsible for the organization of Clare's followers, starting naturally with the region of Umbria and more precisely with the surroundings of Assisi. Ugolino began the first institutional arrangements with five female communities of Umbria and Tuscany in 1218: Monticelli (near Florence), Monteluca (near Perugia), Siena, Lucca, and Foligno.⁵

As this analysis concentrates on the Observant reform of the fifteenth century, out of the many female mendicant communities, I selected those two which had the most significant role in the reform movement. First, the monastery of Monteluca, which was among the first female communities of Umbria and later became one of the richest and most influential female

⁴ For more information about the early female communities in Central Italy see Mario Sensi, *Storie bizzocche tra Umbria e Marche* (Rome: Ed. di Storia e Letteratura, 1995)

⁵ Cristina Andenna, "Dalla 'Religio pauperum dominarum de Valle Spoliti' all' 'Ordo Sancti Damiani': Prima evoluzione istituzionale di un ordine religioso femminile nel contesto delle esperienze monastiche del secolo XIII," in *Die Bettelorden im Aufbau*, ed. Gert Melville and Jörg Oberste (Münster: LIT-Verlag, 1999), 448.

religious institutions of the region; second, the monastery of Santa Lucia in Foligno, founded later in the fifteenth century, which became the local center of the Observants.

From the thirteenth century onwards, the political center of Hungary was the middle of the country, called *medium regni* in the primary sources, including towns such as Esztergom, Fehérvár, Óbuda (and later Buda) and Visegrád.⁶ The mendicant orders preferred to settle in cities and the two orders examined in this thesis—the Franciscans and the Dominicans—had an important role in the royal court, too. The Dominicans arrived in Hungary very early and until the Mongol invasion (1241-42) founded twelve convents. In 1303 Dominican chronicler Bernard Gui records the operation of thirty male and three female convents in Hungary.⁷ After the invasion, the order had the support of King Béla IV, who organized his court in the newly built royal center, Buda, where he also founded a nunnery in Margaret Island. In later centuries this female community—because of its richness, its good geographic position in the center of the *medium regni* and the noble origin of its members—remained the most significant Dominican nunnery of Hungary.

Similarly to the Dominicans, the Franciscans also settled in Hungary right after the foundation of the order: in 1270 they had twenty-five, and at the beginning of the fourteenth century forty convents.⁸ Before the Mongol invasion, only one Franciscan nunnery, Nagyszombat, was founded in the country in 1238, probably because of the cult of St. Elizabeth of Thuringia.⁹ The second nunnery was founded only in 1297 in Pozsony¹⁰ and the expansion

⁶ See Balázs Kertész, “Koldulórendek megtelepedése az ‘ország közepén’” [Mendicant orders settling in the *medium regni*] in *Az első 300 év Magyarországon és Európában: A Domonkos-rend a középkorban*, ed. Csurgai Horváth József (Székesfehérvár: Alba Civitas Történeti Alapítvány, 2017).

⁷ Jacques Quetif, and Jacques Echard, *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum*, vol. 1 (Paris: Ballard et Simart, 1719) on <https://archive.org/details/ScriptoresOpVolume1/page/n19>; cited in Kertész, “A koldulórendek megtelepedése,” 10; András Harsányi, *A domonkosrend Magyarországon a reformáció előtt* [The Dominican Order in Hungary before the Reformation] (Debrecen: Nagy Károly, 1938), 24.

⁸ György Balanyi, *A ferences mozgalom begyökerezése magyar földön* [The Settlement of the Franciscan Movement in Hungarian Lands], *Értekezések a történeti tudományok köréből* 25/10 (Budapest: MTA, 1940), 11–12.

⁹ St. Elizabeth of Thuringia died in 1231 and was canonized in 1235.

¹⁰ János Karácsonyi, *Szt. Ferenc rendjének története Magyarországon 1711-ig* [The History of the Order of St. Francis until 1711], vol. 9 (Budapest: MTA, 1923), 450.

of the Poor Clares continued only in the fourteenth century with the support of Queen Elizabeth, mother of King Louis I, whose mother also joined the Poor Clares when she was widowed. Elizabeth founded the nunnery of Óbuda which soon became equal to the Dominican nunnery of Margaret Island both in wealth and social importance.

Because of the similar social, economic and political position, cultural importance and their corresponding history with the Observant reform I will analyze both the Franciscan and the Dominican nunneries in Hungary. On the other hand, for Italy I will use the example of only the two Franciscan nunneries, as their connection to each other, their role in urban and cultural life is comparable with the two Hungarian nunneries. By the fifteenth century these four female communities became very similar: all had many lands and privileges, the nuns came from families of high social status and they were the most important female religious centers in the region. It is therefore worth to examine and compare how the Observant reform influenced these nunneries, and in what way it changed their life.

In the following I will briefly present the history of the nunneries from the foundation to the Observant reform. This summary I will provide a social-historical background for these case studies by placing them in context: my main interest is to examine the different formation of the Italian and Hungarian monasteries and to see the importance of the chosen monasteries in the local context. There are two goals of the historical presentation. On the one hand, to offer a historiographical summary by citing the most important secondary literature on the communities. On the other hand, to underline the fact that—although the historical development and circumstances of the monasteries are different—the Observant reform had a similar effect on communities in both Italy and Hungary: they became cultural centers and had an important role in the formation of vernacular religious literature.

1.1 Italian female monasteries in Umbria

1.1.1 Monteluca

The monastery of Santa Maria di Monteluca was among the first female monasteries in Umbria founded by the Poor Clares, and later in the fifteenth century it became one of the most important ones.¹¹ The nuns arrived in Perugia in 1218, only six years after the first Poor Clares community had been founded by Saint Clare in Assisi.¹² The geographical location of the monastery can explain why it could become one of the largest and most important female monasteries in Italy: it is in the center of the peninsula, part of the territory of the Papal State, so the political conditions were excellent for close relations with the Church. The building of the monastery was outside but close to the Perugian walls (now part of the city), so it was next to an important city, which was also an episcopal seat. The proximity to the walls guaranteed the safety of the nuns even in time of war. It was the first female monastery in the city.¹³ Assisi and Perugia are very close, only a valley separates them and the monastery of Monteluca offered an excellent view of Mount Subasio peppered with the white houses of Assisi. The distance is less than 30 kms, not even a day's journey either walking or by the carriage. It is clear why it was an excellent place for the Poor Clares, and the position also explains the fact that the monastery of Monteluca had soon the permission from the bishop of Perugia to build a church and a monastery.¹⁴

¹¹ The most important works on this community are Stefano Felicetti, *Aspetti e risvolti di vita quotidiana in un monastero perugino riformato: Monteluca, secolo 15*. (Rome: Istituto storico Cappuccini, 1995); Peter Höhler, "Il monastero delle Clarisse di Monteluca in Perugia (1218-1400)," in *Il movimento religioso femminile in Umbria nei secoli XIII-XIV. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studio, Città di Castello 27-29 ottobre 1982*, ed. Roberto Rusconi (Perugia-Florence: Quaderni del « Centro per il collegamento degli studi medievali e umanistici nell'Università di Perugia » 12, 1984), 159-182.; Ugo Nicolini, "I Minori Osservanti di Monteripido e lo Scriptorium delle Clarisse di Monteluca in Perugia nei secoli XV e XVI," *Piceum Ceraphicum* 8 (1971): 100-130.

¹² Höhler, *Il monastero delle clarisse di Monteluca*, 162.

¹³ Giovanna Casagrande, "Aspetti e risvolti della vita monastica femminile tra medioevo ed età moderna," *Istituti di assistenza e servizi sociali a Perugia dal Medioevo ai nostri giorni: Ciclo di conferenze sulla città*, ed. Franco Bazzi (Perugia: Associazione Porta S. Susanna, 1999), 18.

¹⁴ *Memoriale di Monteluca: cronaca del monastero delle clarisse di Perugia dal 1448 al 1838*, ed. Ugo Nicolini, (Assisi: Porziuncola, 1983), ix.

After the foundation in 1229, the nuns asked for the privilege of poverty of the Poor Clares from Pope Gregory IX. In that year, the abbess of the monastery was Agnese, probably Clare's sister.¹⁵ Initially, the privilege was requested by Clare in the previous year and the reason why the Poor Clares of Monteluce received it so soon was probably the protection of Gregory IX, who had taken care of the nuns even when he was still Cardinal Ugolino of Ostia.¹⁶ When Saint Clare died in 1253, more than fifty Poor Clare sisters lived in Monteluce.¹⁷ In 1264 the abbess of the convent was the sister of Pope Urban IV,¹⁸ which is one of the possible reasons why the nuns immediately adapted the urbanist rule (1262) instead of the original rule of St. Clare.¹⁹ The difference is significant, because while Clare's rule regarding the privilege of poverty contains the absolute prohibition of possessing property both as community and as individuals, the urbanist rule allows the possession of limited land to guarantee the subsistence of the nuns.²⁰ Later on, the Poor Clares were divided along the two rules. Most monasteries followed the urbanist rule, and even after the reform of the Observance this distinction remained. (more about the question of the rules in the 3rd chapter) Thanks to the urbanist rule the monastery received further donations in the following centuries and became the most populated and prestigious Umbrian women's monastery.²¹

¹⁵ Maria Pia Alberzoni, *Chiara e il papato* (Milano: Edizioni Biblioteca Francescana, 1995), 69-70. Alberzoni argues this fact even though there is no written evidence that this Agnese was actually Clare's sister. See Monica Benedetta Umiker, "La ricezione di S. Chiara d'Assisi nel Monastero di S. Maria di Monteluce in Perugia," *Il richiamo delle origini: Le clarisse dell'Osservanza e le fonti clariane. Atti della III giornata di studio sull'Osservanza francescana al femminile (Foligno, Monastero Clarisse di S. Lucia, 8 novembre 2008)*, ed. Pietra Messa, Angela Emmanuela Scandella, and Mario Sensi (S. Maria degli Angeli-Assisi: Ed. Porziuncola, 2009), 49.

¹⁶ *Bullarii Franciscanum Romanorum Pontificum*, vol. 1, 50. Umiker shows that this document is identical to the one given to the nuns of St. Damiano.

¹⁷ Felicetti, *Aspetti e risvolti di vita quotidiana*, 554-555.

¹⁸ As Umiker emphasises, Pope Urban in his letter called his sister Agnese as she was originally named Agnese at birth. However, her name in the community was changed into Maria, and in the official documents of the monastery she is always mentioned as Maria *domini Pape*. This serves as evidence for the claim that the Agnese mentioned in the Privilege of the Poverty cannot be her, but most probably Clare's sister. I thank sr. Umiker for pointing this fact out to me during our consultation in Perugia in April 2019.

¹⁹ Felicetti, *Aspetti e risvolti di vita quotidiana*, 555.

²⁰ About the different rules see Annibale Ilari, "San Francesco d'Assisi, le Clarisse et la Regola benedettina: Appunti per una storia della cultura benedettina," *Quaderni dell'archivio storico e notarile del comune di Ferentino «Antonio Floridi»* (Ferentino, 1978).

²¹ Felicetti, *Aspetti e risvolti di vita quotidiana*, 556.

In the fifteenth century the Alfani family played a very important role in the history of the monastery. Alfano Alfani, the most famous member of the family was a “splendid Perugian knight” and a “man of letters,” a highly educated merchant.²² His numerous family soon became one of the most powerful families in Perugia.²³ He had thirteen children, six of whom were male, and all (including females) received a humanistic education in writing and literature. Three of his daughters were nuns at Monteluce, three others at S. Giuliana, one of his sons was an observant friar, and one of his daughters (after her husband’s death) became a Clarissa. In a hundred years, altogether ten Alfani daughters were nuns in Monteluce, and many others in other Umbrian monasteries.²⁴ We can therefore say that in almost every important religious foundation in the region the family had one or more members and thus could be involved in the economic management of the monasteries and in the religious life of Umbria. This family system did not only benefit the family. The relationship between the monasteries was closer thanks also to the kinship ties that facilitated communication, the circulation of books, the travels of the sisters, which, in turn, also made the transmission of new ideas easier. Thus, it was possible that the Observant reform of the fifteenth century arrived very soon in almost all the Umbrian Poor Clares monasteries. It was very common that nuns raised in families of merchants or notaries worked in the scriptorium. Thanks to the humanistic mentality women learned to write at least, and with this basic skill they could copy manuscripts.²⁵ The Alfani daughters being much more erudite helped them become experienced writers and

²² Giovanni Battista Vermiglioli, *Biografia degli scrittori perugini e notizie delle opere loro* (Perugia: Bartelli, 1828) 10-12

²³ More about the Alfani family see Coriolano Belloni, *Dizionario storico dei banchieri italiani* (Florence: Marzocco, 1951), 10.; Alberto Grohmann, *Città e territorio tra Medioevo ed età moderna* (Perugia, sec. XIII-XVI), vol. 1 (Perugia: Volumnia Editrice, 1981), 416.

²⁴ *Memoriale*, Introduction, xii-xiii.

²⁵ More about the topic see Gianna Pomata, and Gabriella Zarri, eds., *I monasteri femminili come centri di cultura fra rinascimento e barocco* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2005)

translators. However, the nuns certainly received an education also within the monastery as shown by the example of sr. Eufrasia da Gaiche.²⁶

1.1.2 Foligno

Beside the monastery of Monteluca, the other important female Poor Clare community was in Foligno, in the monastery of Santa Lucia.²⁷ Foligno is the closest city to Assisi, therefore there were several friars of Foligno among the followers of St. Francis, and the Third Order of the Regular Franciscans were also present already in the thirteenth century besides monasteries of the Poor Clares.²⁸ The first Poor Clare monastery, according to Lainati, was the monastery of S. Maria di Valle Gaudio di Carpello founded in 1216 which from 1229 was called S. Claudio.²⁹ Then in 1225 the second monastery was built outside the walls, the monastery of Santa Caterina, which was moved inside the walls at the end of the thirteenth century. As a result, in the fourteenth century there were two important monasteries of the Poor Clares in Foligno besides the Tertiary communities. At the time the city also became a center of Franciscan mysticism with Angela of Foligno, who died there in 1309.³⁰ The monastery of Santa Lucia was founded only in the fifteenth century.

From 1327, when Bishop Paolo di Nallo Trinci gave the land (belonging to the Trinci family) to the Augustinians, the church of Santa Lucia was the property of the Augustinian

²⁶ Eufrasia de Gaiche lived in the monastery from her age of six because her father, notary ser Roberto di Meo da Gaiche, having remained a widower left her with the nuns. The *Memoriale* (pp. 132-133) recounts her entire childhood including the house where she lived and the reason why, despite her young age, the nuns welcomed her among themselves. Therefore Eufrasia learned to write from the nuns.

²⁷ The most important works on this community are: Luciano Canonici, *Santa Lucia di Foligno: Storia di un Monastero e di un ideale* (Assisi: Porziuncola, 1974); Jacques Dalarun, "Il monastero di Santa Lucia come foyer intellettuale," *Uno sguardo oltre: Donne, letterate e sante nel movimento dell'Osservanza; atti della I. giornata di studio sull'Osservanza francescana al femminile, 11 novembre 2006, Monastero Clarisse S. Lucia, Foligno*, ed. Pietro Messa, and Angela Emmanuela Scandella (S. Maria degli Angeli-Assisi: Porziuncola, 2007), 79-111; Antonio Fantozzi, "La riforma osservante dei monasteri delle clarisse nell'Italia centrale," *Archivium Franciscanum Historicum* 23 (1930): 361-382.

²⁸ Michele Faloci Pulignani, "S. Francesco d'Assisi e la città di Foligno," *Miscellanea francescana di storia, di lettere, di arti* 6 (1895): 3-15.

²⁹ sr. Chiara Augusta Lainati, "Monastero S. Lucia – Foligno" *Forma Sororum* 2 (1965): 182-191.

³⁰ About her see Christina Mazzoni, "Angela of Foligno," *Medieval Holy Women in the Christian Tradition*, ed. Alastair Minnis, and Rosalynn Voaden (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 581-600; Angela of Foligno, *Memorial*, ed. by Christina Mazzoni (Cambridge: Brewer, 1999), 23-78.

nuns.³¹ The Augustinian nuns lived there for a hundred years, after which five nuns from Sulmona reformed the monastery. At this point, the Foligno Augustinians with other Augustinian nuns moved to another monastery of their order, St. Mary of the Cross, and the *sulmonesi* founded their community in 1425 in the name of the Observant Reform. The Poor Clares community in Sulmona was founded in 1268-69 by the Blessed Floresenda di Palena, and became the community of noble women of Abruzzo whose family donated several lands and proprieties to the monastery.³² Canonici argues that these rich donations were the main reason for the conflicts between the wealthiest families of Sulmona—the Merlini and the Quadrari—and as a result several Poor Clares and Augustinian nuns had to flee their respective monasteries.³³ Some nuns founded new monasteries in Sulmona such as the monastery of Saints Cosimo and Damiano and the monastery of Saint Antonio, others however left the city. Five nuns—three from the Augustian order and two Poor Clares—arrived in Foligno in 1425 and founded the Monastery of Santa Lucia, which during the fifteenth century became the most important female community in the region.

The Poor Clares of Monteluca had a close relationship with the Poor Clares of the Monastery of Santa Lucia di Foligno. The two communities were connected above all by the movement of the observant reform completed in the second half of the fifteenth century, and by the fact that the Franciscan convent of Monteripido controlled and organized the daily and working life in the scriptorium in both communities.³⁴ In the two female monasteries the circulation of the nuns and the exchange of books was frequent, but the most evident proof of their close relationship is the fact that the nuns of the monastery of Foligno occupied an

³¹ Canonici, *Santa Lucia di Foligno*, 34-35.

³² Aniceto Chiappini, “La beata Floresenda da Palena e il suo monastero di S. Chiara in Sulmona,” *Studi Francescani* 8 (1922): 117-161.

³³ Canonici, *Santa Lucia di Foligno*, 36-37.

³⁴ About the convent of Monteripido see Ugolino Nicolini, ed., *Francescanesimo e societa' cittadina: l'esempio di Perugia* (Perugia: S. Maria degli Angeli, 1979); Ugolino Nicolini, “I Minori Osservanti di Monteripido e lo ‘scriptorium’ delle clarisse di Monteluca in Perugia nei secoli XV e XVI,” *Picenum Seraphicum* 7 (1971): 100-130.

important role in Monteluca: sr. Lucia from Foligno and sr. Eufrasia Alfani were abbess of Monteluca for 41 years starting from 1453.³⁵ The two female convents were the most important centers of the Observance in Umbria and even though after 1477 they did not reform together because of different rules, the circulation of nuns and manuscripts remained uninterrupted.

1.1.3. Primary sources about the monasteries

The main source of Monteluca is the *Memoriale*, the chronicle of the monastery written by the nuns themselves, starting from 1488 and continued for almost four hundred years. This type of document is summarily called *Libro di clausura* [Enclosed Book] and the official title of the book in question is *Iste est liber reformationis vel memorialis presentis Sancte Marie Montis monasteries Lucidi extra menia Perusina*, but the Poor Clares and historians simply call it *Memoriale*. It was transcribed entirely and published in 1983 for the eighth centenary of the birth of St. Francis.³⁶

In this book the Poor Clares documented every event of the monastic life, such as the work done in the monastery, the arrival of the novices and the death of the sisters, the journeys of the sisters, etc. As it is written in the introduction of the document, the purpose was the administration by the order of sr Lucia da Foligno and was transformed into a type of chronicle by sr. Eufrasia Alfani. She was the first chronicler who wrote the introduction according to the dictate of her confessor, then her sister, sr. Battista Alfani continued “from her intellect” until her death.³⁷ They are the only writers we have information on, the others remain anonymous. The *Memoriale* is an excellent source of knowledge of the books copied and owned by the nuns, and provides a complete overview of the daily life of the Poor Clares of the time. The codex is the property of the heirs of the monastery of Santa Maria di Monteluca, the Poor Clares

³⁵ *Memoriale*, 123.

³⁶ See note no. 11.

³⁷ *Memoriale*, ix.

of S. Erminio. Their headquarters is currently located in via Eugubina in Perugia as the original building, which from 1911 functioned as a state hospital, is currently closed for renovations.

A similar chronicle was written in the monastery of Santa Lucia, it is called *Ricordanze*.³⁸ It was published four years after the *Memoriale* of Monteluca together with similar sources of the region: the *Libro de dote* of the monastery of St. Leonardo in Montefalco, the *Memoriale* of the monastery of SS. Trinità in Gubbio, the *Memoriale della clausura* of the Monastery of S. Maria della Pace in Norcia and the *Libro de la clausura* of the Monastery of S. Maria Transtiberim in Città di Castello. Sr. Caterina da Osimo started to write in order to preserve the memory of the community and recorded the main events of the monastery.³⁹

Regarding Monteluca, another source in the property of the monastery is the *Entrate e Uscite*, a book of accounts in which the nuns noted down all the goods bought and sold. Today these parchments are kept in the State Archive of Perugia, the no. 44 is entirely transcribed by Felicetti and some are digitized to preserve them in their present condition, given that so many of them are already ruined or illegible due to mold. Stefano Felicetti has also published a detailed analysis of the daily life of the nuns of Monteluca in which he examines these documents down to the end of the fifteenth century.⁴⁰ Naturally there are other types of documents about the monasteries: papal bulls, legal documents of wills and donations, and so on, however, since these texts were usually copied into the chronicle, in the following I will refer to that version of the documents.

³⁸ Angela Emmanuela Scandella, ed., *Ricordanze del monastero S. Lucia osc in Foligno* (Santa Maria degli Angeli: Ed. Porziuncola, 1987).

³⁹ *Ricordanze*, 22.

⁴⁰ Fantozzi, "La riforma osservante," 361-382.; Stefano Felicetti, *Vita quotidiana in un monastero di clausura nel Quattrocento: Monteluca di Perugia e il registro contabile degli anni 1441-1470*, Università degli Studi di Perugia, master thesis (1993).

1.2 Hungarian female monasteries

1.2.1 Nunnery of Margaret Island

The most important female Hungarian monastery was founded by King Béla IV of Hungary, who during the Mongol invasion of the country made a vow to give her newborn daughter, Margaret, to the Dominicans after the liberation of Hungary. As Marcellus—Margaret’s confessor and hagiographer—writes in the *Oldest Legend of Margaret*,⁴¹ she moved with 18 nuns in the newly built nunnery of the Danube island near Buda when she was ten years old, so in 1252.⁴² The island was called the Island of Hares at that time, later its name was changed to Virgin Mary Island after the name of the monastery.⁴³ From the fourteenth century onwards, the name Margaret Island became popular, honoring the cult of Margaret. Besides the nunnery, Béla IV also built a friary in the Margaret Island, and a male convent in Buda.⁴⁴

At the time of the constructions Margaret Island had already been home to several buildings: a chapel of the Premonstratensians, a house of the Franciscans, a house of the Order of St. Augustine, the palace of King Béla IV, houses of the Beguine sisters, and a castle of the Hospitallers of the Order of St. John.⁴⁵ The construction of the monastery was among the first attempts to rebuild the country after the Mongol invasion. According to Klaniczay, the choice of the site was based on the security of the nuns on one hand: the building stands next to the fortress of the Hospitallers.⁴⁶ On the other hand, it is symbolically placed “on the point of

⁴¹ *The Oldest Legend: Acts of the Canonization Process, and Miracles of Saint Margaret of Hungary*, ed. Gábor Klaniczay, Ildikó Csepregi, and Bence Péterfi (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2018).

⁴² The island was the the propriety of the royal family, see Györffy György: *Az Árpád-kori Magyarország történeti földrajza* [The historical geography of Arpadian Hungary], vol. 4 (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1998), 644–645, 652.

⁴³ About the names of the island see Györffy, *Az Árpád-kori Magyarország történeti földrajza*, 644. Henceforth I refer to it as Margaret Island.

⁴⁴ Harsányi, *A domonkosrend Magyarországon*, 26; Jenő Szűcs, “A kereszténység belső politikuma a XIII. század derekán. IV. Béla király és az egyház,” *Történelmi Szemle* 21 (1978): 161–162, 178–181; Kertész, “Koldulórendek megtelepedése,” 16. More about the Dominican monastery of Buda see Katalin H. Gyürky, *Egy egykori budai domonkos kolostor* [An old Dominican convent of Buda] (Budapest: Pannonia, 1976).

⁴⁵ Kálmán Törs, *Margit.sziget* [Margaret Island] (Pest: Atheneum, 1872), 16, Ilona Király, *Árpádházi szent Margit és a sziget* [St. Margaret of Hungary and the island] (Budapest: Panoráma, 1979), 29–40.

⁴⁶ Gábor Klaniczay, “Sacred Sites in Medieval Buda,” *Medieval Buda in Context* ed. Balázs Nagy, Martyn Rady, Katalin Szende, and András Vadas (Boston: Brill, 2016), 238–239.

intersection of the borders of these three important towns [Óbuda, Buda and Pest], a multiple periphery that had the potential to develop into a symbolic center, a ‘celestial’ point in the future metropolis”. On the whole, the selection criteria for the site was twofold: it had to be a perfect place for an enclosed female community and had to serve also as a royal center.

The earliest documents mentioning the nunnery come from 1255, these charters testify that the king donated to the monastery the *ius patronatus* of the Church of the Virgin Mary in Buda and the customs of the city’s markets.⁴⁷ With this and with later donations the nunnery of the Margaret Island became a rich institute, preferred by daughters of noble families.⁴⁸ The nunnery itself was very rich,⁴⁹ however, this did not create a contradiction with the mendicant ideals because the nuns—living in cloistered communities—enjoyed economic security due to the income from the lands as a community and not as individuals.⁵⁰ The nunnery was put under the direction of the Dominicans, and upon the request of the queen a house was also built next to the nunnery in order to ensure the proximity of the friars so that they could perform their duties towards the female community.⁵¹

The canonization documents of Saint Margaret show that the monastery enjoyed a privileged situation and the nuns did not always follow the Dominican rules: Viktória Hedvig Deák OP underlines two cases when the nuns diverged from the strict rules. We know from the legend of St. Margaret that she asked for *consecratio virginum*, a sacred veil, to avoid marriage to the king of Bohemia, although the monastery from 1259 followed—besides the Augustinian Rule—the rules collected by Humbertus which forbade the ceremony of consecration in the

⁴⁷ Kertész, “A koldulórendek megtelepedése,” 19.

⁴⁸ András Kubinyi, “Budapest története a későbbi középkorban Buda elestéig (1541-ig),” [History of Budapest in the late Middle Ages until the Fall of Buda (1541)], in *Budapest története*, vol. 2 (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1975), 76–77.

⁴⁹ For the list of the monastery’s proprieties from the foundation until 1512 see Jakab Rupp, *Buda-pest és környékének helyrajzi története* [The history of Buda-pest and its surroundings] (Pest: MTA Történeti Bizottsága, 1868), 65–70.

⁵⁰ Sándor Láz, *Apácaműveltség Magyarországon a XV-XVI. század fordulóján: Az anyanyelvű irodalom kezdetei* [Nuns’ Literacy in Hungary at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: The beginnings of vernacular literature] (Budapest: Balassi, 2016), 16.

⁵¹ Láz, *Apácaműveltség*, 20.

spirit of equality among the nuns. The pope officially gave this privilege to the monastery only in 1276, and Deák argues that the members of the community could practice this right prior to receiving the privilege because of the important position of the monastery.⁵² The other signs of the privileged position of the monastery are the gifts Margaret received from her father. The sources record both that she received presents and gave them away for devotion,⁵³ and that members of the royal family visited their daughters in the monastery.⁵⁴ Both are against the rules of cloistered female mendicant communities.

The Béla IV's support lasted until 1261 when Margaret, with the consent of the Dominicans, refused his father's request to leave the religious community to get married. Later kings chose to support the Franciscans instead.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the monastery kept its important position and after Margaret's death in 1270 her tomb attracted many pilgrims to the island. Owing to her cult, King Ladislas IV donated the island to the community in 1276—naturally with the exception of the territories occupied by other monastic buildings.⁵⁶

The community received donations from aristocratic families also in later periods: noble families traditionally sent their daughters in the nunnery so it had supporters from the highest lay elite.⁵⁷ As Romhányi demonstrates,⁵⁸ the large number of wills does not indicate the popularity of the monastery as Kubinyi argued,⁵⁹ but simply suggests that the economic stability of the cloistered nuns did not rely on alms, but on the income from their estates. The

⁵² Viktória Hedvig Deák OP, “Árpád-házi Szent Margit, a Domonkos-rend szentje” [St. Margaret of Hungary, the saint of the Dominican Order], *Domonkos szentek és szent helyek: Hereditas Graeco-Latinitatis*, vol. 5, ed. Beatrix Kálny (Debrecen: Debreceni Egyetem Klasszika-filológiai és Ókortörténeti Tanszéke, 2017), 59-60.

⁵³ For example: *Oldest legend*, 62, 69.

⁵⁴ For example: *Oldest legend*, 64.

⁵⁵ Lázs, *Apácaműveltség*, 20. See the foundation of the Franciscan nunnery of Óbuda in this chapter.

⁵⁶ Katalin Irásné Melis, “A Budapest Margit-szigeti középkori királyi udvarhely régészeti kutatása (15–16. század) [The archaeological excavation of the medieval royal court of Margaret Island in Budapest (fifteenth–sixteenth centuries)], vol. 2, *Communicationes Archaeologiae Hungariae* (2008): 299.

⁵⁷ Kubinyi, *Budapest története*, 162.

⁵⁸ Beatrix F. Romhányi, *Kolduló barátok, gazdálkodó szerzetesek: Koldulórendi gazdálkodás a középkori Magyarországon* [Mendicant friars, managing monks: Economy of the mendicant orders in medieval Hungary] Dissertation presented at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2015, 83.

⁵⁹ András Kubinyi, “Főúri és nemesi végrendeletek a Jagelló-korban,” [Baronial and noble wills in the Jagiellonian Era] *Soproni Szemle* 53 (1999): 331–342.

large number of donations can also be explained by the fact that the community needed this kind of social support. In fact, from the fourteenth century onwards, very little documentation survived about the nunnery: most of the documents are about managing the properties, documenting the goods left to the monastery, and settling disputes around the lands.

The cult of Margaret began right after her death. The main promoter of her canonization was her brother, King Stephen V, who asked Pope Gregory X to start the process. The acts of this first investigation are lost, but the oldest *Vita* was written between 1272 and 1275 and during the second investigation, initiated by King Ladislas IV in 1276, 110 testimonies of her humble life and miracles were recorded. These first attempts of canonization failed, and Margaret was officially recognized as saint only in 1943, even though the Dominican Order and several Hungarian kings—for instance, the Angevins of the fourteenth century—urged her canonization. Margaret’s cult was revived in the fifteenth century, her tomb in the church of the monastery became a popular pilgrim destination. Between 1446 and 1467 several miracles and testimonies were recorded by the nuns, and King Matthias supported her canonization, too.⁶⁰

In the sixteenth century—as a consequence of the war against the Ottomans—the community had to leave Margaret Island. The nuns asked for permission to leave the monastery first in 1521, but the request was denied by the provincial, László Pécsi, who granted leave only to those girls who had not made a vow yet.⁶¹ In 1526, after the news of the lost Battle of Mohács had arrived in Buda, the nuns fled to Kőszeg, but later returned at the queen’s request.⁶² In 1529, however, the situation became critical again and the palatine gave permission to the

⁶⁰ Gábor Klaniczay, “Matthias and the Saints,” in *Matthias Rex 1458–1490: Hungary at the Dawn of the Renaissance*, ed. Iván Horváth (Budapest: Eötvös Loránd University Faculty of Humanities, Centre des hautes études de la Renaissance, 2013), 1-18; Bence Péterfi, “Mátyás király és Árpád-házi Margit” [King Matthias and Margaret of Hungary], in *Az első 300 év Magyarországon és Európában: A Domonkos-rend a középkorban*, ed. Csurgai Horváth József (Székesfehérvár: Alba Civitas Történeti Alapítvány, 2017).

⁶¹ *Egyháztörténeti emlékek*, 43-44; Harsányi, *A domonkosrend Magyarországon*, 110.

⁶² Rupp, *Buda-Pest és környékének helyrajzi története*, 78-79.

whole community to leave the nunnery of Margaret Island, which eventually took place in 1541, after the Ottomans took the city of Buda. Their itinerary was Várad (1541–1566), the Dominican nunnery in Nagyszombat (1566–1615), the Clarisses’ nunnery in Nagyszombat (1615–1618), and finally, from 1618 onwards, the Clarisses’ nunnery in Pozsony.⁶³ The nuns took their books with them, but not every book of the library arrived in Pozsony with the community. Madas argues that the reason could be the slow process of moving from Nagyszombat to Pozsony during which books and other objects were left behind.⁶⁴ This fact is testified also in the *History of the Order*, written in 1768 by Jenő Kósa, who mentions that the departing nuns left behind valuable items in return for caring for the sick nuns.⁶⁵ The last nun from the Margaret Island died in 1637.

1.2.2 Nunnery of Óbuda

During the Arpadian dynasty only two female Franciscan monasteries were founded in Hungary: the first community was formed in Nagyszombat (1239) in the name of the cult of St. Elizabeth⁶⁶, the second in Pozsony (1297).⁶⁷ Only after the stabilization of the new royal dynasty, the Angevines, in the fourteenth century, did the expansion of the Poor Clares restart. The Poor Clares had two important supporters at this time: Queen Elizabeth, wife of King

⁶³ Katalin Schwartz, “Mert ihon jönnek Aßonyotok és kezében új szoknyák”: *Források a Klarissza rend magyarországi történetéből* [Sources of the history of the Poor Clares in Hungary] (Budapest: METEM, 2003), 199–201.

⁶⁴ Edit Madas, “Az Érsekújvári Kódex mint a menekülő apácák hordozható könyvtára és két új forrásazonosítás (Műhelytanulmány)” [The Érsekújvári Codex as a portable library of the fleeing nuns and two new source identifications (Occasional paper)], in *Szöveg – emlék – kép*, ed. Boka László, and Vásárhelyi Judit (Budapest: OSZK–Gondolat, 2011), 91–104.

⁶⁵ Schwartz, “Mert ihon jönnek Aßonyotok és kezében új szoknyák,” 114; Lea Haader and Edit Madas, “Érsekújvári-kódex (Bevezetés),” in *Érsekújvári Kódex 1529–1531: A nyelvemlék hasonmása és betűhű átirata bevezetéssel és jegyzetekkel, valamint digitalizált változata CD mellékletként*, Régi Magyar Kódexek 32, MTA Nyelvtudományi Intézet (Budapest: Tinta Könyvkiadó, 2012), 18.

⁶⁶ About the cult of Elizabeth of Thuringia see Ottó Gecser, “Kultusz és identitás: Árpád-házi Szent Erzsébet és a Domonkos rend a 13. században” [Cult and identity: St. Elizabeth of Hungary and the Dominican Order in the thirteenth century] *Az első 300 év Magyarországon és Európában: A Domonkos-rend a középkorban*, ed. József Csurgyai Horváth (Székesfehérvár: Alba Civitas Történeti Alapítvány, 2017)

⁶⁷ Karácsonyi, *Szt. Ferenc rendjének története Magyarországon*, 449.

Charles I, and the wife of Pál Magyar, a rich Hungarian noblewoman who donated several lands to the Poor Clares. The nunnery of Óbuda was founded by the queen in 1346,⁶⁸ the exact location of the monastery was finally identified by Mrs. Vilmos Bertalan only in 1973.⁶⁹ The reason for the foundation was probably the queen's intention to retire in a religious institute as a widower, similarly to her mother, and to be buried there. Another reason might be her endeavor to create an influential female religious institute for the Poor Clares, besides the Dominican nunnery of the Margaret Island.⁷⁰ With the support of Queen Elizabeth the new nunnery indeed became the center of the Poor Clares in Hungary and by 1358 more than a hundred nuns lived there, most of them coming from a noble family.⁷¹ In 1358, Queen Elizabeth requested and received privileges for the nunnery from Pope Innocent VI.⁷² As Karácsonyi notes, these privileges later served as models for the privileges of other Hungarian female Franciscan monasteries, so in this way the queen became the supporter of the whole order.⁷³

As a result of these privileges and the large estates of the nunnery, it soon became the second most important female religious community of Buda—besides the nunnery of the Margaret Island—and through houses owned in the city it also played a significant role in urban life.⁷⁴ The nunnery was under the direction of the Franciscan convent of Óbuda a friary founded

⁶⁸ The most important works on this community are: Bertalan Vilmosné, "Óbudai klarissza kolostor" [The Poor Clares' convent in Óbuda], *Budapest Régiségei* 18 (1958); Karácsonyi, *Szt. Ferenc rendjének története*; Attila Zsoldos, "A királynéi intézmény az Árpádok korában" [The Institution of queenship under the Árpáds], MTA doctoral dissertation, 2003. About the foundation, see Karácsonyi, *Szt. Ferenc rendjének története*, 451.

⁶⁹ Bertalan Vilmosné, "Adatok Óbuda középkori helyrajzához," [Data for the medieval topography of Óbuda] *Budapest Régiségei* 23 (1973): 99–114.

⁷⁰ Brian McEntee, "Elizabeth, Queen of Hungary (1320-1380), and the Óbuda Clares: A Study in Reginal Burial Site Selection," MA Thesis in Medieval Studies, Budapest: Central European University, 2005, 11-14.

⁷¹ Láz, *Apácaműveltség*, 21.

⁷² *Monumenta Romana episcopatus Vespriensis*, vol. 2., ed. by Vilmos Fraknoi and József Lukcsics (Budapest: Franklin Társulat, 1898), 179. Fejér. IX/3.; 57-59. 62. IX/7. 170., cf. Karácsonyi, *Szt. Ferenc rendjének története*, 452.

⁷³ Karácsonyi, *Szt. Ferenc rendjének története*, 453.

⁷⁴ Beatrix F. Romhányi, "Monastic topography of Medieval Buda," *Medieval Buda in Context*, in Balázs Nagy, Martyn Rady, Katalin Szende, and András Vadas (Boston: Brill, 2016), 221.

around 1270 and 1280.⁷⁵ In the fifteenth century the nunnery was under the protection and support of King Matthias and his mother, Erzsébet Szilágyi, who—according to letters written to the pope—unsuccessfully tried to entrust the supervision of the nuns to the Observants.

Similar to the Dominican nuns, the community of the Poor Clares also had to flee the nunnery after 1526. They also went to Pozsony and brought with them the valuable objects of the monastery. The abandoned building complex was destroyed and with the later expansion of the city new buildings were built in its place.⁷⁶

1.2.3 Primary sources about the monasteries

There are several primary sources of the everyday life of the monastery in the thirteenth century since Margaret's hagiographer and the inquisitors of her canonization process wrote down the details of her life.⁷⁷ Unfortunately, no other narrative documents survived from the Hungarian monasteries and in comparison with the Italian monasteries there are very few documents about the history of Hungarian female convents. At the same time this can also be an advantage for researchers as most documents and codices have been published in critical editions in the last century. There are three types of documents related to the nunneries. Firstly, as McEntee argues in his thesis, the most convenient primary sources of the nunneries come from the royal court.⁷⁸ As both nunneries were founded by a royal member—the nunnery of Margaret Island by King Béla IV, the nunnery of Óbuda by Queen Elizabeth—the documents

⁷⁵ Vilmosné Bertalan, "A középkori ásatások – kutatások története Óbudán 1850-1975" [The history of the excavations and of research in Óbuda 1850-1975], *Budapest Régiségei* 24 (1976): 31-42.

⁷⁶ Vilmosné Bertalan, "Óbudai klarissza kolostor" [The Poor Clares' convent in Óbuda], *Budapest Régiségei* 18 (1958): 275.

⁷⁷ Gábor Klaniczay, Ildikó Csepregi, and Bence Péterfi, eds., *The Oldest Legend: Acts of the Canonization Process, and Miracles of Saint Margaret of Hungary* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2018).

⁷⁸ McEntee, *Elizabeth, Queen of Hungary (1320-1380)*.

and letters of these royalties had much importance.⁷⁹ The second group of the sources comprises ecclesiastical documents and letters, also collected and critically edited.⁸⁰ The third type of the primary sources is constituted by the books and texts copied and written by the nuns. About the work in the scriptorium and the books of the Hungarian mendicant nuns Sándor Lázcs offers an excellent analysis in which he examines the books of the nuns both by genre and use.⁸¹

⁷⁹ For such collections of documents see Attila Hegedüs, and Lajos Papp, eds., *Középkori leveleink 1541-ig* [Medieval letters until 1541] (Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1991); Imre Nagy, and Gyula Nagy, eds., *Anjoukori okmánytár* [Collection of Angevin documents] (Budapest: MTA, 1878-1920).

⁸⁰ Gregorius Fejér, ed., *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae ecclesiasticus ac civiles*, 43 vols (Buda 1829–1844); Vilmos Fraknói, ed., *Monumenta Romana Episcopatus Vespreniensis*, 4 vols (Budapest: Franklin Társulat, 1896-1907).

⁸¹ Lázcs, *Apácaműveltség Magyarországon*. See list of the codices in Bibliography, 406-408.

Chapter 2—The Observant Reform

The Observant movement is a very popular research topic among medievalists, and it is examined from many aspects in the secondary literature: the great preachers, monastic network, impact of cultural and religious life, Observant theology and literature are the most usual concepts. About the early phase of the researches of the reform movements the most significant analyses were written by a German scholar, Kaspar Elm.⁸² From more recent studies the most important summary work on the reform movement especially of the mendicant orders is an essay compilation edited by James Mixson and Bert Roest, which offers many excellent studies on how the reforms shaped religion, culture and society.⁸³ At the same time, as the movement was present in all Europe, several case studies were written about the singular reform movements in a local basis, among them this study which also aims to concentrate on the comparison of Italian and Hungarian monasteries.⁸⁴ However, for the better understanding of the position of these local phenomena, the presentation of an outline of the general picture of the Observant reform is necessary to place the following comparative analysis in a wider context. This outline also serves the purpose to gather the most important secondary sources of the topic.

This chapter puts in context the main questions of the following chapter which respectively offers a specific analysis of the same aspects of the reform regarding the Italian and the Hungarian cases. In the first part I will examine the Observant movements from the mid-fourteenth century and present the formation of the Franciscan and Dominican Observant

⁸² See Kaspar Elm, *Reformbemühungen und Observanzbestrebungen im spätmittelalterlichen Ordenswesen Reformbemühungen*, (Berliner historischer Studien 14, Ordensstudien 6; Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1989)

⁸³ James Mixson and Bert Roest (eds.), *A Companion to Observant Reform in the Late Middle Ages and Beyond* (Leiden and New York: 2015)

⁸⁴ See Francesca Bartolacci and Roberto Lambertini (eds.) *Osservanza francescana e cultura tra Quattrocento e primo Cinquecento. Italia e Ungheria a confronto* (Rome: Bibliotheca Academiae Hungariae, 2014)

reforms. My aim is to provide a general historical background to the singular case studies in the following chapter, so the significance of the Observant reform in regional context can be measured respectively to other parts of Europe. In the second section I will specify some problematic characteristics of the reform from the point of view of the female monasteries for a better interpretation of the analysis in the third chapter.

2.1 The Observant movement of the Franciscans and the Dominicans

In the fourteenth century a general feeling of decline of the Christian Church and religiosity manifested also in the mendicant orders: as they moved farther from the original ideas of apostolic spirituality and poverty, the desire to return to their origins became stronger.⁸⁵ The wish of renewal effected most religious orders, and the term “observance” was used to indicate the return to the original purpose and the strict adherence to the Rule.⁸⁶ Most scholars agree that the Observant reform is the general name for several regional attempts to reform religious life and spirituality of the monasteries: the movement is characterized by local reform initiatives of the religious orders which consequently created a network system between reformed monasteries and spread the reform ideas in the region.⁸⁷ The plurality and regionality of this movement are the reason why defining the “Observant reform” is so difficult; in this chapter I use this term as the manifestation of a collective wish to reform Christian mentality

⁸⁵ Observant scholars wrote several treatises on moral issues, important theological questions and legal concepts in which underlined the urgent need to abandon life full of sin like avarice or luxury. See James Mixson, *Poverty's Proprietors: Ownership and Mortal Sin at the Origins of the Observant Movement* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2009)

⁸⁶ The Latin verb ‘obserare’ in English means to observe, to watch, to guard, to keep, to respect. *Cassell's Latin Dictionary* (Boston-New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1968), 404.

I pay attention to.

⁸⁷ Anne Huijbers, “Observance as Paradigm in Mendicant and Monastic Order Chronicles,” *A Companion to Observant Reform in the Late Middle Ages and Beyond*, ed. James Mixson and Bert Roest, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, 59 (Leiden and Boston, 2015): 111-143.

in the monastic framework. Though the reform changed almost all orders during the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries, here I will examine only the mendicant orders with a focus on the Franciscans and the Dominicans, as their story is relevant for the analysis of this thesis.⁸⁸

The Franciscans were divided almost immediately after the death of the founder as they interpreted the rule of Saint Francis and his will differently regarding the question of poverty. The development of the order did not allow absolute poverty and with the increasing number of friars a core of assets was needed to ensure the live of the communities. The two factions, the Conventuals and the Spirituals had many disputes on the question of propriety—Conventuals accepted common propriety—and in the second half of the fourteenth century this division came up again in the framework of the Observant movement.⁸⁹ The Franciscan reforms were started by Paoluccio Trinci who stressed the importance of evangelical poverty and the imitation of Saint Francis by practicing an eremitic way of life outside the cities. The Trinci family even in the fifteenth century supported the Observant ideas and thanks to them the female Observant reform also started in Foligno: five nuns who had to flee their monasteries of Sulmona came to Foligno with the desire to found an observant female community. This monastery—called monastery of Santa Lucia—became the center of the reform of the Umbrian female communities and by reforming the other female monasteries of the region an Observant network was formed.⁹⁰

This example of female observance was not the only case among the first initiatives. One of the first centers of the Observant movement was formed around the strong figure of St. Colette of Corbie, who after seeing visions of SS. Frances and Clare dedicated herself to the

⁸⁸ Bert Roest shows that the Carthusian was the only order not affected by the Observant movement, as they never lost their original severity. Bert Roest, “Observant reform in religious orders,” *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 4, ed. by Miri Rubin, Walter Simons (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 446-7, 453-455.

⁸⁹ See Grado Giovanni Merlo, *Nel nome di San Francesco* (Padova: Editrici Francescane, 2003)

⁹⁰ See the analysis of this network in the Introduction of the *Ricordanze* by Angela Emmanuela Scandella.

mission of the Franciscan order's reformation.⁹¹ With the blessing of Pope Benedict XIII she became the leader of the Observant movement in France and during her lifetime she reformed several Franciscan communities and founded seventeen new observant monasteries.⁹² Her movement consisted in the strong relationship between the communities reformed by her: she kept a correspondance with the other abbesses discussing practical and spiritual issues. The reforms Colette wanted to introduce in her community was the strict observance of the First Rule of Saint Clare. André Vauchez argues that this is the strongest connection between the Umbrian and the French Poor Clares: the wish to live not only in ideal but concrete poverty.⁹³ The incredible charisma of Colette of Corbie, her legislation documents and clear ideas on the regulations for a female observant Franciscan community made the Colettine network unique example of unity of the fifteenth century.⁹⁴

In the fifteenth century the Franciscan observants returned to a less radical regular observance and they quickly spread the reform movement thanks to the enormous influence of famous preachers, of which maybe the most well known is John of Capistrano. The original idea was not the division of the Franciscans, but the reform of the whole order in the spirit of the observant ideas.⁹⁵ However, the Conventual and the Observant ideas were so distinct regarding the question of poverty and by the mid-fifteenth century the two groups of the Franciscans were separated.⁹⁶

⁹¹ For a collection of researches around the figure of Colette of Corbie see: Pietro Messa (ed.), *Colette di Corbie. Atti della VII giornata di studio sull'Osservanza Francescana al femminile (Assisi - Monastero S. Colette, 17 novembre 2012)*, (Assisi: Ediz. Porziuncola, 2014)

⁹² Pierre-Andre Pidoux de la Maduere, *Sainte Colette (1381-1447)* (Paris, 1907), 64.

⁹³ André Vauchez, "Monastero S. Erminio – Perugia," in Pietro Messa (ed.), *Colette di Corbie. Atti della VII giornata di studio sull'Osservanza Francescana al femminile (Assisi - Monastero S. Colette, 17 novembre 2012)*, (Assisi: Ediz. Porziuncola, 2014): 11-18.

⁹⁴ Bert Roest, *Order and Disorder: The Poor Clares between Foundation and Reform* (Medieval Franciscans, 8), (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 173-175.

⁹⁵ For an overview of the transformation of the Franciscan Observance see: Mario Sensi, *Dal movimento eremitico alla regolare osservanza francescana: L'opera di fra Paoluccio Trinci* (Rome: Santa Maria degli Angeli, 1992).

⁹⁶ Nicola Petrone lists the most important papal bulls which sign the separation. Nicola Petrone, *La Storia del Francescanesimo: 1209-2009* (Rocca S. Giovanni : Botolini, 2010), 75-77.

The Dominican Observant movement started similarly to the Franciscan initiatives: thanks to the strong personality of local reformers observant centers were created and a local movement was formed around them with special regional characteristics. For example, in North-Italy Giovanni Dominici founded many observant monasteries and became one of the most important figures of the early Dominican reform movements.⁹⁷ He had strong influence on the reforms and had an important role during the Council of Constance in resolving the Western Schism. He died in Hungary—he was a papal legate there—and on his request he was buried in a Pauline convent in Buda, probably because the Hungarian Dominican friaries at the time did not follow yet the Observant reform.⁹⁸ In Germany Conrad of Prussia was the leader of the observant movement in Colmar and in Schönensteinbach, and in Basel Johannes Mulberg started similar reforms and became famous for her campaign against the lifestyle of beguines and Franciscan tertiaries.⁹⁹ From 1380 the Order General was Raymund of Capua who also supported the reforms and ensured the legal background for the spread of the observance. The second generation of observant Dominicans with the leadership of Bartholomew Texterius as Magister General between 1426 and 1449 achieved the almost total reformation of the order while also kept the unity of the Dominicans.

In sum, the Observant reform of the mendicant orders was the complexity of small initiatives lead by the important preacher of the orders. The reform ideas could come from a local charismatic leaders, however the preachers were the main engine of the reform: as the case of Perugia—presented in the next chapter—also shows, the preacher's influence on laity could start a local monastic reform promoted by the urban communities. In this sense the Observance was an almost spontaneous movement moved by not a strategy of the Church but

⁹⁷ Johannes Meyer, *Liber de viris illustribus ordinis praedicatorum*, ed. Paulus von Loe (Leipzig: 1918), 56.

⁹⁸ András Harsányi, *A domonkosrend Magyarországon a reformáció előtt* [The Dominican Order in Hungary before the Reformation] (Debrecen: Nagy Károly, 1938), 34.

⁹⁹ About Conrad of Prussia see Meyer, *Buch der reformacio predigerordens*, 8-9., cited by Huijbers, 128.; about Johannes Mulberg see Mixson, *Observant reform's conceptual frameworks*, 79.

rather several prestigious members of the mendicant orders. These friars had great personal influence on lay people since they used a language capable of involving the crowds. They were also well-prepared for theological debates and wrote several works which became fundamental for the Observant movement.¹⁰⁰

2.2 Characteristics of the reform movement

One of the most important questions of the reforms was the choice of Franciscan female monasteries regarding the Rule. After the death of Saint Clare the question of the rule of female communities became soon a problem and the solution started with the intention of Cardinal Hugolino of Ostia who—as the protector of the Franciscans—intended to form new female monastic communities and ensure their livelihood and institutional stability. Later, as Pope Gregory IX, he also promoted the foundation of female monasteries, but despite the aspirations to form a unified system, due to several exemptions given to different communities a legally chaotic situation has developed between the followers of Clare.¹⁰¹ Nuns were living under many rules and statutes which described different level of observing poverty: there were the already mentioned Hugolino’s Constitution, the rule of Innocent IV, Isabelle of France’s newly composed rule and Clare’s original *Form of life* with little local differences.¹⁰²

Urban IV tried to resolve this confusion by composing a new rule which canceled the original right to live in total poverty and required material support for the Franciscan nuns.¹⁰³ This attempt had also the purpose to unify different female mendicant monastic communities

¹⁰⁰ See Carolyn Muessing, “Bernardino da Siena and the Observant Preaching as a Vehicle for the Religious Transformation” in James Mixson and Bert Roest (eds.), *A Companion to Observant Reform in the Late Middle Ages and Beyond* (Leiden and New York: 2015)

¹⁰¹ Maria Pia Alberzoni, *Clare of Assisi and the Poor Sisters in the Thirteenth Century* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute Publications, 2004), 15-16.

¹⁰² On the difference between the Rules and a presentation of Saint Clare’s probable intention with her Rule see the first chapter of Lezlie S. Knox, *Creating Clare of Assisi: Female Franciscan Identities in Later Medieval Italy*, (The Medieval Franciscans, 5.) Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008”

¹⁰³ Lezlie S. Knox, *Creating Clare of*, 79-81

and therefore to form a controllable and homogenous female order inside the Franciscan institutions. To enforce this effort of creating a juridical unity, the proper naming of these nuns was fundamental:¹⁰⁴ Urban IV renamed them to Order of Saint Clare or Clarisses, a name that didn't refer to poverty or their connection to the Friar Minor Franciscans.¹⁰⁵ Though the persuasion of the papacy was strong enough to convince many female communities to adopt the new rule and accept the name, most convents in central Italy rejected it which again a sign of the power of mendicant communities.¹⁰⁶

Another important question of the Observant movement regarding the female communities was finding the solution for the evident contradiction of the ideal female mendicant life which required both the complete prohibition of propriety and the enclosed life. The Urbanist Rule resolved the problem with the obligation of the clausura and the common possession, however it contradicted with the wish of the observant nuns to return to the original idea of Saint Clare. This basic problem regarding the female communities raised conflicts between nuns and the Franciscan order itself. The Dominican did not have to deal with this question, as the Augustinian Rule permit the propriety of the community.

2.3 Writing activity in the Observant scriptoria

One of the consequences of the Observant movement was the network between reformed monasteries: the reform ideas passed from one community to another and the connections remained strong even later. One example of such network I already mentioned with the example of Colette of Corbie, where her personality was the main reason of the connection. Another example is the network of the Umbrian nuns which shows three reasons why the monasteries formed a network. First because of the the connection of relatives living in

¹⁰⁴ Alberzoni, *Clare of Assisi and the Poor Sisters in the Thirteenth Century*, 17.

¹⁰⁵ Knox, *Creating Clare of Assisi*, 79.

¹⁰⁶ Knox, *Creating Clare of Assisi*, 78.

different monasteries. The chronicles of the monasteries contain several examples when a family sent the daughters and sons to different communities and in this way took part in the decision making of the religious orders. The second reason is the spiritual guidance provided by the friars: nunneries close to each other usually had the same friars for religious services, and the exchange of confessors was also frequent. Moreover, the abbesses and nuns were transferred too from one monastery to another in order to the already reformed monastery's nuns could teach the newly reformed community to the observant life.¹⁰⁷ The existence of the network between monasteries therefore shows the active role of women in the Observant movement.

The most important consequence of the Observant reform was the use of vernacular language in religious texts. As the predication for moral fight for the correct Christian life was one of the main missions of the mendicant observant preachers, the use of vernacular language was necessary for having impact on the laity and women. Roest argues, that also has relevance the fact that the Observant reform coincided with the humanist period.¹⁰⁸

There are several elements of which co-existence resulted in the increasing literary activity of the observants. Partly because the aim of the Observant reform was the spiritual renovation of Christianity, partly because the main channel of the reform, the preaching activity of the friars required the theological preparation of the preachers, the Observant reform spread together with the vernacular religious literature. In addition, as the activity of copying was considered as labour, all Rules described for female communities the obligatory work and the paper made bookproduction affordable, the writing activity of the nuns was a natural consequence of the reform.

¹⁰⁷ The introduction of the *Memoriale* and of the *Ricordanze* shows maps and detailed data on the network system between nunneries and friaries. *Memoriale di Monteluce: cronaca del monastero delle clarisse di Perugia dal 1448 al 1838*, ed. Ugo Nicolini, (Assisi: Porziuncola, 1983), Introduction by Ugolino Nicolini; *Ricordanze del monastero S. Lucia osc in Foligno*, ed. Angela Emmanuela Scandella, (Santa Maria degli Angeli: Ed. Porziuncola, 1987), Introduction by A. E. Scandella

¹⁰⁸ Bert Roest, "Observant reforms in religious orders," 456-457.

Chapter 3—The observant reform in the Italian and Hungarian nunneries

The first chapter served to present the foundation of the monasteries in order to offer a historical background for the social-cultural analysis in this chapter. I argued that the circumstances of establishing monasteries were different in Italy and in Hungary: in Umbria the female communities and the ecclesiastical leaders played a central role in the foundation with the support of the urban communities, while in Hungary the royal family initiated the creation of new female monasteries. At the same time, by the fifteenth century, the social status of the monasteries examined, their local importance among similar religious institutions in the urban life, and their essential role in the cultural transfers were very similar.

The second chapter provided a general overview on the Observant movement with more detail on the network between monasteries and the rising literacy and literate activity in the female communities. I outlined the main research aspects of the secondary literature about the reform of the mendicant orders, which was necessary to place the present analysis in a wider context.

In this chapter I examine the sources to find out what the Observant reform means in these contexts. Letizia Pellegrini argues that speaking about observances is possible only in plural: the variety of the different environments necessarily means also different kind of reforms.¹⁰⁹ Therefore my aim is to find a common pattern of the Observant reforms in the Hungarian and the Umbrian sources, and to individuate the regional characteristics. The novelty of this approach is a comparison of the manifestation of a historical phenomenon, the

¹⁰⁹ Letizia Pellegrini, “An Irreducible Pural: Franciscan Observances in Europe (15th century),” in *Les observances régulières: historiographies – Varia – Atelier doctoral; Culture e rapporti culturali nel Mediterraneo medievale* 130, no. 2 (2018), accessed March 13, 2019 <https://journals.openedition.org/mefrm/4515>.

Observant reform, in two different social-cultural circumstances which will, in turn, help better understand the reform itself.

First, I compare the circumstances of the Observant reform to understand why these communities chose to reform their monasteries: was it the wish of the nuns? or the result of an external agent who made the nuns change their way of life? And if so, did the lay leaders (the ruler of the territory, the patron of the monastery, some important figures of the town community) have any influence on the choice of changing the monastic life? After answering these questions, I will compare the results to see the eventual regional differences. I examine first the Italian sources which contain more details, and then I will compare them to the Hungarian ones. Secondly, I will analyze the relationship between male and female communities from the angle of situations of conflicts and collaborations to see if being Observants created a feeling of strong connection in the order or the different reform ideas created conflicts between friars and nuns. I will identify the main conflict situations and their resolution, and analyze situations in which nuns and friars collaborated to achieve a common goal. Thirdly, I will present some basic elements of the reform which shaped significantly the everyday life of the nuns. There are three aspects which I examine with more detail: the question of the poverty, the reintroduction of cloistered life and the writing activity of the nuns in the scriptorium.

3.1 The reform movement of the mendicant orders

3.1.1 In Italy

In the fifteenth century, several female Franciscan monasteries existed in Umbria which presented a vast variety within the order: there were Conventual and Observant communities, both of the First and Second Rule. Therefore the concept of the reform could mean both transforming the conventual monastery into an Observant one, and reintroducing the First Rule

in the community. In the Umbrian sources three patterns emerge as the main reason of the reform there: it took place upon the initiative of the nuns, or of the town, or of the Franciscan friars.¹¹⁰

3.1.1.1 The initiative of the nuns

The Monastery of Santa Lucia of Foligno became one of the biggest and most important female monastery of the Poor Clares in Umbria, as it had a huge influence on the other communities because of its scriptorium where nuns copied, translated and wrote devotional texts from the end of the fifteenth century onwards. The main primary source of the monastery is a chronicle called *Ricordanze* which was written initially by sr. Caterina da Osimo, a daughter of an important family of Perugia.¹¹¹ She claims to be an eye witness of the narrated events several times, and she clearly did not simply write down the dictation of a friar but can be considered the author of the text.¹¹²

The Monastery of Santa Lucia was the first reformed community of the Poor Clares in the region,¹¹³ similarly to the Observant Franciscan friars whom first reformed monastery was also in Foligno and whose promoter was the same family of Foligno, the Trinci.¹¹⁴ The first five nuns of the reformed female community of Foligno came from an important town in Abruzzo, Sulmona, with the intention to form an Observant monastery. This intention to live according to the Observant norms is clear from the choice of Foligno where they could count

¹¹⁰ Mentioned also by Scandella in the Introduction of Angela Emmanuela Scandella, ed., *Ricordanze del monastero S. Lucia osc in Foligno* (Santa Maria degli Angeli: Ed. Porziuncola, 1987) and Mario Sensi, *Storie bizzocche tra Umbria e Marche* (Rome: Ed. di Storia e Letteratura, 1995), 359-364.

¹¹¹ Michele Faloci Pulignani, "Saggi della Cronaca di Suor Caterina Guarneri da Osimo," *Archivio Storico per le Marche e per l'Umbria* 1 (1884): 278-322.

¹¹² Attilio Bartoli Langeli, "Scrittura di donna: Le capacità linguistiche delle clarisse dell'Osservanza," in *Cultura e desiderio di Dio. L'Umanesimo e le Clarisse dell'Osservanza. Atti della II giornata di studio sull'Osservanza Francescana al femminile* (Foligno – Monastero S. Lucia, 10 novembre 2007), ed. Pietra Messa, Angela Emmanuela Scandella, and Mario Sensi (S. Maria degli Angeli-Assisi: Ed. Porziuncola,, 2008), 81–96.

¹¹³ The monastery was reformed in 1424-25. *Ricordanze*, 2.

¹¹⁴ "Con 'l braccio delli Signiori de Fuligni fu revelato l'Ordine de sancto Francesco, et in questa torre hebbe el principio, et simelmente qui ebbe el principio la revelation dell'Ordine de sancta Chiara in queste parte, con el braccio delli dicti Signiori de Fuligni." *Ricordanze*, 2.

on the help of the Trinci. They were the ones from whom the nuns received a donation of a land for the monastery,¹¹⁵ which was named after the name of the ancient church of the land.¹¹⁶

But why did these nuns leave Sulmona and from where came the idea of the Observant reform? According to the *Ricordanze* they had to leave Sulmona because of the conflicts between the main families, and they came to Foligno because of “divine inspiration.”¹¹⁷ The document mentions a stop at L’Aquila during their travel where they stayed for several months,¹¹⁸ and where the Observant influence was very strong.¹¹⁹ That might be the reason why the nuns—not all from the Franciscan order—after encountering the Observant ideas in L’Aquila decided to form an Observant Franciscan community in a town where the lay leaders also promoted the Observant reform.¹²⁰ Here we can speak, therefore, about female religiosity as the main motive of the foundation of an observant community and this example is not the only one: there are also other cases of Umbrian monasteries where the reform started because of the nuns’ desire to adapt the Observant rules.

One other example is the Monastery of San Leonardo,¹²¹ a small female community in Montefalco, formed by fourteen nuns who left the Augustinian Monastery of Santa Chiara in Montefalco,¹²² and moved to the hospital of the poor which in the same city, close to the gate.¹²³ Because of the wish of these nuns, four reformer nuns were sent from Monteluca to introduce

¹¹⁵ Luciano Canonici, *Santa Lucia di Foligno: Storia di un Monastero e di un ideale* (Assisi: Porziuncola, 1974).

¹¹⁶ *Ricordanze*, 3.

¹¹⁷ “vennero da la città de Sulmona per divina ispirazione le venerabile madonne et signore”; “spirate da Dio et essendoli revelato per divina voce che qui dovevano edificare uno monasterio” *Ricordanze*, 3.

¹¹⁸ *Ricordanze*, 477.

¹¹⁹ More about this influence see Mario Sensi, *Le Osservanze francescane nell’Italia Centrale (sec. XIV-XV)* (Rome: Istituto storico dei Cappuccini, 1985).

¹²⁰ The five nuns from Sulmona: “sr. Allesandrina di Sulmona, figlia di Nicola principe di Letto e Torre quale prima abbadessa; sr. Margarita di Solmona sua sorella quale seconda abbadessa; Chiara di Solmona, de i duchi della Figliola, figlia di sr. Gemma, ambedue del Ordine di san Domenico; sr. Gemma, vedova, moglie del duca della Figliola, sorella di [Alesandrina e Margarita]; sr. Lisa de Solmona, partente delle sudette” *Ricordanze*, 248.

¹²¹ The chronicle of this community is called *Libro de dote* and it was written by the friar who dealt with the economic affairs of the monastery. The text is published in the Appendix of the *Ricordanze*.

¹²² *Memoriale di Monteluca: cronaca del monastero delle clarisse di Perugia dal 1448 al 1838*, ed. Ugo Nicolini, (Assisi: Porziuncola, 1983), 70.

¹²³ *Ricordanze*, 278.

the rules of the observance.¹²⁴ They officially took the new Rule in 1501, the prioress was one of the nuns from Monteluca. Clearly the main initiative here came from the nuns: as their wish for a strict religious life was not satisfied in their previous community, they founded a new one.

A third example is the foundation of the Monastery of Ss. Trinità in Gubbio which was the result of the wish of a group of women of the Third Order.¹²⁵ These women, called “le Povere,” lived under the government of the Observant friars and who decided to change their way of life and live in an enclosed community.¹²⁶ They bought a hospital building with the help of a papal bull and of the lord of Gubbio, and they founded a new Observant cloistered monastery.¹²⁷ In order to insert this community into the second order of the Franciscans, the local Observant leaders sent four nuns from Monteluca to reform the new community, as it happened in the previous case.¹²⁸ The arrival of the nuns is described as great honor to Gubbio (Monteluca is described as “*sacro et famoso monasterio*”, the nuns as “*donne veramente de abprobata vita*”) and was an occasion of celebrations by the whole city. Because of the nuns of Monteluca followed the Second Rule, the nunnery of Gubbio did the same. Here the ideas of the reform probably came from the friars, but the nuns made the final decision to change their way of life. Very similar is the case of Borgo San Sepolcro, where a group of saintly women of the Third Order requested the privilege to found an Observant Monastery, and finally in 1500 they got the approbation of the friars who sent four nuns from Monteluca.¹²⁹

In sum, in these cases a group of women decided to form a new Observant community. In Gubbio and Montefalco they first moved into a hospital of the poor, then with the help of

¹²⁴ *Memoriale*, 70; *Ricordanze*, 276.

¹²⁵ The chronicle of the monastery is called *Memoriale* and is written by friar Domitio della Bastia who reorganized the documents of the monastery in 1631.

¹²⁶ *Memoriale*, 94; *Ricordanze*, 285.

¹²⁷ *Ricordanze*, 746.

¹²⁸ *Ricordanze*, 751-752.

¹²⁹ For a detailed analysis of the documents of this community see James R. Banker, “Female Voice, Male Authority: A Nun’s Narrative of the Regularization of a Female Franciscan House in Borgo San Sepolcro in 1500,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 40, no. 3 (2009): 651-677.

Observant friars and lay leaders formed a new monastery. In Foligno the nuns had the immediate help of the town leaders. In order to insert the new monastery into the system of the Order—and therefore to be able to control them—nuns (usually four) from an already reformed monastery were sent to help.¹³⁰ Therefore, the spontaneous initiative of the nuns was of primary importance, and they archived their aim with the help of the friars and of the lay leaders.

3.1.1.2 The initiative of the town

The monastery of Santa Maria of Monteluca in Perugia was the first one to follow the example of the nuns of Foligno. In the fifteenth century it was the main cultural center of the Franciscan Order in Umbria because of its scriptorium where the nuns copied and translated the friars work and also were authors of books. The chronicle of the monastery is called *Memoriale* and it was written first by sr. Eufrosia Alfani, then by her sister Battista Alfani until her death: the narration starts in 1448, and goes on in the next 400 years, always written by the nuns.¹³¹

The *Memoriale* says that the date of the reform is 1448, but the chronicle was started in 1488 with the intention to capture in writing the memory of the monastery's reform while the reformer nuns were alive.¹³² Sr. Battista writes that “*ad procuratione delli nobili cittadini de Peroscia*” the monastery was reformed by the nuns of Foligno who came “*per comandamento del dicto summo potefice Pope Nicolò V, et del dicto monsignore cardinale, protectore de l'Ordine.*”¹³³ The arrival of the twenty-four nuns was celebrated by the whole city: citizens, friars, nuns from other nunneries, and so on, made a procession with the participation of the local lay and religious elite. Before the reform the monastery was a Conventual Franciscan

¹³⁰ See Introduction for the *Memoriale* and the *Ricordanze*: map of the reform movement.

¹³¹ *Memoriale di Monteluca: cronaca del monastero delle clarisse di Perugia dal 1448 al 1838*, ed. Ugo Nicolini, (Assisi: Porziuncola, 1983)

¹³² *Memoriale*, 1.

¹³³ *Memoriale*, 6-7.

community united with another Poor Clares' monastery called Sancta Maria de li Angeli de porta Sancto Pietro, the two communities were governed by the same prioress.¹³⁴ The chronicle of the nuns of Foligno confirms this information and highlights the fact that the reform took place at the request of the city of Perugia.¹³⁵ As we can see from the sources, the idea of the reform came from the citizens and was realized by the friars. In fact, not every Perugian nun was happy with the reforms, and to avoid conflicts they moved to the Monastery of Santa Maria de li Angeli with the permission of a special papal bull.¹³⁶

This case shows a pattern where the influence of the city had great importance in the introduction of the reform. It is important to mention other cases of Umbrian female monasteries which followed the same pattern: for example, the Monastery of Santa Maria Trasteverim of Città di Castello was reformed by the nuns of Monteluca because of lay initiative.¹³⁷ The *Libro de la clausura* underlines the importance of the urban leaders and citizens.¹³⁸ After the arrival of the Perugian nuns a big procession was made with all the local religious elite, local clerics and nuns and “*gran parte del populo*,” for the “*grande gaudio et consolatione spirituale de tutto el populo*.” Another case is a similar, an originally Conventual community which was transformed into reformed Observant monastery upon the wish of the urban community.¹³⁹ In 1518, one year after the bull of Pope Leo X which gave autonomy to the Observants, through the mediation of the religious elite the convent of Santa Lucia in Norcia was attached to the Observants and the reform of the two nunneries came to an end.

¹³⁴ “lo quale era de la medesima Regula et Ordine de Sancta Chiara, ma non in Observantia” *Memoriale*, 5.

¹³⁵ *Ricordanze*, 4.

¹³⁶ *Memoriale*, 7.

¹³⁷ The chronicle is called *Libro de la clausura*, published in the Appendix of the *Ricordanze*.

¹³⁸ The urban leaders of the time were “Meglioruccio de ser Baptista Migliorati, Pierpaulo de Francesco Pacisordi, cittadini de la Città de Castello, [...] signor Vitello et de li magnifici signori ‘octo’ de la guardia de la dicta città.” *Ricordanze*, 334.

¹³⁹ Sources about this monastery are published in R. Cordella, “Il ‘Memoriale’ della clausura di Norcia,” *Picenum Seraphicum* 16 (1983): 115-193.

It is clear that the spiritual need of the laity towards the religious communities and the participation of lay leaders in clerical decisions are the main reasons of the Observant reform in these cases. However, the origin of this desire is not indicated in the sources. One reason can be the fact that by the sixteenth century most important Umbrian cities had a female Observant monastery, reformed by the nuns of Monteluca; or by that time the influence of the Observant preachers had great impact on the citizens.

3.1.1.3 The initiative of the friars

There are cases where neither the nuns nor the citizens initiated the reform, but the local religious authority. The *Ricordanze* of the nuns of Foligno writes that the friars requested the reform of the monastery of Narni.¹⁴⁰ This command of the friars caused a great confusion in the monastery of Foligno because by that time the nuns followed the First Rule, while the monastery of Narni the second. The selected nuns followed the rule of the observance and did what the friars said, but this was the beginning of a long argument between nuns and friars.¹⁴¹ The same problem with the request of the city of Gubbio was resolved by inviting nuns of Monteluca instead, as they followed the Second Rule.¹⁴² In the same way, the female monastery of Arezzo was reformed in 1492 because of the wish of the local friars. The idea was presented as a proposal to the nuns, but later from the narration of the *capitulum* it turns out that it was more like an order and the nuns were expected to obey.¹⁴³

In sum, the religious leaders decided about the life choice of the nunneries with full authority, as the case of Narni shows. They sent the nuns from reformed Umbrian nunneries

¹⁴⁰ *Ricordanze*, 43.

¹⁴¹ *Ricordanze*, 44-47.

¹⁴² *Ricordanze*, 48.

¹⁴³ *Memoriale*, 53-54.

even in Tuscany which shows the great territorial coverage of the network between Observant monasteries.

3.1.2 In Hungary

Similarly to Italy, in Hungary the Observant reform could mean both the foundation of a new, Observant monastery and the transformation of an already existing community after the Observant model. As the Hungarian sources are more fragmentated, it is more difficult to find a clear pattern. Therefore, in order to draw a clearer picture about the Hungarian nunneries with the help of the Italian parallel, this comparison will first focus on the similarities, then the possible explanations for the differences.

3.1.2.1 Different types of reform ideas

The Poor Clares Monastery of Óbuda was founded in 1334 and belonged to the royal dynasty, and the nuns came from higher social layers.¹⁴⁴ The nunnery was under the direction of the Franciscan monastery of Óbuda and in the fifteenth century it was under the protection and support of King Matthias and his mother. Regarding the reform movement of the monastery, Karácsonyi cites sources about the Clarissan nunnery of Óbuda,¹⁴⁵ which show that the nuns asked in 1488 the papal nuncio, Angelo Pechinoli, to visit the monastery and to put an end to the nuns' careless and negligent lifestyle which already caused scandals in the community.¹⁴⁶ The nuncio fulfilled their request and, on his suggestion, the community chose

¹⁴⁴ András Kubinyi, "Budapest története a későbbi középkorban Buda elestéig (1541-ig)," [History of Budapest in the late Middle Ages until the Fall of Buda (1541)], in *Budapest története*, vol. 2 (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1975), 76–77.

¹⁴⁵ *Monumenta Romana episcopatus Vespriensis*, vol. 3, 312, 316; János Karácsonyi, *Szt. Ferenc rendjének története Magyarországon 1711-ig* [The History of the Order of St. Francis until 1711], vol. 9 (Budapest: MTA, 1923), 456., 505.

¹⁴⁶ According to the documents of the friars cited in Karácsonyi, *Szt. Ferenc rendjének története*, 71, in a sermon one friar wanted to excommunicate those who entered in the convent without papal permission; the conflict was resolved by the papal nuncio.

a new prioress to begin the changes.¹⁴⁷ King Matthias and the nuncio tried to pass the monastery under the supervision of the Observant Franciscans, but this effort failed because of the death of Matthias in 1490. This pattern is very similar to the case of Foligno: the nuns initiated a reform for which they had important protectors both among the lay and the religious leaders. The election of the new prioress was always the first step in the reform process: in Italy, too, one of the reformer nuns also became the prioress of the reformed community.

However, after the death of the protector, the female reform movement slowed down and the nunnery was reformed by a Franciscan leader, Lukács Segösdi.¹⁴⁸ The Conventual Franciscan religious elite took up the Observant ideas and reformed their monasteries—and also the communities of the nuns—but their separation from the Observants was clear until the sixteenth century.¹⁴⁹ In order to reform the female monastery, one of Segösdi's projects was to translate the Rule to Hungarian for the use of the Poor Clares: this text is in the Codex Guary, written between 1482-1508 with the aim to teach the nuns a strict way of life, therefore it was an important step towards the reform of the monastery.¹⁵⁰

3.1.2.2 Reform against the will of the nuns

The Dominican nunnery of Margaret Island, founded in 1252, by the time of the fifteenth century became the most important female Dominican monastery of Hungary. Here lived Saint Margaret of Hungary and her tomb in the church of the monastery was a popular

¹⁴⁷ Sándor Lázs, *Apácaműveltség Magyarországon a XV-XVI. század fordulóján: Az anyanyelvű irodalom kezdetei* [Nuns' literacy in Hungary at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: The beginnings of vernacular literature] (Budapest: Balassi, 2016), 45.

¹⁴⁸ Karácsonyi, 323.

¹⁴⁹ During the reform period three friars held the post of the provincial superior: Segösdi Lukács, Temesvári Pelbárt, and Laskai Osvát. Lázs, *Apácaműveltség Magyarországon*, 40.

¹⁵⁰ In the Introduction to the edition of the codex Dénes Szabó argues that based on textual analysis the codex is probably the work of the Franciscans of Óbuda and it was made for the Poor Clares. *Guary-kódex*, ed. Dénes Szabó (Budapest: MTA, 1944). For further support in favour of this argument, see Cyrill Horváth, *A magyar irodalom története* [The history of Hungarian literature], vol. 1 (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1899), 85; Kálmán Timár, "Magyar kódex-családok" [Hungarian codex families], *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 37 (1927), 65.

pilgrim destination. Her cult was revived in the fifteenth century and several miracles were recorded, so King Matthias also supported her canonization.¹⁵¹ Traditionally noble families sent there their daughters so the nunnery had supporters from the highest lay elite.¹⁵²

The Dominican friars' reform started in the 1450s when Leonhard Huntpichler came to Hungary and became the leader of the reformed Dominican monasteries.¹⁵³ The reform probably included more frequent visits to the nunnery,¹⁵⁴ which brought the nuns into a conflict with their supervisors.¹⁵⁵ Harsányi shows that in 1459 the nuns, with the help of King Matthias and his mother, Erzsébet Szilágyi,¹⁵⁶ asked the pope to grant the nunnery independence from the friars which included the request of the life-long nomination of Anna as prioress.¹⁵⁷ After the papal bull the friars had minimal influence on the life of the nuns and the prioress had the right to decide who can enter the monastery.¹⁵⁸ This document was the first sign of the conflict between nuns and friars: Pope Pius II permitted the Dominican nuns of Margaret Island to elect their confessor from the Franciscans too, and put the monastery directly under papal jurisdiction. As Péterfi points out, the reason of this papal bull was to ensure the undisturbed life of the nuns in order to leave space for the reform of the community, led by the Prioress Anna's example of an excellent life.¹⁵⁹ The conflict deepened when in 1468 the friars

¹⁵¹ Iлона Király, *Árpádházi Szent Margit és a sziget* (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1979).

¹⁵² András Kubinyi, *Budapest története*, 162.

¹⁵³ Gábor Farkas Kiss, "Latin és népnyelv a késő középkori magyarországi domonkos kolostorokban (Leonhard Huntpichler: Directo pedagogorum)" [Latine and vernacular in the Dominican monasteries of Hungary in the Late Middle Ages], *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 120 (2016): 225-247.

¹⁵⁴ Bence Péterfi, "Mátyás király és Árpád-házi Margit" [King Matthias and Margaret of Hungary], in *Az első 300 év Magyarországon és Európában: A Domonkos-rend a középkorban*, ed. Csurgai Horváth József (Székesfehérvár: Alba Civitas Történeti Alapítvány, 2017), 193.

¹⁵⁵ Harsányi reports Mortier's sources (Daniel Antonin Mortier, *Histoire des maîtres généraux de l'ordre des Frères Prêcheurs*, vol. 3. (Paris, 1907): the Dominican reform was started by Leonardus de Brixenthal, who was a friar in the Dominican Observant monastery of Vienna and under whom influence the Dominicans were reformed in Hungary in the 1450s. András Harsányi, *A domonkosrend Magyarországon a reformáció előtt* [The Dominican Order in Hungary before the Reformation] (Debrecen: Nagy Károly, 1938), 40.

¹⁵⁶ Harsányi, 104-106.

¹⁵⁷ Lázs Sándor supposes that Prioress Anna was the main obstacle of the reforms as she insisted on the old rules. Lázs argues that the comment of Ráskai Lea in the colophon of the Codex Domonkos (133r: 18-19) refers to these conservative nuns. Lázs, *Apácaműveltség*, 44.

¹⁵⁸ *Monumenta Romana episcopatus Vesprimiensis*. vol 3, 155-157, no. CCLXI; Péterfi Bence, *Mátyás király és Árpádházi Margit*, 192.

¹⁵⁹ Péterfi, "Mátyás király és Árpád-házi Margit," 192.

threatened the nuns to exclude the monastery from the order if the regulation was not strictly observed. The next subchapter goes into more detail about this situation, here the resolution is more important: in 1478 Prioress Anna resigned from her office and was sent to a convent of Pécs,¹⁶⁰ then in 1489 Pope Innocent VIII put back the nunnery of Margaret Island under the government of the Dominican friars.¹⁶¹

In sum, these two Hungarian examples follow the same pattern with little differences. In both cases the reform was urged by the male religious leaders of the orders who started their own reform under the influence of the royal elite, the Hunyadi family. King Matthias was one of the main supporters of the Observant Franciscans.¹⁶² After the visitation of the nunnery of Óbuda he planned to give the monastery over to them because the nuns did not keep the rules under the direction of the Conventual Franciscans.¹⁶³ Since they had fewer monasteries and fewer friars than the Observants, this threat motivated the Conventuals to start an internal reform to avoid losing the monastery.¹⁶⁴

The nuns, however, rejected the reforms either because they envisaged a different kind of reform like in the nunnery of Óbuda, or because they preferred the old way of life without changes like the nunnery of Margaret Island led by Prioress Anna. Even after the death of the king and protector the friars could introduce reforms and the nuns opposing them were placed in other communities. This pattern corresponds to the third model presented from the Umbrian

¹⁶⁰ Harsányi, *A domonkosrend Magyarországon*, 107.

¹⁶¹ Lajos Implom, *Adatok a Szent Domonkos-rend magyarországi rendtartományának történetéhez - A rendtartomány alapításától 1526-ig* [Documents for the history of the Dominican province in Hungary from the foundation till 1526] (Vasvár: Magyar domonkos rendtörténet 1., 2017).

¹⁶² It was a common trend in East-Central Europe that the royal and aristocratic elite were the main supporter of the Mendicant orders. Marie-Madeleine de Cevins, *Les franciscains observants hongrois de l'expansion à la débâcle (vers 1450 – vers 1540)* (Rome: Ist. Storico dei Cappuccini, 2008), 73; Beatrix F. Romhányi, *Kolduló barátok, gazdálkodó szerzetesek: Koldulórendi gazdálkodás a középkori Magyarországon* [Mendicant friars, managing monks: Economy of the mendicant orders in medieval Hungary], Dissertation presented at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2015, 8.

¹⁶³ Lázs, *Apácaműveltség*, 45.

¹⁶⁴ De Cevins, *Les franciscains observants hongrois*, 73.

sources, although the Italian nuns welcomed the observance. Lázs argues that the reason of the complete rejection in the nunnery of Margaret Island lays in the social background of the nuns: as they came from a high social group they were unwilling to renounce their previous privileges.¹⁶⁵

The information about Monteluze, Norcia and Città di Castello corresponds to Gabriella Erdélyi's case study which shows the important influence of the town in the reform movement of the monasteries, and argues that lay religiosity was the main driving force which led to the reform of a Hungarian mendicant monastery in 1518 in Körmend.¹⁶⁶ In general, the perception of religiosity within the order is largely determined by the needs of society, which on the other hand were shaped by famous mendicant preachers of the time.¹⁶⁷

3.2 The relationship between nuns and friars

As the nuns' life was controlled by the friars (see chapter 2), a good relationship was necessary for a quiet and humble life between male and female monasteries. The Observant reform, however, made significant changes in the everyday life and in consequence it also created conflict situations between nuns and friars. In Umbria the main reason of these conflicts was the rule chosen: the friars preferred the Urbanist rule, while some female monasteries chose to return to the original rule of Saint Clare. In Hungary there are no traces of this problem in the sources, however the different ideas about the reform did cause conflicts. In the following I will present a case of disagreement between the local friars and the nuns of Foligno regarding the rule of the female community, and I will examine in more detail the conflict case of the nunnery of Óbuda which shows similar elements.

¹⁶⁵ Lázs, *Apácaműveltség*, 43.

¹⁶⁶ Gabriella Erdélyi, "Conflict and Cooperation: The reform of Religious Orders in Early Sixteenth-Century Hungary," in *Communities of Devotion: Religious Orders and Society in East Central Europe, 1450–1800*, ed. Maria Crăciun and Elaine Fulton (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 121–152. Körmend is market town in western Hungary.

¹⁶⁷ Gabriella Erdélyi, "Conflict and Cooperation," 16.

On the other hand, the reform movement also created a strong network between the monasteries, and the reform ideas would not have passed from community to community without cooperation. After the case studies of conflicts, I will present the cases in which the monasteries worked together in order to achieve the same goal.¹⁶⁸

3.2.1 Conflicts

The biggest conflict between the nuns and friars of Foligno started in 1469 when the nuns—with the leadership of abbess Cecilia Coppoli of Perugia and with the support of their confessor fr. Michele Spagnolo—made a vow to pass to the first rule of the Poor Clares. This wish was present in the nunnery also in the previous years during which the community sold its property and used the money to renovate the monastery accomplishing poverty in this way, but at the same time, in order to keep the peace with the friars, they still followed the Second Rule.¹⁶⁹ In fact, the local friars were against the change and fr. Michele was the only friar supporting the nuns because he had a vision of the Virgin Mary saying that the pope himself will give the permission to pass to the First Rule.¹⁷⁰ In 1475 the friars managed to transfer sr. Cecilia Coppoli to the monastery of Urbino which followed the first rule, but the nuns got what they wanted in 1476 when Pope Sixtus IV visited Foligno.¹⁷¹ The original documents of the privileges of Pope Sixtus IV were preserved in the archive of the monastery (the document is called *Bolle e Brevi*) and they are also copied in the *Ricordanze*.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ I took the idea of this structure of the subchapter from the excellent analysis of Gabriella Erdélyi, “Conflict and Cooperation,” 121–152.

¹⁶⁹ *Ricordanze*, 7-8.

¹⁷⁰ *Ricordanze*, 8.

¹⁷¹ *Ricordanze* 10. Papalini emphasizes that in his bull Pope Sixtus IV referred to the rule which Saint Francis gave to Saint Clare, and which was approved by Pope Innocent IV and modified by Pope Eugene IV. Mauro Papalini, “La formula di professione del codice F nell’archivio del monastero di Santa Lucia di Foligno,” in *Il richiamo delle origini: Le clarisse dell’Osservanza e le fonti clariane. Atti della III giornata di studio sull’Osservanza francescana al femminile (Foligno, Monastero Clarisse di S. Lucia, 8 novembre 2008)*, ed. Pietra Messa, Angela Emmanuela Scandella, and Mario Sensi (S. Maria degli Angeli-Assisi: Ed. Porziuncola, 2009), 43.

¹⁷² *Ricordanze*, 120-125.

The papal documents did not resolve the conflict between nuns and friars, and the issue of the rule became a constant source of controversy which has given rise to many further conflicts over the next thirty years. In 1501 the friars wanted to bring the Observant reform to the monastery of Narni and assigned the role of reformer to four nuns from Foligno.¹⁷³ The problem was that the nuns of Narni followed the second rule, therefore the four nuns of Foligno had to abandon the newly acquired First Rule by transferring there. The nuns could not resist because of their vow of obedience and because of the friars' threat to discontinue their spiritual guidance for the nuns. This conflict worsened when the vicar general ordered another four nuns to go to reform the monastery of Gubbio which also followed the second rule.¹⁷⁴ As soon as a new vicar general was elected, the abbess of Santa Lucia wrote a letter to him asking the revision of the orders of the previous vicar and thanks to her determination the next General Chapter forbade the nuns' transfer into a monastery which followed a rule different from the nuns' original community.¹⁷⁵ After this decision the monasteries of the Second Rule were reformed by the nuns of Monteluce, as presented above. However, the nuns previously transferred to Narni did not receive the permission of the friars to return in Foligno, and the nuns recorded several miracles and signs which in their interpretation meant that these recent events in the monastery were against the will of God.¹⁷⁶ Therefore the abbess, sr. Bernardina of Foligno, wrote a letter to the secretary of the pope asking if the nuns' stay was really ordered by the pope as the friars claimed. In his response the pope denied this claim and assured the nuns of his support. As a consequence, for ten years there was a relatively good relationship between nuns and friars, till in 1512, when the same conflict situation repeated. This time the nuns asked for the help of the citizens of Foligno because the pope accepted the position of the

¹⁷³ *Ricordanze*, 26.

¹⁷⁴ *Ricordanze*, 28

¹⁷⁵ *Ricordanze*, 29

¹⁷⁶ The statue of Christ shed tears, comets appeared above the monastery, Saint Clare and Christ appeared in visions saying that the friars will be punished, and so on. *Ricordanze*, 31-32.

vicar general and did not intervene. The conflict was temporarily resolved when the lay leaders pressured the friars to continue to celebrate the sacraments in the nunnery even for the resisting nuns.

In sum, the example of Foligno showed that the most important people who defined the relationship between male and female observant communities were the abbess of the female monastery, the confessor of the nuns who came from a local friary, the vicar of the province, the vicar general of the order, the pope and the citizens of the town. The sources also show that the city generally supported the nuns' position even against the local friars, probably because the lay religiosity was under the influence of the observant preachers who travelled from city to city and preached about the strict observant ideas. On the other hand, the position of the pope changed in every case, depending on the point of view of the most influential people around him. The text mentions several times the expression “our battle against the friars” which also indicates a deep conflict situation and controversy from the part of the nuns. In this “battle” the nuns couldn’t win without a powerful supporter and they had to make new alliances every time they wanted to enforce their will against the friars. Consequently, it caused further conflict situations between the vicar general and the vicar of the province, between the pope and the friars or between the whole male religious elite and the city.

The case of the nunnery of Óbuda is very similar, however the lack of a narrative source prevents a clear view of the events. At the same time a comparison with the Italian case is possible, since the actors of the conflict were the same: the abbess, the confessor sent from the friary, the vicars, the pope and a lay supporter, the king. The main reason of the conflict in Óbuda was not around the rule, but regarding the nature of the Observant reform. Both the friars and the nuns were aware that the new habits in the nunnery were contrary to the strict

rules of the regulation of the Rule.¹⁷⁷ As I presented in the first part of this chapter, the nuns with the support of King Matthias and the help of the papal nuncio tried to reform the community, however the death of Matthias put an end to these initiatives. In the 1490s the Franciscan leaders felt their duty to continue the reform, but it did not succeed without conflicts: one of the nuns, sr. Zsuzsanna Matucsinay had different ideas about the necessary changes. In her letter to Pope Alexander VI she writes in 1492 that her reforms were stopped by the provincial Segösdí and later she was moved to another nunnery in Nagyszombat.¹⁷⁸

Clearly the reform initiative of these nuns and of the friars were different and their conflict ended with the move of the “rebel” nuns, however in this comparison this information is significant as it shows the consciousness of the nuns regarding the choices of their monastic life. Though we don’t know the details of the argument, the conflict situation is very similar to the case of Foligno. The nuns of Óbuda however did not have a powerful supporter in the 1490s: King Matthias died, and religious leaders entrusted the friars with the task of pursuing the reform.

A different conflict situation came about between the Dominican friars and the nuns of the Margaret Island. In opposition to the Poor Clares of Óbuda the Dominican nuns did not want the reform and refused to change their way of life. In the second half of the fifteenth century the abbess did everything to reach the independence of the nunnery from the friars. For this purpose the community had the support of the royal family and the religious elite such as the archbishop of Esztergom, and with their help they sent several requests to the pope.¹⁷⁹ They

¹⁷⁷ For example, in consequence of the preaching of an observant Franciscan friar, a great scandal broke out because abbess Ágnes allowed men to enter the monastery. The general protests were calmed down by the papal nuncio by stating that the abbess had followed the rules. See *Leges Ecclesiasticae Regni Hungariae Et Provinciarum Adiacentium* III ed. by Ignác Batthyány (Albae-Carolinae: Typis Episcopalis, 1827), 544-5., cited by Karácsonyi, 455-6.

¹⁷⁸ Karácsonyi supposes that she had the courage to disobey because of her family’s importance in Hungary. Karácsonyi, 505. See the documents in *Monumenta Romana episcopatus Vesprimiensis*, vol. 4., ed. by Vilmos Fraknói and József Lukács (Budapest: Franklin Társulat, 1898), 3-4.

¹⁷⁹ *Monumenta Romana Episcopatus Vesprimiensis* III. (Budapest, 1902.) 155-157, 159-160, 164-65, 181., cited by Harsányi, 105-107.

asked for the placement of the monastery under the direct jurisdiction of the pope, for the abolition of the rule which requires the re-election of the abbess in every three years and for the right to choose the person of the confessor, even among the Franciscans.¹⁸⁰ Although in this conflict the nuns had the pope on their side, the vicar of the province refused to obey, and the friars stopped to give spiritual guidance to the nuns. The conflict was resolved by 1474 when Pál Váci arrived in the nunnery and started the reform with the Hungarian translation of the Rule.¹⁸¹ In the following years the nuns always had a Dominican confessor and the conflict was resolved probably with a compromise: the nuns changed their way of life, however they also kept their privileges which the successive popes also affirmed (Pius II in 1460, Paul II in 1465, Sixtus IV in 1474 and Innocent VIII in 1487).¹⁸²

The bad relationship between Dominican nuns and friars shaped a very important case of the period: the attempt to finish the canonization process of Margaret of Hungary (d. 1270). As Gábor Klaniczay stressed in his book,¹⁸³ the cult of saints from the Arpadian royal family was very popular also in later centuries thanks to the patronage of members of the royal family and the mendicant orders.¹⁸⁴ During the reign of the Angevin dynasty in the fourteenth century,

¹⁸⁰ After the lost battle of Mohács in 1526 the nuns and friars stayed in their monastery and also the writing activity continued. László Shows that the characteristics of some parts of the Codex Érsekújvári copied in the nunnery of the Margaret Island between 1529-1531 are the proof that the Dominican nuns had Franciscan friars in the nunnery who occupied their spiritual guidance and the organization of the scriptorium. László, 49-50., 231-233.

¹⁸¹ Pál Váci was one of the most important Dominican leaders in Hungary. He studied in Vienna and later in Heidelberg and became lector of theology which position gave him the possibility to reform the nunnery of the Margaret Island. About his life see the summary of Sándor László, "Szent Ágoston regulájának 15. századi magyar fordítója: Váci Pál munkássága a 15. századi domonkos rendi reformban" in *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 109 (2005): 188-204. About the translation see the Introduction of *Birk-kódex 1474: Az emlékhasonmása, betűhű olvasata és latin megfelelője*, ed. by István Pusztai (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1960) (Codices Hungarici, 5). For a short analysis of his writing style see Lea Haader, "Arcképtörödékek ómagyar scriptorokról" in *"Látjátok feleim ..." Magyar nyelvemlékek a kezdetektől a 16. század elejéig: Az Országos Széchényi Könyvtár kiállítása 2009. október 29 – 2010. február 28. Katalógus és tanulmánykötet* (Budapest: OSZK, 2009): 53–78.

¹⁸² Harsányi, 106.

¹⁸³ Gábor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses. Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

¹⁸⁴ The male line of the Arpadian dynasty died out in 1301.

the cult of Hungarian saints became a national issue,¹⁸⁵ and the Angevin kings urged (unsuccessfully) three times the canonization process of Margaret which remained unfinished in 1276.¹⁸⁶

Then, in the fifteenth century also King Matthias included Margaret in his letters in which he asked the pope for the canonization of John of Capistran.¹⁸⁷ He signs letters sent to Pope Pius II in the early 1460s with the request to revive the case of Margaret, as in that period new miracles were registered at her tomb in the Margaret Island.¹⁸⁸ The eleven letters tell about sixteen miracles, the last one happened only one week before the letter was sent. These cases served as complementary material to previous inquisition and documentation made in the 1270s after Margaret's death, the resumption of the complete documentation was not necessary.¹⁸⁹ The documents arrived at Rome—Péterfi found the letters in the Orsini archive—and two of the three necessary steps for the canonization were made: the *consistorium* made the decision of the canonization of Margaret and the decision was made public, but the final step, the canonization ceremony did not follow.¹⁹⁰

Péterfi argues that the reason of the renewed interest for the cult of Margaret had its origin in the conflict between the Dominican friars and the nuns of the Margaret Island, and this difficult relationship was also the reason why the process stopped.¹⁹¹ In the 1450s in the context of the Observant reform the friars tried to reform the nunnery, but the nuns defended

¹⁸⁵ Gábor Klaniczay, "Matthias and the Saints," in *Matthias Rex 1458–1490: Hungary at the Dawn of the Renaissance*, ed. Iván Horváth (Budapest: Eötvös Loránd University Faculty of Humanities, Centre des hautes études de la Renaissance, 2013), 2.

¹⁸⁶ Gábor Klaniczay, "Efforts at the Canonization of Margaret of Hungary in the Angevin Period," *The Hungarian historical review* (2013/2): 313–340.

¹⁸⁷ Gábor Klaniczay, "Matthias and the Saints," 6.

¹⁸⁸ The letters survived in the Codex Héderváry and were published by Sigismundus Ferrarius in *De rebus Hungaricae provinciae Ordinis Praedicatorum* (Vienna, 1637): 380–382. See Bence Péterfi, "Mátyás király és Árpád-házi Margit" [King Matthias and Margaret of Hungary], in *Az első 300 év Magyarországon és Európában: A Domonkos-rend a középkorban*, ed. Csurgai Horváth József (Székesfehérvár: Alba Civitas Történeti Alapítvány, 2017).

¹⁸⁹ For a detailed analysis of these miracles see Ildikó Csepregi, "Árpád-házi Szent Margit csodái," [The miracles of Margaret of Hungary] in *Az első 300 év Magyarországon és Európában: A Domonkos-rend a középkorban*, ed. Csurgai Horváth József (Székesfehérvár: Alba Civitas Történeti Alapítvány, 2017).

¹⁹⁰ Bence Péterfi, "Mátyás király és Árpád-házi Margit," 201–203.

¹⁹¹ Péterfi, 205.

their independency with the help of the royal family. In this situation the nuns had to show their power and Margaret's miracles at her tomb served perfectly this aim, while promoting the canonization of a saint from the Árpád dynasty was convenient to King Matthias too, as it strength her political legitimacy.¹⁹²

From this situation we could see that the nuns acted with the support of important religious and lay leaders and the conflict ended with a compromise. The relationship with the male monasteries influences also important events and the everyday life of the nunneries, and the peace was the interest of both parties. The Hungarian nuns were less radical and effective in these conflicts than the Italian nuns, however it is important to notice that in contrast with the Italian cases, in the Hungarian situations the towns did not have any significant role in these conflicts, and therefore the nuns had less supporters then the Italian communities. The reason of the behavior of the lay people is probably similar to the situation in Italy: as the citizens probably also in Hungary sympathized with the observant ideas—it would explain the general outcry after the observant friar's preaching against the nuns of Óbuda, described above—and therefore supported the reform initiative of the friars.

3.2.2 Cooperations

Contrary to the conflict situations, several cases can be seen in the sources in which the same actors cooperated in order to achieve the same goal. The main reason of the conflicts was the question of the Rule: the friars preferred the Urbanist rule as it was less radical, and in consequence the request of the first rule in some female monasteries created serious disagreements. The opposite of this statement is also true: the female communities who chose the Urbanist rule had good relationship with the male communities and could resolve their

¹⁹² Péterfi, 204.

problems with the help of the friars, and not against them. The best example for this kind of cooperation is the monastery of Monteluce which soon after its reform became the center of the female observance and they had a fundamental role in the reform of other Umbrian monasteries. In the following I enumerate some examples which show this cooperation. The most important among these is the work in the scriptorium, and because of its importance I will write about it with more detail in the third part of this chapter.

In order to resolve problems of everyday life, the nuns of the monastery of Monteluce usually asked the help of the friars, simply because they were above them in the Church's hierarchy. The nuns of Foligno couldn't do the same because of their conflicts regarding the choice of the first rule, that is the reason why they applied for the help of more powerful authorities such as the pope. In this view the examination of the cases of Monteluce in which the friars acted as solvers of the problem shows also general categories of difficulties of the everyday life the nuns had to deal with.

In 1492, during the visitation of the friars the nuns presented the problem of a novice, sr. Maria whose behavior according to the whole community was not proper for an observant nun. Since she came from one of the leader families of Perugia, the friars first talked to the mother who tried to convince her daughter to change her attitude, however after a while the nuns asked again the intervention of the friars who sent back the girl to her family. Battista Alfani also adds her personal opinion on these events by suggesting the future nuns to act in the same way.¹⁹³ Also in other cases the friars acted as judges between the nuns. In 1498 sr. Paula, after finishing her novitiate, during the final vow behaved scandalously and the abbess could not finish her ceremony required in the Rule. It caused disputes in the community if she could be accepted as a nun, and to restore the peace in the community the friars had to intervene by making a compromise between the nuns. Sr. Battista recorded this event also as good

¹⁹³ *Memoriale*, 54.

example for future nuns, because she found probable that this kind of internal conflict would happen again.¹⁹⁴

In another problematic case the nuns also asked for the friars' judgement. In 1493 the nuns received in the monastery a little six-year-old girl whose mother had died and her father, Roberto de li Ghiache, wanted to enter in the Franciscan order. The nuns did not want to accept a child among the nuns as was against the habits of the community, they sent her to her uncle's house till she is grown up enough to choose the monastic life from her free will. However, some time later a war started, the city of Perugia was full of soldiers and the nuns considered the surroundings of the girl's house not safe enough to leave her there. The abbess tried many other ways to arrange the living circumstances of the girl, without success. At this point she asked the friars for help, who managed to have a special permission from the pope to accept the girl till she has the legitimate age to make her choice.¹⁹⁵ This case is special as the war in the city limited the possibilities of the abbess, therefore she needed the wider influence of the friars for the solution.

A third kind of cooperation can be seen in the Hungarian sources: the nuns asked the assistance of the friars to solve their conflicts as landlords with their tenants. For example, the nuns of Óbuda got in a conflict situation with the Pauline friars over a house and a mill of Buda. As the nuns did not trust that the judge of the diocese would agree with their case, they asked the help of the pope asking him to change the person of the judge to the members of the religious elite who probably would have been more partial towards the nuns.¹⁹⁶ The Poor Clares of Óbuda at the beginning of the sixteenth century got into a conflict with their tenants of Cegléd because the city did not pay their taxes to the nuns.¹⁹⁷ The abbess sent the friar who was entrusted with the management of economic affairs of the monastery to go to the city to

¹⁹⁴ *Memoriale*, 63.

¹⁹⁵ *Memoriale*, 55-56.

¹⁹⁶ Karácsonyi, 505.

¹⁹⁷ Cegléd is a small city in the Hungarian Great Plain.

arrange this issue, however the citizens killed him during the argument. This only made things worse because the relatives of the friar brought the case to the Palatine and wanted to make the nuns to pay a compensation for the death. The conflict was resolved with a compromise and the relationship between the city and the nuns was not better neither later, but the example shows that in the problems of essential importance the nuns had their supporters.¹⁹⁸

3.3 Consequences of the reforms

In connection with the Observant reform three aspects of everyday life has importance as they are more significantly shaped by the reform ideas: the question of poverty, the aspect of the *vita comunis* specified by the rule and the writing activity of the nuns. The question of poverty is a relevant problem in the analyzed monasteries only from the aspect of personal belongings as the nuns came from high social layers and usually had personal propriety in form of small objects. The aspect of total poverty of the community was a problem only for those Italian communities which chose the first rule, otherwise the communities themselves had many proprieties (lands, mills, houses, etc.) both in the Italian and the Hungarian cases, permitted by the Urbanist Rule.

The most important aspect of the newly introduced *vita comunis* is the *clausura*, the enclosed life of the nuns in order to ensure their tranquility and therefore their holy status. There are two types of sources to examine the extension of the *clausura*: the architectural structure of the monastery complex and the documents which contains permissions to lay people to enter in the monastery. A third type of indication can be found only in the narratives of the Italian monasteries: the complain of the nuns because the violation of the *clausura* by

¹⁹⁸ Harsányi, 506.

the entrance of too many people.¹⁹⁹ As there is no such information available from Hungary, I deal only with the first two.

The literary production of religious literature in vernacular language in the scriptoria of female monasteries was extraordinary both in Italy and Hungary. The involvement of women in the formation of the cultural life, their role in the cultural transfer and the literacy they possessed are the main questions in the general researches on the Observant reform; in this part I will answer these questions regarding the Italian and Hungarian nuns of mendicant observance.

3.3.1 The question of poverty

Depending on the rule, the prohibition of propriety could mean two things: the first rule of Saint Clare forbids every type of propriety, while the Urbanist rule of the Poor Clares and the Augustinian rule of the Dominicans allowed the propriety for the community but not for the individual nuns. This second interpretation resolves the contradiction between adherence to the enclosure and the expectation of poverty, as the cloistered communities needed the income of the propriety of the monastery.²⁰⁰ The reform movement included also the strict observance of the Urbanist rule too, as probably the nuns did own things used in their life in the monastery. In this sense the question of the poverty in the monastery of Óbuda, of the Margaret Island and of Monteluca regarded the personal belongings of the nuns, while in the case of Foligno where the nuns insisted on the profession of the first rule of Saint Clare the poverty of the community was a constant motive of conflict. The difference of these two interpretations shows the two kind of understanding of the Observant reform too. In this subchapter I will focus on the nuns' attitude towards the question of the poverty.

¹⁹⁹ For example, in the necrology of Abbess Benedecta in 1497 the *Memoriale* remembers that after hearing the notice of her death, all citizens of Perugia wanted to enter in the monastery to touch her body, because she had the fame of a saint and miraculous healer. The writer of the *Memoriale* noted that the crowd had bothered the nuns for several days after this event. *Memoriale*, 60-61.

²⁰⁰ Sensi, *Osservanza al femminile*, 174.

The sources of Monteluca present some interesting cases regarding personal propriety of the nuns. From the economic records before the reforms of 1448 turns out that having some kind of propriety was almost usual in the community. Examples show that after the death of a nun her companions could buy her belongings: Felicetti in his master thesis transcribed many cases from the *Entrata e Uscita* with lists of objects sold inside the community.²⁰¹ For example, in 1442 died sr. Marinutia and during the following year her possessions were systematically sold to other nuns: textiles, clothes, small object such as a vase and even lands of olive trees.²⁰² After the reforms there are only exceptional cases when the nuns bought themselves new things in the name of the monastery, however the situation of the propriety of books became very particular.²⁰³ The records testimony the existence of the “lifetime loan” which means the possession of an object, usually a book, till the death of the nun: after the object belonged again to the community. For example, in 1458 sr. Flora Iacobi received a breviary, propriety of the abbess, *in vita sua tantum*. The record signs also the value of the book, circa 30 fiorini and the obligation to conserve the book in good shape.²⁰⁴ This category also includes the case when nuns sold books to each other or made an exchange of their propriety. in 1459 for example sr. Christina of Perugia sold her book to another nun who was preparing for the transfer to another monastery of Urbino, in order to be able to buy a breviary, sr. Maddalena sold her breviary in 1463 for 20 fiorini to buy another one for 33—her father payed the difference.²⁰⁵ This kind of exchange was not rare, Felicetti cites seven other cases of exchange or acquisition of books only in Monteluca, however this phenomenon is not the unique characteristic of this monastery. The exchanges and acquisitions were usual also between the Umbrian communities and even

²⁰¹ Stefano Felicetti, *Vita quotidiana in un monastero di clausura nel Quattrocento: Monteluca di Perugia e il registro contabile degli anni 1441-1470*, Università degli Studi di Perugia, master thesis (1993). I thank sr. Umiker for sending me the text.

²⁰² *Entrata e uscita*, no. 44, 9r-12r

²⁰³ Felicetti, 131.

²⁰⁴ See the transcription of this legal document in Felicetti, 636.

²⁰⁵ *Entrata e uscita* no. 44., 95r., Felicetti, 638.

between nuns from different monastery, creating by this activity a strong network system between the monasteries.²⁰⁶

Similarly, in the Hungarian nunneries the issue of personal propriety was an important issue during the reform and mostly the friars stressed this aspect of the observance. I already mentioned the case of the *visitatio* of papal nuncio Angelo Pechinoli in the nunnery of Óbuda in 1489: the nuncio followed the example of John of Capistrano and the objects found in the cells of the nuns put in the square outside the monastery.²⁰⁷ Even if the situation changed at the end of the fifteenth century, a letter from the second decade of the sixteenth century shows that the nuns again had personal financial issues: sr. Borbála Tárczay wrote to her mother and asked for money to repay her debts to a Jewish merchant, Olasz Jakab, and to another merchant of Buda.²⁰⁸ In the postscript she also asks for candle wax saying that it is very expensive in Buda. Based on these notes Lázcs argues that by that time the nuns were self-supporting again and they also dealt with financial issues.²⁰⁹ A note in the Codex Gömöry indicate the same issue: the copyist asks payment for her work from another nun.²¹⁰

3.3.2 The question of the *clausura*

Though the reason of the reform varied in the examined cases, the introduction of reforms has always been accompanied by severe *clausura*. The archeological researches and structural analysis of the monastic complex show a complete separation of the space used by the nuns from the outside world, and the written documents show the exemption cases.

²⁰⁶ See more examples in Umiker, “I codici di S. Maria di Monteluca e l’attività scrittoria delle monache,” in *Cultura e desiderio di Dio. L’umanesimo e le Clarisse dell’Osservanza. Atti della II giornata di studio sull’Osservanza Francescana al femminile* (Foligno – Monastero S. Lucia, 10 novembre 2007), ed. Pietra Messa, Angela Emmanuela Scandella, and Mario Sensi (S. Maria degli Angeli-Assisi: Ed. Porziuncola,, 2008),

²⁰⁷ *Monumenta Romana episcopatus Vesprimiensis*. III., 312-313., Lázcs, 45.

²⁰⁸ Attila Hegedüs, Lajos Papp (eds.), *Középkori leveleink 1541-ig* [Medieval Hungarian letters until 1541] (Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1991), 42-43.

²⁰⁹ Lázcs, 42

²¹⁰ *Gömöry-kódex* (1516), 237r: 5–7; cites Lázcs, 43.

The *Ricordanze* mentions the transformation and expansion of the monastery buildings in the 1460s which was necessary because of the increasing number of the nuns.²¹¹ Regarding the form of the dormitory and the infirmary the texts refers to the rules of the *clausura*, although without details. The similar description of the *Memoriale*, however, offers a clearer picture: as abbess, Margherita da Sulmona—former abbess of the monastery of Santa Lucia—created a dormitory by demolishing the walls of the single cells and made modifications also in the garden in order to create the space indicated in the Rule.²¹² Julie Beckers in her architectural analysis of the monastery of Monteluca lists also the further changes:

“...the installing of grilles, specifically ‘a small and round one’ in the confessional area (1451-1453) and a grille with window in the choir (1509) so the nuns ‘could see the Holy Sacrament’ elevated by the priest behind the altar in the lay church; wheels, or *ruote*, mentioned as, for example, ‘a small one in the confessional chapel controlled by the bishop’ (1451-1453), for exchanging goods between the sacred world of the nuns and the earthly world outside. These descriptions reflect a control of relationships that were framed by *clausura*.”²¹³

In sum, Beckers argues that the internal changes in the monastery buildings following the observant reform had the aim to assure the *clausura* and the right conditions according to the regulation.²¹⁴

In Hungary both nunneries were destroyed in the sixteenth century and the monastic structure after the reforms can be understand only from archeological researches.²¹⁵ The

²¹¹ *Ricordanze*, 6-8.

²¹² *Memoriale*, 9.

²¹³ Julie Beckers, “Invisible Presence: The Nuns’ Choir at Santa Maria di Monteluca in Perugia,” *Incontri. Rivista europea di studi italiani* 30/2 (2015): 107–117., 113. The citations are from *Memoriale*, 16, 96, 107, 120, 128., 251., 328, 343.

²¹⁴ The external part of the monastery remained the same as described in Francesco Grispo, “Il ‘quadrellato perugino’ nelle facciate gotiche delle chiese di Perugia,” Appendix II in *Non un grido, non un lamento. 12 maggio 1910: La soppressione del Monastero di Monteluca di Perugia. Atti della V giornata di studio sull’Osservanza Francescana al femminile (Perugia, Monastero Clarisse S. Maria di Monteluca in S. Erminio, 12 maggio 2010)* ed. Pietro Messa, monica Benedetta Umiker (S. Maria degli Angeli-Assisi: Ed. Porziuncola, 2011).

²¹⁵ As the nunnery of Óbuda was completely destroyed on the Ottoman war and the ruins were used to rebuild other buildings of Óbuda, there are only limited sources about the original building complex; because this reason I present only the nunnery of the Margaret Island. For both nunneries see the archeological analysis of Iráné Melis Katalin, “A Budapest Margit-szigeti középkori királyi udvarhely régészeti kutatása II. (15–16. század) II. [The Archaeological Research of the Medieval Royal Court of Margaret Island in Budapest (15-16th century) II.], *Communicationes Archaeologiae Hungariae* (2008); Bertalan Vilmosné, “Óbudai klarissza kolostor” [The Poor Clares’ convent in Óbuda] *Budapest Régiségei* 18 (1958)

nunnery of the Margaret Island had its original structure, typical of contemporary Cistercian monasteries.²¹⁶ The buildings and the rooms are mentioned also in Margaret of Hungary's legends: the cloister, a well house, a library, a secretary, a chapter hall, a *loquatorium*, a kitchen (a new kitchen was constructed in the fifteenth century), the refectory, the lay women's house, an infirmary, a chapel, a guest house.²¹⁷ By making a spatial analysis of the building it is important to examine the structural connections between the buildings used by the cloistered community and the lay people in the service of the nuns. The separation of the nuns, the royal court, the lay servants, the pilgrims and guests and the patients of the hospital was necessary in order to keep the life of the cloistered community undisturbed. These spaces were separated by walls and the cloistered space had separated entrance for the church. In the third phase of the constructions at the beginning of the sixteenth century further constructions were made for flood defense by raising the floor level, the separated buildings were united in one building complex and the choir, the sanctuary and the chapel were decorated with late gothic elements.²¹⁸ Besides these modifications there are no trace in the sources about the structural modifications after the reform, probably because the monastic complex was considered perfectly suitable for enclosed life.

While the cloistered life for nuns was a usual social request towards the female communities and from the male part of Christianity, enclosure is in fact an economic issue: it is possible only if the monastery has another kind of funding than the alms of the citizens.²¹⁹ It serves on the one hand the spiritual purpose of protecting the sacred life and sanctity of women dedicating themselves only to the religion, on the other hand it was practical to the religious

²¹⁶ Rózsa Feuerné Tóth, "A margitszigeti domonkos kolostor," *Budapest Régiségei* 22 (1971), 264–265.

²¹⁷ For detailed maps and images see <http://muvtor.btk.ppke.hu/romanika/mgszgd.htm> (06/04/2019)

²¹⁸ József Laszlovsky, Andrea Kiss, "14th-16th-Century Danube Floods and Long-Term Water-Level Changes in Archaeological and Sedimentary Evidence in The Western and Central Carpathian Basin: an Overview with Documentary Comparison" *Journal of Environmental Geography* 6/3-4 (2013), 7.

²¹⁹ Lezlie S. Knox, *Creating Clare of Assisi: Female Franciscan Identities in Later Medieval Italy* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2008), 32-34

elite to control female communities in this way, as the enclosure worked only alongside the obedience to the friars and the dependence from them.²²⁰ At the same time enclosure did not meant the complete refusal of the outside world, as the connection between the monasteries remained through the movement between communities, the letters of the nuns and the exchange system of books and religious texts, as I presented in the previous chapter.

One type of exemptions under rules of the enclosure was the case of illness or death of a nun. There are several examples of documents which testimony the permission of the vicar of the province for friars to enter in a female monastery. In Hungary for example Paulinus of Győr vicar of the province permitted to friars the entrance into the female buildings to guarantee the service of the sacraments and to ensure the necessary help for funerals.²²¹ Curiously, John of Capistran advised the abbess to be aware that the nuns might fake sickness which probably indicate previous examples of such event.²²² In the Italian sources there are many examples of doctors entering in the monastery, one of them is the case of sr. Felice of the monastery of Monteluca who was ill for ten months and none of the medicament of many doctors helped her.²²³

Another type of the permissions when the vicar of the province or the pope himself allow lay women to visit the nuns. It was a very usual case in Hungary even after the reforms, as the protector of the nunneries, the mother of King Matthias, preferred to spend time among the nuns. In fact, Erzsébet Szilágyi in 1472 got the permission of the cardinal legate Marcus Barbo to visit with her maids the nuns any time,²²⁴ and in 1499 the magister general empowered

²²⁰ The cloistered life became an obligation for female communities of all order by the decree of Pope Boniface VIII in 1298 in which there are strict rules for nuns to exit from the monastery and to unauthorized persons to enter into the clausura. See Elizabeth M. Makowski, *Canon Law and Cloistered Women Canon Law and Cloistered Women: Periculoso and Its Commentators, 1298-1545* (The Catholic University of America Press, 1999).

²²¹ *Archivum Generale Ordinis Praedicatorum*, IV/6, 141a. Lázs argues that the Poor Clares of Óbuda had same permissions as it does not contradict to the Rule. Lázs, 25.

²²² John of Capistrano, *Explanation of the First Rule of Saint Clare (1445)*, 514. (8:10) cites Knox, 139.

²²³ *Memoriale*, 60.

²²⁴ *Monumenta Romana episcopatus Vesprimiensis*. III. 220-221.

the abbess of the nunnery of the Margaret Island to allow the visit of the Virgin Mary's image even to male members of noble families. The same bull however forbid men to stay in the nunnery during night and even lay women couldn't sleep in the dormitory of the nuns.²²⁵ The nunnery of the Margaret Island is a special case, because it was a very frequented place by pilgrims who came to visit the tomb of Margaret of Hungary in the church of the nuns. The nuns could visit the tomb ten times a year and only when the church was closed from lay people.²²⁶

3.3.3 The writing activity

As I presented in the third part of the previous chapter, the increasing literacy activity was one of the main consequences of the Observant reform and this is the most important reason why the comparison of the observant nunneries of Italy and Hungary promised interesting results. The characteristics of the writing activity are very similar in the examined scriptoria: the nuns copied the books provided by the friars; they included their personal comments in the texts, and they used the vernacular language in writing. The nuns of these communities came from the high layers of the society and usually they were literate even before entering the community. On the other hand, the use of the vernacular language in writing differs very much in the two countries: the Italian nuns possessed books also in Old Italian even before the reform, while the first Hungarian texts are from the second half of the fifteenth century. The difference is even bigger considering the quantity of texts survived from the monasteries in vernacular: the first Hungarian text is from the 1440s and the total number of codices in

²²⁵ Harsányi, 105.

²²⁶ At that time the cult of Margaret strengthened again, and many miracles happened around the tomb. See Ildikó Csepregi, "Árpád-házi Szent Margit csodái," [The miracles of Margaret of Hungary] in *Az első 300 év Magyarországon és Európában: A Domonkos-rend a középkorban*, ed. Csurgai Horváth József (Székesfehérvár: Alba Civitas Történeti Alapítvány, 2017), 121-123.

Hungarian language written before the Ottoman invasion is around fifty.²²⁷ Meanwhile, in the two Umbrian nunneries of Monteluce and Foligno by the end of the sixteenth century there were around 250 codices in total: in the scriptorium of Monteluce the nuns copied more than thirty codices in the fifteenth century and fourteen codices were written in the monastery of Foligno.²²⁸

From booklists, catalogues of monastic libraries and inventories a final catalogue was made from the end of the fifteenth century which includes 32 lists of the female monasteries of Umbria.²²⁹ From this list the importance of Foligno and Monteluce is clear: 175 manuscripts belong to Monteluce and 76 are from the monastery of Foligno, while the smallest Umbrian community also possessed 8 books. Considering that the list did not include breviaries or other books for personal use which are mentioned in the *Entrate e Uscite*, this number is probably even higher.²³⁰ In Hungary the nuns probably did not possess many books, as they kept all codices in a cupboard. Most of the Hungarian vernacular codices were written after the Observant reform at the beginning of the sixteenth century in the two nunneries of Hungary examined in this thesis, probably because these communities were rich enough to permit this activity and also because the number of the nuns allowed the inclusion of the work in the

227 Dávid Falvay and Eszter Konrád, “Osservanza francescana e letteratura in volgare dall’Italia all’Ungheria: ricerche e prospettive,” in *Osservanza francescana e cultura tra Quattrocento e primo Cinquecento: Italia e Ungheria a confronto*. (Rome: Bibliotheca Academiae Hungariae, 2014): 161-186.

228 The list of the existing codices of Monteluce from the 15-16th centuries is made by sr. Umiker in Appendix, “Codici di Monteluce,” while in her later study she lists other 14 lost books of which there are indications in other sources: sr. Monica Benedetta Umiker, “La dispersione di carte e libridel monastero S. Maria di Monteluce in Perugia,” in *Non un grido non un lamento, Atti della V giornata di studio sull’Osservanza francescana al femminile (Perugia, Monastero Clarisse di S. Erminio, 12 maggio 2010)* (S. Maria degli Angeli: ed. Porziuncola, 2011): 33-57.; Jacques Dalarun, “Il monastero di Santa Lucia di Foligno come foyer intellettuale,” in *Uno sguardo oltre: Donne, letterate e sante nel movimento dell’Osservanza; atti della 1. giornata di studio sull’Osservanza francescana al femminile, 11 novembre 2006, Monastero Clarisse S. Lucia, Foligno*, ed. Pietro Messa, and Angela Emmanuela Scandella (S. Maria degli Angeli-Assisi: Porziuncola, 2007), 79-111.

229 More about these lists see Carmela Compare, *La cultura delle monache: inventari di biblioteche femminile alla fine del XVI secolo*, Università degli Studi L’Aquila, master thesis 1996; D Zardin, “Libri e biblioteche negli ambienti monastici dell’Italian del promo seicento,” in *Donne, filosofia e cultura nel Seicento*, ed. P. Tptano (Roma, 1999): 347-383)

230 Compare, “I libri delle Clarisse osservanti nella Provincia seraphica S. Francischi di fine ’500,” *Franciscana* 4 (2002), 179.

scriptorium among the other kind of occupations around the monastery.²³¹ In order to see what are the general elements and the specifically local characteristics of the writing activity of the nuns following the Observant reform in Italy and Hungary, I will analyze the work in the scriptoria from the following aspects: the use of vernacular language, the genres of the copied texts, the nuns' literacy and capacity to work in the scriptorium and the leading role of the friars in the organization of the work.

The choice of the vernacular language both in Italy and Hungary can be explained by the fact that by the fifteenth century the nuns did not use or did not understand Latin. Lázcs argues that the introduction of Hungarian in the *lectio communis* was of fundamental importance in the nuns' religious experience, as the Latin language used in masses and prayers created only a passive participation in the religious life. The vernacular readings served to involve the nuns in the spirituality of the reform ideas too.²³² In Italy—because of the great similarity between Old Italian and Latin—most nuns understood Latin texts and were able to translate them to Italian. The vernacular language was used mostly in the codices dedicated for the nuns and in personal letters, while the language of the legal documents and of the personal letters were in both cases in Latin.

Based on the content of the manuscripts the texts copied in the scriptorium by the nuns can be put in categories based on many aspects. Here I will not present a detailed categorization of the manuscripts, that aspect of the comparison could be subject of further philological and literary studies. However I will compare the main categories of the texts by focusing on similarities and differences between the genres of the texts.²³³ There are four important

231 Lázcs, 112. At the end of the 15th century 8 nunneries of the Poor Clares and 12 Dominican nunneries were in Hungary, but only two had a productive scriptorium in which Hungarian language was used. Beatrix F. Romhányi, *Kolduló barátok, gazdálkodó szerzetesek: Koldulórendi gazdálkodás a középkori Magyarországon* [Mendicant friars, managing monks: Economy of the mendicant orders in medieval Hungary] Dissertation presented at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2015, 114-115.

232 Lázcs, 35-36.

233 For the Hungarian texts Lázcs offers an excellent categorization which focuses on the use of the texts. Lázcs, *Apácaműveltség*, 139-386. Compare put the Italian manuscripts of the female monasteries in three

categories present in all communities. The first category contains the legal texts such as the text of the rule used by the community. As the choice of the rule was an important issue in Italy, the Umbrian communities usually had the text of more than one rule (usually the Rule of Clare and the Urbanist rule were copied together) while in Hungary the question was not relevant.²³⁴ The second includes texts regarding important saints of the order in the form of Legends, miracle stories and Vita: all three Poor Clares community had the *Legend* or *Vita* di Saint Clare, also Saint Bonaventure's writings on Saint Francis. Other saints important for the community are also present in the manuscripts, for example Lea Ráskai copied the legend of Margaret of Hungary.²³⁵ Other examples from the Umbrian monasteries are Eustochia de Messina or Angela da Foligno: they had as much importance in the local context as Margaret in the Hungarian communities.²³⁶ The third category groups the texts for use for everyday religious life as the whole Bible or its fragments as passions, the Gospels, other biblical texts, breviaries, compilation of prayers, etc. The genre of sermons is also in this category, however their presence in the nuns' life differs in Italy and Hungary: the Umbrian nuns included the sermons related to special occasions in the chronicles, while the same genre was present in prayer compilations in the Hungarian monasteries.

There is a category which exists only in Italy: they are the writings of the nuns, for example the chronicle of the monastery including necrologies, the necrologies, the economic notes, etc.²³⁷ Besides the writing of nuns known only locally there are texts from famous female saints too such as the *Le sette armi spirituali* of Saint Catherine of Bologna or the *Libro* of

main categories: Franciscan literature, works of important nuns and texts regarding the Bible. Compare, "I libri delle Clarisse"

²³⁴ Compare's lists show that the Rules are the second most frequent texts after the Biblical texts.

²³⁵ *Szent Margit élete, 1510. A nyelvemlék hasonmása és betűhű átirata bevezetéssel és jegyzetekkel* (Budapest: Magyar Nyelvtudományi Társaság, 1990)

²³⁶ About Angela da Foligno see Cristina Mazzoni, "Angela da Foligno" in Alastair Minnis and Rosalynn Voaden (eds.), *Medieval Holy Women in the Christian Tradition, c. 1100–c. 1500* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2010)

²³⁷ For a more detailed presentation of these documents see Chapter 1.1.3.

Angela of Foligno.²³⁸ In both countries there are a great number of prayers, prayer books, treatises and exempla, in sum books which treat the practical part of the monastic life, however the Italian list of books also contains a large number of meditative essays, passions, theological treatises and writings of important Franciscan writers. The main difference between Hungary and Italy is this, the nuns of Umbria were actively involved in the mendicant spirituality, while the books of the Hungarian nuns aimed to help the spiritual experience with the Hungarian translations and explanations of important texts for the monastic life. For example, Pál Váci translated the Rule and the Dominican constitutions in Hungarian in 1474 for the use of the nuns,²³⁹ the text is in the Birk-codex.²⁴⁰ Another important codex for the same purpose is the *Példák könyve* [Book of Exempla] which contains exempla for a perfect life—written probably for the nuns—and therefore is an illustration for the Rule.²⁴¹ These codices were written during the conflict between nuns and friars, therefore can be interpreted as an intention to find a solution or as the consequence of the reform initiative of Prioress Anna.²⁴²

The nuns came from the social elite: in Italy they are daughters or widows of important merchants or other lay urban leaders, while in Hungary they were mostly from noble or sometimes from rich bourgeois families (see Chapter 1). The nuns of both countries received some education before entering in the monastery and were capable to read and write both in Latin and vernacular. In Italy the case of Eufrosia de Ghiache, nun of Monteluca who arrived in the monastery at the age of six, shows that the nuns could learn to write and read also inside the monastery, probably from the other nuns.²⁴³ Unfortunately, there is no such information in

²³⁸ Caterina Vigri, *Le sette armi spirituali*, ed. by Antonella Degl’Innocenti (Firenze: SISMELE Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2000); Angela of Foligno, *Memorial*, ed. by Christina Mazzoni (Cambridge: Brewer, 1999), 23-78.

²³⁹ Sándor Láz, “Szent Ágoston regulájának 15. századi magyar fordítója. Váci Pál munkássága a 15. századi domonkos rendi reformban,” *Irodalomtudományi Közlemények* 109 (2005)

²⁴⁰ *Birk-kódex 1474. Az emlék hasonmása, betűhű olvasata és latin megfelelője. Bevezetéssel ellátva közzéteszi Pusztai István* (Codices Hungarici 5.) Budapest 1960.]

²⁴¹ *Példák könyve 1510. Hasonmás és kritikai szövegkiadás, jegyz. ell., bev. és sajtó alá rend.: Bognár András, Lévárdy Ferenc* (Codices Hungarici 4), Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1960, 291]

²⁴² Péterfi, 196.; Sándor Láz, “A Birk-kódex keletkezése. Alkotói szándékok és módszerek a XV. századi domonkos reformban,” *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 110. (2006), 146-161.]

²⁴³ The necrology of Eufrosia lists almost all her work as copyist. *Memoriale*, 132-133.

the Hungarian sources about the literary education of the nuns, but probably they could read Latin, as there are Latin passages even in the Hungarian texts.²⁴⁴ However, in the Hungarian cases the nuns' work was only to copy the texts provided by the friars, insertions in the text are rare, and happened mostly in preayers.²⁴⁵

The process of vulgarization means a translation from the Latin into the vernacular or the translation between different vulgar languages. It is very difficult to say where the boundary between translation and original work is, since the vulgarized texts are not always faithful to the original ones and often contain explanations, or they are only the adaptations of the Latin texts. At the time half of the books kept in the monastery libraries was in the vernacular and many authors were already writing in the vernacular addressing a wider audience. Many in-depth analyses were made about the linguistic abilities of the Umbrian Poor Clares, I would just like to emphasize that the nuns of Monteluca and Foligno used a highly cultured language and demonstrated a high culture knowledge, comparable to the cultural life of the humanist courts and intellectual centers of friars and lay people.²⁴⁶ They also translated and elaborated the original texts in addition to the copying, and most importantly had the capacity to write independently from the friars.

In sum, the four nunneries following the Observant reform from the second half of the fifteenth century to the first decades of the sixteenth century had an active scriptorium, unique in regional aspects.²⁴⁷ The reform movement sought to engage the nuns in an active spiritual

²⁴⁴ See for example the *Codex Winkler*.

²⁴⁵ See the analysis of the *Codex Lobkovicz* and *Codex Debreceni* in Lázs, 116-118.

²⁴⁶ Ugo Vignuzzi, Petrizia Bertini Malgarini, "Le capacità linguistiche delle clarisse dell'Osservanza: qualche anticipazione," in: *Cultura e desiderio di Dio. L'Umanesimo e le Clarisse dell'Osservanza* (Santa Maria degli Angeli, Assisi, 2009) 35-44, Attilio Bartoli Langeli, "Scrittura di donna. Le capacità scritte delle Clarisse dell'Osservanza," in *Cultura e desiderio di Dio. L'Umanesimo e le Clarisse dell'Osservanza. Atti della II giornata di studio sull'Osservanza francescana al femminile (Foligno, 10 novembre 2007)*, (eds) Pietro Messa, Angela Emmanuela Scandella e Mario Sensi (Assisi: Edizioni Porziuncola, 2008):. 81-96

²⁴⁷ The last manuscript in Monteluca was copied in 1570 – later the monastery possessed printed books, while the last period of the Hungarian scriptoria finished in the 1530s with the flee of the nuns. Compare, 202., Lázs, 114.

religiosity also in the everyday life, which required the provision of vernacular literature for nuns who did not know Latin well. The other reason for the reviving religious-cultural life inside the monastery is much more practical: in the fifteenth century paper became an affordable material, and the monasteries in question had enough capital to get the materials they needed for the books. The friars' role in the writing activity was the same in Italy and Hungary, they organized the work in the scriptorium and provided the texts to copy, usually translations from Latin

Significant difference between Hungary and Italy, that female literacy in the Umbrian monasteries meant reading and writing in Latin and sometimes also in Greek, the comprehension of religious text, the knowledge of the Scriptures and the Rule of the monastery and in exceptional cases also the capacity to vulgarize, translate, and write texts. In Hungary, however, the nuns had very little knowledge of Latin and their writing activity was limited to the copy of the already translated texts and to the compilation of books by putting together similar texts.

Conclusion

The novelty of this thesis consists in the fact that it offers a comparative analysis between Italian and Hungarian female monastic communities. Although these nunneries were already objects of scholars' research in the context of the Observant reform movement, this comparison gives the possibility to examine them together in order to see the general pattern of the Observance and the local characteristics of the reforms. The first chapter showed that the situation of the nuns in similarly rich and elite monasteries made the communities well comparable: the nuns came from the higher levels of the society, the monasteries received several privileges from the Church, the communities possessed many lands and their income permitted the enclosed life. The second chapter presented in general terms the Observant reforms, their origins and most important promoters among the mendicant orders and the earliest reformed communities. It also showed the main changes in religious spirituality and monastic life following the Observant reform which shaped the monastic orders in the fifteenth century. This chapter served to put the comparative analysis of Italy and Hungary in a wider context, and to help in the analysis of the singular cases.

The biggest difficulty of the comparison was the different nature of the available primary sources, at the same time the lack of extensive narrative sources in Hungary gave only more reason to start such research. As it turned out after the comparative analysis, the detailed information of the Italian sources and the context provided in fact a better understanding of the Hungarian sources and helped the interpretation of ambiguous cases. Based on the third chapter there are two important conclusions to make.

First, the Observant reform does not necessarily mean the same thing in Italy and Hungary. The Umbrian nuns being in the center of an Observant network and having important role in the reform initiative had a different attitude towards the reform ideas from those of the

Hungarian nuns. Both the Italian and the Hungarian sources show that in all cases all three agents (nuns, friars and lay leaders) had an important role in the reform movement, however, at the same time the importance of motivational factors varies according to territorial characteristics.

The first analysis reveals that the person of the reform promoter and the kind of reform were related to each other. The initiative of the nuns shows a deep religious wish to go back to the origins, therefore in those cases the Observant reform meant the strict reintroduction of the *clausura* and the fight getting back to the first Rule. The main goal of the friars was to keep the reformed monasteries within an organized framework of the order, so they focused on the supervision of the nuns and, as far as possible, became the leaders of local movements of monasteries of the Second Rule. In these cases the good relationship between nuns and friars resulted in a speedy extension of the Observance. In Italy the urban communities had also great influence on religious issues, and as mendicant preachers provoked strong religious response from the laity by preaching in the squares, the Observant reform connected lay people with the friars and the nuns. The Hungarian laity had a similar attitude towards the monastic orders' observance as in Italy, and also the friars attitude shows the same willingness to reform both the male and the female monasteries. The only difference in this sense can be seen in the nuns' behavior: their independence and privileges are more important than the strict observance. As the analysis showed, the main reason for this is probably the noble origin of the nuns and the special Hungarian society which was still characterized by a strong social hierarchy. In sum, though in these cases the origin of the Observant reform is different, the general pattern in these reform movements is the common wish for the spiritual renewal of the community, even if it meant different kind of reform initiatives of nuns and friars causing conflicts between them.

Secondly, by keeping in mind the initial motivation of the reform movement in the female monasteries and of the relationship with the friars, it is interesting to see what the nuns'

general attitude was towards the reform in those cases where an external agent promoted the Observant ideas. In Umbria the nuns of Monteluca were the main reformers, they were sent in most of the newly founded and reformed monasteries to help to introduce the Observant Rule and the way of life it requested. By examining their reformer activity, it is clear that in every case they were sent to the other monasteries by the friars who also selected the reformer nuns. Even if the nuns welcomed the new way of life, sometimes they didn't pass it willingly to the other monasteries. About the nuns sent to Montefalco the *Memoriale* writes “*le quale tucte, benché lo' fusse molto durissimo, humilmente abassaro el capo socto lo giogho della sancta obedientia.*”²⁴⁸ The nuns sent to Arezzo were so desperate that the friars had to promise them a prompt returning: “*consolandole con belle esortatione et dolce parole, et con promissione che compite li tre anni et anche prima, quando lo' paresse el meglio, potessero retornare ad questo monasterio.*”²⁴⁹ Often the priests, before announcing the names of the chosen nuns, reminded the whole community of their vows of obedience, which fact suggests that the nuns did not leave their community willingly. On the other hand, there were also nuns who were continuously elected to help the reform of other communities: for example, sr. Eufrosia Alfani first went to Borgo San Sepolcro where she was the prioress, and later she went to have the same position in Norcia in 1518.²⁵⁰ Anyway, the obedience to the friars was one of the most important values of the nuns, this comparison served to show if the nuns had a way to contradict to the friars: both in Italy and Hungary it was possible only with powerful support.

In Hungary the nuns did not participate so actively in their own reform—or there is no trace of it in the sources. The case of the nuns of Óbuda showed that the reform was welcomed in the monastery, only not in the way the friars imagined. In the end the two countries presented the two types of the reform movement: Observant reform in Italy it meant a more radical

²⁴⁸ *Memoriale*, 70.

²⁴⁹ *Memoriale*, 54.

²⁵⁰ *Memoriale*, 116.

lifestyle, enclosure and poverty, while in Hungary it was a stricter observance of the rule and a less independent life for the nuns.

However, independently from the nuns' attitude or from the process of the reformation of the nunneries, the consequences of the Observant movement were the same, the everyday life of the nuns changed very similarly. In all cases it reintroduced enclosure, the prohibition of personal propriety and the use of vernacular language. Curiously, in Italy it also created a strong connection between Observant communities, while in Hungary—probably because of the lack of active contribution to the promotion of the reforms—the reform apparently did not make a stronger feeling to appurtenance to a movement, but the common activity in the scriptorium. As in Italy, the friars and the writing activity connected the nuns to each other through their role in the cultural transfer of vernacular religious literature.

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