

# Research Results Based on Non-Textual Sources and Their Interpretation for the History of Mendicant Economy

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**Abstract:** This introductory paper does not summarize the existing literature about the subject. It only aims to sketch some milestones on the basis of examples coming mostly from “Western” researches as comparison tools, but also from remarks concerning “Central-Eastern” Europe. It tries to show which non-textual sources have been explored at present in order to study the economic management of the Mendicant friaries, with which approaches and which results. Few of them have been exploited by now from this point of view. Consequently, numerous issues of key importance still need to be properly addressed, such as: 1) could the Friars in Central Europe be considered by the faithful of the time as (voluntary) “poor”? 2) Did the Friars have a more important role in production and exchanges? 3) Do the non-textual sources give a different image of the social strata that materially supported the friaries than the one provided by texts?

**Key words:** Central Europe, Mendicant friaries, economy, poverty, archaeology, non-textual sources

**Rezumat: Rezultatele cercetării surselor non-textuale și relevanța lor pentru studierea economiei mendicante** Acest studiu introductiv nu își propune să ofere o sinteză a cercetărilor existente dedicate economiei conventurilor mendicante. Principala miză este aceea de a stabili într-o manieră comparativă câteva repere analitice derivate atât din investigațiile istoriografiei occidentale asupra acestui subiect, cât și din observațiile referitoare la situația din Europa Central-Răsăriteană. Ca atare, scopul acestui studiu este acela de a evidenția sursele non-textuale folosite pentru a înțelege economia conventurilor mendicante, care au fost abordările la care s-a recurs și, în egală măsură, rezultatele la care s-a ajuns. Datorită faptului că sursele non-textuale au fost în mare parte neglijate, este esențială formularea câtorva subiecte de cercetare, cum ar fi: au fost Frații Mendicanți percepuți de către creștinii din Centrul și Estul Europei ca adoptând sărăcia în mod “voluntar”?; au jucat mendicanții un rol important în producția

bunurilor și într-o economie bazată pe schimb?; oferă sursele non-textuale o imagine diferită de cea desprinsă din sursele textuale în ceea ce privește grupurile sociale care au susținut conventurile mendicante?

**Cuvinte cheie:** Europa Centrală, conventuri mendicante, economie, sărăcie, arheologie, surse non-textuale

This set of essays brings together most of the papers presented at the Workshop of the MARGEC Program<sup>1</sup> that took place in Budapest, in the Central European University, on 21 –22 November 2013 – with a few additional articles dealing with a related theme.

First of all, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the members of the Department of Medieval Studies, at the Central European University, namely Gábor Klaniczay, József Laszlovszky and Katalin Szende. They had a crucial role in setting up of the whole MARGEC program. Without their cooperation in building up both the scientific and institutional framework of this project, it would not exist. Firstly, they invited me to present, at a Workshop organized by József Laszlovszky about *Centres of Power and Spiritual Life in the Middle Ages and in the Early Modern Period*, the preliminary project of what became formally (one year later) the MARGEC project in October 2010. When I called for contributors in order to set up a research group during this very stimulating scientific meeting, I received many positive reactions from the participants. Secondly, Gábor Klaniczay, József Laszlovszky and Katalin Szende agreed to join the administrative framework of the program before submitting the application to the Agence Nationale de la Recherche – a long process punctuated by a whole series of administrative barriers. Next, József Laszlovszky undertook the task of collecting the archaeological sources of the program and, finally, organizing the Workshop of November 2013 at Central European University. Now, the *Studia* scientific journal, which is published by one of the five associated institutional partners of the MARGEC project, i.e. the Faculty of History and Philosophy of the Babeş-Bolyai University of

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<sup>1</sup> Acronym for “Marginality, Economy and Christianity. The material running of Mendicant friaries in Central Europe (ca 1220- ca 1550)”, collaborative research programme funded by the Agence Nationale de la Recherche (no. ANR-12-BSH3-0002). All details are available on the website of the programme: <http://margec.huma-num.fr>.

Cluj, undertakes the publication of the proceedings of this international symposium.

This meeting was entitled *Non-textual sources for the mendicant economy in East-central Europe (ca. 1220-ca. 1550): architecture, archaeology, urban topography*. It was the third workshop in the MARGEC Program. The first one (in 18 October 2011, in Rennes, several months before the formal beginning of the project) dealt with the state of research on Mendicant orders and Economy in Central Europe in the Middle Ages and Early Modern period, while the following workshop (23 March 2013, in Prague) spoke about the written sources.<sup>2</sup> The aim of the Budapest (CEU) Workshop was to provide the contributors of the MARGEC group with tools, methods and examples to exploit the non-textual sources dealing with the Mendicant economy in Central Europe between the thirteenth and the mid-sixteenth century.

This introductory paper will not summarize the existing literature about the subject – which is too scattered and meager to be properly summarized anyway.<sup>3</sup> It only aims to sketch some milestones on the basis of examples coming mostly from “Western” researches – starting with the valuable results of the Bériou-Chiffolleau’s inquiry published in 2009 in a thick volume called *Économie et Religion*<sup>4</sup> –, as comparison tools, but also from remarks concerning “Central-Eastern” Europe. In the absence of any overview,<sup>5</sup> I must confess that this introductory paper looks like a patchwork. Nevertheless, it will try to show which non-textual sources have been explored at present in order to study the economic management of the Mendicant friaries, with which approaches and which results.

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<sup>2</sup> Both of them have been published: ‘Le fonctionnement matériel des couvents mendiants en Europe centrale (vers 1220-vers 1550): bilan historiographique’, ed. Marie-Madeleine de Cevins, *Études franciscaines*, n. s. 6/1 (2013): 5–115; ‘Le fonctionnement matériel des couvents mendiants en Europe centrale (vers 1220-vers 1550): pour un inventaire des sources textuelles’, ed. Ludovic Viallet, *Hereditas Monasteriorum*, 3 (2013): 19–140.

<sup>3</sup> See the references listed in the following footnotes.

<sup>4</sup> Nicole Bériou – Jacques Chiffolleau (eds), *Économie et religion. L’expérience des ordres mendiants (XIII<sup>e</sup>-XV<sup>e</sup> s.)*, (Collection d’histoire et archéologie médiévales 21) (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Some elements concerning the Hungarian mendicant friaries are briefly mentioned in: Marie-Madeleine de Cevins, ‘Les frères mendiants et l’économie en Hongrie médiévale: l’état de la recherche’, *Études franciscaines*, n. s. 3/2 (2010): 166–207.

#### THE EXPLORED TYPES OF NON-TEXTUAL SOURCES

By “non-textual sources”, we mean all archeological sources, in a very broad sense, including every material hint of the Mendicant friars’ economy.

Within this group, one can roughly distinguish three under-groups comprising several under-types:

1) *the iconographical sources:*

- altarpieces, mural paintings, statues, carved decoration...
- illuminations

2) *the archaeological vestiges of the friaries:*

- buildings (in altimetric and planimetric views), including the materials used to build these buildings
- liturgical equipment and everyday furniture
- ecofacts (organic hints)

3) *the elements of urban (or semi-urban) topography* (i.e. all socio-spatial data that can help to see how the friaries integrated within their economic and social environment), in a global planimetric approach (outside the mendicant cloisters).

The amount of the non-textual sources that can be used for analyzing the Mendicant economy is indeed very small – judging from the few available mentioning in the existing literature. Let me give a few statistics to illustrate this foreseeable statement. In the volume *Économie et religion*, among twenty articles, only one is based (partly!) on non-textual sources. In the collaborative volume published in Spoleto in 2004 in the framework of the same collaborative project, only one article among twelve uses non-textual sources; moreover, its author is the same one who produced the earlier mentioned work: Joanna Cannon – dealing now with the representation of collection (in Central Italy).<sup>6</sup> In the thick Polish volume *Inter oeconomiam*, published in Cracow in 2012, none of the articles about the medieval and early modern periods uses archaeological or iconographical hints.<sup>7</sup> In fresh monographs, the

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<sup>6</sup> *L'economia dei conventi dei fratri minori e predicatori fino alla metà del Trecento. Atti del XXXI Convegno internazionale (Assisi, 9-11 ottobre 2003)*, (Spoleto: Centro italiano di Studi sull'alto medioevo, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> Wiesław Długokęcki et al. (eds), *Inter oeconomiam caelestem et terrenam'. Mendykanci a zagadnienia ekonomiczne* [Mendicant friars and Economy], (Studia i Źródła Dominikańskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Krakowie 9), (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Esprit, 2011).

harvest is meager as well. See the PhD dissertation of Paul Bertrand (*Commerce avec Dame Pauvreté*): he only uses textual sources (charters, records, letters) when analyzing the material running of the Mendicant convents in Liège.<sup>8</sup> See the thesis of Jens Röhrkasten, *The Mendicant Houses of Medieval London*, especially the chapter about Economy (V): it does the same.<sup>9</sup>

Even the publications focusing on architecture and socio-topography are more often based on texts than non-textual sources. The PhD dissertation of Panayota Volti (*Les couvents mendiants et leur environnement à la fin du Moyen Âge*, 2003) draws on several pictures and maps... but they only go back to the eighteenth century.<sup>10</sup> In Central Europe, the PhD dissertation (defended at Central European University) of Kateřina Horníčková dealing with liturgical treasures in Bohemia in the late Middle Ages uses only very few objects.<sup>11</sup> Why? Because, as the author says, it is impossible to do much only with them. Kateřina Horníčková estimates that (roughly) only one percent of the pieces of the liturgical treasure of Bohemia survived. She was forced then to rely upon texts, i.e. sacristy inventories, among which a small handful come from Dominican churches of the Bohemian kingdom.

Among the types of sources listed above, only a few have been exploited until now for the study of Mendicant Economy. Many iconographical sources have been used, but mostly from an art history point of view. Besides, illuminations coming from Mendicant friaries are almost unknown (see the article of Marie Charbonnel). The vestiges of the still existing buildings have been analyzed since the nineteenth century but mainly (yet again) in order to answer stylistic questions – not questions from an economic point of view. The furniture inside the Mendicant friaries and churches has not been studied properly. Yet ecofacts have been investigated here and there, namely to determine what the friars ate, but rarely to know more about the supply of the

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<sup>8</sup> Paul Bertrand, *Commerce avec Dame Pauvreté. Structures et fonctions des couvents mendiants à Liège (XIII<sup>e</sup>–XIV<sup>e</sup> s.)* (Genève: Droz, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> Jens Röhrkasten, *The Mendicant Houses of Medieval London, 1221–1539*, (Münster: Lit Verlag, Vita Regularis, 2004), chapter V (“Economic Aspects”), pp. 221–278.

<sup>10</sup> Panayota Volti, *Les couvents des ordres mendiants et leur environnement à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> Kateřina Horníčková, *In Heaven and on Earth. Church Treasure in Late Medieval Bohemia*, PhD directed by Gerhard Jaritz, Central European University, Department of Medieval Studies, 2009.

friaries or the cultivation efforts of the friars. Ever since the famous Le Goff's inquiry which began in the seventies, urban topography has been linked to the location and the prosperity of the Mendicant friaries – first in France, and then outside of France. That is about all.

In addition, the use of the non-textual sources raises a methodological problem that needs to be stressed here. Because of the academic separation between archaeologists, art historians and historians, many of the aforementioned studies, especially the old ones, do not precisely compare these sources to the data derived from texts. After all, it's very important to take into account the textual sources dealing with, for instance, the objects that were kept and used in the Mendicant friaries: the commissions of altarpieces and liturgical dishes; the sacristy inventories; the last wills (bequests) and donation charters that mention amounts of money given for renovating the buildings and the furniture (of the church and of the convent); the contracts signed with craftsmen, etc. And needless to say, when analyzing an illumination, one should never forget the text that is next to the images.

Moreover, we have to pay attention to the normative texts. Everybody knows that the mendicant legislation prohibited the *curiositates* and *superfluitates notabiles* in the decoration of buildings, and even the interiors of churches. This was true for the Franciscans<sup>12</sup> but also for the Dominicans: the Dominican *Liber constitutionum* (written by Humbert of Romans) prescribed a maximum size for buildings at the end of the thirteenth century, as Florent Cygler points it out in his paper published in the volume *L'economia*.<sup>13</sup>

## MATERIAL CULTURE AND POVERTY

To reach the goal that has been set up, one has to avoid two queries. The first is the esthetic / stylistic approach – not only because no Mendicant “style” can be proved for that time. Secondly, we must forget the allegation (very common in the “traditional” historiography) that if ever a mendicant friary had a marvelous church or golden liturgical dishes, it means that the friary was very wealthy, that it surely owned vast lands

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<sup>12</sup> Damien Ruiz, ‘La législation provinciale de l’Ordre des frères mineurs et la vie économique des couvents en France et en Italie (fin XIII<sup>e</sup> – milieu XIV<sup>e</sup> s.)’, in Bériou-Chiffolleau, *Économie et religion*, pp. 357–386.

<sup>13</sup> Florent Cygler, ‘L’économie des frères prêcheurs dans la législation de l’ordre (XIII<sup>e</sup>– début XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle)’, in *L'economia dei conventi*, p. 99.

or received a huge, steady income. We know now, from several works (which I will touch on later), that there was no systematic link between these realities: the buildings belonged to the friars but the liturgical treasures were considered to be the property of the *patronus*, the lay protector of the friary, who was neither a member of the community, nor even of the Order.

Several approaches – approximately seven – have been implemented so far to analyze the non-textual sources of the Mendicant friaries. The first could be called a «civilizational approach» as it considers the mendicant vestiges as hints of a specific (Mendicant) material culture. The proceedings of the conference (also an exhibition catalogue) in Krems (in 1982) organized for the eight-hundredth anniversary of Saint Francis' birth<sup>14</sup> illustrate perfectly this trend. That volume is the culmination of numerous studies about the Mendicants' (and all monks') material culture. They are mostly the work of Austrians, (coordinated by Gerhard Jaritz, among others) and started in the seventies.<sup>15</sup> They aimed to find out a “mendicant profile” in the Middle Ages. Combined with other indicators, this approach may also provide a glimpse into “Mendicant anthropology.”<sup>16</sup>

In spite of these early, challenging initiatives, the existing literature hardly establishes a «material culture» for the Mendicant friars during the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period, even regarding buildings. Specific architectural features shared by all Mendicant churches have been pointed out in Germany and East-Central Europe, namely the well-known *Hallenkirchen* (i.e. churches with a unique and large nave, without lateral naves). Moreover, most of the Mendicant churches in Central Europe and Germany had few carved decorations. But in Italy, as well as in many other places (England, Brittany, etc.), one can also find three aisled and richly decorated Mendicant churches – an answer to the wishes of laypeople, who wanted to make their mark as supporters of the friars. It remains thus difficult to define an archaeological mendicant “profile”.

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<sup>14</sup> *800 Jahre Franz von Assisi. Franziskanische Kunst und Kultur des Mittelalters* (Wien: Amt der NÖ Landesregierung, 1982).

<sup>15</sup> *Klösterliche Sachkultur des Spätmittelalters. Internationaler Kongress (Krems an der Donau, 18-21 sept. 1978)* (Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1980).

<sup>16</sup> Ludovic Viallet, 'La réforme franciscaine au miroir de ses textes. Jalons pour une anthropologie du 'vivre franciscain' au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Quaestiones, Medii Aevi Novae*, 10 (2005): 331–344.

Not much has been written about the everyday life of friars. They seemingly wore simple cloth (a rope as a belt in the Franciscan order, etc.) and they used casual tools. No luxury object or valuable pieces of furniture were found in the friaries. Nevertheless, some items were imported from distant countries (as shown by Zoltán Soós in his article for the MARGEC Workshop 1, on the basis of the excavations performed at the site of the Franciscan friary of Țirgu Mureș<sup>17</sup>). Several investigations have showed that the Friars Minor ate a lot of meat – moreover, beef and not only pork –, in Transylvania,<sup>18</sup> as well as in Poland (in Inowrocław).<sup>19</sup> Admittedly, meat was varied and abundant in these regions. But in France or Italy, this feeding regime seems to be much more unusual.<sup>20</sup>

The second approach deals with the standard of poverty. Though well-worn, the topic of the compliance (or non-compliance) with the rule of absolute poverty is still an open question, especially but not exclusively regarding the Franciscans. This approach obviously crosses the previous query: one has to determine whether the buildings, the decoration, the furniture, the food, and the clothing of the friars were « poor » or not.

Based on the literature, the answer is quite clear. All studies that combine texts and artifacts state that the Mendicant friars did not

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<sup>17</sup> Zoltán Soós, 'Les Mendiants dans l'économie de la Transylvanie médiévale: l'exemple des Franciscains de Marosvásárhely (Țirgu Mureș)', in 'Le fonctionnement matériel: bilan historiographique', pp. 57-82.

<sup>18</sup> Soós, 'Les Mendiants dans l'économie'; Marie-Madeleine de Cevins, 'Le franciscanisme à table. Les pratiques alimentaires des Frères mineurs en Europe centrale à la fin du Moyen Âge', in Sandrine Costamagno (ed), *Histoire de l'alimentation humaine. Entre choix et contraintes*, Actes du 138<sup>e</sup> congrès national des sociétés historiques et scientifiques (Rennes, 22-27 avril 2013), (Paris: Éditions du CTHS, 2014), pp. 238-249 – [www.cths.fr/ed/edition.php?id=6817](http://www.cths.fr/ed/edition.php?id=6817).

<sup>19</sup> Marek Derwich, 'Le fonctionnement matériel des couvents mendiants polonais du XIII<sup>e</sup> au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle: bilan historiographique et exemple franciscain', in 'Le fonctionnement matériel: bilan historiographique', pp. 19-29, here pp. 27-28. He based this article on: Aleksandra Cofta-Broniewska (ed), *Zaplecze gospodarcze konwentu oo. franciszkanów w Inowrocławiu od połowy XIII w. do połowy XV w.* [The economic basis of the Franciscan friars in Inowrocław from the mid-13<sup>th</sup> till the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century], (Studia i materiały do dziejów Kujaw, Seria Archeologia 15) (Inowrocław-Poznań: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Adama Mickiewicza, 1979).

<sup>20</sup> Clément Lenoble, *L'exercice de la pauvreté. Économie et religion chez les Franciscains d'Avignon (XIII<sup>e</sup>-XV<sup>e</sup> s.)* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013).



comply with the prohibition of the *superfluitates*, as early as the mid-thirteenth century. At least, that is the way we see it now and that is the way some people (inside and outside the Mendicant orders) described the situation then. Actually, we know (from texts and archaeological sources) that the Mendicant friars had got a «capital» (or a «temporal») made first of buildings, *codices*, etc. In addition, these goods belonged to the friars as true *possessions*, according to the Dominican legislation.<sup>21</sup>

About the buildings, non-compliance to the rule of *necessitas* is already shown by the texts. The *admonitiones* of the general Dominican chapters in the second half of the thirteenth century and several acts of the general chapters of the same period<sup>22</sup> reveal that the Dominican leaders were compelled to “go backwards” (regarding the size of buildings, for instance) before the end of the century.<sup>23</sup>

This non-compliance is confirmed everywhere by the archaeological data. Many statues, carvings, altarpieces, and colorful stained-glass windows ornamented the Mendicant churches and convents, as everybody knows. But this was not limited to the sanctuaries. The cells of the friars could be quite comfortable (in northern France, according to Panayota Volti).<sup>24</sup> Some friars used fine decorated knives (like in Țirgu Mureș, as established by Zoltán Soós<sup>25</sup>), as well as mirrors, beautiful seals, precious stones, gold and silver objects, and let us not forget the illuminated manuscripts especially in Dominican friaries. Stables, horses, carts (*currus*), strictly forbidden by the rule, are also revealed by excavations: horse bones and harness pieces were found for example in Inowrocław.<sup>26</sup> We also know about large amounts of food stocks (in Țirgu Mureș<sup>27</sup> and in Visegrád<sup>28</sup>). In short, practice was far from principles.

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<sup>21</sup> Cygler, ‘L’économie des frères prêcheurs’, pp. 96–97.

<sup>22</sup> Cygler, ‘L’économie des frères prêcheurs’, pp. 103–104.

<sup>23</sup> Cygler, ‘L’économie des frères prêcheurs’, p. 104.

<sup>24</sup> Volti, *Les couvents mendiants*, pp. 169–170.

<sup>25</sup> Soós, ‘Les Mendiants dans l’économie’.

<sup>26</sup> Derwich, ‘Le fonctionnement matériel des couvents mendiants polonais’, p. 27.

<sup>27</sup> Soós, ‘Les Mendiants dans l’économie’.

<sup>28</sup> Gergely Buzás et al., ‘A visegrádi ferences kolostor’ (The Franciscan friary of Visegrád), in Andrea Haris (ed), *Koldulórendi építészet a középkori Magyarországon. Tanulmányok* (Művészettörténet-Műemlékvédelem VII), (Budapest: Országos Műemlékvédelmi Hivatal, 1994), pp. 281–300; translated in English: ‘The Franciscan

The staging of Poverty, i.e. the iconographical discourse of the Mendicant friars about poverty – and more generally, the image of themselves that the friars tried to spread – has started to be explored, on the basis of the images showing them as *mendicantes* or, at least, as « poor ».

The role of collection – which had such a prominent role at the beginning of Mendicant history – seems very small. In the Italian Mendicant friaries, Joanna Cannon hardly found any images showing a friar in the action of collecting alms. Instead of this, she found images depicting Saint Francis or Saint Dominic giving alms to the “involuntary” poor: Saint Francis giving his mantel to the poor knight, Saint Dominic giving bread to his disciples, which was a very common picture in the refectories of the Mendicant friaries in France, as well as in Italy.<sup>29</sup> Some specific attributes can be related to collection: the bag upon the shoulders, as well as the baskets in the friars’ hands. Sometimes, a wine barrel stands next to the friars, which helps to identify them in a crowd.<sup>30</sup> These attributes meant alms collection without doubt. But the point remains that there is a lack of images showing begging friars.

#### MICRO- AND MACRO-ECONOMIC APPROACHES AND THEIR LIMITS

A micro-economic approach (at the level of each friary) has been implemented in order to estimate the place of artistic commissions and the cost of the repair work (on the buildings) in the budget of the friaries. Yet, compared to other religious orders’ and secular churches, the issue of works of art in the budget of friaries has not been properly studied so far, as was deplored by Joanna Cannon.<sup>31</sup> We are presented with many hints that could be exploited: the size of the works, the price of the materials, the quality of the execution, etc. Nevertheless, it’s quite impossible to estimate the importance of art works in the economy of the friaries without using written accounts.

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Friary of Visegrád’, in József Laszlovszky (ed), *Medieval Visegrád. Royal Castle, Palace, Town and Franciscan Friary* (Budapest: ELTE Régészeti Intézet, 1995), pp. 26–33.

<sup>29</sup> Joanna Cannon, ‘Panem petant in signum paupertatis: l’image de la quête des aumônes chez les frères d’Italie centrale’, in Bériou–Chiffolleau, *Économie et religion*, pp. 501–533.

<sup>30</sup> Cannon, ‘Panem petant’, pp. 507 and 511.

<sup>31</sup> Joanna Cannon, ‘Sources for the Study of the Role of Art and Architecture within the Economy of the Mendicant Convents of Central Italy: A Preliminary Survey’, in *L’economia dei conventi*, p. 215.

From the contracts of the painters, Joanna Cannon states that even the most beautiful works of art did not cost a penny to the Mendicant friars. For instance, the famous Madonna Rucellai was paid for by a confraternity which was thoroughly linked to the Dominican friary Santa Maria Novella in Florence.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, Michele Bacci observes (based on the accounts and the contracts) that the pieces of the liturgical treasures came from donations, not from purchase.<sup>33</sup> These remarks confirm that the possession of such objects by the friars did not have any consequences on their wealth or on their level of comfort.

Urban topography has been related to Mendicant economy by Le Goff's inquiry.<sup>34</sup> It has helped to understand which environments the friars were looking for, before founding a new friary. Le Goff's group inquiry showed first the strong preference of the friars for already existing or developing towns in France and Italy during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Erik Fügedi stated that this preference is also visible in medieval Hungary, though with important size and chronological differences.<sup>35</sup> Since then, the "Le Goff's model" has been corrected and balanced even in France and Italy, mainly with consideration to the Friars Minor, and especially about the Observant friaries which were founded in market-places, in very small towns, and even in small villages.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Cannon, 'Sources for the Study of the Role of Art'.

<sup>33</sup> Michele Bacci, 'Les frères, les legs et l'art : les investissements pour l'augmentation du culte divin', in Bériou-Chiffolleau, *Économie et religion*, pp. 563–590.

<sup>34</sup> Jacques Le Goff, 'Apostolat mendiant et fait urbain dans la France médiévale: l'implantation des ordres mendiants. Programme - questionnaire pour une enquête', *Annales*, 23 (1968): 335–352; Jacques Le Goff, 'Apostolat mendiant et fait urbain: l'implantation géographique et sociologique des ordres mendiants (XIII<sup>e</sup>–XV<sup>e</sup> siècles)', *Revue d'Histoire de l'Église de France*, 54 (1968): 69–76; Jacques Le Goff, 'Enquête sur "Implantation des ordres mendiants et fait urbain dans la France médiévale"', *Annales E.S.C.*, 24 (1969): 833; Jacques Le Goff, 'Ordres mendiants et urbanisation dans la France médiévale', *Annales E.S.C.*, 25 (1970): 924–946; Jacques Le Goff, 'Le dossier des Mendiants', in 1274 – *Année charnière. Mutations et continuités. Lyon-Paris, 30 septembre-5 octobre 1974* (Paris, 1977), pp. 211–222.

<sup>35</sup> Erik Fügedi, 'La formation des villes et les ordres mendiants en Hongrie', *Annales E.S.C.*, 25 (1970): 966–987; in Hungarian: 'Koldulórendek és városfejlődés Magyarországon', *Századok*, 106 (1972): 69–95.

<sup>36</sup> Hungarian examples in Marie-Madeleine de Cevins, *Les franciscains observants hongrois de l'expansion à la débâcle (vers 1450–vers 1540)* (Bibliotheca Seraphico-Capuccina n°83), (Roma: Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 2008), pp. 51–53.

Secondly, the so-called Le Goff's inquiry demonstrated that the friars tried to settle their convents next to important points (the so-called *points chauds*, "hot points"), i.e. market-places, gates, areas where a lot of people concentrated. On the other hand, the arriving friars tried to avoid parish churches and other secular or regular churches. That is partly the case in Central Europe – for instance, in the Hungarian towns.<sup>37</sup> A specific case is one of the friaries settled next to a royal residence, for instance in Visegrád<sup>38</sup>. This would have led to an economic role for the friars.

Another macro-economic approach is precisely the integration of the friars within the local economy (in handcraft production, in commercial exchanges, etc.), based on the artifacts that were excavated on the site of the friaries (craftwork objects, tools, etc.). This just started to be studied a few years ago, on the basis of archaeological evidence, but also written sources.

The friaries stimulated commercial exchanges: some foreign products were found on the site of Mendicant friaries. Above all, the friars participated in both agricultural and craftwork production. They produced wine (not only for their own consumption), as we know from written accounts (in Sopron<sup>39</sup>) and also from remains of barrels and wine presses. They had livestock activities: animal bones and horns have been excavated on several sites, like in the Polish Franciscan convent of Inowrocław.<sup>40</sup> Craftwork production was also important. In some Mendicant images, for instance in St John of Latran, Joanna Cannon found friars holding tools in their hands.<sup>41</sup> But the best evidence is the remains of tools and workshops that have been excavated in several places.<sup>42</sup>

Last, a social approach, has been implemented, to identify which strata of society supported the friars. The urban topography already

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<sup>37</sup> Marie-Madeleine de Cevins, *L'Église dans les villes hongroises à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Budapest-Paris-Szeged: METEM, 2003), pp. 52–53; also in Hungarian: *Az Egyház a későközépkori magyar városokban*, (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 2003).

<sup>38</sup> Buzás et alii, 'A visegrádi ferences kolostor'.

<sup>39</sup> Tibor Neumann, 'A soproni ferences kolostor a középkor végén' (The Franciscan friary of Sopron at the end of the Middle Ages), in Norbert Medgyesy-Schmikli – István Ötvös – Sándor Óze (eds), *Nyolcszáz esztendő a ferences rend. Tanulmányok a rend lelkiségéről, történeti hivatásáról és kulturális-művészeti szerepéről*, (2 vols, Budapest: Pázmány Péter Katolikus Egyetem, 2013), vol. 2, pp. 136–152.

<sup>40</sup> Derwich, 'Le fonctionnement matériel des couvents mendiants polonais', pp. 26–27.

<sup>41</sup> Cannon, 'Sources for the Study of the Role of Art', p. 256, figs 4 and 5.

<sup>42</sup> Soós, 'Les Mendiants dans l'économie'.

mentioned provides us with socio-topographical indicators. It confirms that there was a strong link – a link of *caritas*, but a link of dependence too – between the Mendicant friaries and towns, between Mendicant friars and their neighbors and donors – mainly city dwellers.

The friaries' benefactors can be identified not only from the texts but also from archaeological hints: the tombstones of laymen or clergymen buried in Mendicant churches and cemeteries, as well as the coats of arms of donors carved on keystones, painted on pavement, or on the background of altarpieces and on the walls of the church and friary.<sup>43</sup> We also find representations of the donors, kneeling on liturgical objects of smaller size, sometimes recording their names. Some of these commissioners were already dead, other still living at the time of the artwork's execution.<sup>44</sup> Most of them were nobles or burghers. But one can meet also with friars: four Dominicans kneel in the lower part of the head-reliquary of Saint Dominic in Bologna.<sup>45</sup> It means that the friars too commissioned works of art! This fact ensures what we already knew from the charters of donation (for instance in Liège): Mendicant friars were involved in the creation of art. All this shed a new light on the issue of the support of the Mendicant friaries (internal or external support). In addition, it also tells much about the way the friars experienced both common and individual poverty.

To sum it up, only very few non-textual sources have been exploited by now from the point of view of the Mendicant economy in Europe during the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period. The results of the previous inquiries are scarce and fragmentary. Consequently, numerous issues of key importance still need to be properly addressed. Among others, three of them can be mentioned. First, considering their material environment and level of comfort (buildings, furniture, etc.), could the Friars (in Central Europe) be considered by the faithful of the time as (voluntary) "poor"?<sup>46</sup> Secondly, because of the specific economic situation of Central Europe (a mostly agrarian economy, where towns were small and crafts little specialized), did the Friars have a more important role in production and exchange – that is, a better integration in the local economy than in the rest of Europe? Lastly, do the non-

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<sup>43</sup> Volti, *Les couvents mendiants*, p. 147.

<sup>44</sup> Cannon, 'Sources for the Study of the Role of Art', pp. 251–252.

<sup>45</sup> Cannon, 'Sources for the Study of the Role of Art', pp. 252–255.

<sup>46</sup> This was the topic of the latest MARGEC conference (21–23 May 2015, in Wrocław).

textual sources give a different image of the social strata that materially supported the friaries than the one provided by texts - mostly produced by/for wealthy people? The papers provided in the following pages begin to answer these crucial issues.