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Preparation for the afterlife of the Hungarian nobility according to the preserved medieval testaments

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Abstract

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The current study is devoted to the efforts of the medieval Hungarian nobility to ensure a peaceful afterlife for themselves and their families. This was hoped to be achieved through donations to the church and religious orders serving in the area. The paper begins with a brief focused on donations to the church that members of the nobility made during their lives and the actions they expected from the church or individual clergymen in return for such pious contributions. Following is a reference overview of pious donations and the form of requiem Masses desired, taken from the preserved medieval testaments of Hungarian nobility throughout the period of the Hungarian Middle Ages. The result is an enumeration of the diversity of testators (men, women, members of lower and higher nobility), the variety of donations (whole villages or clothes), as well as creative ideas on how to ensure a smooth transition to eternal life and the salvation of a soul in the best possible way.

Preserved medieval written sources from the time of the Hungarian nobility confirm that every aspect of their lives carried a certain form of religious expression and was regularly influenced by the church in a variety of forms. A detailed investigation of available sources brings the understanding that the church—and in connection, the thought of death—was an everyday part of life for the nobility. However, those notions were not gloomy fears of the unknown, but hope for a peaceful afterlife and eternal salvation. Such prospects were offered by the church, individual clergymen, several Church Fathers and theologians.¹

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- 1 Numerous opinions about life after death and the resulting instructions on how to properly live earthly life spread in Western Europe in the early Middle Ages, and were recognized in later periods as well. According to St. Augustine, for example, those who were not completely good and righteous during their lives will undergo a test before entering paradise, and those who were not completely evil will go to hell, but their damnation may be more bearable. According to Augustine, only those dead who pay for lighter sins or who showed remorse before death but did not have time for earthly repentance, and who, in any case, led a completely honorable life sufficiently accompanied by good deeds will undergo the aforementioned test, (in the time between death and resurrection). LE GOFF, Jacques. *Zrození očistce*. Praha : Nakladatelství Vyšehrad, 2003, pp. 134–135.

Members of the Hungarian nobility prepared for the afterlife extensively during their lives, the same as the rest of the Christian world. Preserved sources allow for the opportunity to follow their earthly activities, eventually leading to life after death. However, these activities were not only connected with the—often difficult to fulfill—efforts to live a blameless and ethical life, but especially with an active spiritual life strengthened by the support of the local church and monastic orders serving in the Kingdom of Hungary. There was a constant interest in maintaining a good relationship with the church, church institutions or individual clergymen as is evidenced by the actions that nobles in the Middle Ages took towards these figures.² The path to a peaceful afterlife, purgatory or at least a milder punishment for sins committed was realised in the Middle Ages by supporting the church.³ Direct and indirect written references show that the Hungarian nobility prepared for the afterlife during their lifetime, and as they sought to be sure of their afterlife—knowing full well of their own sins—a variety of attempts were made to secure everlasting peace for their souls. Frequently, small or large gifts were given to a specific parish, monastery or the clergy in expectation of special prayers for the donor's eternal salvation. These gifts were bequeathed in donations during life and also in wills written with death approaching. For the direct salvation of their as well as their families' souls, wealthier nobles could afford the provision of continuous Holy Masses, the funding and support of a monastery, entry into the confraternity of a selected order, pilgrimages to important holy places and to the graves of saints, personal portable altars, their own confessors and clergymen or even an active life directly in a monastery as a secular person.

Until now, the opportunity to follow the religiousness of the Hungarian nobles and their activities aimed at ensuring a positive afterlife was possible only through professional monographs and studies describing the lives of individual medieval nobles and their families. It is now possible to get closer to their religiousness via their public life and actions connected with their ancestral property. The spiritual life of and the religiousness of nobility like Stibor of Stiboricz, the noble families of Motešický, Zápolya and many other of his time can be learned from Perín, Korlátko, Plešivec, Štítník, Jelšava and Ujlak.⁴

2 Of course, there were several lords who pursued their goals even at the expense of harming the church and despite the threat of excommunication, not only in the Middle Ages but in later periods as well.

3 Buying prayers for the salvation of a soul through a variety of donations was common among the Frankish aristocracy. This method of securing the afterlife became part of the daily life of the nobility with the increase of Benedictine Monasteries. The phenomenon subsequently reached the Hungarian nobility through monastic orders and monasteries that arose in the early Kingdom of Hungary. It is traced here primarily from the last third of the 11th century with the first preserved documents by which members of the Hungarian nobility founded new or supported existing monasteries on their property. More information by: DRUGA, Marek. *Ob remedium animae nostrae. Motívy spásy v najstarších donačných listinách pre uhorské benediktínske kláštory*. In *Studia Historica Nitriensia*, 2021, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 315–330.

4 DVOŘÁKOVÁ, Daniela. *Rytier a jeho král. Stibor zo Stiboric a Žigmund Luxemburský: sonda do života stredovekého uhorského šľachtica s osobitným zreteľom na územie Slovenska*. Budmerice : Rak, 2018; NOVÁK, Adam. *A terebesi Perényi család története a 15. század közepéig*. Debrecen : Prinntart-Press Kft., 2020; NEUMANN, Tibor. *A Korlátköviek. Egy előkelő család története és politikai szereplése a 15. – 16. században*. Győr : Győri Egyházmegyei Levéltár, 2007; TIHÁNYIOVÁ, Monika. *Bubekovci z Plešivca. Úspechy a pády jedného rodu v politike a umení*. Rožňava : OZ Georgius

In addition, works devoted to the history of medieval sacred buildings, monastic orders and monasteries bring us closer to secular religiousness.⁵ In Slovak and Hungarian historiography, works can be found specifically devoted to donations for the salvation of a soul,⁶ as well as works dealing exclusively with medieval testaments, especially those of burghers and church dignitaries, and among them, several documents devoted exclusively to testaments of the Hungarian nobility.⁷

For the salvation of a soul

The medieval world developed the illusion that in order to escape damnation and to attain eternal life, a person had to lead a pious life and attend Holy Mass regularly, something also emphasized by contemporary preachers in sermons. The people of the Middle Ages were advised how to obtain the greatest possible certainty if they wanted to be saved. Recommendations in-

Bubek, 2017; TIHÁNYIOVÁ, Monika. *Páni zo Štítnika. Putovanie kultúrnymi a hospodárskymi dejinami horného Gemera*. Rožňava : OZ Georgius Bubek, 2019; SKALSKÁ, Monika. *Jelšava a jelšavské panstvo v stredoveku. K osídleniu severného Gemera*. Martin : Vydavateľstvo Maticе slovenskej, 2009; FEDELES, Tamás. Egy középkori főúri család vallásossága. Az Újlakiak példája. In *Századok*, 2011, vol. 145, no. 1, pp. 377–418; KUCHARSKÁ, Veronika. *Ducissa. Život kniažnej Hedvivy v časoch Jagelovcov*. Bratislava : Post Scriptum, 2014; MAREK, Miloš (ed.) *Archivum familiae Očkaj. Stredoveké dejiny rodiny Očkajovcov a listiny z jej archívu*. Trnava; Krakov : FF TU; Towarzystwo Słowaków w Polsce, 2015; MAREK, Miloš (ed.) *Archivum familiae Majtényi. Stredoveké dejiny rodiny Majtényovcov a listiny z jej archívu*. Trnava; Krakov : FF TU; Towarzystwo Słowaków w Polsce, 2013; MAREK, Miloš (ed.) *Archivum Familiae Motešický. Stredoveké listiny z archívu rodiny Motešickovcov*. Trnava; Krakov : FF TU; Towarzystwo Słowaków w Polsce, 2010; GÁLIK, Zdenko. Ctihodná Klára z Hlohovca, manželka Mikuláša Konta. In *Historia Nova*, 2017, vol. 12, pp. 7–29.

5 See, for example: ŽAŽOVÁ, Henrieta. *Stredoveké premonštrátske kláštory v slovenskej časti územia bývalého Ostrihonského arcibiskupstva*. Trnava : FF TU, 2017; SKALSKÁ, Monika. Pavlínsky kláštor v Gombaseku (1371 – 1566). In *Studia historica Tyrnaviensia*, 2012, vol. 24–25, pp. 160–185; HLAVÁČKOVÁ, Miriam. Paulínsky kláštor v Horných Lefantovciach v r. 1369–1526. In ŠÍMONČIČ, Jozef (ed.) *Dejiny a kultúra rehoľných komunít na Slovensku. II. sympóziu o cirkevných dejinách Slovenska na Trnavskej univerzite 15. – 16. 10. 1993*. Trnava : Trnavská univerzita, 1994, pp. 175–181.

6 This issue was last addressed in Slovakia by: DRUGA 2021, pp. 315–330. From Hungarian sources, see especially: FEDELES, Tamás. “*Medicina contra peccata mundane*” Késő középkori főúri misealapítványok. In *Századok*, 2014, vol. 148, no. 2, pp. 443–469. Within the Czech Middle Ages, this issue is processed in a dissertation by: VAŠEK, Zdeněk. *Zbožné dary v českém středověku*. Master thesis. Praha : Ústav českých dějin, Filozofická fakulta, Univerzita Karlova, 2016 or in a study of ANTONÍN, Robert. “*Pro remedio anime fratris mei...*” Několik poznámek ke zbožnosti české šlechty vrcholného středověku. In CHOCHOLÁČ, Bronislav et al. (eds.) *Pro pana profesora Libora Jana k životnímu jubileu*. Brno : Maticе moravská, 2020, pp. 191–203.

7 See, for example: NEMEŠ, Jaroslav. Testament ako prameň materiálnej kultúry stredoveku (uhorské duchovenstvo). In *Studia archaeologica Slovaca Mediaevalia*, 2000, vol. 2, pp. 113–128; NEMEŠ, Jaroslav. Testament bratislavského kanonika Gašpara Romera z roku 1517 a jeho ekonómia spásy. In *Ružomerský historický zborník*, 2009, vol. 3, pp. 150–172; NEMEŠ, Jaroslav. Biskupi a testamenty uhorského duchovenstva v stredoveku In GLEJTEK, Miroslav et al. (eds.) *Arcibiskupi a biskupi Uhorska. Moc prelátov a jej prejavy v stredoveku*. Bratislava : Post Scriptum, 2020, pp. 270–283; DOMENOVÁ, Marcela. Prešovské testamenty do roku 1526 (Diplomaticko-obsahový rozbor). In *Historia Carpatica*, 2002, vol. 33, pp. 29–67; ŠORECOVÁ, Mária. Testamenty banskoštiavnických mešťanov zo 16. storočia (diplomatický a paleografický rozbor). In RAGAČOVÁ, Júlia (ed.) *Diplomatická produkcia v stredovekom meste*. Bratislava : Ministerstvo vnútra SR – odbor archívov a registratúr, 2005, pp. 225–233; MAJOROSSY, Judit – SZENDE, Katalin (eds.) *Das Pressburger Protocollum Testamentorum I. – II. 1410 – 1487, 1487 – 1529*. Wien; Köln; Weimar : Böhlau Verlag, 2010 – 2014; KELÉNYI, Borbála. Hungarian aristocratic women's last wills from the Late Middle Ages (1440 – 1526). Additional data on their piety and social relationships. In BÁRÁNY, Attila (eds.) *Műveltség és társadalmi szerepek: arisztokraták Magyarországon és Európában; Learning, Intellect and Social Roles: Aristocrats in Hungary and Europe*. Debrecen : Debreceni Egyetem Történelmi Intézete, 2014, pp. 133–154; KUBINYI, András. Főúri és nemesi végrendeletek a Jagellókorban. In *Soproni Szemle*, 1999, vol. 53, no. 4, pp. 331–342.

cluded showing remorse for committed sins, trying to avoid them, listening to the Bible and celebrating Holy Masses, willingly doing good deeds, being compassionate and kind to others, patiently bearing adversity, being humble and merciful, contributing to the elimination of injustice, faithfully preserving vows and praying with God's grace "because it is a testimony that we are God's children, especially if we pray with tears."⁸ However, the personal will and effort to fulfill some of these recommendations was crucial; simply the desire to live according to these ideals brought a medieval person closer to eternal happiness.⁹

That is also why the Hungarian nobility, starting from the lower nobility to aristocrats including magnates and barons, attempted to live according to church orders throughout the Middle Ages. They saw the greatest hope in the celebration of Holy Masses, more specifically, in private Masses for the personal salvation of their souls, believing in the value of donations made to the Hungarian church and monastic orders serving locally. The fact that it was indeed a well-thought-out way to ensure eternal life was also evident in the form of individual donations addressed to selected monasteries, churches, chapels, altars, clergymen, even during the active life of these nobles. In exchange, not only regular prayers for the salvation of their souls were expected, but also for the souls of their relatives from the past, the present and the future.¹⁰ A special prayer for living noble landlords and dignitaries affected their position in regional and country-wide relations. On the contrary, commemorating the dead ancestors of a family contributed to strengthening the position of living descendants in Hungarian society, for it pointed to the antiquity of the family and its affiliation to the important deceased representatives of the kingdom.¹¹

Foundations of monasteries and churches by the nobility begin to occur in the Hungarian environment gradually from the last third of the 11th century. A well-known example from the territory of today's Slovakia is the foundation of a Benedictine monastery in Bzovík by *comes* Lampert before the year 1135.¹² Direct mentions of donations from the Hungarian nobility addressed to Hungarian churches and monasteries with the aim of saving their souls (*pro remedio animae*) appeared more regularly from the 13th century, and pious donations serving as a offering to ensure Holy Masses and prayers during the life of Hungarian noblemen and noblewomen again from the beginning of the 14th century. Mainly monasteries, parish churches or specific altars

8 From the book of sermons by Pelbárt of Timișoara and Osvald Laskai taken from: PÁSZTOR, Lajos. A magyarság vallásos élete a Jagellók korában I. In *Századok*, 1941, vol. 75, no. 1–3, p. 52.

9 PÁSZTOR 1941, p. 53.

10 However, it is also necessary to note that a large number of donations were intended for church institutions purely for the salvation of a soul, without mentioning the way in which this is to be achieved.

11 It should also be noted that not every donation given to a church institution carried satisfaction in the form of prayers and religious services, thus revealing nobility religiousness. Economic interest was behind many donations, even in the Middle Ages, meaning the effort to take over an institution itself and the profits from the assets that belonged to it. The effort of a family to gain the support of a selected church institution through donations, in order to get into its structures more easily, may also be seen. It was be a custom that one of the descendants was destined for a clerical career. FEDELES 2011, pp. 402–403.

12 ŽAŽOVÁ 2017, p. 44.

were recipients, in exchange for prayers and Masses.¹³ For example, Master Gregor, son of Laurence, donated the tenth part of the toll from Michalovce to the Church of St. George in the year 1312 for the salvation of his soul. He made this donation on the condition that a Mass should be celebrated twice a week in this church—one on Monday for the dead and the other on Thursday to St. George.¹⁴ Master Andych, son of Peter from Oldza (Pozsony/Bratislava County), secured the regular and perpetual service of Masses for the salvation of his soul in 1350 by donating to the Altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary situated in the Church of the Holy Cross in nearby Zlaté Klasy (a local part of Rastice). His donation of one mansion from this village and various plots of land in its vicinity was meant to ensure the service of a perpetual Mass at the relevant altar. It was emphasized that the donation was meant only for the maintenance of the altar and for the provision of a clergyman to celebrate those Masses.¹⁵ The former Voivode of Transylvania, Thomas of Szécsény, donated to the Saint Adalbert Cathedral in Esztergom in the year 1345, ensuring the eternal salvation not only of his soul, but of the souls of his wife, living children and even those who may yet be born as well.¹⁶ In 1381, the Esztergom provost and later archbishop and royal chancellor John of Kanizsa with brothers Nicholas and Stephen donated to the Örményes Pauline Monastery (today Ligetfalva in Zala County), which was founded by the family sometime before the year 1378. They donated the entire village of Örményes and a mill, expecting local monks to celebrate Masses for the salvation of their souls, as frequently as twice a day.¹⁷ A great supporter of the Pauline Order was also Paul of Koláre, a nobleman with a family estate in the Hont County, as well as a prothonotary of the Hungarian palatine from the beginning of the 15th century. As was learnt from a document written by the prior general of the order, Paul supported the main monastery of the order in Buda not only with specific donations (e.g. a rural stone mansion along with stone and wooden buildings in the Hont village Páta), but also with services. Due to experience with legal issues, he successfully represented Pauline Fathers in the cases they were involved in and in exchange, they pledged to celebrate one Mass daily for the forgiveness of Master Paul's sins and those of his ancestors as well as his descendants, at the Altar of the Holy Cross where his

- 13 In his research, Tamás Fedeles specifically followed the pious donations of late medieval Hungarian nobles made with the aim of celebrating Holy Masses for the salvation of their souls. He came across 69 written sources containing regulations for the celebration of Masses, recording the very first regulation from 1406. FEDELES 2014, pp. 465–468. When examining pious donations, one must take into account the existence of many monasteries and churches that were donated to by families, giving them the right of patronage, including regular prayers for the salvation of individual members of the family as well as the possibility of being buried in the respective church. Therefore, more numerous donations were not recorded here, as the spiritual value of these institutions resulted from patronage law.
- 14 *Regesta diplomatica nec non epistolaria slovaciae I.* Edited by Vincent Sedlák. Bratislava : VEDA, 1980, p. 438, no. 1024; *A nagymihályi és sztárai gróf Sztáray család oklevéltára I.* Edited by Gyula Nagy. Budapest : Gróf Sztáray Antal, 1887, p. 41, no. 34.
- 15 *Codex diplomaticus Hungaricus Andegavensis V.* Edited by Imre Nagy. Budapest : A Magyar Tud. Akadémia, 1887, p. 416, no. 256.
- 16 *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae ecclesiasticus ac civilis IX/1 (CDH).* Edited by Georgius Fejér. Budae : Typis typogr. regiae universitatis ungaricae, 1833, p. 278, no. 139.
- 17 *Documenta artis paulinorum II (DAP).* Edited by Nóra Aradi. Budapest : Az MTA Művészettörténeti Kutató Csoportja, 1976, p. 138.

brother Nicholas was buried and where he wanted to be buried as well. They also promised to light a candle for him on this altar, as well as to celebrate a Mass with a musical setting every Monday for his deceased relatives. On the day of his death and again on the anniversary, monks of this monastery were to remember him through Masses, vigils and prayers.¹⁸ In 1454, the landlord of Gemer Castle Hajnáčka, Simon of Pavlovce, donated one homestead with all attachments in the town of Sajószentpéter in Borsod that belonged to his family to the nearby Pauline Monastery of St. Anna in the area of the Hangony village. Subsequently, he expected a perpetual celebration of Masses for the salvation of his soul.¹⁹

A lot can be learned from the documents of the Éger Chapter about the mindset and intentions of the Hungarian noble families towards securing eternal life. The members of the Cudar family from Onód made a donation to the Pauline Order in Lád (Borsod County), and in the early 60s of the 15th century, brothers Simon and Jacob made the abovementioned donation with the specific instructions: as long as they lived, every Sunday Mass would be celebrated in the monastery for the salvation of their as well as their parents' souls and on Tuesdays for committed sins; every Monday for forgiveness for them and for their parents; and after their death, for the peace of the deceased regardless of holidays.²⁰ In 1470, Sigismund from Svätý Jur and Pezinok was rewarded by the prior general for his tireless help to the Pauline Monastery of the Virgin Mary in today's Mariánka (Pozsony/Bratislava County), as well as for help which was to be provided in the future. The prior ordered monks of the relevant monastery to celebrate a Mass every Saturday at the Altar of St. Catherine in honour of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and on other days, a Mass for Sigismund and his relatives.²¹ In 1473, members of the noble family from Teresztenya donated one vineyard and a meadow to the Pauline Monastery in Gombasek (Gömör/Gemer County), expecting monks to celebrate regular Friday and Saturday Masses for the salvation of their souls.²²

A document from Bratislava Count Nicholas Bánfi and his brother Jacob from 1487 demonstrates the exact perception of the Hungarian nobility on how to ensure salvation of one's soul. They donated to the Pauline Monastery of St. Anna, founded near Dobrakutya Castle (Dobra Kuća, Belovár-Kőrös/Bjelovar-Križevici County), expecting monks to celebrate 40 Masses every year: five Masses to the Passion of Christ, seven Masses to the Our Lady of Sorrows, three Masses to the Holy Trinity, two to St. Catherine, another two to St. Barbara, three to All Saints, one to the twelve apostles, three for their committed sins, three to St. Bishop Nicholas and St. Margaret, two to the martyrs

18 Magyar Nemzeti levéltár, Országos Levéltára, Budapest, Diplomatikai Levéltár (MNL OL DL), sign. 8884; DVORÁKOVÁ 2018, p. 340; SITÁR, Tomáš. *Magister Pavol z Kolár a Hontovci z Poipľia. Osudy slovenskej šľachty v stredovekom Uhorsku*. Krná : Miloš Hric, 2017, pp. 54–55.

19 DAP I. Edited by Nóra Aradi. Budapest : Az MTA Művészettörténeti Kutató Csoportja, 1975, p. 181.

20 MNL OL DL 15 450. See also: MNL OL DL 16 257.

21 MNL OL DL 16 869.

22 MNL OL DL 57 004; SKALSKÁ 2012, pp. 171–178. There are also other donations for the monastery.

St. Fabian and Sebastian, three for the deceased, two for Nicholas's parents, two to the Three Kings, Caspar, Balthazar and Melchior and one for Nicholas's brother Jacob.²³ In the year 1494, the prior general of the Pauline Order rewarded Emeric Himfy from Döbrönte the castellan of the Turňa castle in the service of the Zápolya family for his donation to the Pauline Monastery in Háromhegy (Martonyi, Borsod County) with regular prayers for the salvation of his and his parents' souls. These were to be celebrated in the respective monastery every week, twice on Mondays to the Passion of Christ and once on Saturdays to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary.²⁴

Naturally, Hungarian noblewomen also thought about securing a comfortable afterlife for themselves as well as their relatives during their lifetimes. A notable example is of the very pious lady Hedwig, the widow of Palatine Stephen Zápolya. Several of her donations are known, both to individual churches as well as different monasteries and orders. For example, out of respect to the Virgin Mary, she and her sons generously donated to the Pauline Monastery of the Virgin Mary in Lad in 1507. Consequently, she expected a Mass dedicated to the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary to be celebrated every Saturday for their souls' salvation.²⁵

A testament as a source of the Hungarian nobility religiousness

An even better perception of the Hungarian nobility's ideas on their own afterlife can be garnered through last wills and testaments. These are a special type of written source that have been encountered since the early periods of the Kingdom of Hungary. The primary task of these documents was to chronicle the wishes of a dying person regarding the fate of their immovable and movable assets—outside of the legal procedures of inheritance within consanguinity.²⁶ Gradually, the stipulations of a dying person began to include the fates of their children, wives or husbands in testaments. In earlier periods, closest relatives, familiars and servants were bequeathed property, but from the 13th century, it was more often left to different church institutions. Moreover, we may encounter some conditions of these bequests, for example, to pray and celebrate Masses for the salvation of a soul of a deceased relative as well as present and future family members. The primary motivation to write down these conditions in testaments became the desire for the salvation of souls and eternal life, as well as planning the future fate of one's possessions, which, as the majority of the nobility noted in the introduction to their testaments, they gained primarily through God's will (*a Deo sibi datis et collatis*).²⁷

23 MNL OL DL 35 721.

24 MNL OL DL 46 266.

25 MNL OL DL 38 865.

26 For more on the development of laws on methods of testamentary bequeathing of the noble estates to the Hungarian church see: TÖRÖK, Kálmán. *A magyarországi katolikus egyházi vagyon tulajdonjoga*. Budapest : Deutsch Zsigmond és Társa Könyvkereskedése, 1900, pp. 175–182.

27 In addition to the religiousness of the nobility, testaments are extremely useful for researching the genealogies of Hungarian noble families, their financial and property conditions, their daily life connected with the knowledge of specific objects and clothes they used, and also for researching the history of sacral buildings or specific church institutions. Given that many noblemen and

A number of testaments were preserved from the Middle Ages, and documents for this study were examined from all social classes of the Hungarian noble society, including its female members. It is notable that the number of these records increased in the 13th century. Due to the fact that there were no laws in the Kingdom of Hungary to guide the writing of a testament until the 18th century, no two completely identically structured testaments were found. Also, apparent formal differences were clear, mainly whether a will was written by a local priest on behalf of the testator or by a scribe from a place of authentication or by a notary and scribe of a royal dignitary, who created the last will based on the oral testimony of the testator or credible witnesses of a previously executed will.²⁸

Even the fabrication process of individual testaments was not uniform during the Middle Ages. The nobles often wrote testaments when they were sick, lying in a bed, in the presence of their priest and confessor or the priest of a church donated by their family, who was not only an important witness, but was also the one writing.²⁹ Usually, other clergymen of local churches and some of the closest, but also more distant relatives and acquaintances, gathered as witnesses at a person's bedside. Among the witnesses, we may find *provisors* of the mansion where the nobleman lived, some of the castellans of his castles, familiars, officials, servants and maids. The testament would be sealed by the main witnesses at the request of a testator in order to hold more credibility.³⁰ An equally common way of preserving testaments was their issuance by one of the places of authentication or by one of the dignitaries of the royal court, who wrote it on the basis of his envoys' oral testimony of the visit to the specific nobleman. If it was in the case of a close relative or acquaintance, it often happened that the dignitary in question was directly present in the house of a dying person. This can be observed in the year 1402, when a former royal steward, George of Štítník, wrote his last will in his mansion in Štítník in the presence of a close relative, the Hungarian palatine Detrik Bubek of Plešivec.³¹ Additional information included in testaments was that a respective nobleman could not be present at a place of authentication or come to a notary because of a serious illness or an old age and weakness, as seen in

noblewomen also thought of their familiars, servants and maids, as well as various servants with precisely defined services in their testaments, this type of historical source is beneficial for this type of research. Moreover, there is an opportunity to follow the social contacts of noblemen and noblewomen, not only within the society of the royal court, but also within a respective county and an estate from the number of witnesses, as well as executors (trustees) present at the writing of a testament. Due to the fact that assets that nobles had in deposit are listed almost regularly, testaments also shed light on business contacts and activities.

- 28 Representation from all periods of the medieval Hungarian Kingdom was accounted for—male and female representatives of the Hungarian nobility, all its classes and last, but not least, those testaments that also covered the territory of today's Slovakia—when choosing testaments that for examination. The result was an overview of the development and diversity of testaments, with a key insight into the ideas of the Hungarian nobility about the afterlife.
- 29 There are also testaments that are provided with the testator's handwritten signature (for example, from the period of the Jagiellon dynasty, the exact number was stated by: KUBINYI 1999, p. 332) or those that were entirely written by a testator, as is observed in the case of Michael Majtényi in 1504. MAREK 2013, p. 88.
- 30 The importance of sealing the testament by two selected clergymen was pointed out, for example, by Ladislaus of Léta (Somogy County) at the end of his last will from 1359. MNL OL DL 4867.
- 31 *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár II/1* (ZsO). Edited by Elemér Mályusz. Budapest : Akadémiai Kiadó, 1956, p. 214, no. 1813.

the testament of Helena, wife of Gál from Krušovice in Nyitra/Nitra County (from 1423).³² If noblemen were more prosperous, they would ask a place of authentication to send them envoys for the purpose of writing a will. This was done in a case of Ladislaus Podmaniczky from Podmanice in the year 1485, who approached the Nitra Chapter for this privilege. Two Nitra canons went to Ladislaus's mansion in Bánovce nad Bebravou, listened to his last will and then reported it to the Chapter where it was written down accordingly. As noted in the introduction to his will, he was mentally and physically healthy at the time of its writing.³³ This kind of preservation of a last will, accompanied with a seal from a place of authentication, provided the heirs with certainty of its fulfillment. Therefore, it was also often the custom that if the testament was not written by a place of authentication or dignitary of the royal court, the heirs had its validity confirmed immediately after the will was written by these institutions, or even just by a notary.³⁴ There are also cases when a testament was written on the basis of the testator's oral testimony or of witnesses' oral testimony directly in the seat of a place of authentication, in front of a relevant abbot and convent. Such was the case of Master Stephen, son of Amadeus, whose last will was written on the basis of his mother's, widow's and sister's oral testimonies in the Šahy Convent.³⁵

Many nobles wrote testaments before taking an important journey, setting off for a battle, negotiations or even before a pilgrimage. Aware of the uncertain results of such difficult trips and the completion of its goals, including the possibility of fatal consequences, last wills were written before departure or sometimes during the journey itself.³⁶ However, the most common reasons for writing a testament were habits of faithful Christians and a free, unforced decision to secure the salvation of a soul, as is pointed out right at the begin-

32 ZsO X. Edited by Norbert C. Tóth. Budapest : Magyar Országos Levéltár, 2007, p. 253, no. 593; MNL OL DL 11 356.

33 *A podmanini Podmaniczky család oklevéltára I* (PodOkI). Edited by Imre Lukinich. Budapest : A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1937, p. 184, no. 102.

34 For example, a public notary from Slovenské Pravno was present at the writing of Michael Majtényi's testament in 1504. MAREK 2013, p. 88.

35 ŽAŽOVÁ 2017, p. 98.

36 Around the year 1153, Adalbert, the royal dignitary and diplomat, wrote his last will prior to a long journey to the Sicilian king Roger II. DRUGA 2021, p. 325. Comes Kozmas, son of Paul from Čeklís (today's Bernolákovo), also considered the possibility of dying in battle when he was preparing to fight against the Mongols. To ensure the salvation of his soul, he donated some of his land to the Cistercians from the Convent of Blessed Mary Magdalene in Bratislava. TURCSÁNY, Juraj. Stredoveké Bernolákovo. In DUCHOŇ, Michal et al. (eds.) *Bernolákovo 1209 – 2009, Dejiny obce*. Bernolákovo : Obec Bernolákovo, 2009, p. 39. In 1393, master George of Atyinaszentmárton (in the Vočina district, Kapronca-Kőrös/Koprivnica-Križevci County), husband of Katherine, who was the sister of Palatine Nicholas of Gorjan, wrote his testament before leaving for a diplomatic trip to Venice. ZsO I. Edited by Elemér Mályusz. Budapest : Akadémiai Kiadó, 1951, p. 339, no. 3067. Osvald of Bučany or Korlátko wrote his will before leaving to the fight against the Ottomans, in 1456. MAREK 2010, p. 29. For the same reason, George of Drienčany (originally from the Balog family, Gömör/Gemer County) wrote his last will in September 1521. MNL OL DL 72 196. If a testator did not die in the forthcoming war or battle or during the journey, the existence of more testaments is assumed. The very mentions in testaments warn of this, as they cancel the validity of all the testaments written until then. Such a note is found in the testament of Desider of Kapla. MNL OL DL 10 034; ZsO IV. Edited by Elemér Mályusz and Iván Borsa. Budapest : Akadémiai Kiadó, 1994, p. 60, no. 68. In 1455, before the pilgrimage to Rome and the Holy Land, John Marcali, the Count of Zala County. MNL OL DL 14 915.

ning of Anna's testament from 1231, who was the wife of *comes* Bors from the Miskolc family.³⁷ It is often clear from the beginning of a testament that it was dictated when they were ill or lying in bed in their home, but with a sane mind (*in lecto egritudinis mente tamen sanus*). References to the awareness of impending death (*ex allegatis sciens me morituram; in articulo mortis*) are often encountered, as was the case with Anna, the widow of George from the Apafi family from Almakerék (Fejér County) in 1458,³⁸ and also with Bridget, wife of Abrecht Forgách from Gýmeš in 1491,³⁹ or in the case of John Erdélyi from Târgu Mureș who, in 1472, felt physically ill and could sense death approaching.⁴⁰ In the year 1502, Michael of Motešice admitted the primary effort was to ensure the salvation of his soul at the beginning of his testament, writing that nothing was more valuable for his soul than to return to the place where it came from. In connection, he recalled a special respect for selected saints, namely Saint Anna, the mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for 11 000 saint virgins, for a confessor, Saint Anthony, for the martyrs, for Saints Cosmas and Damian or Cyprian, for Michael the Archangel and the twelve apostles, his advocates and helpers. He also added a practical reason for penning his last will, specifically the concern that his possessions will be taken by secular or undesirable people after his death.⁴¹ In 1519, Katherine from Hédervár, the wife of Stephen of Rozhanovce, mentioned at the beginning of her testament that her death was God's will.⁴² Benedikt Csáky elaborated a bit more on the reasons for writing his will in the year 1490, stating that although his body was very sick, his mind was still healthy. Aware of the transience of earthly life, he preferred to focus attention on rest in "Heaven," as it was eternal and beautiful. He was determined to receive the body of the Lord and thus transform a "perishable" body into an eternal and "imperishable," transform his earthly life into a heavenly one, with eternal and heavenly palaces.⁴³ In the year 1517, the royal court judge Moses Buzlai of Gregorovce (Sáros/Šariš County), the husband of Anna Podmaniczky, confessed at the very beginning of his testament that he was a faithful Christian, a believer in the Catholic Church and that he wished to die with God's grace.⁴⁴

Final resting place and funeral instructions

While testators bequeathed their souls to the supreme God, the Virgin Mary, selected saints or the entire heavenly community (as was the case with Stephen of Rozhanovce in 1523),⁴⁵ their remains were left to the earth. Testaments of-

37 CDH III/2. Edited by Georgius Fejér. Budae : Typis typogr. regiae universitatis ungaricae, 1829, p. 269.

38 *A római szent birodalmi gróf széki Teleki család oklevéltára II. 1438 – 1526* (TelOkl). Edited by Samu Barabás. Budapest : A Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1895, p. 39, no. 36.

39 MNL OL DL 19 749.

40 TelOkl II, p. 114, no. 82.

41 MAREK 2010, p. 85.

42 *A Héderváry család oklevéltára I* (HédOkl). Edited by Béla Radvanszky and Levente Závodszy. Budapest : A M. Tud. Akadémia, 1909, p. 564, no. 390.

43 *Oklevéltár a gróf Csáky család történetéhez I. Oklevelek 1229 – 1499* (CsáOkl). Edited by László Bártfai-Szabó. Budapest : Stephaneum Nyomda R. T., 1919, p. 471.

44 PodOkl II. Edited by Imre Lukinich. Budapest : A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1939, p. 170, no. 65; MNL OL DL 22 994.

45 MNL OL DL 89 173.

ten contain specific directives regarding burial of the body. In the year 1152, Margaret wished to be buried in the monastery Church of St. Martin in Pannonhalma.⁴⁶ Another example is from the year 1281, when Mauricius, the son of the *comes* Mauricius from the Osl family, wished to be buried in the Premonstratensian Monastery of Michael the Archangel in Csorna (Sopron County), of which he was a secular patron. He precisely defined a final resting place in the cemetery—in a tomb under the monastery itself.⁴⁷ This source also confirms that part of the right of patronage over a church or a monastery was also the right to be buried in it.⁴⁸ Therefore, the burial location was not regularly mentioned in testaments as it was not necessary to emphasize the final resting place, either because of the right of patronage over a certain church or a monastery, or because of the existence of a family tomb.

In 1330, William Drugeth gave a relatively vague statement about his final resting place, mentioning 30 *marcas* for the church where his body should be buried.⁴⁹ On the contrary, master Nicholas, son of Jacob (perhaps from a noble family from Putnok in Gömör County) had quite precise ideas about his final resting place included in his will in 1364. He wished to be buried in the Franciscan Monastery of the Virgin Mary in Esztergom, adding instructions regarding the ceremony itself; three horses, one brown, one of the *Bohhar* colour, and one still ridden by him, were supposed to walk in front of his body—no doubt it was laid on a bier.⁵⁰ Anna, the widow of Nicholas, a son of Ban Dominic Sárkány, wished to be buried in Óbuda, in the Convent of the Virgin Mary in the year 1402.⁵¹ Margareth from Svätý Král' (Gömör/Gemer County) bequeathed in her last will from the year 1409 two florins to the local Church of King St. Stephen for the fact that she would be buried in it. She also left them a mill in order to meet the needs of her funeral. At that time, the mill was deposited for four florins.⁵² Master Ladislaus, son of Voivode Frank of Szécsény, according to his testament from 1413, wished to be buried in the Chapel of the Holy Cross in the monastery that was donated by his family in Szécsény.⁵³ In the year 1431, Katherine, daughter of the former royal steward George of Štít'nik, bequeathed to the Church of the Virgin Mary in Štít'nik one silver goblet, a silver cup called *Serlitz*, a silver bowl for salt and one cassock without fur.⁵⁴ Another example from 1472 is John Erdélyi from Vásárhely,

46 DRUGA 2021, p. 325.

47 CDH V/3. Edited by Georgius Fejér. Budaë : Typis typogr. regiae universitatis ungaricae, 1830, p. 100.

48 In 1498, several members of the family from today's Diviaky nad Nitricou agreed on the right of patronage over the local All Saints' Church in front of the Nitra Chapter. They agreed on the burial place of Emeric and Lazarus, which was to extend between the main altar and the Altar of the Virgin Mary and St. Emeric. The other members of the family were to have a final resting place stretching between the Altar of the Virgin Mary and the entrance to the church. MNL OL DL 95 727.

49 CDH VIII/3. Edited by Georgius Fejér. Budaë : Typis typogr. regiae universitatis ungaricae, 1832, p. 506, no. 221.

50 *Hazai oklevéltár 1234 – 1536*. Edited by Imre Nagy, Farkas Deák and Gyula Nagy. Budapest : A Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1879, p. 276, no. 257.

51 ZsO II/1, p. 164, no. 1387.

52 MNL OL DL 14 036.

53 ZsO IV, p. 56, no. 49.

54 Magyar Nemzeti levéltár, Országos Levéltára, Budapest, Diplomatikai Fényképgyűjtemény (MNL

who wished to be buried in the Chapel of the Virgin Mary, which was built outside the borders of the town Oradea.⁵⁵ In 1490, Benedict Csáky requested to be buried on the grounds of the Monastery of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Sălard (Bihar/Bihor County), in the family tomb where his father Francis Csáky was also buried. His funeral should include all the rites customary among the Franciscans, with the appropriate dignity and glory that pertained to him.⁵⁶ Katherine Noffri, the wife of Martin Brcal, wished in a testament from 1495, to be buried in the parish Church of St. Martin in Bojnice. This last will also revealed that her children were buried in the local Chapel of St. Sophia as well.⁵⁷ David of Dombó mentioned four draft horses in his testament from the year 1504, one of which was supposed to be in front of the bier carrying his body. Another request was to be buried in a shirt, stating that the collar of this shirt should be removed.⁵⁸ In the village of Háj (Turóc/Turiec County), Michael Majtén wished to be buried on the south side of the Chapel of St. Anna, attached to the parish Church of St. Katherine, as we learned from his testament written in 1504. Unusually, instructions were also provided regarding the tombstone that would cover his grave. It was to be made of marble with his portrait and coat of arms carved.⁵⁹ The final resting place in the Pauline Monastery of St. Anna in Dobra Kuća was also chosen by Clara, widow of Michael from the Ajtósi family, in the year 1510.⁶⁰ Another example is from 1522, when Ambros Sárkány bequeathed his body to the earth he was born from. He wished to be buried in the Church of St. George situated in his residence in Érd (Pest County, today Érd-Ófalu).⁶¹

During the period of the Middle Ages, some Hungarian nobles obtained the right to be buried in churches or monasteries usually reserved for the members of the royal family from Hungarian kings. One of the few who gained this privilege was Stephen of Rozhanovce, the Count of Temes/Timiş County. In the year 1427, Stephen was allowed by King Sigismund to choose a burial place for himself, his wife, children and brothers anywhere in the Church of the Virgin Mary in Székesfehérvár, and to build an altar or any building, probably a chapel, made of stone there.⁶² Master of the Horse Ladislaus Buzlai from Gregorovce had a similar privilege from the year 1481. King Matthias Corvinus allowed him as well as his wife and children to be buried in the Monastery of the Virgin Mary in Székesfehérvár. The burial place of Ladislaus and his family was defined, in the preserved privilege, as the place in the western part of the monastery, situated to the right behind the entrance through the large gate that was in front of the altar, which the provost of Székesfehérvár

OL DF), sign. 265 284.

55 TelOkl II, p. 114, no. 82.

56 CsáOkl, p. 471.

57 MNL OL DL 62 619.

58 *A Balassa család levéltára 1193 – 1526*. Edited by Iván Borsa. Budapest : Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990, p. 171, no. 471.

59 MAREK 2013, pp. 86, 89.

60 MNL OL DL 35 744.

61 FÜSSY, Tamás. Ákosházi Sárkány Ambrus végrendelete 1522-ből. In *Magyar Történelmi Tár*, 1901, vol. 4, no. 2, p. 139.

62 DVOŘÁKOVÁ 2018, p. 340; MNL OL DL 11 889.

had had built.⁶³

Significant information about the deathbed situation of Hungarian noblemen and noblewomen can be gathered from the testimony of witnesses who were present during the writing of Anna's testament, the wife of Martin Majtényi, in the year 1517. Since her brothers contested her last will right after the funeral, an investigation including the questioning of witnesses followed. From the testimony of Anna's sister-in-law, we learned that when Anna was sick and lying in bed, her confessor Benedict, the parish priest from Iža, reminded her to create a last will. Although Anna was physically exhausted and weak, she was still sane. When she opened her eyes and saw her grieving husband, she called him to her and clearly confessed: "Dearest husband, do not be devastated or sad, if I have to leave this world now, I leave all my earthly belongings to you." At the same time, she asked him not to forget her soul for the love of God and the love of the Mother of God. Anna died shortly after that and psalms were sung for her salvation at her husband's mansion in Nováky.⁶⁴

The chronicle of John Sperfogle, who left a description of the funeral of duchess Hedwig (†1521), the wife of Stephen Zápolya, provides an example of what the funeral of a member of the medieval Hungarian nobility looked like:

The black hearse was being pulled by eight black horses; four people were sitting on it, constantly reading from the psalter. On both sides of the hearse five men were walking and holding burning torches in their hands. Right behind the hearse nobleman George, son of the deceased duchess, was riding a white horse. And behind him about thirty nobles were walking. In front of the hearse but behind the procession, three of her advisors, namely Rossa, Vavrinec and Heyncko, were riding horses. The rest of the household was riding horses and they were together with the people of Levoča in front of the procession. There were about 60 or slightly more riders in addition to those from Levoča. At the end, 24 husars, i.e. Hungarians who were her servants, were walking behind all the carriages (there were 15 of them). Several carriages were carrying women and virgins who were crying at the funeral. It is also important to mention that councillors of Levoča arranged it so that all brotherhoods, craftsmen and guilds were to meet the funeral procession and follow it with their symbols [...] As the funeral procession was passing, the bells of all churches were ringing continuously [...] We should also remind that the brightest duchess was buried at the Spiš Chapter next to her husband. The people of Košice, Levoča, Bardejov, Prešov, Sabinov, Smolník, Gelnica and advocates from thirteen [Spiš] towns and many others were present at her funeral on the Sunday after the Ascension of the Lord, May 12th; even the bishop of Nitra and almost 400 priests and monks attended as well. Those who celebrated the Mass were given 15 denarii and a torch, i.e. ein Fackel, eight small candles and lunch.⁶⁵

63 For more information about specific Hungarian noble families and their members buried in the Székesfehérvár Basilica, see: ENGEL, Pál. Temetkezések a középkori székesfehérvári bazilikában. In *Századok*, 1987, vol. 121, no. 4, p. 630.

64 MAREK 2013, pp. 91–92.

65 KUCHARSKÁ 2014, pp. 9–10.

Pious donations and requiem Masses

The nobles expected that after death, an eternal life in paradise would be ensured by regular and perpetual prayers and Holy Masses. Medieval testaments include only vague references, without specifically emphasizing—but undoubtedly with the expectation—that these were gifts for which the respective clergymen and church institutions were expected to celebrate Masses for the salvation of their souls. On the other hand, there are some with quite clear ideas about the number and regularity of necessary Masses.⁶⁶

As for pious donations, an extensive variety has been seen since the earliest times. The nobles bequeathed a wide range of movable and immovable assets to the church, which they were able to hand over without harming their lives or the lives of their family members. After all, it was for the salvation of their souls. Such donations included parts or whole territories and villages, various appurtenances belonging to the immovable property, specific buildings and their profits, goods, fabrics, clothing or valuables including jewelry and books, but also amounts of money or people, most often from the ranks of servants and vassals. These assets formed a significant part of church property, so it was undoubtedly appropriate to assume some guidance from the church when constructing the last will of Hungarian noblemen and noblewomen.

The testators often had in mind a few church institutions and clergymen when bequeathing donations. For example, in the year 1231, Anna, the wife of *comes* Bors, bequeathed one five-year-old shod horse, kept in a stable to the Dominican Church of St. Margaret in Székesfehérvár; also, to the Dominican Church of St. Katherine in Esztergom one chalice with a palla, previously given to her by King Béla III himself. Additionally, she donated a large carpet or tablecloth to the Dominicans in Bratislava (*domui Posoniensi fratrum predicatorum*), which was brought from Greece and given to her by her mother.⁶⁷ In the year 1274, Master Mojs, the queen's Master of the treasury, the Count of Somogy and Szepes/Spiš County (1274 – 1275), bequeathed one of his villages to the nuns from the Convent of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Margitsziget. Simultaneously, he emphasized that this donation was intended to ensure the salvation of his soul, as it was generally expected to receive such an eternal reward when donating worldly possessions forever.⁶⁸ Another example is from the year 1291, when *comes* Benedict, son of Both, who was the husband of Margareth from the Hont-Pázmány family, for the salvation and comfort of his soul and for eternal happiness as an eternal alms, chose from his possessions—gained thanks to God—a palace or residence in Esz-

66 It is interesting that sometimes such medieval testaments of the Hungarian nobility are encountered without any reference to the church or the clergy, nor any request to ensure prayers for the salvation of the soul of a dying person. This is evident in the testament of John Litteratus, son of Peter from Bar in Pozsony/Bratislava County (today Velký Bar), from 1381. MNL OL DL 50 095. Often, donations are addressed to secular persons, e.g. Peter of Geszt (Borsod County, today's Borsodgeszt), who bequeathed one of his horses to a certain noblewoman, expecting prayers for the salvation of his soul from her. ZsO II/1, p. 203, no. 1724.

67 CDH III/2, pp. 269–270.

68 CDH V/2. Edited by Georgius Fejér. Budae : Typis typogr. regiae universitatis ungaricae, 1829, p. 158.

tergom and bequeathed it to the Premonstratensian Monastery of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Šahy. He also added all the appurtenances, estates and yards adjoined to the palace.⁶⁹ Palatine William Drugeth bequeathed 30 marcas in the year 1330 to the church where he wanted to be buried, while half of this sum was to ensure the celebration of Masses for the salvation of his soul.⁷⁰ In 1389, Master Nicholas of Čeklís bequeathed part of the profit from the toll in Čeklís and half of his vineyard to the local church, expecting daily Masses for the salvation of his soul, and the souls of his wife and parents.⁷¹ He was also generous to Franciscans from the Monastery of the Virgin Mary, located in Bratislava, who were given a certain amount of money. Yet he did not forget to mention the Chapel of St. John the Baptist in the St Martin's Cathedral in Bratislava, which was built and supported by his ancestors. He bequeathed part of the profits from a ship anchored in the Vydrica river for its maintenance.⁷² In 1402, Peter from Geszt mentioned up to six church institutions (the chapel in Vatta, the Monastery of the Virgin Mary in Eger, the Pauline Monastery in Lád and Győr, the Church of St. George in Oszlár in Borsod County, and the Church of St. Michael in today's Borsodgeszt) in his testament. He bequeathed several horses from his stable.⁷³ An exact definition of the number of Masses that were to be celebrated for the salvation of her soul was listed by Margaret from Svätý Kráľ in 1409. She bequeathed one Mass vestment, one tablecloth and one towel or altar cloth to priest Paul from the local church, as well as two Jugerum of land, expecting the celebration of up to 44 Masses. She also bequeathed one ox to the nearby Pauline Monastery of St. Anna in Hangona with the hope that 30 Masses would be celebrated for the salvation of her soul. In addition, she also mentioned a local chaplain, Stephen, bequeathing one pillow or quilt, one canvas or sheet, one hassock and one shirt to him.⁷⁴

In another example from the year 1413, according to the testament of Ladislaus, the son of Voivode Frank from Szécsény, one Mass was to be celebrated daily for the salvation of the souls of his ancestors as well as his own in the Chapel of the Holy Cross in the Franciscan church in Szécsény. Ladislaus supported this chapel as well as the monastery itself by bequeathing an entire village, 200 golden florins, the annual tax from that year, half of the harvest, silver that he had stored at the goldsmith in order to make a chalice, gold, his own badge of The Order of the Dragon, which was to be sold and the profit was to be used for decorating the entire chapel, as well as 500 sheep.⁷⁵ Thomas, son of George from Bogačevo (Belovár-Kőrös/Bjelovar-Križevici County), also thought about life after death in his testament from the year 1420. He bequeathed his

69 ŽAŽOVÁ 2017, p. 133.

70 CDH VIII/3, p. 506, no. 221.

71 TURCSÁNY 2009, p. 4.

72 *A Pécz nemzetség Apponyi ágának az Apponyi grófok családi levéltárában őrizett oklevelei I. 1241 – 1526*. Edited by Ernő Kammerer. Budapest : Franklin-Társulat, 1906, p. 221, no. 100.

73 ZsO II/1, p. 203, no. 1724.

74 MNL OL DL 14 036.

75 DVOŘÁKOVÁ 2018, p. 339; ZsO IV, p. 56, no. 49.

one homestead to the Church of St. Martin in Kalnik (Belovár-Kőrös/Bjelovar-Križevici County) and he specifically wished that they celebrate a Mass for his sins together with a prayer for the dead every Tuesday.⁷⁶ On the other hand, Katherine from Hlohovec, the widow of Mačvan ban Imrich Kont, had a simple request when, shortly before her death in 1422, she bequeathed her jewelry to the Pauline Monastery in Csatka (Veszprém County): prayers for the salvation of her and her husband's souls.⁷⁷ In the same year, Ladislaus Malý from Obyce (Bars/Tekov County), a familiar of the widow of Nicholas Forgách, wrote his last will in Gýmeš Castle, in the presence of the envoy of Zobor Convent. He entrusted his wife, sons and all his possessions under the protection of the aforementioned widow. He also asked her to finance the pilgrimage of one of her people to Rome to the grave of St. Apostles, St. Peter and Paul for the salvation of his soul.⁷⁸ In 1431, Katherine from Štítnik could afford to write a request in her testament to the church donated by her family to celebrate a perpetual Mass for the salvation of a soul. The local priests were to regularly and perpetually pray not only for the salvation of her soul, but also of her relatives, including the soul of Ladislaus of Štítnik, at that time the *provisor* of the Crusaders of the Holy Trinity property in Felhévíz (today part of Budapest) and also the chancellor of Queen Barbara. She promised priests four silver bowls, one silver cup, three simpler bowls together with the village *Csákány (Gömör County, at the present time, an abandoned village in the Imola district in Hungary), as well as an extremely rare gift: her crosses, containing relics of the saints for their prayers. She also bequeathed one cassock to the priest of Štítnik as well as to his chaplain, so that they could pray to God. She allowed relatives to take some of her belongings and to place them on the altar as an offering during Mass, clearly for the salvation of her soul.⁷⁹ Unlike Katherine, who thought only of the church donated by her family in Štítnik in her testament, Margareth, the widow of William from Pozdišovce (Zemplén/Zemplín County), mentioned several churches and monasteries in her testament; the Franciscan Monastery in Céka (Zemplén County, today Lácacséke), the Pauline Monastery in Martonya (also known as Háromhegy), the Church of St. George in Pozdišovce, the Church of St. George in Szin (a village from Torna County), the Franciscan Monastery in Humenné and the Church of St. George in Szentes. She bequeathed several hundred marcas to them, as well as valuables from her closets and chests. In only one case—when leaving certain things to the Pauline Monastery in Martonya—did she ask for the celebration of a perpetual Mass for the salvation of her soul.⁸⁰

The testament of Thomas of Torysa from 1490 includes a long list of church institutions. He mentioned several churches on his property in Szepes/Spiš and Sáros/Šariš Counties; the Church of St. Katherine in today's Velká Lom-

76 ZsO VII. Edited by Elemér Mályusz and Iván Borsa. Budapest : Magyar Országos Levéltár, 2001, p. 338, no. 1444.

77 GÁLIK 2017, p. 8.

78 ZsO IX. Edited by Iván Borsa and Norbert C. Tóth. Budapest : Magyar Országos Levéltár, 2004, p. 229, no. 706.

79 MNL OL DF 265 284.

80 MNL OL DL 85 207.

nica, the Church of St. Stephen in Krivany, the Church of St. Michael in Kömlő (Heves County), a church in Ľubotín, the Church of All Saints in Kamenice, a church in Lúčka, the Church of St. Margareth in today's Červenica pri Sabinove, the Church of St. Martin in Lipany, the Church of the Holy Cross in Kežmarok, the St. Martin's Cathedral in Spišská Kapitula. For these donations, he expected from some of them, the celebration of a perpetual Mass for the salvation of his soul.⁸¹ On the contrary, in the year 1491, Bridget (daughter of John Noffri), wife of Albrecht Forgách from Gýmeš, thought of only one monastery in her testament, namely the Pauline Monastery of the Forgách family in Horné Lefantovce, which was donated by her family. She expected prayers for the salvation of not only her soul, but also her mother's, for bequeathing non-specific property.⁸² Bridget's cousin Katherine, the daughter of Kremnica captain Valentín Noffri, mentioned in her last will from 1495, primarily a parish church situated in the family residence of the Noffri family, in Bojnice, and its Chapel of St. Sophia. She bequeathed several movable and immovable assets to it, expecting from the local *provisor* a regular celebration of two Masses a week; on Mondays for the dead and on Fridays in memory of the Passion of Christ. In addition, a Mass was to be celebrated on the next day after the vigil of St. Michael the Archangel, and it should include nine readings with hymns. This was also to be repeated after the feast of All Saints.⁸³ In the year 1493, Margareth, the wife of George from Putnok, mentioned several sacred buildings and the clergy in her testament. She bequeathed several of her personal belongings to the Church of the Virgin Mary in Putnok, to the Franciscan Monastery in Sajóvámos (Borsod County) and Abaújszántó (Abaúj County), to the Church of St. Margareth in Šivetice, to the Church of St. Katherine in Jelšava, to the Church of St. Andrew in Tornaszentandrás (Borsod County), to the Church of St. George in Sajóvelzd (Borsod County), to priests, deacons and an altar server from Putnok. For the donations, she ordered the latter to celebrate a total of 71 Masses for the salvation of her soul.⁸⁴

On the other hand, in 1502, Michael Majtényi expected for his testamentary bequests, in his first testament, a regular Sunday celebration of a Mass together with musical setting, dedicated to St. Anna in the Chapel of St. Anna (standing next to a parish church). If a major festive holiday, such as Christmas, Easter or Pentecost, fell on a Sunday, the Mass was to be celebrated for that holiday. On other days, Masses were to be celebrated in the following order: on Mondays for the dead with musical setting, on Tuesdays to the apostles, on Wednesdays to Saints Cosmas and Damian with a prayer to Saints Fabian and Sebastian and Cyprian, on Thursdays to the Most Holy Body of Christ with musical setting, on Fridays to the five wounds of our Lord Jesus Christ and on Saturdays to the Virgin Mary with a prayer and to Saint Katherine.⁸⁵ However, after Michael became seriously ill, he wrote another testament in

81 MNL OL DL 69 077.

82 MNL OL DL 19 749.

83 MNL OL DL 62 619.

84 MNL OL DL 90 215.

85 MAREK 2013, p. 85.

1504, again writing about the Chapel of St. Anna, bequeathing several movable and immovable assets (e.g. the office of a *Schultheiß* along with a mill, arable land, meadows, two hundred golden florins, the village of Karlová). With the aim of regularly celebrated Masses for the salvation of his soul, he also mentioned other churches and their *provisors*, namely the Church of St. Nicholas in Nováky, where his parents were buried, the Monastery of the Virgin Mary in Turčany, the priest in Svätý Michal (today Turčiansky Michal), who was supposed to celebrate a spoken Masses, and for the same purpose, the priests in Mošovce, in St. Martin and in Slovenské Pravno. Michael also bequeathed 150 golden florins to the Paulin Fathers in Horné Lefantovce.⁸⁶ In his testament of 1515, Stephen Máriássy wrote about a lector of the Chapter Church of St. Martin, bequeathing two silver chalices. He also left one chalice with one spoon to the parish priest of his native village Markušovce, and one cloak lined with squirrel fur to the priest from Spišský Hrušov.⁸⁷ Katherine Héderváry directly begged her husband Stephen from Rozhanovce to arrange seven spoken Masses before her death in her testament from 1519. Passages about the suffering of Christ would also be read during those Masses and all told up to 70 Masses were to be celebrated in her memory. Katherine also asked her husband to never forget her, but on the contrary, to always pray for the salvation of her soul.⁸⁸ George of Drienčany believed in the perpetual celebration of Masses for the salvation of his soul in the Pauline Monastery in Háromhegy, for which he bequeathed one of his villages and its appurtenances to the monastery in 1521. In order to ensure prayers for his mother, Ursula, the sister of Stephen and Emeric Zápolya, he also bequeathed 25 florins to the abovementioned monastery. In addition, he ordered the purchase of one vestment of white camuca with his money, which was to be placed on the main altar of the monastery church. He also left a blue chasuble made of purple fabric to Pauline Fathers. George did not forget the priest from Nagy Túr (Szolnok County, today Mezőtúr) either, bequeathing twelve florins to pray for him.⁸⁹ Ambros Sárkány was exceptionally generous in 1522. He bequeathed all his clothing (or the profits from its sale), a thousand golden florins, a house in Buda and a quarter of all his silver belongings to the Church of St. George in Érd, where he wished to be buried and where three or four votive Masses were to be celebrated for the salvation of his soul. During the festive days, the church was to be decorated with images of fourteen saints and the Virgin Mary, images that were located in his house in Érd and were made at his request.⁹⁰ In 1523, Stephen of Rozhanovce wished for the regular celebration of Masses on Fridays to the Passion of Christ and on Saturdays to the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary. In exchange, he bequeathed one of his villages with all its appurtenances for eternity to the Chapel of the Blessed

86 MAREK 2013, pp. 86–87.

87 MNL OL DL 75 131.

88 HédOkI I, p. 564, no. 390.

89 MNL OL DL 72 196.

90 FÜSSY 1901, pp. 139–140.

Virgin Mary.

Aforementioned Masses were to be celebrated by the priest from Višňov (Zemplén/Zemplín County), the priest and the vice-archdeacon from Vranov and Topľou with two chaplains. Certain sums of money were bequeathed to those clerics in return.⁹¹ Anton of Pavlovce, who was preparing to fight the Ottomans in July 1526, bequeathed some of his villages to the Eger Chapter in exchange for regular Sunday—to the Holy Trinity—and Friday—to the Passion of the Lord—Masses in the chapels of the Chapter Church at the Eger Castle. Those chapels were dedicated to his and his brother's patrons: Michael the Archangel and St. Anton.⁹² In addition to directly supporting the run of the given church institutions or providing financial support for the celebration of desired Masses, the Hungarian nobles also thought of other ways to ensure prayers for the salvation of their souls by funding the construction, reconstruction or maintenance of these institutions, or even by providing interior equipment and possible repairs. Of course, they expected the most peaceful transition to eternal life for this support.⁹³

Frequently, nobles bequeathed fabrics, secular clothes or damaged pieces of clothing to close church institutions and the clergy. Garments belonging to priests' accessories were to be sewn from those pieces. Just as often, silver spoons, cups or other objects were bequeathed to church institutions. These were to be melted down and converted into objects used in the liturgy.⁹⁴ Last but not least, it is necessary to note that the Hungarian nobility prepared for life after death with remorse and charitable thinking, which was transformed into direct bequests for the sick and vassals. These passages in testaments were meant to mean nothing more than awareness and regret of any bad deeds

91 MNL OL DL 89 173.

92 DÉTSHY, Mihály. Az utolsó Pálóci végrendelete. In CSUKOVITS, Enikő (ed.) *Tanulmányok Borsa Iván tiszteletére*. Budapest : Magyar Országos Levéltár, 1998, p. 38.

93 For example, in 1390, Katherine, widow of Peter of Sása (Pozsony/Bratislava County, today, part of the village Lehnice) mentioned the construction of a choir loft in St. Martin's Cathedral in Bratislava in her testament. ZsO I, p. 200, no. 1797. The former Hungarian palatine Leustach of Jelšava (1392 – 1396) wrote his will in 1401, when he was far beyond the borders of the Kingdom of Hungary, in Ottoman captivity by the sultan's vassal Francesco Gattilius, on the island of Lesbos. Right at the beginning of his testament, he mentioned two monasteries. Out of respect for Jesus Christ and to ensure the salvation of his soul, he left 150 golden florins to each of them for the construction or completion of the Monastery of the Holy Cross in Prievidza and the Monastery of the Order of Preachers in today's Sajókaza (Borsod County). ZsO II/1, pp. 6–7, no. 36. Speaking of the monastery in Prievidza, according to the latest findings, it was the only monastery of the Celestines, a reformed branch of the Benedictine Order, in the Kingdom of Hungary. RÁBIK, Vladimír. *Monumenta Vaticana Slovaciae*. Slovacikálny výskum vo Vatikánskom tajnom archíve. In MARÁZ, Karel (ed.) *Mikulovské kolejní kabinety pomocných věd historických 1*. Brno : Ivo Šperát, 2017, p. 264. Thomas of Torysa contributed 10 florins for the repair of the Maria Magdalena Chapel in Krivany (Sáros/Šariš County), for the consecration of the Chapel of St. Thomas in Lipany and 50 florins for making a chalice. MNL OL DL 69 077.

94 For example, in 1431, Katherine of Štítnik ordered two pieces of cassocks to be sewn into several cloaks for a parish priest of Štítnik and his chaplains. In 1493, Margareth, the wife of George from Putnok, bequeathed a piece of silk for the purpose of making a humeral veil—a scarf covering the priest's shoulders. In addition, she ordered to sell her belt worth 12 florins and to use the amount to finance the painting of St. Ursula and her companions in the exterior of the church in Putnok. In a part of the testament of Anton from Pavlovce and Uhom, he requested removal of gold and silver parts from his silver-gilded spurs, in the year 1526. They would then be made into crosses, chalices and ampoules, used in the liturgy for wine, water or perhaps for oils. MNL OL DF 265 284; MNL OL DL 90 215; DÉTSHY 1998, p. 44.

during their life as well as compassion for the damaged, the poor and the sick. Such expressed regret, even if only at the last moment on one's deathbed, was meant to contribute to the testator's successful transition to eternity. Therefore, it is not surprising that we may find references to repentance of sins quite often in testaments.⁹⁵

Conclusion

Although it cannot be exactly confirmed whether all the aforementioned facts speak about the actual state of the nobility religiousness and their ideas about life after death, it is clear that at least the effort and plans to ensure the posthumous salvation of a soul were a very strong part of Hungarian nobility life. It is clear that the recommendations of medieval theologians and preachers on the correct way of living, to avoid damnation and attain eternal life, had a certain influence in the medieval Hungarian noble society. This was most markedly manifested in donations for representatives of the domestic church and in the expected liturgical acts performed in return for these donations.

95 In 1291, *comes* Benedict, son of Botha, husband of Margareth from the Hont-Pázmány family, mentioned in his testament the destruction and burning down of the villages belonging to the Archdiocese of Esztergom, which had been done under his leadership. In remorse, he bequeathed one of his villages to the Archdiocese with all the benefits and appurtenances. CDH VI/1. Edited by Georgius Fejér. Buda: Typis typogr. regiae universitatis ungaricae, 1830, p. 170. In 1330, William Drugeth also remembered the bad deeds he had committed during his life—albeit under the authority of the king. Among other things, he wrote about his unauthorized occupation of today's village Nižná Myšľa, which he ordered to be returned to the original owner. He also regretted the decision to hang the advocate of Gelnica Nerengár, ordering compensation to his surviving relatives and requesting celebration of Masses for his soul. CDH III/2, p. 270. In 1401, Leustach from Jelšava, thinking of his inevitable death in Ottoman captivity, showed compassion for other soldiers of the Kingdom of Hungary. Although they escaped the Ottomans, they could not get home to the Kingdom of Hungary because of poverty 150 gold florins were bequeathed for their rescue. ZsO II/1, p. 6, no. 36.