

# The effect of monks in the Hungarian Urban Design and Landscape Forming

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**Abstract:** Hungary has a specific history. The monks were settled after the settlement of the Magyars in Hungary. The appearance of the new monks and the continuous proselytization were able to make the country become an elemental part of the Catholic Europe. Therefore the monks had a great role in the urban design and landscape forming. The orders can be divided into three groups based on the relations between the location, activity and landscape forming. In the first category there are those orders which were present in Hungary, but are not substantial in the landscape forming. In the second group there are those orders which settled in large free areas, had significant donations, their main activity was farming, so their impact on the landscape was outstanding. In the third group there are monks who settled in towns, built monasteries, so they had an important role in the formulation of the city structure. I am describing these orders in my essay.

**Key words:** Monk, Landscape, Hungarian urban design

## Introduction

The environment has been formed by the humans. The landscape changes continuously because of the socio-economic conditions. The landscape changes because of the extent and nature of the influence. In the Hungarian history, the landscape history and landscape forming was important due to the maturation of the settlements in the time of Saint Stephen. The defensive-, central- and economic affairs had significant role in the settlements' establishments. The administrative-, commercial- and information functions have increased the central role of the settlements. This central role was advanced by the education-, health- and cultural institutions. The emergence of the monks had a further impetus on the cities. We can know the burden of the landscape forming, via the landscape forming activity of the humans, the humans' ideas in the land-usage. We can see the conscious activities in the landscape forming via the examples of landscape forming, landscape history and landscape ecology. (Csemez, 1996) So my choice was the orders. I will describe the effects of the monks on the urban design and landscape forming.

## Orders in Hungary

Christianity conquered Europe very quickly. Its spreading was influenced by many factors. The early Cistercian persecutions hindered the advancement of the belief all across Europe. The turning point was in 380 AD. on 28<sup>th</sup> February, when Emperor Theodosius decreed that everyone had to follow Jesus 's teaching in the Roman Empire. Then, the religion's spreading was unstoppable. (<http://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kereszt%C3%A9ny%C3%A9g>) The orders were formed. The Hungarians encountered the Christianity at the first time during their migration. The first order was the Benedictine in Hungary in 960. The first reimbursements were the period of Taksony (913?-972), but the first successes were during Géza (972-997). According to the great legend of Saint Stephen (1077) the monks were provided: *"Everywhere they established the holy foundations of the churches, they raised the cloister of the canons, the monastic communities began flourishing. (SRH. II. 383. Leg. ford. 26-27.)* The first monastery was founded in Saint Márton hill in 996, during Géza, in Pannonhalma. The foundation of monastery grew then. After Saint Benedict's sons, the Cistercians came to our country. They were called by Géza II. (1141-1162). Their first monastery was in Cikádor (1142) (today: Bátaszék). They were followed by the Premonstratensians, who followed Saint Augustine's canon. Then different orders came to our country: the Carthusians, the Dominicans, the Franciscans, the equestrian orders. As a result of our specific historical events the monks' history was different and specific in Europe. The initial recovery was interrupted by the Mongol invasion (1240-1242) in the middle ages. The next low point was the Turkish occupation (16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century), when the monks disappeared. Because of secularization of the Regulation of Joseph II (1782) the most monasteries were closed. They returned to Hungary in the early 1800s, and they worked again, but after 150 years, they were forced to leave again in the time of communism. After the regime they returned and they started to advocate the idea of monasticism again. (Török, 1990)

## Landscape Forming and Urban Design

The landscape forming of the monks depended on several factors. The orders can be divided into three groups based on the relations between the location, activity and landscape forming. In the first category there are those orders which were present in Hungary, but are not substantial in the landscape forming. In this group there are the knightly orders whose members were not monks, but secular knights who lived under monastic regulations. These are the Templars, the Hospitallers and the smaller nurse orders. They had a significant role in the Crusades and the surveillance of borders, they were always moving. (Török, 1990) In the second group there are those orders which settled in large free areas, had significant donations, their main activity

was farming, so their impact on the landscape was outstanding. They settled down in solitary, uninhabited places, they lived for God, but they had to cultivate the land to live on. The landscape changed thanks to their farming. In the third group there are monks who settled in towns, built monasteries, so they had important role in the formulation of the city's structure. In this group we can find the begging orders, the teaching orders and the healing orders. (Gecse, 1995)

The landscape forming activity of the orders is characterized by these two citation.

*“Who gives us back the days when we worked all day together? When we cut trees, we made extraction of stone, and other time we planted saplings or watered?”(Nazinia Saint Gergely wrote a letter to Saint Basileios):” First of all /we have to choose/ farming, because it provides the food for our existence...” (I. Aszk 38.)*

At first I will write about the farming orders because of the citation and after that, about the urban design of the monks.

### The farming orders

*“But the servants of the Church were not only the providers of spiritual goods. They were educators, leaders of the people at farming, too... They destroyed forests, dried out marshes, dug channels... Villages were generated. “- wrote Menyhért Érdújhelyi. (Érdújhelyi, 1903, 3.)* In Hungary, the three main farming orders are the Benedictines, the Cistercians and the Premonstratensians. Not only was their farming successful, but also the landscape was changed. The Pauline and the Basilian should also be mentioned.

The members of the Cistercian order established flourishing agriculture everywhere, contributing to the reviving of the tillage and the fruit- and grape cultivation, raising the standards. (Gecse, 1995) The agriculture of the order was successful, because they organised the duties better, they pre-planned the utilization of soil, compared to the feudal farming. They worked themselves, and their life and their future depended on the success of their work. They made farming subunits, grangias. In those places, where the climatic and soil conditions allowed, vineyards were established. The gardens were created both on flatlands and the hilly country; on the hillsides they made terraces which eased the cultivation. (Lékai, 1991)

The centre of the Hungarian male Cistercian life is Zirc. King Béla III founded the abbey in 1182. (Hervay, Legeza and Szacsavay, 1997) From the beginning the agriculture was significant and dominant; the continuous change of the original landscape was the result of that. The landscape forming has been visible since the years of 1700.

A 1776 depiction demonstrates the monastery's building and the regular parcels on its neighbourhood. We can see that in this place there are only the monastery and the soil that became cultivated, because the forests were fall by the monks. The lands were surrounded by the remaining forest. The first military survey originates from 1784 (Figure 1). The settlement was due to the presence of the order, because the viable places had power to modulate the settlement which suffered from the shocks but did not disappear, but were re-populated, and they were blooming again duly owing to the presence of the order. (Tóth, 1998) The appearance of a settlement means a considerable change in the landscape, as the settlement appears as a new landscape element. The fishing ponds were created by the monks by swelling the brooks up. It is visible that between the two depictions what kind of considerable changes ensued in the landscape, thanks to the work of monks. The next detailed depiction originates from 1805 (Figure 2), on which the increase of the settlement and the usage of the areas are clearly discernible, the number of the fishing ponds decreased, and the ornamental garden and the arboretum, which are in the monastery's direct environment, had already appeared here. The abbey's donations were in Bakony, Fejér county and Mezőföld. On each area they adapted to the local conditions, so they cultivated and shaped the landscape.

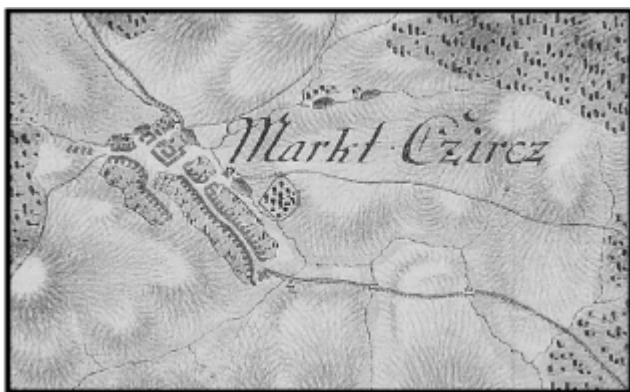


Figure 1: The first military survey of Zirc (1784)  
(The first military survey, 1784, IX 17)



Figure 2: Zirc from 1805  
(Veszprém County Archives)

The watchword of abbeyes is „*Cruce et aratro*” at the Benedictines, that is with “a cross and with a plow”. The Benedictine monasteries established flourishing agriculture during a short time all over Europe. Townships and villages were born at the foot of monasteries. (Puskely, 2006)

The centre of the national Benedictine order is Pannonhalma, which is the earliest founded monastery. It was founded by Grand Prince Géza in 996, but that work was finished by St. Stephen. (Romhányi, 2000) The farming was on the St. Martin’s Hill and the surrounding area from the 11<sup>th</sup> century, at bottom of the slope and in the valleys there was arable cultivation, three-crop rotation was applied while on the slopes there were vineyards. (Puskely, 2006) For the order to be able to do farming, it also was necessary to destroy the forests. On a 1680 depiction (Figure 3) the monastery’s building is well visible. The depiction was made after the expulsion of the Turkish, and accurately reflects the fact that during the occupation the area was completely deserted, the nature took control of the area. The settlers broke up virgin lands again, but the growing population prompted them to make many great cultivated areas. Especially the forests’ clearing was severe at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The new lands were taken away from forests, pasture, fields and completely useless areas. The names show this, as well: Old Pines, Forest bottom, Flat, Little Field. The vines were replanted, and also to new areas. The wine-growing was the main occupation in this area. The pace of development was fast. The cultivation methods and pace were adjusted to the needs and capabilities. (Tóth, 1998) The following representation is the first military survey, it was made in 1784. It can show how much development and transformation had been in this area. The settlement continued to grow, in the hill the viniculture was carried on, and while in the surrounding areas there were fields, and on the not arable, steep slopes there were woods. The river, at the foot of the mountain, was inflated in several places. The second military survey was made in this area between 1846-47 (Figure 4). The areas of the viniculture were grown, this shows that this area was suitable for this agriculture. The 1880 survey shows that the area of the vines was reduced, but it still defines the landscape. The damming disappeared, a swampy, moorland area took shape on its place.



Figure 3: The abbey in 1680  
(Iconismus astorum urbium et regionum Hungariae ex Museo Hungarico, Depiction 30.)

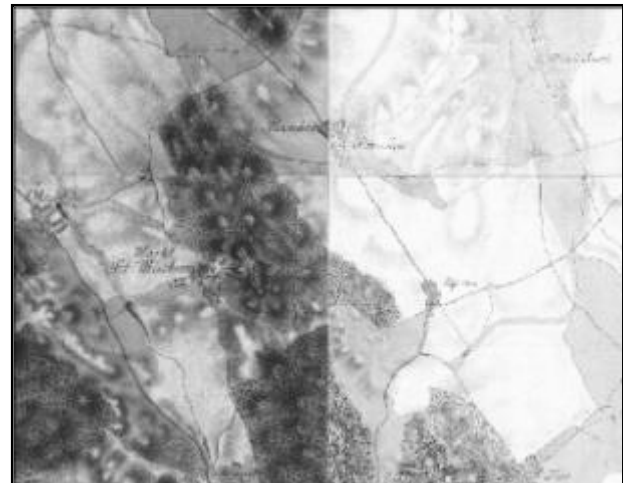


Figure 4: Pannonhalma in the second military survey  
(The second military survey 1846-47, XXVII 50)

The Premonstratens settled down on bleak and lonely places. Trees were destroyed, lands were dug to be suitable for farming. As their writing said, they made flourishing agriculture with hard work, each monastery was transformed into paradise. (Takács, 1905) Their work was the creation of gardens, draining of swamps, usage of the water of springs and streams, the granges were formed farther of the monasteries, and then they expanded into villages, agricultural towns. (Puskely, 2006)

### Urban design

Europe was characterized by the economic development and urbanization in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. There was a growing gap between the rich and the poor. The poverty ideal was emphasized at the orders in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when the begging orders were formed, the Franciscans and Dominicans. They lived working and begging, so they settled down in cities. For their settlement, establishing a house was enough where they could live. In the beginning they lived simply, but after that they had donation of the nobels and kings, they lived better, began large-scale buildings. (Török, 1990) Religious, educational and medical centers were made in the city, around them other secular buildings appeared in the future. So a separate urban fabric was established which influenced the way of the urban constructions.

In the middle ages the attendance number of begging orders was one of the features of the urbanization. The more monasteries appeared in the city, the city got bigger. The Franciscans were represented in all big cities and in the important market towns. The Dominicans settled down in the most important cities, while the Agota hermits settled down only in the cathedral towns. The Paulines, like the Franciscan, had many buildings. The location of the monks was specific in the city, the same as for the farming orders. They built their monasteries in the city where traffic was much, people gathered in large numbers temporarily and they could build in the city centrewith royal permission. If the city did not have space, they built at the edge of the town, near the defenses. The location depended on the city on which activities they made. Whose function was the education and the pastoral, they built in the centre or near the centre, while those function was the medication, they built only at the edge of town, but along the traffic roads, bridges, city gates. This was due to the fear of the disease and of the religion. The location

depended on the role of the building as well. The bishop buildings were in the prominent, confirmed place in the city, often connected to the city wall, because of security reasons. These were the most prominent building in the city. The schools were in the neighbourhood of the bishop's palace or the cathedral. The churches and monasteries of the different orders were scattered within the city wall. (*De Cevins, 2003*)

I would lift a city from medieval Hungary's area. Bratislava. Due to its location, Bratislava was in the focus during the history. It was a royal and religious centre, royal city and place of the Hungarian parliament.

([http://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pozsony\\_t%C3%B6rt%C3%A9nelme](http://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pozsony_t%C3%B6rt%C3%A9nelme)) When we see the medieval description (*Figure 5*), the first number is the royal church, number seven is the Franciscan church and monastery, and the number nine is the town hall around the market place. Outside the city wall there are three churches. These medieval town structure has been preserved to this day with the buildings, too. If we look at the various-age maps (*Figure 6-10*), they show that the structure of the city have not change anything around the religious building.

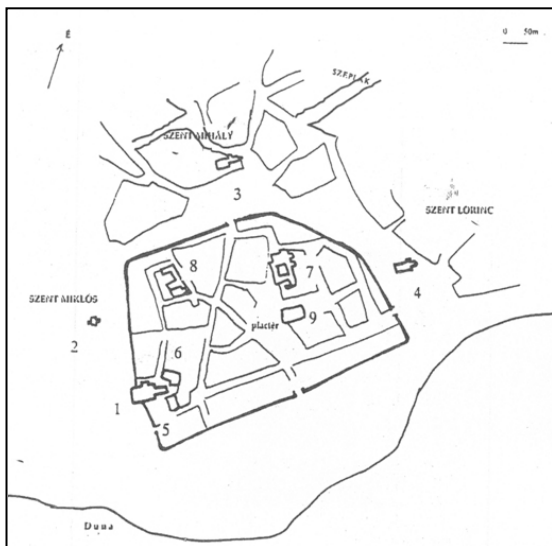


Figure 5: Bratislava in the medieval ages  
(*De Cevins, M. M. ,2003*)

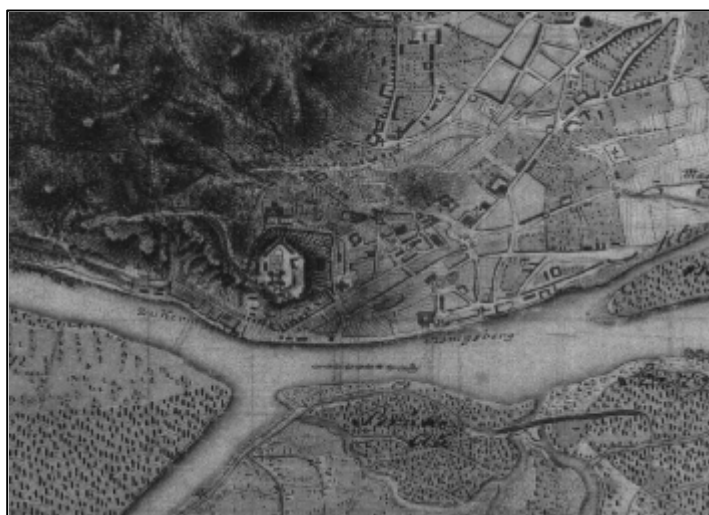


Figure 6: Bratislava in the first military survey  
(*The first military survey, 1782-85, VI 8*)



Figure 7: Bratislava in the second military survey  
(*The second military survey, 1840-47, XXIV 45*)



Figure 8: Bratislava today  
(*Google Earth*)



Figure 9: The Franciscan church and monastery today  
(Own photo)



Figure 10: The market place today  
(Own photo)

## Conclusion

As you can see the orders' activity and its settlement is closely connected to each other, and through this change their impact on the landscape varied the urban design. At first via the demonstrated domestic and foreign example it can be seen, that farming and landscape forming are connected to each other, but its significance and extension change continuously. Initially the aim was, the interest of the assurance of the self-sufficiency, the more land was feature of under cultivation, this activity in the case of the farming orders was well-organized and planned, for all works it had the aim and its way. The initial changes were the biggest changes in the landscape, because, where earlier forest or barren was, the monastery was built, and they made tillages. In the course of the centuries the landscape changed, because of the habits, the values and the order it-self working was transformed, so the farming, which was the main source of living, was sidelined into 20<sup>th</sup> century, the neighbourhood was populated duly for the processes of urbanization, and other revenue sources were provided for the living of the order. I have examined several cities in the urban design of the monks. I can conclude that the religious buildings have had structure-forming impact. The developed medieval urban structure was preserved around the religious building throughout the centuries. More and more religious and secular buildings were built around the square. The building is preserved for posterity, or disappeared, but the urban structure survived until the present day.

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