



CHAPTER OF THE M. A. THESIS

THE CISTERCIAN MONASTERY AND THE MEDIEVAL URBAN DEVELOPMENT OF ZAGREB

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Medieval Zagreb consisted of two urban cores: Gradec, a free royal city chartered by King Béla IV in 1242, and Zagreb, the episcopal see and the seat of the cathedral chapter from 1093–1094. By the time Zagreb began to assume the role of the capital of Croatia at the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the early modern period (the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries), the term *Zagreb* had come to designate the entire urban agglomeration. For the purpose of this paper, the term Zagreb will be used in the restricted medieval sense of the bishop's and chapter's town. The term *Gradec* will refer to the medieval free royal town.

The polycentric urban shape of medieval Zagreb was due to several ecclesiastical institutions having acted as settlement foci. While the assumption of such a role by the episcopal see, the cathedral chapter or the mendicant houses was a common practice in church-dominated towns, the appearance of a Cistercian abbey in urban surroundings, and its subsequent role as an urban nucleus, is a peculiarity without parallel either elsewhere in Croatia or in Hungary.

However, an explanation for this unusual Cistercian position can be offered in terms of the ecclesiastical and economic history of the wider Zagreb area in the Middle Ages, as well as in the light of recent research on the Cistercians. The latter has made it possible to regard the economic activities of this order beyond the limited scope of its agricultural involvement.

In the Middle Ages, the Cistercian order had two monasteries in the Zagreb area. The earlier one, the monastery of the Virgin Mary, or of St. James,¹ was situated near Zagreb on an island of the river Sava. Between 1307 and 1315, the monastery was moved to Zagreb. Reasons for the transfer are not evident in surviving documents. The floods of the river Sava might have been one of the reasons;² however, ecclesiastical and economic factors are most likely to have drawn the Cistercians to this peculiar location.

The bishopric of Zagreb with its cathedral chapter was the center of a large diocese, covering the region of medieval Slavonia. Its network of church institutions not only played an important role in the ecclesiastical organization of the region, but also helped incorporate it politically into the Hungarian-Croatian kingdom.

The foundation of the bishopric at the end of the eleventh century, and the consequent development of a network of archdeaconries and parishes was the first phase of a larger process in which church institutions acted in the ecclesiastical and political internal organization of Slavonia. In the twelfth century these secular church organizations were joined by monastic institutions, namely those of the military orders. However, only with the arrival of the Cistercians and new mendicant orders in the thirteenth century did a network of monastic institutions parallel to that of the diocese, archdeaconries and parishes appear. The spread of monasteries in the thirteenth century may be indicative of the later development of medieval Slavonia: as the Zagreb episcopal see and its secular church network had already secured its ecclesiastical and political background, the appearance of

¹ Both patrocina appear in documents. The monastery was known as: *de insula Sancti Jacobi*, *sancti Jacobi de insula Savi* (*Zava, Zawa, Zasca*), *Sancti Jacobi de insula Savi iuxta Zagrabiam*, *Sancta Maria de insula Aegidii* (*Egidii*), *Beata Maria in Aegidii insula*. See I. Ostojčić, *Benediktinci u Hrvatskoj* [Benedictines in Croatia] III (Split, 1966), 224; also as "claustrum Sancte Mariae Virginis iuxta ecclesiam Sancti Jacobi in insula Egidii", see F. Hervay, *Repertorium historicum Ordinis Cisterciensis in Hungaria*, *Bibliotheca Cisterciensis* 7 (Rome, 1984), 200.

² The River Sava has changed its bed many times over the centuries and caused flooding of the surrounding area until the 20th century when regulations were made. The topography of the pre-river area has changed as well. Islands mentioned in medieval documents, including the island with the Cistercian monastery, disappeared long ago. Therefore, the precise location of the earlier Cistercian monastery is not known. However, the toponym *Savska Opatovina*, in the western part of the present-day town (meaning "the abbey's lands or possessions", or "the abbot's lands or possessions"), suggests this is the possible site. The place has not yet been excavated.

monasteries might have had more to do with the region's economy and settlement development.

The importance of the bishop's see and capitular seat may explain the concentration of monastic institutions, and, specifically, the establishment of a Cistercian monastery first near Zagreb and later in the episcopal town itself. The Templars were already situated in the vicinity in the twelfth century. The Franciscans and Dominicans settled in the mid-thirteenth century (the former in the town, the latter in the *suburbium*),³ and the Cistercians eventually settled in the town at the beginning of the fourteenth century.

An economic explanation for the settlement of Cistercians in Zagreb also requires a consideration of the regional circumstances. The mother-church of the Zagreb monastery is not certain. However, several surviving lists of Cistercian abbeys attribute the Zagreb monastery to the Clairvaux line of descent. It is assumed that the Zagreb monastery descended from the royal foundation of Topusko (Toplica)⁴ settled by Clairvaux. The Clairvaux-Topusko line of descent of the Zagreb monastery seems plausible from an economic perspective. The abbey of Topusko was founded in 1205 by King Andrew II, and endowed with large estates extending over the entire county of Gora. The king declared it a royal abbey (*regale monasterium*), and granted it exemption. Moreover, the abbot obtained judicial rights and other rights previously exercised in the territory by either Slavonian dukes or *comites de Gora*. The abbey was also given the royal right of collecting taxes in the given territories and had its own official for that purpose, *comes curialis*. The abbey had its own soldiers (*castrenses*), keeps (*turres*) and fortified places (*castra, domos pro defensione*).⁵ It also had a number of granges. The abbey soon developed a strong economy. For example, during the papacy of John

³ The bishop might have initiated the settlement of the Dominicans in Zagreb. See I. Kampuš and I. Karaman, *Tisućljetni Zagreb [Zagreb One Thousand Years Old]* (Zagreb, 1985), 25. The Franciscans, strangely enough, did not settle in the neighboring free royal town of Gradec, but in the church town of Zagreb which at that time had very few laymen to whom they could preach. However, the topographical position of their convent suggests they were oriented towards Gradec.

⁴ L. Janauscek, *Originum Cisterciensium I* (Vienna, 1877), 259: *Qui fratres unde misi fuerint certo non constat; sed cum monasterium S. Jacobi in paucis, in quibus commemoratur tabulis in linea Claravallensi appareat, id vicinae Toplicae filiam fuisse suspicamur*. Another opinion affiliates Zagreb's monastery to the Morimond line of descent. See F. Hervay, *op. cit.*, 200. Topusko is situated about 70 km southeast of Zagreb.

⁵ Cf. I. Ostojić, *op. cit.*, 210; see also T. Smičiklas, *Codex diplomaticus regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae VIII* (Zagreb, 1910), 443 (further CD).

XXII (1316–1334), Topusko had to pay a considerable sum of 300 florins in papal taxes.⁶ Large revenues collected from the abbey's estates and its strong economic development propelled its entry into the market. The abbey of Topusko even extended its activities to coastal trade and obtained several houses in the north Adriatic port town of Senj⁷ for that purpose. Therefore, the Topusko abbey did not take part exclusively in agricultural economic activities (the traditional view of Cistercians), but in commercial dealings as well, thereby communicating with towns.⁸

It seems plausible that a such a magnate would be attracted by the developing markets of thirteenth-century Zagreb and Gradec,⁹ and would place its filiation nearby. The position of the first Zagreb monastery on the outskirts of both towns seems fitting as a market outpost of Topusko, but still preserved Cistercian seclusion on the river island.

Recent research on the Cistercians in Hungary also shows that they tended to settle close to commercial roads and market places, thereby taking a more diverse and active role in the country's development than was believed earlier.¹⁰ Cistercians in Hungary were also

⁶ Only one-fourth less than the bishop of Zagreb. Cf. I. Ostojić, op. cit., 211.

⁷ In 1240, the Templars of Senj negotiated with the Cistercians of Topusko to receive some land to build a warehouse in exchange for a part of the market toll. CD IV (Zagreb, 1906), 109-110.

⁸ Recent discoveries in other countries on the order's industrial and trade involvements, altering the traditional view of Cistercian seclusion and agricultural activity, necessitate further research of the Cistercians in Croatia, as the Topusko abbey demonstrates. See W. Schich, "Die Wirtschaftstätigkeit der Zisterzienser im Mittelalter: Handel und Gewerbe", in: *Die Zisterzienser. Ordensleben zwischen Ideal und Wirklichkeit*, Schriften des Rheinischen Museumsamtes 10. Ausst. Katalog (Aachen, 1980), 217-236; idem, "Der frühe zisterziensische Handel und die Stadthöfe der fränkischen Zisterzienserklöster", in *In Tal und Einsamkeit. 725 Jahre Kloster Fürstenfeld, Die Zisterzienser im alten Bayern. III. Kolloquium (Fürstenfeldbruck, 1990)*, 121-143; B. Romhányi, "Die Rolle der Zisterzienser im mittelalterlichen Ungarn" (in print).

⁹ Both jurisdictions held big daily fairs. The fair in Zagreb took place on St. Stephen the King's Day. The free royal town was, according to King Béla IV's charter of 1242, also granted the "bigger market" days on Mondays and Thursdays. See I.K. Tkalčić, *Monumenta historica liberae civitatis Zagrabiae I* (Zagreb, 1889), LXXIX-LXXXI; 4, doc. 8; 433, doc. 9; 46, doc. 54; 15, doc. 18; 40, doc. 49. (henceforth: MCZ).

¹⁰ L. Koszta, "A ciszterci rend története Magyarországon kolostoraik alapítása idején" [The History of the Hungarian Cistercian Order in the Period of Establishing Their Monasteries 1142-1270], *Magyar egyháztörténeti vázlatok* vols. 1-2 (1993), 128: "Especially the geographic situation of domestic monasteries was not in compliance with the severe rules of the order. They had often been built next to commercial roads, settlements and market places. It seems that in Hungary, it was not the Cistercian Order itself that fur-

involved in trade and some abbeys, such as the ones in Pilis and Egres, were privileged in their commercial activities.¹¹

It seems that the settlement of the first monastery in Zagreb could be partly explained by the economic reasons discussed so far. Additional economic reasons might have also motivated the monastery's removal to the town.

Cistercians already had some property in western Zagreb when they were settled on a Sava island in the second half of the thirteenth century and at the beginning of the fourteenth century. This was to become their future town settlement. Before 1259, Peter, the archdeacon of Zagreb, gave them two mills at the rivulet, Medveščak, which divided the two towns.¹² In 1291, the Cistercians owned baths at the same rivulet, on their own land below the church of the Virgin Mary.¹³ Later documents show that in 1484, they owned a slaughterhouse by the rivulet.¹⁴ Some merchants lived in the Cistercian settlement in the same year,¹⁵ and witnessed, however indirectly, the Cistercian involvement in trade. Judicial, arbitrating and administrative duties were examined by the abbey as well.¹⁶ These dealings clearly have to do with the settlement, and not with the running of an iso-

thered the economic development in the vicinity of monasteries. The Cistercians were rather exploiting the possibilities of the economically developing places."

¹¹ B. Romhányi, op. cit., 2: "Noch interessanter ist der Zusammenhang zwischen den Niederlassungsorten des Ordens und dem Handel, wenn wir die Privilegien der Abteien untersuchen. Die Abtei von Pilis z.B., die in einer Zeit als die wichtigste und größte unter den ungarischen Klöstern galt, bekam vom König die Zolleinnahmen von zwei wichtigen Donaufurten, und die Hälfte einer dritten, wobei die andere Hälfte der größten ungarischen Benediktinerabtei, Martinsberg gehörte. In 1230 erwarb die Abtei von Egres ein beispielhaftes Privilegium für die siebenbürgische Salzlieferung, das drei Jahre später auch für andere, am Marosch gelegene Klöster als Vorbild diente, auch wenn das Einkommen dieser viel geringer war."

¹² Tkalčić, MCZ I, 29, doc. 37.

¹³ *ibid.*, 68, doc. 80.

¹⁴ In 1484, the cathedral chapter started to build its own slaughterhouse on the rivulet, Medveščak, as the butcher of the Cistercian slaughterhouse slaughtered diseased cattle. The abbot protected him and did not want to punish him. See L. Dobronić, *Biskupski i kaptolski Zagreb* [Episcopal and Capitular Zagreb] (Zagreb, 1991), 212.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, 212-213: "Some citizens of his lordship the Abbot who live in Zagreb in his settlement (*in vico suo*) transport cattle, pigs and other animals, textiles, oil and other goods from Croatia, Italy, Germany and other countries to parts of Hungary and vice versa, from parts of Hungary and Slavonia to other foreign countries."

¹⁶ The abbot was *conservator iurium cathedralis ecclesiae* and as such acted at law suits, e.g. in 1434, cf. Tkalčić, MCZ II (Zagreb, 1894), 94, doc. 73; he also acted as an arbitrator in conflicts between the king and the free royal town of Gradec (e.g. in 1435), cf. *ibid.*, 105, doc. 81; the monastery was, at least in the 15th century, *locus credibilis*, cf. e.g. *ibid.*, 127, doc. 101; 174, doc. 126.



lated agricultural estate as would conform to the traditional view of the Cistercians. In Zagreb they obviously took an active role in the life of the town.

The most peculiar aspects concerning the Zagreb Cistercians are their ability to generate urbanism, and the location of their abbey in the topographical map of the town. Similarities can be observed with Hungarian monasteries insofar as commercial involvement or proximity to market places is concerned. However, no analogous example can be found concerning the settlement and roles of monasteries in the town.¹⁷ Not only did monks settle in Zagreb, but also a settlement of laymen developed around their church and monastery. In 1441, for example, the abbot writes about the change of ownership of a house "*in vico dicti monasterii nostri*".¹⁸ As has already been shown, some tradesmen lived in this Cistercian *vicus*¹⁹ too. Along the Medveščak, on the other hand, the Cistercians' serfs or servants lived in "little houses and huts covered by turf".²⁰ Their existence is documented because these huts were to be pulled down as they represented a danger to the new town walls if set afire during a possible siege.

The only surviving building of the Cistercian complex is the church of the Virgin Mary which has been rebuilt several times since the Middle Ages. Today it is mainly a baroque building without visible medieval traces. It must be stressed that the church and the surrounding area have not been excavated. The relevant archaeological layer may have been considerably damaged as the present-day building has a crypt while medieval Cistercian ones usually did not. Thus, although the archaeological remains in the church may not be spectacular, excavations are indispensable since it is the only method likely to provide further information on the medieval topography.

¹⁷ In Hungary, there are two examples of a Cistercian monastery located in a settlement: Pásztó and Szentgotthárd. However, neither settlement is comparable to Zagreb, which had considerable power and authority at the time. Moreover, in Pásztó, Cistercians inherited a Benedictine monastery while in Szentgotthárd the knowledge as to whether the monastery preceded the existence of the settlement (and vice versa) remains unknown. See I. Valter, "Das Zisterzienserkloster Pásztó", *Analecta cisterciensia* XXXVIII (1982), 129-139; idem, "Die archäologische Erschließung des ungarischen Zisterzienserklosters Szentgotthárd", *ibid.*, 139-153; In France, however, Cistercians took part in settlement development and a number of *bastides* arose from granges. See C. Higounet, "Cisterciens et bastides", *Le Moyen Age* LVI (1950), 69-84.

¹⁸ Cf. Tkalčić, MCZ II, 186, doc. 133.

¹⁹ Cf. above, note 15.

²⁰ Tkalčić, MCZ II, 370, doc. 31: *in vilibus domibus et tuguriis, cespitibus coopertis, certos domicellas seu jobagiones.*

The church of the Virgin Mary is depicted on the oldest preserved representation of Zagreb which dates from the first half of the sixteenth century.²¹ It is a single-aisle building curiously positioned with its western part protruding out of the town walls.²² The Cistercians were no longer in the town at the time when the picture was made. It seems that the fifteenth-century fortification used the church to strengthen the prominent ridge of the town plateau.

At the time of the picture, conventual buildings had already disappeared and the monastery's location remains unknown. It was clearly near the church, and probably even attached to it. Two possible locations have been proposed so far: a first location east of the church within the area later encompassed by the fortification, and a second west of the church, outside the later fortification.²³ Neither of the locations is proved in the written sources and neither site has been excavated. Interestingly enough, the sixteenth-century drawing does not depict any building resembling a monastery in the vicinity of the church of the Virgin Mary. The drawing is otherwise fairly accurate (as far as the fortifications, cathedral, bishop's palace and Franciscan friary are concerned). It could be that the monastery was west of the church near the rivulet (which would have been appropriate for Cistercians), below the ridge of the town plateau and the future fortification, as St. Ljubić has proposed.²⁴ Therefore, it would have been destroyed in the late fifteenth century because it was a threat to the walls in case of a siege.

The picture introduces yet another interesting feature. To the north of the church, there is an opening in the fortification and a discontinuous line marks the passage between the western gate of Zagreb and the eastern gate of Gradec. The western gate of Zagreb is not mentioned in documents until after the Middle Ages.²⁵ It may be that

²¹ The original is in the Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, Cod. 8609.

²² Zagreb's town fortification dates from the late 15th century. Therefore, a town wall did not exist at the time of the arrival of the Cistercians nor during the century and a half that followed.

²³ For the eastern location see E. Laszowsky, "Plemićeva kuća i cistercitski samostan u Zagrebu" [The Plemić House and the Cistercian Monastery in Zagreb], *Hrvatski zmaj* (1917), 2-12 and 17-19; idem, *Stari i novi Zagreb* [Old and New Zagreb] (Zagreb, 1925), 26; for the western location see S. Ljubić, "Topusko (Ad Fines) i ostaci njegove gotičke crkve [Topusko (Ad Fines) and the Remnants of its Gothic Church], *Vjesnik hrvatskog arkeološkog društva* II (1880), 37.

²⁴ S. Ljubić, op. cit., 37.

²⁵ See L. Dobronić, *Zagrebački Kaptol i Gornji grad nekad i danas* [Zagreb's Kaptol and Upper Town in Past and Present] (Zagreb, 1986), 118.

by the end of the fifteenth century this breach in the new walls served as a kind of a town quarter or neighborhood communication for what was in the span of the Cistercian complex. The drawing also shows a schematically depicted *insula* east of the church of the Virgin Mary. It may have been the Cistercians' *vicus*, though perhaps smaller about half a century earlier. A street leading from the cathedral to the western gate separates it from the *insula* of the laymen settled by the chapter in the fifteenth century. The street exists at approximately the same place today.²⁶

By the end of the fifteenth century, the Cistercian complex thus extended in the south-western part of the town from the rivulet bank up to the ridge of the town plateau. It included mills, baths and serfs' or servants' huts on the bank, the church, the monastery (if still existent at the time) probably somewhere by the walls, and the monastery's *vicus* within the walls. The fortification imposed a physical barrier between two parts of the Cistercian-generated town quarter. It is interesting to observe that the fortification in fact followed not only the topography of the land, but also the earlier established social topography. The Abbot's *vicus* where the tradesmen lived, was situated within the walls, while the serfs' or servants' huts, if they had not been pulled down, would have remained outside the protecting wall.

Although information concerning the Cistercians in Zagreb is scattered, it can be said that they played an important urban and urbanistic role in medieval Zagreb. By the end of the fifteenth century, they had developed a quarter, or at least a street of the town. It may have been small and probably was not densely inhabited. Nevertheless, it housed a number of activities which contributed to Zagreb's urban status at the time.

²⁶ A conclusion concerning the urban pattern within the *insula* cannot be made since the whole area was demolished in the 1930s to make room for the new market place.