



**THE BURIAL SITE SELECTION
OF A HUNGARIAN QUEEN:
ELIZABETH, QUEEN OF HUNGARY (1320–1380),
AND THE ÓBUDA CLARES' CHURCH**

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There is scant information on the places of interment of medieval Hungarian queens. Accordingly, it is difficult to assess to detail the decision-making process of the few queens who themselves chose their own burial sites. The case of Elizabeth, wife of King Charles Robert (r. 1310–1342) and mother of King Louis the Great (r. 1342–1382), however, is an exception. From textual and archaeological evidence, we are able to draw conclusions about the factors which impacted her eventual decision to be entombed in the Corpus Christi chapel in the Clares' Church in Óbuda.¹

At the center of this inquiry is the multi-faceted question of monastic foundation. A thorough examination of Elizabeth's decision to found her monastery at a particular time and in a particular location is necessary for a better understanding of the factors that inspired her ultimate choice of burial site location.

Foundation

The origins of the Clares' convent in Óbuda can be traced to 1334, when Elizabeth was granted papal permission in response to an earlier supplication to build *ad divini nominis et beatae Clarae laudem et gloriam unum monasterium, cum ecclesia, cemeterio, domibus et aliis officinis necessariis*.² The text states that the monastery was to be built for the eternal salvation of herself and her parents (*pro tua et progenitorum tuorum animarum salute*).³ Preoccupation with eternal salvation might have been tied to the death of her father, Wladyslaw Lokietek, King of Poland (r. 1320–1333), a year earlier. This concern is echoed in a 1346 charter that

¹ This study is based on my MA thesis, "Elizabeth, Queen of Hungary (1320–1380), and the Óbuda Clares: A Study in Reginal Burial Site Selection," (Budapest: Central European University, 2005).

² Guilelmi Fraknói, ed., *Monumenta Romana Episcopatus Vespriemiensis*, vol. 2 (Budapest: Franklin Társulat, 1899) (hereafter: MR), 86.

³ MR, 86.



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states the foundation was made *pro sua ac suorum vivorum et mortuorum salute*.⁴ From its conception the complex that would eventually serve as the queen's own tomb had a close affiliation with spiritual concerns and the afterlife.

Elizabeth might have also been inspired to undertake the project by the 1333 journey of Charles Robert and her son, Andrew, to the court of Naples.⁵ While it is unknown whether Elizabeth accompanied them and saw the splendor of Trecento Naples with her own eyes or whether she learned second-hand about the flourishing royal-sponsored monastic institutions affiliated with the Neapolitan court, possibly the wish to emulate them led Elizabeth to pursue her patronage. With other similarities taken into account, the proximity of the date of the trip to the initial foundation request might be more than coincidence.⁶

The Clares' convent was not the first foundation for which Elizabeth was granted papal permission. In 1331, Elizabeth requested permission to rebuild on Margaret Island *unum locum cum oratorio ac cemeterio et aliis necessariis officinis, in quo loco fratres ordinis minorum ...valeant commorari, de bonis propriis construere de novo*.⁷ The supplication seems to suggest a remodeling of the previous existing foundation rather than the establishment of a new one. Unlike the later request, this earlier supplication makes no mention of salvation; her motivations, not explicitly stated, may have lain elsewhere.⁸

⁴ Imre Nagy and Gyula Nagy, ed., *Anjoukori okmánytár* vol. 4 (Documents from the Angevin Period) (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1884) (hereafter: AO), 611. Concern for souls of the living and dead, somewhat vague terminology, might reflect that at the time of the later charter, Elizabeth's husband, Charles Robert, had already passed away and Elizabeth was concerned with his salvation as well.

⁵ Johannes Thuróczy, *Chronica Hungarorum*, ed. Julius Kristó and Elisabeth Galántai (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1985) (hereafter: CH), 124. "Anno domini millesimo tricentesimo tricesimo tertio egressus est rex de Wyssegrad cum Andrea filio suo puero sex annorum in mense Iulii, et perrexit cum bona comitiva militum per Zagrabiam ultra mare, ut filium suum per voluntatem summi pontificis, scilicet Johannis vicesimi secundi et ad instantiam et petitionem inclitissimi Roberti Regis Siciliae regni eiusdem coronaret in regem." Charles Robert stayed in Naples between June 1333 and February 1334. Andrew remained there, much to the displeasure of the Neapolitan court.

⁶ The similarities between the Óbuda Clares' monastery and other royal burial places is dealt with at length in my thesis, Chapter 3 "Possible Influences of Other Burial Places."

⁷ Georgius Fejér, ed., *Codex Diplomaticus Hungariae Ecclesiasticus ac Civilis* vol. VIII/3 (Buda: Typis Regiae Universitatis, 1832) (hereafter: CD), 539.

⁸ For the excavation report on this monastery see Erzsébet Lócsy, "Előzetes jelentés a margitszigeti ferences kolostor területén végzett feltárásról" (Preliminary report on the excavations in the area of the Margaret Island Franciscan Friary), *Archaeológiai Értesítő* 98 (1971): 92–99. For a brief history, see János Karácsonyi, *Szent Ferencz rendjének története*



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Though both supplications were made while her husband was still alive, the papal responses are addressed to Elizabeth alone with no mention of the king. To what extent the queen was, or could have been, acting completely independently in undertaking these two projects is unknown, but these two charters suggest Elizabeth's personal inclination towards religious patronage and building monastic foundations, particularly for the Franciscan order.⁹

In the case of the Clares' church, additional evidence portrays the queen as the one most responsible for the project. A later charter from King Louis refers to the church and convent as *ex provisionis dotalitio Serenissimae Principissae Dominae Elizabeth, eadem gratia, reginae Hungariae, Matris nostrae charissimae, in veteri Buda est constructum et fundatum*.¹⁰ A 1353 charter refers to the monastery as *per Elizabeth reginam Hungariae de novo in Veteri Buda constructo*.¹¹ Another from the Provincial of the Franciscans states that it was Elizabeth who *monasterium pro sororibus ordinis sanctae Clarae ad exaltacionem divini cultus ... fundavit in civitate Sicambriae*.¹² Nor did Elizabeth downplay her own role; a 1355 charter issued by the dowager herself refers to the monastery as *per nos de novo constructo*.¹³

The foundation documents, thus, demonstrate that Elizabeth, more than anyone else, was the initial sponsor of the project and the motivating force behind the foundation of this monastery. That this patronage was clearly linked to the well-being of her soul reveals the intimate connection between the foundation and the queen. More than just a founder, Elizabeth's highly personal connection with the church manifested itself in additional ways.¹⁴ This devotion demonstrates that the Clares' church held a special place in Elizabeth's heart and offers a clear explanation for her eventual decision to be buried there.

Magyarország 1711-ig (The history of the Franciscan Order in Hungary until 1711) (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1924) (hereafter: Karácsonyi), vol. 1, 200–202, and László Gerevich, *The Art of Buda and Pest in the Middle Ages* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1971), 42–43.

⁹ Previously, together with her husband, Elizabeth had acted as the donor for the Lippa Franciscan friary dedicated to St. Louis of Toulouse, Charles Robert's uncle. There is a picture of the donation in the *Chronicon Pictum* (*Képes Krónika* [Hungarian Illuminated Chronicle]), tr. Ibolya Bellus (Budapest: Európa Könyvkiadó, 1986) (hereafter: *Chronicon Pictum*), 255, and Thuróczy likewise details the donation, CH, 120.

¹⁰ CD, vol. IX/3, 239.

¹¹ AO, vol. VI, 128.

¹² AO, vol. IV, 611. Sicambria was the Classical name for Óbuda and frequently used in charters.

¹³ AO, vol. VI, 354.

¹⁴ Elizabeth's munificence is detailed further in my thesis, Chapter 2 "Construction of the Óbuda Clares' Church" in the section titled "Donations and Indulgences."



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Nunnery

The initial supplication reveals Elizabeth's aspiration to found a female religious establishment (*in quo decens conventus monialium seu sororum ordinis dicte ... commodè valeat commorari*).¹⁵ At that time there were only two Poor Clare convents in the Kingdom of Hungary: in Pozsony (Bratislava, est. 1297) and Nagyszombat (Trnava, est. 1240).¹⁶ Deciding to build an establishment for a female religious order on one hand must not be seen as a proto-feministic statement of solidarity and gender promotion, but on the other hand, should not be underestimated. In building a female establishment, Elizabeth left open for herself the opportunity to, at some point later in life, take the veil and live in the convent (either as a nun herself or as a closely affiliated layperson). This would not be strange—both Agnes Habsburg, wife of Andrew III of Hungary, Charles Robert's predecessor, and Jadwiga, Elizabeth's mother, retired to convents after being widowed. In the turmoil surrounding Andrew III's death, Agnes absconded to Austria with her stepdaughter Elizabeth (paving the way for Charles Robert's eventual ascension), where she founded and lived in the Königsfelden Franciscan monastery.¹⁷ Jadwiga relocated into a Clares' convent in Poland only a year before Elizabeth's foundation request. This uprooting from the temporal world to the spiritual upon the death of her father might have influenced the timing of Elizabeth's foundation of the Óbuda complex. Though Charles Robert was relatively young when Elizabeth began the project, the retirement of her mother to a cloister would have been a palpable prompt to think ahead to her own widowhood. Building the convent would not just be an exercise in spiritual devotion, but also a way to plan for the future.

Aside from the "retirement home" scenario sketched above, there is also a likelihood that Elizabeth wished to mirror another royal foundation, the most important female monastic center of Hungary—the Dominican convent on Rabbit Island. This question, particularly with regard to site selection and location, will be dealt with in greater detail below.

¹⁵ Árpád Bossányi, ed., *Regesta Supplicationum* (Budapest: Stephaneum Nyomda, 1916), 86.

¹⁶ Beatrix F. Romhányi, *Kolostorok és társaskáptalanok a középkori Magyarországon* (Monasteries and collegiate chapters in medieval Hungary) (Budapest: Pytheas, 2000) (hereafter: Romhányi), 53 and 46, respectively. Also Karácsonyi, vol. 2, 509–531 and 460–473, respectively.

¹⁷ See Volker Honemann, "Agnes and Elizabeth of Hungary," in *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Anne Duggan (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1997) (hereafter: Duggan, ed., *Queens*), 109–119. Agnes lived until 1364 and, as the daughter of Albert I Habsburg and key player in Habsburg politics, it is likely that Elizabeth would have known of her.



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Buda, Oppidum Buda, Óbuda¹⁸

The 1334 foundation charter for the Clares' church grants Elizabeth the right to establish the convent *in oppido Bude*, a vague term that needs clarification. What is now called Óbuda can be found in later medieval charters as *Vetus Buda* (or also under the anachronism *Sicambria*—the Latin name for the capital of Attila the Hun).¹⁹ Is it conceivable that Elizabeth intended for the church to be built in Buda only to change her mind at a later date? While it is entirely possible, it is unlikely. Almost without exception, Angevin-period royal Hungarian charters refer to Buda as *castrum novum Buda* or *villa Buda* and the distant papacy, knowing little of Hungarian geography, could easily have mistaken the two places.²⁰ This overlooks, however, that the territories of the Provostry, the ecclesiastical section of Óbuda, continued to refer to themselves as Buda well into the Angevin period.²¹ As the queen's foundation was a religious institution, the papacy was using the correct ecclesiastical terminology for the location, *oppidum Buda*, and there was little doubt at the time about its meaning.

Another detail that suggests Óbuda was the desired site was that at the time of the request Buda already had its own Franciscan establishment as well as

¹⁸ The authoritative source for the history of medieval Buda, Óbuda and Pest is the series *Budapest története* (History of Budapest). Of particular value to this study are the following works: György Györffy, "Budapest története az Árpád-korban" (History of Budapest in the Árpád Age), in *Budapest története*, vol. 1, ed. László Gerevich (Budapest: Budapest Főváros Tanácsa, 1973) (hereafter: Györffy), 273–281; András Kubinyi, "Budapest története a későbbi középkorban Buda elestéig (1541-ig)" (History of Budapest in the Late Middle Ages until the fall of Buda in 1541), in *Budapest története*, vol. 2, ed. László Gerevich and Domokos Kosáry (Budapest: Budapest Főváros Tanácsa, 1973), 11–13, and László Gerevich, "Budapest művészete a későbbi középkorban a mohácsi vészig," (Art of Budapest in the Late Middle Ages until 1526), in *Budapest története*, vol. 2, ed. László Gerevich and Domokos Kosáry (Budapest: Budapest Főváros Tanácsa, 1973), 243–267.

¹⁹ The origins of the name *Sicambria* can be traced back even farther than Attila. Originally *Sugamber*, it was a settlement of German Franks which the Romans eventually conquered. For more information see Györffy, 250–251. The Attila story was only later merged with this mythical place in the Middle Ages as Attila's actual capital was much farther east than present-day Óbuda.

²⁰ The existing foundation charter is the papal response, not Elizabeth's request.

²¹ Julia Altmann, "Óbuda," in *Medium Regni*, ed. Julia Altmann, et al., tr. Erika Zoltán (Budapest: Nap Kiadó, 1999) (hereafter: Altmann, *Medium Regni*), 94–95.



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an affiliated female beguine convent.²² Óbuda, although the site of a Franciscan monastery,²³ had no correlating female branch. In this way, the Clares' convent, rather than proving redundant, would be unique amongst the religious establishments in Óbuda. The Óbuda Franciscans, who administered the holy sacraments to the Óbuda Clares, developed such a close relationship that they even petitioned for and subsequently gained the right to be buried in the Clares' cemetery.²⁴

Óbuda and Rabbit Island

Óbuda, thus, was the only reasonable location that could correspond to *oppidum Buda*. There are many possible reasons behind Elizabeth's decision to establish a monastery there, of which the presence of Franciscans and the lack of any female convents have already been mentioned. However, these characteristics fit any number of locations in Hungary. A third reason, the proximity of the location to Rabbit (now Margaret) Island, was something that could only be achieved with a site in Óbuda (*Fig. 1*).

To see the Clares' convent as a spiritually or politically motivated rival to the Dominican convent on Rabbit Island is short-sighted. While Elizabeth did tend to favor the Poor Clare/Franciscan orders in terms of patrimony, any assertion that Elizabeth was attempting to compete with the Dominican convent propagates a fictitious, over-simplified notion of rivalry. Such a supposition blatantly ignores an overwhelming amount of evidence to the contrary; namely that Elizabeth was a firm supporter of the cult of Margaret and a munificent donor to the Dominican Order. Traced through her artistic patronage, it is possible to see this dedication on her journey through Italy (1343–1344) with her gifts to the Dominican convents of Bologna and Milan, both ardent supporters of the cult of Blessed Margaret.²⁵ Elizabeth's donation to St. Peter's Basilica is also important—an embroidered cloth featuring the whole group of Hungarian and Angevin saints, plus the not-yet-canonized Margaret.²⁶ Dispelling the notion of rivalry even further, in 1358, Elizabeth sought and received a papal dispensation that allowed her to visit the Dominican convent

²² Romhányi, 16; Karácsonyi, vol. 2, 544–548. Interestingly enough, this convent was founded by another widow, Sibilla, wife of Nádor Moys.

²³ Romhányi, 48; Karácsonyi, vol. 1, 222–223.

²⁴ CD, vol. IX/7, 171.

²⁵ Gábor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses*, tr. Éva Pálmai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) (hereafter: Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers*), 337.

²⁶ Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers*, 338.

from time to time.²⁷ The Dominican order even received healthy donations in Elizabeth's will.²⁸

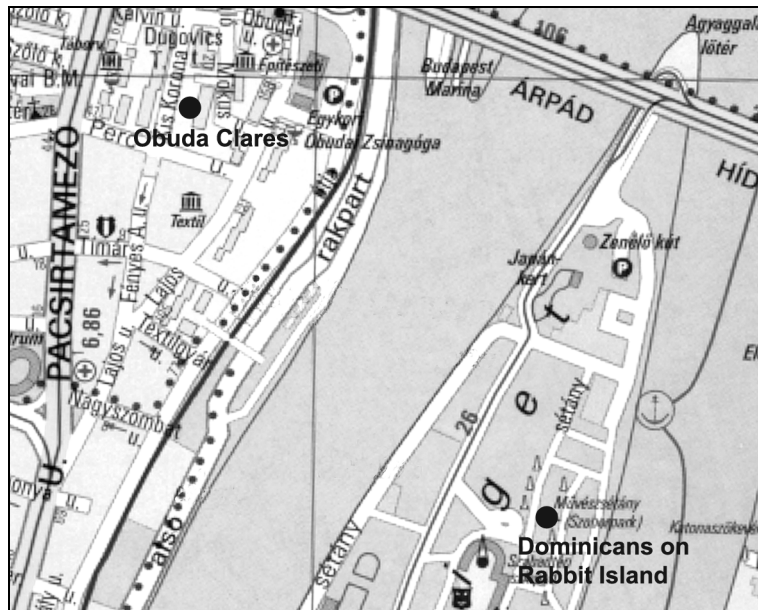


Fig. 1. Map of present-day Budapest showing the proximity of two monasteries. The institutions are separated in distance by less than a kilometer though the Danube acts as an additional barrier.

Rather than rival, the Dominican convent on Rabbit Island, on the contrary, must have had a positive influence on the site selection of Elizabeth's foundation.²⁹ Here was a royal-affiliated female monastery that attracted women from the upper crust of society—including the daughters of kings. The

²⁷ MR, vol. III, 220–221.

²⁸ For a copy of Elizabeth's testamentum, consult Ernő Marosi et al, ed., *Művészet I. Lajos király korában 1342–1382* (Art in the time of King Louis I 1342–1382) (Székesfehérvár: István Király Múzeum, 1983), 73–75. For more information on Elizabeth's will see László Szende, "Łokietek Erzsébet végrendelete," (The last will of Elisabeth Łokietek), *Kút* 3, no. 2 (2004): 3–12.

²⁹ For a history of the Dominicans in Hungary see András Harsányi, *A Domonkos rend Magyarországon a reformáció előtt* (The Dominican Order in Hungary before the Reformation) (Debrecen: Nagy Károly Grafikai Műintézetének Nyomása, 1938); on Rabbit Island see especially 104–110.



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eneration of Blessed Margaret, daughter of Béla IV, certainly was evident throughout the fourteenth century and might have been achieving a new surge in popularity around the time Elizabeth was beginning to plan the foundation of the Óbuda Clares' convent.³⁰ This is evidenced by the construction of new tomb sculpture for the holy princess sometime during the late 1330s.³¹ More than a holy shrine, however, the Dominican convent on Rabbit Island was a large mendicant institution,³² one of the largest landowners in Buda and Pest,³³ and a royal burial place.³⁴

As the center of female monasticism in Hungary, the spiritual power present on Rabbit Island would have been a powerful beacon and Elizabeth, attempting to draw from its popularity and overall sanctity, must have considered placing the Clares' monastery close to the Dominican convent a serious benefit.³⁵

Óbuda as Home

Óbuda, though, was more than the place in which Elizabeth wished to build her monastery. It was also her widowhood home.³⁶ Less than a year after the death

³⁰ Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers*, 335. Klaniczay posits that the contacts which led to the construction of the new tomb might have been connected to Charles Robert's visit.

³¹ Pál Lővei, "The Sepulchral Monument of Saint Margaret of the Árpád Dynasty," *Acta Historiae Artium* 26 (1980): 175–222.

³² By 1276, the convent could theoretically hold 70 nuns and servants, Elemér Lovas, *Árpád-házi Boldog Margit élete* (The life of Blessed St. Margaret of the House of Árpád) (Budapest: Szt. István Társulat, 1940), 111.

³³ *Ibid.*, 120–127.

³⁴ Along with Margaret rests her brother Stephen V.

³⁵ In a somewhat interesting, but tangential, note in the course of my inquiry into Elizabeth's burial place, I encountered a curious mistake in the most renowned medieval account of Polish history, the chronicle of Jan Długosz, *Annales seu Chronica Incliti Regni Poloniae* vol. X (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1985) Following the death of Elizabeth: *Elizabeth Karoli olim Hungariae relicta, filia Wladislai Lokietek et soror Kazimiri Polonie, genitrix vero Ludowici Hungarie et Polonie regum, vicesima nona Decembris in etate grandeva in castro Buda moritur et in monasterio in insula Budensi sepelitur.* (Długosz, X: 75.) How the chronicler came to believe that Elizabeth was buried on Rabbit Island is unknown, but it once again indicates the closeness between the Clares' monastery and the *insula Budensi*.

³⁶ Elizabeth's widowhood is closely entwined with the chronology of the building process, described in my thesis, "Chapter 2: The Construction of the Clares' Church in Óbuda." Though the foundation request took place while her husband was still alive, the actual construction process did not begin until after Charles Robert passed away.



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of Charles Robert, Elizabeth's son, King Louis, granted her legal possession of the castle and its surroundings.³⁷ A charter from 7 January 1343 reads:

*Nos Ludovicus...rex...significamus...quod castrum nostrum de Veteri Buda cum tributis et omnibus suis...pertinenciis universis quocumque nomine vocitatis admisimus...excellentissimae principissae dominae Elizabeth reginae Hungariae genitrici nostrae charissimae ad manendum, conservandum, et inhabitandum usque vitam suam, vel quamdiu sue placuerit voluntati vigore presencium mediante, promittentes eidem, ut quamprimum facultas ad se obtulerit, presentes privilegialiter emanari faciemus.*³⁸

Chance was not the reason that Elizabeth came to reside in the same town where she chose to found the Poor Clares' monastery. Many of the reasons that made Óbuda an ideal location for the residence of the widowed queen were also excellent reasons for founding a monastery there. Elizabeth's legal right to the Óbuda castle simultaneously enabled two things: it ensured her proximity to the building project and guaranteed the monastery protection from outside infringement. Moreover, the continued close connection of its patron would assist the growth and development of the convent's wealth and prestige.

For Elizabeth to have the opportunity to live in the same location as her foundation, Óbuda needed to meet a certain number of requirements. Among the most obvious was the presence of a royal residence.³⁹ The first *curia* can be dated to the late eleventh/early twelfth century, though its function as a royal residence can be dated back to 1189, as attested to by Lübeck's account of Barbarossa's crusade, when the emperor was entertained by the Hungarian king Béla III on the way to the Holy Land. Renovations and building work took

The notion of "builder widows" and the significance of religious patronage to widows is further explored in the conclusion of my thesis.

³⁷ It is important to note here that at the time of the exchange Louis was only 14 years old and his mother must have held considerable sway over his decisions. It is unlikely, in any case, that Óbuda was given to Elizabeth randomly and even more likely that Elizabeth, more or less, gifted Óbuda to herself. This latter scenario would mean that Elizabeth had a certain predilection towards Óbuda and this strong affinity would have both manifested itself in the construction of the Clares' convent and her decision to move there. There is also another potential scenario—that Louis, or his advisors, wished to remove the widowed Elizabeth from Visegrád and court politics and that her time in Óbuda was something of an exile. Casting doubt on this is the considerable political importance that Elizabeth maintained throughout her son's rule and this hints more at a situation in which Elizabeth was an active participant rather than a passive bystander.

³⁸ AO, vol. IV, 297.

³⁹ For more on the palace see Frigyes Pogány, ed., *Budapest műemlékei* (Monuments of Budapest), vol. 2 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1962), 372–382.



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place throughout the thirteenth century and the widow of the last Árpád king, Agnes of Habsburg, appears to have lived there before surrendering the castle to the magnates in 1301.⁴⁰ The castle appears to have been in the hands of Charles Robert throughout his reign, although there is no record of the court ever living there.⁴¹ Likewise, Louis must have retained a legal right to the castle in order for him to give it to his mother. The castle, as bequeathed, was not initially a suitable residence for the widowed Elizabeth based on the considerable amount of renovation she ordered, particularly to the chapel.⁴² Regardless of renovations and expansions, the previous existence of a royal palace in Óbuda was the *sine qua non* of Elizabeth's re-location.

Another factor about Óbuda that made it an appealing place to live was its geography. Situated within the *Medium Regni*, close to Buda⁴³ and not much farther from Visegrád, Óbuda was in the heart of the Kingdom of Hungary. Rather than bury herself in a distant corner of the land, the politically active widow,⁴⁴ whose name is mentioned in the *Decretum* of 1351,⁴⁵ might have wished to live near the mechanisms of government, but not at the Angevin court.⁴⁶ For a woman whose political influence was based on personal connections rather than institutional sureties, drifting too far from court would have certainly resulted in diminished influence.

⁴⁰ Pogány, *Budapest műemlékei*: vol. 2, 372, and Ewa Śnieżyńska-Stolot, "Queen Elizabeth as a Patron of Architecture," *Acta Historica Artium Hungaricae* 20 (1974) (hereafter: Śnieżyńska-Stolot): 22. Also Altmann, *Medium Regni*, 94.

⁴¹ A charter from 1327 refers to Óbuda castle: "et specialiter castelleno nostro dicti castrī nostri nunc et pro tempore..." AO, vol. II, 333; Śnieżyńska-Stolot, 22.

⁴² Described at length in Śnieżyńska-Stolot, 22–25.

⁴³ Louis lived in Buda from 1347 to 1355, then moved to Visegrád.

⁴⁴ László Szende, "Mitherrscherin oder einfach Königinmutter? Elisabeth von Polen in Ungarn (1320–1380)," paper presented at the CEU Department of Medieval Studies Interdisciplinary Workshop on Medieval and Early Modern Queens and Queenship: Questions of Income and Patronage, Budapest, Hungary, 13–16 October, 2004.

⁴⁵ János Bak, et al., ed., *Laws of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary*, vol. 2. 1301–1457 (Salt Lake City: Charles Schlacks, Jr., 1992), 8–9. "With the gracious consent of the most serene princess, the Lady Elizabeth, by the same grace, queen of Hungary, our dear mother ("de beneplacita voluntate serenissime principisse domine Elizabeth, eadem gratia regina Hungarie, genitricis nostre charissime"), and in accordance with the counsel of our barons, we confirm the same liberties in the words of the above-mentioned bull..."

⁴⁶ There is no evidence that she ever lived away from Charles Robert; Óbuda was her first separate residence.



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Elizabeth also was following a trend set by the Árpadian queens. An overwhelming majority of queens during that dynastic epoch lived in the Buda–Esztergom–Székesfehérvár triangle,⁴⁷ and for the first post-Árpadian queen a residence at Óbuda would not be a break from that tradition.

In order to achieve practical separation from the court, however, Elizabeth would have needed financial sureties and a source of income. Invariably, becoming the suzerain of the Óbuda castle and its appurtenances would have allowed Elizabeth her own separate income. This income, and possession of additional territories, can be seen through Elizabeth's donations to the Clares; one cannot give what one does not have and Elizabeth's gifts of land and willingness to buy surrounding properties on behalf of the nuns indicates reasonably healthy holdings. Her unilateral giving, without consulting king or court, likewise demonstrates her ability to access these funds and dispense them as she wished.

Conversely, a successful mendicant institution ought to be established in a community financially sound enough to support it. Though the royal institution, made wealthy and prestigious through the charity of its founder, in all likelihood never had to beg the citizens for its daily bread, the presence of the Franciscan monastery from the late thirteenth century in Óbuda suggests that mendicant orders would have been able to live from the charity of the townsmen and this hints at the relatively sound economic footing of the town.

The history of Óbuda as the seat of royalty might also have influenced Elizabeth's decision to move to Óbuda. As a site imbued with Árpadian history, resurgent royal interest in the town might have derived from a wish to express the dynastic continuity between the Angevins and their predecessors. However, in terms of residence selection, this does not fit the overall Angevin trend. Charles Robert established and built new palaces at Temesvár and Visegrád, preferring those locations to the more traditional ones (Esztergom, Székesfehérvár). Nonetheless, his eventual decision to be buried in Székesfehérvár was a powerful statement of dynastic continuity and a return to traditional patterns. That Elizabeth, as his wife and mother of the new king, would have felt obliged to overtly stress the dynastic continuity through her decision to take up residence in Óbuda seems a bit specious. Perhaps her motivations were less political than more nostalgic—based more on a fictive, romanticized past than political power games.

⁴⁷ Attila Zsoldos, *Az Árpádok és asszonyaik. A királynéi intézmény az Árpádok korában* (The Árpadians and their wives. The institution of queenship in the time of the Árpáds), (Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézete, 2005), 44–46.



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There is an amusing, but doubtlessly influential, mythical history of Óbuda that extends well beyond the scope of Árpáadian nostalgia. Sicambria, the stylized Classical name for the town, was the capital of Attila the Hun, who, in medieval minds, was the first great “Hungarian” ruler.⁴⁸ The connection between Óbuda and Sicambria in Hungary was longstanding—it was mentioned for the first time by Anonymous and reiterated in Simon Kézai’s *Gesta Hungarorum*. The latter writes:

After the court, Attila left Eisenach and went to Sicambria, where he murdered his brother Buda with his own hands and had his body thrown in the Danube. Attila’s reason was that while he was away fighting in the West his brother had overstepped the boundaries of authority he had established between the two of them and had had Sicambria renamed after himself. Although Attila issued an order to his Huns and his other followers that the city was to be referred to as the City of Attila, and the Germans out of fear respected the order and called the city Etzelberg, the Huns paid scant heed to it and continued to call it Óbuda, as they still do to this day.⁴⁹

What connects the “Scourge of God” to Queen Elizabeth is now considered more legend than fact, but both the antiquity of the town and its relationship to Attila would have made Óbuda a prestigious location, imbued with historical and mythical importance.

Even more interesting is the appearance of Óbuda in the Trojan origin myth of the Franks.⁵⁰ According to legend, after leaving the fallen Troy, the Franks lived for some time at Sicambria, before moving westwards. Colette Beaune, a historian of symbols of royal power, asserts that in France the equation of Sicambria with Óbuda was well known as early as the beginning of the fourteenth century.⁵¹ In a court with both Capetian and Hungarian/Árpáadian dynastic connections, Óbuda would seem a perfect fit to emphasize their common history.

Lastly, the most appealing aspect of Óbuda might be related more to what it was not, rather than what is was. By the time of Elizabeth’s taking possession of the town, Óbuda had long since been a location of centralized royal power. At the same time, it was not the site of an important bishopric or saintly shrine.

⁴⁸ Simon de Kéza, *Gesta Hungarorum*, ed. and tr. László Veszprémy and Frank Schaer (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999) (hereafter: Simon de Kéza), 3–77. This story is also included in the *Chronicon Pictum*, 7–40.

⁴⁹ Simon de Kéza, 50–53.

⁵⁰ Colette Beaune, *The Birth of an Ideology*, tr. Susan Ross Hutson (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 226–242.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 234.



The Burial Site Selection of a Hungarian Queen

Except for the important Collegiate Church, Óbuda did not possess any large, long-standing, and entrenched monastic groups like the Cistercians or Benedictines.⁵² If Elizabeth, in trying to ensure the dominant position of the Clares' convent, was looking for a place free from excessive outside influence, at a distance from the court, and more or less a blank slate for a large monastic building project, Óbuda would have been a logical selection.

Conclusion

With its royal connection, historical importance, central location, and urban community, perhaps the same reasons Óbuda was an excellent place for a royal residence made it an equally good location for a Clares' monastery. The symbiotic relationship between Elizabeth and the Clares suggests that both the nuns and the queen benefited from such proximity. The urban location at the center of Hungary would have likewise ensured the convent an important role as a spiritual center and a considerable attractiveness to donors and future patrons, while also providing an appropriate setting for the order's mendicant mission.

Though Óbuda seems to have been an ideal location for both Elizabeth and the Clares, is it possible to assert that in 1334, when Elizabeth initially requested permission to build the convent *in oppido Buda*, she intended to take possession of the town when widowed almost 10 years later and almost a half century later be buried there? This is unlikely. However, it is impossible to separate Elizabeth's widowhood predilection for Óbuda from the fact that the Clares' convent, her most significant act of patronage, was situated there. It was the opportunity to be close to the monastic institution and thus be heavily involved in its development and foundation that drew her there.

There are at least two important factors which ultimately help answer why Elizabeth, given the opportunity by her long widowhood, would have selected this burial site location: (1) The site was built at her behest and as primary patron of the foundation she had a very strong connection and dedication to it, and (2) Elizabeth had a profound spiritual dedication to the Order of the Poor Clares and believed that her burial place should reflect that dedication—both in particular and in general.

One of the curiosities of the burial site selection process was that Elizabeth was the only individual of her immediate family to be buried in the Clares'

⁵² A conflict with the Provostry led to splitting the town in half in 1355. At that point, the section of the town in which the Clares' monastery was built became known as the Queen's Quarter. For more information see Bernát L. Kumorovitz, "Óbuda 1355. évi felosztása" (The division of Óbuda in 1355), *Budapest Régiségei* 24 (1976): 279–302.



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church and the only person buried inside the Corpus Christi chapel. As the solitary person buried in a side chapel in an elaborately decorated mendicant church near a popular shrine of a royal saint, is it conceivable to suggest that Elizabeth someday anticipated being canonized and was building her own saintly shrine? Perhaps this would be egotistical, but in some ways, it would be quite practical and well within Central European royal tradition. One has to only think of the establishments of St. Elizabeth of Hungary in Marburg, St. Cunegund in Sandecz and Elizabeth's own grandmother, Yolanda, in Gniezno to notice the connection between holy princesses and the private foundations they established that would later become their burial sites.⁵³ Furthermore, Elizabeth was surrounded by saints and near-saints—her husband's uncle was a saint, for example—and someone so spiritually devoted and of such holy lineage could have certainly considered it conceivable that one day she might be canonized. Clearly the Clares must have thought the same way—when vacating Óbuda they took with them the relics of their founder and although never formally recognized,⁵⁴ one seventeenth-century list of saints includes the queen as *Elizabeth vidua regina*.⁵⁵

In having herself buried in such a setting, Elizabeth was identifying herself with her earthly deeds. There was no place in which she would have been remembered so frequently and more fondly long after she passed away than in an institution of which she was founder and builder.

⁵³ On the relationship between saintly queens and architecture, consult Paul Crossley, "The Architecture of Queenship: Royal Saints, Female Dynasties and the Spread of Gothic Architecture in Central Europe," in Duggan, ed., *Queens*, 263–300. It should also be noted that Elizabeth traveled to Marburg on her grand tour of Holy Places with Emperor Charles IV in 1357. Consult Antal Pór, "Erzsébet királyné aacheni zarándoklása 1357-ben" (Queen Elizabeth's pilgrimage to Aachen in 1357), *Századok* 35 (1901): 1–14. On the notion of saintly imitation and following of "career-scripts," consult Gábor Klaniczay, "Legends as Life-Strategies for Aspirant Saints," in *The Uses of Supernatural Power*, ed. Karen Margolis, tr. Susan Singerman (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1990), 95–110.

⁵⁴ Another interesting observation: The positions of the burials found within the Clares' Church during the excavation show a large cluster in the southern end of the church, directly outside of the Corpus Christi chapel, more or less arrayed around Elizabeth's burial place. Does this show a sort of cultic veneration of Elizabeth? Would this veneration be based on earthly prestige or heavenly sanctity? I do not really know, but it should be looked into.

⁵⁵ Śnieżyńska-Stolot, 33, n. 33. From A. de Monasterio, *Sacrum gynaeceum seu martyrologium amplissimum* (Paris 1657), 520. For December 29, the entry in full reads *Elizabeth vidua regina. Casimiri regis Polonorum soror*.