

# New Results on the Mendicant Economy in Medieval Hungary: Spatial Distribution, Urban(?) Context

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**Abstract:** In Western Europe the mendicant economy is discussed mainly in urban context. However, the different orders followed different strategies in acquiring the support of the faithful, and thus their social background differed, too. In East Central Europe, the most urban were the Dominicans, the Carmelites and the Franciscan Conventuals, while the most rural were the Austin Hermits. In the case of the Franciscan Observants one can observe a close connection between political activity, intensive royal and aristocratic support, and economic success which resulted in unusual forms of alms donations. The unprecedented success of the Observants was also due to the common aim of the political elite and of the friars to stop Ottoman expansion. Since the economic and political roles played by the bourgeoisie in Western Europe were partly taken over by the nobility they became the “natural” supporter of the mendicants, especially of the Franciscans in this part of Europe. Due to these factors the Hungarian mendicant provinces were the largest in East Central Europe from the late fourteenth until the early sixteenth century.

**Key words:** Central Europe, Mendicant Orders, monastic network, social contacts, economy, settlement system

**Rezumat: Noi rezultate asupra cercetării economiei mendicante în Ungaria medievală: distribuire spațială, context urban(?)**  
Istoriografia occidentală continuă să dezbată problematica economiei mendicante în special din perspectiva contextului urban. Cu toate acestea, diferitele ordine mendicante au adoptat strategii diverse pentru a obține susținerea laicilor, ceea ce înseamnă că se poate vorbi de o susținere marcată, în ultimă analiză, de diferențe sociale. Pentru Centrul și Estul Europei se poate considera că Ordinul Dominican, cel al Carmeliților și al Franciscanilor Conventuali au avut un accentuat profil urban, în timp ce, augustinienii eremiți s-au distins datorită profilului lor rural. În ceea ce îi privește pe franciscanii observanți este lesne sesizabilă legătura strânsă între activitatea politică, puternica

susținere regală și succesul economic bazat pe forme mai degrabă neconvenționale ale obținerii de donații. Succesul observațiilor, neegalat de niciun alt ordin mendicant, s-a datorat și unui scop asumat în comun de către frați și elita politică și anume stoparea expansiunii otomane. Deoarece rolul politic și economic jucat de burghezie în Europa Occidentală a fost parțial preluat de către nobilime în spațiul Europei Central-Răsăritene nu este surprinzător că reprezentanții acestei categorii sociale au devenit suporterii mendicanților, îndeosebi ai franciscanilor. Acest specific al susținerii Fraților Mendicanți explică de ce provinciile mendicante ale Regatului maghiar au fost cele mai extinse în Centrul și Estul Europei în perioada cuprinsă între sfârșitul secolului al XIV-lea și începutul secolului al XVI-lea.

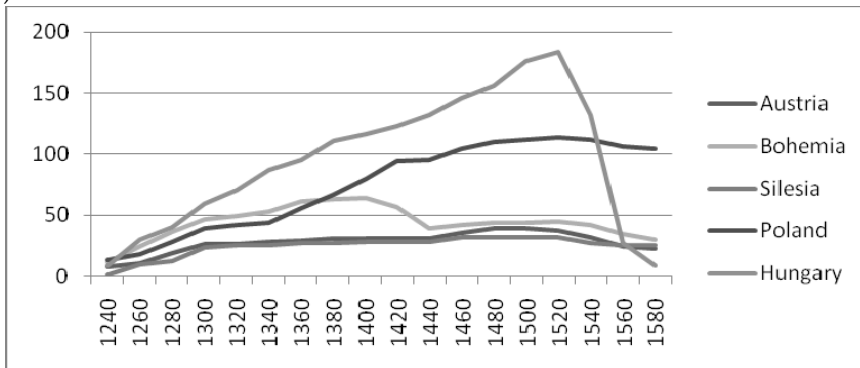
**Cuvinte cheie:** Europa Centrală, ordine mendicante, rețea monastică, contacte sociale, economie, sistem de implantare teritorială

When speaking about the economy of the mendicant orders we soon arrive at questions connected to the social environment and to the characteristics of the mendicant network itself – independent from the actual orders. In Western Europe the mendicant economy is discussed more or less exclusively in an urban context. But does Le Goff's model really work in this East Central part of the continent? How did this set of friaries emerge? Which social and political factors contributed to its formation and how did it change throughout the centuries? In the following I will try to answer these questions and to present how the changing topography of the mendicant network can help us understand the mendicant economy.

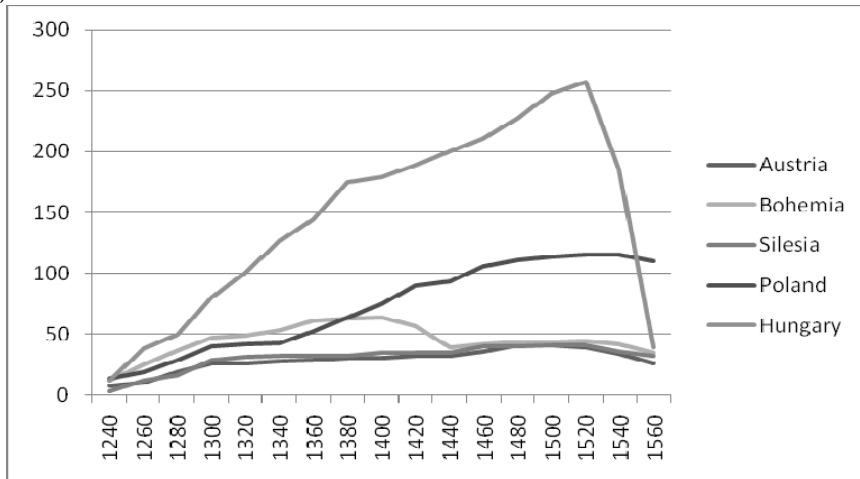
Year	Austria	Bohemia	Silesia and Lusace	Poland	Hungary	Sum
1240	8	12	3	14	12	49
1260	11	25	12	19	38	105
1280	19	37	16	29	50	151
1300	26	47	31	40	80	224
1320	26	49	33	42	100	250
1340	28	53	34	44	127	286
1360	29	61	35	56	144	325
1380	31	63	35	67	175	371

<b>1400</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>393</b>
1420	32	57	38	97	189	413
1440	32	39	38	100	200	409
1460	36	42	42	113	211	444
1480	41	44	42	119	227	473
<b>1500</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>496</b>
1520	39	45	43	123	257	507
1540	34	42	35	116	185	417
1560	26	35	30	114	39	246

Table 1: The evolution of the mendicant network in East Central European countries  
A)



B)



Graph 1: The evolution of the mendicant network in East Central European countries (A: without the Paulines; B: with the Paulines)

As far as the evolution of mendicant networks in this region is concerned the patterns are strikingly different both regarding numbers and tendencies. (**Table 1, Graph 1**) It is also worth mentioning that the characteristic pattern of the graph's lines does not fundamentally change if we include the Paulines too, but the differences only become more exaggerated.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century the number of mendicant and Pauline monasteries in Hungary were more than 250, with an average of 15-16 friars living in them. The average number of individuals in the friaries counted, not including the Pauline monasteries, was around 17. While the Dominican and the Observant Franciscan communities were usually larger (~20 friars or more), the Conventuals, the Austin Hermits and the Carmelites had smaller convents. The lowest number of monks could be found in the Pauline monasteries.

Supposing similar or slightly higher numbers in the other countries of the region, the picture is rather interesting. By the end of the Middle Ages (around 1500), the population of the East Central European region, excluding the Hungarian Kingdom, was 6-6.5 million, according to the data given in the work edited by Jean-Pierre Bardet and Jacques Dupaquier<sup>1</sup> and in the volume by Carlo M. Cipolla.<sup>2</sup> The population of Bohemia was ~1.7 million, that of Poland and Silesia ~4 million,<sup>3</sup> that of

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Pierre Bardet – Jacques Dupaquier (éds), *Histoire des populations de l'Europe* (3 vols, Paris: Fayard, 1997–1999). I am grateful to Mr Peter Őri (Hungarian Demographic Research Institute) who called my attention to this volume. Furthermore see the comprehensive data of György Granasztói, 'Magyarország történeti demográfiájának longitudinális vizsgálata' [Longitudinal analysis of the historical demography of Hungary], in József Kovacsics (ed), *Magyarország történeti demográfiája (896–1996)* [Historical demography of Hungary] (Budapest: Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 1997), pp. 173–180, here: pp. 174 and 177.

<sup>2</sup> Carlo M. Cipolla (ed), *Bevölkerungsgeschichte Europas. Mittelalter bis Neuzeit* (München: Piper, 1971).

<sup>3</sup> In the case of Poland the deviation of the population estimates is extremely large. Iwo Cyprian Pogonowski (*Poland a Historical Atlas* [New York: Hippocrene Books, 1987]) estimated the population of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at 7.5 million in 1493, out of which 3.25 million would be the population of Poland itself. He gives a population density of 15 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> (p. 92), i.e. he counts with 216 667 km<sup>2</sup> for the territory of the Polish Kingdom at the end of the fifteenth century. Henryk Samsonowicz, 'Probe einer demographischen Einschätzung Polens um das Jahr 1500', *Studia Historiae Oeconomicae*, 22 (1997): 17–24) gives an even higher population: 3,5–4 million. However, Sławomir Gawlas, 'Polen – eine Ständegesellschaft an der Peripherie des lateinischen Europa' in Rainer Christof

Austria (i.e. Lower and Upper Austria and Styria) ~0.8 million.<sup>4</sup> Assuming similar proportions to those found in Hungary, the number of mendicant and Pauline monasteries should be around 330 in the Bohemian, Polish and Austrian territories, with ~5300 friars living in them. Even if we take into consideration the consequences of the Hussite movement, the figures would be 290 and 4800. However, there were not more than 239 friaries with 4000-4200 friars at most.

When analyzing the single countries within the region the picture appears unequal. While the rates of population and of monasteries approximately correspond to each other in the case of Austria and Silesia, the three major kingdoms of East Central Europe show certain

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Schwingen - Christian Hesse - Peter Moraw (eds), *Europa im späten Mittelalter: Politik, Gesellschaft, Kultur* (München: Oldenbourg, 2005), pp. 237-262, here: p. 243 supposed a population density of 13-14 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> meaning, for the territory given by Pogonowski, a population of around 3 million inhabitants. In the introduction of the volume published by the Polish Academy of Sciences in 1975 Stanislaw Borowski, 'Population Growth in the Polish Territories', in *The Population of Poland*, edited by the Committee of Demography of the Polish Academy of Sciences (Warszawa: PWN, 1975), p. 8 gave the three core territories of the Polish Kingdom (Lesser Poland, Greater Poland, Masovia) a size of ~146000 km<sup>2</sup>. The territories taken from the Teutonic Order in the second half of the fifteenth century were ~36000 km<sup>2</sup>. Altogether the territory of Poland around 1500 was about 182.000 km<sup>2</sup>. According to his data the population was in this period around 2370000, which means a population density of 13 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> (Borowski, 'Population Growth', p. 11). Complete with Galicia (~42000 km<sup>2</sup>) the country's territory reached 225000 km<sup>2</sup>, and its population was 3 million. But Galicia - being an Orthodox province - was at that point a missionary region, the monastic network of which remained far behind the other parts of the kingdom.

It is peculiar that all the cited works estimate the population density of the Polish Kingdom higher than that of contemporaneous Hungary, however, the mendicant network of the two countries differed radically from each other and they occupied the two extremities of the imaginary scale in the region. The explanation is probably connected to differences in the settlement system, as well as to economic and maybe spiritual reasons, but their investigation goes beyond the framework of this study. It is, however, significant that even in the twentieth century about 15 per cent of the Polish population lived in farmsteads or hamlets and this proportion may have been even higher in the Middle Ages.

<sup>4</sup> For data on Lower and Upper Austria and on Styria I used the relevant parts of the *Historisches Ortslexikon. Statistische Dokumentation zur Bevölkerungs- und Siedlungsgeschichte* (Datenbestand 31.8.2013) (<http://www.oeaw.ac.at/vid/download/histortslexikon/>) (last access: 19.10.2014), beside the works mentioned above.

anomalies. The density of the monastic network of Poland and Bohemia are much lower, while that of Hungary is much higher (**Table 2**):

Country	Territory km <sup>2</sup>	Population 1500	%	Nr of friaries (A)	%	Nr of friaries (B)	%
Hungary	307169	3500000*	36,84	181	45,59	247	51,78
Austria	47554	780000	8,21	38	9,57	41	8,60
Silesia	40319	620000	6,52	30	7,56	32	6,71
Bohemia	74289	1700000	17,89	44	11,08	44	9,22
Poland	224090	2900000**	30,54	104	26,20	113	23,69
Total	693421	9500000		397		477	

**Table 2:** Estimated population of ECE and the mendicant friaries not including Paulines (A), and the mendicant and Pauline monasteries (B) around 1500

(\*according to András Kubinyi's estimation only ~3300000

\*\*some of the Polish literature gives a higher number, 3250000 for 1493)

In Bohemia, there were 64 mendicant friaries before the Hussite wars which represented 20.58% of all friaries of the region. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, the rates of the other territories (without the Paulines) were: Austria - 31 (9.97%), Poland - 74 (23.79%), Silesia - 25 (8.04%), Hungary - 117 (37.62%). The set of mendicant friaries in the Hungarian Kingdom around 1400 corresponded to the proportion of the population within the region, but the percentage significantly rose until 1500. The list completed with the Pauline monasteries shows this anomaly already by 1400 (Hungary 179 [47.61%], Austria 31 [8.24%], Silesia 27 [7.18%], Bohemia 64 [17.02%], Poland 75 [19.95%]). (Cf. **Graph 1**)

To take Western European examples for comparison, France had e.g. about 600 mendicant friaries around 1450.<sup>5</sup> In the very same period,

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<sup>5</sup> Alain Guerreau, 'Analyse factorielle et analyses statistiques classiques: le cas des ordres mendiants dans la France médiévale', *Annales. É.S.C.*, 36/5 (1981): 869-912, here: p. 873 (609 friaries). French literature usually gives the figures on the basis of the actual territory of France. Considering the territory of the fifteenth-century French Kingdom, this number is somewhat lower, around 550. (At the beginning of the sixteenth century France possessed Flanders, but did not possess Alsace, Lorraine,

there were around 290 friaries in East Central Europe and 140 of them in the territory of Hungary. In the mid-fifteenth century the population of France was approximately 13 million, while East Central Europe's can be estimated at 8.5 million. This means that the mendicant network of France was in that period denser than in this part of Europe, and this remains true even if we count the Pauline monasteries which represented a large proportion especially in Hungary (~70 houses in the whole region). However, in the latter case, the difference between the numbers of inhabitants per monastery becomes much smaller (21700 ↔ 27100 and 22400, respectively). If we take but Hungary and France, the picture changes dramatically, since there were ~3 million inhabitants and ~210 convents in Hungary which means ~14,350 inhabitants per monastery (without the Paulines ~20,650). Thus the Hungarian Kingdom reached in this period a density of mendicant monasteries comparable with France.

Around 1500, East Central Europe's proportion is already somewhat higher: in France approximately 683 convents existed among 15.5 million inhabitants,<sup>6</sup> while in East Central Europe these numbers are around 400 and 9.5 million. However, one has to realize that the additional foundations appeared mainly in the territory of Medieval Hungary. Counted without the Paulines more than 50 percent of the almost 80 new friaries were in Hungary. When adding the Paulines too, the proportions are even more unequal, since two thirds of the twelve new monasteries were Hungarian. This means that 60 percent of the more than 90 new monastic houses were in Hungary.

Despite widespread opinion, we can see that around 1500 the mendicant network of Hungary was not at all underdeveloped compared to Western Europe. In this period the population of Hungary was a little bit more than 20 percent of the population of France, but the number of mendicant friaries was 28 percent. The difference is somewhat smaller when comparing Hungary to the German territories (population ~30, friaries ~35 percent).

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Franche Comté, Savoy and Corse. In the comparisons the territory and population around 1500 are provided.)

<sup>6</sup> Richard Wilder Emery, *The Friars in Medieval France. A Catalogue of the French Mendicant Convents, 1200-1550* (New York-London: Columbia University Press, 1962), p. 16. Emery speaks about ~670 convents, but counting them one by one, the result is a bit higher.

In the time of the abolition of monastic houses under Henry VIII there were 50 Dominican, 57 Franciscan, 37 Carmelite and 33 Austin Hermits' friaries in England, and around 3000 friars lived in them.<sup>7</sup> This means the numbers of friars and of friaries were similar in the 1530s in England and in Hungary even if the estimated population of England was lower (~2.7 million).<sup>8</sup>

However, the subsisting – not very plentiful – data indicate that in France or in other Western European regions and even in some parts of East Central Europe the number of friars living in some of the friaries was higher than in Hungary. But the average could not be much higher. In fact, there were some very famous, large friaries in Western and Southern Europe where the size of the convents exceeded considerably the size of the Hungarian friaries (e.g. the Cologne Carmelite friary, the Dominican friaries of Paris and Toulouse, the friaries of Bruges, but also those of Wrocław in Silesia). Nevertheless, there were many more average-sized or even little friaries beside these huge ones. As far as the discussed period is concerned, according to Knowles the average number of friars in the English friaries dropped from 25 in the thirteenth century to fifteen in the fifteenth.<sup>9</sup> Emery supposes similar numbers in Late Medieval France.<sup>10</sup>

As for the Dominican Order, the Hungarian convents were doubtlessly smaller than the French, Spanish or South German ones, since the average number of friars was around 30-35 in the latter

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<sup>7</sup> Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Schools: From Roman Britain to Renaissance England* (New Haven – London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 259.

<sup>8</sup> E. Edward Anthony Wrigley – Roger S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541–1871. A Reconstruction*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 210. Based on these data the proportion of the mendicant friars within the English society was ~1.1 %.

<sup>9</sup> David Knowles, *Religious Houses: England and Wales* (London: Longmans, 1953), p. 363. If we add the Welsh data the number of friaries goes up to 187, the population of friars to around 3150, while the general population was around 3 million.

<sup>10</sup> Emery, *The Friars in Medieval France*, pp. 4-5. Emery calculated with 25 as an average number of convent members in the mendicant orders by the end of the thirteenth century, but the orders show very different patterns from the earliest period of their history. Hinnebusch e.g. counted with 37 friars per convent in England at the beginning of the fourteenth century which means about 1800 friars in the English province. Cf. William A. Hinnebusch OP, *The Early English Friars Preachers* (Roma: Istituto Storico Domenicano, 1951), p. 275.



regions.<sup>11</sup> But the numbers are similar to what we see in Hungary in other countries of East Central Europe. The Polish historian Jerzy Kłoczowski who dealt with the Polish mendicant friaries 50 years ago also pointed to the fact that even if some urban friaries such as those of Wrocław or of Cracow were very large (e.g. in late fifteenth-century Wrocław, there were 66 Dominican, 71 Observant Franciscan, 31 Conventual Franciscan and 41 Austin Hermits – all together 209 mendicant friars), most of the friaries were small, with the minimum number of religious adherents.<sup>12</sup>

Concerning the Franciscan friaries in Burgundy and Auvergne, as well as in Silesia and in Upper Lusatia belonging to the Bohemian crown, data were collected by Ludovic Viallet. The average number of friars per convent was in both regions around 12–14, and it rarely reached 20 which is more or less the same as the Hungarian data.<sup>13</sup>

In the Low German province, the Carmelite convents were much larger by the end of the fourteenth century: in 1384 e.g. there were all together 474 friars in the seventeen friaries, which means an average of 28 friars (however, in Cologne alone there were 95 Carmelites at this time, and even fifty years later, in 1433 the convent had 92 members; thus the average without Cologne was about 23–24 friars).<sup>14</sup> But we must not generalize with these data since the Low German province existed in one of the most developed and most populated regions of medieval Europe. Data from other Carmelite friaries show that the average was not higher than twenty. The friary of Lienz (Tirol) e.g. was planned in the mid-fourteenth century for twelve friars, but by the end

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<sup>11</sup> In Aragon e.g. some 500 Dominican friars lived in 14 friaries by the end of the fourteenth century (thus the average was ~35). Michael A. Vargas, *Taming a Brood of Vipers. Conflict and Change in Fourteenth-Century Dominican Convents* (The Medieval and Early Modern Iberian World, 42), (Leiden–Boston–Tokyo: Brill, 2011), pp. 99–124.

<sup>12</sup> Jerzy Kłoczowski, 'Les ordres mendiants en Pologne à la fin du Moyen Âge', *Acta Poloniae historica*, 15 (1967): 5–38, here p. 11. On the following pages, the author argued for a higher average of between 20–25 friars per convent for the whole period between the thirteenth and the sixteenth century. According to his opinion 3200–4000 mendicant friars should have lived in Poland at the end of the Middle Ages. However, this statement seems to be very doubtful, especially for the Lithuanian and Russian territories.

<sup>13</sup> I am grateful for the kindly provided information by my colleague Ludovic Viallet.

<sup>14</sup> Hans Joachim Schmidt, 'L'économie des Carmes contrôlée par les visiteurs en Germania inferior' in Nicole Bériou – Jacques Chiffolleau (eds), *Économie et religion. L'expérience des ordres mendiants (XIII<sup>e</sup>-XV<sup>e</sup> s.)*, (Collection d'histoire et archéologie médiévales 21) (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 2009), pp. 247–269, here p. 251.

of the century the convent already had twenty members. Thus it became one of the largest friaries in the Upper German province, and one of the schools of the Order was transferred there.<sup>15</sup>

Based on this series of data we can say that the medieval Kingdom of Hungary could sustain as many mendicant friars as France for instance. Still, according to the general opinion, France surpasses Hungary if we take into consideration the abbeys and the nunneries. But the economic background of these institutions was completely different in both regions since they had landed estates and did not live on alms. In a later phase of the research it would be worth including them into the analysis, but for this a detailed investigation would be needed.

The following table shows the relations between the population, the urban character and the mendicant friaries in the countries north of the Alps, around 1500. (**Table 3**) The numbers contain the smaller, regionally known orders, such as the Order of Saint William, the Crutched Friars,<sup>16</sup> the Trinitarians, the Servite and the Pauline Orders.<sup>17</sup> The territory of the Low Countries is divided between France and Germany, as it was in the Middle Ages. Similarly reflecting the situation around 1500, Alsace and the three dioceses Metz, Toul and Verdun, as well as the County of Burgundy (Franche Comté) are counted as the territory of the Holy Roman Empire. According to this, I have calibrated

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<sup>15</sup> Alfons Žák, *Österreichisches Klosterbuch* (Wien–Leipzig: Heinrich Kirsch, 1911), p. 212; Florentin Nothegger, *Sondernummer der Osttiroler Heimatblätter zum 600 jährigen Bestand des Karmeliten-Franziskanerklosters in Lienz* (Lienz, 1949).

<sup>16</sup> The Crutched Friars (Fratres Cruciferi) presented a serious dilemma since there were rather different communities under this name in different parts of Western Europe. Ultimately I decided to include them in England and on the continent, but I have left them out in Ireland because there they founded houses only at the end of the twelfth and the very beginning of the thirteenth century, all of them running hospitals. This decision was also supported by the fact that the order was there treated as canon's community.

<sup>17</sup> The so called "four big mendicant orders" (Franciscans, Dominicans, Austin Hermits and Carmelites) became an axiom of the research ever since the investigation initiated by Le Goff. This perspective can be more or less justified in France or in England, but in other regions of Europe the picture is quite different. The Carmelites were hardly present in certain parts of Europe (e.g. in Scandinavia or in Hungary), while other communities could be rather important in smaller regions as it happened to the Willhelmites on the French-German border region or the Paulines in Hungary. Among the smaller orders, the Paulines became the most significant with regard to the number of monasteries and of provinces, and thus they can be ranked fifth after the bigger orders.

the population numbers. Italy is missing from this comparison because of the simple reason that I could not find reliable data for either the population or the evolution of the mendicant network there. Of course, this has to be emended in a later phase of the research.

Country	Population	Number of friaries (A)	Number of friaries (B)	P/F	Urban proportion (%)	Population proportion (%)	Friary proportion (A, %)	Friary proportion (B, %)	Friaries/ 10.000 km <sup>2</sup> (B)
France	15500000	635	683	22694	36,7	33,79	31,02	30,30	13,5
England	2700000	184	196	13776	61,7	5,89	8,99	8,70	13,0
Ireland	2000000	129	130	15385	17,7	4,36	6,30	5,77	15,4
Wales	300000	10	11	27273	18,2	0,65	0,49	0,49	5,8
Scotland	600000	36	42	14286	52,4	1,31	1,76	1,86	5,4
Denmark	550000	40	40	13750	57,5	1,20	1,95	1,77	6,8
Norway, Sweden*	940000	37	37	25405	32,4	2,05	1,81	1,64	0,8
Germany	12000000	487	538	22305	49,4	26,16	23,87	23,79	10,3
Switzerland	500000	22	23	21739	47,8	1,09	1,07	1,02	8,4
Austria	780000	39	41	19024	41,5	1,70	1,91	1,82	7,7
Bohemia**	1700000	44	44	38636	47,7	3,71	2,15	1,95	5,9
Silesia, Lusatia	820000	39	41	20000	20,5	1,79	1,91	1,82	7,7
Poland	2900000	104	113	26106	26,6	6,32	5,08	5,01	5,0
Ducal Prussia	180000	6	6	30000	0,0	0,39	0,29	0,27	4,2
Hungary	3500000	181	247	14170	34,0	7,63	8,84	10,96	8,0
Croatia, Dalmatia***	900000	54	62	14516	56,5	1,96	2,64	2,75	8,1
Sum	45870000	2047	2254	20350	42,74				8,3

\* Including the Finnish territories. In Norway and Sweden alone the population per friary was ~20000.

\*\* For the total territory of the Bohemian Kingdom, with Silesia and Lusatia, the urban proportion is 34.9%.

\*\*\* The populations of Croatia and Dalmatia are counted with the hinterland (Herzegovina, Montenegro and Albania).

**Table 3:** Relations between the mendicant network and the number of inhabitants in Europe North of the Alps

In Europe north of the Alps there were 8–8.5 mendicant houses per 10 000 km<sup>2</sup>, and the capita per friaries was around 20 000–22 000. This average can be found in Norway and Sweden (without the Finnish territories), in Germany, in Austria, in Switzerland, as well as in Silesia and Lusatia. In France, in Poland and in Scandinavia including Finland the number of people sustaining a friary was a little bit higher, while in Wales, in Bohemia and in Ducal Prussia it was much higher. In fact it is only Bohemia that does not fit into this series, but the reason for this situation was clearly the effect of the Hussite wars. The two others in the aforementioned grouping were small peripheral regions of Latin Christianity. At the other end of the imaginary scale we can find England, Scotland, Ireland, Denmark, furthermore Hungary, Croatia and Dalmatia where the number of population sustaining a friary was around 14 000–15 000.<sup>18</sup>

In the next column one can see the “fait urbain”, i.e. the urban character of the mendicant friaries. The statement of Jacques Le Goff concerning the link between the urban development and the settling of mendicant friars, formulated in the 1970s, became almost an axiom of the historical approach to the mendicant phenomenon. However, there was and remains certain criticism of the thesis from its beginning (e.g. the Hungarian Erik Fügedi who applied Le Goff’s method in the medieval Kingdom of Hungary, or the French historian Ludovic Viallet) indicating that the settling of the mendicant orders was not strictly connected to the urban centers.<sup>19</sup> The Hungarian medievalist András Kubinyi came to the same conclusion based on the functional analysis of urbanisation in Hungary,<sup>20</sup> and all their arguments were supported

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<sup>18</sup> Ireland shows a totally extreme image around 1500 since the Observant Franciscans and the Franciscan Tertiaries founded a large number of new houses in a very short period, especially in the northern part of the island. The country was in a similarly odd situation with regard to the urban character of the mendicants (see below). The problem should be investigated by including the whole monastic network of Ireland, but this is certainly not the subject of the present paper.

<sup>19</sup> Erik Fügedi, ‘Koldulórendek és városfejlődés Magyarországon’, *Századok*, 106 (1972): 69–95, here pp. 88–92 (the article has been published earlier in French: ‘La formation des villes et les ordres mendiants en Hongrie’, *Annales E.S.C.*, 25 (1970): 966–987); Ludovic Viallet, ‘Pratiques de la quête chez les religieux mendiants (Moyen Âge – Époque moderne)’, *Revue Mabillon*, n. s. 23 (2012): 263–271.

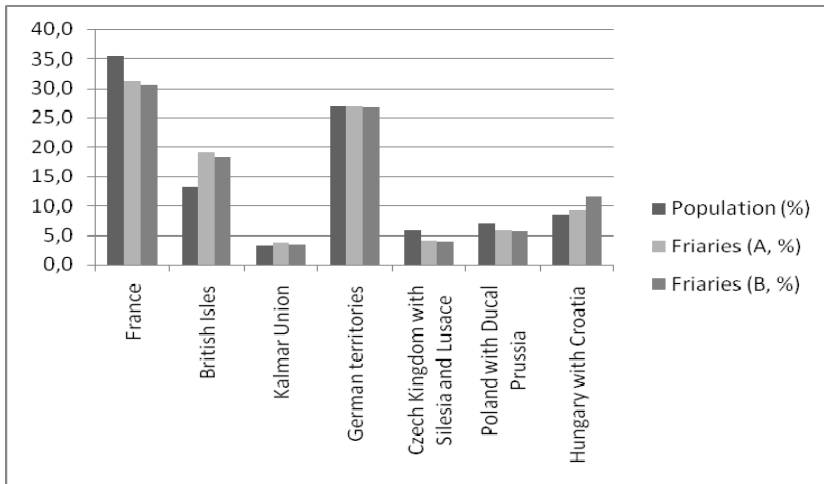
<sup>20</sup> András Kubinyi, ‘Központi helyek a középkor végi Abaúj, Borsod, Heves és Torna megyékben’, [Central places in the counties Abaúj, Borsod, Heves and Torna by the end of the Middle Ages], *Hermann Ottó Múzeum Évkönyve*. 37 (1999), pp. 499–518, here pp. 502–503.

recently with further data from the research of mendicant economy.<sup>21</sup> Of course, the link between the urban centers and the mendicant orders cannot be denied even in those regions where the spreading of these orders was not primarily based on the towns. Thus it is worth having a look at our data from this point of view, as well. If we consider “urban” those settlements which had at least two friaries, the comparison seems to be more or less adequate and valid for most of Europe (the settlements with one single friary were regarded by Le Goff himself and his colleagues as *bourgades*, i.e. not real towns). When comparing the two columns, we can see that there is no strict relation between the sustaining capacity and the urban character, e.g. Hungary – just like England – could sustain a rather high number of friaries, but in terms of urbanization the two countries were very far from each other. (cf. **Graph 2**) In the territories known for their high grade of urbanization, the proportion of urban friaries was in fact high, around 60 per cent. The only surprise seems to be France where this number is somewhat lower. (For the urbanization see also **Table 4** and **5**)

	OCarm	OESA	OFM	OP	Sum
Vienna		1	2	1	5
Cracow	1	1	2	1	5
Buda	1	1	2	1	5
Prague		1	2	1	4
Wroclaw		1	2	1	4
Pécs	1	1	1	1	4
Nagyvárad		1	2	1	4
Graz			2	1	3
Brno		1	1	1	3
Gdansk	1		1	1	3
Esztergom		1	1	1	3
Székesfehérvár		1	1	1	3
Szeged			2	1	3

**Table 4:** Towns with three or more mendicant friaries in East Central Europe ~1500 (not including the Pauline houses) Towns with two friaries: Austria 3, the Czech lands 7, Hungary 19, Poland 4, Silesia 1.

<sup>21</sup> Beatrix F. Romhányi, *Kolduló barátok, gazdálkodó szerzetesek. Koldulórendi gazdálkodás a középkori Magyarországon*. [Begging friars, husbanding religious. Mendicant economy in medieval Hungary.] DSc Dissertation, Manuscript, 2013. Available online: [http://real-d.mtak.hu/688/7/dc\\_702\\_13\\_doktori\\_mu.pdf](http://real-d.mtak.hu/688/7/dc_702_13_doktori_mu.pdf) (last access: 23.7.2015)



**Graph 2:** The capacity of sustaining mendicant friaries in different regions of Europe (middle column [A] without smaller orders, right column [B] with smaller orders)

The following graphs are based on the above table. It is clear that the countries of East Central Europe are rather different around 1500. The first two graphs show the average population per friary (axis x) and the density of the network of friaries (axis y).

As far as the density is concerned, the average (without the smaller orders, A) is represented by the German territories, Denmark and Dalmatia. Significantly lower density can be seen in the northern peripheries of the continent (Finland, Norway, Sweden), while higher density is characteristic for the western regions (England, Ireland, France). Scotland and Wales, Hungary, Poland and Ducal Prussia are somewhat below the average. When completing the data with the smaller orders (B) the image changes: Hungary moves to the territories with average density.

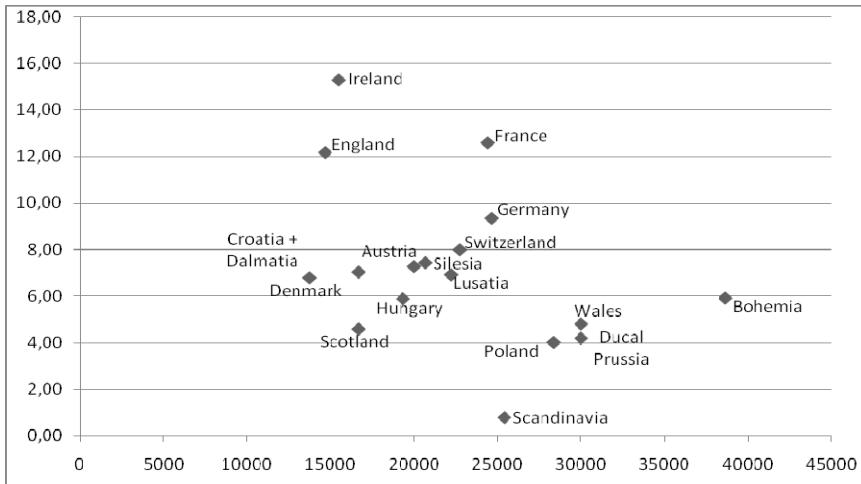
If we consider the average number of people sustaining a friary, the groups are slightly different. In the late Middle Ages, the Czech lands – because of the Hussite movement – stand alone on the upper end of the scale. Two small, peripheral territories are also above the average: Ducal Prussia and Wales – to a smaller extent Poland can be included – while Austria, Hungary and Silesia are around the average. Considerably less people were sufficient to sustain a mendicant friary on the British Isles and in Denmark, and Dalmatia is also close to this group. When we take the smaller orders into consideration (B), the situation changes: Poland reaches the average, while Hungary joins the group of Dalmatia, Denmark and England.

One has to emphasize that the two graphs show only one set period; we should collect more data to present the changes over time. Nevertheless, even based on this set of data we can say that the countries of East Central Europe did not form one group as far as the density of the mendicant network and the capacity to sustain friaries are concerned. Several factors can be supposed in the background: beside demographic and economic reasons we also have to count with the effects of religious (Hussite movement) and political (anti-Ottoman wars) influences. It is also quite clear that the late medieval Kingdom of Hungary cannot be regarded as a peripheral region in this period and, from this point of view, at least no more peripheral than the highly urbanized England. Moreover, we cannot detect any sign of economic or demographic crisis around 1500. However, it would be worth rethinking the position of Poland and of Ireland, but for that further data on the economic conditions and the settlement network would be needed.

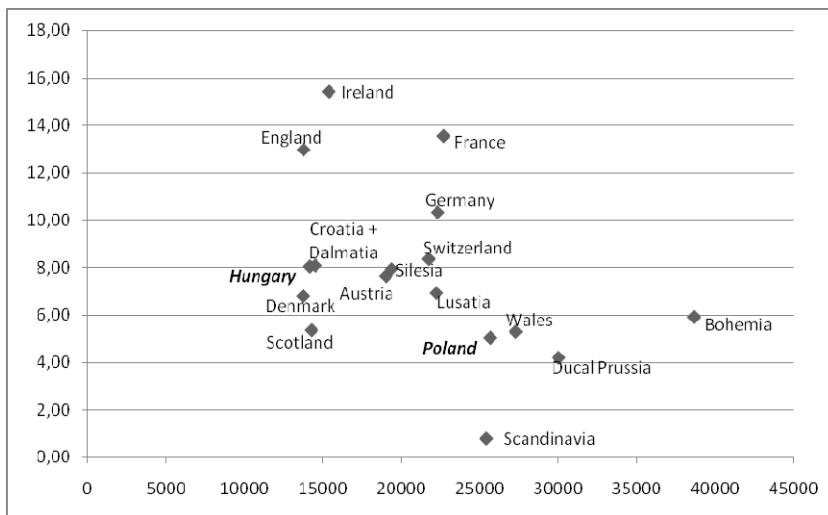
Regarding the density of the mendicant network, data suggest that in some regions – e.g. England or Denmark – these networks emerged in a period when there was a much higher population density in the given areas. It is not too difficult to identify the cause of the demographic crisis, the Black Death, which resulted in no second flourishing period of these orders in the late Middle Ages; the number of friaries hardly grew if at all. Nevertheless, it is important that the crisis did not cause the massive dissolution of the friaries, but rather the usual number of friars went down from about 25 to 15 or so. This suggest that the economic capacity did not collapse, i.e. even fewer people were able to sustain the large number of friaries. **(Graph 3)** One has to admit that the population numbers are, of course, based on “guesstimation”, but the proportions reflect more or less the reality.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> According to these data I think that the population of Hungary around 1500 could not be lower than 3.5 million. Otherwise, the number of people sustaining a friary would be much below the data of England and Denmark which is hardly believable. The difference between Kubinyi's data (András Kubinyi – József Laszlovszky, 'Népességtörténeti kérdések a késő középkori Magyarországon: népesség, népcsoportok, gazdálkodás' [Demographic questions in Late Medieval Hungary: Population, Ethnic Groups, Economy], in András Kubinyi et al. (eds), *Gazdaság és gazdálkodás a középkori Magyarországon: gazdaságtörténet, anyagi kultúra, régészet* [Budapest: Martin Opitz, 2008], pp. 37–48) and this estimation (200 000) was probably concentrated in Transdanubia and in Slavonia. At least this is what the changes of the mendicant network suggest. About the demographic development of medieval Hungary see: Beatrix F. Romhányi, 'Kolostorhálózat – településhálózat – népesség. A középkori Magyar Királyság demográfiai helyzetének változásaihoz'



(A) Density of the mendicant network and the population per friary around 1500, not including the smaller orders ( $x$ =population/friary;  $y$ =friary/10 000 km<sup>2</sup>)



Density of the mendicant network and the population per friary around 1500, including the smaller orders ( $x$ =population/friary;  $y$ =friary/10 000 km<sup>2</sup>)

**Graph 3:** Demographic correlations of the mendicant networks in Europe north of the Alps

[Monastic Network - Settlement System - Population. On the Demographic Changes of the Medieval Hungarian Kingdom], *Történelmi Szemle*, 57 (2015): 1-49.



Friary/town	England	Wales	Ireland	Scotland	Austria	Czech lands	Switzerland	Ducal Prussia	Denmark	Scandinavia	France	Poland	Hungary	Dalmatia and Croatia	Germany	Sum
2	19	1	5	5	3	9	1		10	6	45	7	18	14	59	205
3	8		3	4	2	1	3		1		18	2	7	1	24	73
4	11		1	1		2					11		1	1	9	38
5	3				1						8		2		6	20
6													1			1
7											4	1	1			6
larger towns	41	1	9	10	6	12	4	0	11	6	86	10	30	16	101	343
urban friaries	121	2	23	26	17	29	11	0	23	12	256	27	84	35	262	929
all friaries	196	11	130	42	41	87	23	6	40	37	683	122	247	62	538	2267
"fait urbain"	61,7	18,2	17,7	61,9	41,5	33,3	47,8	0,0	57,5	32,4	37,5	22,1	34,0	56,5	48,7	41,0

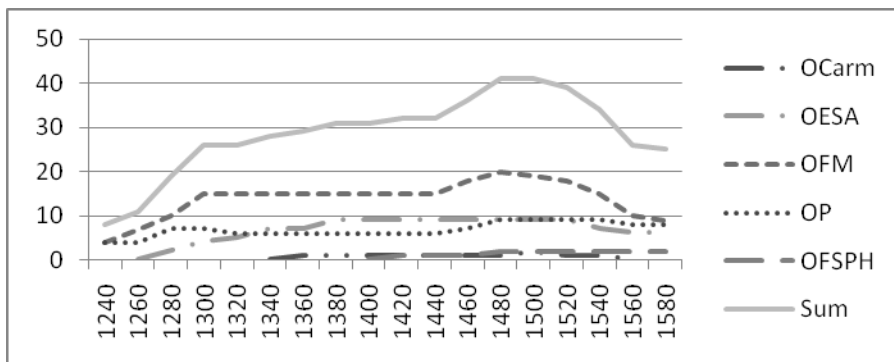
**Table 5:** Towns with two or more friaries in the different regions around 1500, including the smaller orders  
(The friaries of the Low Countries, i.e. today's Belgium and Netherlands are included to those of France and Germany.)

#### THE DYNAMICS OF EXPANSION

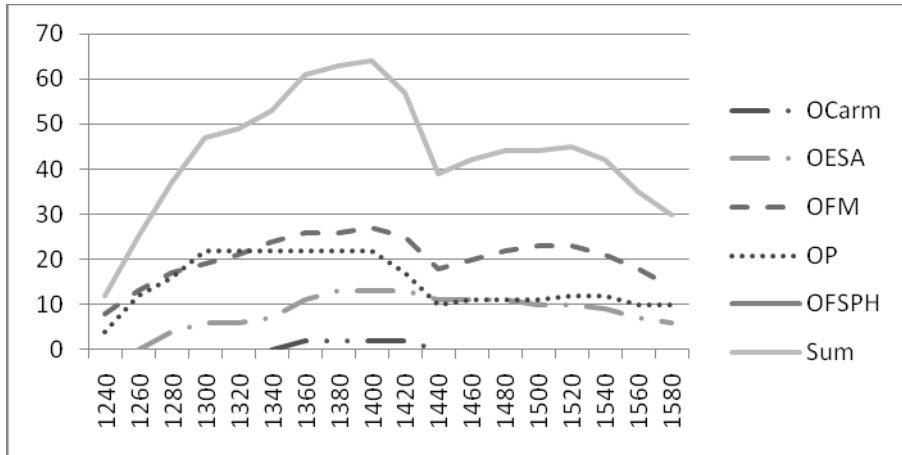
Further questions can be asked concerning the expansion of the mendicant orders in the different regions. One of the typical patterns is the quick expansion, long stabilization and slow decline – sometimes with a smaller flourishing period in the Late Middle Ages – which can be observed in some East Central European cases (Austria, Silesia). In Bohemia the double decline is clearly the result of the Hussite movement and of the sixteenth-century Reformation. The effect of the Hussite movement is reflected in the network of the neighboring territories, too, especially in Austria and Silesia after 1440. The ascendance of the Polish graph is much slower than in the other countries of the region. One also has to take into consideration that it represents only the Polish part of the Commonwealth, while the spreading of the mendicant orders (especially of the Observant Franciscans) continued in Lithuanian

territory even after the 1520s. Therefore the presently slightly declining character would become ascendant were the whole territory of Poland and Lithuania taken into account. (**Graphs 4–11**)

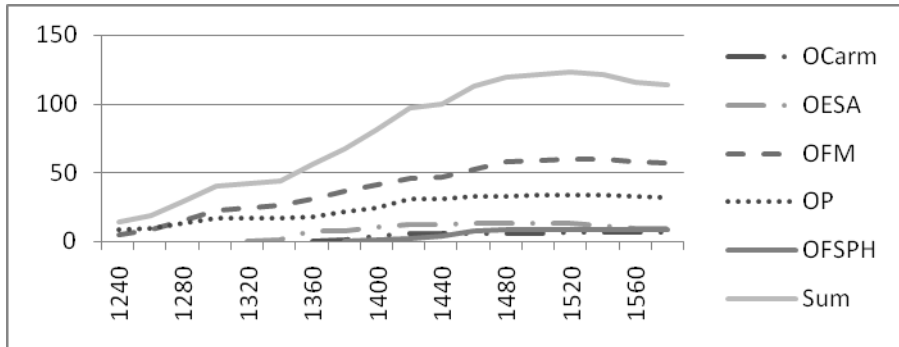
Ultimately, despite the differences, the character of most of the graphs is still similar since there is a shorter or longer stabilization level in them. There are two exceptions: Hungary and Germany where the graphs are constantly ascending until the first quarter of the sixteenth century when they suddenly break down. The prime mover of this pre-Reformation increase in Hungary was the Franciscan Order, while in Germany all the mendicant orders contributed to it to some extent, but the most important were the Franciscans and the Carmelites. As for the German territories, the background of the feature was the different rhythm of development in the different regions. However, this regional diversity cannot be observed in Hungary. The reasons of the sudden collapse are probably similar in the two countries: in Germany the Reformation and the wars of religion, in Hungary the Reformation and the Ottoman wars. An even more abrupt decline of the mendicant orders happened in England and in the territories of the Kalmar Union. In the first case the decrees of King Henry VIII can easily be identified, while in the second it was the quick and undisturbed evolution of the Protestant Reformation which led to the same result. It is especially interesting when compared with Bohemia where the Hussite movement – as hostile as it was towards certain religious communities – could not so deeply affect the monastic network.



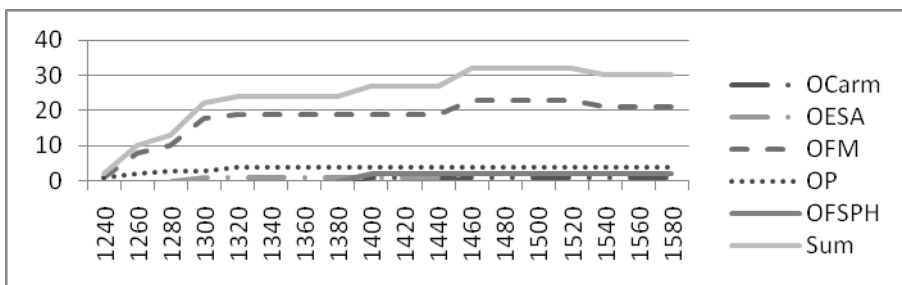
Graph 4: Mendicant network of Austria (1240–1580)



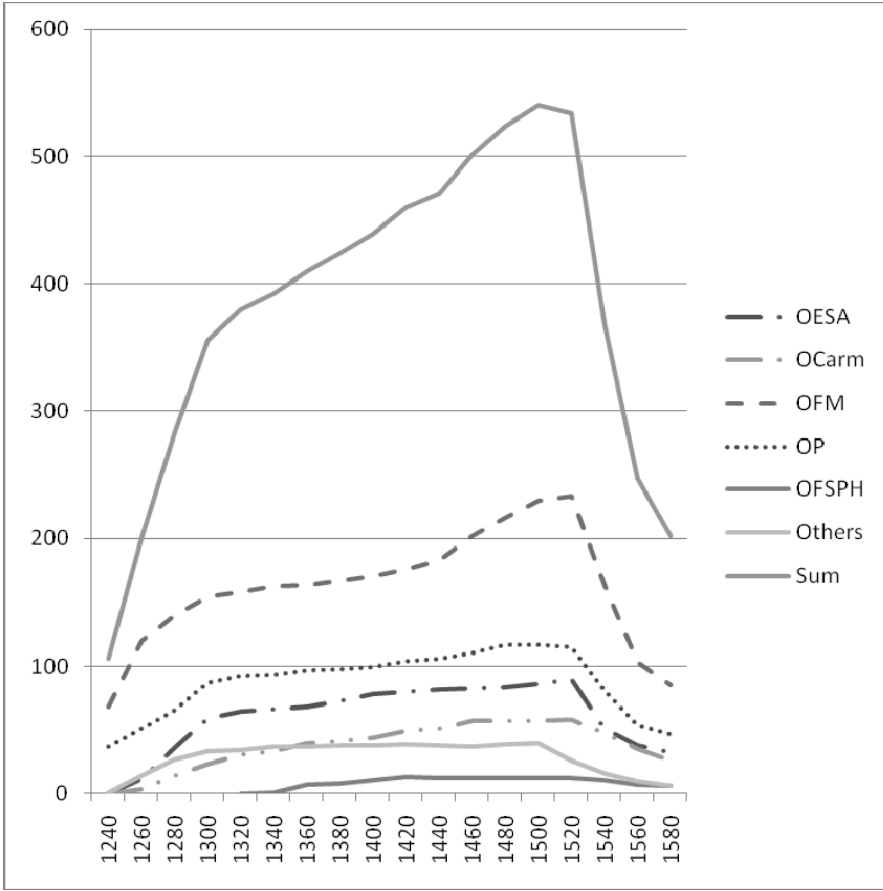
Graph 5: Mendicant network of Bohemia (1240-1580)



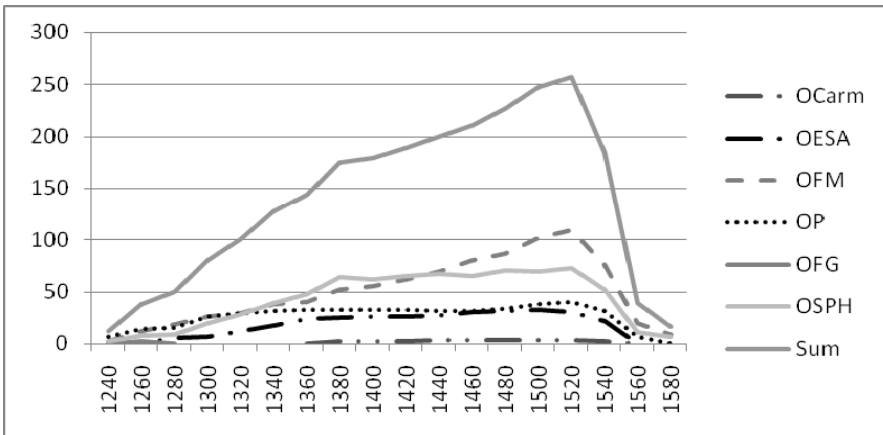
Graph 6: Mendicant network of Poland (1240-1580)



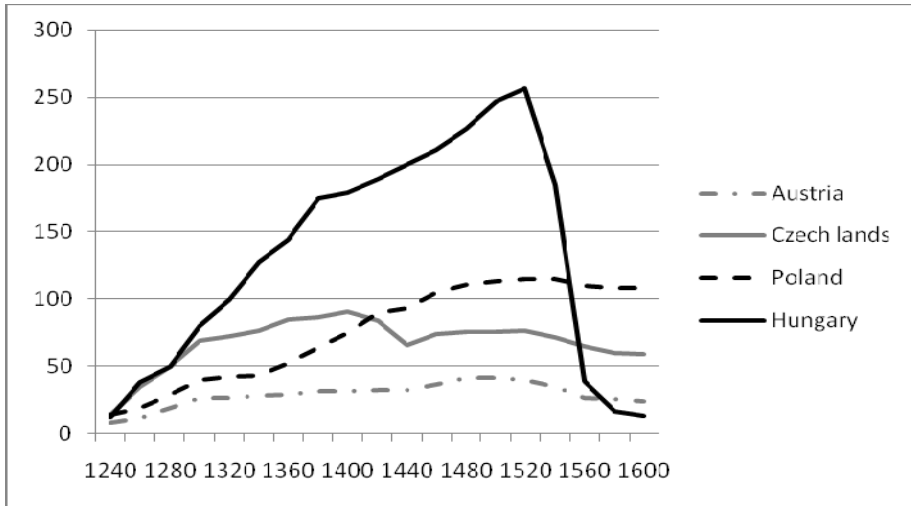
Graph 7: Mendicant network of Silesia (1240-1580)



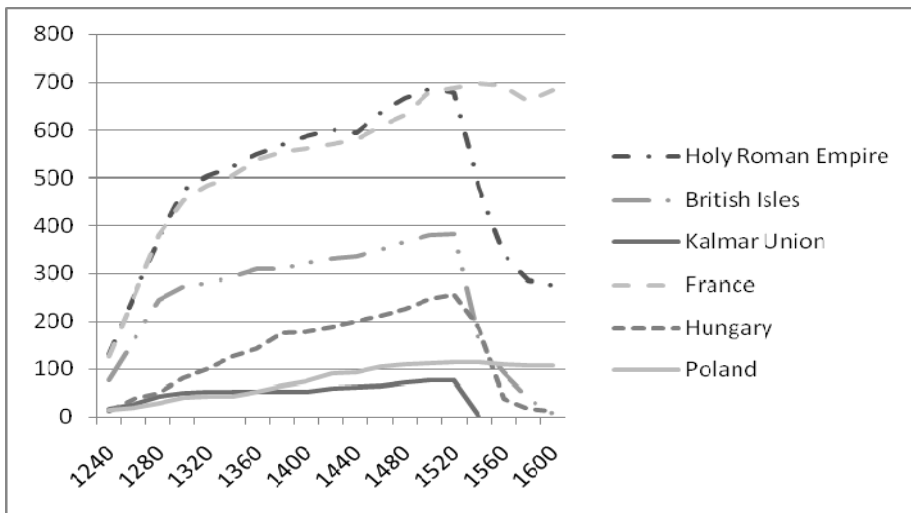
Graph 8: Mendicant network of Germany (1240–1580)



Graph 9: Mendicant network of Hungary (1240–1580)



Graph 10: Mendicant network of East Central Europe (1240-1600)



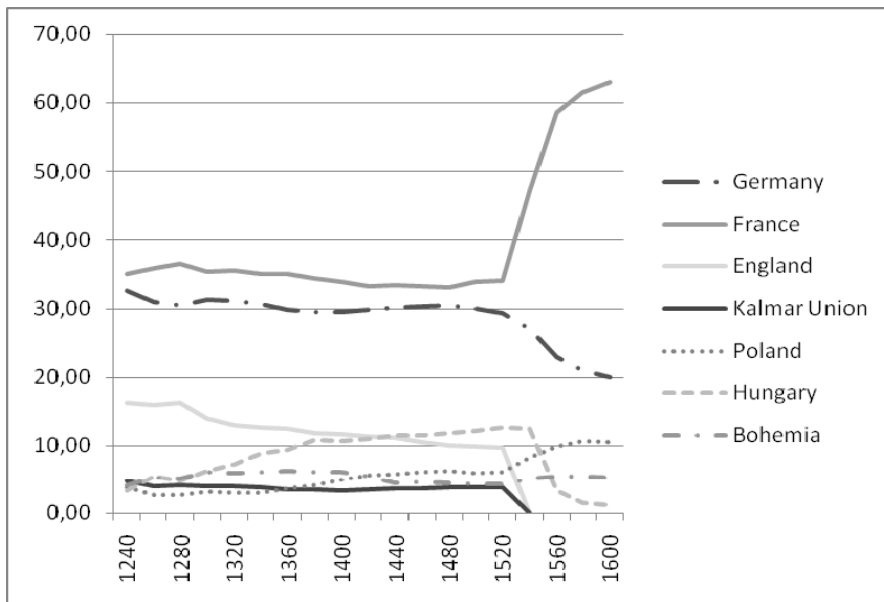
Graph 11: Mendicant network of the Ultramontane Europe (1240-1600)

Finally it is worthwhile to have a look at the proportions of the different regions within the mendicant network of Ultramontane Europe. The following graph shows the changing percentage of the mendicant network of the different regions from the thirteenth to the early sixteenth century. The seven regions - the French Kingdom, the German territories (without Northern Italy), England including Wales, the Hungarian Kingdom with Croatia, the Czech Lands, Poland with

Royal Prussia but without Lithuania, and finally the Kalmar Union – represented till the end of the fourteenth century more than 90 percent of the mendicant friaries, and their proportion was still over 85 percent in the fifteenth century. The period of increase in the thirteenth century caused almost everywhere certain oscillations, and the sixteenth-century Reformation turned everything over. Thus, we can evaluate the period between 1280 and 1520. (**Graph 12**)

As we can see France was leading throughout the Middle Ages, although the proportion of the French friaries decreased to some extent. The next is Germany reaching its stabilization level around 1280 and showing a consolidated trend from the 1360s till the Reformation. This means that parallel to the increasing population there were constantly new foundations even after the big wave of increase in the thirteenth century. In the early period England occupied the third position, but from the fourteenth century on its proportion within Europe decreased gradually. The reason for this feature is that the mendicant network had been established by 1300 and there were none or very few new foundations later.

In the first half of the thirteenth century, the mendicant network of the three East Central European countries started to develop simultaneously, but Hungary soon left this group behind. It is also noteworthy that the mendicant network of Bohemia and of Poland reached a leveling off by the end of this period, while the Hungarian model was slowly but constantly ascendant. This means that the proportion of the Hungarian mendicant friaries within Europe grew from the thirteenth till the early sixteenth century. At the beginning of the fifteenth century England and Hungary even changed their position in the ranking. Another point of interest could be the position of Bohemia and Poland. In the case of the former, we have to notice that the Hussite Wars affected only temporarily the network of friaries. Although there were significant changes as far as the orders are concerned, the position of Bohemian Kingdom remained unchanged. This was also due to spectacular development in Moravia and especially in Silesia. In Poland, the interesting point is the two periods of growth, around 1400 and at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The economic and demographic background of this feature needs further research.



Graph 12: Percentage of different European regions within the complete mendicant network

The spectacular expansion of the mendicant network in late medieval Hungary, mainly due to the intensive spread of the Observants, can be explained by several factors. One of the most important ones was the changing political situation, namely the Ottoman expansion and its consequences. Furthermore, one has to stress the changing demographic situation. The increasing Ottoman pressure and the mass immigration of an Orthodox population into the southern regions of Hungary, mainly to Temes County and to eastern part of Szerém County, resulted in the disappearance of the Franciscan friaries in these regions. In other regions, however, significant development can also be detected. Intensive economic growth, especially in Western Hungary, led to the emergence of a dense network of mendicant friaries. Since there were no towns in most of these regions, tight links between the friaries and the aristocratic or noble residences can be proven („Visegrád-type friaries”). The most characteristic examples of this type are e.g. Ozora (OFM obs.), Kusaly (Coșeiu, OFM obs.), Csákány (OFM obs.), Palota (OFM obs.) Coborszentmihály (Sombor, OP), Simontornya (OP) and Lövő (OESA). This phenomenon had economic consequences too since the founders had to take a greater part in sustaining these

friaries as the alms coming from the local population were insufficient. Beside the aristocratic and noble families, strong royal support is also visible till the end of Middle Ages which can be described in economic terms, as well.

However, the different orders followed different strategies in acquiring the support of the faithful, and thus their social background differed too. The most urban were the (early) Dominicans, the Carmelites and the Franciscan Conventuals, while the most rural were the Austin Hermits. In fact, the most „aristocratic” of these orders were the Franciscan Observants,<sup>23</sup> though in some respects we can view the Dominican Observants in the same category. There was a close connection between political activity, intensive royal and aristocratic support, and economic success which resulted in unusual forms of alms donations.

All these factors contributed to the Hungarian mendicant provinces being the largest in East Central Europe from the late fourteenth till the early sixteenth century. If the mendicant presence was not so much connected to the urban settlements as it was in some southern and western regions of Europe, this was the result of the different social structure. In Hungary, the economic and political roles played by the bourgeoisie in Western Europe were to some extent taken over by the nobility which became the “natural” supporter of the mendicants, especially of the Franciscans in this part of Europe. The unprecedented success of the Observants was furthermore due to the common aim of the political elite and of the friars to stop Ottoman expansion.

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<sup>23</sup> The close links to the Hungarian aristocracy, as well as the non-urban character of the Observant presence in Hungary have already been recorded by Marie-Madeleine de Cevins in her large volume on the history of the Franciscan Observants in Late Medieval Hungary. Marie-Madeleine de Cevins, *Les franciscains observants hongrois de l'expansion à la débâcle (vers 1450 - vers 1540)* (Roma: Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 2008), pp. 132-139, 146.