

A RELIGIOUS SOCIETY IN THE BAROQUE AGE: SCAPULAR CONFRATERNITY IN BARKA

The Research Work

In August 1983, together with staff and students of the Department of Ethnology at the Lajos Kossuth University, Debrecen, I carried out ethnological fieldwork in the vicinity of Rozsnyó (today Rožnava, Slovakia), in the Hungarian villages of the picturesque Csermosnya Valley. We were accommodated in Lucska (Lučka), and from this base we went to Barka (Bôrka), Kiskovácsvágás (Kováčová), Dernó (Drnava), Hárskút (Lipovnik) and Krasznahorka-Várhosszúrét (Krásnahorská Dlha Lúka). I conducted interviews on the subject of pilgrimages and the traditions of local pilgrim feasts, mainly in Hárskút near Lucska, in Krasznahorka-Várhosszúrét and Barka, and observed the old religious objects in the churches and private houses. This was when I first came into contact with the Scapular Confraternity¹ operating in Barka from the 18th century and still living, and I began a lengthy research on the life and operation of the society. It was on this occasion that, with the permission of the parish priest György Taliga, I was able to copy the manuscript of János Tóth on the history of the society.²

However, I knew the society from the earlier research of Sándor Bálint. In August 1940 the Institute of Regional and Folk Research attached to the Department of Ethnology at the Budapest University organised fieldwork based in Dernó for complex research on the Csermosnya Valley inhabited by Hungarians in Upper Hungary which had been liberated in 1938 from 20 years of Czechoslovak occupation. According to the *Workbook of the Dernó group of the Institute of Regional and Folk Research*³ sociographers, musicologists, ethnologists, doctors, lawyers, priests and others took part in the research.

The group began the work on August 7, 1940 and finished on August 25, 1940. The participants generally wrote regular brief daily summaries of their research, noting the place, the subject and in cases giving brief findings. The entries in the workbook indicate that Sándor Bálint did not take part in the research for the

1 GALAVICS 1992. 66. Here Géza Galavics stresses that we can expect a better knowledge of elements of the pilgrimage in the Baroque age mainly from research on societies active in the organisation of pilgrimages, like that in Barka which is unmatched in the richness of its past, and from analysis of their operation.

2 I owe a debt of gratitude to György Taliga, who is no longer alive, for the far-reaching support he gave to my research, and to my informants, in particular Imre Bernát and his wife who shared their time and knowledge with me.

3 Hungarian Museum of Ethnography. Ethnological Data Collection. Ibolya Forrai drew my attention to the Workbook and I take this opportunity to thank her.

whole period. He must have left on August 17th as there are no more entries by him after that date. The lines he wrote in the workbook on five occasions reveal how he spent his ten days there:

“Aug. 7, 1940. *Sándor Bálint* a.m. gathering information in the church and cemetery. Visit to a woman who leads prayer in the church. Afternoon excursion to Hárskút. Hunting for traces of the old pilgrimage cult.”

“Aug. 8. *Sándor Bálint* visit to the oldest man in the village who talked about the old folkways.”

“Aug. 10. *Sándor Bálint* and *János Iván*⁴ full-day excursion to Kiskovácsvágás. Lucska, Barka. Mainly to the churches, folk cults, folk sayings were examined.”

“Aug. 11. *Sándor Bálint* I spoke to the people of the village about the intentions of our group – there were also recitals and peasant songs performed at the impromptu meeting. Aug. 12. I observed cult objects in the churches on the excursion to Rozsnyó and Krasznahorka. Aug. 13. I collected folk traditions linked to the church year in Dernő. Aug. 14. I looked for pilgrimage traditions in Hárskút. Aug. 15. copying.”

“Aug. 16. Friday. Full-day excursion to Körtvélyes and Szádalmás. Research on the theme of religious ethnology. *Sándor Bálint*.”⁵

In his article *Kultusznyomok Rozsnyó vidékén* [Traces of Cult in the Rozsnyó area] written almost immediately after the field research, *Sándor Bálint* examined the historical strata of rural religious life and the traces of cults corresponding to the piety and spirituality of different historical periods. Concerning the centuries of the modern age he made special mention of the Jesuit Baroque cult of the Blessed Lady of the Snows and the Virgin Mother of Pócs and noted that, according to his research, “another very typical trend of the Catholic Baroque, Carmelite piety” also contributed to this.⁶ “The Carmelites spread ... veneration of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and the scapular. Our Lady of the Scapular is especially popular because of the great spiritual privileges associated with it (Bulla Sabbathi⁷). In Barka, in the vicinity of Rozsnyó a separate pilgrimage cult arose as the local veneration of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. In his fervour for Mary, *János Valassik*, parish priest of Barka, approached Fr. *Anaklétus*, prior of the Buda Carmelites, requesting permission to organise a confraternity in Barka as a branch of the archconfraternity in Buda, which had been raised to the status of chief society by Pope Clement XIII in 1759. The confraternity still has members today in

4 Entry in *János Iván*'s own hand.

5 *Táj- és Népkutató Intézet dernői csoportjának munkanaplója*. [Workbook of the Dernő group of the Institute of Regional and Folk Research] Hungarian Museum of Ethnography, Collection of Ethnological data 7735. passim

6 *Bálint* 1943. 92.

7 According to the Sabbatine privilege of the Bulla Sabbathi or Bulla Sabbatina (1322), “the Virgin Mother promised that she will free all those who wear the scapular in a worthy way from purgatory on the first sabbath after their death. Its authenticity was much debated in the 17th century because the original was not found. In 1613 Pope Paul V approved the privileges with certain reservations. However, Pope Clement X recognised it as authentic in 1673.” *BÁLINT* 1977. II. 127, note 1. On the Carmelite Order and the pilgrim feast privileges of societies associated with the Carmelite Order, see also: *AMORT* 1735. 141–147, especially 144–145.

distant places; large numbers of Catholic Hungarians from Mezőkövesd, Kassa (Košice), the Bodva and Torna valleys in the region of Miskolc, as well as Slovaks and Germans from far away who come to take the scapular on pilgrim feast days."⁸

In his summary work on the veneration of Mary in Hungary, Ágoston Balogh does not mention the society in the chapter dealing with the Marian societies and in particular with the scapular confraternities, even though the society also operated in the 1860s and 1870s.⁹ The Scapular Confraternity in Barka is also absent from the work of Gábor Tüskés and Éva Knapp on religious societies in the Baroque age in Hungary.¹⁰

It is only from the manuscript work of János Tóth published here that we can learn about the early history of the Scapular Confraternity in Barka, the first fifty years of the society. (Fig. 1.)

Confraternities

According to canon law, the *confraternities* are church societies formed for the exercise of some act of piety or Christian love, and also to enhance the splendour of public religious services (through special devotions, masses, processions, pilgrimages).¹¹ The latter function, that is, the forms of participation in religious services, was regulated by the canons of ecclesiastical law, making it obligatory for the confraternities to participate as bodies in public processions.¹² Canon law speaks of an archconfraternity if the confraternity groups similar societies which share in the privileges of the archconfraternity. However, canon law officially recognises only those societies which meet two criteria: 1) they serve to enhance the splendour of public services, 2) they were established by the church. The latter is important because their establishment or dissolution depends not on the decision of the members but on a ruling of the church authority.

Naturally, there have been and still are numerous other religious societies which are judged differently under canon law. These include the *tertiary orders* linked to the monastic orders. The canon law revised in 1983 renounces the earlier categorisation (tertiary order, confraternity, devotional society) and uses only two categories: public, that is, church and private associations or societies.¹³

8 BÁLINT 1943. 92.

9 BALOGH 1872. 339–342.

10 TÜSKÉS – KNAPP 1992.

11 BANGHA 1931. I. 350.

12 HÖFER – RAHNER 1958. 719–720.

13 ERDŐ 1986. 298–311. canon

The Scapular and its Confraternity

The scapular is a broad strip of cloth worn over the chest and the back as part of the habit of a few monastic orders (Carmelites, Benedictines, Dominicans). The scapular worn by laypersons is a miniature form of this, consisting of two squares of cloth attached by two ribbons over the shoulders.¹⁴ The image of Our Lady of Mount Carmel printed on cotton fabric was generally sewn onto the squares.¹⁵ Wearing of the scapular is associated with the Sabbatine Bull privilege (Bulla Sabbathi or Bulla Sabbathina), the legendary tradition that Mary promised to help persons who wore the scapular out of purgatory and into heavenly salvation on the first Saturday after their death.¹⁶ The Sabbatine Bull was the subject of dispute for centuries even within the church.¹⁷

In Barka the veneration of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and the pilgrimage of the Scapular Confraternity arose and took root as a result of efforts by János Valassik, a priest in the village in the mid-18th century.¹⁸ The foundation of the confraternity is fully in line with the aspirations of the Catholic church in the mid-18th century. Secular priests began to appear in the first half of the 18th century as organisers of confraternities. There may have been various reasons for their action.¹⁹ The main reasons for the establishment of the Scapular Confraternity in Barka were probably the desire to strengthen the process of recatholicisation and to consolidate the position of Catholics in a mixed denominational environment (Calvinists and Catholics). Naturally, the controlling role of the parish priests also grew through the confraternity. However, in his overview of the history of the confraternity, János Valassik himself does not mention this factor. He only remarks that “the Carmelites ... through their appointed representatives, such as the parish priests” could establish confraternities.²⁰

The society formed by wearers of the scapular joined the archconfraternity of the Carmelites in Buda “because Congregations of this kind had to be set up according to the mediation, guidance and instruction of this order”.²¹ In this way it could share in the pilgrim feast privileges of the archconfraternity. The Latin

14 EGBERS 1994. 184–185.

15 The Barka confraternity had printing blocks for three different engraved images. See TÓTH 1809. (113.)

16 The book of miracles printed in the Buda-Krisztinaváros place of pilgrimage (1755) recommends that its readers join the scapular confraternity for this reason. TÜSKÉS 1993. 176.

17 AMORT 1735. 141–147, especially 146–147.

18 BÁLINT 1943. 92; BARNÁ 1984. 45. This is also confirmed by research by Gábor Tüskés. Tüskés 1993. 176.

19 Among the reasons Gábor Tüskés and Éva Knapp mention the following: 1. unsatisfactory functioning of the already existing societies, 2. reinforcement of the process of recatholicisation, 3. strengthening the position of the Catholic Church which was in the minority at that time, 4. recognition of the financial possibilities, 5. and finally, involvement in the confraternity of social groups which had hitherto been left out of the confraternities. TÜSKÉS – KNAPP 1992. 20.

20 TÓTH 1809. (10.)

21 TÓTH 1809. (20.) The document confirming admission into the archconfraternity in Buda can be read in the history of the confraternity.

ritual for imposition of the scapular described in the manuscript was used in the Carmelite Order right up until the Second Vatican Council.²²

Because of the appeal of their indulgences (mainly with the Bulla Sabbatina), the scapular confraternities were the most popular of the 18th century Marian societies.²³ Gábor Tüskés and Éva Knapp stress as the general reason for their popularity that wearers of the scapular do not suffer damnation, the imposition of the scapular is an impressive ceremony, and the obligations of the members of the confraternity are not onerous: they are required only to say the prescribed prayers and to fast on Wednesdays.²⁴ In his history of the confraternity, János Tóth makes numerous references to two authors (József Telek OFM and Goldsperger?),²⁵ whose works he used on the subject of the Carmelites, the Scapular Confraternity and Marian devotion.

Functioning of the Scapular Confraternity in Barka

In this way in the mid-1700s János Valassik, parish priest in Barka approached the Scapular Confraternity in Buda of the Discalced Carmelites, seeking their permission to set up a scapular society in Barka too. In that age the permission of the territorially competent church authority, the episcopacy or monastic order was always sought for the establishment of societies.²⁶ In this respect, János Valassik acted as required by the church and the rules. His aim, of course, was not to respect the rules but, by following the proper procedure for establishment, to benefit from all the spiritual privileges that the Buda scapular confraternity, as an archconfraternity, already enjoyed through the papal permission.

But János Valassik wanted to be not “only a passing affiliate” of the archconfraternity in Buda, he wanted to set up an autonomous, independent “permanently existing Parent Society”. He was supported in this by József Szentilónay, vicar general of Esztergom, who approached his priests in a circular letter in October 1758 with the encouragement that those in their parish who “wish to set up a Group /:confraternitatem:/” or to gain indulgence, should make the request through him.²⁷ János Valassik therefore informed him that “we are desirous to bring the Congregation of the Carmelite Order” into the parish. Szentilónay wrote to Pope Clement XIII, who issued a bull on the 7th day of the month of

22 MANUALE 1949. 222–227. The text used in the ceremony today in the Carmelite Order differs substantially from this. Cf.: SKAPULÁRÉ 2001. 17–22.

23 TÜSKÉS – KNAPP 1992. 16.

24 TÜSKÉS – KNAPP 1992. 28–29.

25 JÓZSEF TELEK (1716–1772) was a popular Franciscan preacher. His books of sermons (Tizenkét-szilaagú korona [Crown with Twelve Stars], BUDA, 1769; Coronae Marianae II. Vác, 1772.) were reissued a number of times. Cf. SZINNYEI CD-ROM edition. We do not even know Goldsperger’s first name. He is not quoted in Szinnyei’s bibliographical work. All that we know about him, from János Tóth’s manuscript, is that he was a parish priest in Domanita.

26 TÜSKÉS – KNAPP 1992. 23.

27 TÓTH 1809. (21).

Saint George (April 7), 1759 in which he “authorises, reinforces and perpetuates” the confraternity.²⁸ The papal authorisation was sent from Rome to Nagyszombat and forwarded from there by József Szentilonay to Barka, enquiring what feast the confraternity wished. He confirmed the papal bull and the requested feasts and forwarded all the material to Barka on September 19, 1759.²⁹ In this way the society in Barka broke away from the archconfraternity in Buda and through the authorisation and approval of Pope Clement XIII became an archconfraternity itself.

It was the duty of members enrolled to wear the scapular, to say the prescribed prayers, to fast on Wednesdays, preserve chastity according to their state in life³⁰ and to give alms.³¹ The indulgence privileges awarded by Clement XIII were extended in 1804 by Pope Pius VII also to deceased members of the Barka confraternity.³² For example for the day on which they took on the scapular, after confession, communion and saying the prayers intended by the church the members could gain plenary indulgence. On the other feast days of the place of pilgrimage – Candlemas, the feast days of Saint John of Nepomuk and Saint Joachim – by observing the above requirements indulgence could be obtained for seven or forty days, while a visit to the church in Barka brought sixty days of indulgence. Members could also gain full indulgence on their death bed.

The rules of the Scapular Confraternity regulate in detail the holding of pilgrim feasts. It is recommended to prepare at least 600 scapulars for such a feast. The requirements were the following: on Saturday afternoon the image of the Virgin Mother of the Scapular was put out for veneration and the confraternity’s book was placed on a table in front of it. In the afternoon the litany was held in front of the image. According to the rules, the slips for deceased members had to be sent to Barka. A cross was drawn after their name in the register of the confraternity. The names of the deceased were read at the evening mass said for the salvation of the deceased members. The Sunday festive services began with mass at 5 a.m. Sermons were preached in Hungarian, German and Slovak in the morning masses. This ensured the equality of the different language groups in the Latin liturgies. In addition to the main feast, the place of pilgrimage also held similar services on other feast days.³³

The names of the confraternity members were inscribed in the register of the confraternity (*album confraternitatis*³⁴); at first this was kept in alphabetical order, but later they changed to the registration of applicants by year. The title-page of the register bears the Latin inscription: *Pro notitia Domini Directionis. Nomina*

28 TÓTH 1809. (22).

29 TÓTH 1809. (34).

30 To observe the 6th and 9th commandments.

31 TÓTH 1809. (54–71). Among the prayers are mentioned the little office of Mary (Officium Marianum) and the lauds of Mary which could, if necessary, be replaced by saying the Lord’s Prayer and Hail Mary. On the office and the lauds of Mary, see: BAUMEISTER 1992, VÉRBÉNYI – ARATÓ 2001. 157, 225–226.

32 TÓTH 1809. (36–44).

33 On pilgrim feasts in Barka today, see: BARNÁ 1984, KMECZKO 1991.

34 TÓTH 1809. 55.

Confratrum et Consororum indicabit Litera Alphabetica A.v.B. Numerus in primo margine, Annum et diem Mensis, quo quis inscriptus est. † cruenta, Confratris v. Consororis mortem. In 1758, at the time of the establishment of the confraternity, there were applicants who took the scapular only from settlements belonging to the Barka parish: from Barka itself, Lucska and Kovácsi. In 1759 there are already names also from Hárskút, Dernó, Várhosszúrét, Almás (Jablonca), Rozsnyó (Rožnava), Krasznahorkaváralja (Krásnahorské Podhradie), Szilas (Brestovec) and Torna (Turňa nad Bodvou). It can be seen that the fame of the confraternity gradually spread in the region, in Gömör, Torna and Abaúj counties. In 1762 German (manta) residents from Szomolnok (Smolnik) in nearby Szepes County appear for the first time and from then on they enrolled in the Scapular Confraternity in very large numbers and were among the most diligent visitors to Barka and the Barka pilgrim feasts. In 1766 we find Kisbodoló (Budulov), in 1770 Rudnok (Rudnik) and Jánok (Janik), in 1775 Pacsa (Pača) and in 1780 Csécs (Čečejovce). It is no longer possible to discover the reasons for the outstanding numbers of enrolments. Naturally, many things can be explained by the establishment of the new confraternity, the attraction of the indulgence privileges associated with the confraternity and the initial dynamism of the new place of pilgrimage. However, there must have been social causes linked to the place and time for the sudden surge in the number of applicants from particular settlements.³⁵ (Fig. 2–3–4.)

A cause of the popularity in the Baroque age was the spiritual benefit available to members of the confraternity, a subject to which János Tóth devoted a separate chapter in his manuscript. These were: 1. the special patronage of the Blessed Virgin both in life and after death (Sabbatine privilege), 2. the members share in the merits of the Carmelite Order as a whole (prayer, alms, fasting), 3. the many different possibilities for gaining indulgence.³⁶

Between 1783 and 1795 there are hardly any entries in the confraternity register, as a consequence of the policy on the churches of Enlightened Absolutism. The first signs of this appeared earlier, in the reign of Maria Theresa. From 1773, for example, the authorisation of the ruler was required for the establishment of new confraternities. In 1781–1782 Joseph II first dissolved the Franciscan societies and the Franciscan tertiary orders, then in 1784 ordered the dissolution of all societies. However, the most serious restriction was the full confiscation of the property of the societies in 1787–1788. Although these restrictions and bans largely meant the end of the life of the Baroque confraternities, they did not everywhere mean the actual dissolution of the confraternities and the full suspension of their operation. The Scapular Confraternity in Barka also weathered this period somehow. After 1795 the possibility arose of legally reorganising the confraternities.³⁷ The Scapular Confraternity in Barka probably took advantage of this. However, János Tóth makes no mention of these things. It is as though nothing had hap-

35 The period 1721–1770 was the great age in the life of most confraternities. TÜSKÉS – KNAPP 1992. 17.

36 TÓTH 1809. 72–73.

37 TÜSKÉS – KNAPP 1992. 33–34.

pened. He simply notes after the establishment of the archconfraternity in 1759, that in 1803–1804, when the present Barka church was rebuilt, János Zborovszky, parish priest of Barka requested Bishop Ferenc Szanyi that the pope “allow this Confraternity in the new church too”.³⁸ This implies that the Scapular Confraternity had been operating up to that time as well.

From the early 19th century, after 1810 there was again an increase in the number of enrolments. An examination of these shows that distant settlements also joined the Barka confraternity and the Barka pilgrimages. It is only between 1866 and 1884 that there are again no entries. We do not know the reason for this. While in 1866 186 persons enrolled, in 1899 this figure was 357, in 1901 611 and in 1910 427 took on the “blessed scapular”. From then the numbers fluctuated from year to year around 200–300 persons. However, by the second half of the 20th century, in the 1970s and 1980s it dropped to an average of 50 persons a year. Apart from the general causes of secularisation, the atmosphere hostile to the church and religion prevailing in Czechoslovakia must also be mentioned. We have no assessment of the current popularity of the confraternity in Slovakia.

The Pilgrim Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel

By projecting the data of the confraternity’s register onto a map we obtain a clear picture of how, through the Scapular Confraternity, the village of Barka gradually grew from a place of pilgrimage of local, parish significance, into one of the most important sacred places, at first mainly of Torna County and then of Abaúj and the more distant Gömör and Borsod Counties.³⁹ This area, forming a largely concentric circle, changed after the borders were redrawn in 1918 and Barka was annexed to Czechoslovakia. It became increasingly difficult to visit Barka from the regions that remained in Hungary, while the national border also influenced the direction of movement in the territories annexed to Czechoslovakia. As a result, in the 20th century the area on which Barka exerted an attraction became a long, narrow band spreading in an East-West direction beside the border and its members included people from Nógrád County as well as the Bodrogek areas.⁴⁰

The Barka confraternity still preserves the frames and organisational structure shaped in the 18th century. It would appear that the political and socio-economic events of the last century and a half have produced no change here. The parish priest of Barka is always the *director or rector* of the congregation. For many decades the confraternity’s *notary* was the schoolmaster, and the warden was the *curator*. The sacristan of Barka at the same time also acted as *sacristan* in the

38 TÓTH 1809. 35–36.

39 BÁLINT – BARNA 1994. 287–288.

40 BÁLINT – BARNA 1994. 287–288. See also: BARNA 1997. 181.

confraternity. On page 118 of the manuscript the order of pilgrim feast services has been crossed with a pen. This probably indicates a change in the order of services.

Their tasks: the *rector* announces the pilgrimages in time, blesses and distributes the scapulars; the *notary* keeps the book of the congregation, distributes slips, “says the litany on Saturday”; the *curator* purchases the cloth for the scapulars, has them sewn and sells them; the *sacristan* “lights two candles before the small image of the Virgin of the Scapular” “on Saturdays and vigils”, Sundays and feast days.⁴¹ It was the task of the curator and the village judge to keep order at the pilgrim feast.⁴² They made sure that the stallholders “do not sell boots, sickles, etc. as in a market”. Nowadays there are stalls selling honey-cakes, sweets, toys and fancy goods. The collection, the “purse at the small image of the Virgin Mary”, and the candles and wax figures it was the custom to offer were supervised by the *sacristan*.⁴³ According to the regulations governing the pilgrim feast in the 18th–19th centuries, “dancing is forbidden on this day in the inn of the village and on the hill”.⁴⁴ The latter observation shows that the local conditions were taken into account when drawing up the regulations.

On the occasion of pilgrim feasts the rules of the Scapular Confraternity were explained.⁴⁵ Enrolment was first stressed, with the reminder that after death the confraternity membership card must be returned to Barka. This was followed by the importance of faithfully wearing the scapular, thirdly, the saying of the prayers associated with it, and fourthly the importance of the Wednesday fast which was not, however, a strict rule. Fifthly they stressed the importance of preserving chastity according to the state in life. The member who observes all these will receive the spiritual benefits of membership in the confraternity: the patronage of the Virgin Mary and various indulgences. The traditional conditions for gaining indulgence are confession and communion, saying prayers for the advancement of the church and the unity of Christendom. Indulgence can also be obtained on the occasion of funerals. At pilgrim feasts sermons were preached in three languages: Hungarian, German and Slovak.

With the establishment of the confraternity, János Valassik wanted to mobilise people by introducing a new type of piety and so unite the different ethnic groups living in the area, and the whole society regardless of sex, social status or age. As we see it, this means that the aim of the Scapular Confraternity was shaping a distinctive way of collective thinking, representing the unity of the living and the dead and praying for others, that is, the creation of a virtual community.⁴⁶

41 TÓTH 1809. 50.

42 TÓTH 1809. 121.

43 TÓTH 1809. 122. The remark refers to wax offerings made in the late 18th century. See also: BARNA 1987.

44 TÓTH 1809. 122.

45 TÓTH 1809. 125–132.

46 TURNER 1997, TÜSKÉS – KNAPP 1992. 31–32.

Image of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Barka

In his history of the confraternity János Tóth mentions a “little image of the Virgin Mary”, but we know nothing more about it. There are two images of Mary in the Barka parish church today: Our Lady of Mount Carmel on the main altar and a copy of the devotional image of the Virgin Mother of Pócs on the side altar.⁴⁷ This, however, is actually “the composition of the Queen of the Rosary, the Pompeii devotional image, widespread throughout the world at that time. The Madonna occupies a position in the centre and in place of rosary beads, has the infant hand out the scapular, together with Saint Simon Stock and Saint Teresa of Avila, who have taken the places of Saint Dominic and Saint Katherine of Siena in the new composition.”⁴⁸ (Fig. 5–6.)

The legend known in the villages of the district is probably associated with this image. According to this, a man called Kuchta spent three years on a journey to Rome for the image. It was first taken to Lucska, but the next day it flew to a chestnut tree in Barka which stood on the site of the present altar. They returned the image three times and it flew back three times. Then they enlarged the small chapel that was already there so that the devotional image could be brought into the church.⁴⁹ Such a case, where the person venerated, in this case Mary, herself designated the place for her pilgrim cult, thereby legitimising it, is a quite frequent motif in the legends on the origin of places of pilgrimage.⁵⁰ There is no mention of the legend in the history of the confraternity.⁵¹ János Tóth describes the regulation for pilgrim feast days at the time of establishment: “a table covered with a cloth is put out, the small image of the Virgin Mary of the Scapular and the book of the congregation [Album Congraternitatis] are placed on this”.⁵² However, we do not know with certainty the size or identity of this “little image” in the 18th century. Although the legend of Our Lady of Mount Carmel is still very much alive and is found in many variants in the Hungarian settlements of the Csermosnya Valley, the pilgrims do not regard it as a devotional image associated with miracles and answered prayers. The driving force of the pilgrimages to Barka from 1759 was and still is the Scapular Confraternity reinforced with indulgence privileges.

In his manuscript János Tóth mentions the image of the “Virgin Mary of the Scapular” in connection with the scapular.⁵³ He speaks of three different copper

47 Zoltán Szilárdfy points out that a change occurred in the mid-18th century in the iconography of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The portrayal of the Virgin Mother of the Scapular was adapted as an altar painting.

48 SZILÁRDFY 1993. 57.

49 Narrated by Mrs Imre Bernát, 1983.

50 BÁLINT – BARNÁ 1994. 263–264. This motif is known from the nearby village of Uhorna, as well as from Mátraverebély (Nógrád County) and Segesd (Somogy County).

51 One possible interpretation is that the legend evokes the memory of the journeys to Rome required to obtain papal approval for the confraternity. This could explain the similarity between the scheme of the main altar painting in Barka and the devotional image of Pompeii.

52 TÓTH 1809. 115.

53 See note 15.

engraved printing blocks used to print the images on the scapulars. However, I did not see these during my research in Barka.

According to recollections, the image of the Mary of Pócs was in the church until the 1970s, hanging on the wall opposite the sacristy.⁵⁴ The parish priest at that time⁵⁵ had the side altar made and the painting was placed on it later. In the 1980s, on the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, this image was taken out and placed on the outdoor altar set up behind the church. The Latin inscription on the back of the painting reads: *Curant / 1792 / D. Gab. Strohamer Director / Catharina Griner Posta Magister / Filia ejus Anna / Juliana Lázár Cameraria Episcopale.*⁵⁶

* * *

János Tóth, director of the confraternity at the time, in 1809 set down the history of the first fifty years of the Scapular Confraternity in Barka, the organising activity of the founder János Valassik, the operating practice of the society and its pilgrim feasts in the early 19th century. He also records in the manuscript the authorisations to organise the society and indulgences obtained. The strongly practice-oriented approach adopted in the manuscript suggests that János Tóth, taking advantage of the 50th anniversary, wanted to strengthen and confirm the operation of the Scapular Confraternity after the restrictions imposed by Joseph II, and also wanted to provide his successors with a guide to the practical organisation of the society and its feasts. With the anniversary he linked it to time and place and did, in fact, reinforce historical memory and everyday practice. In the 1980s I took part several times in the pilgrim feast held in Barka on the day of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Each of the events took place within frames similar to those we have seen in the history of the confraternity written by János Tóth. The Scapular Confraternity in Barka is still alive.

54 Tradition holds that the image came to Barka from the Jesuit church in Rozsnyó. It was painted after an engraving. This shows the devotional image of Mary of Pócs above the Pócs church. Groups of pilgrims approach the church from two directions.

55 Pál Oravec, at present (2001) parish priest at Torna.

56 The inscription was copied from the original writing. The engraving on which the painting is based can be found in the work written by Pál Esterházy (Eszterás) on devotional images of Mary in Hungary, and also in a forerunner of popular literature: *Négy új istenes ének a Szűz Máriához Kisasszony napjára és más napokra*. [Four new sacred songs to the Virgin Mary for the birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary and other days] Bagó Márton és fiai, Budán, 1875.

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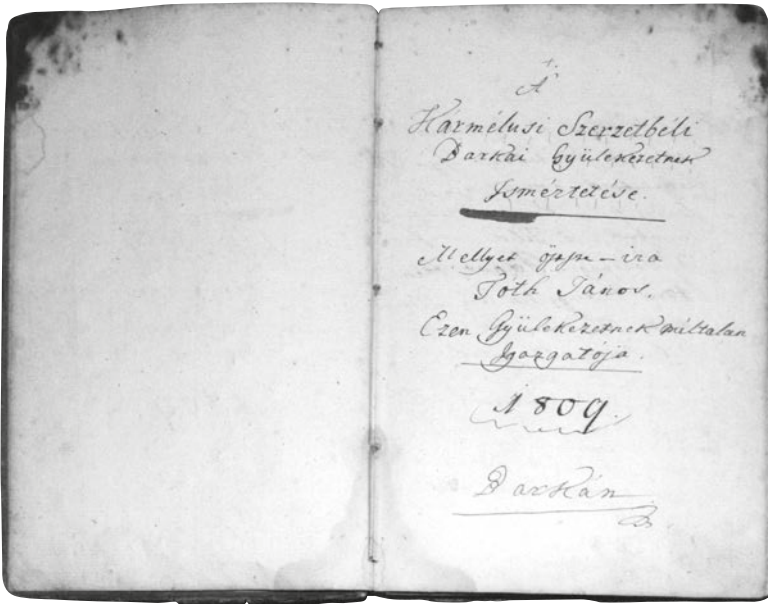


Fig. 1. History of the first 50 years of the Archconfraternity, written by János Tóth, 1809

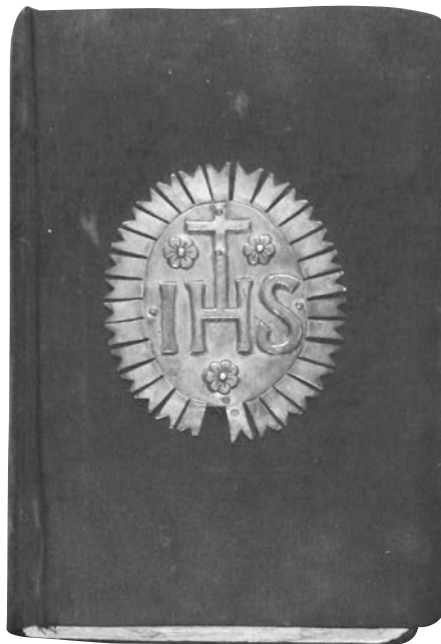


Fig. 2. Book of Scapular Archconfraternity

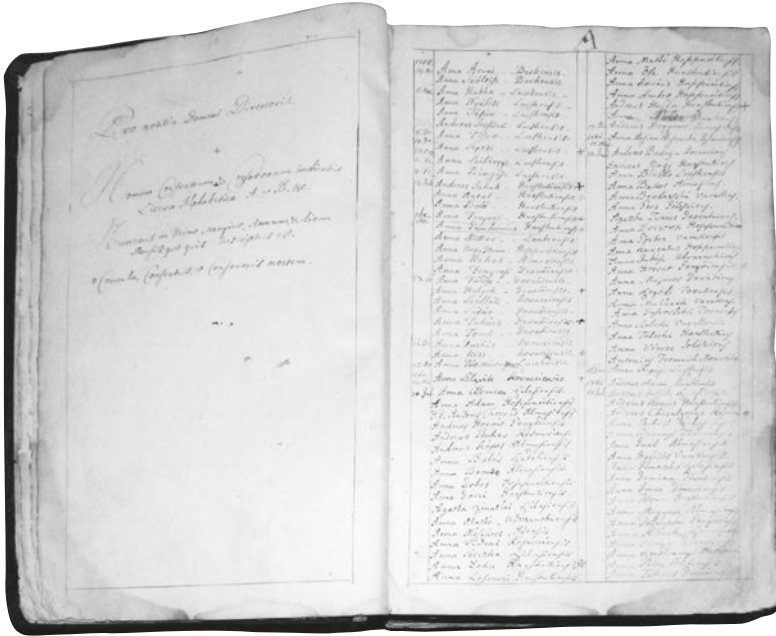


Fig. 3. List of names in the Archconfraternity registration book

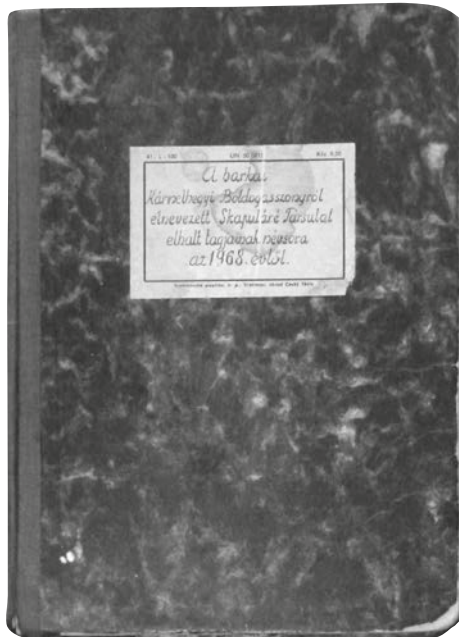


Fig. 4. List of deceased members of the Archconfraternity since 1968



Fig. 5. Main altar in the church, Barka, 2012



Fig. 6. Our Lady of Mount Carmel with the Scapular