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Contents

INTRODUCTION

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

THE MARIANUM – INSTITUTION, LIFEWORLD AND PATRIMONY

Histories of confessional schools from Cluj in the 20th–21st century

Histories of the Marianum

The founding, functioning and the end of the Marianum. The building of the Marianum

The founding of the Marianum

The building and the nationalization of the Marianum

The Marianum made of stone and the spiritual one

“My school – the Marianum”

The departments of the Marianum. Educational contents

1. *Elementary girls’ school*
2. *Civilian girls’ school*
3. *Commercial course for women*
4. *Upper commercial school for women*
5. *Household school*
6. *Girls’ gymnasium*
7. *Teacher’s training school*
8. *Music course*
9. *Taylor school*

10. Teacher's training school for women

Twin institutions

Libraries, laboratories

College

Teaching methods

... in the personal recollections

Literary and sport societies, choirs

- 1. St Elisabeth Society of the upper commercial school*
- 2. German–French society*
- 3. St. Margaret Society of the girls' gymnasium*
- 4. St. Elisabeth Society of the civilian school*
- 5. Diákkaptár society*
- 6. St Cecilia choir*
- 7. Marianum sports club*
- 8. Marianum sport circle*
- 9. Zrínyi Ilona Sports Club of the commercial general school*
- 10. Zrínyi Ilona Sports Club*

Religious and moral education

... in the personal recollections

Religious societies

- 1. Maria Congregation of Elder Girls*
- 2. Maria Congregation of Younger Girls*
- 3. Maria Congregation of Ladies*
- 4. Congregation of Traders*
- 5. Heart Guard, Heart of the Lord Society*

School life: regular and festive days

... in the personal recollections

Recruiting

Women careers (options, images)

Choice of career in the school bulletins

Choice of career in the Aranyszálak column

Choice of career in the correspondence of a class

Choice of career in personal reports, column correspondence and anniversary reports

Choice of career in biographical context

The role of the Marianum in the career image – in interviews

Community construction

Youth paper Transylvanian Hungarian Girls

The Aranyszálak column as a community forum

The programme of the paper and of the column

Discourses. Contents and mentalities

Conclusions

The Community of “Eternal Friendship”

The community of a class through the narratives of Baráti Tudósító (1930–1932)

CASE STUDY. IMAGES OF THE MARIANUM ON A COMMUNITY WEBSITE

“My love, my life – the Marianum!”

The Marianum of László Barta, the service apartment of the Bolyai University

The causes and characteristics of the remembering process

Readers, comments of the Marianum – Cluj series

Conclusions

CONCLUSIONS

BIBLIOGRAPHY

SOURCES

ANNEXES

Abstract

In my thesis I undertake the revealing of written and oral sources on the Marianum, respectively the analysis of the representations of Marianum in different narratives. I seek answers to the questions: How, why, because of who has survived the “Marianum” in the memory of the community? What are/what have been the meanings since its founding, during its functioning, after its nationalization of one of the most renowned educational institutions of Cluj, which functioned between 1911 and 1948, becoming a special notion in public opinion, reflecting a specific spirit, and which has survived because of its “past”?

The research included the revealing of the narrative elements and motifs related to the Marianum, analysing the “authors” of the texts on this topic, the intentions, the media specificities, contexts, and influence, all this within the theoretical and methodological framework of *women’s history, women’s education history, microhistory, social representation, narratology, media narratology, theory of contexts, research of memory and urban research.*

In the first part of the thesis, after a brief presentation of the works on the history of schools in Cluj and on the Marianum itself, I presented the founding of the institute in the context of the educational system in Cluj and Hungary at the beginning of the 20th century: within changing social and economic conditions, although in the crossfire of pro and contra argumentations, the starting of girls’ gymnasiums seemed to be an actuality all over the country, as the opening of university education for women subscribed possibilities for high school graduation, in different types of high schools than the already existing ones, which were preparing girls only for their “natural” vocation: motherhood and household activity. The contemporary texts on the founding of the school, the festive speeches at the inauguration, the press articles with their metaphorical language and use of symbols have already determined their reading as interpretations. Giving a name for this new, monumental building of the city has already specified the institution arising within its walls: as a confessional school complex it served not only the education of the girls, but also undertook their religious, moral, national-patriotic formation. The founding and functioning of the institute was embedded into the educational initiative endeavours of the Roman-Catholic Church from Cluj, and József Hirschler himself, and it resulted in an architectural

achievement on the local level. As a symbol of the specific education, on the narrative level, a specific Marian spirit was set off, a world view interiorized within the walls of the school, serving also as an identification segment and a defining element of personal character after graduation. Loyalty to this spirit, to the school, to the country, to the nation, to Mary, to an optimistic existential concept, plus an attitude preferring good and decent entertainment and resistance in work, in life would be those aspects – according to the bulletin of the institute, to graduation speeches, to anniversary speeches – which differentiate Marianist girls from other schoolgirls, respectively graduates from other women.

I presented the educational contents, cultural activities from the everyday and festive day school life, through the departments of the institute, its twin institutions, libraries, laboratories, college, literary and sports societies, all based on written and oral sources. These express the fact that although the different departments were situated in different parts and floors of the building, thus pupils were not really able to interact on the everyday level, a community lifeworld and spirit could be formed on the level of the whole institute. The festive events of the school years, including carnival period, Christian, national, civilian holidays, the exams at the end of the term, the exhibitions, the optional extracurricular activities have offered lots of possibilities for the pupils and teachers of the institute to prepare and run one or another cultural or social event. There was a frequent cooperation with other local youth organizations (schools, boy scouts, congregations, clubs) on the level of the institute, but also of the different departments or literary societies. The recollections of the interviews reflect nicely the emotive aspect of the participation to these events: these were already a great experience at their time, but it is still something worth remembering in our days. Memories of the classes reflect also their relation to the teachers, to the teaching material as well as to the teaching methods in use. A reconstruction of an idealistic image is not a general characteristic of these texts: the person of the teacher, the methods used are eventually supported or criticised. The teachers were evaluated according to a certain norm: not taking into consideration the physical aspect (although the recollections are referring also to this), a teacher teaching with love, patience, good intentions and enthusiasm could have become a model for the pupils. The recollections also draw our attention to the fact that one cannot generalize: for example different people had different opinion on the rigour of the school.

The chapter entitled *Recruiting* deals with the relation between material, social and cultural capital and educational progress in the case of the pupils of the elementary, civilian,

upper commercial school and gymnasium between 1911 and 1923, based on the research of Emese Sántha. According to the results at the gymnasium graduates the endeavour towards intellectual career was quite evident, as most graduates from this department had an intellectual background, and their education was mostly determined by the previous cultural capital and education of their parents.

In the chapter *Women careers* I analysed the pupils' career options and strategies that can be discovered in the given sources (bulletins, pupils' lists, the correspondence of a class, anniversary reports, biographies, oral history recollections), and the role that the school might have played in their career options and professional realization. On the inferior levels usually the parents decide about the school of their children. Beyond these decisions we can find cultural and ethnic experiences of the family, but also historical circumstances as well. In the first part of the 20th century, although people used to undertake the burden of several years of learning away from their native place, it must have been determinant also the possibility of travelling, as preparing for the admittance or the difficulty of accessing the necessary books might have been sometimes a major factor in determining the education line of a girl. Written sources, anniversary reports show the fact that although the school gave the graduates a qualification, a position in the labour market was more accidental and short-term one, due to several factors, thus the merit of the school could have been validated only in this context. The tendency to find a job, unless dictated otherwise by family conditions, was specific to the graduates, at least until marriage. Based on the recollections we can see that the role of the school proved to be decisive, as even if could not assure a job, but the personality of a teacher or another, the quality of the education led to certain aspects, for example it formed some kind of passion or a specific world view, something that the former graduates have remained grateful for. Although in the last years the circle of Marianist friends of the interviewed people has dropped significantly, it can be seen how a sense of community has survived for decades, a sense fed with regular meetings, according to the possibilities. Even if not through professional formation and jobs, but the Marianum assured a kind of prestige and status for its graduates by the accumulated knowledge and relations capital.

In the chapter called *Community construction* I analysed the representations of the Marianum in written sources that were mainly featuring the teachers of the institute as initiators and formers of discourses. In November 1920, with the starting of the youth magazine, a new discourse was started, a discourse showing a Marianist identity building "from the bottom", embedded in the discourse of the collective identity of Transylvanian

Hungarian girls. Priest teacher János Kende had a great role in this. Coordinating the correspondence of a former class between 1930–1932, priest teacher Benedek Csergő's endeavours are also outlined within the discursive strategy aiming the consolidation and preservation of Marian spirituality. These editorial works were considered necessary within the historical-social-economic frames of the world wars, the minority condition and the economic crisis. The spiritual and cultural education of the youth was kind of general endeavour of those times, especially for the religious field: educating a religious, national and Christian spirit youth, forming a cultural identity based on a common school experience, the love for native tongue, for Transylvania would have helped living a collective solidarity in difficult historical times, thus legitimize the sense of positive existential belief and work morals. Based on the letters of the readers we can state that the identification with the Marianum played an important part in the consolidation of the collective identity of the school as well as of the whole Transylvanian Hungarian school girls' society. The official anniversaries offered the occasion of the consolidation of the identity of the community, while the visit to the school enabled its individual experience: meeting the *spiritual Marianum* within its *protective walls*. The actual and former graduates considered the Marianum as their (spiritual) home, while its community (teachers, pupils and all those identifying themselves with its spirit) was regarded as their family. Its spirit used to be a guiding principle for these people, and they were living, behaving, thinking (reading, dressing, talking, writing letters etc.) like individuals determined by this spirituality (Marian spirit, Christian feeling, religious-moral conduct). The youth magazine represented in fact the materialized form of this spirit and the material evidence of belonging and being linked to the community of the Transylvanian Hungarian girls.

The last analysing chapter of the thesis is a case study, which focuses on the revealing of the discourses of a certain source, which did not give space necessarily to the voices of the former graduates, although they were also involved in the communication process. The members and commenting people of this personal blog were interacting about the Marianum, and for some of them the recollections about the building, the interaction on searching/consolidating the symbols/meanings of the building made them experience, to live their local and regional identity, but also their identity related to the town, to the native land, to the family, to the Bolyai University, while others appreciate the messages related to the Marianum (morals, identities). In the case of the former the Marianum is the chance to identify with the family, with the native town, while for the latter the “path-showing”

character of the message is the important issue, as it offers support to their own world view, past, present, future and existential attitude, on individual level as well as on the level of generations. In the case of László Barta the *home* representation of the Marianum gains a new interpretation: he is not referring to a common home formulated based on everyday school life, but to an inherited world, besides a family and friendship related environment. He grew up in a physically existing building, with a great past he knew of, and especially this knowledge about the past offered him the sensation that in fact the *spiritual* Marianum was also his home. His life was enriched with an inherited spiritual home, which has the same importance in the building and living of his own identity, than his “reconstructed, decoded” family values, discovered in public and family archives. This home, as a heritage, determined his identity.

In my thesis – besides discovering the educational contents – I analysed the kind of representations that we can find in the 20th–21st century narratives about a famous girls’ institute, which even in the public opinion offered quality education and diversified cultural life to its pupils. Already at the beginning of the research I was aware of the fact that the sources, the mediums, the actors of communication determine the discourses as well as the discourses have their impact on the actors, on the recollecting of the Marianum. Therefore we confront the representations of the institute in the fields of consciously oriented and commonly formed ways of communication. According to the intentions of communication the Marianum appears as an architectural-educational achievement of local and Transylvanian Catholicism, but also as a school determining the everyday life of its pupils. Besides professional success the institute outlined, modelled also the individual and existential characteristics of the girls through the spirit that lived between its walls. Besides its pupils and besides direct, personal connections, the Marianum has succeeded in becoming a part of family tradition, the pride of the native town, offering even for those who did not attend it a basic element of ethnical or regional identity.

The *Annexes* include photographs from public and personal archives about the building of the institute, respectively about the cultural events taking place here, but also texts and interviews on educational contents, ritual festive attitudes, and jubilee festivities.