

ÁRKÁD PÁSZTORY
THE STORY OF A MONK, THE DESTINY OF A FORTUNE

ABSTRACT OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

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Contents

1. Introduction – Why a PhD thesis about Árkád Pásztory?	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2. Origin, family, formative years.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3. Abbot at Bixad	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.2 The situation of the monastery Bixad: a reason for misunderstanding between two bishoprics *	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.3 The good householder Pásztory. The revelations of the archpriest from Țara Oașului.	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.4 Serious accusations coming from afar. Slovaks at the monastery	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.5 Investigation against the monk. Hearings in Uzhhorod, Gherla's position	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.6 Árkád Pásztory monastery founder	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.7 A bad day for Pásztory: 17 octombrie 1900	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.8 Plans for revolt. Appeal to the Metropolitan of Blaj and the Archbishop of Esztergom	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.9 Petitions, letters, threats. The involvement of the "laity" in the story	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.10 Pales and pitchforks. Takeover of Bixad Monastery by the new abbot	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.11 Attempt at reconciliation. Rehearing the monk	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.12 The Holy See, the last hope	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.13 Deputy candidate.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.14 Dismissal by order and sentence of Rome	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4. Pásztory Toag.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.1 Signals of submission to Gherla.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.2 The landowner, the community and the mansion in Tur	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.3 The "liberal" Pásztory. Attempt to get involved in political life	Error! Bookmark not defined.

4.4 The First Testament	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.5 Controversy with the editorial staff of the periodical "Új Szatmár"	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.6 The Trial of the Schismatic Ruthenians.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.7 Pásztory and the bishop of Hajdudorog. The idea of a donation	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.8 The trial with the Basilians. The reaction of the bishoprics of Mukachevo and Gherla. Appeal to Rome	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.9 Joachim Homa and István Miklóssy. About the division of Pásztory's wealth	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.Patriot or traitor? *	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.1 What did it all start from?	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.2 Investigation against Pásztory.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.3 A detective from Budapest in the Land of Oaş	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.4 Pan-Slavism in the Slovak parts. Followers of Pásztory in Gömör County	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.5 Search in "Toag". Not a spy, but a usurer.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.6 The notary from Călineşti Oaş and the Russian planes. Pásztory's detention at home	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.7 Intervention of the Minister of the Interior	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.8 The Deputy Committee of Satmar takes over the investigation	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.9 A new series of accusations. Pásztory's internment in Nyiregyháza	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.10 The story of János Pásztor	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.11 Rediscussing the trial of the "schismatic Ruthenians"	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.12 Other planes, other opinions	Error! Bookmark not defined.
6. Árkád Pásztory Foundation	Error! Bookmark not defined.

6.1.Takeover of the Foundation by the Diocese of Hajdudorog**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

6.1.1 A last tribute to the monk Árkád Pásztori.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

6.1.2 Shocking news: The Foundation is mired in debts and obligations**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

6.1.3 Latest details on Foundation validation.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

6.1.4 The Basilians, one last fight.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

6.2 In Greater Romania. Pásztori Foundation under the new administration.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

6.2.1 Romanian troops occupy Sătmár**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

6.2.2 Plundering the estate**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

6.2.3 The case is being investigated. Augustin Maxim, the main suspect ...**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

6.2.4 Treaty of Trianon**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

6.2.5 The Romanian state expropriates the diocese of Hajdudorog.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

6.2.6 Iuliu Hossu, the rightful heir to the fortune?**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

6.2.7 Bishop Miklóssy sells the immovables in Romania. The right of pre-emption of the Romanian State.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

6.2.8 Mixed Arbitration Court of Paris**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

6.2.9 All roads lead to Rome**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Conclusions **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Bibliographies 12

Annexes

.....252

Summary

Keywords: Ruthenians, Greek-Catholics, Basilian Order, Austro-Hungarian Empire, Bixad monastery, schism, peasant emigration to America, Oaş Land, Pásztory's toag, World War I.

The subject of the doctoral thesis "Árkád Pásztory – The story of a monk, the destiny of a fortune", deserves to be known. It is of interest to both academia and the general public. In Oaş land there is a place called "Pásztory's Toag". There is also a mansion there, listed as a historical monument, founded by the protagonist of our thesis (the only construction of this type in the area). Lying in ruins, it will probably disappear in the coming years. The information gathered here therefore also has the role of telling the story of the edifice, of making it not to be forgotten. However, Árkád Pásztory also contributed to the modification of the demographic profile of Oaş. In a predominantly Romanian land, he colonized Slovaks, Ruthenians and Hungarians. The interactions and cultural exchanges between them and the locals have produced important changes there. The character is therefore not just any one. It has historical relevance.

The local history, explored through the reconstruction of the life of such a man, can contribute to a more nuanced and deeper understanding of an era. The captivating biography of this monk from the Bixad monastery, in Țara Oașului, mirrors, in fact, the features of an entire period: the survival of traditional popular religiosity, the emergence of capitalism, the industrial revolution and associationist formulas, the impact of modernity on the structures of the ecclesiastical administration, the manifestation of nationalism, the political and electoral struggle, the peasant emigration to America, the Great War, the creation of Greater Romania, the Agrarian Reform. All these phenomena can be found in our thesis, being completed with new and useful details.

In order to elaborate this doctoral thesis, I researched mostly archival funds, among which we list: the Archive of the Greek-Catholic Diocese of Hajdudorog (Nyíregyháza, Hungary), the County Service of the National Archives, Cluj Branch, where I researched the collection of the Greek-Catholic Diocese of Gherla and the fund of the Prefecture of Satu Mare County, the National Archives of Hungary in Budapest, the Austrian State Archive in Vienna, Vatican Secret Archives, Archive of the Congregation for Oriental Rites in Rome, State Archive of the Transcarpathian Region of Ukraine, National Archives of Romania in Bucharest §.a.

In order to understand the historical context, we took advantage of the book collections of important libraries: the Central University Library in Cluj-Napoca, the Central European University Library and the Szécsényi National Library in Budapest, the Vatican Apostolic Library, but also the Pontifical Oriental Institute Library in Rome.

In researching the press of the time, the online databases "Hungaricana" and "Arcanum" were also very useful to me.

The doctoral thesis "Árkád Pásztor – the story of a monk, the destiny of a fortune" is divided into five chapters, some of which are divided into subchapters, to which are added the "Introduction", "Conclusions", "Bibliography" and "Appendices". The chapters of the work have the role of capitalizing on the results of the scientific approach, using mostly archival sources.

The first chapter "Origin, family and formative years" presents the data collected about the monk's childhood and adolescence. He was born on October 17, 1844¹ in Lunka², Maramureş county and, at baptism, he received the name Sándor. His parents were János Pásztor (parish singer) and Borbála Juhász (teacher).

He studied in the schools of the Basilian monks (in Máriapócs and Užhorod). He studied theology for three years at Máriapócs (between 1864 and 1867), after which he was "anointed" as a monk in the monastery of Cerneca Gora³ and Mukachevo⁴. After his consecration, he was assigned, one by one, to many monasteries, having different functions. It also reaches Máriapócs, the most important monastery of the order, a famous place of pilgrimage sought after for the Icon of the Mother of God, a miracle worker. Three of the Shematisms of the Diocese of Mukachevo mention the monk there: in the one of 1878 he appears as occupying the position of vicar and catechist⁵, in 1881⁶ He is mentioned in the position of parish cooperator, and in 1883 in that of parish cooperator and ecclesiarch⁷.

During his time here and, according to some sources, even earlier, the monk managed to create a kind of fame among the people, through prophecies, miraculous healings, palmistry and other activities of this kind. He was sought after by hundreds of pilgrims and enjoyed the status of a saint. Others challenged and denigrated him, considering him a sorcerer or a

¹ Greek Catholic Episcopal Archives [Arhiva Episcopiei Greco-catolice Maghiare de Hajdudorog] (Further GKPL) I-1-a. 930/1916, apud Csaba Endrédi, *Difficulties and conflicts in the period of foundation of the Diocese of Hajdúdorog*, Ed. Globe Edit, Düsseldorf, 2017, p. 101.

² Magh. Kislonka, today in Ukraine.

³ Magh. Csernekhegy, azi în Ucraina.

⁴ Magh. Munkács, azi în Ucraina.

⁵ Schematismus Venerabilis Cleri Graeci Ritus Catholicorum Diocensis Munkácsiensis, Unghvártini, Typis Caroli Jager , 1878, p. 370.

⁶ Ibidem , 1881, p. 275.

⁷ Ibidem , 1883, p. 275.

charlatan. There are many sources that say that the monk had no financial claims in exchange for these services. But he didn't refuse if someone voluntarily leaves a donation. The large sums resulting in this way attracted the monk's dislikes. Those who questioned his qualities attributed the miracles to all sorts of tricks, such as the use of cinematographic magnesium light when he claimed to interact with the souls of the dead⁸, or the use of curtains behind which the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint Joseph, and the Archangel Gabriel appeared at command⁹. After his time in Máriapócs, Árkád Pásztory served as abbot in the monastery of Málij Bereznij. His move from Máriapócs to Málij Bereznij came after a scandal with a rather large echo. Over time, repeated complaints were made against the monk, which culminated in 1885 with a wide-ranging denunciation made by the doctor András Jósa. The monk was accused of witchcraft and manipulation of the people. We do not yet know many details about those events, but from archival documents and press articles of the time, we know the outcome: the monk Pásztory was expelled from the territory of Szabolcs County.

In 1885 Pásztory became abbot at the monastery of Málij Bereznij, in Ung County. He spent 5 years there. From the sources we have, it appears that the condition of the monastery was deplorable. Massive investments were needed for renovations, but there were also a lot of debts¹⁰. Monk Pásztory, through the money obtained from the donations of the faithful who worshipped him, nevertheless managed to renovate the church and the monastery, which, upon leaving, he left in excellent conditions¹¹.

The second chapter "Abbot of Bixad" illustrates the period when the monk Pásztory served at the monastery of Bixad, in Țara Oașului, Sătmar county. The abbot of the place had recently died, the position becoming vacant. Given that the condition of the Bixad monastery was similar to that of Málij Bereznij, the order considered it useful to move Pásztory there, in the hope that he would be able to restore the place and pay off his debts¹². In Bixad, Pásztory spent ten years, from 1890 to 1900. He had many economic achievements, managing to pay off all the debts of the monastery, to solve the structural problems of the place and annexes and also to build new edifices.

În 1899 a disciplinary process was opened against him, as a result of which he was dismissed from the order. He was accused of violating the sacred vows of poverty and

⁸ Imre Csécsey, *From Ukraine to Maramures în West*, no. 3, 1914.

⁹ Viktor Aradi, *A milliomossá lett "csodatevő" barát*, în *Szabadgondolat*, 1913, p. 300.

¹⁰ Atanasie Maxim, *Memorii*, Ed Scriptorium, Baia Mare, 2009, (data: iulie 1951 - februarie 1952), manuscris olograf în două caiete cu linii, format A5, p. 25.

¹¹ Esztergom Primási Levéltár [Archive of the Archdiocese of Esztergom] (Further EPL) Cat. 23. 6299/1917, apud. Csaba Endrédi, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

¹² *Ibidem*.

obedience. He nevertheless received a dispensation from the Holy See and was allowed to remain a monk outside the order, with the obligation to keep his vows of chastity (necessarily), poverty (if possible) and obedience to the local bishop.

The third chapter, "Pásztor's Toag", shows how the religious community of the monk was formed in the area between the borders of the villages of Tur and Boinești. After obtaining the decision of the Congregation, Pásztor continued to live on his own estate, which he had bought several years earlier from the notary Bertalan Privigyei¹³. It was located on the border of Tur and Boinești localities, in Țara Oașului. That part of the border still bears the name of "Pásztor's Toagul". There, the monk built a mansion, continued the expansion of the estate, through new acquisitions, finally owning a property of about 2,000 fields, on which he brought Ruthenian and Slovak settlers¹⁴. These settlers were not only simple workers, but also followers of the monk. They had turned all their possessions into money, which they then donated to the monk. In return, the monk guaranteed them accommodation, meals, and clothing for the rest of their lives. In this way, a kind of religious community was established that "belonged to none other than their spiritual leader, the monk Pásztor. There they wanted to live with him on the estate, so that through his guidance they could live a true Christian life"¹⁵.

With the community's workforce, but also with the money brought by its members, the monk's residence was transformed into an economic and industrial center. He built a church and chapel there, a curia, a music school for talented young people¹⁶, as well as workshops for various crafts, such as: shoemaking, belting, cart making, tailoring, workshops for making agricultural tools, which all brought a nice profit, especially since the necessary materials came from their own forest and from the fruits of the agricultural activity carried out there.¹⁷ The monk also created a sensation by setting up a private brass band, made up of his workers.

Pásztor made a name for himself in the life of the county through various charitable actions. Ever since he was abbot (in 1889), the press mentioned that he, on the eve of the Easter holidays, distributes aid to the poor in the area, regardless of their confession¹⁸; In 1892, when the house of the Greek-Catholic parish priest Berinde in Călinești Oaș burned to the ground, we see the monk sending him household accessories, clothes and food¹⁹. He donates 20 crowns

¹³ Viktor Aradi, *Tanulmányok a nemzetiségi kérdés köréből. (A ruthén skizma – Pásztor Árkád – A hajdudorogi püspökség)* în Huszadik Század, 1913, pp. 263 – 276.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ Csaba Endédi, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

¹⁶ Csaba Endrédi, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

¹⁷ EPL Cat. 24. 291/1915. A sárospataki plébános vizsgálatának írásos anyaga a Pásztor vagyonról Csernoch János hercegrímás számára, apud Csaba Endrédi, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

¹⁸ *Szatmármegyei Közlöny*, nr. 19, Carei, 7 máj. 1899, p. 5.

¹⁹ *Heti Szemle*, nr. 20, Satu Mare, 14 máj. 1902, p. 4.

for the uniforms of the soldiers of the 48th regiment²⁰, pays 20 crowns in a collection to help a woman, Rácz Istvánné, a poor woman with 7 children²¹. During the war, he donated two geese, a sack of apples, 42 coils, a sack of potatoes, 6 pillows and 6 mattresses for the wounded²². At the initiative of Pál Gáspár, an association was founded in Satu Mare that aimed to take care of minors under 15 years of age who were left without wealth, whose fathers were either seriously wounded or died on the front. Pásztory Árkad donated 200 crowns for this purpose²³. Another newspaper states that, in addition to the amount donated, Pásztory personally took care of twenty such children²⁴. All this weighed heavily in the eyes of the faithful, Pásztory's image as a helper of the poor bringing even more people among his followers. However, many sources show that Pásztory also used the money he collected to make usury. There are documents about legal loans, with interest rates ranging from 5 to 8 percent.²⁵, which often led to foreclosures.

In 1913, the Basilians filed a lawsuit against the monk, claiming his wealth²⁶. They invoked both the fact that most of the fortune had been acquired during the period when Pásztory was a Basilian monk, and the oath of poverty taken by him at the time of entering the order. The state institutions did not comply with the request. The sentence was pronounced in favor of the monk, on the grounds that the laws and oaths of the order belong to his internal structure, but, as a citizen of the Hungarian state, Pásztory has all the rights to own property, and, if he violates the rules of his order, the state cannot intervene in any way.²⁷. The Court of Satu Mare rejected the complaint, ruled in favor of the monk and summoned the monks from Cerneca Gora to pay 2,466 crowns, representing the court costs²⁸.

That year, a major event brought to the fore the Ruthenian population of Maramureş. Out of a feeling of revulsion towards its own priests, who collaborated with the Hungarian administration to the detriment of the people, but also influenced by some Russian spies, the latter, in many villages, rejected the united confession and switched to Orthodoxy. The Hungarian government, on the one hand following its assimilationist ideal, on the other hand for fear of the Russian danger, took drastic measures to stop the current, descending on villages

²⁰ Szamos, nr. 29, Satu Mare, 11 ápr. 1907, p. 3.

²¹ Ibidem, nr. 9, Satu Mare, 12 jan. 1913, p. 5.

²² Ibidem, nr. 14, Satu Mare, 17 jan. 1915, p. 4.

²³ Nagykároly és Vidéke, nr. 15, Carei, 14 ápr. 1915, pp. 2-3.

²⁴ Szatmármegyei Közlöny, nr. 12, Carei, 21 már. 1915, p. 4.

²⁵ GKPL I-1-a. P-14/1906 , apud Csaba Endrédi, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

²⁶ Csaba Endrédi, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

²⁷ GKPL I-1-a. 1/1916, apud. Csaba Endrédi, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

²⁸ Szamos, nr. 66, Satu Mare, 21 már. 1914, p. 3. Népszava, nr. 70, Budapest, 22 már. 1914, p. 11.; Nagykároly és Érmellék, nr. 13, Carei, 28 már. 1914, p. 5.

with the gendarmerie, carrying out searches and arresting hundreds of peasants, thus giving the event a political color and accusing the "schismatics" of betrayal of the country. Everything culminated in a resounding process – "of the schismatic Ruthenians" – held in Sighetu Marmației and, later, at the "board" in Debrecen. In this trial, 94 Ruthenian peasants (women and men), aged between 17 and 64, were accused of treason. By placing the Ruthenian church under the jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church, it was insinuated that they were seeking the union of that part of Hungary with Russia. The trial ended with the sentencing of 33 peasants to a total of 37 years in prison and the payment of 6,800 crowns, court costs. The heaviest punishment was received by Sándor Kabalyuk²⁹, One of the leaders of the movement: 4 years in prison and 1,000 crowns in court costs. This trial was the first political act of the Hungarian government against the Ruthenians, who, through a peaceful religious movement, moreover, protested against the government's policy of assimilation and against the cooperation with it of their own Greek Catholic hierarchs³⁰.

Pásztor was accused in this case of being the administrator of Russian money, subversive. The main evidence on which the insinuations were based was a letter from Sofia. She urged that in case of any inconvenience or problem, the "schismatics" should confidently turn to the monk Pásztor³¹. Sándor Kabalyuk, the head of the movement, was also put in touch with Pásztor. In the end, however, the monk is acquitted.

Another decision of the monk that generated a stir was related to his will. In the form of a foundation, he decided to donate his entire fortune to the newly established Hungarian Greek-Catholic bishopric of Hajdudorog. The bishopric was established in 1913, was validated on May 6 by Emperor Franz Joseph and canonized on June 8 by Pope Pius X³². However, the diocese was going through a difficult period, because the state, although it formalized its

²⁹ Sándor Kabalyuk was born on August 30, 1877, in Yasynia, now Ukraine, into a family of Ruthenian Greek-Catholic peasants. In 1905, sent by the Tsarist Empire, he visited the monasteries of Pochaiv and Kiev, and three years later he went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and to the Orthodox monastery of St. Panteleimon on Mount Athos. There, in 1909, he converted to Orthodoxy. In 1910 he entered the monastery of Yablochyn, now in Poland, where he became a novice monk and studied theology. In 1911 he met with the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople and the Serbian Patriarch of Karlovic, under whose jurisdiction the Orthodox Church of Hungary was. The Patriarch appointed him to serve as a priest in the Ruthenian localities of Iza and Velyki Luchky, during which time he was closely followed by the Hungarian authorities, being suspected of Pan-Slavism. On the verge of being arrested, he fled to Moscow, then to the United States. He returned, however, when the Hungarian authorities initiated the trial against the schismatic Ruthenians. He was arrested and sentenced to 4 years in prison. He was liberated in 1918, after the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He became a priest in Hust and, in 1921, the abbot of the monastery of St. Nicholas near Iza. The following year he was elevated to the rank of archimandrite. He died on December 2, 1947. In 2001 he was canonized, becoming the first Ruthenian Orthodox saint. (Paul Robert Magocsi, Ivan Pop, *Encyclopedia of Rusyn History and Culture*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2005, p.221).

³⁰ Paul Robert Magocsi, Ivan Pop, *op. cit.*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2005, p. 321.

³¹ Viktor Aradi, *Tanulmányok...*, pp. 263 – 276.

³² Csaba Endrédi, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

establishment and allocated an annual amount, in the form of a royal donation for its proper functioning, was nevertheless late in sending the money³³. Thus, the financial situation of the institution had become a delicate one. The monk's donation was the salvation from a premature abolition of the diocese. In exchange, Pásztory was to be accepted as a priest in the newly formed diocese, as was his nephew, János Pásztor (still not ordained). Both would have enjoyed the usufruct of the estate, until their death. The good and old relationship between the monk and István Miklóssy, the first bishop of Hajdudorog, was very important in this regard.

Chapter four "Patriot or traitor?" brings to light the events that led to Pásztory's accusation of being a Russian spy. With the outbreak of World War I, the monk's membership in the Ruthenian ethnicity was exploited again. He is accused, this time, of espionage in favor of the Russians. He was placed under house arrest and searched. As the case did not become clearer, on the contrary, it became more and more complicated, it was decided to keep him in house arrest. The same bishop of Hajdudorog agreed that the diocesan residence should serve as a place of the house arrest. He did not get to be acquitted. On February 22, 1916, at the age of 79, Pásztory passed away. He was buried in the cemetery of Nyiregyháza, above his tomb a beautiful crypt was built, which later became a place of pilgrimage.

The last chapter, "The Pásztory Foundation", presents the story that happened after the monk's death (the fate of the community and the monk's estate): the takeover of the foundation by the diocese of Hajdudorog, the problems encountered, the debts of the foundation, the process of the bishopric with the basilians, as well as the creation of Greater Romania and the remaining of the estate on the territory of Romania. In retreat, the Hungarian communists robbed "Toag", and at the same time the Romanian administration present there also committed abuses. The Trianon followed and a long lawsuit between the bishopric of Hajdudorog and the Romanian State, concluded by a sentence of the Mixed Arbitration Court in Paris.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 129.

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