

Friars at work: Craftsmen of the Dominican Order in 16th-century Transylvania

Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to examine the presence of friar-artisans within the Transylvanian Dominican convents, and their involvement in carrying out works for the houses of the order and for lay communities. Starting with the regulations set by the Dominican constitutions and the provincial chapters in regards to the friars' participation in building activities, the study will focus on written evidence for the presence of skilled workers among the Transylvanian brethren. The main sources for the topic are the early sixteenth-century city account books of Braşov (Kronstadt/Brassó) as well as two records from the priories of Sighişoara (Schäßburg/Segesvár) and Cluj (Klausenburg/Kolozsvár). The documents reveal the names of lay brothers skilled in construction trades and point to the ownership of appropriate tools and working facilities by the convents, but bring no reliable evidence about the friars' work. A case example of prolific cooperation between the local communities and the Dominican brethren of Braşov, who provided building materials and management assistance to the city's construction sites, is also discussed.

Keywords: -