



## Trinitarian Monastery Gardens in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Hungary

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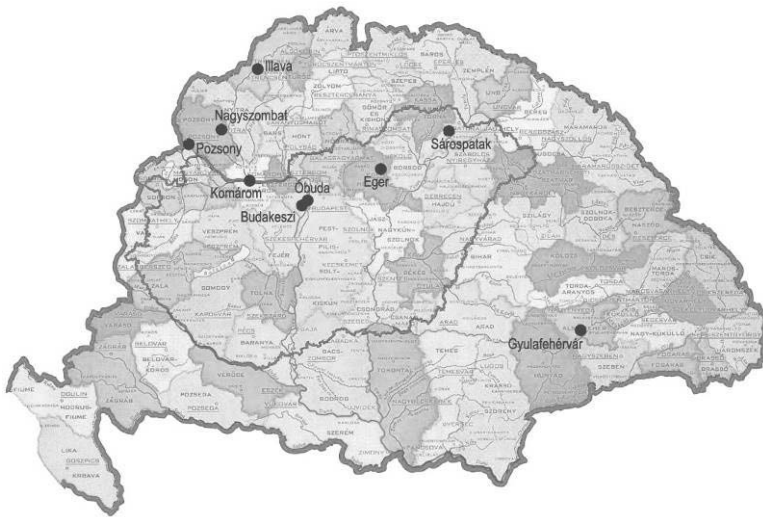
**Abstract:** The formation of Trinitarian gardens was determined by several factors: by the type of religious order (mendicant) which resulted in a modest lifestyle, as well as by their main supporters, often specifying the origin or layout of their monasteries. Generally different functions like farming and recreation were mixed in their gardens. Yet, historical sources like period depictions and descriptions seem contradictory, the clarification of which is the primary aim of the paper. The research examines their quondam monasteries in Illava (Ilava, SK), Pozsony (Bratislava, SK), Nagyszombat (Trnava, SK), Óbuda, Budakeszi, Eger, Sárospatak and Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia, RO).

**Keywords:** garden history, monastery gardens, historic gardens

### 1. Introduction

Monastery gardens are peculiar cultural landscapes, representing the designed and associative types of cultural landscapes all in one. These gardens had been established for functional and contemplative aims since the Middle Ages. The surrounding walls of monasteries had existed since the time of St. Pachomius (292-348 AD) and became a characteristic feature of monasteries onwards [1]. The walls certainly limited the space, therefore, it was general to mix the different functions of places, like planting an orchard in the cemetery garden. Pleasure gardens also developed this way, by the beautification of vegetable or herb gardens.

The Trinitarians, finding their way to Hungary under the Turkish Rule (*Fig. 1.*) [2], belonged to one of the most ancient type of religious orders, the mendicant orders, and as such, therefore, they depended mostly on the charity of the people. The peculiarity of Trinitarian gardens lies in that even though they are supposed to be typical modest monastery gardens, there exist some engravings which depict quite a huge area next to the buildings filled with decorative garden elements. The aim of this paper is to resolve this apparent contradiction and thus present Trinitarian garden art.



*Figure 1:* Trinitarian monasteries in Hungary, 18<sup>th</sup> c.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The National Archives of Hungary keeps many files from the time of the dissolution of the monasteries, of which the inventories include information concerning the gardens as well [3]. Besides, a series of engravings depicting the monasteries has also been essential source [4], since hardly any other imagery sources exist from the 18<sup>th</sup> century concerning these monasteries. Furthermore, site plans and maps also hold useful information regarding the monasteries [5].

The historical research of monastery gardens already has a long tradition, especially in the German-speaking countries [6]. However, Trinitarian monastery gardens are usually not mentioned specifically in either of them, hence the research has basically no antecedents in Hungary as well. Although the order was quite determining in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and also its Baroque architecture was effective, its short existence lasting no more than 90 years made it be overlooked. Yet, works like

Ferenc Fallenbüchl's comprehensive historical description of the Hungarian activity of the order [7], and also others treating the history of certain Trinitarian monasteries [8] have provided great assistance in the research of their gardens alike.

### 3. Results and discussions

The formation of Trinitarian gardens was determined by several factors. The order belonged to the mendicant orders, which resulted in precluding luxury from their lifestyle [9]. Though all Catholic religious orders took the solemn vows of chastity, obedience and poverty, the mendicants were particularly strict concerning the last one, therefore, they lived in even straitened circumstances than for instance their monastic associates, which was highly reflected in their gardens as well. Even though the Trinitarians managed to make a large fortune during their activity in Hungary as a result of their many benefactors from the aristocracy, still most of their wealth was used for the ransom of captives and for mercy, and hardly any amount remained for the upkeep of their living circumstances, including the gardens.

The order's main mediators were the Jesuits who not only helped them in diverse ways, but also affected them in their way of life. Hence also their gardens were built according to similar principals. The Jesuits, though also made a fortune during the 18<sup>th</sup> century and were the most influential order of the time, were specialized on education, and as such, needed to demonstrate a good example to be followed with their surroundings, too [10]. Their gardens were modest and complex, mixing decorative and farming elements which resulted in aesthetically formed vegetable gardens and orchards, reflecting the Baroque axuality and geometrical design.

Nevertheless, a series of engravings with depictions of three Trinitarian monasteries seem to contradict the assumption concerning the formation of their gardens (*Figs. 1-2.*). Two of them (Pozsony and Illava) represent huge decorative gardens, while the one of Gyulafehérvár delineates an empty courtyard [11].

The diversity of the engravings would allow the supposition of their authenticity, still, the two depicted ornamental gardens give rise to a suspicion. The two monasteries were established at almost the same time: Illava in 1693, Pozsony in 1697 [12]. The building up of the monasteries also falls approximately on the same period. It is rather odd, therefore, that while the garden of Illava seems to have been designed in the spirit of the late-Renaissance and early-Baroque garden style (coordinate garden elements, simultaneous appearance of knot parterres and parterres de broderie, slightly oblong forms), the garden in Pozsony already shows the characteristics of the flourishing Baroque style: strong hierarchy, axial symmetry, especially long rectangular parterres, predominating parterres de broderie.

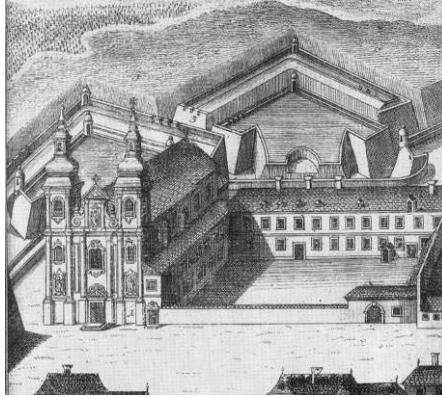


Figure 2: The monastery of Gyulafehérvár, 1739. /J. a S. Felice (1739), *Annalium Provinciae...*Vienna: S. n., between pp. 687-688./

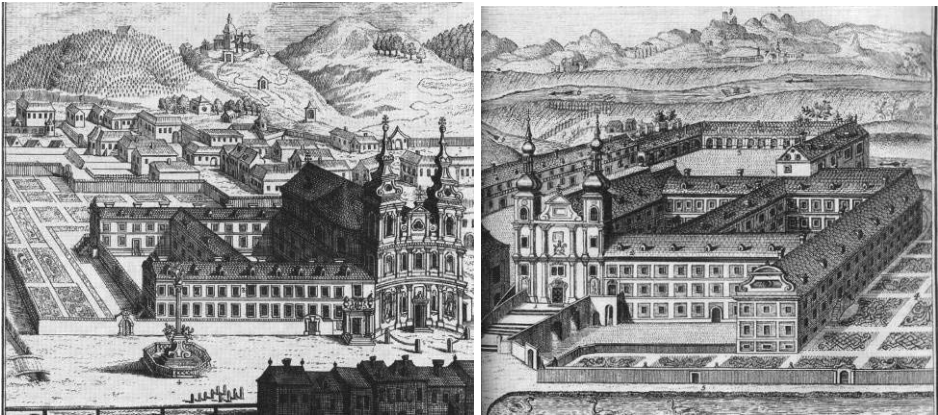


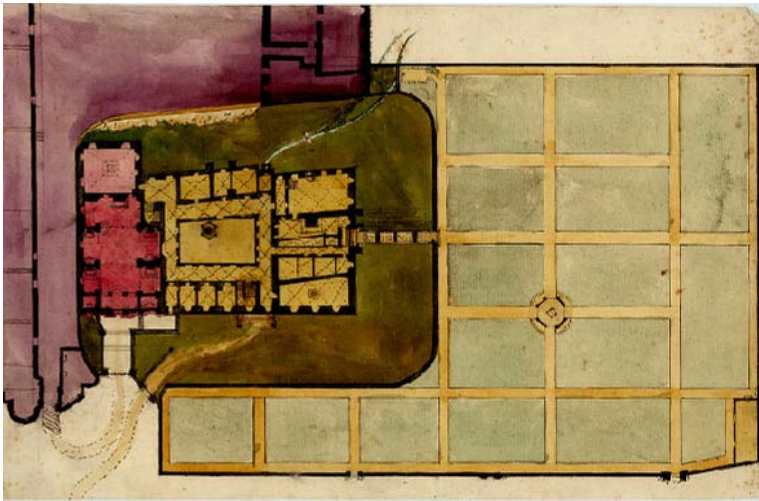
Figure 3: Ornamental gardens in the monasteries of Pozsony and Illava, 1739. /J. a S. Felice (1739), *Annalium Provinciae...* Vienna: S. n., between pp. 658-659, 779-780./

One explanation for the dissimilarity could be the different origin of the two monasteries. The monastery of Illava was built on parts of an old castle which entailed the existence of a previous garden – there existed a water system, a fishpond and an orchard already at the time of the foundation [13]. This may have hindered the stylistic development, while the monastery in Pozsony was built after demolishing everything around it, hence a more up-to-date design could be created [14].

The archival documents, however, do not verify these assumptions at all. The monastery building of Illava surrounded two quadrangles, the smaller of which contained a well. The garden next to the building consisted mainly of orchards and

shady alleys [15]. According to written sources, the garden also had diverse beds, filled with vegetables and ornamental plants alike (*in plures distinctus areolas pro implantatione Olerum, et inseminatione Viridarium Servientes*). There was also a skittle (*Pyramidarium*) used for relaxation by the monks and next to it a feeding place for snails (*Limacetum*) [16].

While the inventories can be considered trustworthy, none of the available imagery sources concerning Illava seems to be really authentic or meaningful. An 18<sup>th</sup> century plan (*Fig. 4.*), showing an earlier version of the monastery, represents the skittle with an arbour above it, which latter probably did not exist any more at the time of the dissolution, as it is not mentioned at all in the inventory. Further details of the garden, however, cannot be specified from this plan, only the geometrical design, the symmetrical beds manifest themselves.



*Figure 4:* The monastery of Illava as shown by an 18<sup>th</sup> c. map. /MOL S12  
Div IX No 0025:2/

Richter Ludovicus's plan of the enlargement and reconstruction of the building delineates orchards and a mere kitchen garden with symmetrically arranged beds (*Fig. 5.*). Both this plan and the engraving of 1739 (*Fig. 3.*), which depicts the whole area as an ornamental garden, can be regarded authentic only to a certain extent. Though the garden could change with time, still, considering that as the order was getting richer, they were very unlikely to change an already evolved ornamental garden into the mixture of vegetable and decorative elements mentioned in the inventory, the chance that these images show realized states is



little. Therefore, both depictions seem to be just imagined versions of the real garden which was, in fact, the mixture of them, laid out with orchards, vegetable and flower beds and recreational areas, like the skittle, at the same time.

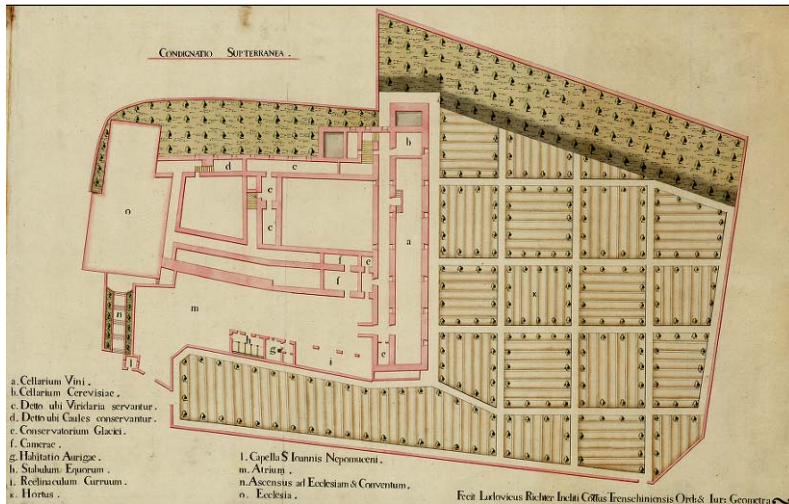


Figure 5: The monastery of Illava on Richter Ludovicus's plan, 18<sup>th</sup> c. /MOL S12  
Div IX No 0025:1/

According to the inventory drawn up at the time of the dissolution, two gardens belonged directly to the monastery of Pozsony, one of them was created in the quadrangle of the building, which was rather small (*Hortus exiguus quadriangularis*). The other one lying westwards from the building was much more extensive (*area spatiosa*) and served as a vegetable garden (*oleraleum*) with diverse fruit trees [17]. This latter one was situated at the same place where the engraving depicts the parterres de broderie (Fig. 3.), but in contrast to it, pleasure gardens are not mentioned at all in the inventory. Only a publication of 1925 mentioned ornamental trees in the monastery concerning the chronicle of the frost damages in the town during the winter of 1708 [18].

All further data concerning the other Hungarian Trinitarian monasteries supports the above mentioned practice related to the gardens: they were neither merely of agricultural purpose, nor just decorative pleasure gardens. While cultivating their land, the monks also let aestheticism and amusement into these places.

A spectacular example is the monastery of Sárospatak, which was founded by the Rákóczi family in 1693, but the wartime right after made it desolate until 1728, and even a fire in 1737 further embittered their life [19]. These circumstances not only affected the buildings, but must have had influence on the gardens as well.

Yet, despite its life of vicissitudes, the monastery had a small flower garden (*Blumen Gärtl*) surrounded by the main building, with an extended kitchen garden next to it (*Fig. 6.*).

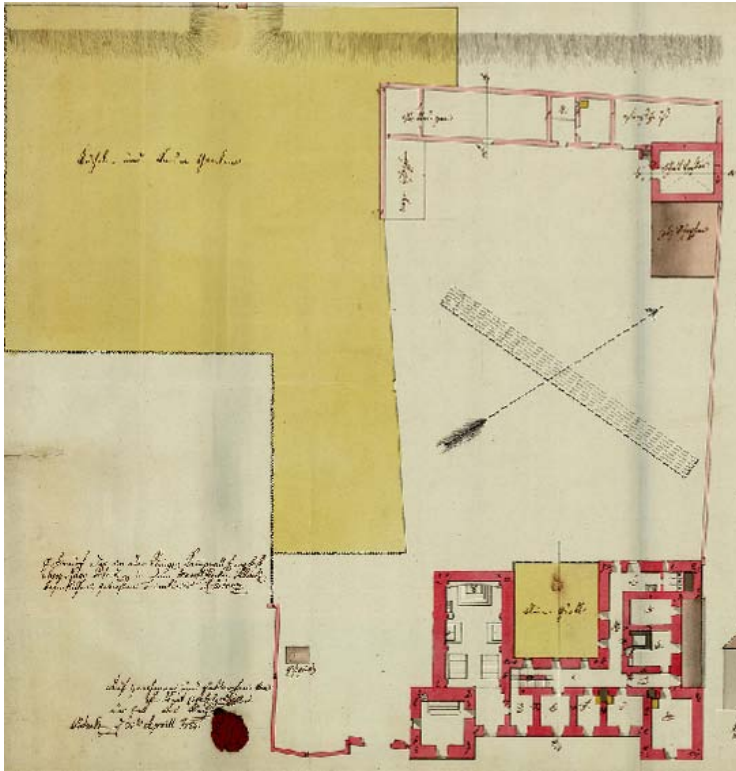


Figure 6: The monastery of Sárospatak, 1784. /MOL S12 Div IX No 0059:1-2/

The monastery of Nagyszombat, founded in 1712, was built between 1720 and 1729 in a street leading to the main square of the town [20]. It also got many donations, including cash, houses, gardens in the suburb and vineyards [21]. Though the estate was not really large, three little gardens belonged directly to the building (*Fig. 7.*). The access to the first one was by the gate of the monastery. The only data available concerning this area is about a well in the southern part. The site plan does not even call it a garden, but only as a courtyard (*Hof*). The next garden opened from this one and served as an orchard with many kinds of fruit trees [22], and there was also a trench here used for lime-burning. This part of the

estate was probably the greenest of all, since not only the site plan depicts it that way, but also pictures painted in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century delineate it full of trees (which were probably the remnants of the original planting) [23].

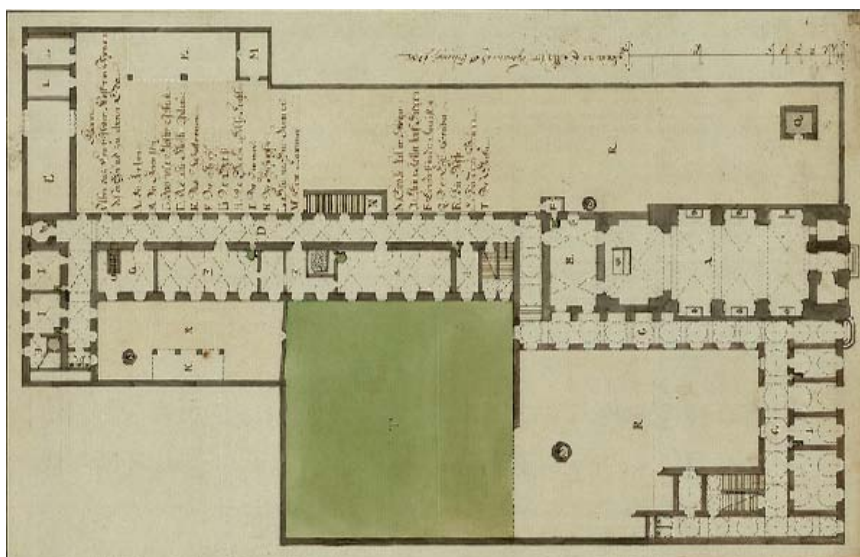


Figure 7: The monastery of Nagyszombat, 1784. /MOL S12 Div IX No 0057:1-3/

The third garden, separated with a wall, was the continuation of the other two. The inventory mentions this as a hall in which there was a four-columned small cottage and a well [24]. The site plan called the cottage a stable, which nomination, however, is a bit odd, particularly because its structure does not contain any walls but the columns. Hence the possibility of an open pavilion created for pleasure and relaxation is much more probable.

According to the inventories, the monastery in Komárom seems to have had the richest garden. Apart from the building, the estate consisted of a court, a small and a big garden. The small garden was situated in the inner yard of the building, while the big one was next to it. The latter was primarily an orchard (*hortus arboribus fructiferis*), but it also included a vineyard which was, however, damaged heavily by the earthquake of 1763 [25]. Moreover, there was also a glasshouse at that place, giving assumptions that the monastery may have had southern tropical plants, though it was already empty and damaged at the time of the dissolution. Their apiary was abandoned, too. The garden also contained a wooden summer cottage with a skittle in it, but this was also desolate [26]. And there were even two beds of herbs in the garden [27].





*Figure 9:* The wooden cottage of the monastery garden of Eger, 1796. /MOL S12 Div VIII No 0076/

Hardly anything is known about the construction of the monastery of Eger, founded in 1717 [28], and finished only in the 1750's [29]. The estate was situated in the suburbs and became a victim of fire in 1763, after which the reconstruction works finished only in 1771 [30]. The monastery included a garden full of fruit trees, in the middle of which did a wooden summer cottage stand [31] (*Fig. 9*).

The monastery of Óbuda-Kiscell, just as several others, stood on a hillside. It was built with the help of the Zichy family next to a chapel dedicated to Virgin Mary, originally standing in a vineyard. It was the last Hungarian Trinitarian monastery, founded in 1738, the buildings themselves evolved even later and were stopped unfinished around 1760. Their rich architecture proves the generosity of the Zichy family and other donators [32]. The estate was enlarged several times for the establishment of a garden, about which, however, we do not know much. According to an engraving of the 1770's, there was a garden with (probably vegetable) beds on the southern side of the monastery [33]. The authenticity of it can be questioned, since even the staircase in front of the church does not reflect reality. The inventory, on the other hand, mentions a garden full of fruit trees with diverse sorts and colours [34]. The monastery of Makkos-Mária, which belonged to the main monastery in Kiscell, had a sacred oak tree often visited by pilgrims. The estate was surrounded by cut hedges and included an orchard and a small grove [35].

Nevertheless, apart from their estate in the towns, the Trinitarians had possessions in the suburbs or in other close villages as well. These areas served agricultural interests, most parts of the estates were used for vineyards, but no data has been found about their function as a pleasure garden. Possessions in Pozsonypüspöki and Récse belonged to the monastery of Pozsony, the latter of which was exceptional due to an element for relaxation in the form of an arbour built above the kitchen [36]. The

several vineyards in Sárospatak, on the other hand, were rather neglected and the monks usually tried to sell them to get cash instead [37]. The Trinitarians in Nagyszombat did also possess a garden out of the town which was an orchard surrounded with walls and included a small house for the gardener, Francisco Medonszky [38]. And also the monastery of Eger had many vineries and another garden in the suburb which was merely a farming area [39].

To take care of all these gardens, the monasteries employed gardeners. They were lay brothers and got salaries annually between 30 and 40 forints. Considering that at the time of the dissolution they were about 65 years old, they must have been rather experienced [40].

#### **4. Conclusion**

Trinitarian gardens are representatives of typical monastery gardens. Though some religious orders – especially the monastic ones like the Cistercians or the Benedictines – often resemble more to palace gardens, having extended luxurious pleasure gardens, the majority of religious orders used their area for cultivation and relaxation alike. The formation of these gardens was made according to the geometrical Baroque style in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Hungary.

The Trinitarian gardens primarily included orchards and kitchen gardens which, considering some period depictions, seem to have been laid out also in geometrical forms, giving way to the aesthetic principles of the time. The monasteries of Illava and Sárospatak must have had merely ornamental parts as well, presumably as a result of their former use as castles, but it can only be assumed that based on the model of these examples, decorative garden parts could appear in other gardens as well. Recreation was particularly important for the monks, arbours and small cottages could be found in almost all of the gardens, often combined with skittles, which latter can also be found by the gardens of their main mediators, the Jesuits.

Nevertheless, as the monasteries got completely new, secular functions after their dissolution in the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, none of the gardens has remained for today. Therefore, as on-site examinations do not hold out promises of new results, it seems that the research needs to stop at analyzing the historical sources.

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- [3] National Archives of Hungary (Magyar Országos Levéltár, in the following: MOL), C103 ‘Inventarien der in Hungarn aufgelassenen Klöster’, 28-29. d.
- [4] The engravings were made by different artists as illustrations for the book Joannes a San Felice (1739), *Annalium Provinciae Sancti Josephi Ordinis Excalceatorum Sanctissimae Trinitatis Redemptionis Captivorum Libri Decem [...]*. Vienna: S. n., between pp. 658-659, 687-688 and 779-780. The book is available in Pannonhalma, Library (Főkönyvtár) 64 E1.
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- [13] MOL C103, 28. d. Illava 11v.

- [14] Fallenbüchl op. cit., p. 98.
- [15] Fallenbüchl op. cit., pp. 74-75.
- [16] MOL C103, 28. d. Illava 19v. Descriptio Horti ad Monasterium pertinentis.
- [17] MOL C103, 28. d. Pozsony 69v.
- [18] „... die Obst- und Zierbäume ganz kahl und leer dastanden und das Frühjahr kein Laub, keine Blüte und keine Früchte brachte!” Nádor, E., Weyde, G. (1925), Die zweihundertjährige Dreifaltigkeitskirche in Pressburg 1725-1925. Bratislava: S. n., p. 24.
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- [22] “Et ex hoc Continuative patet introitus ad hortulum intra claustralem Secundum arbusculis diversis fructiferis implantatum” MOL C103, 28. d. Nagyszombat f27r.
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- [24] “Ex praevio hortulo Continuative patet ingressus ad atriolum intra claustrale, in quo existit Reclinatorium quatuor Columnis muratis insistentibus cum Tecto Scandulaceo...” MOL C103, 28. d. Nagyszombat 27r.
- [25] MOL C103, 28. d., Komárom 43r.
- [26] “pro usu Pyramidibus ludentium est ex asseribus constructa parva Commoditas Lußt Hauß dicta, sed multum desolata” MOL C103, 28. d., Komárom 46r.
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- [28] Fallenbüchl op. cit., p. 132.
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- [31] MOL C103, 29. d. Eger 37v.
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- [34] MOL C103, 29. d. Buda 106r.
- [35] Fallenbüchl op. cit., p. 163., 166. and 170. Kristóf Fatsar mentions a map (MOL S11 No. 311.) which represents an extended ornamental garden, but also adds that the realisation of it in the past is rather impossible. Fatsar op. cit., p. 174.
- [36] MOL C103, 28. d. Pozsony 73r.
- [37] Fallenbüchl op. cit., p. 85.

- [38] MOL C103, 28. d., Nagyszombat f8r, f29r-v
- [39] MOL C103, 29. d. Eger 37v., and *Fallenbüchl* op. cit., p. 134.
- [40] Josephus Vilhelm served in Pozsony, Michael Boczko in Illava, Frantz/Franciscus Medonszky in Nagyszombat (he got only 9 forints), Osvaldus Knechl/Knöchl in Komárom and Andreas a Cruce in Eger. MOL C103, 28. d. Pozsony 80v, Illava 28r and 53r, Nagyszombat 8r and 77r, Komárom 40r and 148r, MOL C103, 29. d. Eger 10v and 54v-55r.