

to offer grooms and their families a devotional focus and a religious context, but also to attend to their more material needs so as to spare them ‘from having to go begging’ (p. 168). Shortly after its founding, the confraternity affiliated itself with its much older Roman counterpart (founded in 1378), but, as Sebreghondi points out, the exact nature of that relationship is not yet clear. In 1690 the confraternity was granted the use of an oratory in the Dominican convent of Santa Maria Novella, where it remained until the 1785 general suppression of confraternities by Grand Duke Peter Leopold. That site has now been converted, in part, into the current pharmacy of Santa Maria Novella, a 1847 neogothic construction that has completely removed any trace of its earlier confraternal use.

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Tóth, János. *History of the Scapular Confraternity in Barka / A barkai Skapuláré Társulat története*. Devotio hungarorum, 8. Ed. and intro. by Gábor Barna. Szeged: Néprajzi Tanszék, 2002. 88 pp., 6 illustrations.

This volume contains an edition of János Tóth’s history of the first fifty years of the Scapular Confraternity founded in Barka (Hungary) in the mid seventeenth-century. The work has survived in a manuscript dated 1809 held by the parish library in Barka. The editor’s introduction (pp. 11–20) is fortunately repeated in English (pp. 22–32); but Tóth’s history (pp. 37–64), regrettably, is not – had it been, it would certainly have been very useful to the wider community of confraternity scholars.

The Scapular Confraternity in Barka, dedicated to Our Lady of Mount Carmel, was founded in the mid-eighteenth century on the model of its namesake in Buda. Its members were obliged to wear the “scapular,” a small garment with an image of the Virgin engraved on it, recite a number of prescribed prayers, fast on Wednesdays, preserve their chastity as appropriate to their station in life (single, married, or widowed), and offer alms. It is still extant today, though much hampered by the re-shuffling of national borders in the past century. In fact, a large part of the territory over which the confraternity traditionally exercised spiritual and devotional influence as now been incorporated into Slovakia, whose recent history of secularization and hostility towards the Church and religion (p. 28) clearly affected the nature of popular Marian devotion, thereby reducing the importance of Barka as a Marian pilgrimage site.

Although the volume has limited scope for those of us who do not read Hungarian, the editor’s brief introduction does offer a brief insight into Marian and confraternal devotions in Hungary from the mid-eighteenth century to the present. It also raises the interesting question (that I do not believe has yet been examined) of the effect of shifting national boundaries on confraternities and

popular devotions. While such a question may not be relevant to confraternities inside major (and fairly stable) nation states, it does seem worth pursuing in areas such as central Europe where the vicissitudes of political history have led to the vagaries of boundaries.

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