

18TH–19TH C. VISITATION STATEMENTS OF PAŽAISLIS CAMALDOLESE MONASTERY

Summary

In 1664, Pažaislis Monastery funded by Chancellor of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania Kristupas Zigmantas Pacas became a part of the Polish-Lithuanian Camaldolese province. It already had a procedure for visiting the monasteries of this congregation. It states that the provincial hermitage was to be visited annually by the highest-ranking monks of the province – the Vicar General with two assistants. According to the practice of the congregation, in Italy similar visits were made by the highest-ranking monk, Father Major with two assistant visitors. Occasionally, Father Majors visited the monasteries of the Polish and Lithuanian province, but their visits were very rare (two of them – in 1742 and 1762 – are known to have taken place in the 18th century).

Little is known about the earliest visitations of Pažaislis Monastery at the end of the 17th or in the beginning of the 18th c. The information is usually limited to the fact that such visits took place. Around 1680, Pažaislis had been visited by Venetian-born Vicar General Giovanni Battista Avogadri who later left a comprehensive description of the founding of Pažaislis Monastery. The only remaining chapter book of Pažaislis contains the statements of almost all the visitations during the period of 1717–1756. They reveal the flaws and other aspects that had to be corrected as recorded by the visitors, as well as established local traditions. These statements of visitations are not very detailed, they rarely mention material assets, but they are very useful in studying the monastery's history in this period.

After the 3rd partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1795, Pažaislis Monastery became part of the Tsarist Russian Empire and was separated from other monasteries of the Polish-Lithuanian province. Some communication and collaboration between the monasteries remained, but the ties weakened significantly. Regular visitations to the Pažaislis hermitage were no longer possible. Since then and until the closure of the monastery in 1831, the maintenance of the Pažaislis hermitage was assigned to the Vilnius diocese. The book contains five statements of visitations from this period of 1795–1831, whose texts have survived. They were written in 1797, 1804, 1819, 1821 and

1831. Only the earliest of them (1797) was published. These statements are very different in their volume – some are very long and informative (1797, 1821), while others are shorter and typically contain repeated information with some additions. These statements of visitations, as opposed to those written in the 18th century, have less information on the monastery's life, such as whether regulations and constitutions were followed, what were the violations and what had to be corrected in the daily routine of the monastery. However, these statements of visitations provide detailed information not only about the monks living in the monastery, but also about the altars and paintings held in the churches, and even information on how many windows or doors there were in the auxiliary rooms, what type of dishes and utensils were kept in the folwarks. Some statements of visitations contain information on the monastery's library, archive, damage and losses incurred. This provides useful insight both on the monastery's life and on the economic activities, traditions and daily life at the time. It is expected that the publication of these visitations at the Camaldolese monastery reveal deeper knowledge about the monastery's history. It is a great addition to the descriptions of Pažaislis given in the publications, that were written by various travelers during the 18th–19th centuries.