

*Places of Authentication (loca credibilia)**

TAMÁS KÓFALVI



1. *The role and importance of the loca credibilia*

The places of authentication (*loca credibilia*)¹ were peculiar and long-lasting institutions of the Hungarian legal system. Their formation had a strong connection with the spread of literacy in Hungary as well as to the parallel transformation of the Hungarian legal practices. According to our present conception, their range of activity can hardly be identified with that of any modern official organisations since these institutions, with special roots in the development of Hungarian law, carried out procedures simultaneously covering the tasks of today's public notaries, investigators, and lawyers. As to the definition of the role the places of authentication played in the contemporary administrative system, the literature usually draws parallels with that of the public notaries in Western Europe.² The basis of their activity was, among other things, primarily the prestige created by the literacy of their members and/or the legalising role³ of the written word. Both

* The research on which the present study is based was supported by OTKA Nr. F29427.

¹ Up to the present, several shorter or longer studies can be read about the charter-issuing activity of the places of authentication, but the completion of a modern synthesis based on detailed research about the particular places of such activity still to be waited. Suggested readings in foreign languages are: F. Eckhart, "Die glaubwürdigen Orte Ungarns im Mittelalter," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung* IX. Ergänzungsband, Innsbruck 1915, 395–558; and Gy. Bónis, "Les autorités de 'foi publique' et les archives des 'loci credibiles' en Hongrie," *Archivum* 12 (1962), 97–104.

² On the history of public notaries in Hungary and their relation to the places of authentication, see I. Barta, "Középkori közjegyzőségeink történetéhez," [On the History of our Medieval Public Notaries] in *Emlékkönyv Szentpétery Imre születése hatvanadik évfordulójának ünnepére*. Budapest 1938, 31–46; J. Köblös, *Az egyházi középréteg Mátyás és a Jagellók korában*. [The Ecclesiastical Middle-Class at the Age of King Matthias and the Jagiellonian Rulers] Budapest 1994, 57–66, (henceforth: Köblös, 1994); Gy. Bónis, "A sasádi tizedper közjegyzői a XV. század derekán," [The Public Notaries of the Tithe Trial in Sasad in the Mid-Fifteenth Century] *Levéltári Közlemények* (1971), 103–113.

³ On the transformation of procedural law in relation to literacy and the development of justification by charters, see A. Degré, "Az irat mint perbeli bizonyító eszköz fejlődése

with private clients and official organisations, the principal token of confidence in the charters issued by the places of authentication was the use of seals possessed by these institutions, earning authenticity in secular legal practices and appearing already in the early phase of their activity.⁴ However, the charters issued by the places of authentication were valid only before secular courts, since ecclesiastical judicature did not accept the authenticity of their seals.

2. *The timescale of the activity of the loca credibilia*

In Hungary the first places of authentication started their activity in the last third of the twelfth century.⁵ The ground-breaking role in their development was, understandably, played by the most important cathedral and collegiate chapters.⁶ However, at the beginning of the thirteenth century other major cathedral and collegiate chapters⁷ followed suit, and from the middle of the same century the convents of outstanding prestige usually of royal foundation also engaged in such activity.⁸

The development of the places of authentication received a significant impetus by Article 21 of the law of 1231 which, in order to avoid malfeasance, ordered churchmen to join the bailiffs (*pristaldus*) in administering official procedures.⁹ The decree of King Louis the Great in 1351 brought a turning point in the growth of the number of places of authentication, since under one of its articles the king had the right to use seals of the smaller convents re-examined.¹⁰ It was needed

a feudális Magyarországon," [The Development of Charter as a Proving Tool in Trials in Feudal Hungary] in *A magyar hivatali írásbeliség fejlődése, 1181–1981*. Magyar Herold – ELTE Történelem Segédtudományai Tanszék kiadványai, Vol. 1, ed. I. Kállay, Budapest 1984, 279–293, (henceforth: MH, 1984); I. Hajnik, *A magyar bírósági szervezet és per-jog az árpád- és a vegyes-házi királyok alatt*. [The Hungarian Judicial System and Procedural Law During the Reign of the Kings of the Árpádián and the Mixed Dynasties] Budapest 1899, 341–377.

⁴ L. Solymosi, "A hiteleshelyi pecséthasználat kezdeteihez," [Contribution to the Beginnings of Seal Usage at the Places of Authentication] in MH, 1984, 91–139.

⁵ For the beginnings of the charter-issuing activity of the places of authentication, see I. Szentpétery, *Magyar Oklevéltan*. [Hungarian Diplomatics] Budapest 1930, 122–125, (henceforth: Szentpétery, 1930).

⁶ Veszprém – 1181; Székesfehérvár – 1184.

⁷ Esztergom – 1208; Győr – 1210; Buda (Budapest) – 1211; Nagyvárad (Oradea) – 1215; Arad (Arad) – 1221; Nyitra (Nitra) – 1224; Zágráb (Zagreb) – 1226.

⁸ On the activity of the Benedictine monasteries as places of authentication an extensive study was prepared by László Solymosi. See L. Solymosi, "A bencés konventek hiteleshelyi oklevéladásának kezdeteim," [The Beginnings of the Charter-Issuing Activity of the Benedictine Monasteries as Places of Authentication] in *Mons Sacer 996–1996. Pannonhalma 1000 éve*. Vol. 1, ed. I. Takács, Pannonhalma 1996, 481–498 (henceforth: MS).

⁹ J. Beér–A. Csizmadia, eds. *Történelmünk a jogalkotás tükrében. Sarkalatos honi törvényeinkből 1001–1949*. [Our History in the Mirror of Codification. Selections from Our Cardinal Laws 1001–1949] Budapest 1966, 97.

¹⁰ See details in Szentpétery, 1930, 214–215.

because in some ecclesiastical institutions serving also as places of authentication – mainly those convents under secular overlordship and/or those with a particularly small personnel – strong secular influence could be bad to serious doubts about the content of the charters issued there. The defeat at Mohács in 1526 also meant an important milestone in the history of the places of authentication, though the division of the country into three parts in 1541 caused an even sharper break between their medieval and early modern activity.¹¹ As a consequence of the decomposition and/or transformation of the pre-Mohács administrative structures as well as the persistent hot conflicts with the Turks within the country, the archives of the places of authentication partly perished, and partly hidden in places – in most cases under the protection of other ecclesiastical institutions – more secure from the Turkish ravages.¹² Therefore, even if the charter collection of a particular place of authentication remained extant, it was detached, for the whole period of the Turkish occupation, from the everyday life of the territory where the charters were produced and, consequentially, the process of organic development was interrupted. These documents were also in danger of vanishing due to lack of systematic storage, their housing in unsuitable places, and their almost continuous movement from one place to another.¹³ Throughout this period, perhaps one of the biggest problems that the places of authentication had to face was lack of personnel.¹⁴ The troubles caused by this¹⁵ and the necessarily enlarged geographical territories to be covered by their activity were even further aggravated by the general public disorder of the sixteenth–seventeenth centuries. The demand for the activity of the places of authentication and the use of their charters grew significantly after the expulsion of the Turks. In many cases, the charters surviving in the archives of the places of authentication were of great importance for the retrospective justification of proprietary rights.¹⁶ The places of authentication also played a significant role in the reorganisation of the

¹¹ Up to the present, the basic work on the modern history of the places of authentication is still L. Papp, *A hiteleshelyek története és működése az újkorban*. [The History and Activity of the Places of Authentication in the Modern Age.] Budapest 1936 (henceforth: Papp, 1936).

¹² Naturally, this was not always a trouble-free process as is shown by the calvary of the chapter of Eger between 1596 and 1650. Papp, 1936, 20–21.

¹³ The history of one of the most significant places of authentication surviving the Turkish occupation was studied by L. B. Kumorovitz, “A leleszi konvent országos levéltára,” [The National Archives of the Lelesz Convent] *Levéltári Közlemények* (1932), 223–255.

¹⁴ Papp, 1936, 8–17. He listed the causes of the decay of the places of authentication after 1526 as follows: 1) the slackening of discipline in the chapters and convents, 2) the spread of Protestantism, 3) the troubled public order, 4) the Turkish presence.

¹⁵ Cf. Art. 1492/44, and 1552/41.

¹⁶ At that time, the majority of commissions given to the places of authentication was due to the ‘neo-acquisition trials’. During the reclamation of proprietary rights, they were commissioned to write down countless objections and deprivations. On this new role of the places of authentication, see Papp, 1936, 41–42.

administration of the country. Owing to all these factors, the period between the end of the seventeenth and the middle of the eighteenth centuries was marked by the renewal of the activity of these institutions.¹⁷ Indeed, due to the – albeit only provisional – revaluation of their role, one can perhaps even speak about their transient second efflorescence.¹⁸ However, the importance of these places of authentication and their organisational dimensions merely shadow their former, fourteenth-century glory.¹⁹ From the middle of the eighteenth century onwards, legal literacy gradually slipped into the hands and became the task of secular intellectuals.²⁰ The role of the places of authentication in lower level official administration was rapidly confined by the growing use of the written word in the counties, towns,²¹ and public notaries.²² This process was certainly accelerated by the appearance and advance of the reformed churches in Hungary.²³ As a conse-

¹⁷ For example, the chapter of Nagyvárad (Oradea) from 1693, while those of Pécs and Vác from 1700 onwards revived their activity as places of authentication. However, the restoration of these institutions did not always go without difficulties, since the necessary financial background of their activity and/or the possessions assuring that should have also been restored to the members of these institutions. For the cases of the places of authentication at Turóc (Kláštor pod Znievom), Kapornak (Nagykapornak), and Zalavár, see Papp, 1936, 26.

¹⁸ The extensive readjustment of the activity fulfilled by the places of authentication was accomplished according to the Para. 39–44 paragraphs of the decree issued in 1723 by King Charles III.

¹⁹ It can be stated despite the fact that in the seventeenth–nineteenth centuries new places of authentication arose that were non-existent during the Middle Ages, that is such ecclesiastical institutions gained also the right of issuing charters which earlier were not entitled to do so. Accordingly, for example, on the basis of the Para. 2 paragraph of the Art. 57 article of the law issued in 1647 (reassured by the Para. 3 paragraph of the Art. 56 article of the law of 1741) the chapter at Zengg (Senj), while on the basis of the 15th decree of 1802 the chapter at Besztercebánya (Banská Bystrica), the latter in the place of the charter at Turóc, started functioning as places of authentication.

²⁰ The increasing spread of Protestant as well as Jesuit education and/or the significantly growing presence of the state in education meant a great contribution. The spread of secular literacy effected the way of administration at the places of authentication. In support of the above statement, a good example is the fact that from the seventeenth century onwards it became more or less regular that the clients wrote their avowals at home in their mother tongue and afterwards these avowals were copied word by word into the charters issued by the given places of authentication by this way authenticating the documents.

²¹ To the boom of the charter production of the towns, see B. Bak, “Városi írásbeliség a XVIII. században,” [Urban Literacy in the Eighteenth Century] in MH, 1984, 294–310.

²² For the early phase of secular literacy, see A. Kubinyi, “Írástudás és értelmiségi foglalkozásúak a Jagelló-korban,” [Literacy and Professional Intellectuals in the Age of the Jagiellonian Rulers] in MH, 1984, 186–208; I. Kállay, “Magánhivatali írásbeliség,” [Private Legal Literacy] in MH, 1984, 335–343.

²³ However, the above influence may not have been effecting directly, as in case of having no other possibility it was obvious also for the non-Catholics and the urban citizens

quence of all the above elements, the places of authentication became mere depositories of charters and as such only produced copies of the documents in their custody. Article 35 of the decree of 1874 put a final end to their independent history with its Para. 214 stating that the places of authentication could only prepare authentic copies of the documents preserved in their archives, but could not issue any new charters.²⁴ The activity of the places of authentication embraces almost seven centuries of Hungarian statehood, therefore the charters issued by them represent an extremely rich source-basis for research into Hungarian history.

3. *The loca credibilia and the number of charters they issued*

On the territory of medieval Hungary almost eighty ecclesiastical institutions can be shown to have taken part, for a shorter or longer period, in the issuing of authentic charters. Some thirty per cent of all the documents extant from Middle Ages (1000–1526) are charters issued by chapters and convents, mostly produced as a result of their activity as places of authentication. This percentage likely represents the proportion of actual charter-issuing, as in medieval Hungary a significant part of the charters issued were produced by the places of authentication. This is illustrated in the chart below according to centuries.

<i>Period</i>	<i>Chapters</i>	<i>Convents</i>	<i>Total</i>
1101–1200	4	0	462
1201–1300	3039	536	13886
1301–1400	19422	7383	73260
1401–1500	24487	24109	154499
1501–1526	8945	10689	58874

to turn with their cases to the places of authentication. The impact of Protestantism on the places of authentication was analyzed in Papp, 1936, 11–14.

²⁴ The die-away process at the places of authentication had started earlier, the Art. 35 article of the decree issued in 1874 simply canonized an already settled situation. To prove this statement, László Papp – on the basis of the relevant protocols – mentioned the following data: “[...] the chapter at Esztergom from 1850 till 1854, that is during five years, issued altogether ten authenticated charters, moreover its majority was done for the canons of the chapter. [...] Between 1854–1863 the Esztergom chapter did not function as a place of authentication, while in the following ten years, between 1863–1872, it issued twelve charters, with the exception of three, again all to its own canons. The situation was not much different at any other places. The Zalavár convent from 1861 (restart) until 1867 (end), during seven years, emitted twenty-two charters, and that meant a relatively high number.” Papp, 1936, 50. As a comparison – on the basis of the electronic database prepared by the National Archives of Hungary (MOL) about the pre-Mohács (i. e. pre-1526) charters –, between 1350–1354 the chapter at Esztergom issued 59 charters, while between 1363–1372 this number was 65.

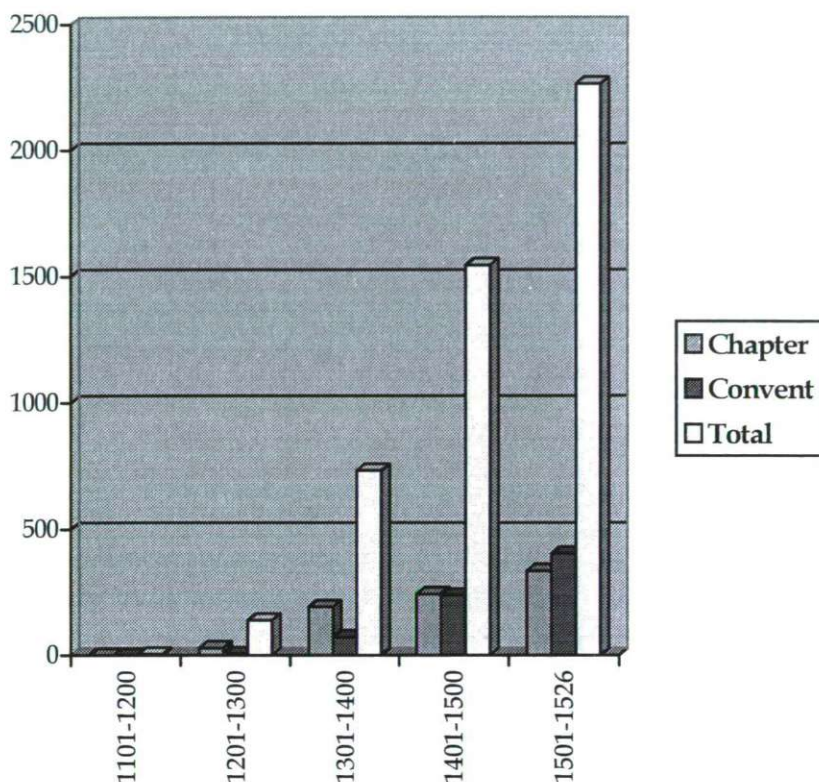


Table 1. *The changes in the charter-issuing activity of the chapters and convents in relation to all extant medieval charters (Item/year)*

The extant material shows that the rate of charter-issuing by the places of authentication grew with decreasing intensity during the Middle Ages. The deceleration was evident, primarily, in the activity of the chapters, which in the case of the convents happened to a lesser degree. These changes are shown in the chart below.

	Chapter	Increase		Convent	Increase	
		db	%		db	%
1201-1250	706			52		
1251-1300	5182	+4476	86	976	+924	94,6
1301-1350	16716	+11534	69	4376	+3400	77,6
1351-1400	21210	+4494	21	9881	+5505	55,7
1401-1450	22733	+1523	6,6	19510	+9629	49,3
1451-1500	25250	+2517	9,9	27488	+7978	29
1501-1526	17454			21004		

PLACES OF AUTHENTICATION (LOCA CREDIBILIA)

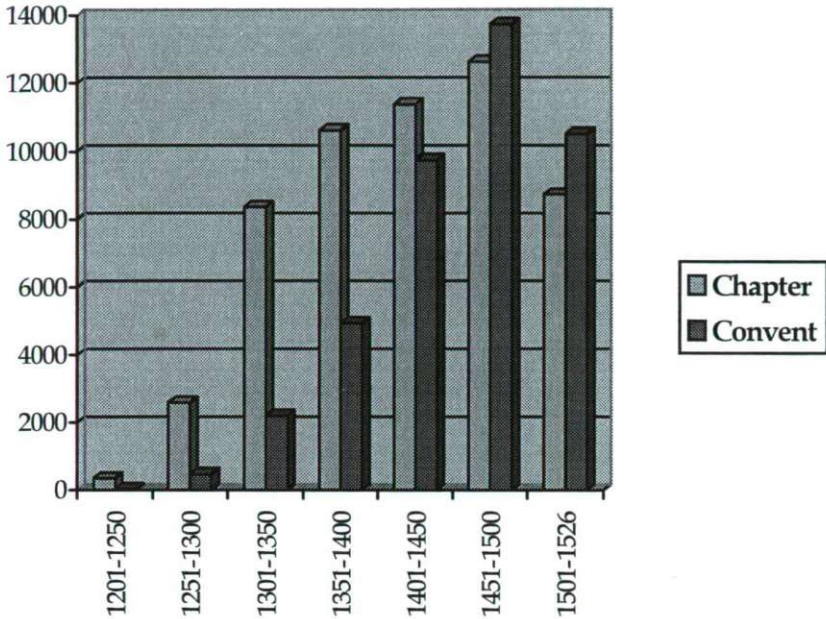


Table 2. *The changes in time undergone in charter-issuing activity of the chapters and convents in proportion to all the extant medieval charters*

Due to this tendency, from the second half of the fifteenth century onwards, the Hungarian convents issued more charters than the chapters usually with higher prestige, education, and personnel. This feature is represented by the chart below.

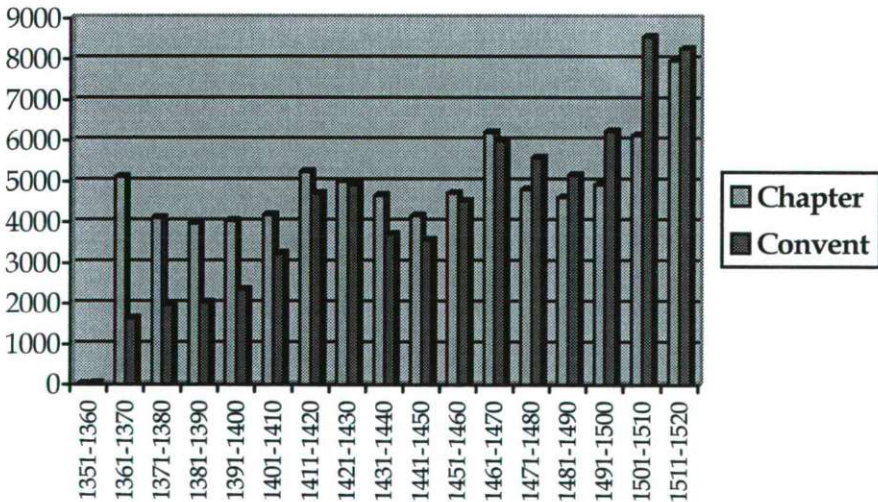


Table 3. *The shift in the proportion of the charters issued in chapters and convents between 1350–1520*

This phenomenon might be explained by the fact that the canons of the chapters were less in the need of the income deriving from the authentication activity than the monks of the convents.

4. *The stages of activity done by the loca credibilia*

The places of authentication carried out their authentication role essentially for two large client-groups, and on that basis two main forms of activity developed.²⁵ One of these groups was constituted by private clients who came to these institutions to arrange their various legal matters (such as buying and/or selling, mortgages (*inpinoratio*), exchanges of immovable/movable goods, arrangements for wills, avowals, etc.), and thereby gained written and authentically sealed evidence, of their case. Certainly, the clients most frequently made their declarations (*fassio*) in the church, but it can also be rightfully presumed that in those cases when many witnesses were involved their reception of happened in the open air. In front of the places of authentication the parties involved could appear not only personally, but also through their authorised representatives (*procuratores*). For these representatives separate letters of commission were drawn up which could be validated for a single case, for a determined period of time, or with general validity.

The other group using the places of authentication was constituted by official bodies involved in legislation²⁶ in relation to actual phases of any legal procedure. The places of authentication, by separate letters of mandate (*mandatum*), were commissioned to carry out different legal actions (such as inspection of boundaries (*reambulatio*), seisin of estates to new owners (*statutio, introductio*), inquiry, transcription of charters, etc.), after which the institutions concerned prepared written reports (*relatio*). In such cases, the place of authentication concerned usually sent its own commissioner, whose task was to act as a witness at the procedure carried out by his secular colleague and on return home to certify that the legal steps of the given process had been carried out.²⁷ Most probably, the selection of witnesses from the places of authentication was determined by various elements collectively. Since the external authentication activity meant several days spent far from the community of the chapter and/or the convent, in a secular environment – resulting in serious trial concerning discipline and the observance of liturgical obligations especially in case of monks – only the most reliable persons were sent for these external tasks. Certainly, the very old and/or

²⁵ On the circle of people using the places of authentication, see in details Szentpétery, 1930, 127–128.

²⁶ Practically, any official participants in the legislative process (king, palatine, seneschal, county, ban, etc.) could call upon the places of authentication to carry out particular legal acts.

²⁷ For an exemplary analysis of the external activity fulfilled by the chapter at Pécs, see L. Koszta, *A pécsi székeskáptalan hiteleshelyi tevékenysége (1214–1353)*. [The Activity of the Cathedral Chapter of Pécs as a Place of Authentication (1214–1353)] Pécs 1998, 105–116 (henceforth: Koszta, 1998).

feeble people, despite their spiritual constancy, were not used for carrying out such external activities. However, maturity was not only essential in order that the person could easier resist the attractions of secular life, but also because during the procedures there was a great need for firm knowledge of composition and writing skills and, at the same time, the commissioners should be familiar with all the details of the appropriate legal procedures. On the other hand, the chapters and convents carried out the different tasks of authentication, above all, obviously, the issue of charters, for money. Clearly this was particularly the case with poorer communities.²⁸ In practice, of course, the quantity of work would have principally determined the circle of commissioners sent out from the places of authentication. If a given chapter or convent was not able to send enough delegates competent in every respect to fulfil the large number of commissions, other people would clearly be sent from time to time. If the number of commissions for external procedures was too great for the places of authentication to confine the work to one of their members, the chapters or convents in question could also commission the priests of the parishes under their jurisdiction to help.²⁹ In the practice of the larger places of authentication, there are examples to be found even for sending out apprentices. Sometimes it happened that the places of authentication carried out external procedures at the request of private persons, though each of such cases had a well-defined reason behind it. Usually, the illness, that is the confinement to bed of the persons giving the avowals – commonly testators – provided the reason for calling a witness from a certain place of authentication. Another reason could be if women wanted to make avowals, in cases they were frightened to travel to the place of authentication due to the dangers of journey.

The scope of activity of the places of authentication covered the territory of the whole country. As in the case of external procedures – in order to prevent possible abuses – more places of authentication were commissioned with the same procedure, the spheres of operation of the places of authentication, in fact, overlapped with each other. The main principle in selecting a place of authentication was that it was situated in the county of the particular legal case. However, this principle was often disregarded if a place of authentication in the neighbouring county was closer. Though four places of authentication (the chapters of Buda and Székesfehérvár, the Bosnian chapter, and the Székesfehérvár Hospitaller

²⁸ Taking into consideration the difficulties of travel in the Middle Ages, the external authentication activity was a tiring job and was not completely safe, therefore those churchmen not necessarily in the need of the income deriving from such activity – having, for example, a lucrative prebend – tried to avoid being involved in such commissions. In the chapters, principally, the simple canons classified by József Köblös as ‘serving canons’ undertook these tasks. Köblös, 1994, 79–80.

²⁹ In case of appointing parish priests, it was not necessary that the parish church concerned should be under the jurisdiction of the involved place of authentication. In the practice of the cathedral chapter of Pécs, for example, the major criteria of selection was that the parish church should be close to the landed property involved in the particular legal case. Koszta, 1998, 109.

commandery) were given country-wide authority to issue charters, the territorial sphere of action, in principal, was shaped by everyday practice.

The compiling and issue of the charters finalised the authentication processes – both in cases of internal and external cases. In the case of avowals and/or procedures accomplished outside the place of authentication a memorandum was prepared. The draft charters and, eventually, the charters themselves were produced on the basis of these memoranda. In compiling of the charters certain patterns, existing formulae were used collected into separate books – formularies – or taken from documents issued earlier. Several formula-charters are extant written only to provide model texts for the different types of legal cases. The completed charter was read over and, in necessary cases, was corrected by the person in charge, usually the *lector* or his deputy, the *sublector*. From the fifteenth century, the completion of checking was more and more frequently indicated on the back of the charters as well. The language of the charters until the mid-nineteenth century was Latin. Apart from sporadically occurring vulgar expressions, however, from the sixteenth century onwards, certain parts (e. g. attestations) were put into the charters in Hungarian. However, from the seventeenth century onwards, the whole text could be in Hungarian. Para. 6 of Article 6 of the decree issued in 1840 instituted the compulsory usage of Hungarian in issuing charters, even though the places of authentication were by that time hardly in action.

The last, but perhaps the most substantial phase of the process of issuing charters was the authentication itself. The early method was to prepare a chirography (*chirographum*) when the content of the charter was written twice, one below the other, separated by the first letters of the alphabet, and afterwards the document was cut into two through these separating letters. One part of the charter created in this manner was given to the person or institution concerned, while the other copy (*par*) remained at the issuing place of authentication. The most important authenticating instrument was the seal kept by the *custos* or his deputy, the *subcustos*. The seal was most frequently placed on the charters pendantly or impressed. The places of authentication always used one-sided seals. At certain places two different seals were in use simultaneously, the major one (*sigillum maius*) used for issuing letters of privilege and the smaller one (*sigillum memoriale*) employed in any other cases. The seal-figure usually portrayed the patron saint of the given chapter or convent and/or his/her attribute(s). In addition to the seal of the particular place of authentication, on several occasions, the seal of the head of the community, its abbot or provost, was also placed on the charter.

The applicant had to pay for issuing and sealing the charter.³⁰ The fee, primarily, depended on the character and type of the charter itself, that is how richly it was decorated and how elaborately it was composed. From the money paid for issuing the charter the *lector* and the notary (*notarius*) usually got a separate sum. The places of authentication preserved the texts of the charters issued in the form

³⁰ L. B. Kumorovitz, "A leleszi konvent pecsételési- és oklevéltaxa-lajstromai," [The Sealing and Charter Issuing Fee-Registers of the Lelesz Convent] *Levéltári Közlemények* (1929), 312–325.

of copies or through copying them into registers, so later they were able to produce transcripts about the original documents. In the beginning, these copies, together with the treasures of the church, were usually stored in the sacristy. Later, due to the growing number of documents and their more frequent use, they were placed in separate rooms (e. g. in the *scriptorium*). From the seventeenth century onwards, it became quite frequent that the parties involved appeared at a given place of authentication with an already prepared draft, and the institution only composed an introductory and a closing part to the submitted document and gave it back as an already authenticated charter.

5. *The historical value of the charters issued by the loca credibilia*

The charters issued by the places of authentication serve as important sources of general history and of other fields. These documents are especially significant for ecclesiastical historical research. The ecclesiastical historical data to be gained from the charters concerned can be divided into two major groups. The first set of information relates to the places of authentication themselves as ecclesiastical institutions. Nevertheless, in investigating this data, it must be taken into consideration that the charters issued by these places of authentication were official legal documents, thus direct information about these places as ecclesiastical institutions only appeared in the texts to a small extent. However, this makes them even more valuable for church history, since in most cases they convey irreplaceable knowledge from other sources. Such data might have crept into a charter, if the particular place of authentication itself had somehow been involved in the matter.³¹ In particular, it could happen if the place of authentication had acted in the legal case as an ecclesiastical landlord. The charters issued in such proceedings, contribute beyond measure to a better understanding of the landed properties and serving personnel of the chapters and/or convents carrying out the authentication activity.

One of the most significant values of the charters issued by the places of authentication that they make possible a knowledge of the persons playing a role in this activity and thus of the number of people in these institutions. Since, at the end of several charters, in order to increase the credibility of the given document, the dignitaries of the chapter or convent (*series dignitatum*) were also often listed.³² This happened in particular in the case of letters of privilege, that is in charters assuring especially important rights issued in solemn forms.³³

³¹ The places of authentication, though as far as we know there were no relevant legal inhibitions, tried to avoid issuing charters concerning their own matters to prevent later insinuations. Szentpétery, 1930, 127.

³² In case of the cathedral chapter of Pécs, see Koszta, 1998, 110–111.

³³ On the analysis of these lists of dignitary, see Zs. Hunyadi, "A székesfehérvári johanita konvent hiteleshelyi tevékenysége az Árpád-korban," [The Activity of the Székesfehérvár Convent of the Knights of St. John as a Place of Authentication in the Árpadian Period] in *Capitulum I. Tanulmányok a középkori magyar egyház történetéből*. ed. L. Koszta. Szeged 1998, 54–55 (henceforth: *Capitulum I*); T. Kófalvi, "A pécsváradi kon-

Certain ecclesiastical persons are mentioned in the charters, who, in the majority of cases, did not appear in any other sources, therefore these documents are the major and basically the only source of information concerning them. This cognition is important not only in itself, but because through them significant conclusions can be deduced about the ecclesiastical layer they represent.³⁴

The second set of information to be gained about ecclesiastical history from the charters consists of data about the situation in the various institutions dealt with by the places of authentication. Here the first example to be mentioned are those when other institutions visited a particular place of authentication to have it issue charters about their own legal matters or have it transcribe their own charters. Significant ecclesiastical historical data could get into the documents issued by the places of authentication during the inquiries fulfilled on commission, the audition of witnesses and/or the transcription of letters of mandate. Through the reports on the malfeasance committed against churches, the economy and population of several ecclesiastical properties can be studied.

There are many cases when the places of authentication carried on legal procedures against ecclesiastical landlords, and these are extremely interesting if both the accused and the plaintiff were churchmen or ecclesiastical communities.

Besides church history, the charters issued by the places of authentication can also contain valuable data for local history, genealogy, economic history, linguistics, and material culture.

vent hiteleshelyi tevékenysége az Árpád-korban (1254–1301),” [The Activity of the Pécsvárad Convent as a Place of Authentication in the Árpadian Period (1254–1301)],” in *Capitulum I*, 144–146.

³⁴ From this viewpoint, the investigation of the world of the chapters promises results, since the mobility and economic significance of the monks are much smaller in scale than those of the ecclesiastical middle-class and/or the secular priests. This is discussed in Köblös, 1994.