



Donating Food to a Monastery: Gift and Communication

Dr. Rimvydas Laužikas

Vilnius University Faculty of Communication, Saulėtekio al. 9, 10222 Vilnius, Lithuania
E-mail: rimvydas.lauzikas@kf.vu.lt

Abstract. The article focuses on the study of food donations at the rural Dominican Monastery in Lithuania. The theoretical framework applied perceives donations not only as the transfer of goods but also as a process of information transmission. In this process, the donor is the sender of the message; the gift becomes the message; the act of giving is the channel of communication; and the recipient of the gift is the receiver of the message. The article presents the gastronomic culture of the Monastery and a classification of the possible communicative meanings of food donations. Gifts of care, gratitude, connection, and joy are identified in the Monastery's donation book. According to the donation book, these donations differ in terms of the types of food donated, the frequency of donations, and the social profiles of the donors.

Keywords: *gastronomy culture, food donations, gift as communication, monastic food, Dominicans.*

Anotacija. Straipsnyje pristatomas maisto dovanojimo kaimiškoje vietovėje įsikūrusiam dominikonų vienuolynui tyrimas. Taikomoje teorinėje schemoje dovanojimas suvokiamas ne tik kaip gėrybių perdavimas, bet ir kaip informacijos perdavimo procesas. Šiame procese dovanotojas yra pranešimo siuntėjas; dovana tampa pranešimu; dovanojimo veiksmas yra komunikacijos kanalas; dovanos gavėjas – pranešimo gavėjas. Straipsnyje pristatoma vienuolyno gastrominė kultūra ir maisto dovanojimo galimų komunikacinių reikšmių klasifikacija. Vienuolyno dovanų knygoje identifikuojamos rūpesčio, dėkingumo, ryšio ir džiaugsmo

dovanos. Remiantis dovanojimo knygos duomenimis, šios donanos skiriasi dovanojamo maisto rūšimis, dovanojimo dažnumu ir dovanotojų socialiniais profiliais.

Esminiai žodžiai: *gastronominė kultūra, maisto dovanojimas, dovana kaip komunikacija, vienuolynų maistas, dominikonai.*

Introduction

Donation is usually defined as the transfer of material things (money, goods) from one owner to another.¹ In describing gifts and donations, the emphasis is usually on: (i) the voluntariness and free will of the donor, (ii) the philanthropic nature of the donation, (iii) the need to help the recipient, and (iv) the ability of the recipient to use the gift without any restriction. Research shows this phenomenon is multifaceted and has many different social functions.² In the research presented in this paper, we have focused on one of these – communicative function. Is a gift just a transfer of material goods? Or is there something more behind it? In her thesis, Latinytė highlighted four groups of gift concepts identified by Alain Caillé. One of them includes theories that argue that behind the gift and the phenomenon of donation happens something more important than a material object transfer from hand to hand, “...the gift can be studied as a symbolic language that points to something other than itself...”³ This group of theories includes theories of communication and information. From their point of view, a gift can be seen as a message encoded in semiotic terms “...a gift as a sign that encompasses, conveys meaning and enables communication...”⁴ In this case, donation can be understood as a process of information transmission. In this process, the donor is the message’s sender; the gift becomes the message; the giving is the channel of communication; and the gift’s receiver is the recipient of the message. This essentially

¹ Cambridge English Dictionary. [Žiūrėta 2024 10 07]. Prieiga per internetą: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/donation>

² The theoretical contexts of gifts and donations and the communicative aspects of the gift are well analysed in Rūta Latinytė’s PhD thesis *Dovanojimas kaip tarpasmeninių santykių reiškimosi būdas XX a. pabaigos – XXI a. pradžios lietuvių kasdienėse praktikose* (Gift-giving as an expression of interpersonal relations in everyday practices in Lithuania at the end of the 20th – beginning of the 21st century) [žiūrėta 2024 10 07]. Prieiga per internetą: https://www.llti.lt/failai/RLatinyte_Daktaro%20disertacija_Dovanojimas.pdf

³ LATINYTĖ, Rūta. *Dovanojimas kaip tarpasmeninių santykių reiškimosi būdas XX a. pabaigos – XXI a. pradžios lietuvių kasdienėse praktikose*. Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2022, p. 21 [žiūrėta 2024 10 07]. Prieiga per internetą: https://www.llti.lt/failai/RLatinyte_Daktaro%20disertacija_Dovanojimas.pdf

⁴ Ibid., p. 33.

aligns with the classical Claude Elwood Shannon's communication process schema.⁵ An approach based on communication and information theories creates an opportunity to analyse gifts in a particular way. According to Latinytė, "... to get to know the picture of the world that surrounds and is perceived in a specific way, the relationship between the Self and the Other, and the act of communication that takes place in the act of donation ...".⁶

The communicative function of food gifts has been known since at least the Middle Ages, when "...as part of commensality, sociability, hospitality and charity, food gifts underpinned customary patterns of life; they developed networks of relationships, establishing good lordship, and played an important role in negotiations...".⁷ Gifts to the monastery certainly had an offering or self-offering function. This is evident in the Lithuanian language through the synonymy of the words "gift" and "offer".⁸ In a Christian sense, this idea is linked "...to the way the Gospels narrate the practice of Jesus, presenting Him as someone who considered no table unworthy of His presence. Theogastronomy is particularly interested in His pedagogy of proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom, which gradually reveals the relationship between the gift of food and the gift of self, as a fruitful path to a unified, fulfilled and saved life...".⁹ This aspect of offering is important in defining the concept of gift in the context of donations to the church or monastery. The transfer of material goods with preconditions (e.g. to pray for the donor) cannot be considered a real gift. However, at least in the context of this study, it appears that no such preconditions were imposed in the case of food donations.

The object of this study is the donation of food to the rural Dominican Monastery in Lithuania. Monasticism has been and continues to be a specific form of life known in various religions. The relationship between monasticism and gastronomic culture is interesting in the context of this study. At a more general level, it is theogastronomy – "...the relationship that a person, a people and a civilization establish with their 'gastro-nomy' – in the etymological sense of the term – has a *theophanic* value and holds a discreet pastoral and theoretical fecundity...".¹⁰ In the daily practical life of a particular monastic community, this worked through the Rule.

⁵ SHANNON, Claude E. A Mathematical Theory of Communication. *Bell System Technical Journal*, 1948, Vol. 27, p. 379–423.

⁶ LATINYTĖ, Rūta. *Dovanojimas kaip tarpasmeninių santykių reiškimosi būdas XX a. pabaigos – XXI a. pradžios lietuvių kasdienėse praktikose*. Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2022, p. 33 [žiūrėta 2024 10 07]. Prieiga per internetą: https://www.llti.lt/failai/RLatinyte_Daktaro%20disertacija_Dovanojimas.pdf

⁷ WOOLGAR, Chris, M. Gifts of food in late medieval England. *Journal of Medieval History*, 2011, Vol. 37, Issue 1, p. 6. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmedhist.2010.12.004>

⁸ *Lietuvių kalbos žodynas*. [Žiūrėta 2024 10 07]. Prieiga per internetą: <https://ekalba.lt/paieska/detalioji/?paieska=dovana&p=1&d=50&i=426a34db-8e25-4ed2-a6d8-666297ed1fda>

⁹ SILVESTRINI ADÃO, Francys. Theogastronomy: a sui generis theological aesthetic. *Perspect. Teol.*, 2022, 54(3), p. 591. Prieiga per internetą: <https://doi.org/10.20911/21768757v54n3p585/202>

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 585.

The founder of the Dominican Order, St. Dominic (Domingo de Guzmán, 1170–1221), chose the Rule of St. Augustine but added to it some special norms governing the observance of the poverty proclaimed in the Gospel, education, and preaching while travelling in the country. In later times, these regulations were elaborated, supplemented, and modified.¹¹ In the Rule of St. Augustine, food plays the role of some kind of “fuel”, and the need for it is linked to the state of health of the monk “...food and clothing shall be distributed to each of you by your superior, not equally to all, for all do not enjoy equal health, but rather according to each one’s need...”. The state of health must also be considered in fasting:

...so far as your health permits, by fasting and abstinence from food and drink. However, when someone is unable to fast, he should still take no food outside meal-times unless he is ill...

However, eating differently (better) because of one’s health should not be an object of self-aggrandisement or jealousy. Similarly, eating differently (better) for health reasons should not become an addiction or a simulation of illness.¹² The early (13th century) Constitutions of the Order detail the calendar of meals (fasting and non-fasting time), the exceptions to fasting for the sick and those travelling, and the procedures for meals in the monastery. According to the Constitutions, the monks must eat together in the refectory. Meals were served twice. All monks (except the sick) had to eat the same food. Complaints about food were considered a moderate offence punishable by a fast of a few days on bread and water alone.¹³ As we know from the fundamental collection of Dominican documents compiled by Vincenzo Maria Fontana, this regulation was still in force in modern times. There were no major changes in the later documents, but the dietary rules were much more detailed for both fasting and non-fasting periods.¹⁴ Of course, as the monastic community expanded into new geographical areas, the monastery’s daily routine and way of life were usually adapted to the realities of the geographical area and local culture. Life in a local monastery was essentially a

¹¹ ASHLEY, Benedict M. *The Dominicans*. [Žiūrėta 2024 10 07]. Prieiga per internetą: <http://www.domcentral.org/study/ashley/dominicans/ashdom00.htm>

¹² The Rule of St. Augustine. *General documents about the Order of Preachers*. [Žiūrėta 2024 10 07]. Prieiga per internetą: <http://dominicains.ca/documents-generaux/?lang=en>; https://www.op.org/documents/#810-860-wpfd-1_lco-book-of-constitutions-and-ordinations-home-doc-en-5fbf8ea66d4ae

¹³ The Primitive Constitutions of the Order of Preachers. *General documents about the Order of Preachers*. [Žiūrėta 2024 10 07]. Prieiga per internetą: <http://www.domcentral.org/trad/domdocs/0011.htm>; https://www.op.org/documents/#810-860-wpfd-1_lco-book-of-constitutions-and-ordinations-home-doc-en-5fbf8ea66d4ae

¹⁴ FONTANA, Vincenzo Maria. *Constitutiones declarationes et ordinationes capitulorum generalium S. Ordinis Praedic. ab anno 1220. vsque ad 1650 emanatae*. Ex probatis eorundem actis in Ordinis archiuio asservatis iussu reuerendiss. F. Io. Baptistae de Marinis Magistri Generalis exscriptae, digestae, atque euulgatae a patre F. Vincentio Maria Fontana... Pars prima Caballus, 1655. Prieiga per internetą: https://books.google.lt/books?id=64IPAAAcAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=lt&source=gbg_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

compromise between the ideal (the rules of the Order) and the reality (the local situation and opportunities).¹⁵

This article presents a case study of the analysis of one document – the donation book of the rural Dominican monastery from 1764–1829.¹⁶ The document contains much information about the food donated to the monastery. This 125-page book is composed almost exclusively of records of food donations. Gifts of items or money are only occasional and exceptionally rare. This kind of historical source is exclusive to studies of the history of monastic gastronomy. The most common sources for these studies are account books, monastic diaries, property inventories, and the decisions of the monastery's superiors.¹⁷

The aim of the study was to understand whether and to what extent the donation of food to the monastery could be perceived as not only a material gift but also a communicative message. To realise this aim, the following research questions were analysed:

- (i) The main trends of the diet of the Dominican monastery – what do we know and what additional information does the donation book provide?
- (ii) The donation process from a communication point of view – what are the social profiles of the donors and the trends in their donations?
- (iii) Possible meanings of gifts – what gifts and what meanings could have been communicated?

The study uses a qualitative content analysis approach. The data in the donation book is structured by Claude Elwood Shannon's communication process schema. The data were analysed using MaxQDA software.

¹⁵ LAUŽIKAS, Rimvydas. Vilniaus kolegijos jėzuitų bendruomenės gastronominės kultūros reikšmės. *Senoji Lietuvos literatūra: jėzuitai Lietuvoje: tarp kasdienybės ir amžinybės*, 2020, Nr. 49, p. 109–45.

¹⁶ 1764–1829 metų Palėvenės vienuolyno gautų maisto produktų (aukų) sąrašai. Lietuvos mokslų akademijos Vrublevskių bibliotekos Rankraščių skyrius (The Wroblewski library of the Lithuanian academy of sciences, later in text – *LMAVBRS*), f. 255, b. 846. However, it is important to note that the document has no original title page. The attribution of the book of donations to the monastery of Palėvenė is based only on the information from the beginning of the 20th century that the book originates from the library of the monastery of Palėvenė, which closed in 1865. Some of the records in the book and some of the family names mentioned in the book suggest that it could potentially be the donation book of the neighbouring Skapiškis Dominican monastery rather than the one of Palėvenė Dominican monastery. The book may have entered the library of the monastery of Palėvenė after the closure of the Skapiškis monastery in 1832. Given that a separate study would be needed to confirm this hypothesis, and given that in the context of the research presented in this paper, there is no fundamental difference whether the book belongs to the Dominican monastery of Palėvenė or to the neighbouring Dominican monastery of Skapiškis, in this paper, the donation book is referred to by the title given in the document's metadata of the Wroblewski library of the Lithuanian academy of sciences as the "Inventory of the foodstuffs received by the Dominican monastery of Palėvenė".

¹⁷ KLAJUMIENĖ, Dalia; LAUŽIKAS, Rimvydas. *Dominikonų palikimas Palėvenėje ir Skapiškyje*. Kupiškis: Kupiškio etnografinio muziejaus, 2023.

Diet of the Dominicans of Palėvenė in the 17th–19th centuries

For the study presented in this article, the knowledge about the diet of the Dominicans of Palėvenė is important (i) as contextual information that reveals the novelty of information and scientific value of the donation book in comparison with other sources on the monastic diet and (ii) in the formation of a context that is relevant for the understanding of the donation as a communicative process and for the possible “reading” of food gifts as communicative messages.

Analysing the documents of the Dominican monastery of Palėvenė, we notice that this community is a good example of how the Dominican way of life has adapted to the realities of a remote geographical space and local culture in the Lithuanian province. The gastronomic culture of the Dominican Order functioned as a framing structure of ideas, principles, rules and symbols. In contrast, the local gastronomic tradition of the nobility of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania manifested itself on a much more practical level regarding kitchen ingredients, recipes, cooking techniques and equipment.¹⁸ The names of the monks mentioned in the documents also refer to the local origin of these people.¹⁹ Thus, the local cultural presence in the monastery undoubtedly had a strong personal dimension. The gastronomic culture is very conservative, formed in the family environment and difficult to change, even when a person is ordained a monk.

Geographically, the Palėvenė region is quite distant from the larger cities (Vilnius, Kaunas, Riga), but it is close to one of the old Vilnius-Riga roads.²⁰ This led to a fully rural lifestyle and, simultaneously, allowed for a more or less equal experience of both Lithuanian and Livonian culinary influences. The vast majority of the ingredients, products and dishes mentioned in Palėvenė are typical of the cuisine of the provincial Lithuanian nobility of the same period. As in the manor houses of the nobility, most of the food in the monastery was made from local produce grown on the manors and farms. As on other estates of the time, rye for bread, oats for the horses and barley for

¹⁸ The interaction between the gastronomic culture of the Dominican Order and local gastronomic traditions in Palėvenė monastery is analysed in a more detailed way in KLAJUMIENĖ, Dalia; LAUŽIKAS, Rimvydas. *Dominikonų palikimas Palėvenėje ir Skapiškyje*. Kupiškis: Kupiškio etnografijos muziejus, 2023, p. 166–215. The local differences in food and drink consumption from the common European Dominican practice in Poland are recorded in the documents of the visitation of Damiano a Fonseca between 1617 and 1619 (KŁOCZOWSKI, Jerzy. *Wielki zakon XVII-wiecznej Rzeczypospolitej u progu swego rozwoju. Dominikanie polscy w świetle wizytacji generalnej z lat 1617–1619*. *Nasza Przyszłość*, 1973, t. 39, p. 163–167). The overview of the Dominican monasteries in the State of Teutonic Order, at KUBICKI, Rafał. *Wokół klasztorowego refektarza – przepisy i praktyka na przykładzie mendykantów z terenu państwa zakonu krzyżackiego w Prusach*. *Historia naturalna jedzenia. Między antykiem a XIX wiekiem*, Gdańsk, 2012, p. 122–134.

¹⁹ 1861 metų Palėvenės dominikonų vienuolyno inventorių. *Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvas* (Lithuanian State Historical Archives, later in text – LVIA), f. 1671, ap. 4, b. 2, p. 56v.

²⁰ BALIULIS, Algirdas; ČELKIS, Tomas. *Senujų Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės kelių aprašymai*. Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2018.

beer were the largest crops grown. As at the manor, beef and mutton dominated the monks' tables. The challenge of monastic life was that there were no major rivers and lakes in the region that would allow for an abundant and regular supply of fish. As we know from the inventories, the monastery does not seem to have had its own ponds.

Purchases supplemented the shortage of home-grown products in Palėvenė. The monks purchased the foodstuff locally (with local Jews), as well as in Kupiškis, Kamajai, Skapiškis, Anykščiai and Kėdainiai. The potential choice of products purchased by the Dominicans of Palėvenė in surrounding towns must have been similar to what was grown on the monastery's farms. Fish was a separate part of local purchases. Another type of purchasing was the luxury ingredients. Several times a year, the monks would travel to Vilnius, Kaunas, Riga, Tilžė or Königsberg to buy exotic spices (pepper, cinnamon, cloves, ginger), as well as sugar, salt, raisins, coffee, tea, olive oil, herring and wine. They were primarily and mainly bought in Riga. In Vilnius, Königsberg, Tilžė, most purchases were household goods (iron, glass, nails) or various items (clocks, furniture, crockery, kitchen utensils). Such purchases of spices would indicate that even in the 19th century, the Palėvenė's kitchen was more conservative, more typical of the baroque-style cuisine of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This style of cuisine was typical of the smaller province estates of the 18th and the first half of the 19th centuries, and one of its characteristic features was the abundant use of dry imported spices. In contrast, more modern cuisine uses more natural, herbal spices and ingredients.

The available sources – account books and inventories – provide limited information to identify the specific dishes and drinks produced and consumed in the monastery in the 17th–19th centuries. In December 1693, bagels (*obwarzanki*) and a lot of saffron for Christmas wafers were bought in the Palėvenė monastery, along with other products. In March 1694, wheat flour, bagels and Venetian caraway (cumin)²¹ seeds for baking rusks were bought.²² The monastery also brewed beer, honey mead, and vodka locally. More luxurious drinks were bought for the monastery's needs (primarily for guests): mostly French wine, vodka, arrack, English porter, and dark beer. Perhaps the most impressive purchase was 10 bottles of champagne bought in January 1784 for 100 złoty.²³

In the context of the study presented in this article, the stock lists of Palėvenė monastery are also interesting. In July 1717, the following smoked food supplies were in the Palėvenė monastery's storage: 17 slabs of [cured] lard, 15 pairs of hams, 14 pairs

²¹ Venetian caraway (kmin wenecki) is identified as cumin according to: ŁUCZAJ, Łukasz; DUMANOWSKI, Jarosław; MARSZAŁEK, Cecylia; PARASECOLI, Fabio. Turmeric and Cumin Instead of Stock Cubes: An Internet Survey of Spices and Culinary Herbs Used in Poland Compared with Historical Cookbooks and Herbals. *Plants (Basel)*, 2023, 29; 12(3), p. 591. doi: 10.3390/plants12030591

²² 1693–1694 metų Palėvenės dominikonų išlaidų sąrašas. *LVIA*, f. 1671, ap. 4, b. 412, p. 149v, 150, 150v.

²³ 1758–1785 metų Palėvenės dominikonų vienuolyno pajamų ir išlaidų knyga. *LVIA*, f. 696, ap. 2, b. 13, p. 199v.

of geese,²⁴ four pairs of sirloins, five pairs of pigs' heads, seven pieces of pigs' fat,²⁵ five pork bellies, 25 pairs of smoked pieces of heifer meat, less than one bucket of butter, 300 pieces of cheese, and 80 garnetzes of ordinary vodka.²⁶ In 1861, there were mentions of smoked meats: 10 slabs of [cured] lard, 25 pairs of smoked boneless hams, five pieces of pigs' fat, and eight pairs of hams.²⁷

The dishes made by the Palėvenės monks can be partly determined from the kitchen equipment, utensils, and crockery used for eating. In 1804, the kitchen contained four clay moulds for baking babkas (such kinds of cakes) and one spindle for making pasta. The monastery's assets include glass vessels for sugar, mustard, oil, vinegar, butter, wine, and Provence olive oil; a tin box for tea; copper pots for coffee (ibrik); salt cellar made of tin; a bronze teapot (ibrik) for tea; sugar basin; milk jugs; an alembic for distilling, with all the accompanying equipment; and a cask for salting meats.²⁸ In 1861, the kitchen mentioned a device for roasting coffee and a coffee grinder.²⁹

Food donation to the monastery

The donation book adds considerably to the information about the monastery's diet. The raw materials and ingredients donated by various individuals for cooking do not differ much from those grown on the monastery's manors or bought from the local merchants and markets. However, in the case of dishes and drinks, the range of products in the donation book is much broader than is known from other sources.

Among the raw foodstuff and ingredients donated to the monastery were oats, common, green and white peas, buckwheat, wheat, barley, rye, high-quality wheat and rye flour, malt barley, oat and buckwheat groats (some of which are described as "beautiful"), steamed buckwheat groats (called "iron"). Also, there are apples, pears, cabbage heads, beetroot and sweet beetroot, onions, and hops. Rarer vegetables include pumpkin, cucumbers, celery and parsley roots, leeks and horseradish. Most of the animals and birds were donated alive. This form of donation is due to the perishable nature of meat. Therefore, the meat of a slaughtered animal could spoil both during transport and cause problems for the monks because they need to consume it very quickly. The donations were, therefore, rams, bulls, calves, heifers and cows, pigs, piglets, chickens, hens, ducks, turkeys, geese, and capons. Some young animals and birds are

²⁴ Smoked geese (in Lithuanian – pusžašiai, in Polish – *polgąski*) are the specific food supplies typical for the territory of former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. This is the boneless meat of the goose. The prepared meat is pre-fermented in a mixture of spices and later – smoked.

²⁵ Smoked pigs' fat (in Lithuanian – išnauja). The pork fat is rolled into a porks' peritonium and smoked.

²⁶ 1751 metų Palėvenės dominikonų vienuolyno ir bažnyčios inventories. LVIA, f. 1671, ap. 4, b. 2, p. 100v.

²⁷ 1861 metų Palėvenės dominikonų vienuolyno inventories. LVIA, f. 1671, ap. 4, b. 2, p. 56.

²⁸ 1804 metų Palėvenės dominikonų bažnyčios ir vienuolyno inventories. LVIA, f. 1671, ap. 4, b. 2, p. 85v.

²⁹ 1861 metų Palėvenės dominikonų vienuolyno inventorių. LVIA, f. 1671, ap. 4, b. 2, p. 56.

donated for further breeding (e.g. “a pig for feeding”,³⁰ “a bull for rising”,³¹ “four sheep for breeding”³²). Others are for food. In some cases, this is noted in the donation book (e.g. “a cow for the kitchen”³³ or “a pig for the table”³⁴). There were also donations of fresh fish (common breams, flounders, lampreys, tenches, crucian carps, salmon, sturgeons, pikes, eels, ruffes, vendaces, and “small fish”), sturgeon meat, salted herring, Dutch herring brought from Riga, crayfish, beef, and ram’s shoulder, slaughtered and cleaned geese, a quarter of a ram or heifer meat, bacon, lard, melted tallow (probably at least some of which was used for lighting), pork fat, eggs, honey, dried mushrooms, nuts, coffee, salt, and sugar (kandyzbrot and kanar).³⁵ There is a clear seasonality in the donation of farm-grown produce. Fruits, vegetables and cereals appear in late summer and early autumn after the harvest.

Game meat and wild bird meat donations (hare, moose and venison steaks, moose quarters, hazel grouse, partridges, black grouse, wild pigeons, capercaillie, woodcock, wild geese and ducks) can be distinguished as a separate group. This can be hypothetically linked to changing dietetics, where – due to the influence of the Enlightenment and Romanticism – there was a turn away from Christian food symbolism and humoral dietetics to scientific knowledge-based dietetics (actually, understanding the science background of 18th–19th century). In the context of this change, hunting became not only a kind of nobility’s leisure but also a common source of foodstuff.

Many ready-to-eat products and dishes have also been donated to the monastery. The information about them adds considerably to the existing knowledge about the dishes eaten by the monks. The monks receive rye bread, made of plain and high-quality flour, March bread,³⁶ wheat cakes (*pierogi*), flat bread (*placki* white and with saffron, yellow), obartuchs,³⁷ cakes made with honey and fasting cakes made with onions, simple buns and buns filled with curd, gingerbread, sugar piper-biscuits (*pipirniki*), wheat and rye rusks, biszkokts³⁸ and cweybakes,³⁹ bagels (*obwarzanki*), simple and sugar small bagels (*obwarzaneczki*), rolls (*zawijanek*) with oil and with poppy seeds, poppy seed sweets (*makownik*), candy sweets (*cukierki*), cheeses (some of them “with butter”, probably made from whole milk), Dutch cheeses, English cheeses, butter, sour cream, simple and white kishka (*kiszki*), roasted geese, sausages, smoked hams, smoked geese (*polgąski*),

³⁰ 1764–1829 metų Palėvenės vienuolyno gautų maisto produktų (aukų) sąrašai. *LMAVBRS*, f. 255, b. 846, p. 17v.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 50.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 15v.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16v.

³⁵ Kandyzbrot and kanar are historical sugar varieties, similar to contemporary brown crystallised cane sugar.

³⁶ March bread is a specific kind of bread made with honey and spices.

³⁷ Obartuch is a specific cake with curd filling.

³⁸ Biszkokt is a cookie made with flour and eggs and baked twice (first baked and then oven-dried).

³⁹ Cweybak (zwieback) is a type of crisp, sweetened bread made with eggs and baked twice.

pigs' heads (*glowizna*), small hams (*okorki*), loins and chops, vinegar, smoked fish (eel, flounders), various confitures. Most of the products were consumed in the monastery, but some were redistributed. For example, in February 1812, part of the bread was passed out to beggars.⁴⁰

Some of the food gifts were exceptional, such as the “presents from Riga” received from Koscialkowski in February 1767: large and small raisins, white and grey ginger, rice, sweet almonds, pearl barley, sugar kandyzbrot, dried cod (*stokfisz*), and lampreys.⁴¹ In August 1775 Morikoni donated eight lemons,⁴² in August 1777, Puzyna donated currants and Granicki – one bottle of green olive oil.⁴³ In March 1778, Borkowski, the parish priest of Skapiškis – a barrel of (probably pickled together) limes (citruses) with olives and three pounds of orange peels.⁴⁴

The monastery donation book also reveals a much more detailed picture of alcohol consumption. The number of alcohol donations (both in terms of types and quantities of drinks) is very high. The alcohols donated are ordinary vodka, double-distilled vodka, sugar vodka, sweet vodka, French vodka, peach vodka, orange vodka, cinnamon vodka, spice vodka, English vodka, ratafia, mead (Trojniak), Hungarian wine, French wine, Muszkatel wine, Frontyniak wine, local regular, local “March”⁴⁵ and English beer. Some alcoholic beverage gifts are exceptional. For example, in February 1822, Nikodem Kasperowicz, the parish priest of Skapiškis, donated five bottles of cognac for “the election of a new prior in Skapiškis”. In May 1767, Morikoni donated a bottle of Hungarian wine for healing purposes.⁴⁶

In summary, food donations are dominated by products for everyday meals. There is a small amount of food stock. Overall, at the beginning of the period covered by the donation book, in the 18th century, there was a greater variety of donated food and a more significant number of donations. More donations are made for ready-made products and dishes. At the end of the period, in the 19th century, there is a general decrease in the number of food donations and a smaller variety of donations (bread, cheese and various types of meat predominate).

From 1768 to 1772, gifts were converted into monetary value (how many złoty and groschen were given). In 1768, gifts ranged from 18–20 groschen (sausages, herrings) to 40–28 złoty (larger quantities of grains). Some of Koscialkowski's donations are exceptional in terms of value at this time.⁴⁷ Later, the gifts became smaller. In 1771,

⁴⁰ 1764–1829 metų Palėvenės vienuolyno gautų maisto produktų (aukų) sąrašai. *LMAVBRS*, f. 255, b. 846, p. 95v.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 12v.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 31v.

⁴⁵ The beer made in March was perceived as one of the best local beers.

⁴⁶ 1764–1829 metų Palėvenės vienuolyno gautų maisto produktų (aukų) sąrašai. *LMAVBRS*, f. 255, b. 846, p. 13v.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 14v–15v.

most were for 1–4 złoty, while the largest ones amounted to 14–31 złoty. However, the more expensive ones were donated only a few times yearly.

Thinking about the Communicative meanings

The monastery's donation book includes the names of the donors alongside most of the donation records. More such personalised entries were made in the 18th century. The 19th-century donations are much more anonymous, for example, "from the church, four cheeses"⁴⁸ or "from the offer, 11 loaves of bread and two cheeses".⁴⁹ When analysing donors, we could divide them into two large groups: regular and occasional. Regular donors supported the monastery with food regularly, for many (10–15) years, several times per year. Such was the parish priest of Skapiškis, Borkowski, the podstoli of Ukmergė, Koscialkowski and his wife, the rittmaster, Malyszka, the pisarz of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Morikoni and his wife, the wife of the starosta of Rubów, Rejecka, the wife of the starosta of Samogitia, Tyszkiewiczowa, the deputy starosta of Ukmergė, Tyzenhauz, the stolnik of Braclaw, Wiszniewski. Other donations were occasional (e.g. Szuksza, Esperjaszowa, Pondziewicz, Rodziewicz, Plato, Montygaila, Daugelowa or Butwidówna). When comparing donations, regular donors dominate the overall flow of donations in terms of the frequency of donations and the variety of gifts. For example, in 1764, out of 52 donations, occasional donors accounted for only a quarter of the total. Regular donations are more likely to give ready-to-eat food products and dishes. However, their donations are more minor in quantity. Meanwhile, occasional donors supplied the monastery with more raw materials (cereals, meat) in large quantities.

Interpreting donation in the context of the proposed above theoretical model (donation as an act of communication), we can describe the food gifts to the monastery as realised gifts that are "...structurally in line with the pattern of fulfilled giving, receiving, and/or repaying..."⁵⁰ We can identify the motives that inspired donations by linking donors to gifts. These are more evident among regular donors. In the Latinytė's model, motives are related to the categories of realised gifts, which are: (i) gifts of the caring relationship, introducing an unequal relationship between the donor and the recipient; (ii) gifts of gratitude, referring to another gift, service or good received in the past; (iii) gifts that keep people connected, which are particularly relevant for those who have to overcome distance in terms of space or time, for whom the gift-giving route becomes a way of bridging this gap; (iv) apologetic gifts include efforts to repair

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 19.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 22.

⁵⁰ LATINYTĖ, Rūta. *Dovanojimas kaip tarpasmeninių santykių reiškimosi būdas XX a. pabaigos – XXI a. pradžios lietuvių kasdienėje praktikose*. Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2022, p. 48 [žiūrėta 2024 10 07]. Prieiga per internetą: https://www.llti.lt/failai/RLatinyte_Daktaro%20disertacija_Dovanojimas.pdf

broken personal ties, an act of relational change that refers to past events and hurtful experiences; (v) gifts of joy are inherently emotionally charged, but often also carry other charges of meaning; (vi) life gifts, which denote a significant life change, event, turning point, often the only one of its kind in the interviewee's entire life. In addition to these categories, there are also gifts for yourself and a request to make a charitable donation or donation to a cause instead of a personal gift. However, these categories are not relevant in the context of the study presented in the article.⁵¹

Many regular donations of everyday foodstuffs can be considered gifts of the caring relationship. For example, the Tyszkiewiczowa, Koscialkowski, and Morikoni families donate the monastery grains, meat, and dairy products for a long time, every year, one or a few times per month. Such regular donations can be interpreted as ongoing care to ensure the everyday well-being of the Dominican monks. For example, in March–October 1764, per eight months, Tyszkiewiczowa made 10 donations to the monastery. He donated high-quality rye flour, wheat flour, buckwheat groats, peas, cakes, cheeses, fishes (hazel grouse, crucian carp, common bream, ruffes, “small fish”), beef and vodka. Some occasional donations, such as those involving the transfer of everyday foodstuffs, which are not luxurious and not questioned in the context of monastic life, can also be interpreted as gifts of care.

The donation book does not include many gifts of gratitude. Most are donations from Borkowski, the parish priest of Skapiškis. The document suggests that the monks helped him several times in his works. For example, in April 1773, he donated the monks by two purs⁵² of rye, barley, oats, and one pur of buckwheat “for their help in hearing confessions”;⁵³ in January 1777, he sent gifts “for their service during the Jubilee”;⁵⁴ There are fewer gifts of gratitude from other people. Koscialkowski once donated six purs of rye and barley “for the commemoration of his name day”.⁵⁵ Gifts of gratitude are mostly the everyday (not luxury) foodstuff.

The third category of gifts fixed in the donation book of the monastery are gifts that keep people connected. In the case of a monastery, this category of gifts is related to the gifts of the caring relationship and the gifts of gratitude. People who potentially need help and advice from the monks' side try to keep close connections. A good example could be Borkowski, the parish priest of Skapiškis, who donates to the monastery the everyday (not luxury) foodstuff regularly, not only in cases of gratitude. Unlike other regular donors, Borkowski's gifts are less frequent (several times a year). Another noticeable thing is that he does not donate ready-made products and dishes, only ingredients (mostly meat, fish, and eggs). An example of a less frequent gift is the donation of Eperiaszyna, the wife of

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 47–129.

⁵² Pur – the old unit of measurement, equal to 20 garnetz (depending on the period time, approximately 50–70 l).

⁵³ Ibid., p. 22v.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 27.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 23.

the starost of Maišiagala, in May 1764. She donates only once every few years, donating: 12 purs of rye, 12 purs of barley, 5 of wheat and peas, 3 of buckwheat, one small barrel of butter, 30 cheeses, one heifer and one pig, and 20 garnetz of vodka.

The last category is the gifts of joy. These “...must be at first satisfied and give joy to the donor...”⁵⁶ In the donation book of the monastery, this category is represented by two kinds of gifts: (i) for feasting and (ii) donations of luxurious foodstuffs. Specific mentions label the donations for feasting. For example, in October 1773, for the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, the monks received vodka, cweybakes, cakes, pastries, bread, a pig, a goose and ducks from the different donors.⁵⁷ In August 1788, Komorowski donated an ox for the St. Dominic feast.⁵⁸ Another group of gifts, luxury foodstuff, compensated the monastery for the lack of products they did not produce or did not produce enough. These products could be understood as providing the pleasure of eating, violating modesty and poverty, and therefore being unsuitable for monastic production (e.g. sweets) or even intrinsically undesirable (e.g. alcohol). Meat from wild beasts and birds, and meat from capons, veal and piglets, could also be considered as luxury foodstuff. Also, butter, sour cream, cheeses, high-quality wheat flour and some (especially rarer) vegetables. The inappropriateness of wild game and poultry meat in the monastery can also be interpreted in a humoral dietetic sense. These meats were considered rich in yellow bile (*chole*). And bile was perceived as the opposite of holiness from a humoral point of view.

Two additional categories of gifts (apologetic gifts and life gifts) are not identified in the donations book of the monastery.

Conclusions

To summarise the results of the study presented in this paper, we can establish that:

- (i) The main trends of the diet of the Dominican monastery are typical of the cuisine of the provincial Lithuanian nobility of the same period (18th–19th centuries). As in the manor houses of the nobility, most of the food in the monastery was made from local produce grown on the manors and farms. Several times a year, the monks purchase exotic spices (pepper, cinnamon, cloves, ginger), as well as sugar, salt, raisins, coffee, tea, olive oil, herring and wine in Riga. That indicates that even in the 19th century, the monastery’s kitchen was more

⁵⁶ LATINYTĖ, Rūta. *Dovanojimas kaip tarpasmeninių santykių reiškimosi būdas XX a. pabaigos – XXI a. pradžios lietuvių kasdienėse praktikose*. Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros mirtautosakos institutas, 2022, p. 51 [žiūrėta 2024 10 07]. Prieiga per internetą: https://www.llti.lt/failai/RLatinyte_Daktaro%20disertacija_Dovanojimas.pdf

⁵⁷ 1764–1829 metų Palėvenės vienuolyno gautų maisto produktų (aukų) sąrašai. *LMAVBRS*, f. 255, b. 846, p. 23.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 48v.

conservative, more typical of the baroque-style cuisine of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This community is a good example of how the Dominican way of life has adapted to the realities of a remote geographical space and local culture in the Lithuanian province.

- (ii) Comparison of the different sources about the history of the gastronomy of the monastery shows that the inventories and account books predominate by the information about the raw ingredients. The main added value of the donation book is the information about the ready-made products and dishes and the use of luxurious products in the Dominican monastery.
- (iii) The study shows that the donation process can be analysed from a communication point of view. The donors (senders of messages) are the provincial nobility of different levels. There are no mentions of the high-level magnate's families (like Radziwills, Sapieha, or Pacowie), and top-level state government, or religious officials (like the chancellor, hetmans or bishops). The higher social level donors are the members of Koscialkowski, Tyszkiewicz and Morikoni families, and the higher level of mentioned state service position is the starosta of Samogitia (Tyszkiewiczowa, wife of starosta). Also, the stolnik, podstoli, pisarz, the officials of local (powiat administration) level, and priests of different parishes. Some of them donate to the Dominican monastery regularly (a few times per year), and some occasionally. The main groups of donations are raw ingredients (meat, fish, grains, dairy products) and ready-made products and dishes (bread, different kinds of cookies and cakes, smoked meat and fish, and alcoholic drinks).
- (iv) The possible meanings of gifts could classify the donations. Applying the donation meanings model presented in Rūta Latinytė's PhD thesis, the gifts of the caring relationship, gifts of gratitude, gifts that keep people connected, and gifts of joy are identified in the monastery donation book. According to the donation book, these donations differ in terms of the foodstuff donated, the frequency of donations, and the donors' social profiles. Some donations are commented on directly in the book, allowing us to categorise communication meanings more accurately. Of course, the book of donations is a limited source for the study of communication because of its accounting structure. Further research on this topic would require a deeper investigation of the biographies of the donors and the egodocumentary sources they created.
- (v) This study has several limitations. First of all, the study is qualitative. The categories of gifts discussed and their communicative meanings are overlapping. In each case, the donor was most likely to have several motives, so this classification cannot be directly converted into a quantitative measurement tool. We cannot accurately calculate quantitative data on each type of donation mentioned in the donation book. Another limitation is the small sample size of the data – only one monastery. Therefore, we cannot generalise the results of the study.

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Maistas vienuolynui: dovana ir komunikacija

Dr. Rimvydas Laužikas

Vilniaus universiteto Komunikacijos fakultetas, Saulėtekio al. 9, LT-10222 Vilnius, Lietuva
El. p. rimvydas.lauzikas@kf.vu.lt

Santrauka

Straipsnyje nagrinėjama maisto produktų ir gaminių dovanojimo praktika kaimo vietovėje įsikūrusiame dominikonų vienuolyne (Kupiškio savivaldybėje, Lietuvoje) 1764–1829 metais. Tyrime taikoma komunikacijos mokslų teorinė prieiga, leidžianti daryti prielaidą, kad maisto dovanojimas buvo ne tik materialinė parama, bet ir informacijos perdavimo forma. Pagal šį

modelį dovanotojas veikia kaip pranešimo siuntėjas; dovana yra pranešimas, dovanojimo veiksmas – komunikacijos kanalas, o vienuolynas – pranešimo gavėjas.

Tyrime remtasi retu istoriniu šaltiniu – vienuolyno donacijų knyga, kurioje laikui bėgant fiksuojami asmenų paaugoti maisto produktai, gaminiai, kitokios donacijos. Skirtingai nuo įprastų šaltinių, tokių kaip sąskaitų knygos ir inventoriai, dovanojimo knyga suteikia daugiau informacijos apie vienuolyne suvartotus gatavus maisto produktus ir prabangos prekes.

Pagrindiniai dominikonų vienuolynui dovanoti maisto produktai ir gaminiai buvo: (i) grūdai (rugiai, miežiai, kviečiai, grikiai), daržovės, vaisiai ir pieno produktai; (ii) mėsa: naminiai gyvūnai (kiaulės, karvės, paukščiai) ir laukiniai žvėrys (elniai, kiškiai, stirnos); (iii) įvairios šviežios ir sūdytos žuvys (nėgės, silkės, lašišos); (iv) prabangos prekės (prieskoniai, cukrus, razinos, alyvuogių aliejus, arbata ir kava); (v) kepiniai (duona, bandelės, riestainiai, meduoliai, pyragai ir pyragaičiai); (vi) alkoholis (degtinė (įskaitant aromatizuotą), midus, alus, prancūziški ir vengriški vynai). Tyrime maisto produktai ir gaminiai analizuojami platesniame vienuolyno gyvenimo ir dominikonų mitybos papročių kontekste. Vienuolių mityba atspindėjo tiek dominikonų religines taisykles, tiek vietines lietuvių bajorų gastronomijos tradicijas.

Donacijų įrašuose pateikiami donatorių vardai, atskleidžiantys jų socialinį profilį. Tai buvo daugiausia Lietuvos provincijos bajorai (kunigai, vietos pareigūnai ir žemvaldžiai). Tarp dosniausių ir nuolatinių aukotojų buvo Koscialkovskių, Tiškevičių ir Morikonų šeimos.

Remiantis Rūtos Latinytės dovanų klasifikavimo modeliu, tyrime buvo išskirtos keturios pagrindinės komunikacinės maisto dovanojimo dominikonų vienuolyne prasmės:

1. Rūpesčio dovanos (ilgalaikiai rėmėjai, pavyzdžiui, didikų šeimos, kurios reguliariai tiekė būtiniausius maisto produktus vienuolynui išlaikyti).
2. Dėkingumo dovanos (jomis buvo aiškiai išreikšta padėka už praeityje suteiktas paslaugas).
3. Dovanos ryšiams palaikyti (maisto produktais rėmėjai užmezgė arba palaikė ryšius su vienuolynu ir taip užsitikrino paramą ateityje).
4. Džiaugsmo dovanos (Šv. Dominyko ir Švč. Mergelės Marijos švenčių proga dažnai buvo aukojami prabangūs arba šventiniai maisto produktai).

Straipsnyje parodoma, kad maisto dovanojimas vienuolynui buvo daugiau nei labdaros aktas – tai buvo socialinis ir komunikacinis gestas. Kartu parodoma, kad vienuolyno donacijų knygoje užfiksuoti vertingi duomenys apie vienuolių mitybą, socialinius tinklus ir istorinę gastronominę kultūrą. Taikant komunikacijos mokslų prieigą, tyrimas leidžia naujai pažvelgti į tai, kaip XVIII–XIX a. Lietuvoje vienuolių ir kilmingųjų sluoksniuose maistas buvo naudojamas rūpesčiui, dėkingumui, socialiniams ryšiams ir džiaugsmui išreikšti.

Gauta / Received 2024 10 14
Priimta / Accepted 2025 05 06