

REGENSBURG AND HUNGARY

Methodological Outlines of a Liturgical Interaction

This paper is intended to delineate a theoretical background for the next two case studies. The central question of our research concerns the patterns of variation within the Medieval Latin Rite. Technically, the topic is approached from two perspectives.

On the one hand, the widest possible sample of each ceremony is collected, analysed and classified from all over Europe. This sample is based primarily on geographical and institutional diversity, i.e., we try to gain access to as many sources as many dioceses, religious orders, and monastic institutions once existed. Secondly, we try to verify the continuity of liturgical features by comparing the most trustworthy (meaning, the most typical representatives of the respective traditions) but later sources with the earliest accessible layer of the same tradition.

On the other hand, for many years now we have been conducting a comprehensive survey of a single tradition, that of the Use of Esztergom, archiepiscopal see of Hungary. Esztergom is privileged not only for her subjective eminence for Hungarian scholars but because of several other reasons. One of them is feasibility. Due to many historical disasters, Esztergom's source material became narrow enough to be manageable but sufficient enough to inform us about each relevant liturgical detail.

Another reason is its historical and geographical position. The Hungarian church was established late enough to require an elaborate liturgy in its full extent, far from the step-by-step and often spontaneous development of Uses that go back to Christian antiquity, yet early enough to have characteristic liturgical variants, compared, for instance, to the newly established dioceses in southern France at the beginning of the 14th century or the Lithuanian church at around the same time. As to its geographical extent, the Hungarian Kingdom was the largest territory in Europe where a more or less uniform, "national" liturgy prevailed from the beginnings of its ecclesiastical history around 1000 until the abrogation of its distinctive Use in the 17th century. Such "national" Uses in other regions, for example, Italy, Britain, Poland or Scandinavia, although evolved, were a result of later tendencies. Therefore, primary interest is invested in the reconstruction of each ceremony according to the Esztergom Use. In this case, all the chronological and geographical variants are taken into account.

While working on this twofold research, some peculiarities emerged that may link the liturgical Use of Hungary to that of Regensburg (or Ratisbon), as it is going to be thoroughly explained by my colleagues. My task is not to anticipate their presentations but to introduce some basic concepts which are indispensable for interpreting the related features of the two traditions, as well as for understanding the deeper nature of liturgical interactions in the Middle Ages. There are four such basic concepts which I summarise in the following terms: (1) range of diversity, (2) continuity of the evidence, (3) compound structure, and (4) formative period.

RANGE OF DIVERSITY | The description of a ceremony, of course, consists at first of a series of textual items; not because musical or ceremonial diversity would be less valuable but because written evidence is the largest part of our heritage, and because such is the logic of traditional Christian worship, where not only each melody but also each gesture is connected to a single text. Thus, a comparison of textual items can be realised in two stages.

First, one has to define the valid elements and the structure of each ceremony. It is a formal criterion of liturgical relationships that structural parallels can be systematically stated. This is the basis of a wider cluster what we call a “Rite”, as regards Hungary and Regensburg, the Roman Rite. Where structural parallels are not systematic, one has to split the evidence into different Rites. E.g. the Roman offertory chant and the Byzantine *cherubikon*, the Roman preface prayer and the Mozarabic *illatio* are functionally parallel. However, their parallelism is neither structural, nor systematic, since not all the chants and prayers of the respective rites have their mutual equivalents. Furthermore, even the related items have too many different attributes: the offertory belongs to the Propers, the *cherubikon* to the Ordinary of the Mass, the preface introduces an unchanging Canon while the *illatio* comprises the whole anaphora until the consecration, etc. Where structural coincidences are systematic, one can speak of different “Uses” within the same Rite.

This is only obvious, however, in the case of ceremonies which have a well-defined and recurrent structure, above all the Mass and the Divine Office. This is what we call a “hard structure”, and a typical example of it will be demonstrated by the series of changeable Mass orations. Insofar as the Ritual in a broad sense is concerned, i.e., occasional ceremonies like the administration of sacraments and sacramentals, processions or dramatic gestures, a hidden structure has to be detected with the help of comparing the common features of different variants. This is what we call a “soft structure”, and it will be represented by the ceremonies of monastic initiation. One could say that in the case of hard structures, evidence is evaluated within the frame of an already known system. However, in the case of soft structures, evidence comes first, and the system is derived only from its abstraction.

The second stage of the research is when elements in the same position of two or more related systems are compared. For example, the postcommunion prayer assigned to the Fourth Sunday of Lent, or the formulas of giving the elected abbot his insignia can be compared according to the Uses of Hungarian dioceses and Regensburg. A mechanic comparison would lead to a binary opposition: some elements are the same and others are different. Nevertheless, liturgical features of the same Rite can only be interpreted in the foreground of the wider context, i.e. if the background of the possibly widest cluster of parallels is also known. This is what we call the range of diversity. It is not yet a symptom of relationship between Hungary and Regensburg, if the postcommunion in the same Mass of the same day happens to be the same in the Uses in question. It is only symptomatic when this coincidence is unique or at least very rare in the Roman Rite. Therefore, we have to consider a statistically relevant amount of data from all over Europe in order to distinguish between what is

commonplace or meaningless from the comparison's point of view and what is really informative.

CONTINUITY OF THE EVIDENCE | The second principle is the general concept of Uses which poses the question of continuity. The hypothesis that each ecclesiastical institution had its own distinctive liturgical variant is not self-evident. Apparently, synodal statutes, introductions to Ordinals and the titles of some late medieval books suggest such a situation but the suspicion cannot be excluded that this was only a would-be state of affairs, forced by prelates and cathedral chapters, and real liturgical practice was far less uniform. The older the evidence is, the more heterogeneous it seems to be.

In turn, old evidence seldom informs the reader whether it is the representative of this or that Use. Again, the prestigious age of a source does not always refer to a prestigious origin. As in the case of church buildings, the most important ones are those which are the most naked to the changes of history. Irrelevance might actually be the best asylum for the survival of churches and liturgical books alike. Therefore, if some later sources do not have their older counterparts, it does not necessarily mean that the so-called Use of a diocese was designed only in a later period, and cannot be traced back to earlier centuries. It is also plausible that the old book is not the most trustworthy representative of the given Use, or scholars simply failed to attribute it to the correct origin. As a matter of fact, the problem of continuity may be solved by a method what we call "inverse chronology".

Inverse chronology means that, contrarily to the best traditions of 20th century research, the analysis of medieval liturgies must not start with the first surviving sources but precisely with the last ones: the pre-Tridentine, printed service books and some relatively late manuscripts which also bear a clear-cut title. After having detected the range of diversity, informative liturgical features have to be derived from sources of ascertained origin. If such a peculiarity can be highlighted in a printed service book from Hungary or Regensburg, one can be sure that at least by the turn of the 15th and the 16th centuries that particular text with that assignation was really recited in the related cathedral, and supposedly in the entire diocese of its ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

Then these peculiarities have to be traced back further into the past. Earlier sources where the same combination of distinctive features systematically occurs most probably belong to the same tradition, but even so, the decisive factor of the Use's identity will be their presence in the late but identifiable books. If only the continuity is questioned, the whole process of going back in history from source to source can be simplified by taking only the last and the first extant books that show the same distinctive features. The fact that there are a great many instances when printed books and rather ancient manuscripts of the same diocese or institution have really much in common demonstrates that uniformity and faithful transmission was an original concept of liturgical thought, not a late medieval idea of some austere clerics.

There are, of course, no two perfectly identical sources from the age of handwritten book production, and a degree of difference within a realistic margin of error

always has to be taken into account. Ancient sources will never provide precisely the same items, in the same order, and with the same assignation as printed ones do, but again, knowing the range of diversity reliably defines which specific types and exactly which quantity of divergences can be tolerated.

COMPOUND STRUCTURE | With the term “compound structure” we try to suggest that ceremonies are built up by layers and modules so that liturgical relationship almost never means that services as a whole are the same. By layers we describe the typology and hierarchy of liturgical texts. It is obvious that prayers, lessons, and chants belong to different layers, but within their own layers they form a coherent corpus. Prayers and chants are performed by different ministers, from different books, at different locations of the liturgical space. Their literary and musical natures are different. These generic layers work separately insofar as one Use can share the other’s prayers without borrowing its chants or order of lessons, and vice versa.

Beyond the large generic layers, there is a more nuanced hierarchy of the single genres within each layer. Experts of plainchant know well that Introits do not vary in the same degree as Alleluias do. Similarly, we can state that in ordination rites consecration prayers are more stable than acclamations or formulas for delivering objects and vestments to the candidates. Lessons for traditional Sunday Masses and Lenten weekdays form a more untouchable system than the readings of *dominicae vacantes* or Lenten Thursdays, and the latter are even less variable than the pericopes for non-Lenten Wednesdays and Fridays. Thus liturgical relationships might be closer or more distant as regards the possible variety of genres involved.

While layers build up the liturgy synchronically, i.e., prayers, lessons, and chants are performed in a mixed way or even at the same time, modules are like acts and scenes of a drama. What we call a ceremony or, using a Latin terminology, an *ordo* is an uninterrupted course of events. However, according to the length of an *ordo* there can be more or less divisions. One can recognise them partly from historical and ceremonial circumstances, partly from recurrent units, and partly from comparison. For instance, the baptismal rites may be divided according to their origin as they have been merged from seven separate *scrutinia*, conducted successively during Lent, and the actual Baptism, administered on Holy Saturday. The dedication of a church consists of modules that focus on successive stages within the sacral occupation of the building. Structural patterns can also be illustrative: orations are usually the textual headstones of ritual modules. Eventually, the comparison of variants within the same *ordo* often helps to confine the basic components of a rite: different as they are, all Western Palm Sunday *ordines* apply the modules of recalling the typical biblical scenes, the blessing of objects, the adoration of a venerated item, and entering a holy precinct.

Modules work as prefabricated accessories of a larger edifice. While the ceremonies of a hard structure tend to share features according to layers, soft-structured ceremonies prefer to take over one another’s modules. Interaction between Uses does not necessarily extend to every module of an *ordo*, but applies only to some of them.

Nonetheless, a partial but deliberate borrowing of at least one entire module is enough to reveal that these Uses once had a direct historical contact, and this is what we are looking for in the case of Hungary and Regensburg.

FORMATIVE PERIOD | Our last task is to explicate how pure liturgical evidence may be transformed into historical information. For this, we need to define the concept of formative periods. It is well known that different parts and genres of the liturgy were born or developed further in different ages, and this had a strong impact on the nature and variety of the related parts and genres. A Corpus Christi procession could not be held before the introduction of the feast itself, and one cannot speak of sequences in the early Middle Ages. Nonetheless, the general use and fixed assignation of some textual, musical, or ceremonial items mean that they were already known in a relatively early period.

Liturgical Uses were the property and specific brand of dioceses and religious institutions which had a real history of their own. The foundation of each diocese, monastery, or religious order serves as a *terminus post quem* for the shaping of its distinctive Use. Since they needed a Use for their liturgical life, practiced it regularly, and continuity is a key feature of liturgical customs, it is not likely that radical changes happened very often, and that the first variant of the Use evolved considerably later than the institution was actually founded. If changes still occurred, the sources and parallels of the content may be telling with respect to the historical circumstances in which the changes came about. The term “formative period” describes the age when a Use was at first designed, or the ages when it was submitted to substantial revisions.

As malleability is not the typical condition of a Use, formative periods refer to the influence of decisive events, critical circumstances, or influential personalities. The Norman Conquest of England, the revolts of the pagan Slavic tribes in Northern Germany, or the destruction and rebuilding of Aquileia were all such historical events which had obvious liturgical consequences. Anglo-Saxon liturgical features mingled with French ones and spread further to Sicily or Norway; plenty of dioceses that ceased to exist and were re-founded around the first millennium acquired a relatively uniform liturgical practice; the Use of Aquileia, one of the most respectable cathedrals of Roman antiquity, was given an unmistakable German character.

Liturgical interaction between two institutions is the symptom of a factual relationship. It is not possible in a random fashion and at any time. Therefore, liturgical contents always have to be compared against historical factors: when, how, and why the interaction might have taken place, and conversely, in what periods was the interaction improbable? What sort of ceremonies, what layers or modules are involved, and why? Was it an enduring relationship strengthened by regular contact, or was it a transient phenomenon, more or less faded into oblivion, and recorded only by a few liturgical fossils?

As mentioned above, one of the advantages of the Hungarian source material is that there is no considerable distance between the foundation of the first dioceses and the date of the first extant service books, hence its formative period is rather well

documented. This insight into the *status nascendi*, the very making of a liturgical Use makes early Hungarian liturgical history so fascinating. How and what exactly Regensburg contributed to this project will be the subject of the following lectures.