

# The Prehistory of the *Ordinarius Strigoniensis*

## The Relationship of a XV<sup>th</sup> Century Print to its Manuscript Antecedents

The ordinal is the most important directive text regulating liturgical practice during the second half of the Middle-Ages. One of the few surviving examples of this sort of book from Hungary is the *Ordinarius Strigoniensis* (Esztergom Ordinal), first published in 1496, but—as assumed according to the parallels suggested by plenty of related textual traditions—the result of a considerable handwritten past. As it can be suspected from decrees of the cathedral chapter of Esztergom mentioned with dates in the text itself, an immediate ancestor of the printed ordinal underwent a process of serious modifications during the reign of King Matthias between 1478 and 1484, probably in order to prepare its first printed edition. Nevertheless, these editorial efforts do not represent a terminus a quo but rather an intermediary phase, which transmitted the peculiarities of a written culture to a printed one, and is characterized both by the conservation of some items and the abolishment of others thought to be obsolete for this special purpose. In my treatise, by analyzing and identifying some of the text's historical levels and some of its striking omissions, I try to demonstrate that—at least in this case—the editors were surely aware that a single manuscript consulted by a cathedral community and the numerous incunabula copied for the use of chapels and parish churches had different requirements. Thus the preparatory works of the Esztergom Ordinal can serve as a model for conveying medieval textual culture to the modern age.

In the course of evaluating an incunable or some early printed material, the question naturally arises whether the actual text is a faithful copy of an earlier manuscript, or on the contrary, it is a modern, separate compilation. If the immediate manuscript antecedents are lost (and in Hungary this is more or less the case), this question may only be decided on the basis of the printed material itself. In such situations, the inquiry has to rely principally on the book's own introduction or colophon, which at times contain relevant information regarding the printing process, or on the datable characteristics of content, structure, and language in relation to other similar sources.

The Esztergom Ordinal does not contain an introduction or colophon which may offer information about the circumstances of its composition and edition in print. Only the later editions prepared in Venice and Lyons have an explicit colophon, yet even in this case it only applies to the prior editions of Nuremberg. However, some other printed liturgical books also intended for use in Hungary do provide the reader with more details about their preparation, and there is no reason to suppose that the information thus given cannot be extended also to other books of similar age and type, for example, to the *Ordinals*. The essence of the data one may so gather can be summarised the following way: the printing was undertaken at the behest of some high secular or ecclesiastical dignitary (*e.g.* King Matthias or Oswald Thuz, bishop of

Zagreb). The exemplar of the first editions was one single manuscript, which was the most reliable and representative book of the given rite. Before printing, the exemplar was examined by experts; it was corrected and brought up to date. It is now impossible to determine whether the end result was the insertion of handwritten corrections within the original document, or the production of a new improved manuscript. It is certain, however, that before the establishment of Hungarian printing press, the commissioner had no way of controlling the printing process, and so it was in his best interest to provide the bookseller in direct contact with the press with a clean-cut exemplar. It is not feasible that the printing press engaged in any creative philological or redactional work.

Hence if we suppose that the Esztergom Ordinal was printed on the basis of a central commission and one representative exemplar amended by numerous modifications, our task is to identify and, insofar as possible, accurately date the material taken from the original manuscript version, as well as the stratum belonging to the last modifications. The problem is further complicated by the existence of several layers in the original manuscript material itself, both synchronically and diachronically. The existence of synchronic strata I infer from the fact that the medieval inventories of certain Western European churches indicate a number of Ordinals, and that on one occasion even the editor of the Esztergom Ordinal mentions several Ordinals among his sources; *i.e.* it is not at all sure that the manuscript exemplar followed one single source. As to the diachronic strata, their existence may be deduced from the references in the introduction of many Ordinals to a whole range of preexistent literature. I have personally discovered several consecutive versions of the very same text in the libraries and archives of some churches with a well-documented history, and what is more, even within the same version one can often detect the modifications and amendments introduced in the course of the book's usage. Based on the parallels and the judgment of common sense, I am of the opinion that the diachronic element is more emphatic. We can be rather certain that the chapters and convents usually preserved the older Ordinals that were not in use anymore, but they used only one book, and that in its latest version, to regulate their daily practice. For this reason the best way to understand the manuscript antecedents of the printed version, is to see them as members of a straight line of "genealogy" that are constantly expanded, modified; and when they become obsolete or too confusing, a new, well-organised version is prepared. The sole reason for the simultaneous use of several Ordinals was if a disputed question had to be settled by the consultation of all the previous customs, since the successive redactions could easily cause certain omissions to occur.

The different layers of modification in the Esztergom Ordinal manifest themselves chiefly on the structural level. It is clear that the basic structure of the book is as follows: beginning with the vigil of St Andrew, the Ordinal describes the liturgical

year in one continuous course (concatenating the temporal and sanctoral cycles), within which the individual liturgical days represent the basic elements of division. The liturgical days start with first vespers (if there is one) and continue with the rest of the office hours. The Mass (and on occasion the preceding procession) takes place after the none, and the day is concluded with compline. The added comments are usually attached to that particular ceremonial detail to which they specifically pertain. It calls for attention, however, that each section is followed by a somewhat incoherent set of notes of uneven length which are introduced most often by the words “item”, or at times by “nota” or “notandum.” The larger portion of these notes could easily be inserted in the actual ceremonial description, yet they form a separate, appendix-like section. Based on the editorial logic of the manuscript copies and of the books extant in several consecutive versions, I suppose that these additional notes originally (in the former phase of redaction) were marginal comments or explanatory inserts which became part of the main text only as a result of the next redaction.

In light of these preliminary remarks let us now examine the intrinsic evidence pertaining to the historical layers of the source at hand! Among the six known editions, only in five do we find the date of publication. The text of the different editions is essentially unaltered, and the earliest dated edition is from 1496. The experts date the only edition without a colophon, and thus without reference to the year of publication, to 1493 in the earliest, and so this year may be considered the *terminus ante quem* of the preparation for printing. Within the text itself five different dates can be found in reference to certain decisions of the cathedral chapter, among which the earliest took place in 1478, the latest in 1484. The same time period is established by the two allusions to John Flans (Beckensloer), an Archbishop of Esztergom under King Matthias’ reign. The *terminus post quem* for the final redaction of the exemplar manuscript is thus 1484, the same year when at the mandate of King Matthias the second, most wide-spread edition of the Esztergom Breviary was published. This was also the year when the Stuchs printing press, charged with the publication of the Breviary and the first two editions of the Ordinal, was established in Nuremberg.

It must be taken into account, however, that each decision of the cathedral chapter is quoted in the appendix-like sections, among the additional notes, while the references to Archbishop John are located very close to each other, at the beginning of certain sections, and in the same context. Hence the time references to King Matthias’ reign within the Ordinal in all likelihood do not indicate the time frame of the book’s actual composition, but only the period of preparation for the printed edition. It is probable that the sentences written in the first person singular, in which the anonymous author of the text alludes to himself or to his work, also form part of the same layer. Theoretically, they could come from different redactors, but the particu-

lar phrasing and the similar position in the text seem to point to one specific person. From these passages it emerges that the redactor is a member of the cathedral chapter of Esztergom who, as a liturgical expert and the cleric in charge of compiling the Ordinal, was in position to access all the relevant sources available at the time. Consequently we may reasonably suppose that the last version in the long “genealogy” of manuscript Esztergom Ordinals was reedited in the 70s and 80s of the XV<sup>th</sup> century, and this redactorial work was accomplished by one of the canons in the cathedral chapter of Esztergom who made use of several sources accessible to him.

Another chronological reference-point is provided by the connection between the Esztergom Ordinal and the manuscript Ordinal called *Rubrica Strigoniensis* (also known as the Szepes Ordinal). The latter was given its final form (as we know it today) sometime between 1462 and 1469, in the collegiate chapter of Szepes. From the characteristics of its actual content it is evident that this work does not represent the ritual customs of the provostship of St Martin; instead, it contains an abridged summary of the liturgy in the Esztergom cathedral. All the typical characteristics of the Szepes usage are absent here, while there are several references to Esztergom. The document often concerns itself with episcopal functions (which would make no sense in Szepes), designates the church of St Stephen Protomartyr (in Esztergom) as the station church, in two processional orations (written out *in extenso*) the names of St Adalbert and the Mother of God (the title of the archiepiscopal see) are invoked, and St Adalbert occupies a special position also in the commemorations. From these considerations it manifestly follows that the so-called Szepes Ordinal is an extract from one of the lost manuscript Ordinals of Esztergom, and this abridged text was compiled not later than the 60’s of the XV<sup>th</sup> century. The exemplar manuscript used as its source is thus the common “ancestor” of both the printed Esztergom Ordinal and the so-called Szepes Ordinal.

The connection between these two Ordinals is further corroborated by two other facts. First, there are passages in these books that are identical, word by word, especially in the first part of the manuscript. Second, in the Esztergom Ordinal one may find internal references to certain elements within the same book, which are not actually in the printed text, yet they can be found in the so-called Szepes Ordinal. For instance, the long rubric concerning the office for the third and fourth week of Advent, or the particular way of donning the dalmatic on the feast of St Stephen Protomartyr (of which the printed text makes mention on Good Friday). Obviously, none of these phenomena could be explained by the speculation that the normative liturgical text of the archiepiscopal see may have been influenced by a much less significant, peripheral extract.

We may draw two conclusions from these considerations. Given that the Szepes manuscript is most likely not the first representative of its textual tradition and its

dependence on a standard copy in cathedral use could be a result of several intermediate editorial revisions, the so-called Szepes Ordinal dates back the manuscript antecedent of the Esztergom Ordinal at least to the first half of the 60's of the XV<sup>th</sup> century, but probably earlier. It also becomes clear that the redactorial process of preparing the Esztergom Ordinal for printing involved some omissions. Otherwise it is impossible to make sense of the fact that the shorter and sketchier Szepes Ordinal should have preserved details which do not feature in the known editions of the Esztergom Ordinal, even though these details indubitably point to the cathedral use of Esztergom and the book itself contains references to them in different sections. It remains now to determine as accurately as possible how far back in time the supposed "genealogy" of the manuscript Esztergom Ordinals can be traced, and to identify the principles guiding the redactorial process to which the manuscript tradition was subjected before printing.

The first question can be answered based on the archaic features of the liturgical content and structure. The following elements in content allow us to date the genesis of the basic stratum of the text to a period prior to the XV<sup>th</sup> century: at the end of an additional set of notes we find mention of a decree of Pope Gregory XI (1370–1378); the organisation of abbreviated liturgical items at one place not in the liturgical but in a typological order; supplementary notes indicating multiple additions with respect to the feasts in early summer that were only introduced gradually in the period between the XII<sup>th</sup> and XIV<sup>th</sup> centuries; the springtime Ember days are not yet assigned to the first week of Lent. Among the archaic structural elements we may indicate the fusion of the temporal and sanctoral cycles, especially at the end of the XV<sup>th</sup> century and in Hungary where we can find examples of such a technique only in relatively early sources. Considering that one of the the great epochs of codification for the Esztergom use strictly speaking was the turn of the XIV<sup>th</sup> century, and it is also when the Ordinal as a genre flourished all over Europe, I venture to propose that the textual tradition of the Esztergom Ordinals originates in this period. The *terminus post quem* may be determined by the fact that the textual tradition of certain Esztergom *Ordines*, identified as the heritage of the XI<sup>th</sup> and XII<sup>th</sup> centuries, did not influence at all the phrasing of the Ordinals.

The second question is answered by the development of the printing press itself. As a result of this new technology, the normative books of Esztergom, such as the Breviary, the Missal, and not much later the Ritual (fulfilling also the function of the Processional), became more widely available. The expanded and unified rubrical material fixed the description of many ceremonies during the liturgical year, and so it was not necessary to include them in the Ordinal. More significantly, it was precisely the description of ceremonies that was too closely tied to the spatial features and personnel of the cathedral, and so their adaptation to different churches posed real diffi-

culties. These omissions did not apply to the Sacred Triduum and Easter, probably out of respect for the traditions, and because it would have been rather difficult to separate the references to liturgical texts from the corresponding ceremonial instructions. Hence the Esztergom Ordinal left out a good deal of ceremonial descriptions, yet it kept the catalogue of abbreviated items, even though they were also available in other printed liturgical books. This could only be explained by the different customers these two types of books were meant to serve. Only more affluent clerics were able to purchase the larger, representative liturgical books, while in printing the Ordinal the lower cost was obviously an important consideration. The catalogue of items was included in the Ordinal for purposes of codification; it was meant most probably to assist the revision of the accumulated manuscript material, considered either outdated or of unsure provenance.