

The “Esztergom Antiphoners” (Cathedral Library of Esztergom, Ms. I. 3 c, d) in the Context of Musical Notation*

The 15th-century pair of the so-called Esztergom Antiphoners, held in Esztergom Cathedral Library under the signs **Ms. I. 3 c** and **d**,¹ are prominent codices for examination of late medieval office tradition from Esztergom, primatial see of Hungary (*Facsimile 1–2*). The literature previously knew some fragments of them from Hungarian and Slovakian collections, 1 and 5 half folios from the manuscript **d** are kept in the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences² and another piece of folio from the same codex is known from the ELTE University Library in Budapest.³ From manuscript **c** one folio was recently discovered in Trnava City Library by Eva Veselovská.⁴

The volumes include the chant repertory for the Temporale and Sanctorale feasts. They complement each other, but they certainly do not belong together. They were recorded in research projects of the Early Music Department in the Institute of Musicology of Hungarian Academy of Sciences as Str–I/3/1 and Str–I/3/2. These abbreviations appear in the CAO-ECE databases,⁵ and in monumental editions of Hungarian antiphon and responsory melodies by Janka Szendrei and László Dobszay.⁶ These signs suggest coherence between the volumes, so we use another abbreviations referring to the recent library signs: antiphoner **d** means Str–I/3/1, antiphoner **c** stands for the Str–I/3/2 below.

Earlier research examined the sources in full, musically and liturgically. The findings show convincingly that these fine, large choir books convey a pure version of the office tradition of Esztergom, the Ritus Strigoniensis, which was the central liturgical use of medieval Hungary. As László Dobszay put it, the high degree of correspondence between the liturgical content of the antiphoners and the 1484 printed

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¹ The RISM signs are H-Efkő Ms. I. 3. c and H-Efkő Ms. I. 3. d. In Janka Szendrei's catalogue: C9, C8. See Janka Szendrei, *A magyar középkor hangjegyes forrásai* [Notated Sources of the Hungarian Middle Ages] (Budapest: MTA Zenetudományi Intézet, 1981), 60.

² MTA T 308, in Szendrei's catalogue: F 40. Klára Körmendy, *A Knauz-hagyaték kódextöredékei és az esztergomi egyház középkori könyvtárának sorsa* [Codex Fragments of the Nándor Knauz's Bequest and the History of the Medieval Library of Esztergom], *A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Könyvtárának Közleményei* 7 (82) (Budapest: MTA Könyvtár, 1979), 79–80.

³ See *Fragmenta Latina Codicum in Bibliotheca Universitatis Budapestinensis*, ed. László Mezey (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1983), 198: U. Fr. I. m. 236. Klára Körmendy, *A Knauz-hagyaték kódextöredékei és az esztergomi egyház középkori könyvtárának sorsa*, 81.

⁴ Trnava City Library: SK-TR MMT IIIId/599. Cover of *Liber restantiarum 1659, 1670, 1676*. See Eva Veselovská, *Catalogus Fragmentorum cum Notis Musicis Medii Aevi e Civitate Tyrnaviensi* (Bratislava: Institute for Musicology of Slovak Academy of Sciences, 2015), 50–51 (Fragment 8); Klára Körmendy–Eva Veselovská, „Az Esztergomi Főszékesegyházi Könyvtár Ms I 3c jelzetű antifonáljének egy töredéke a Nagyszombati Városi Levéltárban”, *Magyar Könyvszemle* 131 (3), 300–302.

⁵ See László Dobszay–Andrea Kovács, *Corpus Antiphonarium Officii – Ecclesiarum Centralis Europae. V/A Esztergom (Temporale)* (Budapest: Zenetudományi Intézet, 2004), 39.

⁶ Janka Szendrei–László Dobszay, *Antiphonen*. Monumenta Monodica Medii Aevi V/1–3 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1999); idem, *Responsories* Vols. 1–2 (Budapest: Balassi, 2013).

Esztergom breviary shows the reliability of these sources.⁷ Direct evidence of the Hungarian (Esztergom) provenance of manuscript **c** includes the special Hungarian Sanctorale feasts: *historiae* of local origin for King St Stephen and his son, Prince St Emeric (Imre), and Translation of St Adalbert, patron saint of Esztergom Cathedral.⁸ At the same time, the obvious correspondences in the Temporale part (in manuscript **d**) also confirm the provenance of Esztergom.⁹ The musical analysis of the manuscripts' whole antiphon and responsory repertory likewise shows how the melodic variants of the codices match closely the musical versions of sources belonging to the medieval Esztergom rite.¹⁰ The research findings on the antiphoners are convincing, but examinations cannot be concluded yet, even after the liturgical and musical variants have been precisely defined and reconstructed. For analysis so far into their art history and musical paleography reveals inconsistencies¹¹ that question where they belong, their age, and even whether they stem from the Esztergom Cathedral.

Unfortunately the antiphoners do not refer to the workshop that copied them or the copyists or scribes. Nor can references be found in other, contemporary source materials on the scriptoria of Esztergom Cathedral. Kinga Körmendy pointed to one single reference to an Esztergom scriptorium from the late Middle Ages. The humanist bibliophile Joannes Máthes reports in his *Veteris acis Strigoniensis descriptio* that Esztergom Archbishop János Vitéz had 30 copyists working there.¹² So there was clearly a significant workshop in Esztergom in the Middle Ages, but no specific conclusions on our Esztergom source material can be drawn.

As Kinga Körmendy explored, one of the marginalia of the antiphoner **d** dating from 1632¹³ provides further possibilities for reconstructing the antiphoners' history. By 1632, the archbishop of Esztergom was no longer resident in the city. Historical data shows that the seat of the archiepiscopal province moved from Esztergom Castle to Nagyszombat/Trnava¹⁴ in 1543 to escape the Ottoman invasion. According to the note, Márton Radossény, an Esztergom canon, was probably in possession of the codex in 1632;¹⁵ thus the book was in Nagyszombat in the 17th century as part of the archiepiscopal book collection. The

⁷ László Doboszay, *Corpus Antiphonarum. Európai örökség és hazai alakítás* [European Heritage and Hungarian Creation] (Budapest: Balassi, 2003), 335.

⁸ See St Stephen (on August 20): f. 158r/6r, St Emeric (on November 5): f. 188v/36v, Adalbert (on November 6): f. 103v/261v. Andrea Kovács, *Corpus Antiphonarium Officii – Ecclesiarum Centralis Europae. V/B Esztergom (Sanctorale)* (Budapest: Zene tudományi Intézet, 2006), 123, 160, 162.

⁹ See the comparative tables in László Doboszay–Andrea Kovács, *Corpus Antiphonarium Officii – Ecclesiarum Centralis Europae. V/A Esztergom (Temporale)*.

¹⁰ See Note 6.

¹¹ A brief summary on the antiphoner's research history can be read in Janka Szendrei, *A magyar középkor hangjegyes forrásai*, 30–31.

¹² Körmendy Kinga, *A Knauz-hagyaték kódextöredékei és az esztergomi egyház középkori könyvtárának sorsa*, 19, 31. jegyzet.

¹³ Körmendy Kinga, *A Knauz-hagyaték kódextöredékei és az esztergomi egyház középkori könyvtárának sorsa*, 81.

¹⁴ Nagyszombat, today Trnava. A city in Slovakia, 47 km to the north-east of Bratislava.

¹⁵ See inscription at the end of the codex, on a bonded piece of paper by black ink: *Martinus Radosseny S. J. renovavit anno 1632. 18. febr.* Márton Radossény had a canon's stallum in Esztergom (Nagyszombat at that time) between 1645 and 1653. See Kinga Körmendy, *A Knauz-hagyaték kódextöredékei és az esztergomi egyház középkori könyvtárának sorsa*, 81–82.

question is whether they could have been among the treasures rescued from the Ottoman occupation from Esztergom in 1543 to Nagyszombat.

The uncertainty is increased by the earlier issues of historians and art historians, who presented the manuscripts as two linked volumes and ascribed them to György Pálóczy, Archbishop of Esztergom between 1423–1439, all on the basis of the similarities of illuminations in codex **c** with the Pálóczy Missal of sure Esztergom provenance.¹⁶ Music palaeography, on the other hand, points to a different opinion. Janka Szendrei denied that such a developed, ornate codex in Messine Gothic and Hungarian mixed notation could have been inscribed in the beginning of the 15th century. She put it 20–30 years later, to the middle of the century.¹⁷ Furthermore, she distinguished the two books: while she described the musical notation of codex **d** as a typical 15th century central Hungarian form, she noticed a sort of Bohemian “colouring” in the musical notation of the antiphoner **c**.

This is important, if not the most important conclusion about the codexes to be found in the literature. There were scriptoria producing representative codices for Hungarian liturgical use with Bohemian notation, to foreign commissions (e. g. the Zalka/Várad Antiphoner¹⁸), but there is no case of the opposite: the scriptorium of the Esztergom Cathedral certainly did not work officially in Bohemian writing style.¹⁹ So only systematic music palaeographic examination can show how the notation of the two antiphoners relate, what kind of elements of Bohemian notation implies and whether this warrants conclusions about the origin of both codices.

It is generally thought that the central Hungarian (Esztergom and Buda) scriptoria in the second half of the 15th century developed their new, mixed style of normative plainchant writing because the earlier writing style, the Esztergom notation²⁰ in flexible, conjunct neumes had run up against the growing size of the manuscripts.²¹ After the example of the Messine Gothic notation style in Central Europe, the heads of the notes were steadily enlarged and given a rhombus shape, while structural alterations were also made

¹⁶ Lásd Polikárp Radó, *Libri liturgici manuscripti bibliothecarum Hungariae et limithropharum regionum* (Budapest: Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, 1973), 528–529; Berkovits Ilona, „A kódexfestészet emlékei az Esztergomi Főszékesegyházi Könyvtárban” [Relics of Codex Painting in the Cathedral Library of Esztergom], 292–294.

¹⁷ Janka Szendrei, *A magyar középkor hangjegyes forrásai* (Budapest: MTA Zenetudományi Intézet, 1999), 30–31.

¹⁸ H-Gc (sine signatura), Szendrei-catalogue: C 53. See Janka Szendrei, „A Zalka antiphonale provenienciája” [The Provenience of the Zalka Antiphoner], in *Zenetudományi Dolgozatok 1988* (Budapest: MTA Zenetudományi Intézet), 21–32, (22).

¹⁹ See Janka Szendrei, „Hangjegyírás. A cseh notáció” [Music Notation. The Bohemian Notation], in *Magyarország Zenetörténete I. Középkor* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988), 213. It contradicts Bruno Stäblein’s theory, who considered the use of the rhombic or Bohemian (Messine) notation widespread in Hungary. See Bruno Stäblein, *Musikgeschichte in Bildern. Schriftbild der einstimmigen Musik*. (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1975), 68, 206.

²⁰ A distinct Hungarian medieval plainchant notation was identified by Janka Szendrei from the end of the 13th century. This central Hungarian (or Esztergom) notation reached an aesthetic climax in the proportionate, flexible drawn, uniquely artistic notation of the 14th-century Missale Notatum Strigoniense (SQ-BRm EC Lad. 3 and EL 18). See Janka Szendrei, *Középkori hangjegyírások Magyarországon* [Medieval Musical Notations in Hungary], *Műhelytanulmányok a Magyar Zenetörténethez 4* (Budapest: MTA Zenetudományi Intézet, 1999), 46–49.

²¹ Janka Szendrei, „A gótikus hangjegyek kialakulása. A metzigót notáció hatása” [Formation of the Gothic Musical Notes. Influence of the Messine Gothic Notation] in Szendrei Janka, *Középkori hangjegyírások Magyarországon*, 63–68.

in the neumes. The increase in note size also broadened the spaces between the staff lines, so that the series of notes slanted to the right, as seen for example in the climacus neume and its combinations. Along with the change in the writing direction of the central Hungarian scriptoria came the tendency to separate the neume structures, the flexible neume shapes gave way to notation with square, fragmented signs. Still, some of the Hungarian structures survived, such as the conjunct climacus and the special scandicus forms, or the old tied pes, torculus and porrectus forms as distinctive signs of this mixed notation.²²

Antiphoner **d** is the earliest and major remain of the new reformed musical codex writing of Hungarian origin that Janka Szendrei described explicitly as Messine Gothic–Hungarian mixed notation.²³ Its specialities are regular, rhomboid note heads, comfortably broad structures, and a writing direction slanted to the right, but such old Hungarian elements can be found in its notation as conjunct pes, torculus or porrectus.

The notation in the codices **d** and **c** differs notably in detail (see *Table 1*). The writing style of antiphoner **d** is more concise and regular, while in antiphoner **c** the copyist elongates the neume structures horizontally. The custos at the end of each musical line has two different shapes: the antiphoner **c** has a form that is not of the type in Hungarian sources, as found in the **d**, but of the type of square notation, which often appears in Bohemian notation as well. Turning to neume structures, a notable difference can be seen in the shaping of the scandicus. In contrast with the elements apparent in the antiphoner **d** and other sources of Hungarian scriptoria, antiphoner **c** has a punctum+pes combination. This is the feature Janka Szendrei saw as typical of Bohemian notation.²⁴ Another sign of a northern influence is the decidedly rhomboid look of the layout. Bohemian solution can be seen, for example, in the form of the scandicus of fifth + third intervals: in the antiphoner **c**, the intermediate punctum is a full rhomboid form, while the antiphoner **d** uses only a vestigial half-note here. Similarly, in the case of the pes, the vertical element of the neume is shifted to the right, so the rhombus can be shaped more regularly in antiphoner **c** than in **d**. A further clue of northern influence can be the five-line staff (with the square custos), which was also alien to Hungarian scribal customs.²⁵ Musical notation of antiphoner **c**, at the same time, seems to be a unique mixture. While Bohemian codex notation emphasizes the angular rhomboid notes and joins them by thicker line elements giving the writing a specific character, notation in codex **d** links the neume-elements by thin strokes as seen in the Messine Gothic and Hungarian–Messine Gothic mixed notation types.

²² It is important that this transformation of musical notation did not appear as a sudden change in the 15th century: more transitional, chronological variants can be distinguished with more or less numbers of tied neumes.

²³ See Note 21. The term „Messine Gothic” can be traced back to Bruno Stäblein’s use. See Bruno Stäblein, *Musikgeschichte in Bildern. Schriftbild der einstimmigen Musik*. (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1975), 68.

²⁴ Janka Szendrei, *Középkori hangjegyírások Magyarországon*, 78.

²⁵ Four-line staff system and rhomboid custos were usual in Hungarian sources.

Though the music writing of antiphoner **d** represents a more regular form of the contemporary Hungarian-Messine Gothic mixed notation, the manuscript's origin of Esztergom Cathedral could not be confirmed. The codex **d** has preserved old Hungarian neumes, such as the forms of conjunct pes, torculus and climacus, but some modern signs as the climacus of three tilted rhomboid punctum or scandicus of inverted half-circles were introduced to the notation as well. In this codex, Bohemian neume forms are not found, but it contains more elements which also suggest a northern scriptorium of the Esztergom archdiocese. The same red five-line staff system appears instead of the Hungarian 4-line version and a horizontal cutting of the pes-stroke can be seen.²⁶ The text writing of the codices are very similar. Furthermore, at the end of the manuscript **d**, Bohemian notation emerges. Furthermore, on tiny fragments, I've found in the maculatura material of the antiphoner in Esztergom Cathedral Library,²⁷ Bohemian writing elements can be reconstructed, for example, the above-mentioned pes with thicker linking lines.

This special neume system of codex **d**, which is characterized by a five-line staff, conjunct pes, torculus, climacus, scandicus of inverted half circles and the angular layout – some old and many new elements of Hungarian plainchant writing – find analogies among contemporary codices or notated fragments from Hungary.²⁸ These sources seem to be a part of a larger group, which was referred by Janka Szendrei as products of peripheral (northern-eastern) scriptoria of the medieval Hungary.²⁹

Based on investigation of musical paleography it can be said that the antiphoners **c** and **d** is certainly not works of the same scribes and these manuscripts did not come from Esztergom Cathedral. More likely, the manuscripts derive from the northern part of archdiocese, from an area influenced by mixed local solutions in codex making. From that place the antiphoners may have found their way into the archiepiscopal library of Nagyszombat later, then in the 19th century they've arrived to Esztergom from Nagyszombat with the rest of the book collection of the Cathedral Library.

As a new discovery, among the fragmented sources in Slovakian and Hungarian collections, some pieces of folios have been recently recognized that was made with musical notation very close to the writing style of the Esztergom antiphoners. These new sources are gradual and psalter fragments. Eva Veselovska revealed some of them in Trnava and Modra,³⁰ which show exactly the same kind of layout we've seen in antiphoner **c**: e.g. the text notation, the five-line staff system of similar size, the Bohemian scandicus form of pes+punctum, the typical tilted pes and angular tied neume-structures. Another piece of

²⁶ Sometimes virga has a rhombic end.

²⁷ Six fragments emerged from the binding. Three of them contain musical notation and may belonged to the same codex of Bohemian origin according to the musical paleographical investigation.

²⁸ A typical example for this layout see e. g. Güssing, Franciscan Library, cover of 4/297.

²⁹ This writing type also emerges from the Gradual Futaki, held in Istanbul (TR-Itks 68, Szendrei: C 45).

³⁰ See Eva Veselovská, *Catalogus Fragmentorum cum Notis Musicis Medii Aevi e Civitate Tyrnaviensi*, Tomus IV (Bratislava: Institute for Musicology of Slovak Academy of Sciences, 2015), 46, 50, 104 110: 1 Graduale SK-TR Meisterbuch 1653–1870, 7 Graduale SK-TR MMTIIIId/598; idem, *Catalogus Fragmentorum cum Notis Musicis Medii Aevi e Civitatibus Modra et Sanctus Georgius*, Tomus I (Bratislava: Institute for Musicology of Slovak Academy of Sciences, 2008), 75: 20 Graduale 3112.

fragment of this kind of notation has been recently emerged by our research from the Pauline Library of the Central Seminary in Budapest.³¹ This is a part of a psalterium chori, which prescribes a poorly readable responsory *Benedicamus Dominum*, a conjunct pes and a Bohemian scandicus from this chant, and the five-line staff system of the similar size again. One of the possessors of the *liber tradens* could be identified: the Jesuit University in Nagyszombat.³² This possessor inscription confirm that the fragment comes from a liturgical codex, which was made and used near Nagyszombat.

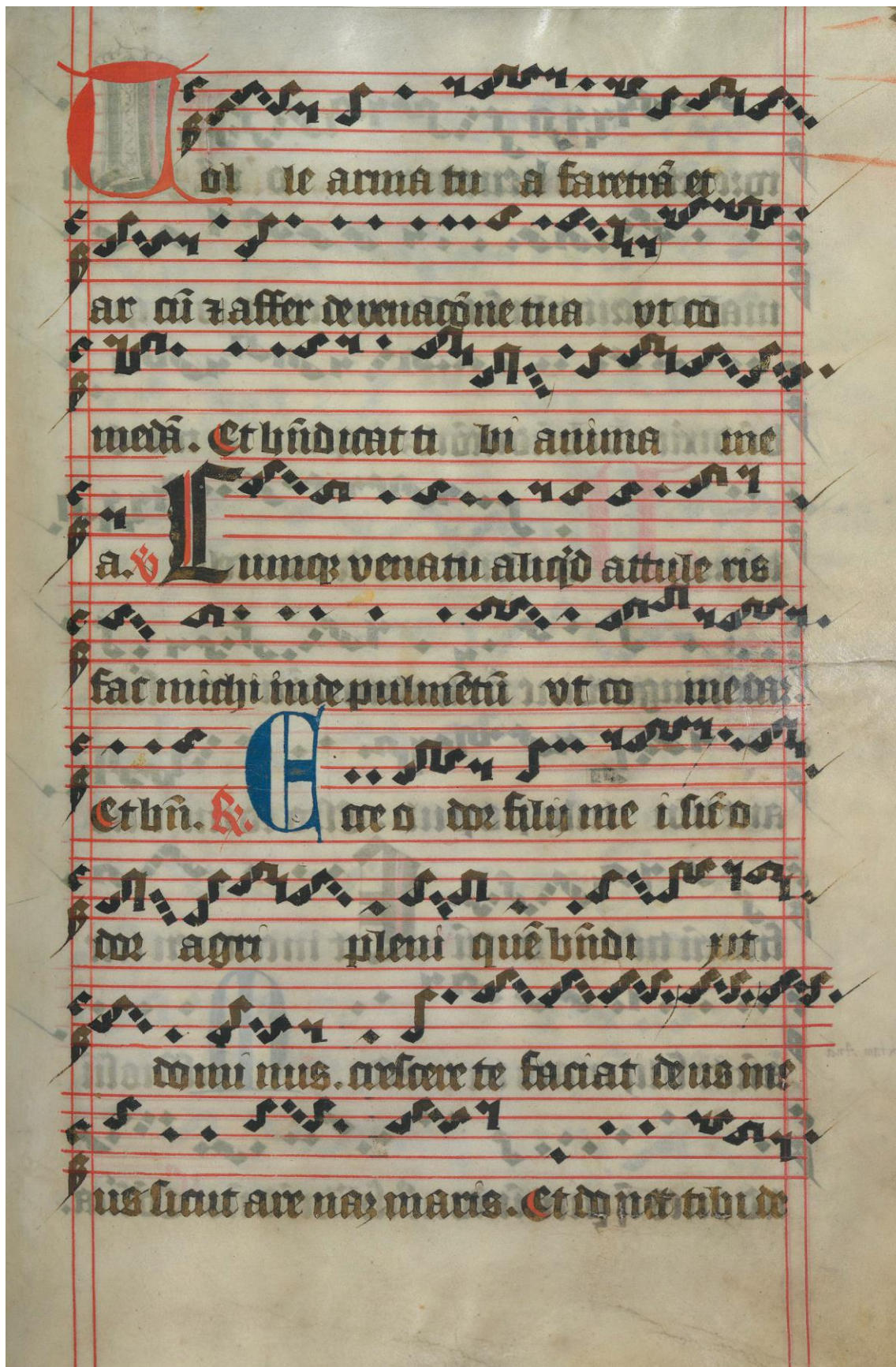
New discoveries are also related to our other source, antiphoner **d**. Last year some gradual fragments were found in Hungarian libraries, in Szombathely³³ and Budapest (*Facsimile 3*),³⁴ and their detailed paleographical examination revealed a really close relationship between them and codex **d** (e. g. text writing, a five-line staff of the same size, the same neumes, like conjunct pes, torculus, climacus, scandicus of inverted half circles and the angular layout). Even the tiny elements of musical handwriting seem to be identical, as if the antiphoner and the gradual fragments had been made by the same copist. Is it possible that these sources derive from the same workshop, or the same notator? Could the antiphoners and the new fragments belong to a representative choir book series prepared for the same ecclesiastical institution? There are still a lot of questions. Anyway, our newly found codex fragments suggest that the “pair codex” as the Esztergom antiphoners **c** and **d** were treated in the literature earlier were surely not pairs of each other. At the same time, based on their musical notation, each book may have been gradual pairs from the same workshop, or, maybe from the same notator in the norther part of the Esztergom archdiocese, somewhere near Nagyszombat.

³¹ *Fragmenta Latina Codicum in Bibliotheca Seminarii Cleri Hungariae Centralis*, ed. László Mezey (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988), 74: F. Fr. l. m. 73.

³² *Liber tradens*: BBc 17. Joannes Garetius, *De sanctorum invocatione liber...* Gandavi, 1570. Possessor: *Collegij Tyrnaviensis Societatis Jesu 1632. – Hunc ego possideo librum ... quis sum namque Johannes ... cognomine Bochkor [...]*gy.

³³ Two gradual fragment from Szombathely: Vas Megyei Levéltár EL-48; Szombathelyi Egyházmegyei Levéltár (without sign).

³⁴ Two gradual fragment from Budapest: National Széchényi Library, cover of Inc 387; ELTE University Library: cover of Inc. 260.



Facsimile 1. Esztergom Antiphoner (Temporale) Esztergom Cathedral Library, Ms. I. 3. d



Facsimile 2. Esztergom Antiphoner (Temporale) Esztergom Cathedral Library, Ms. I. 3. c













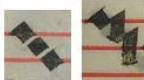
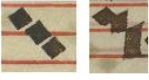
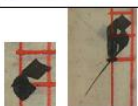





	Antiphoner d	Antiphoner c
Punctum		
Pes		
Clivis		
Torculus		
Porrectus		
Scandicus		
Climacus		
Keys		
Custos		
Specific neume-combinations		

Table 1. Neumes in antiphoner d, c



Facsimile 3. Gradual fragment, ELTE University Library, cover of Inc. 260