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Findings on the Text of the Bessarion Corvina Codex

(Budapest, National Széchényi Library, Cod. Lat. 438)\*

The present paper continues the study published last year,<sup>1</sup> which was dedicated to the printed edition of Bessarion's (1403-1472) two works. This time again the Strasbourg print is in focus, with the aim of making certain comments about its text.

First, the information available about the Corvina Codex (Budapest, National Széchényi Library, Cod. Lat. 438), containing the two pieces, and of the 1513 Strasbourg edition is summarized. The starting point is Cardinal Bessarion's own codex containing three of his writings. At the turn of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century, this codex was kept in the Buda library, the location where Augustinus Moravus (1467-1513) must have read it. Today it is in the Manuscript Collection of the National Széchényi Library, marked as Cod. Lat. 438.

Out of the three pieces, we focus on the two that, as initiated by Augustinus Moravus, were printed in Strasbourg in 1513.<sup>2</sup> One is a treatise entitled *De Sacramento Eucharistiae*, that Bessarion wrote around 1464, while the other is *Epistola ad Graecos*, a letter the cardinal addressed to the Greeks and wrote in 1463.

The printed text at the end of the *Epistola ad Graecos* says that the Strasbourg edition (1513) is based on a manuscript in the Buda library.<sup>3</sup> The Strasbourg edition was issued in

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1 EKLER, P., Greek and Byzantine Authors and Augustinus Moravus Olomucensis. Part One: Plato and Bessarion. In: JUHÁSZ, E. (ed.), *Byzanz und das Abendland III. Studia Byzantino-Occidentalia*, Budapest 2015, 247–255.

2 Bessarion, *Oratio de Sacramento Eucharistiae. Epistola ad Graecos*. Ed. Augustinus Moravus. Argentorati [Strasbourg] ex aedibus Schurerii, men. Decemb. 1513.

3 “Ex libro syncaerae fidei transcripta, qui in bibliotheca Budensi Pannoniae inferioris habetur, cura Augustini Moravi, viri doctissimi.” (Strasbourg, 1513, fol. G<sub>ii</sub><sup>v</sup>.) Cf. BARTONIEK, E., *Codices Latini Medii Aevi*. Budapest 1940. num. 438, p. 393–394; CSAPODI, CS., *The Corvinian Library. History and Stock*. Budapest 1973. num. 115, p. 160. – For Bessarion's codex, see Edina Zsupán's recent paper: ZSUPÁN, E., Bessarion immer noch in Buda? Zur Geburt der *Bibliotheca Corvina*. In: EKLER, P. – KISS, F. G. (eds.), *Augustinus Moravus Olomucensis. Proceedings of the International Symposium to Mark the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Death of Augustinus Moravus Olomucensis (1467–1513). 13<sup>th</sup> November 2013, National Széchényi Library, Budapest*. Budapest 2015, 113–138. For the links between Bessarion and Hungary, see Dan Ioan Muresan's paper: MURESAN, D. I., Bessarion et l'Église de rite Byzantin du royaume de Hongrie (1463–1472). In: GASTGEGER, CHR. – MITSIOU, E. – POP, I.-A. – POPOVIĆ, M. – PREISER-KAPPELLER, J.

December 1513, only a month after Augustinus's death in November of the same year.

The present paper deals with the relationship between the Corvina manuscript and the printed Strasbourg edition. The main question is whether the manuscript notes and corrections we read in the codex had an impact on the later printed edition, in other words, whether the textual corrections are realized in the 1513 book.

For the sake of this scrutiny, the manuscript notes made to the text of the codex have been collected. Some of them are marginal (on the margins of the text), others are interlinear (above the words or in between the lines). In trying to identify the functions of the notes, we see that some of them are textual critiques of the Latin text, while others concern its content. The present paper does not deal with the latter. Thus, only those notes are introduced and analysed that concern the Latin text of the codex.

In Cod. Lat. 438, there are three works by Bessarion. Two of them feature in the Strasbourg print. As one of the main aims is to compare the texts of the codex (Cod. Lat. 438) and the Strasbourg print, the work that features in the codex but not in the Strasbourg print is immediately excluded. Thus, the two items left are the *Epistola ad Graecos* and the *De Sacramento Eucharistiae*. The present paper focuses on only one of the two. It has been decided that the present paper will study only the notes made to the text of the *De Sacramento Eucharistiae*.

After establishing these facts and having scrutinised the notes concerning the text of the *De Sacramento Eucharistiae* (Cod. Lat. 438), we may draw the following conclusions:

1. In the *De Sacramento Eucharistiae*, there are 31 relevant textual locations, i.e. notes that correct or supplement the Latin text of the Cod. Lat. 438.
2. The notes are by more than one hand.
3. These corrections and additions have been compared with the relevant locations in the 1513 Strasbourg print.
4. It may be generally concluded that the corrections in Cod. Lat. 438 are also present in the 1513 print. In other words, the text of the Strasbourg invariably contains those readings that were copied into the Cod. Lat. 438 when the text of the codex was being improved. (There is only one location where the improved words of the codex differ from the reading of the Strasbourg print.)

In possession of these findings, certain further questions may be raised.

1. How many people are the manuscripts notes likely to come from? When and where were they made?

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– SIMON, A. (eds.), *Matthias Corvinus und seine Zeit. Europa am Übergang vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit zwischen Wien und Konstantinopel*. Wien 2011. 77–92.

2. Were the notes made at the time when the original text was copied into the codex? Is it possible that somebody may have checked and corrected the text immediately after they had been copied?
3. Or was the original text of the codex improved later, in the last third of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, either in Italy or in Hungary?
4. Is it possible that some of the notes might be related to the 1513 Strasbourg edition? In other words, is it possible that straight before the printed edition (1513) the text of the Cod. Lat. 438 may have been checked and corrected, which is what we see traces of in the codex?

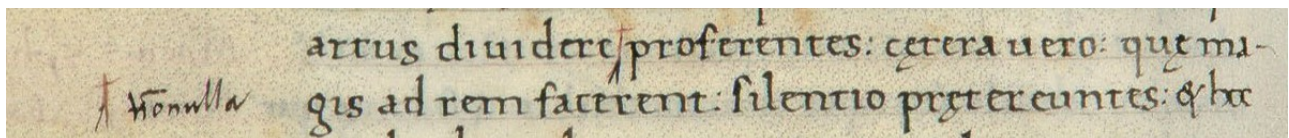
Following a thorough examination of the notes, this is the summary of the findings. In the section containing *De Sacramento Eucharistiae*, we find notes by at least three different hands.

1. There is one hand (perhaps two) that features more frequently (at least three times each).
2. In addition, there are additional hands that feature less frequently (once or twice). Of the latter, there is one hand that seems to appear once only, but exactly at the point where the note (correction) is not identical with the text printed in 1513.

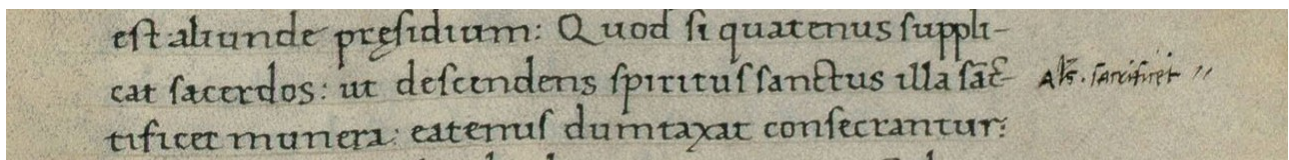
For illustrating these points, some reproductions are introduced. The images are selected from the *De Sacramento Eucharistiae*, the only focus of the present paper, located in the manuscript marked as Cod. Lat. 438.

First, examples are given of each type featuring three times (A, B).

A) fol. 39<sup>v</sup>

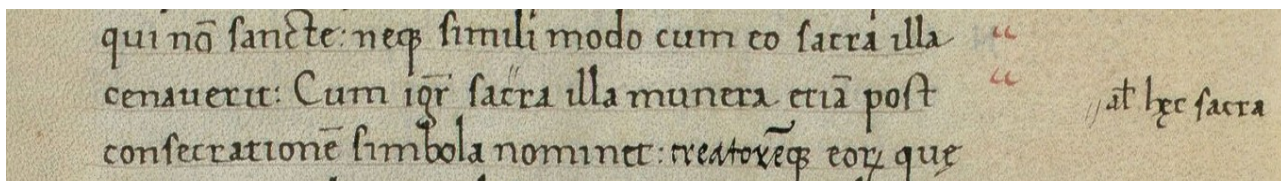


B) fol. 40<sup>r</sup>

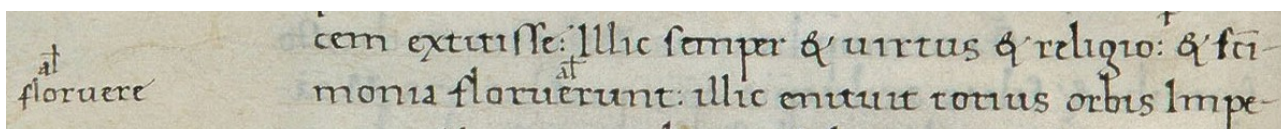


Next, the hands featuring once or twice are (C, D, E) are shown.

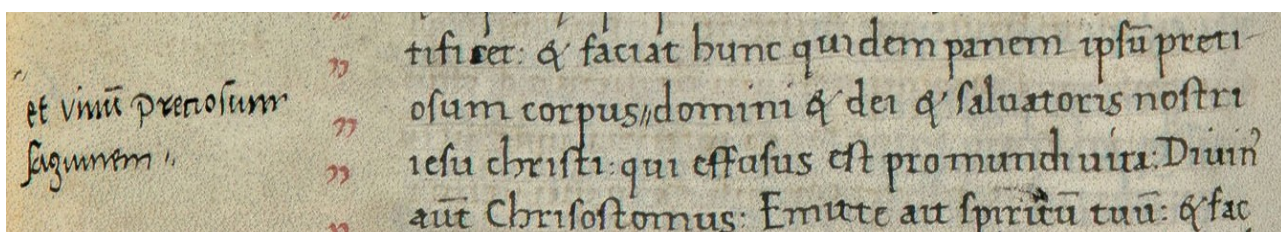
C) It is presumed that the next hand produced only the one note (52<sup>r</sup>) seen below. (In fact, this is the note that is not identical with the text of the printed edition.)



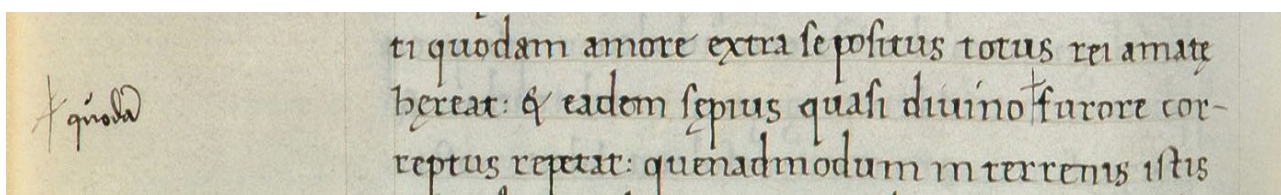
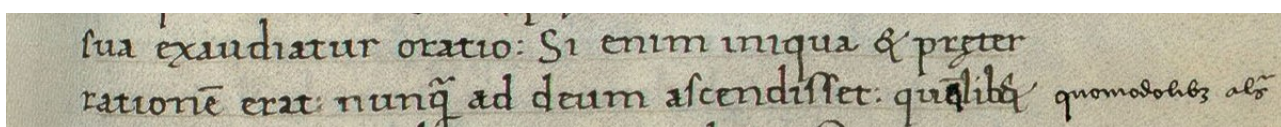
(It is to be noted that at another point in Cod. Lat. 438 where the *Epistola ad Graecos* can be found, there seems to be the same hand (writing)! It is perhaps conceivable that the note “al[ias/-iter] floruerē” (fol. 18<sup>v</sup>) is by the same hand as “al[ias/-iter] hęc sacra” at the end of *De Sacramento Eucharistiae* (fol. 52<sup>r</sup>).)



D) Most probably this hand also features once only (fol. 33<sup>v</sup>).



E) This hand is seen only in these two locations (fol. 50<sup>r</sup>, 50<sup>v</sup>).



We have no knowledge of the persons that made these notes. The notes offer no clues as to who entered them and when.

(The scribe of the code was Leonardus Iob. His name appears at the end of the first and the second works as “Leonardus Iob scripsit.” However, the same does not feature after the third work, which is in our focus. The script of the basic text of the codex is humanistica rotunda. Edit Hoffmann argues that it was made in Florence (cca. 1450-1470), while according to Ilona Berkovits

probably in Umbria or Emilia in the 1460s.)<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately, thus we have no information about the authors of the notes. Therefore we can neither state nor exclude the following:

1. It is conceivable that the notes were made after copying and are, in fact, corrections.
2. It cannot be excluded that the corrections were made later, perhaps in Buda.
3. It cannot be excluded either that some of the notes are related to the 1513 Strasbourg publication.

## Summary

Bessarion was an outstanding personality of his age, and his *De Sacramento Eucharistiae* is regarded as an important document. The codex containing the *De Sacramento Eucharistiae* first belonged to Bessarion, and later passed into the possession of the Bibliotheca Corviniana.

Augustinus Moravus was an important personality in Central European, thus in Hungarian humanism. This justifies our interest in the Strasbourg print, as Augustinus had a major role in having the Buda library's manuscript (or more precisely, two of the three works found in the codex) printed in Strasbourg in 1513.

As noted before, the *De Sacramento Eucharistiae* was made around 1464. It may be stated therefore that the corrections we read in the Corvina copy of the *De Sacramento Eucharistiae* reappeared in the text of a book printed decades later.

It is worth remarking that volume 161 of the *Patrologia Graeca* features both works: the *Epistola ad Graecos* appears both in Greek and Latin. The Latin text given is not based on the Strasbourg edition (1513). The *Patrologia Graeca* published the *De Sacramento Eucharistiae* on the basis of the 1562 Antwerp edition. The *Patrologia Graeca* does not refer to the 1513 edition. Neither does the 1562 Antwerp edition mention the Strasbourg (1513) publication.<sup>5</sup>

## Overview and further research options

The present paper has studied the notes related to and corrections of the text of the *De Sacramento Eucharistiae* (Cod. Lat. 438) rather than the full text. It seems a logical further step to compare each point of the Cod. Lat. 438 with the text of the Strasbourg edition. (In addition, it should also be compared with the text of the Antwerp edition, as that is what the *Patrologia Graeca* contains).

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<sup>4</sup> CSAPODI (n. 3) 160

<sup>5</sup> *Patrologia Graeca*, CLXI, col. 449–480, 481–490; 493–526.

The text of the *Epistola ad Graecos* may also be the subject of further research. It seems that the full text of the Cod. Lat. 438, from beginning to end, should be compared with the Latin text in the Patrologia Graeca. (Since the Patrologia Graeca contains also the original Greek text, in case of more significant differences, it would be useful to study the relevant locations of the Greek text as well.)