

Ababylonjabol hoda ijeru siodokv ijuj  
ad profeta hogj wij enket dijejeru ad  
istenuj

Zentinek: usz fiamak a hodia kazeleita  
nepnek

*Alleluia C L X*

**A**nekletek vnat vj eneket a dicitur  
te zenteknek eghagaban. Gz gllan  
uszad abban ki totta qtet: et svornak  
lani vragyanak a kiralokban. Dicitur  
ietek a neuet karban: tympanomban  
es soltarban enekletek a neki. Mert  
iol kellek vnat a nepeben: es fel  
magastaita az engedelmeseket vduj

szoban. Gz gllan zentek dicitur  
szoban a haidatoban. Istinek  
a omj a tordoban: es ket clq tarak  
a kezekben. Gz gllan tenni nemzetek  
ben: poreitafat nepekben. Gz gllan  
ket meg tottam bekoban: es a nemesse  
ket vas vorkaban. Hog tegenek a  
bennek meg ut iteletet: dicitur mend

a zentinek *Alleluia C L X*

**D**icitur vnat a zentiben: dicitur  
tek qtet a vragyanak tgelletiben.  
Dicitur qtet a ketsegeben: dicitur  
tek qtet a magaganak sokasagan  
Dicitur qtet lombitanak zedatiban  
dicitur qtet soltarban es hegedoben.

Dijejeru vi ijuj ad istenuj nepu  
ad profeta

# Hungarian Psalm Translations and Their Uses in Late Medieval Hungary

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In many European lands, including East Central European countries such as Bohemia<sup>1</sup> or Poland,<sup>2</sup> the Book of Psalms was among the first biblical texts to be translated into vernacular languages. However, the rendering of the Psalter in Hungarian happened fairly late, only in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Some passages of the legend of Saint Margaret of Hungary – a 13<sup>th</sup> century royal princess who lived her life as a Dominican nun – were interpreted to refer to a Hungarian-language Psalter used by the saint. Nevertheless, the actual references to the princess' recitation of the Psalms do not mention that this was done in the vernacular.<sup>3</sup>

The earliest codices containing the Hungarian translations of the Psalms originate from the late fifteenth century, an age when Hungarian-language literacy began to flourish for the first time, catering to the need of a restricted circle of readers for vernacular literature.<sup>4</sup> This was a period of significant increase in literacy, an age “when the written word permeates the fibre of Bohemian, Polish, and Hungarian social life – even if there remain certain areas in which orality continues to be preminent.”<sup>5</sup>

The identity of the early Hungarian Psalm translations' readership has been debated in Hungarian literary history. The largest group of beneficiaries were probably the nuns who did not have a sufficiently good command of Latin to completely understand the texts of the divine office, and who therefore required vernacular translations to study the liturgical texts in private, thus being able to enhance their communal liturgical experience. In a recent monograph, Sándor Lázcs has compared the vernacular book culture of these Hungarian nuns with that of the South-German observant cloisters, especially the Saint Catherine monastery of Nuremberg. On the basis of the German material, he argued that such vernacular Psalters were by no means used in the liturgy, but that they helped the nuns to familiarize themselves with the texts they had to recite and sing in Latin during the divine office.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, some vernacular Psalm manuscripts were or may have been intended for the use of lay persons, who copied the liturgical practice of religious communities

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Pečírková 1998, p. 1169.

<sup>2</sup> Wodecki 1998, p. 1202-1203. See especially the *Psalterz Floriański* and the *Psalterz Puławski*.

<sup>3</sup> Margaret's Hungarian-language legend mentions her using the Psalms as a form of private prayer: Balázs 1990, 13/7r. The acts of her canonization process contain several testimonies to the same: Csepregi *et al.* 2018, p. 170-171, 206-207, 220-221, 286-287. Neither source mentions explicitly that the Psalms were recited in Hungarian. The issue was discussed in detail by Boros 1903, p. 34-37.

<sup>4</sup> For a still useful overview on the beginnings of Hungarian literature see: Horváth 1931, p. 111-125.

<sup>5</sup> Adamska 1999, p. 188. On East Central European literacy see also: Adamska, Mostert 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Lázcs 2016, p. 222.

◀ Fig. 1. *Apor Codex*, Székely National Museum, Sfântu Gheorghe, A. 1330, p. 164.

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▲ Fig. 2. *Apor Codex*, Székely National Museum, Sfântu Gheorghe, A. 1330, the codex before its restoration.

▲ Fig. 3. *Apor Codex*, Székely National Museum, Sfântu Gheorghe, A. 1330, bottom of p. 100.

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## Notes

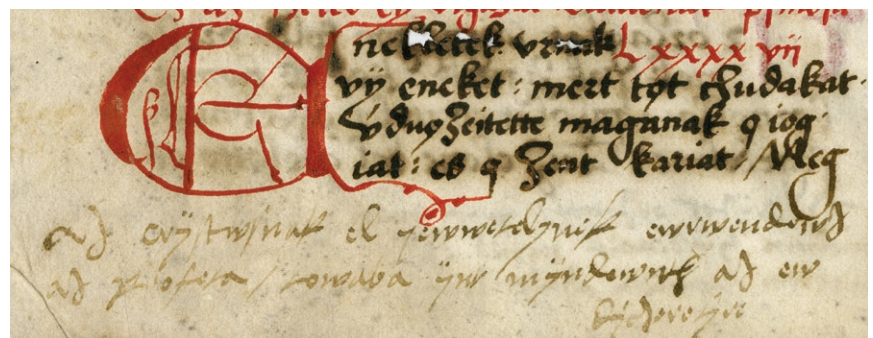
<sup>7</sup> Madas 2013, p. 200.

<sup>8</sup> Shelfmark: A 1330. Its recent edition containing a thorough introduction, the photography of each page and the letter-by-letter transcription of the text, as well as a CD with the digital copy of the manuscript: Haader et al. 2014. My presentation of the manuscript is based on the introductory study of this edition.

<sup>9</sup> Due to the complete or partially missing leaves from the beginning of the codex, the first 29 Psalms are completely missing, while only fragments remain from Psalms 30-55.

as a form of private devotion. It must be emphasized, therefore, as Edit Madas did in her study on the use of Psalters in medieval Hungary, that although most Hungarian Psalm translations were made from Psalters for liturgical use, the vernacular versions themselves were never used in liturgy. They only served as aids in private devotion.<sup>7</sup>

The earliest among the Hungarian Psalm translations has been preserved in the *Apor Codex*<sup>8</sup> to be found today in Sfântu Gheorghe (Hung. Sepsiszentgyörgy). This manuscript preserves a part of the first Hungarian Bible translation, the much-debated *Hussite Bible*. The seriously damaged (see Fig. 2) and lately restored codex was copied in two phases. The first section, consisting of a Psalter<sup>9</sup> with the hymns and canticles of the divine office, originates from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. This unit is the work of two hands. The part penned by the second scribe, who



took over the work from the middle of Psalm 50, preserves a text translated probably in the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. With respect to its orthography and language, this translation is closely related to the Bible translations preserved in the codices of Munich and Vienna.

The second unit of the codex originates from the first decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (from before 1520). It consists of hymns and canticles (some of them already figuring in the previous part but in a different translation and orthography), a part of a Premonstratensian ordinal describing the liturgical actions to be performed yearly to commemorate the founders, benefactors, and deceased members of the Order and of the monastery, as well as a passion dialogue attributed to Saint Anselm. This 16<sup>th</sup> century part was probably prepared for the Premonstratensian nuns of Somlóvásárhely as a liturgical aid and devotional reading.

The Psalm translation of the *Apor Codex* was made on the basis of the *Psalterium Gallicanum*. The Psalms are given in a numerical order and not according to the order of the liturgy. They are introduced by rubrics offering information on the author, genre, and historical background of the text. These facts suggest that the translation was not made from a liturgical book, but from a manuscript containing the Book of Psalms or several other biblical books. However, the compilers of the first part of the *Apor Codex* intended to prepare a book to be used in connection with the liturgy. They added biblical canticles and the hymns of the divine office for the period from Advent to Easter to the Psalms, probably having in mind a *de tempore Psalterium cum hymnis* as a model. References are made to the liturgical function of some Psalms as well. For example, the rubric of Psalm 97 (see Fig. 3) mentions that this is the vigil of the seventh night (*Ez az heted ey vigazat*), which means that this was the first Psalm to be sung during the Vigils of Saturday night. The division of Psalm 118 into eleven parts, which ultimately results in 160 Psalms instead of 150, also goes back to a textual tradition connected with the liturgy.

An interesting addition was made to the Psalms of the *Apor Codex* rather early in the history of the manuscript. This consists of Hungarian-language summaries or titles to the Psalms entered in a Gothic cursive hand as marginal notes on the top and bottom margins of the pages. What is curious about these *marginalia* is the fact that they are almost identical to the summaries figuring in the prose Psalter translated by the Protestant István Székely and published in Cracow in 1548,<sup>10</sup> though their orthography is different.<sup>11</sup> According to recent research, the marginals were probably written in the 1530s, before the publication of Székely's translation.<sup>12</sup> Both texts possibly draw from a common source.

The historians of the Hungarian language often argue that, out of all medieval Hungarian Psalm translations, the one in the *Apor Codex* is

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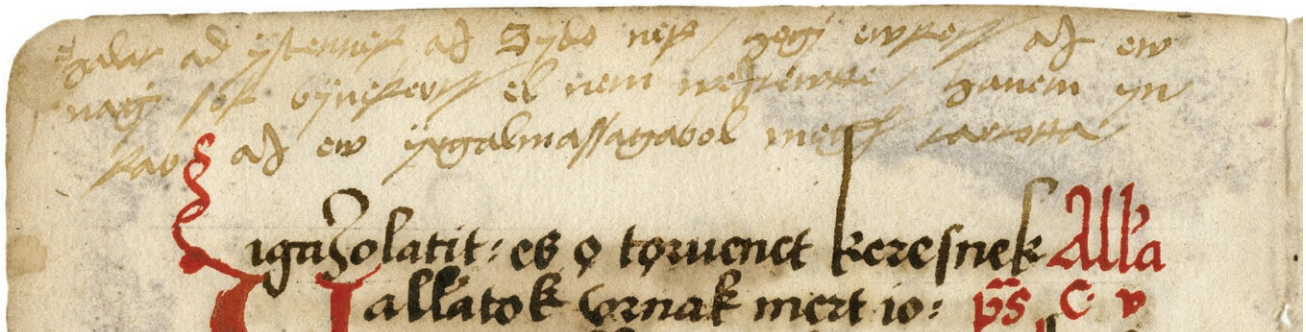
<sup>10</sup> *Soltar könü Szekely Estvantul magyar nielre forditatott...* [Psalter translated into Hungarian by István Székely...], *Krackoba* [Cracow], *Strikovia beli Lázár* [Lazarz Andryslowic], 1548, RMK I 19, RMNY 74.

<sup>11</sup> See as an example Fig. 4, which shows the summary of Psalm 105 in the *Apor Codex*. The same text figures in Székely's edition as the summary of Psalm 106: *Halat ad istennec az Sido nep / hog' üköt az ü nag' soc bünökert el nem vefötöte / hanem inkább az ü irgalmassagabol meg tartotta* [The Jewish people thanks God that he has not destroyed them for their many sins, but that he has preserved them in his mercy.] – *Soltar könü...*, *op. cit.*, f. 109<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Réka P. Kocsis, who wrote the chapter on the marginal notes of the *Apor Codex* in the introduction of the codex edition (Haader *et al.* 2014, p. 80–82), dedicated several studies to the question. See for example: Kocsis 2015.

▼ Fig. 4. *Apor Codex*, Székely National Museum, Sfântu Gheorghe, A. 1330, top of p. 114. The beginning of Ps 105 and the summary / title copied on the upper margin.

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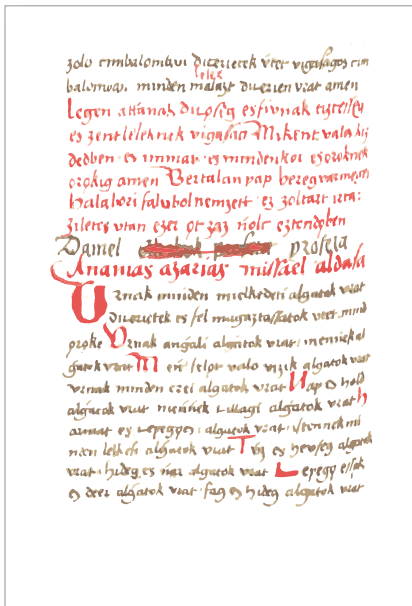


Fig. 5. *Döbrenței Codex*, Batthyaneum, Alba Iulia, r. III. 76, p. 230.

Drawing after an online photo available at [manuscriptorium.com](http://manuscriptorium.com).

Fig. 6. *Codex of Keszthely*, National Széchényi Library, Budapest, MNY 74, f. 4.

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closest to the Psalter of the *Döbrenței Codex*,<sup>13</sup> a manuscript preserved in the Batthyaneum Library in Alba Iulia (Hung. *Gyulaféhérvár*).<sup>14</sup> This other version was copied in 1508 by Bertalan of Halábor,<sup>15</sup> a priest and notary who studied at the university of Cracow in 1493-1494. Besides the Psalter, the codex contains the translation of other biblical texts (pericopes for the entire year, the Song of Songs and the Book of Job), as well as canticles and hymns, sermons from the breviary, and a meditation on the Passion. The liturgical character of this completely preserved Psalter is more pronounced than that of the one in the *Apor Codex*. The Psalms in the *Döbrenței Codex* follow the liturgical order and the rubrics are also of a liturgical character.<sup>16</sup> The Latin *incipit* of each Psalm is given in order to help the reader to identify them. Bertalan of Halábor did not mechanically copy the texts from his source, he often corrected and improved them. He must have been motivated by his pastoral duties.<sup>17</sup> The codex may have been intended for lay users, familiarizing them with important biblical texts used in the liturgy such as the Psalms, in order to deepen their understanding of the official Latin liturgy. It may have been intended to serve as an aid to private devotion, its readers' using it as a prayer book.

Two other complete Hungarian Psalters further demonstrate the usefulness and popularity of such liturgy-inspired manuscripts, that helped devotees in communal prayer or were used in individual worship. The *Codex of Keszthely*<sup>18</sup> and the *Kulcsár Codex*<sup>19</sup> go back to the same original. The *Codex of Keszthely* was probably copied for a female community of Poor Clares or Franciscan tertiaries in 1522 in Léka (today: *Lockenhaus* in Burgenland, Austria) by Gergely of Velike.<sup>20</sup> His good knowledge of Latin (revealed by the frequent use of Latin abbreviations) as well as his familiarity with religious vocabulary (deduced from the mistakes he makes while copying) suggest that he was an educated clergyman. He may have been in the employ of the Kanizsai family, the owners of Léka. The *Kulcsár Codex* was penned by Pál of Pápa, an observant Franciscan friar, whose activity is well documented in the records of his Order. His mistakes in the Latin incipits of the Psalms reveal that he was not as good a Latinist as Gergely of Velike. Brother Pál finished a very similar copy of the Psalter, down to its structure, to the *Codex of Keszthely* as late as 1539.<sup>21</sup> His manuscript was possibly meant for the use of the Beguines of Ozora.

Apart from the Psalms, both codices contain the *Te Deum* and some short prayers, *suffragia* and commemorations. The *Codex of Keszthely* also contains several hymns after the *Te Deum*, while the *Symbolum Atha-*

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<sup>13</sup> A good summary on the debate regarding the (written and oral) textual tradition(s) of the Hungarian Bible translations is given in the introduction to edition: Haader, Papp 1999, p. 33-37.

<sup>14</sup> Shelfmark: Ms. III. 76. Digital copy available at: [http://www.manuscriptorium.com/apps/index.php?direct=record&pid=NLR\\_\\_NLOBR\\_MS\\_III\\_76\\_\\_2LD4LR5-ro](http://www.manuscriptorium.com/apps/index.php?direct=record&pid=NLR__NLOBR_MS_III_76__2LD4LR5-ro) (Accessed on: 10.09.2018.). Edition: Abaffy, Szabó 1995. The Psalter is on p. 15-230 / fol 8<sup>r</sup>-115<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> The colophon (see Fig. 5) on p. 230 / fol. 115<sup>v</sup> says: *Bertalan pap beregvármegei Halabori falvból nemzett : ez zoltart irta: ziletés vtan ezer öt zaz nólcz eztendoben.* [This Psalter was written in the 1508<sup>th</sup>

year of the Lord by the priest Bartholomew, born in the village of Halabor (today in Ukraine) in Bereg county.]

<sup>16</sup> Madas 2013, p. 200.

<sup>17</sup> His scribal attitude was described by Haader 2009, p. 63-64.

<sup>18</sup> National Széchényi Library, shelfmark: MNY 74. Digital copy: <http://www.mek.oszk.hu/15900/15944/> (Accessed on: 15.10.2018.). Edition: Haader 2006. The information given below on the manuscript is based on the introduction of this edition, which also lists the extant secondary literature on the codex.

<sup>19</sup> National Széchényi Library, shelfmark: MNY 16. Digital copy: <http://www.mek.oszk.hu/15900/15952/> (Accessed on: 15.10.2018.). Edition: Haader, Papp 1999. The information given below on the manuscript is discussed at length in the introduction of this edition, which also gives an extensive bibliography on the codex.

<sup>20</sup> His name is given in the Latin colophon on the last page (450/fol. 228<sup>v</sup>): *Et sic est finis huius operis per me gregorium de welykee et cetera In lewka. 1.5.2.2. Inceptum fuit hoc Psalterium in vigilia Iacobi Apostolj et est finitum In festo omnium sanctorum domini.*

<sup>21</sup> These data are given in the colophon (p. 367 / f. 184<sup>r</sup>): *finitur Psalterium Anno domini 1.5.3.9. per fratrem paulum de papa.*

Beatus vir qui no abyt In consilio Superiorum  
ps .1.

**W**

odog ember ky begvede  
neknek tanachyaba nem  
yarek / ees ky byneseknek  
wthaba nem alloch / ees ky wegedel  
mnek sekýbe nem wth

De w akaratya wznak terwenyeb  
ees evel / ees napal gondolkodyk w ne  
ky terwenyeb

Ees lezen mykppen solyo vyznek mel  
lette ylteteh fa ky w ydeyen adya  
w gromelcheth

Ees w leuele el nem hrol ees myn  
deneketh kyketh tezen bewelchethnek

Nem wgy begvedenek nem wgy dee  
mykeenteh poor / kyth feel el frwth fel  
dnek synerel

Azeth begvedenek ytelethebe nem tamad  
nak feel sem bynesek ygazaknak  
tanachyaba

Merth w ygazaknak wtach megh yf  
merthe ees begvedeneknek wtha el  
nem weez

Beatus vir qui non Abijt in  
conconfilioꝝ psalmus primus

**B**u ddog ember kȳ kegȳet  
leneknek tanachyaba ne  
m yarth ees kȳ byneseknek wta  
ba nem alloth ees kȳ wezedelmnek  
zekybe nem wleth.

**E**w akaratya wrnak terwenye  
be gondolkodyk w nekȳ terwenye  
be eyel ees napal.

**E**s lezen mykewen folyo vyznek me  
lette yltetheth fa kȳ w ydeyebe ad  
ya w gyemwlcheth.

**E**s w leuele el nemhwj ees my  
ndeneketh kyketh tezen bewltheth  
nek.

**D**em wgy kegȳetlenek nem wgy  
dee mykenth poor kyth zeel el  
tweth feldnek zynerel.

**A**zereth kegȳetlenek ytelethbe nem  
eamadnak zeel sem bynesek yga-



*nasii* occupies the corresponding place in the *Kulcsár Codex*. The *Codex of Keszthely* is somewhat longer than its counterpart, containing more *suffragia*, commemorations, and hymns, as well as the Seven Penitential Psalms at its end. The inclusion of all these elements suggests that both manuscripts were meant to be used in order to achieve a better understanding of the texts of the divine office recited in Latin by nuns and tertiaries who had only an elementary knowledge of Latin.

A significant number of Psalms figure in two prayer books compiled by Pauline monks for their aristocratic patroness, Benigna Magyar (c. 1465?-1526). She was the daughter and heiress of Balázs Magyar (?-1490), a renowned general of king Matthias Corvinus, and the wife of Pál Kinizsi (1431?-1494), an even more famous general and legendary warrior in the anti-Turkish wars. Husband and wife founded the Pauline monastery of Nagyvázsöny. As a token of their gratitude, the monks prepared two Hungarian-language codices for the lady.

The earlier of the two, the *Festetics Codex*,<sup>22</sup> prepared between 1492 and 1494, is an expensive parchment codex with two richly decorated pages (one of them has the coats of arms of both husband and wife, see Fig. 8) and 11 coloured initials. The prayer book modelled on the book of hours contains *The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (with many Psalm translations), one of the usual components of this book type, the introduction of the Gospel of John, the Seven Penitential Psalms in Petrarch's rewriting, and some private prayers addressed to Mary. The second manuscript, the *Czech Codex*,<sup>23</sup> copied several years later by a Brother M., repeats some pieces from the earlier book. In addition, it contains the summer vespers from the *Saturday Office of the Virgin* (including five Psalms) and several new prayers. In these two collections the Psalms are the integral parts of a composition modelled on the collective liturgical practice but used mainly in private devotion.

Apart from complete Psalters and selections of individual Psalms, numerous Psalm verses have been included into the various Hungarian-language codices copied between the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 1540s. Translations of the Gospels, such as the already mentioned *Codex of Munich*,<sup>24</sup> copied in the Moldavian town of Târgu-Trotuş (Hung. *Tatros*) and preserving the New Testament part of the so-called *Hussite Bible*, or the *Jordánszky Codex*,<sup>25</sup> whose origin is still debated, bring some quotations from the Book of Psalms.

Psalm verses are also often built into the text of private prayers. One such prayer, the *Octo versus sancti Bernardi*, originating from the popular late medieval Latin prayer book *Hortulus animae*, has been constructed entirely from Psalm quotes. Its translations figure in three different Hungarian-language codices.<sup>26</sup> The spiritual power believed to be carried even by such individual verses of the Psalter is revealed by the miraculous story narrated in the introductory rubric of the prayer, as can be found in the version of the *Lobkowitz Codex*. According to this, the Devil appears to Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, teasing him that he knows eight Psalm verses, which daily said would benefit one as much as the recitation of the entire Psalter. When he refuses to identify them, the saint constrains him to tell them by promising to recite all 150 Psalms daily unless the demon reveals the secret. The Satan defeated by this "threat" offers him this prayer.

The most numerous Psalm quotations are to be found among the arguments of treatises and sermons. Sermon collections such as the *Érdy Codex*,<sup>27</sup> compiled by an anonymous Carthusian monk for the use of nuns

◀ Fig. 7. *Kulcsár Codex*, National Széchényi Library, Budapest, MNY 16, f. 1r.  
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## Notes

<sup>22</sup> National Széchényi Library, shelfmark: MNY 73. Digital version: <http://nyelvemlekek.oszk.hu/sites/nyelvemlekek.oszk.hu/files/festetics.pdf> (Accessed on 20.10.2018). Edition: Abaffy 1996.

<sup>23</sup> Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, shelfmark: κ42. Edition: Abaffy 1990.

<sup>24</sup> Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek, shelfmark: Cod. Hung. 1. Digital copy: <http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/~db/0008/bsb00087531/images/> (Accessed on 30.10.2018.) Editions: Décsy, von Farkas 1958; Décsy 1966; Nyíri 1971.

<sup>25</sup> Esztergom Cathedral Library, shelfmark: MSS II.1. Facsimile edition: Lázs 1984.

<sup>26</sup> *Lobkowitz Codex*, The Lobkowitz Collections, Prague, shelfmark: VI. Fg. 30. Edition: Reményi 1999, p. 346-350; *Peer Codex* (first quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century), National Széchényi Library, shelfmark: MNY 12. Edition: Kacs Kovics-Reményi, Oszkó 2000, p. 181-184/f. 91<sup>r</sup>-92<sup>r</sup>; *Thewrewk Codex*, Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, shelfmark: κ 46. Edition: Balázs, Uhl 1995, p. 246-249 / f. 123<sup>v</sup>-125<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> National Széchényi Library, shelfmark: MNY 9. Edition: Volf 1876.



and lay brothers, translate many verses from the Book of Psalms. The unknown Carthusian usually gave the Latin quotation before its Hungarian version since the Latin text would also have sounded familiar to his readers (or listeners, if the texts were read aloud during mealtime), who were in the daily habit of reciting the Psalms in Latin during the divine office. All these Psalm verses inserted into various texts were habitually translated together with their immediate context, and not taken over from extant translations.

The partial or complete Hungarian Psalm translations preserved in different 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century codices were prepared for the purposes of private study or devotions. However, they were closely connected to the liturgy, as the ultimate aim of their perusal was to obtain a better understanding of this biblical book of paramount importance in the communal liturgical practice. As the Psalms were read and recited daily by the members of religious orders and even by some lay people, and as they were translated and explained orally in vernacular sermons as well, this relative abundance of such translations is natural when compared to other Hungarian-language texts in this corpus.

► Fig. 8. *Festetics Codex*, National Széchényi Library, Budapest, MNY 73, f. 2<sup>r</sup>.  
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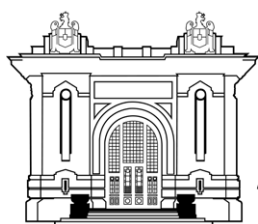
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