

The Origins of the Manuscript of the Franciscan Rule and the Testament of Saint Francis from the Convent of Gyöngyös, Hungary, in 1494

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The Significance of the Manuscript and its Description

The Franciscan Province of Our Lady of Hungary wished to celebrate the official papal approval of the Franciscan Rule 800 years ago by publishing the most aesthetically attractive of the Hungarian manuscripts that we have.¹ For obvious reason, this publication does not contain a detailed discussion of the text itself; though this aspect is also worth considering.

The codex's importance lies in the fact that it is unknown to researchers in the field of the history of the Franciscan Order. Undoubtedly owing to the difficulties researchers had in gaining access to important manuscripts in the communist era, this manuscript does not figure amongst those that Kajetan Esser investigated when preparing his edition of the *Testament of Saint Francis*.² He does not refer to the manuscript in his subsequent critical editions of the *Testament*, either.³

1 *Regula Bullata, A Gyöngyösi Ferences Könyvtár Regula- Kódexe*, Budapest 2009. The introductory essay is written by Kapisztrán Varga O.F.M.

2 K. Esser, *Das Testament des heiligen Franziskus von Assisi. Eine Untersuchung über seine Echtheit und seine Bedeutung*. Münster/Westfalen 1949, 17-27.

3 *Opuscula Sancti Patris Francisci Assisensis*, ed. K. Esser (*Bibliotheca Franciscana Ascetica Medii Aevi*, 12), Grottaferrata 1978, 23-37, 305-317; K. Esser – E. Grau, *Die Opuscula des hl. Franziskus von Assisi. Neu textkritische Edition*. (Spicilegium Bonaventurianum, 13.) Grottaferrata 1989, 31-38, 431-447. Antonio Cicero does not mention the codex in the lists of manuscripts that he prepared after those of Esser. (Cf. A. Cicero, "I codici degli opuscula Sancti Francisci emersi dopo l'edizione di Kajetan Esser", in *Verba Somini mei. Gli opuscula di Francesco di Assisi a 25 anni della edizione di Kajetan Esser*, O.F.M. Atti del Convegno

The manuscript is located in the Franciscan (historical) library and archive in Gyöngyös. The number given to the codex is Cod. Med.5.⁴ It consists of 12 parchment sheets, with a cover of 18.2 by 12.8 centimetres, the sheets themselves being 17 by 12.1 centimetres.⁵ It now has a smooth brown leather cover, held together with a strap. It was restored in the workshop of the National Széchényi Library in 1974.

The manuscript was probably prepared in Hungary, its home, moving from Szeged to Gyöngyös in the 19th century. The writing style is „*gothica textualis formata*” (from 1494); the first letter of some chapters is illuminated. Since it does not bear the owner’s name, we can assume, in my interpretation, that the manuscript was always the property of the Franciscan Order. We can also conclude that it was done for a convent whose books did not have to be saved during the period of Turkish occupation. This would have had to be a friary that remained active throughout this period. This would apply to both the friary in Gyöngyös and the one in Szeged. The friary in Szeged has an especially important place in the history of the Observant branch of the Order in Hungary. The manuscript, therefore, is likely to have been written by Observant friars. The year 1494 is given on the front side of the manuscript at f. 11, at the close of the Testament: this could well be the date when it was completed. The details given on the inside of the cover are from the 16th century. They let us know that the manuscript had been bound by then. Specialists record the Hungarian poem on the inside of the cover as being of considerable linguistic importance.⁶

Our codex contains only the *Rule of Saint Francis of Assisi* and the *Testament*. But the Rule is not given in the form in which it is presented in *Solet annuere*,

internazione, Roma 10-12 aprile 2002. A cura di A. Cacciotti, Romae 2003, 383-426.) Since the facsimile of the Gyöngyös codex was published in 2009, I was unable to consult Carlo Paolazzi’s critical edition. He is also unaware of the codex’s existence, however. (See *Francisci Assisiensis Scripta*, critique edited by C. Paolazzi, Grottaferrata, 2009, 14-18.)

- 4 In the old list of holdings of the Franciscan library in Gyöngyös, the number of the manuscript is 2 and not 5. In this list, manuscript 5 contains the constitutions of the province (which bears the name „the Fathers”). The volume was only given the number 5 after the dissolution of the order in 1950, when the library of the order in Gyöngyös became one of the branches of the National Széchényi Library. All descriptions of holdings after this date give the manuscript the number 5. It is this number that I will use. The codex is described in Cs. Csapodi, *Bibliotheca Hungarica, I*. Budapest. 1988, No. 1334.: „Cod. Med. aevi 5. Regula et vita minorum fratrum. 1494. – Magyarország – perg. 12 fol. Cover: smooth leather. Remarks: Previously in the possession of the Franciscans brothers in Szeged. After the flood of 1879, the manuscript was sent from Szeged to Gyöngyös.”
- 5 It is possible that there were originally only 5 two-sheet folios, with the first and twelfth folio bound together to protect the manuscript. A „*sexternio*” thereby resulted. The manuscript could have been part of a larger compendium/collection (of texts/manuscripts).
- 6 I thank Edit Madas for this information. Cf. *Répertoire de la poésie hongroise ancienne*. Dir. I. Horváth, Paris, 1992, I, 33, No.3519. See also B. Stoll, *A magyar kéziratok énekeskönyvek bibliográfiája* [Bibliography of the Hungarian song-books]. Budapest, 2005, Függelék [Appendix] n. 157. Horváth and Stoll erroneously refer to Cod. Lat. 2. instead of 5.

Pope Honorius III's bull of 1223, but as it is presented in *Litteras felicis recordationis Honorii*, the bull that Pope Nicholas III issued on August 21, 1297, which also contained *Solet annuere*.⁷

The Textual Background of Saint Francis's Testament

As I have already mentioned, the volume contains the approved *Franciscan Rule* of 1223 and the *Testament*. In the mind of Saint Francis, the *Rule* and the *Testament* very much belong together. The Observant friars also saw the two works as companion texts. They therefore wanted to keep the *Rule* according to the earlier papal interpretations.

The text of the *Rule* shows a high level of uniformity throughout the history of its reproduction. This was due to two factors: the first being that the original papal bull could always be consulted; and the second being that the brothers learnt the *Rule* by heart.⁸ There are more textual discrepancies as far as the *Testament* is concerned, however. These can help us in specifying the textual history of the manuscript under discussion.

There were probably quite a number of manuscripts of the *Testament* produced in the course of the 13th century. Francis himself advised the brothers always to have with them a copy of the *Testament* as well as the *Rule*, and to read both aloud at chapters. Still, only two copies remain from this period, the As and V4: this certainly makes tracing the manuscript history of the *Testament* more difficult. This is also due to the fact that researchers face the opposite problem with 15th century manuscripts, of which there are a huge number. Taking the research of Esser further, P. Paolazzi counts 127 handwritten manuscripts, 52 translations and 16 incunabula (block-set reproductions). Up till the edition of Wadding, he lists 500 translations and printed editions.⁹ Given so many texts and divergences between them, establishing a tree for the evolution of these manuscripts is very hard indeed. For this reason, P. Paolazzi singled out 22 manuscripts from the XIII and XIV centuries on which to base his edition. This drastic reduction in the number of variant texts thus made it easier to identify textual novelties that had arisen from the scribal errors that can be found in

7 L. Wadding, *Annales Minorum*, t. V, Ad Aquas Claras (Quaracchi) 1931, Regestrum Pontificium XXI-XXII. 457-458.

8 "In the Name of the Lord, I beseech all the brothers that they learn the tenor and sense of those things that are written in this life for the salvation of our souls, and frequently recall them to mind. And I pray God that He who is Almighty, Three in One, may bless all who teach, learn, hold, remember, and fulfil those things as often as they repeat and do what is there written for our salvation. And I entreat all, kissing their feet, to love greatly, keep and treasure up these things." (1Reg 24.)

9 C. Paolazzi, *Francisci Assisiensis Scripta*. Grottaferrata 2009, 397, note 4.

particular groups or sub-groups of the manuscripts, as well as a more objective assessment of a specific variant or omission.¹⁰

My Aim and Approach

The aim I set myself was to find out as much as I could about the origin of the codex, the sources upon which it draws, and its relationship with the manuscripts to which it is related. I saw this task as important, given that it is the oldest bound copy of the Rule and Testament that we have in Hungary. As such, it is representative. Furthermore, as I have already mentioned, no discussion of this particular codex has so far been published. Since the manuscript contains only the *Rule* and *Testament*, however, it is only the texts themselves that can provide us with information about its origin and sources.

To find out more about the sources of the manuscript, I chose a very straightforward method. My first step was to compare the Gyöngyös codex with the text of the *Testament* published in the critical edition of Esser and Grau.¹¹ The comparison revealed that the text of the Testament given in the Gyöngyös codex diverged in seventy places from that in the critical edition: there are thus seventy textual variants to explain. These are of various kinds: expansions, word-omissions, misread or misspelt words, different word-order, and so forth.

My second step was to investigate, with the help of the critical edition, whether the seventy variants in the Gyöngyös codex reappeared in other manuscripts of the Testament and, if so, in which manuscripts. I also noted when the text given in these other manuscripts did not match the one found in the Gyöngyös codex.

My third step was to identify which of these texts bore the closest resemblance to the text of the *Testament* given in the Gyöngyös codex. Obviously, research into the origin of some of the other manuscripts would refine the picture even further.

I did not use the recent critical edition of Paolazzi firstly because I completed this research in 2008, in preparation for the codex's publication in 2009; Paolazzi's edition, only came out in 2009. My second reason is that, even though his edition is elegantly written and presented and his resolution of various textual problems is useful, he bases his research on manuscripts from the 13th and 14th centuries and not from the 15th century. His timeframe does not allow us to place a text of the *Testament*, copied at the close of the 15th century, within the manuscript tradition with the degree of precision necessary.

I set out to identify the principle textual orientations of the codex on the basis of the three previous modern editions of the *Testament*. They are the following: the version, with an accompanying study, that Kajetan Esser published in 1949,

10 The chosen manuscripts are as follows: An (s. XIV/m); As (s. XIV/m); B1 (ante a. 1342); Ba1 (s. XIV/2); Bc1 (s. XIV/1); BM1 (s. XIV); BrS2 (s. XIV); Bu (s. XIV/1); Cla (c. 1321-1323); Dh (s. XIV/1); FN (a. 1316/40); FO (c.a. 1370); Is1 (s. XIV/1); N1 (s. XIV); OB (a. 1384/85); PrM1 (s. XIV); SF (1343-1348); T (s. XIV/m); To (s. XIV); V1 (Post a. 1340); V4 (s. XIII/ex); Wo (s. XIV/1); Paolazzi, 2009. 387.

11 Esser - Grau, *Die Opuscula des hl. Franziskus von Assisi*, 431-447. The volume was published at 2009, therefore I have not used the Paolazzi edition.

and which was completed in preparation for the critical edition of the complete works of Saint Francis published in Rome in 1978;¹² the volume of the *Opuscula* that appeared in 1989, and which Engelbert Grau edited after Esser's death;¹³ and Paolazzi's text, against which I was able to check my own hypotheses and conclusions.

What the Comparison of Manuscripts Revealed? When the Gyöngyös codex is placed beside the critical edition of Esser and Grau, 70 textual variants appear. In order to evaluate them, we first have to look at the possible sources on which the writer or writers of the codex might have relied.

Scrutinizing the Manuscripts

The two oldest manuscripts (As, V4), both of which were penned in the 13th century, reveal far more differences than matches in comparison to the Gyöngyös codex (the As contains two agreements and 13 differences; the V4 two agreements and 10 differences). Therefore, these manuscripts, in this regard, cannot be considered relevant.

There are far more instances of agreement, however, with manuscripts from the 14th century. Fifteen variants in the Gyöngyös codex are the same as those in the BMI, which is a codex stored in the British Museum, and two variants differ. Unfortunately, we do not know very much about this manuscript, which came into the possession of the British Museum between 1854 and 1875. This manuscript very much resembles the Gyöngyös codex. The other codex bearing strong resemblances to the Gyöngyös codex is the FO, which is stored in the Observant Franciscan friary of Ognissanti in Florence. It was completed around 1370. It is the major codex containing what has come to be known as the Porziuncola group of Saint Francis's writings.¹⁴ Fourteen of the textual variants are the same as in the Gyöngyös codex and two differ.

A codex in Barcelona (Bc1), which comes from the 14th century but about which we know little, also has the same variants as the Gyöngyös codex in a significant number of instances: nine altogether. The variants diverge in three places. Interestingly, the variants in a codex located in the Bodleian Library in Oxford also agree with our codex in nine places and diverge in three. This codex belonged to Peter Tragurio and dates from 1384/85. This is worth noting since, in Paolazzi's derivational manuscript tree, this codex stands alone; it does, however, show marked affinities with our manuscript. It should be noted, nevertheless, that the convent in Dubrovnik did not belong to the Bosnian vicariate of the Observants

12 K. Esser, *Das Testament des Heiligen Franziskus von Assisi*. Münster/Westfalen 1949.; Idem, *Studien zu der Opuscula des Hl. Franziskus von Assisi*, Rom, 1973.

13 The first edition is *Opuscula Sancti Patris Francisci Assisensis*, ed. Caietanus Esser O.F.M. in: *Bibliotheca Franciscana Ascetica Medii Aevi Tom. XII. Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas Grottaferrata (Roma) 1978* (see note 3); the second is Esser - Grau, *Die Opuscula des Hl. Franziskus von Assisi*.

14 For the description, see K. Esser - R. Oligier, *La tradition manuscrite des Opuscules de Saint François d'Assise. Préliminaires de l'édition critique*. Rome 1972, 42-43.

in the later medieval period, but, as the Hungarian vicariate of the Observants stemmed from the Bosnian one, we can presume that the Hungarian Observants were influenced by their Bosnian brothers to the south.

A codex that belongs to the manuscripts known as the „Avignon” or „*Fac secundum exemplar*” is also very similar to the Gyöngyös codex. This excellent manuscript was prepared before 1342 and is lodged in the friary of Thorn. It has the catalogue number B1. Between this manuscript and the one in Gyöngyös, there are eight instances where the variants agree and one instance where they differ. There are other codices, however, in this „Avignon” group. One is known as the „Budapest” codex (Bu), which dates from the first half of the fourteenth century. Between this codex and the Gyöngyös one, there are nine instances of agreement and two of divergence. Another codex is the so-called Sankt Florian manuscript, which dates from 1348/49. In it, there are nine instances of agreement, and three of divergence. Another is Vatican codex V1, which was prepared at some time after 1340. There are seven instances of agreement and two of divergence between the V1 and the Gyöngyös codex.

The Gyöngyös codex is also very similar to a codex from the first half of the 14th century that was produced in an unknown Italian friary, now lodged in San Isidoro in Rome. Its catalogue number is Isl. There are eight instances of agreement and one of divergence in it. It is also similar to a codex from the 14th century that is located in Prague and has been given the number PrM1. There are eight instances of agreement and three of divergence. There are some other manuscripts worth including in the comparison. One is a manuscript number An, which is located at the Antonianum University in Rome. It dates from the middle of the 14th century and was produced in province of Tuscany. There are seven instances of agreement and four of divergence. Another is the „Bal” codex in the Dominican convent in Basel: there are seven instances of agreement and two of divergence. Another text of the *Testament* to be mentioned is included in the *Exposition* of Angelo Clareno: there are seven cases of agreement and one of divergence. And, finally, there is also a codex in Naples (NI) that reveals seven instances of agreement and four of divergence.

The Results Checked against Paolazzi's Edition

On the basis of Paolazzi's critical edition of the *Testament*, the Gyöngyös codex falls into the „c” group of manuscripts. This group, which includes manuscripts dating from the 13th and 14th centuries, is relatively uniform. It can be divided into two sub-groups, c¹ and c². CLa, B1, Bu, PrM1, SF, and V1 fall into the c¹, whereas BM1 and FO can be placed in the c² sub-group.

The characteristics of the c group are as follows:¹⁵

Words or phrases are left out:

| Verse | Ed. Critic. | omission | Mss | Gy5 |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|--------------|-----|
| 25. | <i>Praecipio firmiter</i> [<i>per obedientiam</i>] | the <i>per obedientiam</i> is omitted | c, - BM1 | + |
| 25. | [<i>Neque pro ecclesia</i>] <i>neque pro</i> <i>alio loco</i> | <i>Neque pro ecclesia</i> omitted | c, -BM1 + Dh | + |

Gy5 parallels BM1 in both places

Additions or corrections are made:

| Verse | Ed. Critic. | Addition or correction | Mss | Gy5 |
|-------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-----|
| 4. | dedit mihi talem fidem in ecclesiis | <i>in ecclesiis suis</i> | c, + OB | + |
| 12. | et verba eius scripta | <i>ipsius</i> for <i>eius</i> | c, -PrM1 + OB | + |
| 33. | <i>Et minister firmiter teneatur</i> | <i>Minister vero</i> for <i>Et</i> <i>minister</i> | c, - PrM1 | + |

In these three cases the Gy5 behaves as if it was part of the c group: namely, the omission of certain words is not so characteristic, but additions or corrections can be found.

Paolazzi then divides this c group into the two sub-groups: c¹ and c²:

The following textual variants show that a c¹ sub-group exists indeed (The text is adjusted to accord with the Rule of 1223):

| Verse | Ed. Critic. | Variant | Mss | Gy5 |
|-------|-------------------|----------------------|-----|-----|
| 16. | dabant pauperibus | pauperibus erogabant | c | + |

An addition that serves as a kind of a gloss:

| Verse | Ed. Critic. | Variant | Mss | Gy5 |
|-------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5. | Adoramus te Domine Jesu Christe | Adoramus te, sanctissime Domine | c ¹ + Bc1, BrS2 | - |
| 41. | istam sanctissimam benedictionem. | istam sanctissimam benedictionem. Deo gratias. Amen | c ¹ - PrM1 + To | Partially: the "Amen" is included but not the "Deo gratias" |

¹⁵ Paolazzi, 389.

The Characteristics of the c² sub-group (BM1, FO):

| Verse | Ed. Critic. | Variant | Mss | Gy5 |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----|
| 18. | Officium debeamus clerici | nos clerici | c ² + Is1, Wo | + |
| 24. | habacula pauperula et omnia ali quae pro ipsis construuntur | <i>et omnia alia</i> omitted | c ² | - |
| 24. | <i>semper ibi hospitantes sicut advene</i> | <i>semper ibi habitantes</i> <i>sicut advene</i> | c ² + Dh, Cla | - |
| 38. | <i>non mittant glosses in Regula neque</i> <i>in istis verbis</i> | <i>neque in ista verba</i> | c ² | - |

Overall, in regard to the 14th century sources that our codex have drawn upon, our examination reinforces the classificatory analysis of Paolazzi. Despite a small number of exceptions, the body of manuscripts into which we would place the Gyöngyös codex according to Paolazzi's analytical scheme shows a high degree of uniformity.

The Gyöngyös Manuscript in relation to its contemporary Fellows

Now that we have investigated manuscripts that were possible precursors of the Gyöngyös codex, we need to look at 15th century possibilities as well. It is only in this way that we can locate our codex more securely within the network of manuscripts to which it rightfully belongs.

As far as the text variants are concerned, the Gyöngyös manuscript shows the highest degree of concordance with a codex of Verona (Ve). From the 70 variants, this manuscript has 15 that are exactly the same as in the Gyöngyös manuscript, not showing any difference whatsoever. Unfortunately, all we can say about its date is that it was made in the 15th century. From its name, however, we can conclude that the friary was an Observant one. The codex that shows the highest degree of concordance after this one is a 15th century codex from a Florentine friary (we do not know which one). What we do know is that it belonged to Brother Antonius of Florence. It matches the Gyöngyös codex in 11 places and differs from it in 2. The ratio is the same as with V2 (that is, the Vatican) codex. This manuscript was only lodged at the Vatican during the Napoleonic wars. It originally belonged to the convent of *Ara Coeli*, which was given to the Observants in 1444. The codex named RC, which is now housed in the General Curia of the Conventual Franciscan friars, has ten instances of agreement and one of divergence.

Three manuscripts from the Avignon (or the "*Fac secundum exemplar*") group agree significantly with the Gyöngyös codex. The Leignitz codex (Lg), which dates from between 1481 and 1489, has 10 instances of agreement and one of divergence; the Wroclaw codex (BU) from 1448 or 1468 has 9 instances of agreement and four of divergence; and the Magdeburg codex (Ma), which dates from the first half of the 15th century, shows 8 instances of agreement and 2 of difference. I include another codex in this group, namely the B3 codex (Berlin, Staatsbibliothek cod. theol. lat quarto 43. 1452), since it has only 5 instances of agreement and two

of divergence. This Magdeburg codex and the Lg (Leignitz) codex (Bibliothek der Peter- und Paulskirche cod 11. 1481/89) contain no other work of Saint Francis besides the *Rule* and the *Testament*.

The Munich codex (MU), which dates from 1485, and which comes from an Observant convent, perhaps the one in Nuremberg, has the same variants as the Gyöngyös codex in 9 instances and contains no divergent passages. A particularly interesting codex is the one in the National Library of Vienna (Wien, Nationalbibliothek, cod. 2233. +1498), which was made for a Brother John, who had become a bishop. Like the Gyöngyös codex, it contains only the *Rule* and the *Testament*. It was also made only four years before the Gyöngyös codex. The variants in the two codices agree in 9 instances and diverge in 1. We cannot say for sure who this Brother John, who was a bishop in 1498, might have been. However, we do know of a Jan (or János) Filipec (1431-1509), who was of Moravian descent, and who carved a successful career for himself during the reign of King Matthias. He was the bishop of Várad from 1476 until 1490; the administrator for Olomouc (in the Czech Republic) from 1482 until 1490; and, from 1485 until 1490, he held the post of chancellor for the Hungarian kingdom. He resigned from all his posts and became a Franciscan of the Observance after the coronation of Vladislaus II of Hungary at the end of September 1490. He died in the convent of Uherské Hradište, which he himself had founded as bishop.

We should also mention that, besides these codices, there are three, which have seven variants that match those in the Gyöngyös codex, and which have one variant that is different. These are from the second half of the 15th century. They are a manuscript in the British Museum (BM2) which was made in an Italian Observant convent; a manuscript in the Convent of Saint Anne in Munich from 1453; and a codex in the Main Arch Chapter in Prague. The other manuscripts show fewer instances of agreement.

I should also mention that the Gyöngyös manuscript differs from the critical edition in 16 places; in this regard, it is unlike any of the other versions of the text. A good number of these variants involve changes in word-order, but there are also cases where a word has been omitted or a different one has been used. The incipit and explicit, however, are peculiar to this manuscript. Whether these are scribal errors or come from a transcription of the text that has since disappeared, we do not know.

To bring all this together, we can say that a comparison of the text of the *Testament* in the Gyöngyös codex with the text found in other manuscripts from the 14th and 15th centuries reveals that the Gyöngyös codex is related most closely to Italian Observant precursors. The body of these codices was enriched with some manuscripts related to Central Europe in the second half of the 15th century. What is also characteristic of the Gyöngyös codex, though, is its undoubted relationship with the Avignon (namely, "*Fac secundum exemplar*") group of manuscripts. There are also variants, however, that are only found in the Gyöngyös codex.

I think we can conclude that the text is essentially modelled on earlier Italian Observant manuscripts; nevertheless, it also shows the influence of the Avignon group of manuscripts, and, what is more, the peculiarities of a more particular ambiance that we are now unable to identify.