

FRAGMENT OF A 14TH-CENTURY GRADUAL IN THE HUNGARIAN NATIONAL ARCHIVES*

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ABSTRACT

One of the most important collections in Hungary for documents containing medieval codex fragments as their binding is the Archives of the Hungarian Treasury, Section E of the Hungarian National Archives (MNL OL) in Budapest. This study will focus on a recently-discovered medieval notated codex fragment, which was used as a cover of a document in the archival records of the Hungarian Chamber. In this archive, documents of the same type are organized into separate groups, subgroups and collections. One of them is the collection known as *Urbaria et Conscriptioes*, marked in the archival order as siglum E 156. The fragment is a complete bifolium of a 14th-century gradual. The two complete parchment leaves, with 11 lines of text and music per page, show the late stage of the Esztergom notation, which also makes it clear that the original manuscript, the 14th-century gradual was copied and used in the medieval Kingdom of Hungary.

Keywords: medieval manuscript fragment, host volume, Hungarian National Archives, urbar, Csábrág Castle, János Krusics

Among the mostly 16th–17th century books and manuscripts with parchments leaves from medieval codices as their covers, of special importance are the official written documents which were produced in large numbers at all levels of ecclesiastical and secular administration in late medieval and early modern Hungary. From time to time they underwent systematic arrangement, ordering and sorting, which often meant

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new binding. Recycled manuscript folios were often used as covers or binding reinforcement, and continued to be used in this secondary role for centuries.

The fragments preserved on official archival documents are of special interest for fragmentological research in at least two respects: (1) As a rule, they were not glued to the corpus of the host manuscript, but rather stitched to it with thread, and instead of cutting or cropping the parchment leaves according to the size of the documents, they were folded to size, so there was no great damage. Consequently, the fragments remained relatively intact, with both sides accessible for research without major restoration work. (2) Official documents were almost always handled, arranged and bound by the institution responsible for producing them, and the binding process took place locally. It seems plausible that in these cases the documents were bound in parchment leaves of medieval codices no longer in use, but not yet discarded. Bound documents can usually be linked to specific years, so the exact date of binding can easily be determined. In this way, a connection can be established between the modern carrier and the medieval fragment serving as its cover, since the information obtained from one is also relevant for the other, and the two sets/types of information can reinforce each other. (This type of connection is absent from the more random coexistence of printed books and their manuscript covers, since the books could have been bound decades after they were printed, and the place of binding was not necessarily the place of printing). Thus, for the researcher looking for the provenance of the mother codex of the fragment, i.e. the place of its origin and use, in order to connect it with the fragment content – including the transmitted repertory, chants and notations – it is much easier to deal with fragments covering handwritten official documents than with those preserved on printed books.

One of the most important collections in Hungary for documents containing medieval codex fragments as their binding is the Archives of the Hungarian Treasury, Section E of the Hungarian National Archives (MNL OL) in Budapest.¹ This section contains the documents of the central financial administration bodies established under the Habsburg government after the Battle of Mohács (1526) and the dissolution of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary. It includes the archival corpuses of the *Hungarian Chamber* (Camera Hungarica, Ungarische Kammer), which operated from 1528 as a provincial treasury subordinated to the Court Chamber in Vienna. Initially located in Buda, it moved its seat in 1529 to Pozsony / Bratislava and there was also a second treasury, the Szepes / Spiš Chamber (Camera Scepusiensis, Zipser Kammer) established in 1567 with its seat in Kassa / Košice in present-day Eastern Slovakia.² Past research has uncovered several medieval codex fragments from both collections.³

¹ Available online: <https://mnl.gov.hu/mnl/ol/magyar_kincstari_leveltarak> (05.04.2025)

² On the role, structure and functions of both chambers, see: EMBER, Győző: *Az újkori magyar közigazgatás története Moháctól a török kiűzéséig* [The history of modern Hungarian administration from Mohács to the expulsion of the Turks]. (= Magyar Országos Levéltár kiadványai, III. Hatóság- és hivataltörténet 1.) Budapest : Magyar Országos Levéltár, 1946.

³ Many of these already appear in the catalogue of Janka Szendrei published in 1981: SZENDREI, Janka: *A magyar középkor hangjegyes forrásai* [Notated sources of the Hungarian Middle Ages]. (= Műhelytanulmányok a magyar zenetörténethez 1.) Budapest : Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1981. Most recently, Fanni Hende summarised the codex fragments recovered and restored from the individual archival units of MNL. These form a special collection of fragments (fond Q 406) in the archives. Cf. HENDE, Fanni: *Az Országos Levéltár*

The following study will focus on a recently-discovered medieval notated codex fragment serving as a document cover in the archival records of the Hungarian Chamber. My focus is not primarily on the analysis of the liturgical-musical content or notation of the fragment, but rather on the broader cultural-historical context connected with the carrier.

The discovery of the fragment in 2020 was due to the pandemic. When cultural institutions – including libraries and archives – were closed in March 2020, for chant scholars a period of virtual library visits and online archival research began. Our Digital Music Fragmentology Research Group, established a few months before the outbreak,⁴ with the support of the Momentum Programme of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences⁵ sought to make the best of this unprecedented situation. From March 2020, we browsed the online catalogues of the historical book collections of Hungarian libraries and archives, and searched for medieval codex fragments in digital photograph archives accessible on the web, including the databases and catalogues on the website of the Hungarian national archives, including the E-section, the Archives of the Hungarian Treasury, which keep the historical documents of the Hungarian Chamber. Documents of the same type are organized into separate groups, subgroups and collections. One of them is the collection *Urbaria et Conscriptioes* marked in the archival order with the siglum E 156.⁶ It was on one of its units, *Fascicle 4 File No. 11*, that we found the fragment during our virtual expedition.

The fragment is a complete bifolium of a 14th-century gradual. (The digital images are shown in **Figure 1–3**, the basic data summarized in **Table 1**, and the liturgical-musical content in **Table 2**.) As explained in the introduction, it is almost completely intact: there has been almost no cropping, but rather folds, and it was not glued to the document, but sewn with a thick thread in two places of the spine. The two complete parchment leaves, with 11 lines of text and music per page, show the late stage of the Esztergom notation, which also makes it clear that the original manuscript, the 14th-century gradual was copied and used in the medieval Kingdom of Hungary.⁷

Mohács előtti gyűjteményében található kódextörödékek [Codex fragments in the Pre-Mohács collection of the National Archives]. In: *TURUL*, Vol. 91, 2018, No. 2, pp. 64–80.

⁴ HAS 'Momentum' Digital Music Fragmentology Research Group, 2019–2024, principal investigator Zsuzsa Czagány. For further information see the research group's website. Available online: <<https://ldzf.zti.hu/en/project/>> (05.04.2025)

⁵ Available online: <<https://mta.hu/lendulet/lendulet-program-105403>> (05.04.2025)

⁶ MNL OL E 156. Available online: <<https://archives.hungaricana.hu/hu/urbarium/>> (05.04.2025)

⁷ The detailed description of the content and notation of the fragment see in: CZAGÁNY, Zsuzsa – GILÁNYI, Gabriella: Egy 14. századi magyarországi graduále töredéke az Országos Levéltárban [Das Fragment eines Graduales des 14. Jahrhunderts im Ungarischen Nationalarchiv]. In: *Magyar Könyvszemle* [Revue pour l'Histoire du livre et de la presse], Vol. 139, 2023, No. 1, pp. 1–21. For a shorter summary see the description of the fragment on the website Fragmenta Manuscriptorum Musicalium Hungariae Mediaevalis, available online: <<https://fragmenta.zti.hu/f941>> (05.04.2025)

Table 1. General information and technical data of the fragment

Genre	Gradual
Date	s. 14
Archives, signature	Hungarian National Archives E 156 Urbaria et Conscriptiones – a. Fasc. 4. – No. 11. (host)
Material	parchment
Extent, condition	1 bifolium, almost complete, detached and restored
Page height and width	455 x 547 mm
Written height and width	307 x 217 (f.1) 307 x 231 mm (f.2)
Stave height	16 mm
Number of lines	11 lines with text and music per page
Script	gothica textualis
Notation	Strigonian
Notation-remarks	4-line staves with lines traced in red, clefs C, F, G, double (C, F) and triple (C, F, G) clefs, no custos.



Figure 1: Fragment before restoration



Figure 2: Fragment after restoration (f. 2v-1r)



Figure 3: Fragment after restoration (f. 1v-2r)

Table 2. Liturgical content of the fragment

Folio	Feast	Genre	Incipit	Mode	CANTUS ⁸	MELODIARIUM ⁹
f.1r	QuT Adv f4	All	Prophetae sancti praedicaverunt*	2	g02341	–
f.1r	QuT Adv f4	Grad	Prope est Dominus	5	g00530	Gr-096
f.1r	QuT Adv f4	Grad-V	Laudens Domini loquetur	5		
f.1r	QuT Adv f4	Off	Confortamini et iam nolite	4	g00509	Off-020
f.1r	QuT Adv f4	Comm	Ecce virgo concipiet et pariet	1	503007	Co-050
f.1r	QuT Adv f6	Intr	Prope esto Domine	4	g00510	In-122
f.1r	QuT Adv f6	Intr-V	Beati immaculati	4	g00510a	In-122
f.1r	QuT Adv f6	Grad	Ostende nobis Domine	2a	g00511	Gr-091
f.1r	QuT Adv f6	Grad-V	Benedixisti Domine terram tuam	2a	g00511a	Gr-091
f.1v	QuT Adv f6	Off	<i>Deus tu convertens</i>		g00499	Off-028
f.1v	QuT Adv f6	Comm	Ecce Dominus veniet	6	g00513	Co-047
f.1v	QuT Adv Sabb	Intr	Veni et ostende nobis	2	g00514	In-160
f.1v	QuT Adv Sabb	Intr-V	Qui regis Israel	2	g00514a	In-160
f.1v	QuT Adv Sabb	Grad	A summo caelo egressio	2a	g00515	Gr-001
f.1v	QuT Adv Sabb	Grad-V	Caeli enarrant gloriam Dei	2a	g00515a	Gr-001
f.1v	QuT Adv Sabb	Grad	In sole posuit tabernaculum	2a	g00517	Gr-072
f.1v	QuT Adv Sabb	Grad-V	A summo caelo egressio	2a	g00517a	Gr-072
f.1v	QuT Adv Sabb	Grad	Domine Deus virtutum	2a	g00519	Gr-037
f.2r	QuT Adv Sabb	Grad-V	Excita Domine potentiam tuam	2a	g00519a	Gr-037
f.2r	QuT Adv Sabb	Grad	Excita Domine potentiam tuam	2a	g00521	Gr-050
f.2r	QuT Adv Sabb	Grad-V	Qui regis Israel	2a	g00521a	Gr-050
f.2r	QuT Adv Sabb	Hy	Benedictus es Domine Deus	7	g00523	–
f.2r	QuT Adv Sabb	Hy	Et benedictum nomen	7	g00523	–
f.2r	QuT Adv Sabb	Hy	Benedictus es in templo sancto	7	g00523	–
f.2r	QuT Adv Sabb	Hy	Benedictus es super thronum	7	g00523	–
f.2v	QuT Adv Sabb	Hy	Benedictus es super sceptrum	7	g00523	–
f.2v	QuT Adv Sabb	Hy	Benedictus es qui sedes	7	g00523	–
f.2v	QuT Adv Sabb	Hy	Benedictus es qui ambulas	7	g00523	–
f.2v	QuT Adv Sabb	Hy	Benedicant te omnes angeli	7	g00523	–
f.2v	QuT Adv Sabb	Hy	Benedicant te caeli terra mare	7	g00523	–
f.2v	QuT Adv Sabb	Hy	Benedictus es in omnibus operibus	7	g00523	–
f.2v	QuT Adv Sabb	Hy	Gloria Patri et Filio	7	g00523	–
f.2v	QuT Adv Sabb	Hy	Sicut erat in principio	7	g00523	–
f.2v	QuT Adv Sabb	Hy	Benedictus es Domine Deus	7	g00523	–
f.2v	QuT Adv Sabb	Tract	Qui regis Israel	8	g00524	Tract-033
f.2v	QuT Adv Sabb	Tract-V	Qui sedes super cherubim	8	g00524a.1	Tract-033
f.2v	QuT Adv Sabb	Tract-V	Beniamyn et Manasse*	8	g00524a.2	Tract-033

Abbreviations: QuT Adv – Quatuor temporum Adventus; f4 – feria quarta; f6 – feria sexta; Sabb – Sabbato; Intr, Intr-V – introitus, versus ad introitum; Grad, Grad-V – graduale, versus ad graduale; All – Alleluia; Off – offertorium; Comm – communio; Hy – hymnus (Canticum Danielis)
Incomplete chants are indicated with an asterisk. Rubricated chants are written in italics.

⁸ Cantus: A Database for Latin Ecclesiastical Chant – Inventories of Chant Sources. Directed by Debra Lacoste (2011–), Terence Bailey (1997–2010), and Ruth Steiner (1987–1996). Available online: <<https://cantusdatabase.org/>> (05.04.2025)

⁹ Melodiarium Hungariae Medii Aevi Digitale. Available online: <<https://melodiarium.zti.hu/en/>> (05.04.2025)

But what kind of document was bound into the bifolium? The host manuscript is a lengthy urbar (urbarium) of 20 pages: a directory of taxation, a register with the tax obligations of Csábrág / Čabrad' Castle – located in the former Hont County in present-day Slovakia – and its surrounding villages, recorded in 1549.¹⁰ According to its inscription the register was made 'tempore et Capitaneatu Johannis Schabrag',¹¹ i.e. during the captaincy of Johannes Schabrag. It gives a census of urbarial services and goods that the listed villages had to submit as taxes to the castle lord. It also names the villages that had to pay taxes to the Turks. The remarks in the census *et turcis servire tenetur* suggest that it was common for inhabitants of the villages – especially for those close to the border of the territory occupied by the Ottoman forces – to pay double taxes, to both the local landlord and to the Turks.

Csábrág Castle established as a manor centre in the 15th century, became part of the system of border castles built during the 16th century, and played an important role in the Hungarian defensive system against Ottoman invasion, primarily protecting the mining towns in the upper part of the country.¹²

From the early 16th century onwards, several different aristocratic families owned the castle: Tamás Bakócz (1497–1521 Archbishop of Esztergom), and the Erdődy, Pálffy, and Balassa families. But who was Johannes, captain of the castle in Csábrág named by the urbarial register? This is none other than János Krusics / Ján Kružič, the brave soldier of Croatian origin, who was appointed captain-general of Csábrág in 1549 by the king. In the following decades, Krusics had a significant career as a castle captain. In 1570, he was ennobled by King Ferdinand and received the title of baron, and in 1574 he also held the office of ispán/župan/comes/count of Liptov County. His life displays the bravery and military valour required in the 16th-century for those of lower origin to enter the Hungarian aristocracy.¹³

The urbarium preserved as the host manuscript of our fragment was compiled in 1549, the year in which Krusics became captain of Csábrág Castle. We can assume that the census was held due to the change of the castle's ownership. On the instructions of his superior, the newly-appointed captain reviewed the income conditions of the castle estate, and prepared a detailed statement regarding the tax obligations of the villages belonging to Csábrág.

¹⁰ The castle ruins of Čabrad' belong today to the village of Čabrad'ský Vrbovok, located in the southeast of Krupina in south-central Slovakia.

¹¹ *Registrum continens possessiones jobagionemim [!] proventuumque animalium numerum arcis Csabrag, Anno p[raesenti] quadregesimo nono tempore et capitaneatu Johannis Schabrag.* MNL OL E 156 – a. – Fasc. 004. – No. 011., 3.

¹² BOROVSKÝ, Samu: *Magyarország vármegyéi és városai. Hont vármegye közései / Csábrágvarbók* [Counties and cities of Hungary. Villages of Hont county / Csábrágvarbók]. Budapest : Országos Monografia Társaság, 1906.

¹³ See also PÁLFFY, Géza: *Kerületi és végvidéki főkapitányok és főkapitány-helyettesek Magyarországon a 16–17. században* [Borderfortress-captain-generals, district-captain-generals and vice-captain-generals on the Hungarian frontier of the Habsburg Empire in the 16th and 17th centuries]. In: *Történelmi Szemle*, Vol. 39, 1997, No. 2, pp. 257–288; *ibid.*: *Utak az arisztokráciába – bárói címszerzők a 16. századi Magyar Királyságban* [Paths to the aristocracy – baronial title holders in the 16th-century Kingdom of Hungary]. In: PAPP, Klára – PÜSKI, Levente (Eds.): *Arisztokrata életpályák és életviszonyok* [Aristocratic careers and living circumstances]. (= *Speculum Historiae Debreceniense* 4.) Debrecen : Debreceni Egyetem Történeti Intézete, 2009, pp. 9–23.

Since our research focuses primarily on the medieval chant manuscript fragment covering the census, it is of interest when, where and under what circumstances the binding was made. The register was obviously compiled locally, under the instructions and supervision of the castle captain, and it may also have received its parchment cover here. However, the completed document – whether bound or unbound – was not kept locally, but – in accordance with the usual practice – was forwarded to the Hungarian Chamber as the competent superior institution. The Chamber, which moved from Buda to Bratislava to escape the Turks in 1531, received official submissions from most parts of the country. After they had undergone administrative processing, they were bound into fascicles.¹⁴ Krusics's urbarium may have arrived in Bratislava in 1549 and this is the latest date on which it could have been bound in the parchment leaf of the 14th-century gradual.

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¹⁴ Cf. EMBER, Győző: *Az újkori magyar közigazgatás története Mohácstól a török kiűzéséig*. (= Magyar Országos Levéltár kiadványai, III. Hatóság- és hivataltörténet 1.) Budapest : Magyar Országos Levéltár, 1946, pp. 119-147.

Summary

FRAGMENT OF A 14TH-CENTURY GRADUAL IN THE HUNGARIAN NATIONAL ARCHIVES

The study discusses the cultural and historical background of a fragment of a 14th century gradual of Hungarian origin, kept in the Hungarian National Archives (Budapest), Section E (Archives of the Hungarian Treasury), as part of the *Urbaria et Conscriptiones* fund. The almost complete, recently detached and restored bifolium, which contains Mass chants of the Ember Days in Advent, served as a cover of the document in *Fascicle 4 File No. 11*, a summary of tax obligations (urbarium) prepared in 1549 at Csábrág / Čabrad' Castle under the captaincy of János Krusics (Ján Kružič). After completion, the document was most likely transferred to the Hungarian Chamber in Pozsony (Bratislava) where, after the usual administrative procedures, it received its cover made from the parchment leaf of a medieval chant manuscript.

Resumé

FRAGMENT GRADUÁLU ZO 14. STOROČIA Z MAĎARSKÉHO NÁRODNÉHO ARCHÍVU

Štúdia sa zaoberá kultúrno-historickým kontextom fragmentu graduálu zo 14. storočia, ktorý pochádza zo stredovekého Uhorska a dnes sa uchováva v Maďarskom národnom archíve v Budapešti, v Sekcii E (Archív uhorských pokladníc) ako súčasť fondu *Urbaria et Conscriptiones*. Takmer kompletne, nedávno zreštaurované bifolium obsahuje omšové spevy na kántrové dni v Advente. Slúžilo ako obal dokumentu vo *Fasciculus 4, No. 11*, ktorý dokladá súpis daňových povinností (urbár) vyhotovený v roku 1549 na hrade Čabrad', v tom čase pod velením kapitána Jána Kružiča. Krátko po vyhotovení bol urbár pravdepodobne presunutý do Uhorskej komory, sídliacej v Bratislave, kde po obvyklom administratívnom procese získal vonkajší obal z pergamenového listu stredovekého notovaného graduálu.