

# THE ORATIO JEREMIAE IN THE CHOIR OF MARTINČEK (SLOVAKIA)

VIKTÓRIA MATÁKOVÁ & FRANCISCO M. GIMENO BLAY<sup>1</sup>

Universitat de València

**Resumen:** El presente artículo analiza los grafiti del interior de la iglesia de Martinček (Eslovaquia), prestando especial atención a la Oratio Jeremiae (Lamentationes Jeremiae 5, 1-3), texto que formaba parte de la liturgia del Sábado Santo.

**Palabras clave:** Grafiti (Martinček Church) / Oratio Jeremiae.

**Abstract:** The present article deals with the graffiti inside the Martinček Church (Slovakia), with special attention to the Oratio Jeremiae (Lamentations of Jeremiah 5, 1-3), a text usually read in Church on Holy Saturdays.

**Key words:** Graffiti (Martinček Church) / Oratio Jeremiae.

The restauration of the church in Martinček, the Slovak Republic, in 2002 has revealed the difuminated remains of a text, written on the left part of the west wall of the nave, in the choir area. This church is located in the Liptov region, a wide valley surrounded and protected by several mountain ranges. The region is located in the Northern part of the republic, about 230 km away from the capital city, Bratislava (fig. 1). The most important population center in this valley has always been Ružomberok, a town that was founded at the crossroads of two historic *viæ magnæ*, and received town rights in 1318. The church of St. Martin was built about 10 km away from this town as a parish church shared by two small neighbouring villages. The chosen place was a hill in the middle of the valley, which gave the church a strategic position. It was built on the lands belonging to the nearby castle of Likava, so it belonged to the royal dominions.

The St. Martin church (Illustr. 2) is a small building, built before 1252 and it is perhaps the oldest church in Liptov. It has just one nave with a rectangular presbytery and a tower attached to the west church wall. The interior of the church was

decorated with frescos that were discovered a few years ago and their dating range between 1300 and 1320. They belong to the corpus of the most ancient gothic mural paintings of Slovakia.<sup>2</sup>

Inside the church, there is a wooden choir attached to the west wall, at present with the entrance from the tower. The choir was built during the third quarter of 19<sup>th</sup> century and it replaced the original one from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, or other subsequent one. In the course of the next centuries the only access to the choir was from the nave, by means of wooden stairs in the southwest corner of the nave.

It was on the west wall of the nave, in the area of the choir, where the restaurators discovered two areas with several texts written in Latin, on the right and left side. On the right side of the wall, on a fairly large surface (170 x 60 cm) there are several texts written with a reddish-ochre-coloured writing instrument. These inscriptions are accompanied by several drawings (angel, knight, head). However, the fragmentary state of the conserved written remains doesn't allow a complete reading, and it is the reason why we cannot know if there is any relation between

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<sup>2</sup> First iconographic analysis of the figures and the musical instruments in MATÁKOVÁ, Viktória. *Kostol sv. Martina biskupa v Martinčeku*. Unpublished degree dissertation. Bratislava: Comenius University, 2006.



Fig. 1. Map of Slovakia, location of the village Martinček.



Fig. 2. St Martin church, 13<sup>th</sup> century.

them. In just one case was it possible to read one complete sentence.

Deus in templis manufactis non habitat

These words were probably written in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It is the quote from Acts of the Apostles (17, 24), which complete version according to the Vulgate Bible is the following:

Deus, qui fecit mundum, et omnia quæ in eo sunt, hic cæli et terræ cum sit Dominus, non in manufactis templis habitat.<sup>3</sup>

In other cases it was possible to individualize and read just a few letters (hra[...][...]nis) or isolated words:

[...]h[...] habens mih[...][...][per]e l

G[...] t[...]...]tus laborat at[...]

Mar[...][...]66[...]

However, at present it is impossible to read these messages and establish connections between them, if any.

That is not the case of the inscription that that most interests us. It is situated on the left side of the west wall, precisely in the area of the old, now nonexistent, stairs, 130 cm above the floor of the current choir. Its reading is quite complex. The outline of the letters has almost disappeared and they are imperceptible because of the deterioration caused by the fact that the surface has been painted over in the past. The writing was executed with a ductile instrument, charcoal-like, the same colour as the others inscriptions.

Surely the text was not placed there by the ecclesiastical hierarchy, since it doesn't present the typical formal features of the solemn writing, assigned by a specific institution for a public place.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, it is not an inscription or a writing made with an adequate instruments that would allow to present a homogeneously organized text. Quite the contrary, the hypotetic writing area where the text is written in, does not have regular lines, but a slight ascendant inclination from left to right. Also, the small dimensions of the writing area, 47'5 x 17 cm, go unnoticed if it is compared with the dimensions of the wall where it is located. On the contrary, if it were an official inscription – understood as one written by the *dominus* of the graphic space–,<sup>5</sup> its material features would be entirely different and would occupy an outstanding place of the wall and, of course, it would not be located in the area of the choir.

The reading of the found text is relatively complicated due to the aforementioned deterioration (fig. 2). However, a closer look allows us to discover some of the letters that formed the original text. It is possible to recognize approximately the following letters:

Oratio ger ... ph... ...record ...d...mi ... d l  
 ...iderit nob... ..... ressp... o...br...l  
 ...tr.m ...editas nra ... vers... ...esst ...l  
 dm pater nr... ..d... ...os pupili f... s...l

The result of the reading seems terribly disheartening and apparently the reconstruction of the text is extremely complex. Nevertheless, the search carried out with some of the almost com-

<sup>3</sup> "God, who made the world and all things therein, he being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands".

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. PETRUCCI, Armando. *La scrittura. Ideologia e rappresentazione*. Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore, 1980, pp. XVII-XXV.

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. PETRUCCI, Armando, 1980 (note 4), pp. XVII-XXV.

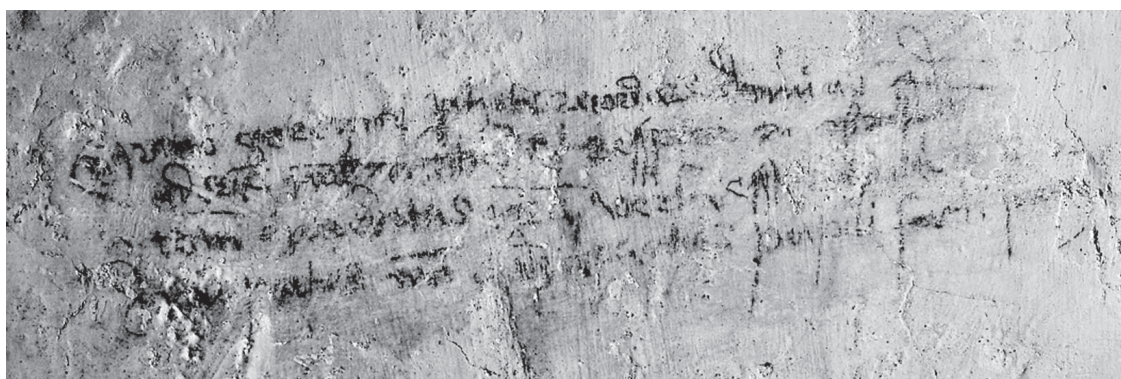


Fig. 3. Inscription of Oratio Jeremiae.

plete words that can be read (*Oratio Ger[eremie], record[are], pupili*) has allowed, with help of the Concordances of the *Holy Scriptures*,<sup>6</sup> to identify and reconstruct the whole meaning of the parietal annotation as a part of Book of Lamentations of Jeremiah, to be precise the fifth lamentation (Lam 5, 1-3).<sup>7</sup> In accordance with this identification the text can be reconstructed as follows:

Oratio Ger[emie] [pro]ph[ete]:<sup>8</sup> Record[are],  
 D[o]mi[ne, qui] d[omi]n[us]  
 [acc]iderit nob[is]; [Intuere et] resp[ice]  
 o[ppro]br[ium] i[er]u[sal]e[m]  
 nos]tr[u]m. [Her]editas nostra vers[a] est [ad alienos]  
 D[o]m[us] pater [nostra] [a]d [extrane]os. Pupil[us]  
 f[acti] s[um]us | [...]

NOTE: The letters that are illegible at present are written in square brackets and the vertical bar indicates the end of each line that forms the mural inscription.

Line 4: "D[o]m[us] pater n[ost]ra", there is a possi-

bility to read: "D[o]m[us] pater n[ost]ri". The word "pater" is an addition, since it does not appear neither in the *Vulgata*, nor in the contemporary manuscripts (neither in *Antiphonarium Bratislavense IIb*, nor in *Antiphonarium Bratislavense IV*), as it could be observed in the transcription included subsequently.

The *Oratio Jeremiae*, the fifth lamentation, is part of the liturgy of Easter Saturday.<sup>9</sup> This *oratio*, Lam 5, 1-11, is read, in effect, in the first nocturn at Matins (*Ad Matutinum in primo nocturno*), in the third reading. The full text of the *Oratio Jeremiae* was found in two late medieval Slovak antiphonaries, *Antiphonarium Bratislavense IIb*<sup>10</sup> (fig. 4) that dates back to the years 1487-1488 and *Antiphonarium Bratislavense IV*<sup>11</sup> (fig. 5) that dates back to the last third of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The first one, *Antiphonarium Bratislavense IIb*, was ordered by *Johannes Han*, a canon of the cathedral of St. Martin of Bratislava, and copied probably in the "scriptorium" of this cathedral and decorated by

<sup>6</sup> FISHER, Bonifatius (ed.). *Novae Concordantiae bibliorum sacrorum iuxta Vulgatam versionem critice editam*, 5 vols. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1977.

<sup>7</sup> For the quotation of all biblical texts we use COLUNGA, Alberto; TURRADO, Laurentio (eds.). *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Clementinam*, 7<sup>a</sup> ed. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1985.

<sup>8</sup> The abbreviation used here is *p̄na*: *propheta*, cfr. CAPPELLI, Adriano. *Dizionario di abbreviature latine ed italiane*, 6<sup>a</sup> ed. Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1979, p. 271 although this abbreviation can be used for *philosophia* as well. The abbreviation of the *p*, which stands for *pro*, allows the first possibility.

<sup>9</sup> Cfr. *Liber Usualis pro dominicis et festis cum cantu gregoriano ex editione Vaticana adamussim excerpto et rhythmicis signis in subsidium cantorum a solesmensibus monachis diligenter ornato*. Paris-Tornaci-Roma-Neo Eboraci: Desclée & Socii, 1956, pp. 758-759. The gregorian musical notation is included.

<sup>10</sup> Nowadays it is conserved in Bratislava. Municipal Archive (Archív mesta Bratislavy), EC Lad. 4; Museum of the city of Bratislava (Múzeum mesta Bratislavy), A-5, A-49, 671/Arch. 29 a, 454/Arch. 1928; Slovak National Archive (Slovenský národný archív), Sign. 4. Cfr. SOPKO, Július. *Codices latini medii aevi bibliothecarum Slovaciae*. Martin: Matica Slovenská, 1981 ("Codices medii aevi qui in bibliothecis Slovaciae assevantur ac olim asservabantur, I"), pp. 50-51 y 75-77; SOPKO, Július. *Codices ac fragmenta codicum bibliothecarum Slovaciae*. Martin: Matica Slovenská, 1986 ("Codices qui in bibliothecis Slovaciae assevantur ac olim asservabantur, III"), pp. 65 y 74; SOPKO, Július et alii. *Bratislavský antifonár II*. Martin: Slovenská národná knižnica, 2000 ("Memoria Slovaciae. Medii Aevi manuscripta") [Bratislava. Univerzita knižnica (University library of Bratislava) SCR.C.00080]

<sup>11</sup> Nowadays conserved in Bratislava. Municipal Archive (Archív mesta Bratislavy), EC Lad. 2; Slovak National Archive (Slovenský národný archív), Kódex n° 2. Cfr. SOPKO, Július, 1981 (note 10), p. 75.

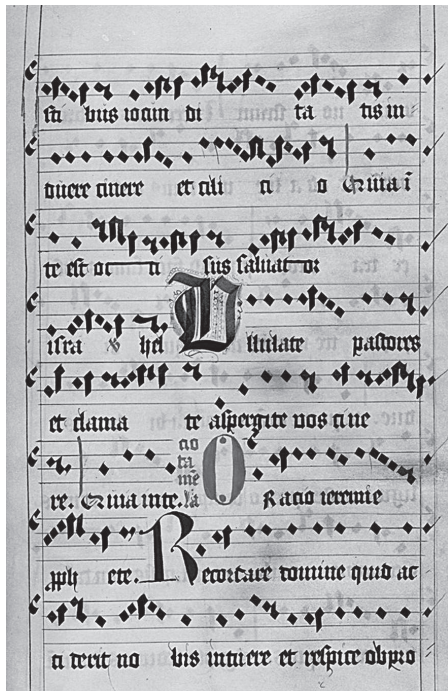


Fig. 4.

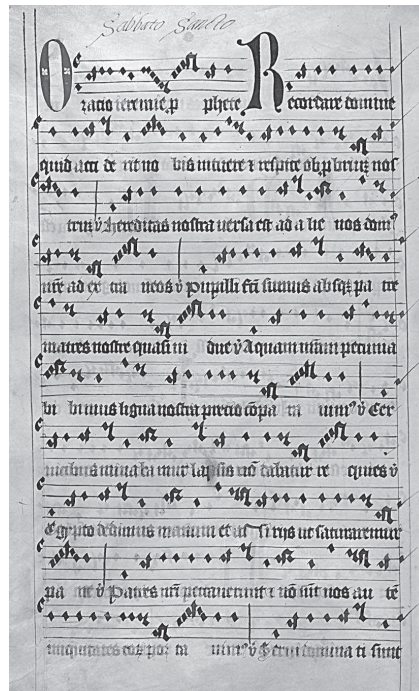


Fig. 5.

Fig. 4. Antiphonarium Bratislavense IIb – folio 192r (currently 313v), 1487-1488.

Fig. 5. Antiphonarium Bratislavense IV – folio 141v, last third of 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Matthias Prenner.<sup>12</sup> As regards the origin of the *Antiphonarium Bratislavense IV*,<sup>13</sup> on the folio 1v this manuscript contains an initial letter (A) with an illustration. Therein St Martin is depicted cutting the cape and giving it to the poor in front of the city walls. This is a decoration that certainly combines two heraldic elements: the city wall and the gate. They are identical to those that appear in the coat of arms of the city of Bratislava. The figure of St Martin represents the chapter of the cathedral, since the cathedral of Bratislava is dedicated to the bishop of Tours.

Both manuscripts include the text of the *Oratio Jeremiae* (in *Sabbato Sancto. Ad Matutinum. In primo Nocturno*). In the following lines we offered the version from the *Antiphonarium Bratislavense IIb*. The transcribed biblical text is Lam 5, 1-11, 16, 19-22. It says:

[192r] **Lamentatio.** Oratio Jeremie prophete. Recordare, Domine, quid acciderit nobis; Intuere, et respice opprobrium<sup>14</sup> nostrum. Hereditas

nostra versa est ad alienos, Domus nostre ad extraneos. Pupilli facti sumus absque patre, Matres nostre quasi vidue. Aquam nostram pecunia bibimus; Ligna nostra pretio comparavimus. Cervicibus minabamur, Lassis<sup>15</sup> non dabatur requies. Egipto dedimus manum, [193r] et Assiriis, Ut saturaremur pane. Patres nostri peccaverunt, et non sunt; Nos autem iniquitates eorum portavimus. Servi dominati sunt nostri; Et non fuit qui redimeret de manu eorum. In animabus<sup>16</sup> nostris afferebamur<sup>17</sup> panem nobis, A facie gladii in deserto. Pellis nostra quasi clibanus exusta est, A [193v] facie tempestatum et famis. Mulieres in Syon humiliatae sunt, Virgines in civitatibus Juda. Cecidit corona capitis nostri; Ve nobis, quia peccavimus! Tu autem, Domine, permanebis, Et solium tuum in generatione et generationem. Quare in perpetuum oblivisceris nostri, Et derelinquis nos in longitudo<sup>18</sup> dierum? Converte nos, Domine, et convertemur; Innova dies nostros, sicut a principio; Sed proiciens repulisti nos, Iratus es contra nos vehementer.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Cfr. SOPKO, Július et alii, 2000 (note 10).

<sup>13</sup> Cfr. SOPKO, Július et alii. *Bratislavský antifonár IV*. Martin: Slovenská národná knižnica, 2007 ("Memoria Slovaciæ. Medii Ævi manuscripta") [Bratislava. Univerzitná knižnica (University Library of Bratislava) SCR.C.01561].

<sup>14</sup> In the original test: *obprobrium*.

<sup>15</sup> In the original test: *Lassis*.

<sup>16</sup> In the original test: *manibus*.

<sup>17</sup> In the original test: *efferebamur*.

<sup>18</sup> For the punctuation of the text we have used FISHER, Bonifatius, 1977 (note 6). COLUNGA, Alberto; TURRADO, Laurentino (note 7).

At present we have insufficient data to approach the authorship of the inscription. However, the script offers some indications. The graphic execution, even if it is not of exceptional quality, reveals a literate person, somebody who knew the brachygraphic system as proved by the use of some abbreviations. The executive ability of the author was altered by the circumstance of writing on the wall, which is a surface that is not prepared for it. As a consequence, the resulting graphic forms show certain unsteadiness in the tracing of the letters and that makes their reading difficult. Moreover, the ink has lost intensity in some words and in others it has almost completely disappeared.

The area of the church where inscription is located, suggests several interpretations regarding the authorship of the text as well. As we have mentioned before, the author had to be a literate person with good command of writing, a person who had to be used to reading and writing in Latin. Perhaps the author of the text knew it by heart, maybe because he sang it or read it in the choir during the liturgy of the Hours, or he just copied it from some breviary or even from the Easter Saturday Mass. Consequently, the person who wrote it on the wall as a reminder had to be a clergyman or a member of the choir of the church in Martinček. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that the parietal inscription begins with a capital letter O (*Oratio*) inside which is a nearly unrecognizable drawing, which resembles a human face. This drawing represents a parallelism to the medieval practice of filling the spaces inside the letters by different drawings.<sup>19</sup>

It is necessary, in conclusion, to propose a dating for the wall inscription. Everything seems to indi-

cate that it must have been written at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The unsteadiness of the graphic forms that derive from the parietal writing, makes it difficult to compare these forms with those of other contemporary manuscripts. Nevertheless, the threatening letter<sup>20</sup> (fig. 6) written by the group of bandits led by Fedor Hlavatý, that was active on the frontier between Slovakia and Poland, presents a very similar handwriting to that one used in the *Oratio Jeremiae*. It was written on 25th July 1493 against the urban patriciate of the town of Bardejov, after the execution of some members of the group.<sup>21</sup> The letter exposes a common handwriting which could be related, among others, to the central European *bastarda* cursive script styles that are present also in library circles since the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, as proved by some contemporary manuscripts.<sup>22</sup> In addition, the graphic execution of some words is very elementary, for example: *Orawa*, *Mvran* (ninth line). The essential graphic features of the alphabet that were used in this letter coincide completely with the script style of the *Oratio Jeremiae* from Martinček.

A research among other reproduced writings and manuscripts from the capital city of Bratislava (in the south-west of the country) and the north area of present-day Slovakia (the region of the town of Žilina in the north-west and the central region of the country, the town of Kremnica) has allowed to corroborate the proposed dating. Among the mentioned manuscripts there are very similar form of letters as the uncial form of *d* (*recordare, domini, acciderit, domus*) found in the Book of Žilina from 1473<sup>23</sup> and in the letter of Menhart from 1479;<sup>24</sup> the lower-case *g* (*geremie*) is similar to those in the letter of Bartoš of

<sup>19</sup> Cfr. As an example: the capital letters **B** (*Beati omnes qui timent Dominum: Ps, 127*; from the antiphon: *Benediximus vobis in nomine Domini: Ps, 128, 8*), y **D** (*De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine: Ps, 129*); cfr. *Antiphonarium Bratislavense IIb*, f. 55v.

<sup>20</sup> Prešov, State Archive – deposit in Bardejov (Štátny archív v Prešove, pobočka Bardejov, Fond Magistrátu mesta Bardejova), sign. 3110/A.

<sup>21</sup> CHALOUPECKÝ, Václav. "Bardějovská listina". *Průdy*, 1923, VII, pp. 34-35; CHALOUPECKÝ, Václav. *Středověké listy ze Slovenska*. Bratislava-Praha: Nakl "Melantricha", 1937; PAULINÝ, Eugen. *Dejiny spisovnej slovenčiny*. Bratislava: Slovenská akadémia vied a umení, 1948, pp. 32-33; HUŠČAVA, Alexander. "Zbojnícke družiny na severovýchodnom Slovensku do roku 1526". *Slovenský národopis*, 1956, IV, n° 4-5, pp. 458-470; HUŠČAVA, Alexander. "O činnosti zbojníckych družín na severovýchodnom Slovensku na konci XV. stor. (Bardejovský výhražný list vo svetle histórie)". *Historické štúdie*, 1956, II, pp. 181-212; HUŠČAVA, Alexander. *Bardejovský výhražný list vo svetle histórie*. Bardejov: Mestský úrad-Regionálne kultúrne stredisko-Štátny okresný archív, 1993.

<sup>22</sup> KIRCHNER, Joachimus. *Scriptura Gothica libraria. A saeculo XII usque ad finem Medii Aevi LXXXVII imaginibus illustrata*. Monachii et Vindobonae: In aedibus Rudolphi Oldenbourg, 1966, tab. 61b. Written in Moravia using the *bastarda* cursive script style, Wien, National Bibliothek, cod. 2828.

<sup>23</sup> Bytča, State Archive – deposit in Žilina (Štátny oblastný archív Bytča, pobočka Žilina), sign. A 1. HUŠČAVA, Alexander. *Dejiny a vývoj nášho písma*. Bratislava: Slovenská Akadémia vied a umení, 1951, p. 248.

<sup>24</sup> Budapest, National Archives of Hungary (Magyar Országos Levéltár), Diplomatikai osztály 18269. CHALOUPECKÝ, Václav, 1937 (note 21), p. 130.

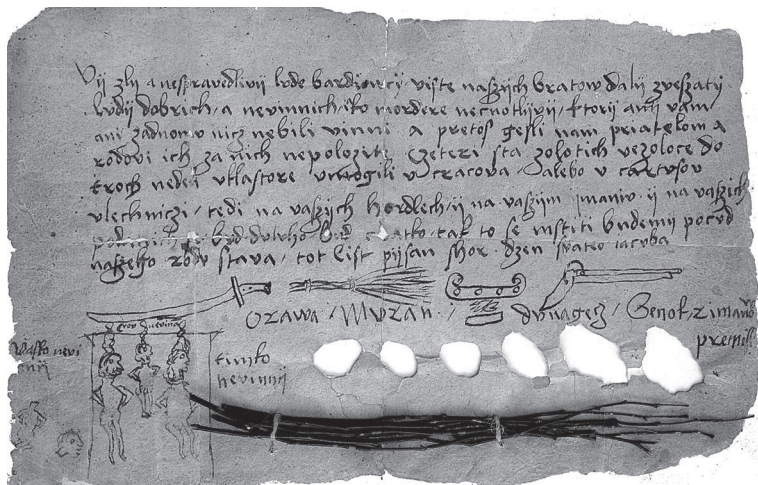


Fig. 6. Threatening letter of Bardejov, written by the group of bandits led by Fedor Hlavatý on 25th July 1493.

Hartvíkovice from 1471,<sup>25</sup> in the letter of Menhart from 1479<sup>26</sup> and also in the Bible of Kremnica from the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century;<sup>27</sup> the round *r* (*oratio, geremie, acciderit*) from the wall inscription is not used in abundance in studied handwritten documents since the straight *r* is usually used there. Nevertheless some documents do use it as for example the sale certificate for Luká Kardoš, inhabitant of Žilina, from 1472<sup>28</sup> and the letters of prior Schomberg from 1458;<sup>29</sup> the inscription contains the high *s* in the beginning and in the centre of the word (*versa, est*), keeping the double-curved *s* for the ends (*hereditas, extraneos*). A similar use was found in the Book of Žilina

from 1473<sup>30</sup> and in the Bible of Kremnica from the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>31</sup> The *v* from the word *versa* in the wall inscription has been found with very similar forms to those in the letter of prior Schomberg from 1458<sup>32</sup> and in the letter of Menhart from 1479.<sup>33</sup> The *b* from *opprobrium* is closed in the upper part as it was found also in the sale certificate for Luká Kardoš, inhabitant of Žilina, from 1472,<sup>34</sup> the Book of Žilina from 1473<sup>35</sup> and the letter of Menhart from 1479.<sup>36</sup>

This quick review of some manuscript testimonies of the mentioned area allows us to verify the hypothesis about the dating around 1493, i.e., at the end of 15<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>25</sup> Budapest, Hungarian National Museum (Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum). CHALOUPECKÝ, Václav, 1937 (note 21), p. 122. The author does not give the topographic signature.

<sup>26</sup> Budapest, National Archives of Hungary (Magyar Országos Levéltár), Diplomatikai osztály 18269. CHALOUPECKÝ, Václav, 1937 (note 21), p. 130.

<sup>27</sup> Kremnica, Parish Library, sign. Cx XVII, fol. 201v. Cfr. SOPKO, Július, 1981 (note 10), pp. 199-200.

<sup>28</sup> Budapest, National Archives of Hungary (Magyar Országos Levéltár), Diplomatikai osztály 17302. CHALOUPECKÝ, Václav, 1937 (note 21), p. 123.

<sup>29</sup> Bratislava, Municipal Archive (Archív mesta Bratislavy), n° 3180 (1458 I 19). Cfr. ŠEDIVÝ, Juraj. *Mittelalterliche Schriftkultur im Pressburger Kollegiatkapitel*. Bratislava: Chronos, 2007, p. 204.

<sup>30</sup> Bytča, State Archive – depóito de Žilina (Štátny oblastný archív Bytča, pobočka Žilina), sign. A 1, HUŠČAVA, Alexander, 1951 (note 21), p. 248.

<sup>31</sup> Kremnica, Parish Library, sign. Cx XVII, fol. 201v (cfr. SOPKO, Július, 1981 (note 10), pp. 199-200.

<sup>32</sup> Bratislava, Municipal Archive (Archív mesta Bratislavy), n° 3180 (1458 I 19). En. ŠEDIVÝ, Juraj, 2007 (note 29), p. 204.

<sup>33</sup> Budapest, National Archives of Hungary (Magyar Országos Levéltár), Diplomatikai osztály 18269. CHALOUPECKÝ, Václav, 1937 (note 21), p. 130.

<sup>34</sup> Budapest, National Archives of Hungary (Magyar Országos Levéltár), Diplomatikai osztály 17302. CHALOUPECKÝ, Václav, 1937 (nota 21), p. 123.

<sup>35</sup> Bytča, State Archive – deposit in Žilina (Štátny oblastný archív Bytča, pobočka Žilina), sign. A 1. HUŠČAVA, Alexander, 1951 (nota 21), p. 248.

<sup>36</sup> Budapest, National Archives of Hungary (Magyar Országos Levéltár), Diplomatikai osztály 18269. CHALOUPECKÝ, Václav, 1937 (nota 21), p. 130.