



RELICS OF A BENEDICTINE LEGENDARY IN SCANDINAVIA?

Notes on fragments nos. 527-529 from the Royal Library and no. 8302 from the Danish National Archives

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This article testifies to the advantages of publishing lists and images of medieval manuscripts and manuscript fragments on the internet. By searching such on-line publications, fragments nos. 527-529 from the Royal Library and no. 8302 from the Danish National Archives have been recognised as originating from the same codex. Codicological and palaeographical analysis places this codex with hagiographical contents (Bede's prosi-metric life of St Cuthbert and Jonas of Bobbio's account of St. Columban) in the years around 1200. Philological analysis links the version of Bede's life of St Cuthbert to a continental tradition rather than directly to an English model. Finally, on the basis of the analysis of the fragments themselves and the circumstances connected with their recycling as covers for the royal customs accounts of Malmø in 1628 it is suggested that the Cluniac monastery of All Saints at Lund might have been the medieval home of this beautifully written monastic legendarium.

The fragments

When I during the fall term 2005 was preparing exercise materials for a course in Latin palaeography and wanted to include material from local archives, it was natural to take advantage of the growing number of interesting web sites offering catalogues and images of medieval manuscripts and manuscript fragments. The web site of the Royal Library¹ had already for a couple of years offered a very useful selection of material, but in the then quite new site liturgy.dk² a high number of hitherto unnumbered, unpub-

¹ Petersen 2004-.

² Ottosen 2002-.

lished and unidentified fragments from the National Archives (RA) were inventoried by Knud Ottosen and Michael Gelting³ and images of these made available to the public. Fragment RA no. 8302 presented itself as well suited for such an exercise, being both relatively old and beautifully written. The parchment fragment is the bottom part of a folio and is used as a folded cover of the Malmø customs accounts from the year 1628. Eventually the text was identified by the class as Venerable Bede's prose life of Saint Cuthbert⁴, written in two columns, and the script was classified as a gothicising minuscule from around 1200.⁵

The following year the Royal Library launched a new web site with fragments of medieval Latin manuscripts⁶, including nos. 527-8 containing Bede's prose life of Saint Cuthbert.⁷ Together with RA 8302 these two fragments appeared to me to make up a full folio, containing the whole text of chapter forty-one and the major part of chapter forty-two. Notes in a hand of probably the late 19th century on both fragments indicate that they too were once attached to Malmø accounts from 1628⁸. These two fragments must have been selected for transfer to the Royal Library while the fragment RA 8203 by chance was left in the National Archives. The editor of the new web site, Erik Petersen, reports that fragment 528 very likely was found or identified later since pencil notes on fragment 527 do not take into account the text contained in fragment 528. Fragment 527 which is the uppermost part of the folio and carries the running title *Vita s(an)c(t)i Cuthberti ep(iscop)i*, was already in 1908 known to Ellen Jørgensen, who briefly reported the finding in her thesis on *Foreign influences during the earliest period of the Danish Church*.⁹

It has been suggested,¹⁰ that fragment 529 of the Royal Library originally belonged to the same codex as 527-528. The script of the fragment, the rul-

³ Gelting 2005-.

⁴ BHL 2021, edition in Colgrave 1940.

⁵ The team of students working with RA 8302 consisted of Anne Bouzy, Line Krag, and Stamatia Noutsou.

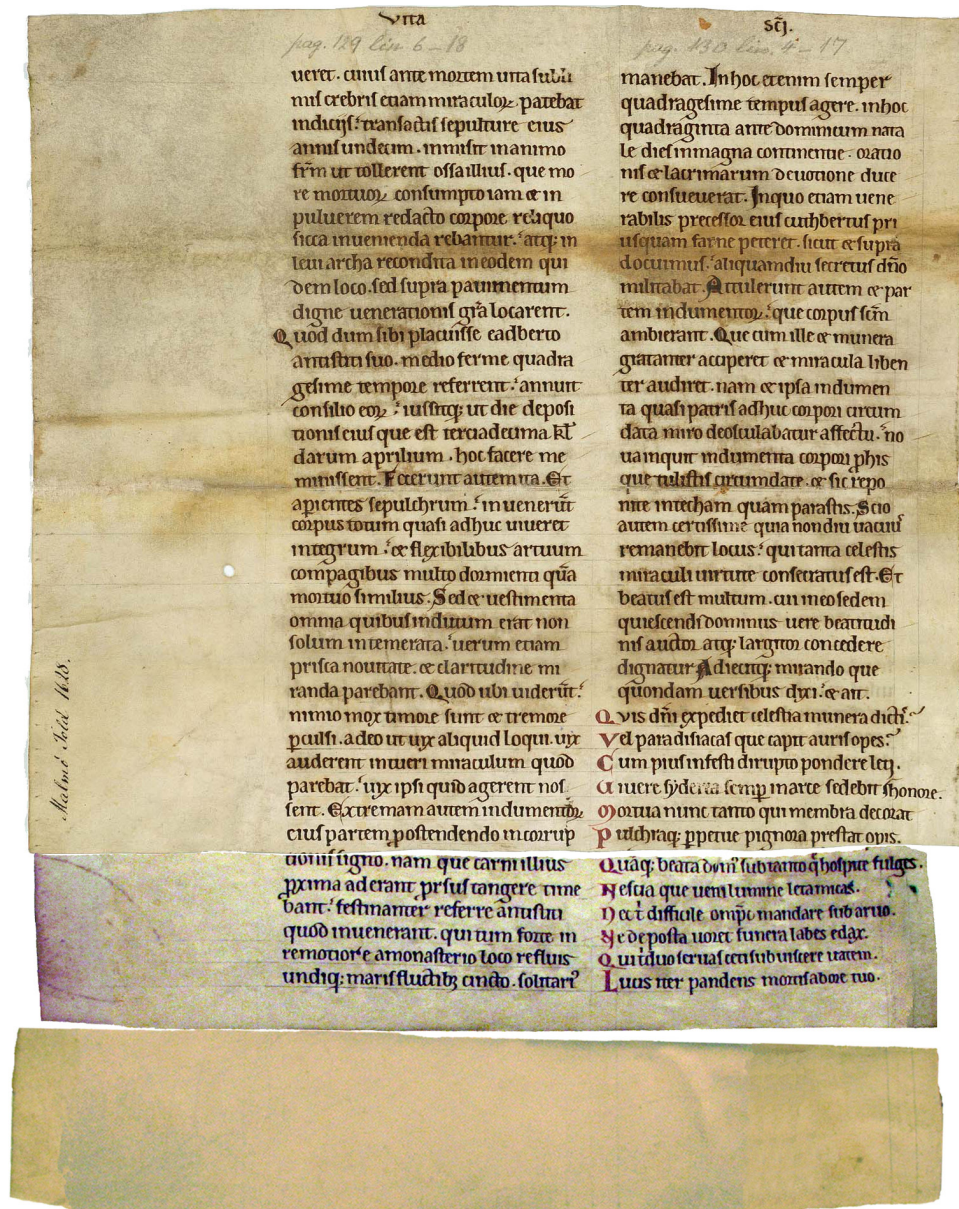
⁶ Petersen 2006-.

⁷ Cf. Petersen 2006, <http://www.kb.dk/permalink/2006/manus/660/eng> (verified 1 April 2007).

⁸ Fragm. Haun. 527: "Malmø Toldregnskab 1628"; Fragm. Haun. 528: "Malmø Told 1628".

⁹ Jørgensen 1908 enumerates p. 79 (199) the known manuscripts and fragments with English saints' lives in versions for use outside the office, including Benedict of Peterborough's life of St. Thomas of Canterbury (= BHL 8170-8174, fragments of which are also contained in RA 576-678), and she concluded that the presence of these texts in Denmark could not be due to coincidence.

¹⁰ Cf. Andersen & Raasted 1983, 17.



Digital reconstruction of the preserved folio (verso) of Bede's prose life of St Cuthbert on the basis of fragments nos. 527-529 from the Royal Library (photo: Det Kongelige Bibliotek) and fragment no. 8302 from the Danish National Archives (photo: Christian Troelsgård)

ing and width of the margin appear indeed to be identical with those of the three fragments mentioned above, and as it contains hagiography too, namely a part of *Vitae Columbani abbatis discipulorumque eius* by Jonas of Bobbio,¹¹ this suggestion seems reasonable.

The script and the lay-out

The script is a 'transitional' minuscule with clearly gothicising features, giving a fairly broad and rounded impression. Bows do not 'bite' each other, except in the collocation *pp*. Upright ascenders are seen in c. 75% of the occurrences of *d*, alternating with rounded *d*. Ascenders are short and have triangular tops, occasionally with a slight tendency to fork shape, moderate serifs are seen at the feet of almost all minims, but no apparent tendency to broken shafts can be noticed. The bow of claw-shaped *h* crosses regularly the baseline, and *capitalis*-shaped *s* is seen, though only in c. 30 % of the occurrences of *s* in final positions, including the occasional use of super-script *s*. Double *ii* are furnished with small hair-strokes, and the latter *i* takes the shape of *i longa*, crossing the base line. The most common ligatures are *et* and *o* with *r rotundum*. *S-t* and *c-t* ligatures are frequent, but the latter give a fairly artificial impression. The script does not employ *e caudata*, Tironian *et* is absent, and the scribe has used only few abbreviations. Words split between lines are marked with hair-strokes, and the punctuation system involves three signs which we might call *punctus*, *punctus circumflexus*, and *interrogatio*. Initials are embellished with red strokes, versals (*verso*) written in red ink, rubric initial (*recto*) with red and blue colour.

The lay-out is based on two columns of 39 lines each, making up a writing surface of c. 286 x 198 mm including the space between the columns. The total size of the now reconstructed parchment folio (see plate),¹² which has been trimmed at the top edge, is c. 378 x 298 mm. These observations taken into account, I would date the manuscript to the period around 1200, perhaps more likely before the centenary. With these characteristics, the script appears rather central European than Northern French or English. In addition, the low frequency of abbreviations, the carefully rendered punctuation, and the great size of the codex may point in direction of a book for reciting aloud.

¹¹ BHL 1898, Ionas Bobiensis: *Vita s. Columbani abbatis discipulorumque eius libri II*, in *Passiones vitaeque sanctorum aevi Merovingici*, 2, eds. Krusch 1902 and Tosi 1965.

¹² The image (*verso*) is processed on the basis of a digital image from the Royal Library, Copenhagen, and my own photos of the fragments in the National Archives. Fragment 8302 of the National Archives (the two bands at the bottom of the picture) is slightly curved due to the attachment to the accounts. *Fragmenta hauniensia* 527-528 have been skilfully spliced together by the conservators at the Royal Library. Marks of folding and tiny needle holes from the binding of the accounts are visible in each of the three sections.

The texts

Very little is left from Jonas' life of St. Columban of Luxeuil/Bobbio and it is not reasonable to try to place this text in relation to the textual tradition. The reconstructed folio from the life of St Cuthbert, however, renders the miraculous cure of a boy by means of mud made from the earth where the waste water from the cleansing of St Cuthbert's dead body had once been poured out (Ch. 41) and the finding of the saint's incorrupt body eleven years after his death, including abbot Eadbert's praise of that event, transformed by Bede into nine elegiac couplets (Ch. 42)¹³, and this portion of text seems to be sufficient for such an analysis. Colgrave's edition lists a total 115 variant places over the two chapters represented in the Copenhagen fragments, but leaving aside insignificant orthographic variation and adding new readings from the Copenhagen fragment, only forty-four variant readings of interest for the study of the textual tradition remain. Colgrave established with reference to major *lacunae* two main groups of manuscripts, of which the first one, comprising the oldest manuscripts,¹⁴ can be divided into two subgroups, *Am* and *An*, and the second one, mostly comprising later manuscripts though generally offering a better text, divides into three branches, *Bx*, *By*, and *Bz*. The Copenhagen fragments exhibit five readings not shared by any one of the manuscripts reported by Colgrave. Amongst these independent readings one is decidedly a scribal mistake,¹⁵ one is a simple transposition and two readings attest to a not too deep understanding of the Latin text,¹⁶ while the last one, *sedebit* for *dabit* in the pentameter *Uiure siderea semper in arce dabit* (<when the merciful Lord> will grant <us> to live eternally in the starry citadel) is in open conflict with the metre. Bede, himself author of a popular handbook on Latin metres, draws in his own verses heavily on the poetic language of the classics, but a study of the eighteen verses in chapter forty-two, reveals that his loans are always indirect and go through the earlier Christian poetry with which he was

¹³ These verses do not form part of Bede's metrical life of St. Cuthbert; in the prose (or rather prosimetrical) life they are introduced with the phrase *que quondam versibus dixi* (Ch. 42) and they may have belonged to the lost work *Liber epigrammatum heroico metro, siue elegiaco*, that appears on the list of Bede's works at the end of his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, together with the entry on his two lives of St. Cuthbert: "Vitam sancti patris monachi simul et antistitis Cudbercti, et prius heroico metro et postmodum plano sermone, descripsi."

¹⁴ Colgrave 1940, 45-50. The A-group comprises the famous manuscript Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, no. 183, early 10th c., which comprises also Bede's metrical life of St. Cuthbert and an illuminated page of dedication which has been linked with king Aethelstan's gift (c. 930) to the see at Chester-le-Street, later transferred to Durham.

¹⁵ Ch. 41, *per orcismi gratiam* for *per exorcismi gratiam*.

¹⁶ Ch. 42 (rubric) *repertum sit* for *sit repertum*; Ch. 42 *festinanter* for *festinarunt*; Ch. 42 *veni* for *nevi* (ie. for 'naevi', which is indeed a rare and 'poetic' word).

deeply versed.¹⁷ The definitely wrong reading *sedebit* for *dabit* might be an attempt at interpreting the obscure meaning of the verses, at the cost of switching the last foot of the pentameter into hexameter-ending!¹⁸

In all of the remaining thirty-eight variant places the fragments agree with the subgroup *Bz*, they follow manuscripts of family *Bx* in between thirty-one and thirty-five places, agree with the group *An* in twenty-nine places, the family *By* in twenty-four places, and, finally, follow the group *Am* only in thirteen to sixteen places. The three readings that unite the family *Bz* and our fragments against the other groups of manuscripts are (Ch. 41, Colgrave 1940, 290, line 10) *sancta loca* for *loca sancta*, (Ch. 42, Colgrave 1940, 294, line 11) *cum* instead of *dum*, and (Ch. 42, Colgrave 1940, 294, line 14) *pignora* against *pignore*. It seems therefore evident that the codex from which our fragments stem belonged to the family *Bz*. Colgrave delivers a very precise description of this group of six manuscripts:

... there are some half-dozen cases where the group agrees in a word-order different from the rest of the MSS ... Another connection between the group is that the Prose Life is followed by a series of twenty-eight miracles consisting of the usual two chapters from the *Historia Ecclesiastica* as well as nine chapters of miracles and seventeen other chapters from the *Brevis Relatio*, all in the same order... It is probable that this group goes back to an exemplar carried across to the Continent in the mid-twelfth century; there is not sufficient evidence to show that any one of the group was the exemplar. Four of them ... belonged to Cistercian houses and it is quite possible that the other two were also copied in a Cistercian house on the Continent, most likely in North or Central France.

Some of the manuscripts include this block of hagiographical material on St. Cuthbert (feast on 20 March) as a part of seasonal legendaries in many volumes, as does for example the manuscript Montpellier, Faculty of Medicine, MS I, that once made up the second part (February-March) of a huge Clairvaux legendary in eight volumes, while others seem to focus on a selection of English saints, old ones such as Sts. Aidan, Oswald and Dunstan,¹⁹ and

¹⁷ E.g. v1 *caelestia munera* (from Propertius through Iuvencus, *Evangelii libri* 4.912); v4 *siderea arce* (from Valerius Flaccus perhaps through Prudentius, *Liber Apotheoseos*, 334; v11 *lucis iter* (probably Propertius via Valerius Flaccus through Arator, *Historia Apostolica* 2.118); v17 *Fariam... humum* (probably from Lucanus through Cyprianus Gallus' use of this geographical adjective to describe the Egyptian servitude, e.g. *Heptateuchos*, *Exodus*.80 or *Numeri*.351).

¹⁸ Cf. e.g. Verg. *Aen.* 6.616 and Iuvencus, *Evangelii libri* 4.260 about the eternal enthronement of Christ.

¹⁹ E.g. a hagiographical compilation once belonging to Vauclair, now Laon, Bibliothèque Publique 163 bis.

fairly recent ones like Thomas Becket.²⁰ None of the manuscripts cited by Colgrave, though, includes the life of St. Columban of Luxeuil/Bobbio (feast on 21 or 23 November) and the codex from which the Copenhagen fragments have been preserved had probably a different profile though textually dependent on Colgrave's Cistercian *Bz*-group. Therefore, I have searched the library catalogues for more versions of Bede's prose life in order to find it in constellation with the life of St. Columban of Luxeuil/Bobbio. Listings of English manuscripts yielded no result. On the continent, however, at least one such manuscript exists, namely Darmstadt, Hessische Landes- und Hochschulbibliothek Hs 752, an eleventh-twelfth century-codex from the Benedictine monastery Grafschaft in Nordrhein-Westfalen, catalogued as *Vitae Sanctorum*.²¹ This manuscript, which is partly palimpsested,²² contains in its upper layer (*Romanische Buchschrift* of the 12th c. according to the catalogue) on fols. 1^v-48^v Bede's prose life of St. Cuthbert, and on fols. 48^v-84^v Jonas' life of St. Columban. The remaining folios of the codex encompass in the same script the *Visio Baronti* and the passion of the Cologne bishop and Benedictine abbot of Stavelot-Malmedy, Agilulf (eighth c.),²³ and in a late Carolingian minuscule (eleventh c.?) Walahfrid Strabo's life of St. Gall,²⁴ disciple of St. Columban. Irrespective of St. Columban's and St. Gall's adherence to Celtic monastic regulations, they were by the 12th century both considered to be venerable abbots and reformers within the Benedictine movement. Placed in a context with the life of St. Cuthbert of Lindisfarne, of a local Benedictine abbot-bishop, and of a contemplative text as the *Visio Baronti*, the collection seems to me to have a distinct monastic, if not Benedictine, mark. The manuscript Darmstadt 752 was produced in the scriptorium at Grafschaft,²⁵ which was founded in the second half of the eleventh century and populated with monks from the neighbouring Siegburg (Abtei Michaelsberg), which itself was founded few years earlier with close ties to the Piemontese centre of Cluniac reform, Fruttuaria.²⁶ There is, however, no direct connection between the text of *Vita Cuthberti* in Darmstadt 752 and our fragments, as the former belongs to Colgrave's group *Am*.

The textual tradition of our fragments depends with certainty on a continental reception of Bede's life of St. Cuthbert and has no direct connection

²⁰ E.g. a hagiographical compilation once belonging to Cîteaux, now Dijon, Bibliothèque Publique 574 (334).

²¹ Staub *et al.* 1979, 180-182.

²² Lowe 1963, no. 43.

²³ *Passio Agilolfi*, BHL 145.

²⁴ BHL 3247-49.

²⁵ Staub *et al.*, 180

²⁶ Cf. Bischoff 1979.

with the English manuscript tradition.²⁷ Further, the constellation of Sts. Cuthbert's and Columban's lives not only points in that same direction, but it might also suggest a Benedictine rather than a Cistercian orientation.

The possible contexts

Finally, the presence of fragments from such a hagiographical collection in Malmö customs accounts for 1628 deserves a few thoughts. Fortunately, information of the 'secondary provenience' has been preserved in almost the whole body of Danish fragment material, i.e. indication of date and place of origin of the specific items to which the parchment fragments were attached in the 16th and 17th centuries. Such pieces of information are of major importance for the evaluation of the fragments as sources of the cultural history in Medieval Scandinavia.²⁸ The essential questions are the following: Was the codex produced in Scandinavia or some other place? Was the codex used in Scandinavia or was the codex/loose parchment sheets imported later as raw material for the binding of accounts? Was the codex demolished and recycled for binding purposes locally, in this case at Malmö customs chamber,²⁹ or centrally, i.e. at the Royal accounts chamber, *Rentekammeret*? All of these situations have in fact been documented in previous works on the Danish fragments³⁰ and, therefore, all possibilities should be considered. With regard to the production of the manuscript, it seems to be very difficult, if not impossible, to decide whether or not the original codex was written e.g. in Scania or another part of medieval Denmark. A transitional script of probably Danish origin and in many respects similar to the one of the fragments discussed here is seen in NKS 869 g 4^o, the famous Angers fragment of Saxo Grammaticus' *Gesta Danorum*. The general impression, however, is that the script in our fragments is somewhat more uniform in its aspect, the ascenders are much shorter, the bodies of the letters more rounded, the forks on ascenders much less developed, and the percentages of curved *d* and final *s* in *capitalis*-shape are different. The exchanges be-

²⁷ The Durham-group is named Ax by Colgrave, and the supposed exemplar for the Az-group was closely tied to that group, see the enumeration of coincidences above.

²⁸ Karlsen 2006 writes p. 17: "The fact that only few fragments are still attached to the account books facilitates the reconstruction work", but it must be considered no less than disaster to fragment studies, if the secondary provenience is not known.

²⁹ The newly appointed mayor of Malmö, Peder Berthelsen, delivered 29 April 1629 the customs money for 1628, accompanied by at least three sets of accounts, each covering a specific category of goods, to the king Christian the Fourth's customs officer in Copenhagen, Jonas Heinemark. It is very likely, that the now reconstructed folio was cut in three equal parts to reinforce the bindings of the three fascicles containing the 1628 accounts. Heinemark's letter of receipt is preserved unbound in the fascicle.

³⁰ These basic problems inevitably connected with the study of medieval Scandinavian parchment fragments are convincingly summarised and exemplified by Tortzen 1999.

tween Scandinavian and foreign scriptoria must have been considerable, but in the absence of a clearly identifiable hand for comparison, secure localisation of manuscripts with transitional scripts based alone on palaeographical criteria is probably impossible. A continental origin seems, however, more likely to me.

The only diocesan *sanctorale* outside England³¹ that includes an office for St. Cuthbert is that of Nidaros (*Trondheim*).³² This office is fully dependent on an early twelfth-century secular redaction of the Durham monastic office,³³ but even if portions of the readings go back to Bede's texts on the saint, the transmission of the office is totally independent of that of the two lives. Given that the text of the life of St. Cuthbert in the Copenhagen fragments with all probability is derived from a continental source, a Norwegian connection seems not plausible.

In Denmark, English Benedictines from Evesham, Worcestershire, populated right from beginning of the twelfth century the monastic community of St. Canute the King at Odense, and from the 1130's English influences were strong also at Ringsted, where monks from Odense went to the monastery of St. Knud Lavard (St. Canute the Duke). Learned monks, the successors of Ailnoth of Canterbury and Robert of Ely, did bring books and texts concerning English saints to Denmark, as it has been shown that elements of originally English offices have been adapted for the celebrations of the two Canutes.³⁴ The reading and study of the life of St. Cuthbert would have fitted very well into such a monastic context, had it not been for the decidedly continental profile of the textual transmission of the fragments in question. To continue along this line of thought, any (Scandinavian?) Cistercian or Benedictine house could have produced, imported, possessed, and/or used the legendary from which our fragments have been detached.

Malmø customs accounts of 1632 are bound with fragments of *Statuta synodalia Nicolai Hermanni, episcopi Lincopensis*,³⁵ and this must imply that at least a part of the parchment used for the protection of Malmø accounts during those years was of Scandinavian origin. Now, only few ac-

³¹ The archdiocese comprised ten bishoprics: Bergen, Stavanger, Hamar and Oslo (Norway), Kirkjubø (The Faeroes), Skálholt and Hólar (Iceland), and Garðar (Greenland), but also Peel (Isle of Man) and Kirkwall (The Orkneys). In a certain sense, thus, the see of Nidaros was not far from "England".

³² Gjerløw 1979, 165-167.

³³ Hohler 1956, 157.

³⁴ Bergsagel 1975.

³⁵ National Archives nos. 1529-1530, see Gelting 2005-. Niels Hermansson's episcopate fell between 1374 and 1391. The *Statuta Synodalia Nicolai Hermanni* have been published by Reutherdahl 1841, 56-85.

counts from the Malmø customs chamber seem to have been preserved,³⁶ but there are fair chances that also our fragments belonged to a codex used somewhere in Scandinavia, if the parchment were supplied from local sources and the binding took place locally. The Linköping diocese is situated at quite a distance from the then Danish Malmø, but occasionally fragments of Swedish origin turn up in seventeenth-century accounts from Denmark's eastern provinces. If one should look for a Benedictine monastery of some importance within a shorter distance of Malmø, the *Monasterium Omnium Sanctorum* at Lund might be a qualified candidate. The position of that monastery as the head of all Benedictines within the archdiocese of Lund from c. 1206³⁷, its adherence to the family of Cluny and its strong connections to Central Europe³⁸ might strengthen my hypothesis, though I must admit that there are several other possibilities.³⁹

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³⁶ Royal Library, fragments nos. 466-467 (Malmø customs accounts 1633) contain parts of John Cassian's *Collationes* III, 21, 33-35 from one codex of the twelfth-thirteenth century, see also Andersen & Raasted 1983, 15. The *Collationes* were obligatory reading in all Benedictine monasteries, cf. *Regula Benedicti* ch. 42. Further fragments from Malmø (1628-1632) are National Archives nos. 8294-8302, 8304-8305, and 8308-8315, which are all tiny fragments from late medieval missals and antiphoners (fifteenth-sixteenth c.), see Ottosen 2004-.

³⁷ *Diplomatarium Danicum*, 1. Række, 4. bind (1200-1210), 111, Letter of 18 January 1206, pp. 217-218.

³⁸ Depoin 1917, no. 650, pp. 253-254, a letter from Hugo V, abbot of Cluny 1199-1207: "Notum sit omnibus qui presens scriptum legerint vel audierint quod donnus Hugo quintus, abbas Cluniacensis, assensu et voluntate donni [Auscul]phi prioris et tocius capituli, dedit J., abbati ecclesie Omnium Sanctorum Lun[die], Petro de Oratorio cum omnibus fratribus et sororibus in Datia commanentibus, societatem ut fratribus Cluniacensis ecclesie et plenariam participationem omnium beneficiorum que fiunt apud nos et in omnibus locis nostris...."

³⁹ Mejer & Raasted 1973 suggested that a late twelfth-century codex containing the Latin version of Josephus, reconstructed from fragments protecting Elsinore and Helsingborg accounts of the late sixteenth c., once belonged to the library of the Cistercian monastery at Esrom (Sealand) or that at Herrevad (Scania); if the present hagiographic collection was used at a Cistercian rather than a Benedictine community, places as Alvastra and Nydala, both situated in the diocese of Linköping, are together with Herrevad the most likely candidates.

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