

# THOMAS BECKET, CLAIRVAUX, AND RINGSTED: SAINTLY DIVERSITY AND EU- ROPEAN INFLUENCES IN A TWELFTH- CENTURY FRAGMENTARY LEGENDARY FROM DENMARK

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**Summary:** This article examines a collection of saints' lives from c. 1200, preserved as fragments in the Danish National Archives and the Royal Library.<sup>1</sup> Half of the fragments transmit material related to Thomas Becket: Benedict of Peterborough's miracles, John of Salisbury's vita, and an anonymous account of King Henry II's penance in Canterbury. The presence of the two latter works in Denmark, as well as that of some of the other legends represented amongst the fragments, are identified and discussed here for the first time. Based on the contents and provenance of the fragments, a link to Ringsted abbey is suggested.

## Introduction

It is a well-known fact that only a small number of the books that once existed in medieval Denmark have survived intact.<sup>2</sup> As was the case in other Nordic countries, manuscripts were dismembered on a large scale in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, their parchment reused for

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- 2 For an overview of known monastic books from medieval Denmark, see Langkilde 2005.

other purposes – for instance as binding material. The fragment collections of the Danish National Archives and the Royal Library in Copenhagen hold respectively c. 7000 and c. 3000 fragments from medieval books used to bind accounts from administrative units in the early modern Danish state.<sup>3</sup> These fragments have received varying amounts of attention over the years, with some scholars questioning their value as source material due to uncertainties of provenance.<sup>4</sup> Others, however, have argued for the fragments' potential to shed light on medieval Danish book culture through case studies of reconstructed books and/or linking the fragment material to known manuscripts.<sup>5</sup> The identification of fragments stemming from the same book is an important step towards gaining a clearer picture not only of the original manuscript, but of the context in which it was copied and used. The reconstructed manuscript thus has the potential to illuminate the wider cultural situation at the time of its production, even when most of the contents have been lost.

This article examines such a case, namely a large-scale legendary transcribed towards the end of the twelfth century and preserved in 29 identified fragments in the National Archives and the Royal Library in Copenhagen. The legendary contains material for saints known to have been celebrated in Denmark, such as St Nicholas, as well as some whose cults are less common in a Danish context, notably St Ecgwine, St Romaricus, and St Trophimus. Half the fragments transmit material for Archbishop Thomas Becket of Canterbury, who was slain in his own cathedral in 1170; most of these fragments consist of Benedict of Peterborough's collection *Miracula Sancti Thomae*. The presence of this work in the Danish fragment material, including in the manuscript in question, has been noted in the earlier literature; however, it has not previously been observed in the scholarship that the fragments of this legendary also contain John of Salisbury's vita of the saint, as well as an anonymous account of the rebellion against King Henry II (formerly published as part of the miracle collection of William of Canterbury). This latter text is known from only two other twelfth-century manuscripts, one from Winchester

3 Heikkilä & Ommundsen 2017: 9.

4 Notably Tortzen 1999. On the lack of systematic studies to address this question, see Gelting 2017.

5 See for instance Rossel 2020; Ommundsen 2020; Troelsgård 2007; Myking 2018.

and one from Clairvaux, and its presence in the Danish manuscript thus testifies to the links with the European elites that had been established by the end of the twelfth century. Considering this new information about the contents of the legendary, as well as material aspects of its surviving fragments, I propose that the manuscript was compiled in Denmark and that its place of production may have been Ringsted, a wealthy institution with close ties to the royal line of Knud Lavard. This theory is supported by the secondary provenance of the fragments, which were all used as binding material on accounts from Sjælland.

### **Background: Thomas Becket and the cult of saints in Denmark**

The slaying of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, in his own cathedral on 29 December 1170 sent shockwaves through Europe. The murder occurred when a group of knights serving King Henry II – though acting on their own initiative – tried to arrest the archbishop, following the latter's conflict with Henry over the rights and independence of the English Church. In the aftermath, stories of miracles taking place in Canterbury quickly started to spread, documented in the miracle collections of Benedict of Peterborough and William of Canterbury, and a cult dedicated to Thomas Becket rapidly emerged, leading to his canonisation in 1173. Within a few years, the veneration of Saint Thomas was leaving traces across Europe, in the form of liturgical commemorations, paintings, carvings, and sculpture.<sup>6</sup> Denmark was no exception, as evidenced by the wall paintings of St Michael's church at Sønder Nærå, Fyn, which depict the murder in Canterbury. These paintings can be dated due to their strong similarities to representations of the same scene found in other images from the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.<sup>7</sup> A similar date (c. 1200) has been attributed to the baptismal font of Lyngsjö in Skåne, unusual in that it portrays King Henry II as directly responsible

6 On the rapid spread of Thomas's cult, see Duggan 2016; and Slocum 2002: 98-126.

7 Haastrup 2003: 135.

for the murder.<sup>8</sup> The wall paintings of Sønder Nærå, on the other hand, remain neutral about the king's role.<sup>9</sup> Their resemblance to other visual depictions elsewhere in Europe suggests not only that an iconographic convention had already been established, but also that this convention had been imported to Denmark, to the point of influencing the decoration of smaller parish churches.

The Danish royal family are highly likely to have played a part in bringing the cult in Denmark, or at least in having promoted its popularity. In his collection of Thomas Becket's miracles, William of Canterbury include three that are related to Denmark. The first of these describe a ship in Slesvig that due to its size could not be launched until Saint Thomas was promised a hundred pounds of wax for every journey made by the ship.<sup>10</sup> According to William, King Valdemar I owned a stake in this ship, which suggests the transmission of the miracle happened through someone connected to the royal family, or possibly a member of the guilds dedicated to St Knud.<sup>11</sup> The second miracle tells of an envoy named Clemens, who was sent by Queen Sophia, Valdemar's wife, to her father in Russia, but who was captured by Wends.<sup>12</sup> Valdemar and Sophia's son, King Knud VI, was then put in charge of a fleet and, alongside the archbishop, he captured the castle where Clemens was held prisoner, liberated the envoy, and conquered the Wends.<sup>13</sup> The miracle account attributes this victory to the intervention of Thomas Becket, to whom Clemens had prayed for help, and whom he had seen the night before the Danish conquest, accompanied by the archbishop. Therefore, in William's words, Saint Thomas "was highly regarded" (*magnus haberetur*) in Denmark. The third miracle describes how a canon of Lund named Sven

8 Antonsson 2015: 395. It has been suggested that this font may have been commissioned by Queen Gertrud (d. 1197), wife of King Knud VI and daughter of Duke Henry "the Lion" of Saxony (Lind 2021: 39-40).

9 Haastrup 2003: 139.

10 Robertson 1875: vol. I, 317-18.

11 Lind 2021: 39.

12 Robertson 1875: vol. I, 543-44.

13 The archbishop is not named in the text, but he can be identified as Absalon due to Saxo's account of the events, which are presented as taking place after Eskil's retirement (Lind 2021: 35-36).

was ill to the point of being paralysed, until he vowed to go on a pilgrimage to Canterbury.<sup>14</sup> This miracle is not dated, but may have been transmitted to Canterbury alongside the Clemens miracle.<sup>15</sup> It seems clear, then, that not only did Thomas Becket quickly come to be venerated in Denmark, but Danes, probably including people with close links to the royal family, also brought their own miracle stories with them to Canterbury, where they were documented by William.

The introduction of this new cult to Denmark, while swift, followed a pattern that had been in place for a long time, that of Danish veneration of English saints. Due to the close connections between England and Denmark, which began during the Anglo-Saxon period and were particularly strong in the first half of the eleventh century, yet did not cease after the Norman Conquest of 1066, saints such as Alban and Botolph were venerated widely.<sup>16</sup> Such veneration left traces in the emerging Danish book culture, where saints were included in calendars, martyrologies, missals, and legendaries. The latter genre consists of collections of saints' legends, that is, stories of saints' lives and/or their miracles intended to be read aloud on the saint's feast day. While there are no complete surviving legendaries from Denmark, fragments from manuscripts belonging to this genre have been identified in various collections over the years, thus complementing our knowledge of medieval Danish cults of saints.

In 2007, for instance, Christian Troelsgård identified Bede's life of St Cuthbert, transmitted in four fragments from a legendary penned c. 1200, as belonging to a continental rather than an English tradition.<sup>17</sup> Based on textual traits as well as the provenance of the fragments, Troelsgård suggested the possibility that the legendary stemmed from the monastery of All Saints (*Monasterium Omnium Sanctorum*) near Lund.<sup>18</sup> Some years later, I identified a group of fragments spread across the Norwegian and Danish National Archives, as well as the University Library of Lund, as probably being part of a copy of the Flemish legend collection *Legendarium Flandrense*, a collection important in a Danish context as it

14 Robertson 1875: vol. I, 544-45.

15 Lind 2021: 32.

16 Jørgensen 1909: 17-21; Gelting 2007: 100-1.

17 Troelsgård 2007: 7-8. The fragments in question are KB 527-529 and DRA 8302.

18 Troelsgård 2007: 10.

transmits Ailnoth of Canterbury's *Gesta Swenomagni regis et filiorum eius*, "the oldest history of Denmark".<sup>19</sup> The fragments may have stemmed from the Cistercian house of Herrevad, which owned the one known Danish manuscript to have transmitted this text – the Codex Huitfeldianus, which was lost in 1728, and which I proposed may in fact have been one of the volumes forming part of the Danish *Legendarium Flandrense*, the fragments stemming from other volumes of the same copy.<sup>20</sup> In 2020, Åslaug Ommundsen published her discovery of Leo of Ostia's works on Saint Clement in a fragmentary legendary that, like the two previous examples, was penned c. 1200, and the fragments of which, like the Danish *Legendarium Flandrense*, were dispersed in the Norwegian and Danish National Archives.<sup>21</sup> These fragments constitute the second and third known witnesses to Leo's *De origine beati Clementis* and *De translatione beati Clementis*.<sup>22</sup> These texts were thus not widely disseminated, and if the legendary was copied in Denmark, they may be indicative of direct links to Rome and Italy, where Leo served as cardinal bishop of Ostia Antica from 1101 until his death c. 1115.<sup>23</sup>

19 Myking 2018. One of the fragments stemming from this legendary, containing the name of Saint Aldegunde of Maubeuge, had earlier been discussed by Steffen Harpsøe (2014), who correctly saw it as an indication of Flemish-Danish connections, although the lack of the manuscript context led him to date the tiny fragment to the late eleventh century rather to ca. 1200.

20 Myking 2018: 135-36. The suggestion of Herrevad is not only based on the Codex Huitfeldianus, but also on the provenance of the fragments: while those in Oslo probably were reused a second time, the parchment brought to Norway by a Danish administrator, the tiny fragment discussed by Harpsøe (see note 19), and some fragments of Geoffrey of Auxerre's *Declamationes* (KB 1082-1085) written by the same scribe all have a post-medieval provenance from Skåne. In 2022, I discovered six more fragments from this legendary (DRA 3364-65, 3369-3372) in the Danish National Archive. (According to notes from the now-defunct fragment working group, the fragment DRA 3362 belonged to the same codex, but this fragment is currently missing.) The provenance of the newly identified fragments is also from Skåne, thus strengthening the Herrevad theory.

21 Ommundsen 2020.

22 Ommundsen 2020: 228.

23 Ommundsen (2020: 241) does not propose an origin for the legendary, but states that "the scribe may well be of Scandinavian origin".

As these examples illustrate, the legends found in the Danish fragment material testify to mixed influences, where both English and continental saints are commemorated, sometimes by rare texts that indicate connections with important European institutions. While it is usually impossible to state a Danish origin with certainty – save for the rare cases where Danish saints are included – the fragments in general, and the legendary collections in particular, still make for a rich source that should not be overlooked when it comes to the study of saints' cults in high medieval Denmark, as well as of the networks and connections that transmitted and nurtured these cults, influencing intellectual and cultural life. This will, I hope, be demonstrated in the following.

### **Vitae sanctorum 15: contents and characteristics**

In the autumn of 2020, my interest was caught by some fragments in the Danish National Archive (DRA 576-78) due to the characteristic hand of the scribe (see the palaeographical discussion below). The Royal Library had recently made their collection of Latin fragments available online, and browsing through these images, I recognised the same hand in two groups of fragments already identified by researchers as stemming from the same manuscript: KB 67-71 and KB 517-23.<sup>24</sup> These were clearly written by the same scribe as the one who had penned DRA 576-78, images of which were available to me thanks to Michael Gullick and Åslaug Omundsen, and which I also had the opportunity to examine in person not long after. Over the following months, I was able to identify several other fragments written by this scribe, all of which most probably stemmed from the same manuscript. These fragments are divided between the Royal Library and the Danish National Archives. The vast majority of them were used to bind accounts after the Reformation, although the secondary use or provenance of others are unknown. Apart from DRA

24 Images available here: [www5.kb.dk/manus/vmanus/2011/dec/ha/object97493/da/](http://www5.kb.dk/manus/vmanus/2011/dec/ha/object97493/da/) and [www5.kb.dk/manus/vmanus/2011/dec/ha/object98367/da/](http://www5.kb.dk/manus/vmanus/2011/dec/ha/object98367/da/) (accessed 2 February 2023).

576-78, they remain in situ (that is, bound to their accounts). The complete list of hitherto identified fragments, listed by their numbers, is as follows:

Location	Provenance	Contents/saints commemorated
KB 67	?	Trophimus
KB 68	?	Trophimus
KB 69	?	Trophimus
KB 70	?	Trophimus
KB 71	?	Trophimus
KB 517	Ringsted LR 1622	Nicholas
KB 518	Ringsted LR 1622	Nicholas
KB 519	Vordingborg, Jordebog 1621-22	Nicholas
KB 520	Vordingborg, Jordebog 1621-22	Anastasia, Eugenia
KB 521	Vordingborg, Extrakt 1621-22	John the Apostle; Stephen Protomartyr; Marinus
KB 522	Vordingborg, Extrakt 1622-23	<i>John of Salisbury – Vita St. Thomae</i>
KB 523	Ringsted LR 1622	Romaricus
KB 2829	Ringsted Kloster Regnskab 1622-23	Benedict of Peterborough – <i>Miracula St. Thomae</i>
DRA 576	?	Unknown – Account of the Rebellion against King Henry II of England / Benedict of Peterborough – <i>Miracula St. Thomae</i>
DRA 577	?	Unknown – Account of the Rebellion against King Henry II of England / Benedict of Peterborough – <i>Miracula St. Thomae</i>
DRA 578	1622	Benedict of Peterborough – <i>Miracula St. Thomae</i>
DRA 3994	Antvorskov 1621-22	Benedict of Peterborough – <i>Miracula St. Thomae</i>
DRA 3995	Antvorskov 1621-22	Benedict of Peterborough – <i>Miracula St. Thomae</i>
DRA 4001	Antvorskov 1622-23	Benedict of Peterborough – <i>Miracula St. Thomae</i>



DRA 4002	Antvorskov 1622-23	Benedict of Peterborough – <i>Miracula St. Thomae?</i> <sup>25</sup>
DRA 4003	Antvorskov 1622-23	Benedict of Peterborough – <i>Miracula St. Thomae</i>
DRA 4004	Antvorskov 1622-23	Benedict of Peterborough – <i>Miracula St. Thomae</i>
DRA 4004a	Antvorskov len, Fortegnelse på rodhuggen skov 1622-23	Benedict of Peterborough – <i>Miracula St. Thomae</i>
DRA 4004b	Antvorskov len, Fortegnelse på rodhuggen skov 1623-24	Benedict of Peterborough – <i>Miracula St. Thomae</i>
DRA 4055	Antvorskov Ugekost 1622-23	Benedict of Peterborough – <i>Miracula St. Thomae</i>
DRA 4060	Antvorskov 1622-23	Benedict of Peterborough – <i>Miracula St. Thomae</i>
DRA 5096	Ringsted 1623-24	Benedict of Peterborough – <i>Miracula St. Thomae</i>
DRA 5460	Vordingborg 1622-23	Anastasia, Eugenia
DRA 8197 <sup>26</sup>	Køge 1621-22	Ecgwine

Table 1: Fragments from *Vitae Sanctorum 15* identified in the Royal Library (KB) and the Danish National Archive (DRA)

The fragments in the National Archives had all been listed as “VI:SA” (*Vitae sanctorum*) in Esben Albrechtsen’s catalogue of 1976. The detached fragments DRA 576-577 had been given the signature *Vitae Sanctorum 15* in the register created by Jørgen Raasted.<sup>27</sup> I have kept this signature in this article, using it to refer to the fragmentary manuscript as a whole.

25 The fragment DRA 4002 is too tiny for the text to be identified with certainty, but most likely it stems from the same leaf as DRA 4001, which is used to bind the same account.

26 Identified by Rossel (2020: 208).

27 This register (*Catalogus fragmentorum e codicibus et chartis Medii Aevi, quae in archivis, bibliothecis, musaeis Danicis asservantur*) is available physically at Copenhagen University and the Danish National Archives; at the latter institution it can be searched for under “Codex-registrant” or “Rulle-Marie”. On the register and its system, see Raasted 1960.

As it turned out, the group was also discussed in a Ph.D. thesis from 2020 by Sven Rossel, who had identified most of the fragments in the list above (with the exception of DRA 4004a, 4004b, 4055, 4060), as well as the fragment used to bind town accounts for Køge for the year 1621-22 (DRA 8197). As the group was not the focus of his study, his discussion, while insightful, is brief, and his identification of the textual contents contain some inaccuracies that are corrected here.<sup>28</sup>

As indicated in Table 1, the preserved fragments from *Vitae Sanctorum* 15 contain material for the following saints, here listed according to the date of their feast and with references to the *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina* where applicable:

- Nicholas (6 December, BHL 6127 and (a version of) 6167)
- Romaricus (8 December, BHL 7323)
- Anastasia (25 December, BHL 401)
- Eugenia (25 December, BHL 2666)
- Stephen (26 December)<sup>29</sup>
- Marinus (26 December, BHL 5538)
- John the Apostle (27 December, BHL 4320)
- Thomas Becket (29 December)
- Trophimus (29 December)
- Ecgwine (30 December, BHL 2436)

Some of these saints – namely Nicholas, Anastasia, Eugenia, Stephen, and John the Apostle – are from the Bible or from Late Antiquity, and cele-

28 Rossel (2020: 209) lists the fragments as containing the legend of Anastasius (rather than Anastasia) and Martin (rather than Marinus). The text described by Rossel as a sermon for Saint Eustace is in fact part of the legend for Romaricus, which includes references to Eustace. John the Apostle and Stephen are not listed by Rossel amongst the saints included in the manuscript, nor are John of Salisbury's *vita* of Thomas Becket or the anonymous account of the rebellion against Henry II mentioned.

29 The texts related to Stephen is from the Acts of the Apostles (7:36-59) – which deals with St Stephen before the Sanhedrin (a legal court) – and Fulgentius of Ruspe's sermon, edition available here: [www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/02m/0467-0532\\_Fulgentius\\_Ruspensis\\_Episcopus\\_Sermones\\_MLT.pdf](http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/02m/0467-0532_Fulgentius_Ruspensis_Episcopus_Sermones_MLT.pdf) (accessed 31 January 2023).

brated throughout Christianity, including in Denmark. They are therefore hard *a priori* to associate with any given region. To an extent, this is also true for Thomas Becket of Canterbury, whose case is discussed specifically below. The Marinus whose legend precedes that of John the Apostle is not the famous Saint Marinus of Monte Titano (feast 3 September), but a “puer” (young boy) who, according to the legend, is put to death by the Roman emperor. As a punishment, the emperor falls ill, but is healed by praying to the Christian God; however, upon twice turning back to his heathen god, Serapis, he dies a gruesome death. This text (BHL 5538) is found in several other twelfth-century manuscripts, including a legendary collection from Clairvaux (see below).<sup>30</sup>

Saint Trophimus (d. 3rd century) was a bishop of Arles in France. The text transmitted in the *Vitae Sanctorum* 15 was identified by Sven Rossel as the “Berlin” version of the B tradition of the *Sermo Trophimi* which is presently only known in a late-medieval Northern German manuscript, kept in Berlin.<sup>31</sup> In a Danish context, Trophimus is a rarity, as is Romaricus (d. 653). A Frankish nobleman, Romaricus founded the abbey of Remiremont in Eastern France.<sup>32</sup> As for the Englishman Ecgwine (d. 717), bishop of Worcester and the founder of Evesham abbey, his inclusion is less surprising in the light of Evesham’s connection with Denmark, as pointed out by Rossel, who first identified the fragment.<sup>33</sup> Around the year 1100, twelve monks were sent from Evesham to Odense, an initiative taken by King Eric Evergood (‘Ejegod’) and bishop Hubald of Odense, with

30 A list of manuscripts containing Marinus’s legend is found here: [http://bhlms.fltr.ucl.ac.be/Nquerysaintsectiondate.cfm?code\\_bhl=5538](http://bhlms.fltr.ucl.ac.be/Nquerysaintsectiondate.cfm?code_bhl=5538) (accessed 1 Februar 2023). In addition to these, this text also appears in the so-called Cotton-Corpus legendary (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, Ms 9, f. 213v-217v), an English legend collection from the eleventh century.

31 Rossel 2020: 208. The B tradition of this sermon itself is found in two other manuscripts, one written in Arles in the 11th century (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, latin 5295, f. 2r-5r) and a 12th-century manuscript from Forcalquier (Rome, Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, reg. lat. 125, f. 103r-104r). On the B sermon and its three versions, see Krüger 2002: 49-51 and 350-52.

32 Romaricus’s legend (BHL 7323) has been edited by A. Guinot (1859: 377-88).

33 Rossel 2020: 209. Dominic’s life of Ecgwine was incorporated into Thomas of Marlborough’s history of Evesham, which was most recently edited by Jane Sayers and Leslie Watkiss (2003). The text in the fragment corresponds to Book 2 of and its Prologue, chapters 65 and 69 in the edition (Sayers and Watkiss 2003: 76, 80).

the agreement of King William Rufus of England.<sup>34</sup> An agreement dated to ca. 1095-1100 and confirmed by King Eric defines the role of the Benedictine house in Odense as a daughter of Evesham.<sup>35</sup> The agreement included provisions for the visit of Evesham monks to Odense (and vice versa). That such visits did take place is indicated by a letter from Bishop Riculf of Odense, dated to ca. 1135-1139, that references a visit from an unknown Evesham monk.<sup>36</sup> Ecgwine is also included in the litany of the Odense Breviary from 1497, suggesting the lingering presence of his cult throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>37</sup> The text in the fragment is from the life of saint Ecgwine composed by prior Dominic of Evesham, who died in or before 1145.<sup>38</sup> A copy of this work could therefore conceivably have been brought to Odense by the visiting Evesham representative in the 1130s and presented as a gift.

As the surviving fragments indicate, *Vitae Sanctorum* 15 must have been an imposing manuscript in its original state. No leaf has survived entirely uncropped, but judging from the large fragment DRA 4055, the original leaves would have measured at least 500 mm in height and 350 mm in width, with 44 lines to the page. The text is laid out in two columns, each of which measures ca. 100 mm in width. There are horizontal pricking marks in both margins; the leaves are ruled in plummet. The main text is written in brown ink by a single scribe, whereas a different hand has added rubrics in bright red. There are initials in blue, brown, and green decorated with red flourishes, as well as red initials decorated with flourishes in purple. Occasionally there are smaller initials in red or blue. A couple of larger initials have been preserved: a green H with red flourishes introducing Fulgentius's sermon on St Stephen (KB 521, Figure 1), and a P introducing the Prologue to Benedict of Peterborough's miracle collection (DRA 576-77). This P is also in red, with blue flourishes, and

34 Sayers and Watkiss 2003: 570-71. Hubald, who is first recorded as bishop of Odense around 1095 and who was probably an English Benedictine, set out to found a monastic chapter in Odense based on the English model (King 1962-1965: 193-94; Münster-Swendsen 2013: 160-61).

35 DD I:2, no. 24.

36 DD I:2, no. 67. The visit probably took place in the context of Riculf's renewal of the agreement between Evesham and Odense (DD I:2, no. 66).

37 Jørgensen 1909: 19.

38 Sayers & Watkiss 2003: xxxii.

a distinctive “knot-like” motif in green and blue filling the lobe (Figure 2). The colour scheme and style of the initials are reminiscent of those found in the contemporary legendary containing the legends of Saint Clement, which could point to a shared environment.<sup>39</sup>

The main scribe’s hand is easily recognisable. It shows an English influence in the upright aspect of the script, in the “trailing-headed” *as* and the “s-like” ductus of the *gs*.<sup>40</sup> There is a stiffness to the hand that suggests the scribe may have been local, or at any rate not an expert, although certainly accomplished enough to carry out a copying project on this scale.<sup>41</sup> The rubricator’s hand, on the other hand, seems more professional, and the script possibly more French-influenced.<sup>42</sup> An interesting feature of the main scribe’s hand is the way hairlines on the *ts* trail into the left margin, a feature that can also be found in another contemporary legendary, namely the Danish copy of the *Legendarium Flandrense*, which was possibly written at the Scanian abbey of Herrevad.<sup>43</sup> Regarding the main scribe’s orthography, a distinctive feature is the consistent use of *f* instead of *ph* (e.g. *Trofimus* instead of *Trophimus*). This could perhaps suggest a deliberate simplification of Latin spelling.<sup>44</sup> This aspect, as well as the rather stiff and “homegrown” character of the parchment, may point to the legendary having been produced in Denmark. Parchment from areas where book production had been established for centuries, such as England and France, tends to be finer and more supple. In Denmark, on the other hand, book production was still a relatively recent

39 Ommundsen 2020, see also above. I thank Åslaug Ommundsen for first drawing my attention to this legendary and its initials.

40 On these characteristics and their prevalence in English manuscripts, see Ommundsen 2007: 97, 99.

41 An example of a similar script can be found in fragment 2072, in the Royal Library, available online here: <http://www5.kb.dk/manus/vmanus/2011/dec/ha/object101380/da/> (accessed 12 January 2023). This fragment was originally used to bind an account from Raabeløv for the year 1579, then reused for an account from Helsingborg for 1645.

42 I thank Teresa Webber and Marc Smith for sharing their opinions on the scribes during a poster session at the 22nd Colloquium of the Comité international de paléographie latine in Prague, September 2022.

43 Myking 2018, see also above. For an analysis of the scribe’s hand, see Ommundsen 2017: 203–11.

44 I thank Steffen Hope for making this point in a personal communication.



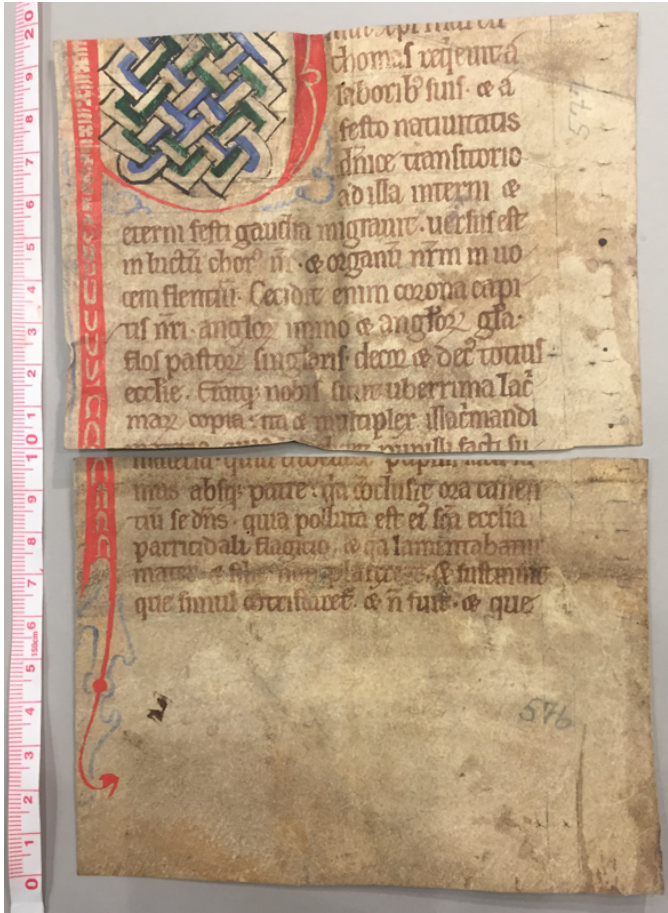


Figure 2: Copenhagen, National Archives, DRA 576-577: The prologue of Benedict of Peterborough's miracle collection. Photo: Synnøve Midtbø Myking

### The Thomas Becket texts in Vitae Sanctorum 15

Thomas Becket represents a special case in that the material related to him makes up half of the fragments of Vitae Sanctorum 15. No less than three texts are represented: Benedict of Peterborough's *Miracula Sancti*

*Thomae*, John of Salisbury's *Vita Sancti Thomae*, and an anonymous account that, while not dealing with the saint specifically but rather about the rebellion against King Henry II, has hitherto been ascribed to William of Canterbury (see below). The former of these, Benedict's miracle collection, was compiled 1171-1173, when Benedict was still a monk of Christ Church, Canterbury.<sup>46</sup> The work is known for its rapid and widespread dissemination.<sup>47</sup> For the benefit of scholars working on this collection and its tradition, I have outlined the textual contents of the fragments containing Benedict's miracles in Table 2 below, with reference to the chapter divisions and pages in J.C. Robertson's edition from 1875.

<b>Overview of Benedict of Peterborough's <i>Miracula Sancti Thomae</i> in <i>Vitae Sanctorum</i> 15</b>			
<i>Fragment</i>	<i>Provenance</i>	<i>Chapters according to J.C. Robertson's edition (1875: II)</i>	<i>Page in Robertson</i>
DRA 576	?	Prologue	21
DRA 577	?	Prologue	21
DRA 578	1622	Prologue; Liber I, Chapter I-III	26-31
DRA 3994	Antvorskov 1621-22	Liber II, Chapter LXV and LXIX	109-110, 113
DRA 3995	Antvorskov 1621-22	Liber II, LXV (recto), LXVII, LXIX, LXX (verso)	110, 112-114
DRA 4001	Antvorskov 1622-23	Liber II, Chapter LXVI-LXVII	111-112
DRA 4002	Antvorskov 1622-23	Liber II, Chapter LXVI? <sup>48</sup>	
DRA 4003	Antvorskov 1622-23	Liber II, Chapter LXVI/LXVIII	111, 113
DRA 4004	Antvorskov 1622-23	Liber II, Chapter LXVI/LXVIII (same leaf as 4003)	111, 113

46 Koopmans 2011: 139-40, 151-53. A traditional view has been that Book IV of Benedict's miracles was added later (Vincent 2012: 359-62). For a full discussion of the compilation of Benedict and William's miracle collections, see Koopmans 2011: 139-58.

47 Koopmans 2011: 128-30; Duggan 1997: 56-7; Vincent 2012: 357-59.

48 See note 25.



DRA 4004a	Antvorskov len, Fortegnelse på rodhuggen skov 1622-23	Liber II, Chapter LXV/LXXI (same leaf as 4004b)	110, 114
DRA 4004b	Antvorskov len, Fortegnelse på rodhuggen skov 1623-24	Liber II, Chapter LXV [rubric implies no. 63]/LXXI	110, 114
DRA 4055	Antvorskov Ugekost 1622-23	Liber II, Chapter XLIII-XLVI [xlv in manuscript]	91-93
DRA 4060	Antvorskov 1622-23	Liber II, XLVI [xlv] – L [XLVIII]	93-96
DRA 5096	Ringsted 1623-24	Liber III, Chapter XX-XXI/XXII-XXVI	132-133
KB 2829	Ringsted Kloster Regnskab 1622-23	Liber III, Chapter XXVII-XXXV	137-142

Table 2: The fragments of *Vitae Sanctorum* containing Benedict of Peterborough's *Miracula Sancti Thomae*

The other texts related to Thomas Becket are found in three fragments, two of which (DRA 576-577) are conjoint and from the recto side of the leaf on which the Prologue to Benedict's miracles is found on the verso side.

Other "Thomas Becket texts"			
Fragment	Provenance	Contents	Reference to Robertson's edition (1875: I-II)
KB 522	Vordingborg, Ex-trakt 1622-1623	John of Salisbury – <i>Vita sancti Thomae</i> (BHL 8180)	Vol. II, p. 305-309
DRA 576-577	?	Anonymous account of the rebellion against Henry II (ascribed to William of Canterbury in the edition)	Vol. I, Chapter 6.93, p. 488-489

Table 3: Other "Thomas Becket material" found in *Vitae Sanctorum 15*

While it is unknown whether the original legendary preserved all these texts in their complete state, rather than as excerpts, the fact that we find snippets from all of the first part of Benedict's miracles (the Prologue to Book III) suggests that this collection, or at least the whole of Book I-III, may have been included in its entirety, rather than as a limited

excerpt. If so, the collection must have made up most of the volume's contents, perhaps even constituting a volume of its own. However, the format and the style are so close to the rest of the fragments that if Benedict's Miracles, or the Thomas Becket texts as a whole, were bound in a separate volume, this volume was no doubt produced alongside the rest of the legendary.

Scholars have been aware for a long time that the collections in Copenhagen included fragments containing parts of Benedict of Peterborough's *Miracula Sancti Thomae*. Alongside a fragment from the same work, but from a different manuscript (identifiable as KB 2828), Ellen Jørgensen referred to "a folio leaf containing 'Miracula St. Thomæ auctore Benedicto'" in the Royal Library, used to bind an account from Ringsted 1622-23.<sup>49</sup> This fragment is surely identical to KB 2829 (see Table 1 above). In 2015, John Toy signalled the existence of fragments from a copy of Benedict of Peterborough's miracles currently kept in the Danish National Archives, transmitting the Prologue and text from the first three books.<sup>50</sup> Most recently, the work was identified in the fragmentary *Vitae Sanctorum* 15 by Sven Rossel.<sup>51</sup> The presence of the vita written by John of Salisbury (KB 522), however, seems to have gone unnoticed by earlier scholars, and the same is true for the anonymous text preceding the opening of Benedict's miracles (DRA 576-577), with one exception. In the unpublished notes of the now-defunct working group for fragment studies

49 Jørgensen 1908: 79.

50 Toy states that there are twenty-eight fragments from Benedict's work in the archives, but lists only some of those identified in this article, and in a way that does not entirely correspond to the archive's shelf marks, namely in the following manner: DRA 576-578, 3994/95abc, 4001/2abc, 4003/4abcd, 4060abc and 5096abc (Toy 2015: 277, note 5). His inclusion of the fragment DRA 4005, which stems from a different manuscript, as well as his stated number of 28, which corresponds more closely to the number of fragments from the legendary as a whole (rather than from Benedict's work), could be due to a reliance on second-hand information.

51 Rossel 2020: 208.

at the Danish National Archives, the text is registered, but not identified.<sup>52</sup>

The *Vita et Passio sancti Thomae* by John of Salisbury seems, like Benedict's miracle collection, to have spread quickly across the continent.<sup>53</sup> The vita was an expanded version of a letter, originally written by John in early 1171, that contains the earliest known discussion of Thomas Becket as martyr, including a comparison of his sufferings to those of Christ.<sup>54</sup> John had known the archbishop for many years, having served as his secretary; they had both gone into exile in France due to the conflict with King Henry II over the rights of the English church.<sup>55</sup> The text transmitted in the fragment KB 522 describes the fateful period of Becket's life when he was still Henry's chancellor and the King wanted to promote him to the archiepiscopal see of Canterbury. Despite his misgivings, Thomas accepted the office, whereupon he changed his manner of life, taking his dedication to the Church more seriously than the King had anticipated. The Danish legendary may have contained the full vita while still intact (and probably did), but the snippet surviving in the fragment thus presents a poignant counterpoint to the other newly identified Thomas Becket text in *Vitae Sanctorum* 15, the anonymous account of the rebellion against King Henry II, which culminates in the King doing penance at the saint's grave.

I originally identified this anonymous text as that published as Chapter 6.93 in J.C. Robertson's edition of William of Canterbury's collection of Thomas Becket's miracles.<sup>56</sup> This chapter is part of a group (6.91-6.98) that are transmitted in the manuscript Winchester College MS 4 as part of William's work. However, these chapters, which form a historical account of the rebellion against King Henry II and the ensuing conflict, are unlikely to have been authored by William, but may have been copied

52 The note accompanying fragments 576-577, identifying the contents as the prologue of Benedict's miracle collection, adds: "continent etiam textum (de Thoma?) nondum recognitum". See Rigsarkivet, Arbejdsgruppen for Fragmentforskning, Codex-registrant (1975-1981), box 14.

53 Duggan 1984: 427-28.

54 Duggan 1984: 427.

55 On this conflict and the relationship between John and Thomas, see Duggan 1984.

56 Robertson 1875: vol. I, 487-89.

into his collection either by himself or someone else.<sup>57</sup> Apart from the Winchester manuscript, on which Robertson's edition of William's collection is based, the chapters 6.91-6.98 are included in a manuscript in Montpellier (Bibliothèque interuniversitaire, Section Médecine, H 2), where they, as in the Danish legendary, precede Benedict of Peterborough's collection of Thomas Becket's miracles.<sup>58</sup> The Montpellier manuscript also contains John of Salisbury's *vita*. Both Winchester MS 4 and Montpellier H2 are contemporary to the Danish *Vitae Sanctorum* 15.<sup>59</sup> Montpellier H2 once belonged to the Cistercian abbey of Clairvaux, where it formed an appendix to the multi-volume "Grand Legendary".<sup>60</sup> Most of the surviving volumes from this legendary are kept in Montpellier, under the neighbouring shelf mark to Montpellier H2.<sup>61</sup>

The text published as Chapters 6.91-6.98 of William's miracle collection is an account of the rebellion against Henry II by his own family in the years 1173-1174. This rebellion was instigated by the King's oldest son, Henry the Young King, who was backed by his brothers Richard and

57 Koopmans 2011: 155, 280 (n. 108). I thank Rachel Koopmans for making me aware of this in a personal communication, and for drawing my attention to the text's presence in the Montpellier manuscript. For the view that the miracles 6.91-6.98 were in fact written by William, matching in content the latter's prefatory letter to King Henry found in the Winchester and Montpellier manuscripts, see Vincent 2012: 379.

58 Additionally, a late medieval manuscript in Germany (Paderborn, Erzbischöfliche Akademische Bibliothek Theodoriana Ba 2), includes the chapters 6.91, 6.93-95, and 6.97, but nothing (else) from William's miracle collection (Koopmans 2011: 280, n. 108).

59 Vincent (2012: 372) dates the Winchester manuscript, which I have not seen, to s. xii/xiii. I would suggest a similar date for the Montpellier manuscript, which Vincent (2012: 372) dates to s. xiii and Duggan (1997: 61) to s. xii.

60 Dolbeau 1978: 167-68; Duggan 1997: 61-62 n. 65, 63.

61 Montpellier, Bibliothèque interuniversitaire, Section Médecine, H 1, vol. 1-5. These volumes cover the months from 10 February to March and from July to December; a volume now in Troyes (Médiathèque municipale, Ms. 1) covers April - June, whereas the tome covering January to 6 February has been lost (Dolbeau 1978: 167).

Geoffrey as well as by his mother, Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine.<sup>62</sup> The rebels formed a wide alliance that included, amongst others, King Louis VII of France and William the Lion, King of Scots. The assassination of Thomas Becket formed part of the rebellion's context. In order to gain support, Henry consciously drew on his father's role in the murder and its aftermath, as is shown by a letter to Pope Alexander III, where the Young King portrays himself as a defender of the church and of the martyred archbishop's memory, as opposed to Henry II, who had not even punished the killers.<sup>63</sup> However, in July 1174 Henry II returned from France, where he had defeated his opponents, and went straight to Canterbury where he sought the saint's forgiveness by praying, weeping, and being beaten at the grave – and was rewarded, the following day, with William the Lion's capture.<sup>64</sup> The text in the fragments DRA 576–577 recto stems from Chapter 6.93, which tells of this visit to Canterbury and Henry's penance. As transmitted in the fragments, it reads as follows:

ieiuniis et elemosinis a regno suo. Nam dorobernie a mane diei usque in diem alterum. Non cibum non potum sumpsit non ad necessaria nature uel semel exiuit gratum habens peregrinationis sustinere molestias et cum cogeret a fratribus omnino non acquieuit sed assidens tumbe martiris solum nudum premens et nichil sibi substerni sinens diem et noctem sine dormitationem etiam transegit et populo spectaculum fuit. Neque enim quemquam uolentem ad tumbam accederet repelli passus est. Mane uero celebratis missarum Sollemnibus et uisitatis omnium sanctorum patronorum ecclesie lipsaniis signum peregrinationis absportans sicut erat illotis pedibus stando ocreas induit precipiens ut se cantuarienses sequerentur et res suas mobiles aquam mediwaihe transferrent. Quia irruptionem hostium immuniti

with fasting and alms [Henry diverted God's anger] from his kingdom. For in Canterbury, he did not consume any food or drink from early

62 On the rebellion, see Weiler 2009 as well as Matthew Strickland's study of Henry the Young King, which also examines Young Henry's role in the aftermath of Thomas Becket's murder (Strickland 2016: 107–18).

63 Weiler 2009: 21–22.

64 Bartlett 2000: 56.

morning to the next day, nor did he once attend to nature's needs, but welcomed the trials of pilgrimage. Even when he was encouraged to by the monks, he would not rest at all, but sat by the martyr's grave clutching the bare soil, not allowing anything to be spread underneath him. He passed a day and night without sleep and was a spectacle to the people; for neither would he allow for anyone desiring to access the grave to be driven away. But in the morning, having celebrated the solemnities of Mass and visited the relics of all the church's patron saints, carrying the sign of pilgrimage, he donned leg coverings as he stood, feet dirty; and he bid the people of Canterbury to follow him and transfer their movable goods across the waters of the Medway. For [they could not sustain] a raid from the enemy unfortified.

Montpellier H2 has the same readings as the Danish legendary, except that it has *jejunio* and *fluvium* where the fragments have *jeiuniis* and *aquam*. Robertson's edition, based on the Winchester manuscript, has the same different readings as the Montpellier manuscript (*jejunio*, *fluvium*), as well as *volentium ad tumbam accedere* where the fragment has *volentem ad tumbam accederet*. Overall, however, the three witnesses are very close.

In the fragment, the anonymous text precedes the Prologue of Benedict's Miracles, which open on the verso side. A similar placement is found in the Montpellier manuscript, where the chapters 6.91-95 are integrated under the rubric "quando et quomodo rex sancto martyri satisfacit et pristinam libertatem ecclesie restituit" ("when and how the king satisfied the sainted martyr and restored to the church its former liberty", f. 5), without further chapter headings. The text transmitted in the fragments (6.93) is found on f. 5v (a-b). Both the readings and the placement of the anonymous text in the Montpellier manuscript (prior to Benedict's Miracles), as well as the inclusion of John of Salisbury's *vita* in both this manuscript (f. 1-5) and the Danish *Vita Sanctorum* 15, indicate that the Danish witness is closer to the Clairvaux/Montpellier manuscript than to the Winchester witness. The Montpellier manuscript and the Danish witness may thus stem from the same exemplar, or the exemplar of the Danish fragment was copied from the Montpellier manuscript – which must have happened at Clairvaux.

### The Clairvaux connection

An evident link between Clairvaux and Denmark during the second half of the twelfth century is found in the person of Archbishop Eskil of Lund (d. 1181). He had been friends with Bernard (d. 1153), Clairvaux's charismatic abbot, and chose to retire to the abbey as a monk in 1177. Eskil was also on friendly terms with many other leading European churchmen of the time, and thus must have received the news of Thomas Becket's assassination not long after it happened. The news may have struck particularly close to home, given that Eskil had had his own differences with the king of Denmark, Valdemar I; like the English archbishop, he spent years in exile in Northern France in the 1160s. However, by the 1170s Eskil had returned, the situation had stabilised, and Valdemar was now seen by Thomas Becket's followers as a model to emulate.<sup>65</sup> At least this seems to have been the case for John of Salisbury, who had, like Becket, been exiled in France due to the conflict with King Henry II over the rights of the English. In a letter written during his exile, in 1167 or 1168, he referred to Archbishop Eskil's return to Denmark as an example he hoped would be followed by the English king.<sup>66</sup> John's familiarity with these events testify to Eskil's integration in the network of European intellectuals of which Thomas Becket was also a member. Following Eskil's return, Valdemar himself was counted in the Cantuarian archbishop's circle, as evidenced by a letter dated to 1167-1170 sent from Herbert of Bosham to the Danish king, wherein Valdemar is asked for advice regarding Thomas's conflict with King Henry II.<sup>67</sup> The link between Thomas Becket and the Danish royal family is, moreover, strengthened by the miracles included by William of Canterbury, two of which involve the saint's intercession to their benefit (see above).<sup>68</sup> The fact that accounts

65 Lind 2021: 36-37. For the view that relations between Eskil and Valdemar remained tense, which eventually resulted in Eskil's forced retirement, see Münster-Swendsen 2019.

66 DD I:2 no. 180, see also below.

67 DD I:2, no. 181; Lind 2021: 37.

68 A list of relics added on f. 1r of the famous Copenhagen Psalter (KB, Thott 143 folio) includes a relic "from saint Thomas the Archbishop". The name of the relics' owner has been erased, but Christopher de Hamel (2016: 303-305) reads it as "uualder-

of these miracles found their way into William's collection indicate that members of the royal circles, or their associates, went to Canterbury on pilgrimage by the 1180s, if not before.<sup>69</sup>

Given this affiliation, the Danish elite of the time would have a special interest in texts related to Thomas Becket, both the miracles and John of Salisbury's *vita*, because of the slain archbishop's connection to Denmark via Archbishop Eskil and the Valdemar dynasty.<sup>70</sup> Eskil himself may have provided the opportunity for these texts to reach Denmark. *Vitae Sanctorum* 15 was copied between c. 1175 and 1200, whilst Eskil retreated to Clairvaux in 1177, having abdicated his office in favour of Absalon. According to Saxo, envoys from Valdemar and from the cathedral chapter in Lund visited Clairvaux on their way to Rome, where they obtained a letter from Eskil in support of Absalon's appointment.<sup>71</sup> It is feasible that either these envoys, or someone accompanying Eskil on his journey, could have acquired one or more manuscripts in this context – and perhaps the very idea to produce a legendary on the scale evidenced by the fragments.

marus... apud Ringsta[dium]" ("Waldemar at Ringsted"). Future examinations involving multi-spectral images may confirm or disprove this reading. It should be noted that Thomas Becket is absent from the psalter's calendar, which probably indicates the manuscript was made before his canonisation; however, his name has not been added at a later stage.

69 The mission to liberate Clemens may be identical to Knud VI's expedition to Walgust/Wolgast. If so, this would have taken place in 1184, according to the *Sjælland Chronicle* and other annals (Kroman 1980: 110).

70 At present, we do not know whether William of Canterbury's miracle collection reached Denmark. Given the fact that it contains three miracles explicitly related to Denmark (see above), one would assume that Danes would have been interested in this collection, had they known about it – but William's miracles enjoyed a much narrower circulation than those of Benedict (Koopmans 2011: 129). Still, it would not be surprising if future investigations into the Danish fragment collection revealed the presence of a hitherto unknown copy of William's miracles. Haki Antonsson (2015: 404-7) has suggested that Saxo was inspired by the Thomas/Henry conflict in his portrayal of the confrontation between King Sven Estridsen and Bishop Wilhelm of Roskilde, an episode that was resolved by Sven performing a display of humiliation, as Henry had done in Canterbury. If this is correct, then Saxo, writing in the years around 1200, would have had access to one or more accounts of Henry's penance – such as the one contained in the fragmentary *Vitae Sanctorum* 15.

71 Friis-Jensen & Fisher 2015: vol. 2, 1434-35.



A multi-volume manuscript showing interesting similarities with the Danish *Vitae Sanctorum* 15 is the third volume of the Grand Legendary from Clairvaux.<sup>72</sup> Romaricus's legend, which is (to my knowledge) otherwise unattested in Scandinavia, is found here, and the same volume includes the legends of saints Anastasia, Eugenia, and Marinus "puer", as well as Pseudo-Mellitus's account of John the Apostle. While arguably these saints are commonly enough celebrated for their legends to have reached Denmark by multiple pathways, their presence alongside Romaricus in both the Clairvaux manuscript and the Danish legendary suggests, again, that the latter may have shared its exemplar with the former. The Clairvaux manuscript containing the Thomas Becket material, Montpellier H2, was also part of the Grand Legendary, and it is possible that the Danish *Vitae Sanctorum* was constructed in a similar way, with several volumes, including one dedicated to Saint Thomas and his miracles.<sup>73</sup>

Interestingly, however, the Clairvaux legendary does not include the sermon on Trophimus (or any text related to him). Nor does it contain the same text in honour of Nicholas: while the Clairvaux manuscript transmits the life written by John the Deacon (BHL 6104), the Danish fragments contain two different texts, namely two miracles related to the abduction of a boy (BHL 6127 and 6167; the latter with some deviation from the printed version), the first of which was transmitted in a contemporary legendary collection that in medieval times belonged to the abbey of Saint-Hubert in the Ardennes.<sup>74</sup> Assuming that this text was in circulation in the area, it could have been brought to Denmark under the

72 Montpellier, Bibliothèque interuniversitaire, Section Médecine, H 1, vol. 3. The text corresponding to the piece of Romaricus's legend transmitted in fragment KB 523 is found on f. 48r-v. For a catalogue notice with lists to references, see [www.calames.abes.fr/pub/#details?id=D01040001](http://www.calames.abes.fr/pub/#details?id=D01040001) (accessed 1 February 2023).

73 Montpellier H2 also includes texts related to the saints James, Alpinus, Elafius, Leudomirus, Felix, and Servatius.

74 Namur, Musée Provincial des Arts anciens du Namurois, Fonds de la Ville 15 (online catalogue: [www.cicweb.be/fr/manuscrit.php?id=115&idi=51](http://www.cicweb.be/fr/manuscrit.php?id=115&idi=51), accessed 31 January 2023). For a list of contents in this manuscript, see *Analecta Bollandiana* 1882: vol. 1, 494-503. I thank the Société archéologique de Namur for allowing me to consult this manuscript in person in April 2023, as well as for providing me with high-quality images.

same circumstances as the text(s) from Clairvaux – by members of Eskil’s retinue returning to Denmark or by the envoys, passing through the Low Countries on their journey back home. The fact that the contents of the Clairvaux legendary and *Vita sanctorum* 15 do not entirely overlap suggests that the link, if it exists, is not one of blind copying but perhaps rather one of inspiration. Still, while the miracle collection by Benedict of Peterborough was widespread enough to have found its way to Denmark via multiple pathways – including directly from Canterbury, which was visited by Danes, as illustrated by William’s “Danish miracles” – the rarity of the anonymous text about King Henry II and the rebellion constitutes an argument in favour of Clairvaux as a possible source, as does the similarity of its placement within the manuscript in both the Clairvaux manuscript and *Vita sanctorum* 15.

Certainly, Eskil was not the only link between Clairvaux and Denmark during the second half of the twelfth century. The abbey of Esrum had been founded in 1151 (on Eskil’s initiative) with monks from Clairvaux, giving rise to a new line of Danish Cistercian monasteries alongside the line descended from Herrevad in Skåne, founded (probably also by Eskil) in 1144 by monks from Cîteaux. There is little doubt that texts, including saints’ legends, were brought to Denmark by the Cistercians, for instance in the context of abbots travelling to the general chapter.<sup>75</sup> In the case of *Vitae sanctorum* 15, however, there is nothing in particular to link this manuscript to the Cistercians, apart from the similarities between its contents and those of the Clairvaux legendary: Cistercian manuscripts of the period tend towards a rather uniform look, using black ink, monochrome initials, and the punctuation sign *punctus flexus*, all of which traits are absent in our legendary.<sup>76</sup> This does not in itself preclude a Cistercian origin, as there are surviving manuscripts that do not confirm to the uniformity (or do so inconsistently), but neither can it be assumed

75 On this question, see Myking 2018, where it is argued that the Cistercians of Herrevad may have owned a copy of the *Legendarium Flandrense*, which circulated mainly amongst Cistercian houses in Flanders, including the abbey of Ter Doest, which had documented relations with Scandinavians.

76 For examples of this style, see Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. Lat. 543, 636 I–II, and 1149, all of which belonged to the Danish abbey of Esrum.

that texts transmitted from Clairvaux would only be copied by Cistercian scribes, rather than being disseminated in other milieus.

### A “grand legendary” from Ringsted?

In short, *Vitae sanctorum* 15 was a large-scale manuscript probably produced in late twelfth-century Denmark and including texts that had only recently been composed, such as Benedict of Peterborough’s miracle collection, and/or seem to have had a narrow circulation, such as the anonymous account of Young Henry’s rebellion and the sermon on Trophimus. Where would be the most likely place of production for such a manuscript? Considering the material resources necessary, both in terms of parchment, expertise, time, and above all access to textual exemplars, the legendary is likely to have been copied at a wealthy institution with a substantial library as well as manpower – such as a monastery.

While the difficulty of tracing the medieval provenance of fragments based on the provenance of their postmedieval use is recognised, we should not overlook the fact that a monastic library would be an evident source of parchment for early modern administrators in need of binding material. Considering the postmedieval provenance of the fragments, which were all used as binding material for accounts from various fiefs in Sjælland, two monastic houses are represented: Ringsted and Antvorskov. Five of the identified fragments were used to bind accounts from Ringsted from the years 1622 to 1623-24, whereas ten fragments were used as binding on Antvorskov accounts from 1621-22, 1622-23, and 1623-24. Additionally, five fragments were used to bind accounts from Vordingborg (1621-22 and 1622-23), and one for the town account of Køge (1621-22). The provenance of the remaining fragments is not known, although one of them (DRA 578) has the note “1622” added. The identified fragments were thus used to bind accounts within a relatively short period of time, from 1622 to 1624. The legends preserved concern saints whose feast days are in December, which points to the fragments stemming from the same volume or part of a volume.

As Michael H. Gelting has argued, the accounts from fiefs based in old monastic estates are more likely to have been bound with parchment

stemming from the monastic collections.<sup>77</sup> Gelting illustrates this with a fragment used to bind an account from Ringsted for the years 1585-86 (DRA 4985), to which someone has added a prayer to Samson of Dol. Samson was not commonly venerated in Denmark (or in Europe), but the priory of Halsted in Lolland, which belonged to Ringsted, owned a relic of this saint. Although little is known of Ringsted's book collection, it must have been quite substantial given the abbey's wealth and importance. It therefore seems more likely that parchment would be sourced from this fief and used for accounts from the nearby area, rather than the other way around.

What about Antvorskov, which was also a wealthy house? We cannot dismiss the possibility that the legendary was owned by this institution, but it is unlikely that it was produced there. Antvorskov was founded by Valdemar I some time before 1182, at about the same time as the manuscript was copied. It seems hardly possible that Antvorskov would have a functioning scriptorium at this point, if indeed it ever established one.<sup>78</sup> While we cannot automatically deduce medieval provenance from postmedieval provenance, and origin even less, I would suggest that the fragmentary legendary was not only owned by Ringsted abbey, where it was dismembered and distributed after the Reformation, but that it may also have been produced there, and that such an origin is supported by the manuscript's contents.

This theory hinges on whether there was a functioning scriptorium in place at Ringsted by the last quarter of the twelfth century. Danish book production probably began about a century earlier, in the late eleventh century. From the first half of the twelfth century, several manuscripts connected to the archiepiscopal see of Lund have been preserved, some of which are believed to be of Danish origin.<sup>79</sup> All of these manuscripts have a Scanian provenance, but it is likely that book production

77 Gelting 2017.

78 Cristina Dondi's inventory of liturgical books with a provenance from the Order of Saint John does not contain any twelfth-century manuscripts, and no collections of saints' legends (Dondi 2003: 225-56).

79 This group includes the *Necrologium Lundense*, *Lectionarium Lundense I* and *II*, *Liber Daticus Vetustior*, and others. As shown by Sven Rossel (2020), at least the *Lectionarium Lundense II* was copied locally, by a very prolific scribe.

must have been established in other parts of medieval Denmark at approximately the same time, that is before 1150. Such production necessitated stable working conditions, access to material resources (parchment, ink, and writing supplies as well as textual exemplars to copy from), and, not least, skilled labour. At this point, these prerequisites could most easily be met in the context of a (wealthy) monastic community.

Ringsted was one such community, and although no direct evidence of book production survives from this abbey, this institution is likely to have had an active scriptorium at least from the second half of the twelfth century onwards. The church founded at Ringsted by Bishop Sven in ca. 1080 gained prominence when Duke Knud Lavard was buried there in 1131. The monastery connected to the church was founded by King Erik Emune in 1135, and its close association to royal power continued for the next decades, as Svend Grathe and Valdemar I had Knud Lavard's body exhumed and enshrined in 1146. This initiative was opposed by Archbishop Eskil of Lund, as well as by two members of the community itself. These were removed, and a certain John from Odense was made abbot before 1148.<sup>80</sup> After Valdemar had gained sole reign over Denmark in 1157, he invested considerable resources into making Ringsted a prestigious institution, worthy of governing his saintly father's remains, including by having a new monastic church erected. His efforts were rewarded in 1170, when the shrine of Knud Lavard's recently canonised body could be placed on the high altar, and Valdemar's own son Knud was crowned in the new church.

The promotion of Knud Lavard's cult included literary efforts. Already in the 1130s, an English Benedictine called Robert of Ely wrote a *vita* of the saint, most likely while present at Ringsted.<sup>81</sup> Only a few excerpts of this text survive, copied in early manuscripts.<sup>82</sup> The oldest manuscript containing the liturgy for the Mass and Office of Knud Lavard is likely to

80 A charter by Svend Grathe dated to 1148 (DD I:2, no. 101) refers to this event as having taken place. According to the preserved *vita* of Knud Lavard, John was made abbot the same year Erik Lam abdicated, that is in 1146 (Chesnutt 2003: 119, 157).

81 Chesnutt 2003: 5.

82 On these manuscripts and the edition of the excerpts from Robert's work, see Gertz 1908-1912: 183-86, 234-41.

have been copied at Ringsted in the thirteenth century, although its medieval provenance cannot be confirmed.<sup>83</sup> While the *vita* transmitted in the manuscript was probably written outside of the monastery itself, it has been argued that the Office was compiled at Ringsted, whose monks developed Knud's liturgy for monastic use.<sup>84</sup> This liturgy has been shown to reflect English influence, both in that chants were adapted from the offices of English saints and in that the antiphon *Tecum principium*, which occurs at Epiphany (6 January) in English uses, is used for the celebration of Vespers I for Knud on this date.<sup>85</sup> The exact date of the liturgy's development is uncertain, but this English influence fits with both the scribe of *Vitae sanctorum* 15, who seems to have been trained by an English teacher, and with the inclusion of the life of St Ecgwine in the legendary. John could have brought this text with him from Odense when he was made abbot of Ringsted in the 1140s.<sup>86</sup> However, the English influence on the legendary is not uniform, as shown by both the inclusion of the French saints Trophimus and Romaricus, the presence of the Nicholas legend from the Ardennes, and the similarity in contents between *Vitae Sanctorum* 15 and the Grand Legendary from Clairvaux discussed above.

### Conclusion

*Vitae Sanctorum* 15 is an interesting manuscript for several reasons. It testifies not only to which saints' legends were read and copied in Danish institutions, but also to the characteristics and style of manuscripts produced in Denmark, its likely place of origin, towards the end of the

83 Kiel, University Central Library S. H. 8 A. On this manuscript and the liturgy for Knud Lavard, see Chesnutt 2003; and Bergsagel 2010.

84 Chesnutt 2003: 56-57, 62-63, 66-67.

85 Bergsagel 2010: xxxvi-xxxviii. Especially the placement of the *Tecum principium* antiphon makes for "a clear indication that the liturgical observance of St. Knud Lavard contained in the Kiel MS had its origin in an environment in which English practice was observed" (Bergsagel 2010: xxxviii).

86 It also is worth noting that Evesham's connection with Odense was re-confirmed by King Valdemar I in 1174 (DD I:3, no. 48). I thank the anonymous reviewer for drawing my attention to this point.

twelfth century. Furthermore, it is another indication of the links between Denmark and important European institutions such as Clairvaux during this time. Not least, it may provide a new testimonial to the literary and scribal culture of Ringsted, from which we otherwise we have very little evidence, although it must be stressed that this localisation is no more than a theory.

To sum up: I would postulate that *Vitae Sanctorum* 15 was compiled from several exemplars, one or more of which stemmed from Clairvaux and included the “Thomas Becket texts” (John of Salisbury’s vita, the anonymous account of the rebellion against Henry II, and the miracles of Benedict of Peterborough), the legends of Romaricus, Anastasia, Eugenia, and Marinus “puer”, as well as the acts of John the apostle by Pseudo-Mellitus. The exemplars of the sermon in honour of Trophimus and the legend of St Nicholas may also have been acquired on the journey to or from Clairvaux. Ecgwine’s legend, on the other hand, was brought to Denmark via the abbey of Evesham and its connections with the Benedictines in Odense. From all these exemplars, the scribe, who may have been a member of the community at Ringsted, compiled what was probably a multi-volume manuscript testifying to the links with Clairvaux and the Cistercians as well as the English abbey of Evesham. The scribal workshop where the legendary was compiled thus functioned as a melting pot, putting together a collection to be read aloud, confirming to the community their connections with the most influential institutions and religious orders of their time.

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