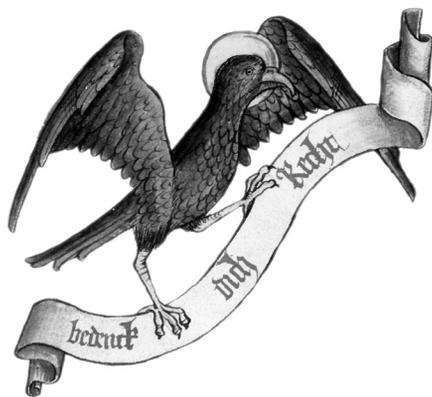


Særtryk af
FUND OG FORSKNING
I DET KONGELIGE BIBLIOTEKS
SAMLINGER

Bind 50
2011



With summaries

KØBENHAVN 2011
UDGIVET AF DET KONGELIGE BIBLIOTEK

Om billedet på papiromslaget se s. 169.

Det kronede monogram på kartonomslaget er tegnet af
Erik Ellegaard Frederiksen efter et bind fra Frederik III's bibliotek

Om titelvignetten se s. 178.

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Redaktion: John T. Lauridsen
med tak til Ivan Boserup

Redaktionsråd:
Ivan Boserup, Grethe Jacobsen, Else Marie Kofod,
Erland Kolding Nielsen, Anne Ørbæk Jensen,
Stig T. Rasmussen, Marie Vest

Fund og Forskning er et peer-reviewed tidsskrift.

Papir: Lesebo Design Smooth Ivory 115 gr.
Dette papir overholder de i ISO 9706:1994
fastsatte krav til langtidsholdbart papir.

Grafisk tilrettelæggelse: Jakob Kyril Meile
Nodesats: Niels Bo Foltmann
Tryk og indbinding: SpecialTrykkeriet, Viborg

ISSN 0060-9896
ISBN 978-87-7023-085-8

PALAEOGRAPHICAL OBSERVATIONS
on four medieval fragments of the *Gesta Danorum*
of Saxo Grammaticus in The Royal Library

BY

MICHAEL GULLICK

It is well known that no complete medieval manuscript of the work of Denmark's earliest historian, Saxo Grammaticus, has survived. The text has had to be established almost entirely from a printed edition, published in 1514, together with some medieval manuscript fragments, all of which are housed in the Royal Library. The earliest of these fragments, called the *Angers-fragment*, comprises four part-leaves (NKS 879 4°), datable to about 1200, discovered in the nineteenth century in a French provincial library and subsequently acquired by the Royal Library. These were almost certainly written by the historian, and they have amendments, made over time, that were almost certainly the work of the historian as well. There are also four later fragments, all of the thirteenth century, and it is with these fragments of the *Gesta Danorum* that the present note is concerned. The four comprise one complete leaf, two fragments from another leaf that together make up something less than half of a full-leaf, and a small part of a third leaf.¹

The complete leaf (NKS 570 2° II, called *Lassens fragment*) is from a large book (390 × 270 mm) written by a good scribe in two columns (Fig. 1), and one of the most important palaeographical features of the handwriting is the punctuation. Within sentences the scribe used two forms of punctuation to indicate pauses. First, tick-and-point (*punctus*

* I am very grateful to Ivan Boserup of the Royal Library for introducing me to the fragments that are the subject of this note, and for his encouragement to write something about them. I am further grateful to him for reading and commenting upon early drafts of this note and helping me with the relevant bibliography. He is not (of course) to be held responsible for any of my views or observations.

¹ The most recent description of all of the fragments, with references to the earlier literature, is in the latest edition of the text edited by K. Friis-Jensen, with a Danish translation by P. Zeeberg, in Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum: Danmarkshistorien*, 2 vols., Copenhagen 2005, i. pp. 38–40, and there are images of all of them on the library website <<http://www.kb.dk/da/nb/materialer/haandskrifter/HA/e-mss/flh-html>>.

elevatus), shaped, rather as its description implies, as a ‘tick’ with a ‘dot’ below (Fig. 2, line 9), and this is a very common medieval mark of medial punctuation. There are several different forms of this mark, but the one in the fragment is identical to that found in English and some French manuscripts, whereas German (and some French and other northern manuscripts) used different forms.² Secondly, and not occurring so often, flex (*punctus flexus*), shaped like a figure 7 with a ‘dot’ below (Fig. 2, line 7). This is not so common, but its occurrence is significant because, taking into account the nature and date of the fragment, it suggests that the manuscript now represented by the fragment was written at or for a Cistercian house, for *punctus flexus* is a characteristic of Cistercian books.³ This narrows the origin of the fragment from a manuscript written in ‘Denmark’ to one probably written in ‘a Cistercian house in Denmark’ of which, during the thirteenth century, there were ten.⁴

Another distinctive palaeographical feature of the handwriting is the ‘suspension’ sign in the form of a horizontal line written above letters to indicate to the reader that something in a word has been abbreviated (Fig. 2).⁵ There is nothing unusual about this, for medieval scribes extensively abbreviated what they wrote, but what is unusual is the form of the line. In the fragment it is frequently quite long, extending over more than one letter, whereas such suspension signs were usually (more or less) only over one.

² M.B. Parkes, *Pause and Effect. An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West*, Aldershot 1992, pp. 38–40.

³ For flex punctuation see B. Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography: Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, Cambridge 1990, pp. 170–171, with references, Parkes, *Pause and Effect*, pp. 36, 39–40 and 43, and A. Derolez, *The Palaeography of Gothic Manuscripts*, Cambridge 2003, p. 185. It should be said that *punctus flexus* does sometimes occur in books that were not Cistercian, but I am inclined to think that their presence in the Copenhagen fragment (and the others noticed below) does indicate a Cistercian origin.

⁴ Ås, Esrom, Herrevad, Holm, Løgum, Øm, Ryd, Sorø, Tvis and Vitskøl. For a twelfth-century Justinus manuscript (Royal Library, GKS 450 2°), probably written in France, with *punctus flexus*, that was acquired by Archbishop Absalon (d. 1201) and bequeathed to Sorø, see *Living Words & Luminous Pictures: medieval book culture in Denmark*, exhibition catalogue, ed. E. Petersen (1999), no. 13 (p. 19) with plate. For fragments of a manuscript of c. 1200 with *punctus flexus* in the Royal Library that I think was probably written in Scandinavia, if not Denmark, see Fr. 527 + 528 + 529 (+ Copenhagen, Rigsarkivet Fr. 8302), an image of which is on the library web site.

⁵ For medieval abbreviations see Bischoff 1990, pp. 150–168, and Derolez 2003, pp. 187–188.

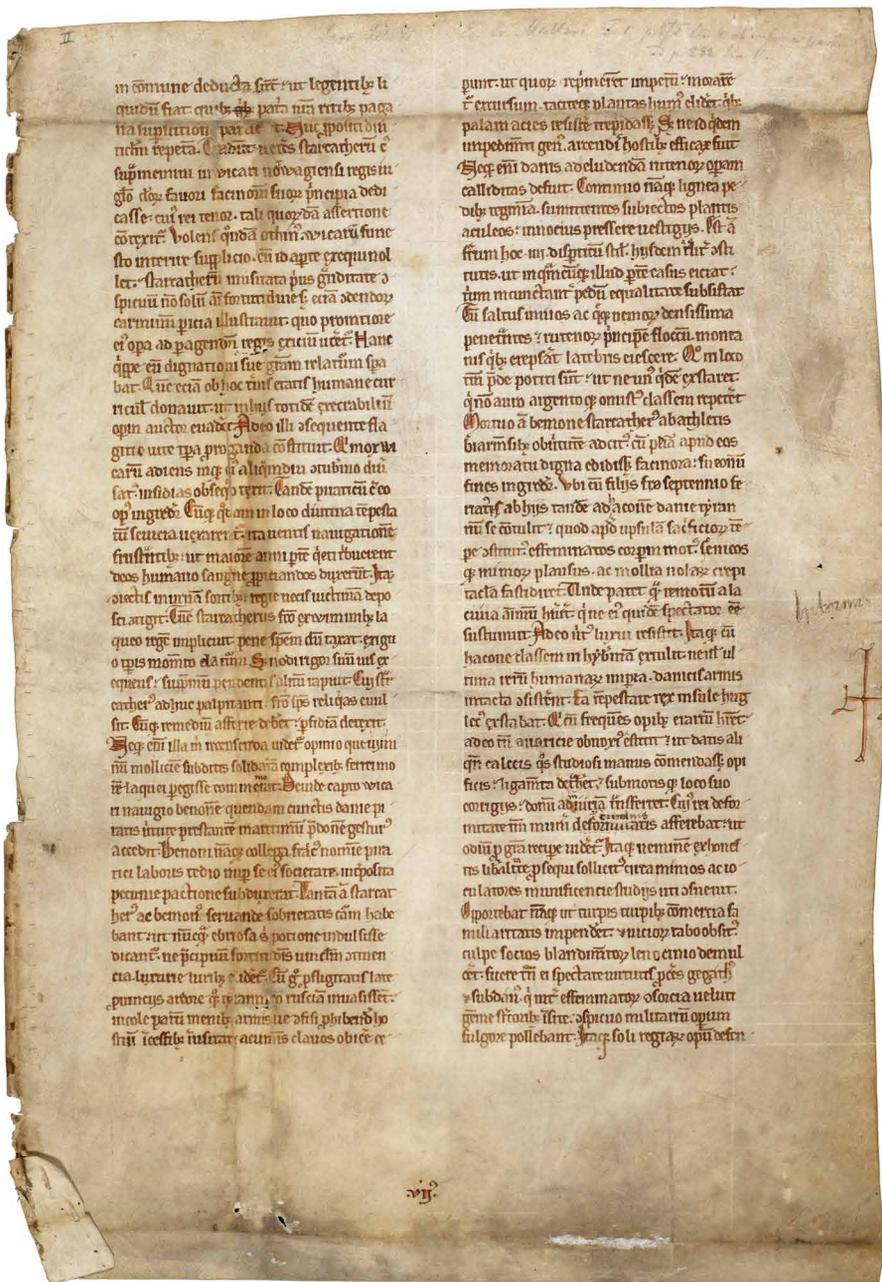


Fig. 1: NKS 570 2° II recto (reduced). The Royal Library.

in comune deduda fuit: ut legitur: li
quod si fiat: quibus qd pax non ritibus paga
na supponitur: parat. Et sic postquam
nichil reperta. Et ad hoc uerba starathetru e
supplementum in uicariu non uaganti regis in
glo dno suozu facinorosi suozu pncipia dedi
casse: cui rei tenor. tali quozda assertione
co'terit: uolent quoda' o'mni' uicariu' sine
suo interire sup' h'co. cu' id apud exequu' nol
let. starathetru' inuicem p'us gubnate d
spiritu' no' solum ad fortitudinem s' etia' ueritudoz
caritatu' p'ua illustrat: quo p'romotione
et opa ad pagenu' regis exiit uerit. Hanc
q'ppe cu' dignatione sue g'nam relatum spa
bar. Que' etia' ob hoc tunc erant humane cur
ritat' donauit: ut in h'c' t'one' exetabitu'
quon' aucto' euaderet: sicut illi assequerit fla
gite uere ipa p'roganda' co'stituit. Et mox
ca'ri adiens inq' q' alio' modu' subino d'ni
sar' inuicem obsequi' tunc. Tandem p'ncipiu' e'co
op' ingredit. Cui' q' am' in loco d'nnia' rep'eta
tu' seuerita' ueritate. na' uenit nauigatione'
frustrat' ut maior' annu' p'ce' q'eri' t'uerit
uozu humano' sanguine' p'ua' annos d'p'ere'it. Ita
d'icet in uicariu' s'ontu' regie' ne'at' uictima' depo
sa' argit. Cui' starathetru' s'io' ex uim' m'ly la
quoz regie' impleat. pene' spem d'ni' t'uar. En'gu
o' t'pis' motu' d'la' r'um. Et nodu' rego' s'um' uel' ex
equent'. sup' p'ua' ueritate' s'altu' rapuit. Cui' s'it
carber' ad huc' p'at' p'ant'. s'io' ipse' reliq'as' euul
sit. Cui' q' remedi' affere' d'bet. p'fida' d'cepit.
Et q'p' e'ni' illa' in mentis' uide' op'imo' que' uim'
na' mollitate' subd'ctis' s'olida' complectis' ferri' mo
re' itaque' p'og'esse' con' m'et'at. Deinde' capto' uicari
u' nauigio' beno'ne' quendam' cunctis' dante' p'
tans' in uere' p'f'ant' m'ant' m'iu' p'bon' g'elur'
a'cedit. Benoni' itaq' collega' s'ic' e' nomie' p'ua
rit' et laboris' redio' inq' se' e' fo' d'etate. in p'olita
p'one' in p'actone' s'ub' d'p'urat. Tanta' a' starath
het' ac demou' seru'nde' s'olnetas' am' habe
bant: ut' n'ic'q' e'bon'osa' s' potione' indul'fiste
d'icant'. ne' p' p'ua' s'ontu' d'is' uic' d'ni' ammen
cia' l'urare' l'urib' e' d'et. Cui' g' p'lig'nat' l'ur
p'umeis' at'one' q' p' r'amp'io' r'ufata' inu' f'iste
in'ole' p'atu' mentis' am'is' uel' d'is' p'hibe' d'is' h'o
s'it' i' d'is' i'ustit' ac'um'is' claus' ob'ide' re'

punt: ut quoz' rep'meter' imp'et' mo'at'
E' cur' sum' r'at'ere' plantas' h'um' d'it' d'it'
palam' acres' r'el'iste' r'ep'ido' s'. Et' n'ed' q'em
in'pedim' gen' ar'endi' hostib' eff'icaz' fuit
Et q'p' e'ni' d'ans' ad' elud'enda' r'at'ioz' op'am
calliditas' d'fuit. Com'mo' n'ag' lignea' p'e
dib' reg'na' s'um' r'at'ioz' s'ub' d'ctis' plantis
aculeis' innocuis' p'f'ere' uel' s'up'is. Et' a'
s'rum' hoc' in' d'is' p'it' s'it' h'ys' em' r'at' d'it'
r'at'ioz' ut' in' q'ntu' illud' p'ce' casus' e'ic'at'
tum' m'andant' p'eb' equalit' r'at' s'ub' d'ctat'
Cui' s'altu' uic'ioz' ac' q'p' n'emo' d'ens' s'it' ma
penet'it' r'at'ioz' p'ncip' s'locu' m'onta
tus' q' b' ex'p'at' l'ur' b'is' e'ic'ere'. Et' in' loco
t'ui' p'ce' p'ot'it' fuit: ut' n' e' u' d' q'p' ex' l'are'
q' no' auto' arg'entoz' om'it' d'as'lem' r'ep'et'
M'omo' a' benone' starathet' ab' a' b' h'ic'us
b'iam' s'it' ob'it'at' ad' d'it' cu' p' d'it' apud' eos
m'emo' r'at' digna' e' d'it' s'it' fac'no'ia' s'io' u'iu'
s'ines' in'g'red'it. U'bi' cu' s'it' s'it' s'ep'timo' s'e
r'at' s' ab' h'ys' r'at' d' ad' a' r'at'ioz' d'ant' r'p'ian
tu' s' e' d'it' r'at' quod' apud' ap' s'it' s'it' s'it' r'at'
p' e' d'it' r'at' e' s'it' m'at'os' co'p' m'ot' s'entioz'
q' m'it'oz' p'la'us'is' ac' m'olla' nol'az' c'epi
t'acta' s'it' d'it' r'at'. T'and' p'at' q' r'at'ioz' a' la
c'una' d'it' h'ic' q' n' e' q' u' d'it' s'it' r'at'ioz' e'
s'it' s'it' r'at'ioz' p' d'it' r'at'ioz' u' r'at'ioz' s'it' q' u'
h'ac'one' d'as'lem' in' h'ys' b'ia' r'at'ioz' n'it' ul
r'at'ioz' r'at'ioz' h'umanaz' im'p'ia' d'ant' s'it' r'at'ioz'
m'acta' d'it' s'it' r'at'ioz'. T'and' r'ep'et'at' r'at'ioz' in' s'it' h'ic' g'ug
l'et' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz'. Et' in' f'req'ues' op'ly' e' r'at'ioz' h'ic' r'
ad' d'it' r'at'ioz' r'at'ioz' e' ob'it'at' r'at'ioz' u' d'ans' ali
q' r'at'ioz' q' s'it' d'it' s'it' m'at'os' co' m'ent' d'it' op'
f'it' r'at'ioz' h'ic' r'at'ioz' d'it' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz'
co' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz' d'it' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz'
m'at'os' s'it' m'at'os' d'it' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz'
o' d'it' p' r'at'ioz' r'at'ioz' m'at'os' s'it' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz'
r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz' p' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz'
cu' l'at'ioz' m'at'os' s'it' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz'
p' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz' ut' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz'
m'at'os' s'it' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz'
culpe' factos' bland' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz'
e' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz'
s'it' r'at'ioz' q' u' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz'
g'eme' s'it' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz'
s'it' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz' s'it' r'at'ioz'

h'ic' r'at'ioz'

vij

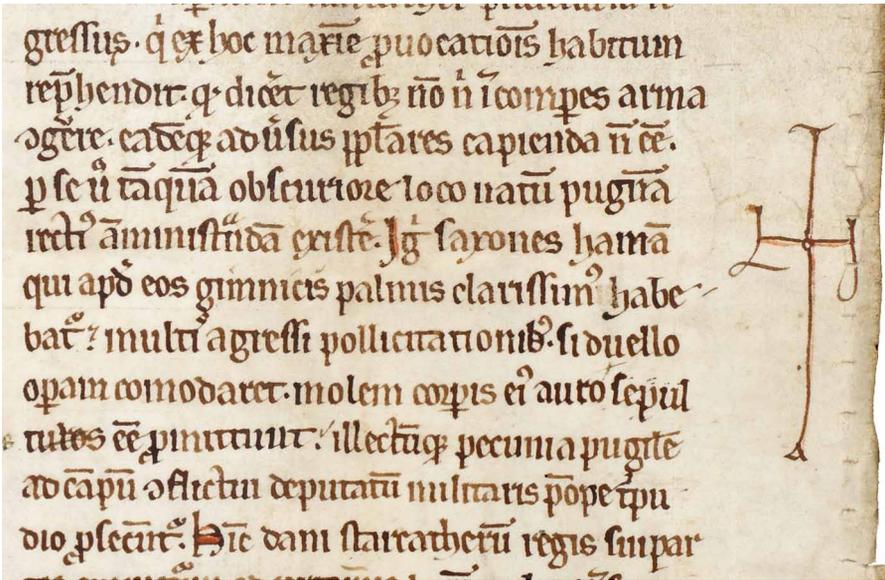


Fig. 2: NKS 570 2° II verso (same size detail). The Royal Library.

The leaf also has several other interesting features. The ‘ruling pattern’ (the arrangement of the plummet lines ruled to guide the scribe) comprises two vertical lines each side of both columns, a total of eight, and the use of four between the columns rather than three is a little elaborate. This could either be a feature of Danish books (therefore a national feature), a characteristic of the scriptorium where the manuscript was written (therefore a local one) or a pattern preferred by the scribe (therefore a personal one). In addition, the four central horizontal lines were extended beyond the vertical lines to the leaf edge, a feature that first appears regularly in about the last third of the twelfth century, and there is an additional vertical close to the edge of the leaf, another feature that first appears regularly towards the end of the twelfth century and appears frequently throughout the rest of the middle ages.

The scribe wrote a quire number (**vij**⁹) at the centre foot of the recto of the leaf, showing that this was the first leaf of a quire (Fig. 1). It was very common to put quire numbers on the last verso of a quire, and the *Gesta Danorum* leaf is probably from a manuscript with quire numbers on the first rectos and last versos of quires, an uncommon rather than a rare feature, but is this either a national characteristic, a local one, or a personal one? At present this is simply unknown.⁶

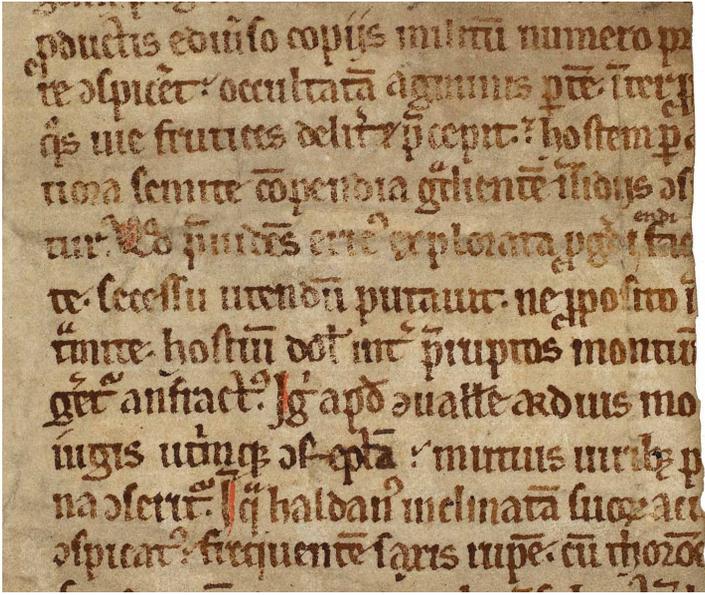


Fig. 3: NKS 570 2° IA verso (same size detail). The Royal Library.

Finally, the scribe wrote ‘above the top line’, that is to say the first line of writing is above the first horizontal ruled line. Until the thirteenth century this was standard, but during the course of the century scribes began to write ‘below top line’ and continued to do so throughout the rest of the middle ages.⁷ The date at when this change took place in different parts of Europe remains to be determined, but it does appear to have been a universal one that is roughly datable to about the middle of the thirteenth century, although when it took place in Denmark is unknown (to me at least).

Two of the three smaller fragments of the *Gesta Danorum* are from the same leaf (NKS 570 2° IA and IB, called *Kall Rasmussens fragment*) (Fig. 3). These also have *punctus flexus* (Fig. 3, line 3), and therefore they can also probably be attributed a Cistercian origin. They also have the Anglo-French form of *punctus elevatus* (Fig. 3, line 2), and, further-

⁶ A manuscript from c. 1300 in the Royal Library with quire numbers on the first recto, as well as the last versos, always written in red, is the vernacular *Urtebog* of Henrik Harpestreng, NKS 66 8°. (I noticed this manuscript by chance, and not because of any kind of systematic search.) The Latin explicit on the last verso in the manuscript uses *punctus flexus*, suggesting that the manuscript may be Cistercian influenced.

⁷ Derolez 2003, p. 39.

more, they also have unusually long suspension signs and a ruling pattern with four verticals between the two columns. The fragments were clearly from a manuscript of a similar size to the one-leaf fragment, and it has been suggested that the fragments may have been written by the same scribe as the one-leaf fragment. However, I think that although the hand of the fragments is certainly very like the hand of the scribe of the full leaf, they are the work of different scribes.⁸ The similarity of the hands of the two scribes, and their use of *punctus flexus*, long suspension signs and (it appears) an identical ruling pattern, suggests, at the very least, that the scribes inhabited the same milieu.

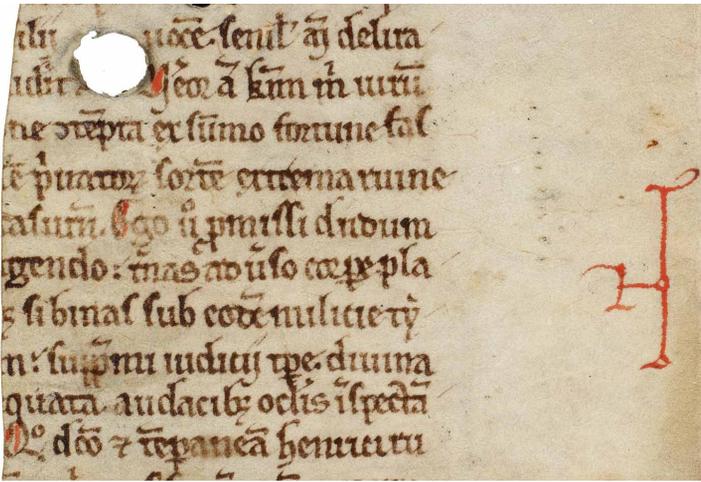


Fig. 4: NKS 570 2° III recto (same size detail). The Royal Library.

The fourth fragment (NKS 570 2° III, called *Plesners fragment*) contains the smallest amount of text of the three fragments (Fig. 4), and it does not have *punctus flexus*, but it does have the Anglo-French form of *punctus elevatus* (Fig. 4, line 6). (It is possible that the absence of *punctus*

⁸ E. Kroman, ed., *Codices scriptorum rerum Danicarum. II. Chronica*, Corpus codicum Danicorum Medii Aevi 4 (Copenhagen 1962), pp. xvi–xvii. The scribe of the two small fragments sometimes wrote **ar** in a ligatured form (the **r** as the majuscule form, with the back of the **a** as its stem), a ligature not used by the scribe of the full leaf, and the scribe of the full leaf usually wrote Tironian **et** with two horizontal strokes, whereas this form was only used occasionally by the scribe of the two small fragments. The identification by Kroman of the scribe of the one-leaf fragment with the scribe of the two smaller fragments is not mentioned in the descriptions in Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, i. p. 39.

flexus is because the particular passages of text in the fragment did not require it, not that the manuscript from which the fragment belonged did not use it.) But the scribe did use the same unusually long horizontal suspension sign found in the other fragments, and this suggests that the scribe of the smallest fragment also inhabited the same milieu as the scribes of the other fragments. It is possible that all three scribes worked in the same place, for, while the use of the long suspension sign by one scribe could be regarded as idiosyncratic, its use by three more or less contemporary scribes suggests a common training. But here another note of caution is required, for might the use of an unusually long suspension sign be a national characteristic or a local one?



Fig. 5: NKS 570 2° II verso (reduced). The Royal Library.

There are several other features of the fragments that seem worth drawing attention to. The first is the curious interlace device at the foot of the verso of the full-leaf fragment that looks as if it was drawn by the text scribe (Fig. 5). This may be unusual, and I cannot (at present) offer an explanation for its presence, although a similar, more elaborate device occurs in a similar position in a twelfth-century Cistercian manuscript made at Sitticum in modern Slovenia.⁹ Secondly, the form of the three Nota signs, touched with red, in the full-leaf fragment are distinctive and memorable and ought to be easy to recognise if they

⁹ Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Cod. 756 f. 150r, reproduced in N. Golob, *Twelfth-Century Cistercian Manuscripts. The Sitticum Collection*, London 1996, fig. 14. The device appears on the recto of the penultimate leaf in a quire, and it is the only one in the manuscript, see *ibid.* p. 198. (I noticed this by chance, not because of searching for such devices.)



Fig. 6: NKS 570 2° II verso (detail, slightly reduced). The Royal Library.



Fig. 7: NKS 570 2° IA verso
(same size detail).
The Royal Library.

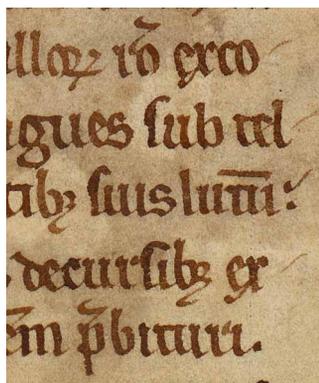


Fig. 8: NKS 570 2° IA recto
(same size detail).
The Royal Library.

occur elsewhere (Fig. 2). Thirdly, the form of the red Nota sign in one of the small fragments, although less distinctive than the ones in the full-leaf fragment, also ought to be easy to recognise elsewhere (Fig. 4). Fourthly, the pen-flourished initial for the opening of Book VII on one of the small fragments looks confident and assured in its execution (Fig. 6). (The letter is green and the flourishing in red.) It was almost certainly not the work of the text scribe, for the details of the forms of the letters of the remains of the red title (*in^o xxx^o* is all that survives of the section title 'Haldinus xxx^{us}') (Fig. 7) are not found in text, and the title should probably be associated with the hand responsible for the initial and for touching the capitals in the text with red. (Note the forms of the serif at the top of the minims and the forms of the *x* by the rubricator in Fig. 7, and compare them to those by the scribe of the text in Fig. 8) This division of labour is quite common in manuscripts of this date, and the means of finishing the flourishes to the left of the stem of the initial and the symmetrical spiral forms in the bowl of the initial, are likely to have been repeated in more or less the same manner in other work of the same hand, and therefore other initials by the same hand ought to be recognisable if they occur elsewhere.

Because of the proposal that the scribe of the one-leaf fragment is to be identified with the scribe of the two fragments from the same leaf, together with their very similar layout, it was suggested in an important study published in 1962 (although not for the first time) that the three

fragments probably came from the same manuscript.¹⁰ (This means, of course, that the four fragments are the remains of two manuscripts.) The text on the one-leaf fragment is fairly close to the text on the two fragments, and the 1962 suggestion was taken up in a study published in 1988.¹¹ This carefully worked out how much space the ‘missing’ text between the fragments occupied, and concluded that the one-leaf fragment, known to be the first in the seventh quire of a manuscript because of the quire number on its recto, was separated by six leaves from the leaf from which the two fragments were cut. Because medieval manuscripts were often made up with quires of eight leaves, it was concluded that the fragments came from the outermost ‘bifolium’ (or two conjoint leaves) of a quire formed from four bifolia. This conclusion (but not the evidence) was then repeated in the 2005 edition.¹² The 1988 study appears to have accepted the view that the fragments were the work of the same scribe. But, despite the textual detective work done in 1988, is there any other physical evidence that needs to be considered and does my view that the fragments were the work of two scribes mean that the conclusion that the fragments are from one manuscript remain sound?

The parchment of the three fragments is very similar. The recto of the one-leaf fragment is almost certainly the flesh-side of the parchment (all parchment has two sides, a ‘flesh-side’ and a ‘hair-side’) and the versos of the two smaller fragments are probably also flesh-sides, and this means that the 1988 suggestion that the three fragments are from the same bifolium is supported by this physical evidence. However, it has proved impossible to see any other physical evidence in the fragments to confirm that the three were once part of the same bifolium.¹³ What does appear certain is that the one-leaf fragment is from a manu-

¹⁰ Kroman 1962, pp. xvi–xvii. Earlier scholars assumed that the three fragments were from the same manuscript because of their similar physical features. So, for example, Carl S. Pedersen, *Apoteker Sibbersens Saxobog. Saxos Danmarkshistorie gennem Tiderne i Text og Billeder*, 1927, p. 17, also reproducing the three fragments in the sequence II–I–III, that is, according to their location within Saxo’s work, not to the date of their inclusion in the library’s collections.

¹¹ K. Friis-Jensen, ‘Do the Lassen and Kall Rasmussen fragments of Saxo Grammaticus’s *Gesta Danorum* belong to the same codex?’ in *A Literary Miscellany Presented to Eric Jacobsen*, ed. G.D. Caie and H. Nørgaard, Publications of the Department of English, University of Copenhagen 6 (Copenhagen 1988), pp. 67–71.

¹² Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, i. p. 39.

¹³ I am very grateful to Jiří Vnouček of the Preservation Department of The Royal Library for carefully examining these fragments and passing on his observations concerning their physical evidence to me.

script in which the parchment was arranged so that the flesh-side was at the quire exterior. (During the Romanesque period, it was common for quires to be arranged with the hair-side at the quire exterior, but towards the end of the twelfth century some manuscripts are found with their quires arranged with the flesh side at the exterior, and thereafter both arrangements can be found. However, the chronology and localisation of these two arrangements remain to be determined.)

When I examined the full-leaf fragment next to the two smaller fragments in 2008, I was uneasy and uncertain about the suggestion that these were from the same bifolium for the parchment and ruling did not seem to quite match. There is certainly no reason why two scribes could not have worked in the same quire, but I would like to propose an alternative explanation for this that was not apparently considered in the 1988 study.

The full-leaf fragment and the two smaller fragments from another leaf were from two manuscripts of very similar size. (It seems clear that the other small fragment was from another manuscript of similar size, although it has never been suggested that this could be from the same manuscript as the other fragments, despite their similar scribal features.) The relative closeness of the passages of the texts on the two leaves in the *Gesta Danorum* that prompted the 1988 suggestion that the leaves were from one bifolium might not be the case, but the chance survival of fragments from about the same position within two manuscripts. And surely it would be more interesting to have fragments from three manuscripts rather than two?

The fragments have all been dated to the late thirteenth century, and this date goes back as least as far as the 1926 catalogue of the Latin manuscripts in the Royal Library,¹⁴ to be repeated by subsequent scholars. The character of the writing and the placing of the first written line above rather than below the first ruled line suggests an earlier date, somewhere in the middle of the thirteenth century, and I would prefer a date in or about the second third of the century (*c.* 1230–1260). What is intriguing about the manuscripts, whether two or three, now represented by the fragments is why they were made. The manuscripts were clearly large and (relatively) grand books, and their common palaeographical features suggest that they may have been made in the

¹⁴ E. Jørgensen, *Catalogus codicum latinorum medii aevi Bibliothecae Regiae Hafniensis* (Copenhagen 1926), pp. 404–405, repeated in the description of the fragments in Kroman, *Codices scriptorum rerum Danicarum*, pp. xvi–xvii, and Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, i. p. 39.

same place. Who directed them to be made, and why? Saxo's work is of enormous interest and value to modern historians, but it does not appear to have circulated widely during the middle ages. (The *Gesta Danorum* was certainly not alone in this, for the work of other 'important' medieval historians also had little or no circulation during the middle ages.) Might the fragments represent some kind of attempt to disseminate copies of Saxo's work from one Danish Cistercian house? (It may be noted in passing that Saxo's first patron, who died in 1201, was Archbishop Absalon who was an enthusiastic supporter of Cistercian monks.) If it could be determined where the fragments were written, it may be possible to determine who directed them to be made and why. Fundamental questions to ask of any manuscript or group of manuscripts, even if represented only by fragments, is (first) their origin, (secondly) their date, and (lastly, and most interesting of all) their purpose. I have tried in this note to address something of the first two questions.

To repeat, and to extend what was said above, too little is known about Danish book production at present to be certain of the significance of the observations presented here, but surely future work on manuscripts of Danish origin and the thousands of fragments of Danish provenance (housed in the Royal Library and the National Archives in Copenhagen) must bear them in mind. It is possible that the scribal features drawn attention to here will be found elsewhere, and surely it is even possible that further examples of the work of the scribes of the fragments exist elsewhere, waiting to be identified. If this turns out to be so, it may then be possible to answer fundamental questions about the fragments with greater assurance than it has been possible to do so here.

SUMMARY

MICHAEL GULLICK: *Palaeographical observations on four medieval fragments of the Gesta Danorum by Saxo Grammaticus in the Royal Library.*

The four fragments of a total of three parchment sheets from one or more Saxo manuscripts from the 1300s, found and published between 1855 and 1877, and now archived in Capsule NKS 570 2°, were for a long time considered to belong to the same codex, but Ellen Jørgensen pointed out in 1926 that Fragment III, the Plesner fragment, represented an independent codex. The common origin of Fragments I and II, the Kall Rasmussen fragment and the Lassen fragment, respectively, was further substantiated by Erik Kroman in 1962 and Karsten Friis-Jensen in 1988. This paper demonstrates that, in spite of the fact that all three fragments share many codex-related and palaeographical characteristics, especially punctuation, very likely placing them in a Cistercian environment (there were 10 monasteries of this order in Denmark, including the Sorø Monastery established by Absalom), there are basic but overwhelming reasons to assume that the three wholly or partially preserved leaves derive from three different manuscripts of the same size and make-up and that they were produced in the same environment, a possible indication of a specific project in the century after Saxo in the interests of promoting his work. The author points out that detailed palaeographical studies of the considerable number of manuscript fragments in the Royal Library and in the National Archives, many of which may be assumed to derive from manuscripts of Danish origin, could presumably shed more light on book production in Denmark in the 1300s and hence also on the questions discussed in the paper.

