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A RECENTLY-DISCOVERED FRAGMENT PRESERVING TEXT OF EARLY THIRTEENTH-CENTURY NORWEGIAN CHARTERS

A UNIQUE PARCHMENT fragment was discovered in the Arnamagnæan Collection in Copenhagen in November 2015. The staff at the conservation workshop found three adjacent strips of a fragmented single parchment leaf during restoration of the manuscript AM 22 4to. The fragment measures ca. 15 x 9 cm and comprises three equally-sized strips with a width of ca. 3 cm (Fig. 1). 22–23 lines of text are preserved on the recto-side, while the verso-side is blank. The text is in Old Norwegian, but has many lacunae as the beginning of each line is missing. Moreover, the last two lines are severely damaged and more lines may be missing.

The fragment was found under the leather cover of the binding on the fifteenth-century legal manuscript AM 22 4to. The three strips were used as lining on the spine where they were placed in between the four raised bands. The parchment strips were pasted onto the spine and parts of the boards with the text facing downward (Fig. 2). The glue employed, presumably some kind of animal adhesive, caused small amounts of the ink to stay on the spine and boards as the parchment strips were removed. Nevertheless, the legibility of the text is fairly good. The parchment itself, however, has suffered somewhat from its secondary use. Both the top and bottom edges are damaged and two parallel areas of wear and discoloration run horizontally over the parchment. These parallel imprints are caused by the contact with the edges of the boards. In the area of the upper imprint, which was placed over the edge of the lower board, the damage makes the text partially illegible and there are several small holes from vermin. Comparable holes, presumably caused by woodboring beetles, can be found in the lower board.

The secondary carrier of the fragment, AM 22 4to, is a codex of 245



Fig. 1: Newly discovered parchment fragment containing text of early thirteenth-century Norwegian charters (verso-side without writing). The fragment was reused as spine lining inside the binding of Copenhagen, Den Arnemagnæanske Samling, AM 22 4to. Photo: Suzanne Reitz.

leaves made of both parchment and paper. The manuscript contains several Danish law texts, among others Valdemar's Zealand law and Eric's Zealand law.¹ Kristian Kålund dates the manuscript to the second half of the fifteenth century.² At the back of AM 22 4to, there are four additional leaves (fols. 243–246) which were written in the sixteenth century.³ It is not known how or when the manuscript came into Árni Magnússon's collection.

Dating of the old binding

The old binding of AM 22 4to, inside which the fragment was found, appears to be an original binding. It is a dark brown full binding made of blind-tooled leather on wooden boards. There are traces of corner and center pieces as well as indications of two former clasps on the boards. From the fact that the leaves only have one set of sewing holes it can be assumed that this is the first binding of AM 22 4to.

The attachment style of the binding can be described as a so-called "Gothic" or late medieval binding, where the supports of alum-tawed skin are laced through the exterior face of the board instead of the edge.⁴ Other examples of such an attachment style of the boards on European manuscripts range from the early fourteenth century through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁵ Bindings with this attachment method often have shaped boards, as does the present binding, where the boards are beveled toward the spine. This kind of shaping is most common in

- 1 Both laws have been edited as part of *Danmarks Gamle Landskabslove. Med Kirkelovene*, udgivet af Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab, Vols. 5–8 (København: Gyldendal, 1936–1941). A translation is available in *The Danish Medieval Laws: The Laws of Scania, Zealand and Jutland*, ed. by Ditlev Tamm and Helle Vogt (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 111–232.
- 2 Kristian Kålund, *Katalog over den Arnamagnæanske Håndskriftsamling*, udgivet af Kommissionen for det Arnamagnæanske Legat. 2 vols (København: Gyldendal, 1889–1894), I, 351.
- 3 Kålund, *Katalog*, I, 351–352. Due to an error in the foliation, it runs up to 246 while there are only 245 leaves (number 135 was skipped).
- 4 See Karen Jutzi et al., *Medieval and Early Modern Manuscripts: Bookbinding Terms, Materials, Methods and Models*, compiled by the Special Collections Conservative Unit of the Preservation Department of Yale University Library (2015), 18 and 30, accessed April 26, 2016, www.travelingscriptorium.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/binding-booklet-2015.pdf.
- 5 J. A. Szirmai, *The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding* (Surrey & Burlington: Ashgate, 1999), 174; Jutzi et al., *Manuscripts*, 28.



Fig. 2: Copenhagen, Den Arnemagnæanske Samling, AM 22 4to under restoration. The three strips have partially been removed, leaving clear traces of how they were placed over the spine and boards. Photo: Suzanne Reitz.

bindings from the fifteenth century.⁶ The endbands were also worked in a way that is characteristic for bindings of the “Gothic” style and they can be described as Szirmai’s Type III (“saddle-stitch endband over primary wound endband”).⁷ Szirmai finds the earliest dated example of this kind of endband on a German manuscript from 1434 and the latest on a central European printed book from 1547, while other scholars have found this endband type in bindings from the mid-thirteenth or early fourteenth centuries to the end of the fifteenth century.⁸

While the features of the old binding discussed above are considered characteristic of “Gothic” or late (Western) medieval bindings, others (such

6 Jane Greenfield, *ABC of Bookbinding: A Unique Glossary with over 700 Illustrations for Collectors and Librarians* (New Castle & New York: Oak Knoll Press & The Lyons Press, 1998), 97. See also Jutzi et al., *Manuscripts*, 19.

7 Szirmai, *Archaeology*, 203.

8 Szirmai, *Archaeology*, 208.

as blind tooling and leaves being cut flush with the boards) are more commonly found in earlier bindings, for instance the so-called “Romanesque” bindings which are typically found on manuscripts from the eleventh to the end of the fourteenth centuries.⁹ Since Kålund dates the main part of AM 22 4to to the second half of the fifteenth century, however, and since the binding does not show any traces of reuse, it can hardly be older than that. Thus, the earliest possible dating would be around 1450.

Nothing in AM 22 4to suggests that the manuscript was unbound for a long period of time after it was written. It is furthermore unlikely that the binding was disturbed later on and the fragment placed underneath the leather cover then. When the last four leaves were added to AM 22 4to in the sixteenth century, they were merely glued into the existing binding structure without disrupting it. Moreover, the leather cover does not appear to have been removed from the wooden boards at an earlier time, and the glue on the spine and boards suggests that the fragment was an original part of the binding. It can hence be concluded that the three strips of the fragment were placed underneath the cover of the binding when the manuscript was first bound, which presumably happened not too long after it was written, i.e. between 1450 and 1500 or a few years after that.¹⁰

About the transcription

The text preserved on the fragment has been transcribed here on a fairly diplomatic level. Abbreviations have been expanded (and italicized) in keeping with the scribe’s general practice. Certain letter forms are kept apart, most notably ⟨i⟩ vs. ⟨ī⟩, ⟨r⟩ vs. ⟨z⟩ and ⟨s⟩ vs. ⟨f⟩, whereas others have been merged, e.g. ⟨i⟩ and ⟨ī⟩, ⟨m⟩ and ⟨n⟩ and ⟨n⟩ and ⟨ŋ⟩.

Due to the relatively poor condition of the fragment in places, in many cases it cannot be determined whether the scribe wrote ⟨i⟩, ⟨ī⟩ or ⟨i̇⟩. Similarly, the distinction between ⟨d⟩ and ⟨ð⟩ is uncertain in several instances. In some cases, the ⟨ð⟩ could furthermore be interpreted as a ⟨ð̅⟩ (a ligature of ⟨ð⟩ and ⟨e⟩). These, and other paleographical and linguistic aspects – in-

⁹ Szirmai, *Archaeology*, 140–142.

¹⁰ This dating is highly dependent on Kålund’s paleographic dating of the main text of AM 22 4to, a critical re-evaluation of which would be desirable.

cluding remarks on the language of the exemplar(s) — will be discussed in more detail in a forthcoming publication on the fragment (see below).

Transcription

- 1 [...o] fwa morg[o] goðrar aminningar Noregs kononga [ooooo]
- 2 [...o] . figurdar konongs. sænðr quediú. Eriki ærkibifkupi [ooo]
- 3 [...o] allum guds vínun ok fínun vinum vǫrðanðom ok vǫðz kǫ-
- 4 [...]ðe. þeim ær hann gefz með míldi ok mífkunfæmd
- 5 [...] fnt at figurðz konongr moðzfaðz mín hof staðen
- 6 [...] guds modoz. ok fua fkal vera til hins øffta dags.
- 7 [...] þui er með rettom aatronaðe vǫl vera til guds. dyr-
- 8 [...] ero til fǫmðar. ok mer til framkømdar. bæde ym
- 9 [...v]ǫl taka .j. mote kononglega hæmpnd. hǫær fa ær
- 10 [...] eftir þui fem ek hefir nu bírt a brefue mínu.
- 11 [...]kkoz. sæm ek fe raððz hollyvina mínna at lata hann
- 12 [...]þæs guð. at þetta ok alt annat. er ek tekr .j. mín
- 13 [...]or]d fra orde. vttan aa. fyrfrkrifuado brefue
- 14 [...]ga]f þeffom ftað til vpheldis. þat er æign hǫnf er
- 15 [...]men til fær. þa liggr honom viðz. ræidi guds.
- 16 [...]fk]øytingar vattar. Jøhan bifkup forle prefr. Afuarðz
- 17 [...]ð fíðan er jorden var fkyt ok mego þo vítni bera
- 18 [...] fkialdara. Hakon jarl sænðz quediú allum guds
- 19 [...]em̃ia hann ok væita honom hialpræde fer til mífkunnar
- 20 [...]at honom vanz eígi lif til. þa hefir jngi konongz broðz var
- 21 [...]om̃ hueriom manne at riufua þeffa hans [g]iof ok fua
- 22 [...]fua hylli [gu]ð[s] ok [hinna]r hælgu mariu ok [ooooo] [g]uds
- 23 [...]oru.

- 1 [...o]: Remnants of 'm;' (með)? 1 fwa: Seems to read 'fwa', but <w> not used elsewhere.
 1 morg[o]: Reading uncertain. Possibly two characters missing. 1 kononga: Or 'kononga'?
 (cf. the shape of <e> in 'kononglega' l. 9). 2 [ooo]: The first unclear character could be <þ>.
 3 vǫrðanðom: Very unclear. 3 vǫðz kǫ-: Perhaps <r> instead of <z>. 4 [...]ðe: Or '[n]ðz'?
 4 gefz: <f> perhaps followed by an abbr. 6 [...]: Remnants of an <o> ('mario')? 8 ym: Very
 uncertain. 9 [...v]ǫl: Uncertain, but remnants of what could be a <v>. 11 raððz: Uncertain.
 12 [þæs: Parts of <þ> legible. 12 tekr: <r> partly damaged. 13 [...]or]d: The hook of <r> legible.
 13 fyrfrkrifuado: Or 'fyrfrkrifuada'? 13 brefue:] partly damaged. 14 hǫnf: Uncertain.
 17 [...]ð: Perhaps <e> instead of <o>. 19 [...]em̃ia: Perhaps <n> instead of <m>, <e> uncertain.
 21 [...]om̃: Very uncertain. The first (undeciphered) character written interlinearly. Something
 like *fyrirbjóðum* could be expected. 21 [g]iof: Parts of <g> legible.

Dating and character of the text

The text preserved on the three strips is missing several words and parts of words at the beginning of each line, besides having a mutilated ending, making the continuity and syntax of the whole difficult to ascertain. Nonetheless, a preliminary analysis of the names of historical individuals that occur in the text allows for a dating with a high degree of proximity based on comparison with established prosopographical data from other sources.¹¹ Additionally, seventeenth-century regests of lost Norwegian letters with related contents may provide further information about the original charters.

As will be argued further below, we seem to have a set of three letters, written continuously and concerned with establishing related property rights. While lines 2 and 18 clearly have recognizable epistolary salutations (“fæðr quediú”), which mark the beginnings of two separate letters, the end of line 10 (“hefir nu birt a brefue mínu”) also gives the impression of an ending, especially when juxtaposed with the reference to a previous letter in line 13 (“aa. fyrrfkrifuado brefue”), although there is some room here for doubt. It is thus possible (but by no means certain) that a salutation is missing in the lost beginning of line 11. If not, lines 11–18 could alternatively be construed as an addition appended to the first letter rather than as an independent letter. However, the witnesses in lines 16–18 clearly mark the end of a letter.

In the first letter, at line 2, the name of the primary recipient is noted: Archbishop Eiríkr (“Eriki ærkibifkupi”). The Old Norwegian language of the letters shows beyond doubt that this cannot be Erik Valkendorf, whose period of office fell in the early sixteenth century, so the individual in question must be Eiríkr Ívarsson, Archbishop of Nidaros 1188–1205/6. The second letter (lines 11–18) does not preserve the names of the sender or recipient(s). At the beginning of the third letter (line 18), the name of the sender, Hákon jarl, is fully legible (“Hakon jarl fæðz quediú”). Since

11 The primary source of information about the political players of the period from 1202–1207 in Norwegian history is the anonymous *Bøglunga saga*, which covers events from the end of *Sverris saga* to the beginning of *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*. See Þorleifur Hauksson, Sverrir Jakobsson, and Tor Ulset eds., *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar: Bøglunga saga. Magnúss saga lagabætis*. 2 vols. Íslenzk Fornrit 31–32 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2013), including introduction and notes.

this Hákon refers to his brother as King Ingi (“jngi konongz broðr var”, l. 20), we may identify him as Earl Hákon the Crazy (‘galinn’, d. 1214), son of Cecilia, daughter of King Sigurðr Munnr. Hákon the Crazy was the half-brother of Ingi Bárðarson, king of the *Birkibeinar* faction from 1204 to 1217. In the first letter, moreover, mention is made twice of a King Sigurðr: first in line 2 as a qualification in the genitive (“figurdar konongs”), and again in line 5 as the maternal grandfather of the sender (“figurðz konongr moðzfaðz mín”), whose name is missing. King Sigurðr Munnr was the maternal grandfather of both King Ingi and Earl Hákon the Crazy. However, the royal threat (“taka .j. mote kononglega hæmpnd”) in line 9 speaks unambiguously for the king. We may thus attempt to reconstruct line 2:

[...jngi konongr dottlez sonr] figurdar konongs. fænðr quedi. Eriki ærkibiskupi [ooo]

More could well be missing at the beginning of the line, so this reconstruction provides the information that *at least* the equivalent of two more strips of parchment is missing.¹² The witnesses listed in the second letter (lines 16–18), Bishop Johan, the priest Sqrli, Sigvarðr and a certain “skjaldari” whose name is lost, have so far not been identified.¹³

The letters themselves were evidently not dated but assuming they belong together and originate from around the same time, we can assign dates to them on the basis of the names and titles of the receiver of the first letter and the senders of the first and third letters. According to *Boglunga saga*, King Ingi Bárðarson was elected with the support of Archbishop Eiríkr in the summer or autumn of 1204, after which he appointed his older half-brother, Hákon the Crazy, who had also been a contender to the throne, as earl and general by his side.¹⁴ About a year and a half later, the archbishop ceded his office to a successor on account of blindness and old age. The precise *terminus ante quem* for the letters cannot be fixed but in extant papal letters Eiríkr’s successor, Þórir Guðmundsson, is referred

12 The calculation also takes into consideration a left-hand margin.

13 Similar by-names, ‘minniskjöldr’ and ‘skjaldarband’, are found in *Hákonar saga*, which covers the subsequent period in Norwegian royal history. See the names ‘Magnús minniskjöldur’ and ‘Andrés skjaldarband’ in the index of names in Þorleifur Hauksson et al., *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, II, 295 and 319.

14 Þorleifur Hauksson et al., *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, I, 9–10.

to as archbishop as early as February 1206.¹⁵ This circumstantial evidence allows for a dating of the first and third letters to 1204–1206.

The property handed over in the first letter, or rather, the gift that is being confirmed, appears to be a church farm called Hofstaðrinn (“hof staðen”, l. 5). The original giver is “figurðz konongr moðzfaðz mín” (l. 5), i.e. Sigurðr II Haraldsson (d. 1155). Although the name of the receiver is missing, it seems to be an ecclesiastical institution dedicated to the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, “guds modoz” (l. 6).¹⁶ The receiver of the gift seems to be a church other than Hofstaðrinn (which appears to *be* the gift) or a monastery dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

Eight attested Norwegian diplomas from 1188 to 1229 most likely refer to the same place, Hof(staðrinn). These letters belonged to the Cistercian monastery of Høfuðey (modern Norwegian Hovedøya) just outside of Oslo, which was dedicated to the Anglo Saxon king St. Edmund the Martyr and to the Virgin Mary. The letters define the property rights to Hof on Húðrimar (Norwegian: Hov på/i Hurum/Hurumhalvøya), i.e. the church farm Hof on the peninsula between the modern capital Oslo and the city of Drammen. Some are gift letters, others confirmations of gifts, and three defined the rights of salmon fishing in Húðrimar Straumr (named after the current in the narrow strait between Svelvik and Hurum).¹⁷

Our knowledge of these eight letters and their contents derives entirely from the *Akershusregister* of 1622, the originals having likely been destroyed

15 *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*. 22 vols. (Kristiania/Oslo: Malling/Kommissjonen for Diplomatarium Norvegicum, 1847–1992), VII, 6–10.

16 This form is possibly an indirect object in dative, e.g. “gaf/helgaðr guds modoz”, or, though less likely considering the archaic language of the letter, a genitive governed by a preposition, e.g. “til guds modoz”.

17 These charters are described in *Regesta Norvegica* (RN) (nr. 204, 324, 352, 369, 370, 390, 588, 589). A digitized and searchable version has been made available by The National Archives of Norway, “Regesta Norvegica”, online version by Digitalarkivet, accessed April 25, 2016, www.dokpro.uio.no/dipl_norv/regesta_felt.html. The monastery in question was a large proprietor of land in the Middle Ages. It was founded in the middle of the twelfth century, and abolished in 1532, when it was burnt down and its treasures and archive moved to Akershus in Oslo by the Danish Governor, Mogens Gyldenstjerne. See Bernt Christian Bowitz, “Hovedøya Maria kloster – langt fra menneskers ferdsel? En analyse av klosterets økonomiske forhold” (MA thesis, Institutt for arkeologi, konservering og historie, University of Oslo, 2009), last modified January 18, 2005, www.duo.uio.no/bitstream/handle/10852/23783/Bowitzx.pdf?sequence=1.

in the great fire of Copenhagen in 1728.¹⁸ Two Danish officials, both secretaries of the Danish Chancery, Gregers Krabbe (1594–1655) and Mogens Høg (1593–1661), supervised the compilation of this register, though in deciphering the letters they may have been aided by Norwegian scribes who could read Old Norse. A set of three letters in the *Akershusregister*, nr. 1018–1020 in the printed edition (corresponding to RN 369, 370, 390), have contents that are related to the new fragment on several points:

1018. 3 kongebreffue tilhaabefest, dett ene Haagen Jarlß gaffuebreff paa itt laxefischende, kaldis Hoff wedt Hudrumstrøm [Hudrumstrøem]. 1019. Dett andett er J: kong och Haagen Jarlß stadfestelße paa samme gaffue. 1020. Dett 3die er J: kongens dottersøn Sigurder konges wdi lige maade stadtfestelße paa for^{ne} gaffue, alle 3 wden aar og dag. [1205–14].¹⁹

The similarities are considerable. As described in the Register, we appear to have a set of three undated letters in the fragment.²⁰ In both cases, two of the main agents are the same, King Ingi and Earl Hákon as senders, and included in this context is a mention of King Sigurðr as King Ingi's maternal grandfather. The editor of *Regesta Norvegica* dates these letters within Ingi's and Hákon's period of office, 1204–1217 and 1205–1214, while Gustav Storm and Bernt Christian Bowitz, in the latter's study of the economy of Hovedøya monastery, date them more narrowly to 1212 and 1204–1208 respectively.²¹ Our dating of the text of the new fragment falls within this range of years. In addition, the sets of letters in both cases concern a church farm, 'staðr', called Hof. Finally, the phrase "J[nge] kongens dottersøn Sigurder konges [...] stadtfestelße" in the Register, which is marked off as a citation by the editor of the *Regesta Norvegica* ("dattersønn av kong Sigurd"), fits with our attempt to reconstruct line 2 in the fragment.

18 G. Tank, ed., *Akershusregistret af 1622: Fortegnelse optaget af Gregers Krabbe og Mogens Høg paa Akershus slot over de derværende breve*, Udgivet af Den norske historiske Kildeskriftkommission (Kristiania: Grøndahl & Søn, 1916), III–IV.

19 Tank, ed., *Akershusregistret*, 68. Editorial additions are printed in brackets. On this entry and on the farm Hof, see Bowitz, "Hovedøya Maria kloster," 60–61.

20 Other instances of three letters "attached" in the *Akershusregister* are rare, although they do occur, e.g. nr. 90–92 ("tilhaabefest"), and 140–142 ("sammelfest").

21 RN 369; Bowitz, "Hovedøya Maria kloster," 61.

Although a more detailed investigation of these correspondences is needed, it is tempting to advance the working hypothesis that the new fragment from the binding of AM 22 4to is a copy of the same three letters described in the *Akershusregister* (nr. 1018–1020). For this hypothesis to stand, however, one needs to allow for inaccuracies in the Register (which is not without flaws in other places) with regard to the order of the letters. It is also possible that the fragment represents two of the Akershus-letters, the third one having been written below on a missing bottom part of the leaf or even on another leaf now lost.

Conclusions

Old Norse texts are rarely found in book bindings, which most often yield scraps of Latin liturgical books, and the discovery of a set of royal letters in this context is even rarer. The rediscovery of letters from the Hovedøya archive is most unexpected. It is also worth pointing out that few diplomatic texts in Old Norse survive at all from this early date. The documents in question, although they originally belonged to a Cistercian monastery in Norway, concerned the property rights of the monastery which were transferred to the Danish Crown after the destruction of the monastery, and thus not made obsolete. As far as can be known, these letters were still valid legal charters at least into the seventeenth century. Their reuse in the binding of a Danish law manuscript thus calls for an explanation. One possible explanation for their becoming obsolete could be the archaic language they use, which was probably not legible to Danish officials around 1500. The owners of a manuscript like AM 22 4to would presumably be found in such circles, although studies to support that supposition have as yet not been undertaken. Why the Norwegian letters under discussion ended up in the binding of this codex, why they were copied in the first place, and whether they are singular documents or form a part of a collection of such copies are questions that cannot be answered at this point. A more detailed investigation of the fragment, including an analysis of the writing and the language, is scheduled to appear in *Opuscula* 15 (pres. 2017). Meanwhile, this preliminary publication makes the fragment available to those who might be interested in the knowledge, historical or otherwise, that it can yield.

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AM 22 4to

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