

## MEDIEVAL PARCHMENT IN ELSINORE - A CASE STORY

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For more than 40 years Jørgen Raasted has been collecting, registering, and investigating the fragments of medieval manuscripts in Danish archives and libraries (1).

In this paper I shall discuss a problem often dealt with by the Sexagenarian during his studies of medieval books: Where do these fragments come from? I cannot give an answer, and I am afraid the result of my research makes things even more complicated than before.

The Lutheran Reformation of 1536 meant a secularization of all Roman Catholic monasteries, churches, estates - and libraries in Denmark. Many of the manuscript books had already become outdated by printed books, and the majority of the rest were mass books, antiphonaries, Catholic theologies, and other papal writings useless to the Lutherans.

The parchment of the books, on the other hand, is strong material, much better suited than paper for many purposes, and so the books were cut to pieces and the parchment reused for bindings and other things.

Thousands of these fragments have been preserved, mainly as bindings of accounts from the period 1550-1650; after this date all medieval parchment in Denmark seems to be spent.

Two important groups of accounts are bound in parchment: (a) The accounts concerning tax income etc. from the fiefs, kept by the Lord Lieutenants. They were made *in duplo*, and one copy was sent to the Exchequer in Copenhagen, the other was stored in local archives, which - with a few exceptions - are all lost. It has long been supposed that the fragments used on the accounts of the fiefs originated from the local, confiscated libraries, but it is now evident that at least some of the accounts were bound (or rebound) in Copenhagen. This means that we cannot conclude that a fragment from, say, the accounts of the fief of Kronborg derives from a book in a monastic library in Elsinore (2).

Therefore the other group (b) is of special interest: Some accounts were kept by local authorities, and because they dealt with money of no interest to the administration in Copenhagen they always remained in the town where they were made. The best preserved local archives in Denmark

are those from Elsinore (3). Among them are the accounts of the church of St. Olai, an almost complete series from the rebuilding of the church (1557). Until 1896, when the accounts from 1557-1754 were transferred to the new Provincial Record Office in Copenhagen (LAK), all the accounts and the fragments on them formed part of the archives of the church. In Copenhagen the accounts were rebound and all the fragments were removed from them and handed over to the National Record Office (RA). Nowadays, the only vestiges of the fragments on the accounts are the perforations in the paper made by the binder's needle (4).

In 1928 the greater part of the fragments were handed on to the Royal Library, where they now form part of the Collection of Medieval Manuscript Fragments.

The Series of accounts begins two years before the consecration of the church in 1559; after 1606 a new method of binding was introduced together with a bewildering double numbering. There are no fragments on the accounts after 1606.

At this point of the investigation into the fragments of the accounts from Elsinore we can make the following conclusions:

(1) The serial numbers on the fragments are added by various hands (16th to 17th cent.), some simply indicating the number, others correcting and clarifying a note. They can always be verified by the notes in the accounts. The persons mentioned are the church wardens responsible for the finances of the church. They are all well documented, well-to-do citizens of the town. Many of the numbers missing from the fragments were written on the paper of the accounts (nos. 11,12,29,31). The accounts 13,18,19 are missing.

This means that the accounts were bound and their serial numbers corrected at short intervals. Some of the fragments were used for the accounts of one year, others (e.g. 2480) comprised the accounts of several years.

(2) It is probable that the fragments RA E 454-57 belong to the fragments from Elsinore: The fr. E 456 is part of codex TH AA 18 which contains frr. LAK 136 (the accounts of Helsingør Rådstue 1586-87) and KB 1667 (St. Olai no. 17, 1585). The dates on frr. 454-57 are added in red pencil (19th-20th cent.) Traces of a similar pencil are found on the accounts in LAK, serial no. 4.

If this argument is correct, we may find other examples of codices whose fragments occur on different sorts of accounts in Elsinore.

(3) Unfortunately, the oldest extant accounts from the fief of Kronborg date from 1610, and we cannot compare them with those from St. Olai, but since most codices only occur once, it is almost certain that the church warden and his book-keeper did not have whole manuscripts but only sheets of parchment at their disposal.

(4) Four notes show that these fragments were meant (and probably used) for earlier accounts: (a) fr. 2201 no. 15: '... 84'. This may be explained in many ways, such as a slip of the pen, but this is certainly not the case of (b) fr. 2274, no. 21: '... pendinge fra 83 och till anno 84 Extragt' (the account being from 1588-89), or (c) of fr. 2178 no. 22: 'Extragt och Forklaring fra Phillip 1591 och indtill Phillip Jacobi 1582' (the account being from 1589-80), or of (d) fr. fr. 2223 nr. 24.: 'Wgekos/ bog tel/ fra phillip/ Jacobi Aar/ och indtill/ Aars dag.'

The term 'Extragt och Forklaring' (variously spelled) is used for a shorter edition of the accounts kept by the Lord Lieutenants. It might be argued that the extracts mentioned are those of the accounts of St. Olai, but the first known extract of the series dates from 1593-94, and the fragments must have been used for bindings on much thicker books than the small extracts from St. Olai. The 'Extract offver Broer Jenssons Reigen-schab ... 1593' consists of one page, that of 1599 of three, and that of 1609 of one page. Furthermore, they are not called 'Extragt och Forklaring'.

The term 'Wgekost' also points to the accounts from the fief, fr. 2223 (and 2158?).

The oldest notes on the fragments may therefore very well derive from the book-keeper's office at Kronborg. The parchments were sold, I think, by the clerks either because they were extra bindings that were not used after all, or (which seems more probable) because they were originally bound on the duplicate of the official account made by the Lord Lieutenant which was kept at the castle of Kronborg. After a short period (less than 10 years) the duplicate was destroyed and the parchment sold to colleagues in the town.

There can be other explanations, but nevertheless it means that there was an influx of parchment from the castle to the town, and a further

research of the 95 fragments preserved on the accounts of the Lord Lieutenants may give more examples.

Does this imply that the fragments from St. Olai (and perhaps some from Kronborg) originate from the monasteries of Elsinore? By no means! Some undoubtedly do, but we have at least one proof that parchment was imported to Elsinore. The proof is furnished by a letter sent by King Fredrick II to his Lord Lieutenant Niels Parsberg at Roskildegaard (5):  
 (...) Wij bede thig och wille, ath thu strax forschicker hiid till wortt slott Kroneborg alle huis Papistische Bøger, som finds ther paa wor gaardt wdi Roschild wdi huis Inuentarium, thu ther haffuer annamitt, saa the strax mett thett første kunde hiid komme. Ther medt schier wor wilge. Befalendis thig Gud. Schreffuitt paa wortt Slott Kroneborg then ij Dag Junii Aar Mdlxxxvij. Vnder wortt signett. Fridrerich.

Why does the King ask Niels Parsberg 'to send to our Castle Kronborg all existing papal books in Roskildegaard as soon as possible'? - Because of the parchment, not the contents of the books. It was used for various purposes, and only a small part of the books was used in a way that leaves any traces. We can see some of the traces, but for the time being they cannot be followed further than to the book-keepers in 16th-cent. Elsinore. Only a large scale investigation of all known fragments from Elsinore can shed more light on this interesting and intriguing problem, but the hypothesis for further research must be that not even in fragments from local archives can we expect any connection with local medieval libraries.

#### Appendix

Shortly before 1570 someone wrote a poem on a sheet of parchment while idling in his office. Later on, the sheet was cut into two pieces, and one of them containing the first two lines of the poem was used for the accounts of 1569-71; the other piece is probably lost.

The lines read:

Ehuor thu est wdj løst eller nød

Tha betenck Jesu Christi pine och død.

I have not been able to identify the poem or its author, and it is highly probable that this is the beginning of an unknown poem on mortal vanity by an unknown Danish renaissance poet of the class 'Poëta minores'.

## NOTES

(1) cf. Jørgen Raasted: *Middelalderlige håndskriftfragmenter i Danmark I Scandia* 26.1960.145-50, *Inventar over Det kongelige Biblioteks fragment-samling ved Merete Geert Andersen og Jørgen Raasted. Hafnia MCMLXXXIII*, *Inventar over fragmentsamlingen i Landsarkivet for Fyn ved Jørgen Raasted*, 1979 (manuscript).

Furthermore, Jørgen Raasted supervised the 'Middelalderlige håndskriftfragmenter i Rigsarkivet ved Esben Albrechtsen' 1976 and my *Index Codicum Theologiae Auctorum* (1984), *Index Codicum Bibliocorum* (1984) and *Index Codicum Gradualium* (1986, manuscript).

(2) In an article 'Catalogus fragmentorum Codex Biblicus 10' in: 'Heure-siologia opuscula Georgio Iuulio Raastedio Quinquagenario... oblata', *Hafnia MCMLXXVII* p 1-7 I have exemplified the problem by reconstructing a well documented bible BI 10, the fragments of which were found on accounts from all over the country, including those of Helsingør Almindelige Hospital 1629-30 (LAK 56-59). The only other known codex biblicus with fragments from Elsinore (BI 16) confirms my suspicions.

(3) cf. *Sjællandske Rådstuearkiver indtil ca. 1858. Frederiksborg Amt I* Copenhagen 1971, and *Sjællandske Retsbetjentarkiver indtil 1919. Frederiksborg Amt III*, Copenhagen 1974.

(4) cf. Jørgen Raasted's manuscript inventory of the fragments in the LAK and the 'Fortegnelse over Arkivalier, afleveret fra Kirkeinspektionen for St. Olai i Helsingør til Provinsarkivet i København 1896'.

(5) cf. *Kirkehistoriske Samlinger* 5. Rk. Bd. 1, 1901-03.

INVENTORY OF THE FRAGMENTS OF ST. OLAV, ELSINORE. (Corrections by other hands in brackets).

Fr. no.	Ser. no.	Date	Class	Notes on the fragments	Contents of the fragments
2481	1	1557-61	AN XV		
2196	2	1568-69	AN XV-XVI	Anno Dmj 1568 frann paaske dagh och tiill paaske anno 1569	
2482	3	1569-71	AN XV	(1) Ehuor thu est wdj løst eller nøð Tha betenck Jesu Christi pine och døð. (2) Anno dmj 1569 (- 70) och 1570 (- 71)	
2204	4	1570	GR XV-XVI	Claus Nielssons Oppersell paa Kierkenns wegne anno MDLXX	24.-28.6.
2480		1575-78	AN XV-XVI	(1) Hanns Niellsenns og Davit Leiells Regenschab paa Kierckens wegne fra a <sup>o</sup> 75 indtill S Michils dag a <sup>o</sup> 78 som Regenschaben vnder wdviiser	
2197	7	1575-79	AN XV-XVI	(2) Anno Dmj 1571, 1572, 1573, 1574, och anno 1575 tiill paaskedag 1576. Amenn	2197 is part of the same cod. as 2196.
2198	8	1576-77	AN XV-XVI	76 tiill 77	
2199		1577-78	AN XV-XVI	77 (78)	
2205 (10)		1580	GR XV	1580	Sabb.quat. temp.
2200	14	1582	AN XV-XVI	(1) (82)	

Fr. no.	Ser. no.	Date	Class	Notes on the fragments	Contents
(2200)					
2201	15	1583	INC XV-XVI	(2) Frans Lauesonn Burmeister Kirke Werge David Leiell 1583 (1) ... 84 (2) Ano Dmj 1583 S ouluffes Reckenskap Bog af Hellsingøer (3) (83)	
2222	16	(1584)	BR XIII		
{ 1667	17	1585	THAA 18, XIII-XIV	1686 (1685)	Comm. in Ps.
{ LAK 136					Comm. in Ez.
{ E 456		1582-86		(1582-86)	Comm. in Ez.
E 457		1586-87	LE 13 XIV	(1586-87)	
2274	21	1588-89	GR XV	(1) ..... pendinge fra 83 och till anno 84 Extragt	f 4 quat. temp.- 25.12.
2275-76				(2) Kirkens regenskaff fra St Knuds dag 88 til St Knuds dagh 89. Niels Barfoed, Michel Svøkill (two strips of parchent on no. 21)	
2178	(22)	1589-90	MI XV	(1) Extragt och Forklaring fra Phillip 1581 och indtill Phillip Jacobi 1582 (2) Kirkens regenskaff fraa St Knutz dag 89 til 90. Niels Barfoed, Michell Svøkill	dom. in palmis f 2 maj. hebd.
2484	23	1589	GR XV	90 (89)	

Fr. no.	Ser. no.	Date	Class	Notes on the fragments	Contents
2223	24	(1590)	BR XIII	Wgekos/ bog tel/ fra phillip/ Jacobi Aar/ och indtil/ Aars dag/ Kirkens regenskaff fra St Knudsdag 90	
	25	1590-91	BR XIII	... 91. Niels Barfoed, Michel Svøkill (90, serial number '24' corrected: '25')	
1703	26	1591-92	TH AA XI-XII	Kirkens regenskaff fra 91 til 92 (92) Lauritz Ehem.	Sermo
2180	28	1592-93	MI XIV	(1) Broder Jenssønns Kierckewergens Regenschaff frann phillipi iacobj ano 92 och indtil phllipi Jacobj iglien 93	
				(2) S Olai Kierckens Regenskab fra Ano 92 och til det aar 93 (92).	
				(3) S Olai Kierckens Regenskaff som Broder Jenssønn oc Michel Svøchill haffver giord frann Anno 1592 oc till Anno 1595 oc begynnades frann philippi iacobj dag oc till philippi iacobj anno 1595.	
2179	30	1593-94	MI XIV	(1) S. Olai Kierckens Regenskaff paa it Aar fra Ano 93 och till Anno 94 iglien Broder Jenssønn Kierckewerge. (93).	
				(2) Broder Jenssønns bog paa S/ (1594-97, Tavlepenge) MI 58 XIV-XV (1597-98)	
E 454		1595-57	LE 12 XII		
E 455		1597-98	MI 58 XIV-XV		



Fr. no.	Ser. no.	Date	Class	Notes on the fragments	Contents
{	2206	1599	GR XV	1600 (1599)	com. unius mart.
	2207	1600	GR XV	1601 (1600)	com pl. martt.
{	2277	1601-02	GR XV	....	sabb. post dom. 4
				Kirckens Regenschab fran 1601	
				och till ano 1602	quadr.
{	2202	1602-03	AN XV-XVI	Niels Jenssenn (fra philipi jacobj	
				til) 1603 (1602) och 1604 (1603)	
{	2203	1603	AN XV	Niels Jenssens Kierke...	
				1604 (1603)	
{	1646	1605	JUR XIV-XV	1606 (1605)	
				1607 (1606)	
{	1647	1606	JUR XIV-XV	1607 (1606)	

Note: fr. 2205 may be part of the same codex af frr. 2206-07, but it is written by another hand.