

**NOTES ON THE ERASMUS-AUTOGRAPH**  
**ms. GL. KGL. SAML. 95, 2°**  
 with a survey of the letters

by *Erik Petersen*

The aim of the fragmentologist is normally to reconstruct as much as possible of a given codex on the basis of the evidence that can be established from the fragments and other sources. The reconstruction may be physical, as when several fragments can be proven to have belonged to one and the same original codex; or it may be intellectual, and the aim of the fragmentologist will be, then, to extract as much evidence as possible from a single or a few fragments about, say, the liturgical practice in a given location. In some cases fragments form an important addition to knowledge gathered from more complete sources, in other cases fragments are all we have as our basis for information.

Fragments may be defined as parts or pieces of a previous unity, codicologically speaking the *codex*. The work of the fragmentologist is, in a way, dialectical, in the sense that a conception of the unity is necessary for the interpretation of the fragment; on the other hand, the fragment forms the basis for the reconstruction of the unity. The fundamental question is *how* we define 'unity'.

A codicological unity is not always an unambiguous phenomenon. A fragment of, say, an antiphonary gives no trouble in this respect, since our conceptions of an antiphonary are fairly well defined. But there are more complicated cases. In the following I shall deal with a manuscript which may in some ways be considered as a collection of fragments or of writings in a more or less fragmentary condition, in others as a unity.

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The Royal Library is in the possession of three invaluable volumes of Erasmus-autographs: Gl. kgl. Saml. 95, 2°, Gl. kgl. Saml. 96, 2°, and

Thott 73, 2°. There are certain similarities between the volumes: their content is miscellaneous, their internal arrangement is disordered, they have come into Danish possession in a way that is not traceable in all respects, they have received their present binding after Erasmus' death, and they have attracted relatively little attention until fairly recently.

P.S. Allen, the famous editor of *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*, was the first to announce the existence of Gl. kgl. Saml. 95, 2° to the scholarly world; he was allowed to borrow the manuscript, so that he could study it at the Bodleian Library in Oxford. The manuscript contains a large section of drafts for 52 letters. Strangely enough Allen seems to have had no knowledge about the two other Copenhagen manuscripts, and nobody seems to have told him about them, although they also contain epistolary material relevant to his edition<sup>1</sup>. In 1964, Margaret Mann Phillips made use of the manuscript in her book 'The 'Adages' of Erasmus. A Study with Translations'. To her, the primary interest of the manuscript was, of course, its content of adages – the manuscript contains about half of the new adages which were to be published in the edition of 1533. She noticed that the manuscript does not represent the final text. Her observations seem to confirm the general impression that Allen also got from his study of the manuscript: that the texts contained in it are late, and that they were further elaborated before they left Erasmus' hands. Margaret Mann Phillips overlooked (as likewise Allen and later scholars seem to have done) one tiny piece of relevance to her study: an addition to an *adagium* located in the present volume on f. 198a, between two letters. – Only in the 1960es, during the preparation of the new edition of Erasmus' *Opera Omnia*, was it noticed by scholars outside Denmark that three manuscripts existed. C. Reedijk made a first presentation of them in his contribution to the *Festschrift Herman de la Fontaine Verwey*, in his article 'Three Erasmus Autographs in the Royal Library at Copenhagen'<sup>2</sup>, and the manuscripts have been taken into consideration in the relevant volumes so far published of the *Opera Omnia* – until now first of all Thott 73, 2°. Reedijk adds little to the information on Gl. kgl. Saml. 95, 2° given by Allen; he himself refers to his treatment of this manuscript as a summary of Allen's analysis, and concentrates on the

description of the two other Erasmus autographs. So far the only work of Erasmus contained in Gl. kgl. Saml. 95, 2° that has been edited in the Opera Omnia is the *De praeparatione ad mortem*<sup>3</sup>. The editor, A. van Heck, makes some remarks on the value of the manuscript that may perhaps be considered symptomatic; in his introduction he writes: "malheureusement il ne s'agit dans ce manuscrit que d'une simple ébauche, pas complète, écrite d'une main pressée et négligente; de sorte que sa valeur pour la constitution du texte n'est pas grande"<sup>4</sup>. One understands the frustration of the editor in search for good sources for the constitution of the text, although the observation, *via negativa* points out the central quality of the manuscript: that it shows the work in progress, Erasmus in his studio, *calamo currente*, so to speak.

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There are many unsolved problems surrounding the three manuscripts. In the following I shall not try to solve them, but only add a few observations on one of them, Gl. kgl. Saml. 95, 2°, and present a survey of the letters contained in that volume, hopefully adding to a firmer basis for future conclusions.

In Appendix XIII of *Opus Epistolarum*<sup>5</sup>, P.S. Allen has described the content of Gl. kgl. Saml. 95, 2° in a fairly detailed way. The major elements of the manuscript are the following:

- 1°        A list of writings by Athanasius
- 2°        Ecclesiastes, Book I
- 3°        De praeparatione ad mortem
- 4°        Adagia
- 5°        Indices to the Adagia [in a secretary's hand]
- 6°        Notes on Seneca
- 7°        Notes on St. Augustine
- 8°        Drafts of 52 letters
- 9°        Testamentum Des. Erasmi Roterodami

A listing of the content in the manner just used gives a false impression of the volume in which various parts of various writings and items are so intermingled that it is hard to find any order. Parts

of Ecclesiastes occur together with parts of the *De praeparatione ad mortem*. In other words, it is possible to find a coherent sequence of folia only in bits and pieces. – As we shall see, the same is true for the section of letters; we might have expected to find them organized either chronologically, or by receiver, or by subject, but as we have them in the volume, no such structure occurs.

P.S. Allen speaks very appropriately of the 'orderly and yet disordered arrangement'<sup>6</sup> of the volume; this is true even of the section of letters. As an orderly arrangement must be considered the fact that all letters have been placed together at the end of the volume; on the other hand, one finds great disorder as to the relative location of the letters within the section. As in the rest of the volume, there are only minor sequences of folia which might in some way or another be seen as following some kind of logical structure.

The earliest letter in the volume dates to 1517; the latest are from 1536, the year of Erasmus' death<sup>7</sup>. These are the earliest and latest datable documents of the entire volume. Considering how much Erasmus travelled around in Europe, and how often he changed his address during this long period, one may, as a matter of fact, see it as no small wonder that so much material is still preserved. All the writings contained in the volume, and several of the letters, had been printed during Erasmus' lifetime, but still he kept the original drafts till the end of his life.

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P.S. Allen's main interest in the volume was, as one would expect, the sequence of letters. Oddly enough, and in spite of his very accurate description of the volume and of his intelligent analysis of its content, he did not communicate a list of contents of the letter section; in his Appendix XIII he merely presents a chronological scheme of the spread of the letters according to the years in which they were conceived, without indicating which letters he was actually dealing with. In the following I shall present a list of the letters as they occur in Gl. kgl. Saml. 95, 2°, indicating the folia, the date, the recipient<sup>8</sup>, and a reference to the no., vol. and pages in Allen's edition.

## Gl. kgl. Saml. 95, 2\*: ff. 160-253

fol.	date	recipient	Allen:		
			no.	vol.	page
160-161v	20.2.1536	"amicis lectoribus" <sup>9</sup>	3100	XI	287-290
162-164v	(fin. 1532)	Joannes Faber	2750	X	135-139
164v-167	1.11.1533	Justus Declus	2874	X	309-313
167v-169v	19.11.1533	Joannes Vergara	2979	X	317-323
170-176v	2.3.1532	Martinus Bucer	2615	IX	445-457
177	blank				
177v	blank	(inscribed <i>Bucerd</i> )			
178	16.3.1536	<John Longlond>	3108	XI	300
178	16.3.1536	<Leonard of Gruyeres ?>	3109	IX	300-301
178a	blank				
178av	blank				
179	27.1.1536	Ferdinandus	3087	XI	272-273
179a	blank				
179av	blank				
180-180v	3.5.1528	Clemens VII	1987	VII	378-379
181-181v	30.11.1531	<John Morin>	2577	IX	393-394
182-183	11.5.1533	<Stephen Loret ?>	2807	X	220-222
183v	blank	(inscribed <i>bonus dies...</i> )			
184-187v	12.12.1524	Georgius dux Saxoniae	1526	V	601-607
188-189	1.2.1533	Theobaldus Fettichius	2760	X	148-150
189v	blank				
190-191	(Jan.) 1533	"Pio lectori" <sup>10</sup>	2758	X	144-147
191v	blank				
192-193	8.9.1529	Gvilhelmus Montfolius	2215	VIII	277-279
193	blank				
194-195v	10.9.1519	Jacobus Tutor	1013	IV	65-67
196	16.7.1528	Joannes cardinalis Lotharingiae	2009	VII	416-417
196v	blank				
197-197v	24.3.1528	Georgius dux Saxoniae	1983	VII	373-374

198-198v	16.7.1528	Ursinus Velius	2008 VII	415-416
198a	Piece of <i>Adag., Chil. IV, Cent. II, prov. XXIII</i> <sup>11</sup>			
198av	blank			
199-200v	5.8.1531	Joannes Botzemus	2516 IX	309-312
201-206	7.3.1531	Jacobus Sadoletus	2443 IX	157-168
206v	blank (a few letters inscribed)			
207-208v	30.3.1530	Christophorus Mesia	2299 VIII	400-405
209	31.3.1530	Alfonsus Manricus	2301 VIII	410-411
209v	blank			
210-211	(ca.24.6.)1530			
		Andreas Alciatus	2329 VIII	451-455
211v	blank			
212	24.6.1530	Antonius Fugger	2330 VIII	455-456
212	24.6.1530	Joannes Cholerus	2331 VIII	456
212v-213	24.6.1530	Christophorus a Stadlo	2332 VIII	456-458
213v	blank			
214-214v	11.8.1530	Conradus Herbipolensis	ecclesiae episcopus	
			2361 IX	7-9
215-215v	30.6.1530	Georgius Saxoniae dux	2328 VIII	466-468
216-216v	14.3.1531	Julius Pflug	2451 IX	186-188
217-217v	15.3.1531	Georgius Saxoniae dux	2452 IX	188-189
218-218v	13.3.1531	Lazarus Bayfus	2447 IX	178-179
219-220	13.3.1531	Baptista Egnatius	2448 IX	179-182
220v	blank			
221-222v	12.3.1531	Eobanus Hessus	2446 IX	173-177
223-224	13.3.1531	Jacobus Tussanus	2449 IX	182-185
224v	blank			
225-227v	31.3.1531	Andreas Alciatus	2468 IX	231-236
228+231 <sup>12</sup>	30.3.1530	Petrus Mesia	2300 VIII	405-410
229-229v	5.9.1529	Thomas Morus	2211 VIII	271-273
230	blank			
230v	blank			
231-231v	belonging to same letter as f. 228			
232-232v	12.4.1531	Augustinus Trivultius	2482 IX	255-256
233	blank			
233v	blank			
234-234v	28.3.1530	Argentoratensis senatus	2293 VIII 393-394	

235	6.6.(1530)	Bernardus episc. et card. Tridentinus	2326 VIII	446-447
235v		blank		
236-237v	28.8.1527	Alfonsus Manricus	1864 VII	146-151
238-238v	(ca. 16.11.1517)			
		Petrus Aegidius	715 III	145-147
239-239v	23.8.1524	Argentinae civitatis moderatores	1477 V	511-513
240	(March 1532)			
		<Bernard of Cles>	2623 IX	463-464
240v		blank		
241-242v	22.3.1525	Joannes cardinalis Lotharingiae	1559 VI	52-55
243-244	20.11.1524	Ferdinandus	1515 V	579-580
244v		blank		
245	(Sept. 1530 ?)			
		<i>Unknown</i>	2381 IX	42-45
245v		blank		
246	(ca.31.7.1520)			
		Conradus praesul Wertzenburgensis	1124 IV	306-307
246v		blank		
247	16.10.1535	<Francesco Maria Sforza>	3064 XI	238-239
247v		blank		
248-248v	31.12.(1530)			
		"Lectori" <sup>13</sup>	2416 IX	98-99
249-252	30.3.1527	Thomas Morus	1808 VII	5-14
252v		blank		
[253-253v		<i>Testamentum Des. Erasmi Roterodami</i>		

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P.S. Allen's description of the manuscript has been authoritative for later treatments of the volume. It might therefore be useful to question a few of his observations. The Copenhagen volume has, as Allen states, "considerable value in the light it throws on Erasmus' practice in the writing and preservation of his correspondence"<sup>14</sup>. It shows that in Erasmus' later years his practice was to make

rough drafts of letters which were then reshaped in fair copies made by secretaries for dispatch. As noted by Allen himself, this is in contrast to Erasmus' earlier practice as witnessed by the famous Deventer Letter-Book<sup>15</sup> covering the period 1516-1518; in this period Erasmus normally wrote the letters for dispatch himself and had secretaries copying them in the letter-book - the occurrence of a letter from 1517 in Gl. kgl. Saml. 95, 2° may perhaps indicate that Erasmus' practice was not different in different periods, but different rather for different purposes or situations.

As mentioned, Allen also notices that in spite of the disorderly arrangement of the manuscript, there is, in fact, a certain degree of arrangement about the papers: "... the displacement which occurs is not of single sheets but ... of groups"<sup>16</sup>. Yet displacement of single sheets certainly occurs, as a quick glance at the scheme printed above soon will reveal. The most notable example of displacement is, perhaps, the folio containing a bit of Adag. IV.ii. XXIII which has been so displaced that it has remained unnoticed by both Allen and later scholars<sup>17</sup>.

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The conclusion drawn by Allen on the content and arrangement of Gl. kgl. S 95, 2° - and he is followed by later Erasmus-scholars - is "that the collection was not made by any one interested in the papers for their historical value; for in that case we might fairly expect to find them carefully sorted out and the letters especially placed in chronological order. It seems more as though it were a congeries brought together almost haphazard by some one desirous of gathering and yet hardly heeding what he gathered..."<sup>18</sup>. Reedijk speaks about Gl. kgl. Saml. 95, 2° and the two other Copenhagen-autographs as "souvenir-volumes"<sup>19</sup>. To me the opposite conclusion seems equally likely: that the papers were collected by some one very well aware of the historical significance of the papers. The collector has found the papers in Erasmus' house in exactly the sequence in which they are now bound, and he wanted to keep them in this shape, because this was the shape in which he found them left by the great Erasmus. Most of the content of the volume had been printed already in Erasmus' lifetime, and could be studied and consulted in the printed editions - whereas the papers were found to be of value because they gave an



impression of Erasmus himself and of his house. The disorderly "arrangement" is Erasmus' own and its preservation even after being bound in the present volume is not due to the lack of intellectual interest but is due to personal piety. The disordered arrangement was part of the historical value of the papers, and was, in itself, easily explicable when understood as personal papers by Erasmus that had been following him during his journeys and vicissitudes for a long period of his life.

Apart from the various internal arguments in favour of this thesis, there is at least one physical feature of the manuscript, hitherto unnoticed, that seems to support it: the presence of quire-signatures all through the manuscript. The quires have been alphabetically marked, beginning with the second quire on f. 4 which is marked with a *q* and ending with the last quire, marked with *mm*. It is, of course, difficult (if not impossible) to give a precise date for these markings, but it seems evident that their shape is late medieval or early modern, more or less contemporary, that is, with Erasmus' death. This proves, I believe, that the present disposition and arrangement of the manuscript is original (and not caused e.g. by inaccurate binding or rebinding during the later history of the manuscript); and it proves that the arrangement was intended: if the papers were in no order, and no order mattered to the collector or owner of the manuscript, why, then, should they be structured as they were, probably when bound, by the alphabetical marking of the quires?

Gl. kgl. Saml. 95, 2° may very well be considered as a collection of fragments - entire books, passages and bits and pieces of his writings and letters, located in great disorder in the volume when compared to the printed editions. But the present state of the papers is not a witness to the bad scholarly qualities of the collector as a fragmentologist - he had no intentions of reconstructing the original 'volumes' of writings and letters; his frame and context was the late Erasmus, and his aim and motive was piety towards the great humanist and scholar<sup>20</sup>.

## NOTES

1 Allen wrote to the Royal Library in April 1907. His letter begins: "Audiui nuper, vir clarissime, extare in bibliotheca Regia Hafniensi aliquot epistolas vel ad ERASMUM ROTTERODAMUM vel ab ipso scriptas..."; a little later he continues: "Manet hoc unum quaerendum, licet prae pudore vix petere ausim: an si forte fortunâ epistolas quotquot sunt unum aut alterum volumen complectatur, velis haec Oxoniam mittere ad bibliothecam Bodleianam pro unius mensis spatio" [letter in the archive of the Royal Library, A 10. Brevsager, vol. IV]. – It would have been interesting to know *who* informed Allen about the Erasmus-letters in Copenhagen.

The head of the Royal Library at the time, the learned H.O. Lange, answered immediately: "... The Royal Library possesses a volume containing various autographs of Erasmus, among those rough draughts of 48 letters, which are, I think, of some interest for you. This volume (Øl. kgl. Saml. 95 Fol) can be sent to the Bodleian for your use, if I get an official request from the Librarian..." [letter in Allen's papers in the Bodleian Library].

It is hard to understand how the scholar and librarian H.O. Lange could possibly forget to tell the Erasmus-scholar and -editor P.S. Allen of the two other Erasmus-volumes in Copenhagen – not least because Allen himself mentions in his letter that the letters may be contained in more than one volume. Since Øl. kgl. Saml. 96, 2° contains only a single letter and the letters of Thott 73, 2° are all prefatory letters to works intended for publication (a category that is included by Allen in his *Opus Epistolarum*), the most likely explanation for Lange's silence is that he was not aware that the the two volumes did contain epistolary material – the letters were probably not registered in the library's files of *letters*, as were the 48 drafts of letters in Øl. kgl. Saml. 95, 2°. – Nevertheless, it remains a puzzle that he did not tell Allen about it, for the mere sake of making the volumes known to the scholarly world outside – and for that matter inside – Denmark.

2 *Studia in honorem Herman de la Fontaine Verwey*. Amstellodami 1966, p. 327–349.

3 *Opera Omnia. Ordinis quinti tomus primus*, Amsterdam & Oxford 1977, p. 321ff.

4 *Op. cit.*, p. 328f.

- 5 Vol. III, Oxford 1913, p. 630-634.
- 6 Op. cit., p. 632.
- 7 The earliest letter is on 238-238v; the four letters from 1536 are on f. 160-160v, f. 178 (two letters) and on f. 179.
- 8 I follow Allen in his dating of the letters; I have, however, maintained the Latin versions of the names of the recipients, following the manuscript. Names in brackets indicate that the recipient is not mentioned in the manuscript or in a printed version of the letter; in such cases I follow Allen.
- 9 Address to the reader, appended to *Aliquot Epistolae* added to the *De puritate tabernaculi*, 1536.
- 10 Preface to Chevallon's edition of *Hieronymi Opera*, Paris 1533.
- 11 LB II (1703), p. 996 A.
- 12 Allen, slightly inaccurately, indicates the location of the letter as f. 228; in fact an entire letter splits up the letter to Petrus Mesia into two halves.
- 13 Preface to *Paraphrasis... in elegantias Laur. Vallae*, Freiburg 1531.
- 14 (68) Appendix XIII, p. 632.
- 15 Ms. 91 of the Athenæum Library at Deventer; see Allen's Appendix VIII of *Opus Epistolarum* (vol. I, 1906, p. 603-609).
- 16 Appendix XIII, p. 632.
- 17 F. 198 (a) is only a scrap of paper, measuring 21.3 x 9.5 cm. The entire text in the ms. reads:
- allusit ad hoc proverbium aliquot locis M. Tullius ut in Ep. ad Att. lib. 4: ne βαθυτητα mea, quae in> agendo apparuit, in scribendo sit occultior [Ad Att. IV.vi.3]. Rursus <...> Admirabere meam βαθυτητα, cum salui redierimus<;> tanta mihi μελετη huius virtutis datur [Ad Att. V.x.3]. Rursus lib. 6. ep. 1: nam nulla re sum delectatus

ma<gis> quam meam ~~βεβαιότητα~~ in Appio tibi, liberalitatem in Bruto probari uehementer gaudeo [Ad Att. VI.i.1-2]. - The inaccuracy of the last quotation has survived in the printed editions.

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Appendix XIII, p. 631f.

19

Op. cit., p. 349. - Reedijk describes the existence of three volumes of Erasmus-autographs in Copenhagen as a "perplexing situation" to which he might be "reconciled ... if several more of these souvenir-volumes should be discovered in other libraries in the world. The existence of Erasman mementoes of this kind in larger numbers would automatically reduce the odds against three of them emerging in the Royal Library in the way described. Thus the improbability with which we are now confronted would be homoeopathically remedied by fresh surprises". In general one might perhaps say that there are odds against the emerging of many manuscripts in the libraries in which they are now located; and I admit that I find Reedijk's sympathetic and pious hope improbable. As to his description of the manuscripts as "souvenir-volumes", I would rather speak of "source-volumes" - the three volumes were each kept together in the way they are not only to remind posterity about Erasmus, but also, and first of all, to give a first-hand impression of *how* he worked, and *how* he kept his papers - which is still the primary value of the volumes.

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I am preparing a study of various codicological elements (including the bindings) of Gl. kgl. Saml. 95, 2°, Gl. kgl. Saml. 96, 2° and Thott 73, 2° in order to analyze, i.e., the possible inter-relationship of the three Erasmus-autographs in the Royal Library.

I wish to thank my father-in-law Eric Jacobsen for discussing various points of this paper with me, and for checking my English.