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Two Unexamined Witnesses to Ralph of Coggeshall’s *Chronicon Anglicanum* in London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 371

The *Chronicon Anglicanum* by Ralph, abbot of the Cistercian abbey of Coggeshall in Essex, has long been recognised as an important source for the reigns of Richard I and John, although modern scholarship has focused primarily on the earliest extant manuscript: London, British Library, Cotton MS, Vespasian D.X.¹ In some respects, this restrictive scope of enquiry is understandable: the numerous excisions, revisions, marginalia, and interfoliations to the Cottonian manuscript are indicative of a working copy, perhaps even Ralph’s autograph; and this manuscript formed the basis of Joseph Stevenson’s 1875 edition.² Yet the *Chronicon*, written in the late-twelfth and early-thirteenth centuries, boasts a rich and interesting (albeit lamentably understudied) manuscript tradition, with at least four further copies surviving from the thirteenth century alone, as well as several extracts and

¹ See Guy N. Hartcher, “Ralph of Coggeshall’s ‘Chronicon Anglicanum’: An Investigative Analysis” (PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 1979), 86–103; David A. Carpenter, “Abbot Ralph of Coggeshall’s Account of the Last Years of King Richard and the First Years of King John,” *English Historical Review* 113 (1998): 1210–30; Elizabeth Freeman, *Narratives of a New Order: Cistercian Historical Writing in England, 1150–1220* (Turnhout, 2002), 179–213.

² Ralph of Coggeshall, *Chronicon Anglicanum*, ed. Joseph Stevenson, Rolls Series 66 (London, 1875) [henceforth RC].

abbreviations.³ Two, possibly three, manuscripts were created at Coggeshall Abbey and an early copy, ending in 1195, was consulted by the St Albans chronicler Roger of Wendover, all of which suggests that the *Chronicon* was being copied for external “publication”.⁴

London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 371 – a miscellany of mainly thirteenth-century works – contains two unexplored witnesses to the *Chronicon Anglicanum*, both of which offer a valuable window onto later perceptions of Richard I’s reign, particularly his crusading career. The second of these, fols. 59r–72v, is the primary focus of this brief analysis and, for convenience, is hereafter referred to as the *Deeds*.⁵ The inscriptions on the flyleaves indicate that some of the codex originated from Reading Abbey, to which several works, including the *Deeds*, were added; beyond this, the manuscript’s provenance is unknown.⁶ The next work in MS 371, an excerpt of Martinus Polonus’ *Chronicon pontificum et imperatorum*, provides a clue to dating. On fol. 71v, the *Deeds* ends abruptly mid-sentence, with the same scribe commencing the preface to Polonus’ *Chronicon* on fol. 72r. Having completed the preface, the scribe then returned to the *Deeds* on fol. 72v, clearly demarcating that it was a

³ Christoph Egger, “A Pope Without Successor: Ralph of Coggeshall, Ralph Niger, Robert of Auxerre, and the Early Reception of Joachim of Fiore’s Ideas in England,” in *Joachim of Fiore and the Influence of Inspiration: Essays in Memory of Marjorie E. Reeves (1905–2003)*, ed. Julia E. Wannenmacher (Farnham, 2013), 145–79 at 148–53.

⁴ James Willoughby, “A Templar Chronicle of the Third Crusade: Origins and Transmission,” *Medium Aevum* 81 (2012): 126–34 at 128–30; Maurice Powicke, “Roger of Wendover and the Coggeshall Chronicle,” *English Historical Review* 21 (1906): 286–96.

⁵ This manuscript was briefly noted in *Itinerarium peregrinorum et gesta regis Ricardi*, ed. William Stubbs, *Chronicles and Memorials of the Reign of Richard I*, Rolls Series 38, 2 vols. (London, 1864), 1:xxxv n. 2; *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, ed. James F. Dimock, Rolls Series 21, 8 vols. (London, 1861–91), 5:xxxix–xxxi.

⁶ Montague R. James and Claude Jenkins, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Lambeth Palace*, 1 vol. in 5 parts (Cambridge, 1930–2), part 4:503–4; *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, ed. Dimock, 5:xxxix n. 1.

continuation of the previous work. According to Wolfgang-Valentin Ikas, the copy in MS 371 reflects the second recension of Polonus' chronicle, completed in around 1271 or 1272, which thus provides a plausible *terminus ante quem non* for the *Deeds*.⁷

The *Deeds* is undoubtedly based on Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS latin 15076, or a copy of that manuscript, for it retains most of its variant readings and omissions.⁸ Unfortunately, the provenance of the Paris manuscript is also unclear. A scribal error has led to the suggestion that this manuscript, like Vespasian D.X and London, College of Arms, Arundel XI, was created at Coggeshall Abbey.⁹ It certainly dates from the early thirteenth century and is likely a copy of Vespasian D.X, although it has a complex chronological arrangement and represents a later stage in the *Chronicon*'s transmission than Arundel XI.

An examination of the additions to Vespasian D.X which do and, more tellingly, do not appear in the *Deeds* further suggests that its scribe worked from the Paris manuscript. Thus, an interleaved chapter on Duke Hugh III of Burgundy's deception during the Third Crusade and a lengthy expansion of the relief and battle of Jaffa in 1192, introduced on a bifolium, both feature in the *Deeds*.¹⁰ However, another interpolated chapter, entitled "On the holy

⁷ Wolfgang-Valentin Ikas, "Martinus Polonus' Chronicle of the Popes and Emperors: A Medieval Best-seller and its Neglected Influence on Medieval English Chroniclers," *English Historical Review* 116 (2001): 327–41 at 330, 331 n. 3.

⁸ Variant readings and omissions in the Paris manuscript are noted in Stevenson's edition (listed as V) and have been checked. See RC, 32 n. 2, 33 nn. 1, 2, and 4, 34 n. 3, 39 n. 2, 40 n. 3, 41 nn. 1 and 5, 43 n. 6, 45 n. 2, 51 n. 6, 56 nn. 3 and 4; London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 371, fols. 59r, 59v, 60r, 60v, 61r, 61v, 62r–62v, 63r, 65r, 66v, 68v.

⁹ Willoughby, "Templar Chronicle," 128–9.

¹⁰ London, British Library, Vespasian D.X, fols. 56, 57v, 59r–60v; London, College of Arms, Arundel XI, fols. 60v–61r, 62r–64r; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS latin 15076, fols. 46r–47v, 48v–51v; MS 371, fols. 60v–61v, 62v–65r. All Vespasian D.X references are to the ink folio numbers used by Stevenson and Carpenter, rather than the pencil numbers.

relics”, which is attested in both Vespasian D.X and Arundel XI, is missing from the Paris manuscript and thus from the *Deeds*.¹¹ Three interlineations in the Cottonian manuscript – “scilicet, ad Vincula S. Petri”, “per sex hebdomadas”, and “apud Jopen” – were brought into the main text of Arundel XI, yet none feature in the Paris manuscript or the *Deeds*.¹² Likewise, whereas a marginal addition to Vespasian D.X (“juxta Rubeam Cisternam”) was carried into Arundel XI, there is a blank space in the Paris manuscript and the addition is similarly missing from the *Deeds*.¹³

While the *Deeds* is demonstrably based on Paris, BnF, MS lat. 15076, it is not a straightforward copy. The scribe (or his master) made several decisions which radically changed the *Chronicon*. It commences with the departure of the kings of England and France on the Third Crusade and their arrival in Sicily in 1190 (but under the rubric “mcxci”), and thus omits Richard’s coronation, his taking of the cross, and the entire pretext for the expedition. Thereafter, the scribe reproduced the *Chronicon*’s coverage of Richard I’s crusading exploits: his subjugation of Cyprus, sinking of a Muslim vessel, contribution to Acre’s fall, disagreement with King Philip II of France, execution of Muslim prisoners outside Acre, capture of Darum, interception of a Muslim merchant caravan, victory in the battle of Jaffa, and consent to a three-year truce.¹⁴ However, all matters not directly relevant to that theme were omitted. Thus, he ignored the chapters on Emperor Henry VI’s coronation, Archbishop Geoffrey of York’s capture in September 1191, the discovery of King Arthur’s bones, and the Virgin Mary’s resurrection of the dead.¹⁵ The scribe then followed the *Chronicon* down to Duke Leopold V of Austria’s death in December 1194 (included in the

¹¹ Vespasian D.X, fol. 58r; Arundel XI, between fols. 56 and 57.

¹² Vespasian D.X, fol. 61r; Arundel XI, fols. 64r, 64v; BnF lat. 15076, fols. 51v, 52r; MS 371, fols. 65r, 65v.

¹³ Vespasian D.X, fol. 55v; Arundel XI, fol. 60v; BnF lat. 15076, fol. 46r; MS 371, fol. 60v.

¹⁴ MS 371, fols. 59r–65v.

¹⁵ RC, 29–30, 36–7.

annal for 1195), before skipping approximately twenty-seven printed pages in Stevenson's edition, and only returning to his source for the king's widely-disseminated letter of 1198, concerning the war with France, and part of Coggeshall's obituary of Richard.¹⁶

The other witness to the *Chronicon Anglicanum* in MS 371 is equally complex. It forms part of an unfinished history of the kings of Britain from Brutus to Henry III, composed in several stages by multiple hands and interrupted by other works. The account of Richard I's reign starts on fol. 52v but was continued by another scribe (fols. 53r–55r) using the *Chronicon Anglicanum*. This work, henceforth referred to as the *Reign*, is a highly abridged copy of the *Chronicon* and an annalistic treatment of events, with each annum clearly signified (unlike in the *Deeds*). The scribe liberally rewrote, reordered, and condensed his source, making it difficult to identify the exemplar. He may have consulted the Paris manuscript, although there are some variant spellings, such as "Ptolomaidem" instead of "Tholomaidam".¹⁷ The *Deeds* cannot be the exemplar, since the *Reign* includes material clearly derived from the *Chronicon* but not attested in the *Deeds*. Thus, the *Reign* alludes to Pope Clement III's death, Celestine III's succession, and Henry VI's imperial coronation (none of which are in the *Deeds*); and it continues beyond December 1194, providing brief entries for each annum down to Richard's death and John's accession in 1199.¹⁸

Nonetheless, it is possible that the scribe had seen, and perhaps drawn inspiration from, the *Deeds*. Intriguingly, the *Reign* has the same starting point as the *Deeds* – the kings' departure for the East in 1190 – and similarly omits most of the intervening material before Philip's landing at Acre and Richard's arrival at Cyprus.¹⁹ Two corrections made to the

¹⁶ MS 371, fols. 65v–72v. For the omitted material, see RC, 66–94.

¹⁷ MS 371, fol. 53r.

¹⁸ MS 371, fols. 54v–55r.

¹⁹ MS 371, fol. 53r.

Deeds by a very different hand to that in the script, using a browner variety of ink, are also relevant here. While one (on fol. 65v) is merely the correction of “eva” to “evasere”, the other is more substantial. The original scribe had missed the clause “et in antris et cavernis delituerunt” (which is represented in the Paris manuscript), specifying that the Muslims who fled from the battle of Jaffa “hid in caves and dens”. This was duly added in the margin of fol. 65r by a scribe whose hand (as far as can be ascertained from such a small sample of writing) appears to be very similar to that responsible for the first part of Richard I’s reign (fol. 58v). Thus, the scribe of the *Reign* may have had access to the *Deeds*, but it was not his base manuscript.

MS 371 provides important evidence for the reception of Ralph of Coggeshall’s *Chronicon Anglicanum* in medieval England, and its role in shaping monastic interpretations of Richard I’s reign. Neither of the excerpts in MS 371 can be considered faithful copies of the *Chronicon*: both scribes approached it critically, demonstrating a degree of selectivity in what they included and excluded, and in so doing fashioned works quite distinct from Ralph’s original. One scribe abridged and rewrote the *Chronicon* to create a briefer annalistic treatment of Richard’s reign which was envisaged as one component part of a broader historiographical project, whereas the other transformed the *Chronicon* into a work more akin to a *Deeds* of Richard I, in which the Third Crusade looms large. The latter was based on Paris, BnF, MS lat. 15076, or a now-lost copy of that manuscript. Both of these reworkings of the *Chronicon*, which recalibrated its treatment of events to focus more directly on King Richard’s actions, are in tune with Reading Abbey’s longstanding ties to the Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings, which began with its founding by Henry I.²⁰ If MS 371 is indeed a

²⁰ See Lindy Grant, “Reading Abbey: Intellectual and Artistic Culture in an International Context,” *Reading Medieval Studies* 42 (2016): ix–xvi; Ron Baxter, *The Royal Abbey of Reading* (Woodbridge, 2016), esp. 91–130.

product of Reading Abbey, as seems likely, then at least one manuscript of the *Chronicon Anglicanum* must have reached the royal abbey in the thirteenth century.