2012

An Introduction to Editing Manuscripts for Medievalists

János M. Bak

Central European University, Budapest, BAKJM@CEU.HU

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/lib_mono

Part of the Medieval Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
Bak, János M., "An Introduction to Editing Manuscripts for Medievalists" (2012). All Complete Monographs. 1.
http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/lib_mono/1
AN INTRODUCTION TO EDITING MANUSCRIPTS FOR MEDIEVALISTS

János M. Bak
AN INTRODUCTION TO EDITING MANUSCRIPTS FOR MEDIEVALISTS*

*This practical guide was prepared by the author—in cooperation with Denis L. Bethell (UC Dublin)—based on the relevant parts of Heinz Quirin’s widely used *Einführung in das Studium der mittelalterlichen Geschichte* (5th ed. Stuttgart: Steiner, 1991) and planned to be part of an expanded English-language version thereof. Prof. Bethell’s untimely death cancelled this project, but the author felt that this chapter may be useful for students of medieval manuscripts even in its incomplete form. For a few years it served as part of a Handbook used by graduate students at the Central European University, Budapest. Work on the text (with the exception of “Translating”) was terminated in the 1980s and only rarely could more recent literature be included and recent developments considered. Yet, most of it is traditional enough to be still relevant in the twenty-first century as well. For expert counsel in preparing the present digitalized edition the author is grateful to Frank Schaer, his colleague at CEU, and to Rick Clement for encouraging the publication.
While not all medievalists are faced with the interesting but challenging task of editing a text from one or more manuscripts, it is necessary for all of us who work with edited texts to know how they came into existence and be able to judge the correctness—or otherwise—of the procedure. Also, considering that guides to textual work are mostly concerned with Classical Latin and Greek (or Biblical) manuscripts, a short overview, oriented more towards medieval texts may be useful.

By “manuscripts” we mean here essentially surviving handwritten books from the medieval period which preserve the texts of narrative sources, letter collections, saints’ lives and scholarly, legal, and literary material generally. Traditionally, manuscripts or codices are differentiated from records (charters), even if the latter survive in book form, such as chancellery registers or major privileges folded like a booklet. As a rule, manuscripts are not to be found in archives, but rather in libraries, museums or private collections. Obviously, some general statements about methods of working apply to both records and codices, but they should not be treated in the same way. Care should also be taken not to confuse similar technical terms. For example, the *provenance* of a manuscript means the place and date of its production and the history of its wanderings, and is not to be confused with the *principe de provenance* applied to record sources, which prescribes that archivists should keep records originating from the same administration in their original context.

In the following outline such manuscripts will be discussed as contain narratives or treatises, although many other exist as well, such as liturgical books, legal textbooks, and so on. Some general rules apply to all of them, while their specific classes demand special approaches and particular expertise. Moreover, medieval codices are also important sources as physical objects ("monuments"), offering evidence on the trade and art of book production (and the production and development of the constituent parts, the material of their leaves, inks and pigments, and so on), as well as on writing and on library systems. On these technical matters a fine guide is Richard Clement’s “Medieval Book Production” on HTTP://WORKS.BEPRESS.COM/RICHARD_CLEMENT/3.


2 For these and other issues connected with them (definition, editions, illumination etc.) see now *The Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, Gen. ed. Graeme Dunphy, Leiden: Brill 2010 [henceforth EMC] – soon to be available digitally as well.
The present introduction will touch certain aspects of these, for they are relevant to the analysis of the contents, but they constitute separate fields of study in themselves, namely paleography, codicology, art history and so on.

**Textual and manuscript transmission**

Before a proper judgment can be made about a work and its author, it is first necessary to establish the way in which the text has come down to us.

By textual transmission we mean the process in which the text reached our age. Very few sources survive as autographs, written and corrected by the author himself. We have the autograph of the chronicle of Thietmar of Merseburg with his own corrections, and of William of Malmesbury’s *Gesta Pontificum* (with the more scandalous passages struck out with his own pen). Not long ago the autograph of Ranulf Higden’s *Polychronicon* was discovered in the Huntington Library in California, and such discoveries are no doubt still to be made. A noted study was made by Leon M. J. Delaissé of the autograph manuscript of the *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis. In what has been described as an “archaeological” examination he studied it minutely, noting every erasure and crossing out, every change in the paper. He was able to reconstitute the slow process of its composition, the various changes in the book’s plan, and the addition and suppression of pieces of the text.

But autographs are exceptional. At the other end of the scale are those works which survive solely in fragments or in quotations, or which we know once existed but are now lost. Sometimes reconstruction is possible. One source can be strips of parchment used to make bindings. A famous case of reconstruction is that of the tenth-century epic *Waltharius* which began with the recovery of the “Innsbruck fragment,” once used by an Ingolstadt binder of the early sixteenth century to reinforce the spine of a book. Other verses were found elsewhere on single leaves, and from these scattered materials Karl Strecker was able to reconstruct the entire epic (MGH Poet. 6).

In between these rare extremes are the majority of texts that survive in a few manuscripts, usually different from each other at least as regards the copyist’s mistakes.

---

3 *Huntington Library Quarterly* 23 (1959/60) 1-18.

Moreover, medieval “editors” frequently added or omitted parts of texts for various reasons: political, aesthetic, technical (space, volume), and so on. Sometimes the authors themselves prepared more than one version in the course of their working life.

Then there are authors whose works were immensely popular and of whom hundreds of manuscripts survive. It may take years and travel all around Europe and beyond to take account of them and hence to reconstruct the text. Much can be learnt from the study of a popular text’s transmission. Who copied it, when, where, and why? (Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* provides a good example of an interesting transmission⁵). Moreover, narrative (but also theoretical) texts usually contain large parts that were “inherited” by the author from earlier writers (authorities), whether rewritten or not, or edited in one way or another. This kind of editing may differ in different manuscripts.

Finally, there are authors for whose texts we have no manuscript copies and which only survive in printed editions of the fifteenth century or even later.

These issues belong to the field of textual criticism (on the technical aspects of which see below, pp. 14-17) and include philology as well as the study of the age of the writing, of mentalities, of literary conventions and so on.

In order to assess the value of a given manuscript for the study or edition of a text, its *provenance* must be established. This involves initially deciding when and where it was written, and to whom it originally belonged.

The study of handwriting and *scriptoria* is the task of the paleographer. For the period before 900 A.D. a census of all known Latin manuscripts appears in E. A. Lowe’s *Codices Latini Antiquiores*.⁶ It is arranged in volumes by the countries and collections where the manuscripts now are; gives a plate to show their handwriting; and discusses paleographical questions (e.g., what abbreviations are used) and provenance. For the period after 900 the number of manuscripts grew increasingly greater, and the studies become more scattered and regional.

For a manuscript’s provenance we may find evidence in the text itself. For example, there will sometimes be a *colophon* at the end of the text or the book, in which a scribe will tell us who he is and where he is writing. But frequently such a colophon (especially in earlier manuscripts) consists only of a few words, like *Amen* or


Finis or Telos, perhaps with a short prayer for the soul of the reader. Sometimes there will be an inscription of ownership or a shelf mark which will tell us that a book belonged to a particular library in which case the study of library catalogues is important. The Munich scholar Paul Lehmann has done yeoman service in innumerable works on them (notably his editions of the catalogues of Reichenau and St. Gall). In English scholarship the greatest recent authority has been Neil Ripley Ker, whose handbook lists all known surviving manuscripts of English monastic libraries, with notes on their printed and unprinted library catalogues. The names of previous owners can also be telling, for they too can act as clues as to where the manuscript originally came from. For example, the name of Dr Thomas Man, who collected many of the surviving manuscripts of Rievaulx, may suggest a Rievaulx provenance. Again, even when we know where and when a manuscript was written, its subsequent history is always important, for it is part of the history of thought and of collections, and may aid the identification of other manuscripts. Moreover, the fate of a manuscript may shed light on the reception of the given text or texts, their impact on later writings (of those who owned the book or others) and on cultural history in general.

One of the famous libraries of the late Middle Ages was that of King Matthias I of Hungary, the so-called Bibliotheca Corviniana, and its reconstruction has been important for the history of illumination and of Hungarian and Italian humanism. MS Lansdowne 836 in the British Library has an inscription of ownership, Ex Bibliotheca Regis Mathiae Dono R’mj Episcopi Quinqueecclesiensis D Antonii Verantij Honor’mi Constantinopolj. This tells us that Bishop Verancsics/Vrančić of Pécs recovered this copy of Horace, which had belonged to Matthias’s library, when he was Hungarian ambassador to Stambul in 1555-7. We can trace it from him through the Dutch collector Gislebertus Cuperus, till it arrived in the library of Lord Lansdowne, who donated it to the British Museum. A Quintilian which was for long time in the Vienna Hofbibliothek has this inscription of ownership: Liber iste Iohannis Alexandri Brassacani . . . Bude anno 1525, mensis decembris die 6. This tells us that it belonged to the Humanist Brassicanus, a Viennese scholar who acquired it in Buda in 1525. He took great care to

---

7 His works are now collected as Erforschung des Mittelalters 5 vols., Stuttgart: Heinemann, 1959-1962.
erase every sign of its previous ownership, but it can still be shown that he had “borrowed” it from the royal library, and that it was made for Matthias in Umbria in 1460-70. A Chrysostom, now also in Budapest, bears the shelf-mark R.4.19. This was its shelf mark in the library of the Dukes of Modena, where it had arrived by 1560. The binding of a Catullus bears the arms of Prince Eugene of Savoy, who was given it by the governor of Transylvania; and so on.

In this case we can show how manuscripts once made at the orders of a particular patron for his own collection can turn up anywhere from Constantinople to St Petersburg, from Budapest to New Jersey: in the case of many less readily identifiable manuscripts the clue to provenance could be supplied by any of the indications just discussed or suggested: the type of binding, the arms on it, the shelf mark, the other manuscripts acquired along with it, the hands that have scribbled on its flyleaves or margins. Sometimes such things can be highly important pieces of history—for example, the oldest example of writing in English is a nun’s inscription of ownership in a Würzburg manuscript. Sometimes the fate of a manuscript can be a whole cultural history in miniature: there is a copy of the Book of Acts written in Greek in Sardinia in the sixth century, which can be shown to have been used at one time by Bede. It afterwards went with the English missionaries to Germany. During the Thirty Years’ War it was looted from Würzburg by the Swedes, who sold it to Archbishop Laud, who gave it to the Bodleian library in Oxford. Such adventures contain a warning. It should not be forgotten by anyone who sees a manuscript that he may be the last person to do so. The cartulary of St. Nicholas, Exeter had been made into a series of toy drums for children before it was identified and rescued; the sixth-century Book of Eye was cut up in the 1890’s for game labels. The other Corvine Chrysostom was destroyed in 1944 when the Germans burnt Warsaw. It survives now only in photographs of its title page and of the notes at the end of the volume, made by the Hungarian scholar Flóris Rómer, now in the Széchényi National Library in Budapest. Habent sua fata libelli.
Manuscript description

Each manuscript must be properly described before it can be worked on. Medievalists will most likely be interested in the actual text or texts which a manuscript contains, but they certainly cannot edit it without a proper description of its manuscripts, and, as discussed above, establishing a text’s history of transmission is essential to understanding it. A good description summarizes a great deal that is important for editors, codicologists, art historians, and so on. There is no generally accepted system, unfortunately, for describing manuscripts, but there are good examples of recent scholarly work where the authors explain the conventions they have adopted and offer models which can be followed. Naturally every group of manuscripts presents its own problems, and special headings may have to be introduced to address them. Other manuscripts may simply not supply enough information to permit a full description. The following remarks apply primarily to the description of Latin MSS; traditional practice in the description of MSS in other scripts and languages may vary somewhat, but the basic principles are the same. Essentially, four major divisions must be made in the description of a manuscript - (I) a heading, (II) an account of the contents, (III) a physical description, and (IV) a history of provenance.

I. Heading

This identifies the manuscript (=MS) concerned by its present place of deposit (library, museum etc.), number, title (or titles), language, date, and a brief note on provenance: e.g. Oxford, Corpus Christi College 209, Augustinus etc., Latin, s. xii/xiii, from Fountains Abbey.

The press mark (or call number) often consists of an internationally accepted abbreviation for the manuscript collection, accompanied by a number in that collection. e.g. Clm = *Codex latinus monacensis* = a MS in the Bavarian State Library (*Bayerische Staatsbibliothek*) at Munich; Cod. Vat. Reg. Lat. = *Codex Vaticanus Reginae Latinus* = a MS from the library of Queen Christina of Sweden, now in the Vatican; Guelph. = *Guelpherbytanus* = a MS from the Herzog-August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, the residence of the Guelph (Welf) Dukes of Brunswick, and likely to be one of the MSS they obtained with the collection of the bibliophile Illyricus (1520–1575). An extensive list of MSS and their abbreviations can be found in the EMC 2: 1653-1727; an older guide is F. W. Hall, *A Companion to Classical Texts* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press,
Such abbreviations should however, be used with caution, and only when they can be presumed to be familiar to likely readers; even then it is essential to include somewhere in the publication a table of abbreviations indicating in full the collections they refer to.

The date (year or century, the latter usually in Roman numerals with s. for saeculum, to which, if appropriate, the specification “early” [in for ineunte] or “late” [ex for exeunte] may be added) and place of origin should be given briefly even if controversies regarding either or both are later discussed in detail. The language (or languages) should be noted after the summary description of the contents.

II. CONTENTS

Medieval manuscripts are frequently composite (colligata) and can contain dozens of unrelated texts. Unlike modern books, they rarely have a title page, giving the author and the title, and even if they do, this page usually refers only to the first work in the collection. It is only the occasional MS with contains one text alone - e.g. Isidore’s Etymologiae or Augustine’s Confessions or the Bible. Since many medieval texts are anonymous, it is of great importance to describe and (as far as possible) identify every single text contained in a codex. It is particularly important to note the beginnings and ends of texts (Incipit and Explicit) to clarify the history of the text and avoid misascription.

Each item of a MS should be lettered or numbered. The following information should be given for each, as completely as possible:

1. Rubrics (so called because they were mostly though not always written in red, ruber) or titles at the beginning and end: Incipit and Explicit. If there is no title given (which is frequent) the three or four opening words are to be given as Incipit, and if these are taken from a classical or biblical text (e.g. in a sermon) the opening words which follow should be given as well.

2. The usual title of the work if it does not appear in the rubric, or is given in an incorrect or unusual form in the text. In the rare case that one encounters a text that has not received a traditional title yet, a suitable one should be given. Some well-known titles of chronicles and other texts were given by their first editors—and stuck.
3. Full cataloguing should include a reference to the best printed text, and notes on any major differences from it: gaps, additions, variations in arrangement, textual variants. This applies only to major differences; whereas detailed differences should be treated in the course of editing the text; for to describe a MS is not to edit it and these are two stages of the work and should not be mixed up. If no printed text is available comparison should be made with other MSS, but if this would involve detailed textual comparison, the description is best limited to a summary.

4. An account of any corrections or marginalia whether early or late which are of importance for the character and the history of the text. Minor later annotations or corrections which have no textual importance but which may be important for establishing previous ownership should be discussed under IV (Provenance), below.

The texts in the original nucleus of a MS should be described first. Later additions in margins, on leaves originally left blank, or on added leaves should follow, numbered in the same way as the “original” contents. Their arrangement should reveal as clearly as possible the successive stages in the growth of a MS as a collection of texts or in the uses to which it has been put.

III PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The external characteristics of a MS are of great importance in establishing its origin and subsequent uses and ownership, and very often serve therefore as the basis for work on texts. It can save a great deal of trouble to record these characteristics systematically from the beginning of one’s research, since later they are likely to be important to dating, ascription, and so forth. It is useful to begin with the actual physical appearance and makeup of a MS, i.e., its basic material and number of pages, proceeding onto writing, decoration, and binding, for this reflects the actual way in which the book was made. In turn, one needs to consider the process of medieval book production. For example, medieval codices were not made of sheets of paper folded one or more times, but of pieces of parchment cut more or less to the same size, and folded in half to give pairs of leaves (bifolia). These were inserted into each other to form gatherings or quires of four, six or more leaves, and then sewn along the hinge and bound. In early MSS the pages tend to be unequal, later they were cut after sewing (like modern books), especially when the edges were subsequently gilt. In paper MSS the number of leaves in a gathering depends on the number of folds in the original sheet: one fold
gives two leaves (folio, abbreviated to 2° or occasionally F°), two folds give four leaves (quarto, 4°), four give eight leaves (8°), and so on.

1. Composition
(a) Number of leaves, including all endpapers or added leaves.
(b) Foliation. Modern books are paginated: i.e., a number is given to each side of every leaf. MS books are foliated: i.e., a number is given to the two-sided leaf. The usual reference is to the front of the leaf as recto (r) and to the back as the verso (v): for example, fol. 18v would, in a modern book, be p. 36. Some authors use an apostrophe for verso - e.g. fol. 18'. Others use a for recto and b for verso, but this is not recommended, since the letters a and b should be reserved for the columns of a page (if there is more than one) - e.g., fol. 18vb means “on the second column on the back of folio 18.” Sometimes the foliation follows the view, so to say: the verso of one leaf (left hand side in the open book) and the recto of the following (right hand side) are foliated by the same number. The form of the Roman or (more usually) Arabic numbers--in a contemporary foliation--may be helpful in dating a codex. (If there is no foliation at all, the cataloguer of the codex should add one.) Previous and mistaken foliation should be noted. These can be clues to provenance, and to sections now missing or misplaced.
(c) Material on which the MS is written i.e., papyrus, parchment (usual membrane or the more refined and expensive vellum), or paper. With paper, the watermark should be identified, and this will probably assist in the dating of the MS. A whole literature exists on the subject of watermarks, and there are extensive repertories of them. The classic work by Charles Briquet10 is still essential, as are a number of other earlier works,11 but the numerous more modern repertories should also be consulted. Some are devoted to a particular type of mark; others are useful for MSS from a particular place or period. Even so, it will by no means always be possible to identify a given watermark. Moreover, unless you are fortunate enough to find an exact correspondance (and there is a world of difference between identical and similar marks, a fact which Briquet himself did not always appreciate), the most that you will be able to say is that

the MS was probably written during the period (sometimes quite extensive) during
which paper with marks of the type in question is known to have been used.

(d) Material with which it is written. Inks and colors.

(e) Overall measurements of the leaves and written space: both are usually given as
height by breadth, in metric measurements. The format (folio, quarto, etc.) should be
stated in the case of books made of paper. (Parchment MSS are all technically folios, so
no format is given for them.) Since the sizes in which paper was produced varied
considerably in the medieval period, there is only a tenuous relationship between
format and final size; the modern “formats” such as pot 12° etc., which really refer to
dimensions rather than composition, are used only for printed books of the machine-
press era.

(f) Number of columns and lines.

(g) Collation (sometimes called quiring). A parchment MS is made of quires. As
explained above, a quire is an assembly of pieces of membrane each folded in two and
inserted into each other, then sewn together. Two pieces of parchment sewn into each
other are a Binio, three a Ternio, four a Quaternio, and so on. Larger quires than
Sexterniones are unusual. Unless there are quire marks (see below, under j), it is not
easy to establish the quiring, especially when the MS was tightly bound (or rebound).
Sometimes the size of the leaves helps, when the margins of the codex have not been
cut. A careful look at the codex “from above” can be misleading; finding the threads
that hold the quires together is the best method. It may be possible to distinguish
bifolia by identifying the inner and outer sides of the parchment; in paper MSS, the
watermarks, where visible, can be very helpful.

There are different systems of abbreviation for the collatio or quiring - e.g. 3 III +
VI + 6 IV + 2 III + (IV - 1) describes a MS made up of three Ternios, one Sexternio, six
Quaternios, two Ternios and one Quaternio which has a leaf missing. Another, better,
system is given below in our example from N. R. Ker, Medieval Manuscripts in British
Libraries (vol. 1, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1969). This, it will be seen reads “1
10,” i.e. the first quire is made of five sheets folded in half, so that f.1 and f.10 are part
of the same sheet, as are f.2 and f.9, and so on. “6 12 wants 12,” means that the twelfth
half sheet is missing. “12 two” the quire only has two leaves, and its construction is
doubtful.
(h) Arrangement of sheets (i.e., of the hair and flesh sides of the parchment) is not always easy to establish and is frequently omitted.

(i) Pricking: Small holes made with a needle or a sharp metal tool to guide the scribe who made the ruling. Ruling: This was made in order to assure parallel lines and (vertically) justified margins. It is rare in early codices, tends to be made by scratching in the eleventh-twelfth centuries and with lead (the precursor of the pencil) from the late twelfth century onwards. Paper MSS--and later parchment ones as well--were lined with fine ink-lines, as the sharp tools would have torn the leaves.

(j) Quire signatures and leaf signatures or custodes. These are letters or numbers, usually at the bottom of the back of the quire’s last leaf, or, less frequently, of every leaf, to guide the binder. In the case of leaves they may be as sequence such as a₁, a₂, a₃--but only in the first half of the quire, for the rest follows automatically. MSS were often bound incorrectly, or rebound with quires or leaves missing: the signatures help to show if something like this has happened.

(k) Catchwords. It was often customary to place the first word of the next quire at the bottom of the page preceding it called reclamans. This practice is often to be seen in eighteenth century books where the catchword (also called custos, though inconsistently) come at the end of every page - often to help those reading aloud, and save them from losing the thread as they turned the page. It is usual to note the presence of catchwords in early medieval MSS, while in later ones their use is taken for granted.

2. Handwriting :

(a) The description of scripts used for texts, including notes on scribal characteristics, such as letter forms, abbreviations, punctuation and so forth. There is often disagreement about the nomenclature of certain kinds of lettering (mainly later medieval ones), and it is wise to cite the authority for one’s classification.

(b) Guide letters for initials, notes for rubrics or illustrations.

(c) Changes of scribe or rubricator in relation to contents or quiring.

(d) Texts of scribal signatures, mottoes, monograms, etc.

(e) Notes on the hands of those making corrections and on marginal or interlinear notes made at or near the time or writing.
3. Decoration:
Initials, line fillers, border decorations, miniatures and so on.

We are nowadays sensitive to the connections between “text and image” and the symbolic meaning of colors used and so on, therefore, a careful description of the illuminations and decoration may be of importance for more than just dating and locating the MS.12

4. Binding:
Date and origin, technique and decoration. It is especially important to note when the binding was done. Later collectors frequently made up composite MSS, detached quires and cut margins. Bindings often show evidence of ownership—e.g. in coats of arms—which are useful in discussing provenance and may contain hints at textual transmission as well.

5. Opening words of the second leaf:
It is unusual to find exactly the same words of the text opening the second recto of a second folio. For this reason MSS were often identified by them in medieval library catalogues, and they may serve today to distinguish otherwise very similar MSS

IV. PROVENANCE  (See also above, Manuscript transmission)

The brief information given in the heading should be expanded by establishing:
(a) The original owner or recipient.
(b) Subsequent owners down to the present.
Evidence is supplied e.g., by type of script, dedications, heraldic devices, inscriptions and marks of ownership, “ex libr,” marginalia, liturgical evidence (of use in a certain church or diocese), entries in library or booksellers’ catalogues, references to the MS in correspondence. Dictionaries of biography and histories of book collection will help with the identification of owners. References should be given in footnotes or in a bibliography to handbooks used.

12 See, e.g., the articles on illumination in EMC 1: 843-71.
An example may be useful. This is the entry for St. Paul’s Cathedral London Ms.3 from Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts*, pp. 242-3. Ker explains his conventions in his preface, and this should be consulted.

### 3. Avicenna

1. **ff. 1 - 502 v**

   *Incipit liber canonis primus. quem princeps abohali abuisenci de medicina edidit. verba abohali abuisenci. In primis deo gracias agemus. . . . (f.2v)*

   *Dico quod medicina est sciencia. . . . kerates xxviii.*

   Avicenna, Canon medicinae, in five books in the translation of Gerard of Cremona. Often printed: GKW 3114-24. A few leaves are missing and the leaves of quire 27 are out of order: see below. Tables of contents in front of bks. 1 and 4, which like bks. 2 and 3, but not 5, begin on new quires: part of the table of bk. 4 has been copied twice. The colophon of bk. 5 is in a current hand in the margin of f. 502v as a guide to the rubrics or, who did not copy it, however, in the space left for it after 'kerates xxviii': so far as it can be read it agrees nearly with B.M., MS Royal 12 G. vi. Contemporary notes refer to another copy, e.g. (f.77v) in al' nines’. Annotations of s. xiv, xv in English hands include seven lines of verse on f. 389: [F] leubotomus, uentus, scarpellus, caute, sacellus . . .

2. **ff. 502v--3**

   *Qui abscidunt sanguinem menstruorum . . . ad tinnitum aurium. Explicit liber Quintus Deo Gracias.*

   A collection of recipes which commonly follows the Canon and is here treated as part of it. A reference to it follows the colophon of art. 1 in the margin of f. 502v: Liber hauch (?) filli hyssac sic completus est liber.

3. **ff. 503–7v**

   *Alfachimid est medicus. . . . Zegi id est atramentum. Explicitiunt sinonima auicenni.*

   Commonly follows the Canon.

4. **ff.507v–8**

   *Aced genus absinthii subalbidi . . . Nelem id est meituritilis (read mercurialis). Explicitiunt exposiciones secundum arabicos et secundum almasorem.*

An alphabetical table of materia medica ending at N. It follows art.8 in Merton College, MS 224 - where it ends at L - and in Erfurt MS F. 247.

ff.v+420+iv, foliated (i-v), 1-209, 300-402, 402*, 403-43, 444-508 (509-12). 360 x 260 mm. Written space 250 x 168 mm. 2 cols. 57-64 lines. Collocation 1 10 2 8 3-5 12 6 12 wants 12, blank, after f.65 7-11 12 12 two (ff.126-7) 13-14 12 1510 16 nine (ff.162-70) 17-22 12 2312 wants 6 after f.340 (ff.336-40, 335, 341-5) 2412 2512 wants 6, 7 after f.362 2610 2712 (ff.379, 378, 380, 321, 381-4, 322, 385, 387, 386) 282 (ff.388,389) 2912 308 3112 3210 33-3412 35 two (ff.454, 455) 3612 3710 wants 6, probably blank, after f.472 38-3912 4010 wants 9, 10, probably blank. Signatures I-XXXIX and a medieval foliation ending in bk. 4 date from a time when bk. 2 (ff.66-127) was misbound at the end. Two hands, the second writing bk. 2 and the last quire but one. Initials: (i) of each book (ff.2v, 66, 128, 394, 473) and on ff. 1, 390, in colours on gold and coloured grounds, with grotesques (etc.) in the decoration: four of the seven are historiated (ff. 2v, 66, 394, 473:cf. Mackinney, no.91.10); (ii) 2-line, blue with red ornament or red with violet ornament; (iii) in tables of chapters, 1-line, red or blue. Capital letters in the ink of the text occasionally marked with red. Binding of s.xix. Secundo folio *doctrine principis pertinet* (f.3).

Textual criticism

Once the manuscripts—in this context usually referred to as “witnesses”—have been assembled, the texts have to be critically sifted and evaluated. There are two major steps in this process which lead on to the final result of establishing the best reading of the text:

(i) **External criticism**

External criticism treats the state of the text from a mainly formal point of view. The questions it asks relate to the various relationships between the different parts and states of the text (e.g., in different MSS or redactions), how independent they are from each other, and, if necessary, whether the text is genuine. The main procedure is the comparison of as many versions of the text as possible in the attempt to survey the entire breadth of the textual tradition. It has the two aims of establishing a text which best reflects the intentions of its author, and reconstructing the history of the text’s use and transmission. In the majority of cases this will be done by trying to arrive at an “archetype” of the text. The process naturally involves finding out a text’s origin: who wrote it, when and where. (Here, once more, codicology and textual criticism uses a different terminology from diplomatics, where “external criticism” relates merely to the parchment or paper, the writing, and the sealing.)

(ii) **Internal Criticism**

Internal criticism deals with a text’s contents and studies the text’s special characteristics and the author’s methods and motives. At this stage it concentrates on the particular nature of the one source under review. In the first round of textual scholarship the major task used to be to decide what the source is worth as historical evidence, but now more sophisticated questions are also asked, such as those about the author’s educational background, political loyalty, his (or hers) handling the traditions (*memoria*), the purpose of writing (*causa scribendi*), and so on.

**EXTERNAL CRITICISM**

I) **Textual transmission**

It has already been said that autographs rarely survive. Quite frequently neither does any manuscript closely related to the autograph.
Of course, normally what is desired is a text as near as possible to the “original,” to the author and his time. The surviving witnesses must therefore be examined and arranged in order. This is achieved by the comparison of the MSS with the aim to decide which has the best surviving texts. How independent are the witnesses of each other? And therefore, how genuine are they? The relationship is established by a comparison of their different readings. Karl Lachmann (1793-1851), the pioneer of critical text editing in nineteenth-century Germany (where he worked both on Biblical and Old High German texts) called this process *recension*. The process of comparison is called *collation*. The easiest way to do this is to write the text in the different witnesses out in columns, so that differences in readings (or agreements) can be seen. Divergences and differences between different MSS may be marked in colors. Thus it can readily be seen that “red” MSS are different from “blue.” But red and blue are perhaps more closely related together than a “green” group (which can be recognized by the mistakes which a transcriber made in his exemplar, and which have been carried on downwards in its different copies). Such groups are then ordered by resemblance into “classes” and “families,” derived in different ways from the archetype. This family relationship is called “filiation.” Much of this can now be done electronically on the computer and there are special programs that help doing it.¹³ Such a classification enables us to decide on the worth of different classes of MSS and their probable reliability. It should be noted that omissions and interpolations are the only really sure way of determining the relationship between MSS. (Other variants may arise independently in different MSS!) A MS with a given portion of the original text cannot have been copied from one that lacks it. Lost manuscripts will be christened (as in mathematics) with symbols like X, Y, Z, (for the unknown). The results can usually be expressed in a *stemma*. The families will be identified by capital letters: A, B, C, etc., —and for their members it will be more convenient (and memorable) to use the initial letter of the manuscript’s name (from the place where it is kept): I for the Innsbruck fragments, K for the manuscript in the Karlsruhe Landesbibliothek, P₁ and P₂ for the two manuscripts from Paris. As an example here is the stemma of Henry’s *Chronicle of Livonia* (eds. Arbusow and Bauer, MGH SS.rer.Germ. in us. schol., 1955)

¹³I found by chance an interesting blog on this matter, referring mainly to modern literature: [HTTP://WRAABE.WORDPRESS.COM/2008/07/26/COLLATION-IN-SCHOLARLY-EDITING-AN-INTRODUCTION-DRAFT/], but I’m sure there are many other guides and discussions on-line.
Stemma of Henry's Chronicle of Livonia

(H) Lost original of the author (H)enry (ca. 1225-7).

(A) Archetype of the now surviving MSS (None of the other MSS derive from Z. But they share readings with Z which cannot be those of the author, because there are nonsensical words or obvious omissions. Therefore Z and all other MSS derive from an unknown intermediary manuscript which was not Henry’s own)

Z Codex Zamoscianus (Zamoyski Library, Warsaw): Cod. memb. c. 1300
Z is a good text, preserving readings lost or corrupted in the other witnesses, but a careless copy, with large gaps which the other MSS do not have. Further mistakes were imported into the texts belonging to the group deriving from (M) and (N), both now lost, but otherwise independent. Their common exemplar must have been another copy of (A), which is therefore called (X).

(M) an assumed fifteenth-century transcript that was the model for the three following witnesses sharing common interpolations and omissions:
R Library of the Gymnasium in Reval (Tallinn) MS III 98 Cod.chart. A poor transcript from c. 1660.
R1 copy of R from the eighteenth century, used by J. G. Arndt, the first translator.

(N) a postulated copy of (X) which was better than (M), and the model for the following two MSS as they share the same readings and interpolations:
T Toll collection, Reval (Tallinn), now in the Estonian State Archives. It was commissioned and excerpted by the historian Thomas Häarn who died in 1678.
O Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek Hanover MS.XXXIII 1746. Cod.chart. from the Oxenstierna collection initially. Written in Livonia by a sixteenth century Humanist. He made interpolations using books published in 1550 and 1552, and his work was used by an antiquary in 1575.

Two late copies dependent on O, of no value for textual reconstruction (hence given lower case sigla):
w Stadtbibliothek Riga 2482. Cod.chart. Written by Johann Witte in 1653.
k Estonian Association of Learned Societies, Dorpat MS 250. From the Knüpfer collection, written by two scribes in Stockholm in 1660.

Conclusion:
Z should be the basis for the edition. When Z fails, S is the next best witness; since O and T have been so much interpolated and revised that they should be considered only when S fails.
Two reservations can be made about constructing *stemmata*. The first is that they can be constructed too confidently. In many cases the history of transmission is unclear, and no one missing “X” can be safely postulated as the intermediary between the extant witnesses and the missing Archetype.

Maurice Bévenot puts his finger on the difficulty when he says: “The construction of such a stemma depends on a certain view of the transmission of MSS: it adopts as basic the obvious fact that a copyist makes mistakes, and that his mistakes will be copied by the next generation or give rise to fresh mistakes. Thus MSS get worse down the centuries, and therefore when we are postulating *ancestors*, we must suppose them to have been better and better up the centuries as we get nearer and nearer to the author himself.”14 Bévenot was dealing with the writings of Cyprian, a patristic author, whose works were widely spread, received a great deal of early medieval edition, including a great deal of emendation and contamination. While in the case of some groups of manuscripts *stemmata* can be constructed and manuscripts eliminated, a whole group of manuscripts will be left whose readings are equally strong: and while on the basis of them a text can be established it would be too much to say that an archetype ever can be. Indeed the variants are so strong in the case of Cyprian’s *De Unitate* that it is not too much to suppose (thought we cannot prove) that Cyprian himself issued a revised version, and for certain passages the texts can only be printed parallel as alternatives. In others the manuscript tradition will certainly not allow us to rule out a reading, and if it is to be discarded it cannot be on grounds of philology or manuscript tradition, but only on the basis of what we know of Cyprian’s own way of thinking—a judgment which is bound to have an element of the subjective.

The history of a given text can in fact create many difficulties in constructing an archetype. Medieval books were “published” in the sense that authors could and did circulate them. But they were manuscripts. Authors worked over their texts, altering them and adding to them even after the first transcriptions had been made. Controversial texts in particular were likely to be copied *in statu nascendi*. Who today can possibly decide between the variants of such texts?

The alternative to what may be called the Lachmann-tradition is often referred to as the Bédier-method.\textsuperscript{15} It is based on the principle that we wish to have a text of a medieval work that was in fact read (listened to), learned, quoted—in a word: used—by a medieval (and early modern) public. Let us remember that the rigorously (re)constructed archetype in the best MGH tradition is a text which we do not know whether it was ever read by anyone, or at best we can assume that it was read by the scribe of the MS next to it in the stemma, and maybe by those few scribes who started the different “branches.” In contrast, we may decide to search for a version of the text that can be proven to have been in circulation in several copies, and ultimately we may choose the one of which most copies survived (or are known to have existed, e.g., from medieval library catalogues or from frequent quotations in other works or other references). It may be still useful to note the variants in other MSS (or groups of MSS) if we want to present a truly critical edition, but the main body of the text will be taken from one MS (or group of MSS) which we have reason to believe that it was widely received by medieval audiences and readers. It seems that this procedure is gaining ground in recent decades, not unconnected with the growing interest in the reception of texts and in their impact on the public for which they were written. One might, therefore, call this approach a “functionalist” one.

(II) Emendation

Once the text has been established, it may require emendation in places where a scribe or series of scribes have made a mistake. Manuscripts were either copied from other manuscripts or, frequently, dictated. For original works an author often wrote his draft on wax tablets which he might either copy out himself or give to a scribe. In all these processes mistakes can readily occur. As anyone will understand who has tried to copy a text himself, texts are easily miscopied. They were even more easily misheard, and a dictator was likely to introduce glosses into the text. In such cases emendation becomes necessary, and the grounds for it are those of grammar and sense, and their justifications are paleographical, grammatical, and literary. A helpful, but not unproblematic principle is that of the \textit{lectio difficilior lectio potior}. This is relevant when there are (two or more) different sets of readings of which one is more “difficult,”

or less usual than the other: e.g. in the Life of St. Wulfric of Haselbury there are four manuscripts, three of which were written in the author’s lifetime: E and C read *mactabat*, F and H *macerabat*. We may accept *mactabat* as the less “usual” word in this context. The principle is based on the tendency of scribes to “simplify”: incomprehensible words for example, unfamiliar names of tribes in the original are replaced by known entities. Sometimes entire sentences are changed, and the transcriber substitutes something that makes sense to him. It is, however, important not to impose our own cultural presuppositions in the application of the principle of *difficilior lectio*: what is *difficilior* for us may have been the more familiar possibility for the scribe. Nowadays the principle is debated; above all by those who prefer actually read texts to (Lachmannian) reconstructed ones. Among them, Martin L. West wrote: “When we choose the ‘more difficult reading’ … we must be sure that it is in itself a plausible reading. The principle should not be used in support of dubious syntax, or phrasing that it would not have been natural for the author to use. There is an important difference between a more difficult reading and a more unlikely reading.”

Emendation is based on a presumption of some form of corruption in the text, the result of bad transcription, laziness or ignorance. But it should never introduced silently: *all* editorial interventions must always be signaled, lest the reader be left with the impression that the emendation is the actual text of the MS. This can be done essentially in two ways. The amended form can be printed in the body of the text and the original—faulty, incomplete, different—text added in a note, with reference to one or more witnesses containing it/them. This is the traditional “MGH-style” procedure and is appropriate when a composite text (based on the stemma) is being presented. Alternatively, the “faulty” text can be printed, especially when the edition follows the “Bédier method” and presents one “best” manuscript, and the annotation will contain a reference to the “correct” form: *recte: &*. However, every editorial project has its own particular style and that has to be applied consistently.

Traditional emendation results mainly in the removal of expansions, interpolations, and corruptions.

---

16 Ed. M. Bell, *Sommerset Record Society* 47 (1933) 67.
1) Expansion

It is very common for explanatory or additional remarks of one kind or another to come into texts, not necessarily for any reason of bias. e.g. *Tertia via ad idem (in qua deducitur Virginem peccatum originale non contraxisse) sumitur ex pecci originalis indecenti macula*. (Hermann de Scildis, *Tractus de conceptione gloriosae virginis Mariae*, ed. A. Zumkeller, Cassiacium, Supplement 4, Würzburg 1970, 128). The scribe of Ms.K added the words in parentheses to explain what the author was doing.

2) Interpolation

Interpolation means deliberate alteration by expansion (or deliberate omission). For instance, there are two versions of the basic constitution of the Cistercian Order, now known as the *Carta Caritatis Prior* and the *Carta Caritatis Posterior*. When the two are compared there is a clear case of interpolation in the clause on visitations carried out by the Abbot of Cîteaux:

*Semel per annum visitet abbas maioris ecclesiae (per se vel per aliquem de coabbatibus suis) omnia coenobia quae ipse fundaverat, et si fratres amplius visitaverit, inde magis gaudeant.*

The words in brackets come from the *Posterior*. They were plainly interpolated at a date when the number of houses founded by Cîteaux had become large and the abbot had to delegate his duties to fellow abbots. (*Les Plus Anciens Textes de Cîteaux*, ed. J.de la Croix Bouton and J.B. van Damme, *Cîteaux, Commentarii Cistercienses Studia et Documenta* II, Achel 1974. 134).

3) Corruptions

The following (with examples taken mostly from Burghard of Ursberg’s *Chronicle*, MGH SSrG 16) are the common kinds of corruption:

(a) Omission

Either of a word or a line (particularly common in poetry and extremely helpful in establishing *stemmata*). e.g. There are 3 MSS, A, B, P, : the passage in brackets has been omitted by A: *Libra (casei octo denariis emebatur; caro carissima erat. Nam in) quarta parte bovis mortui dedi XX soldos et unum* (Otto of Freising, *Gesta Federici imperatoris*, 50).

(b) A particular sort of omission is by *Homoioteleuton*. 
This means jumping from one similar sounding letter, syllable, or word to the next. e.g.:

Lotarius quoque imperator eo modo confortatus est in imperio (nam et supra dictus Cuonradus, qui ei adversabatur in imperio) a facie eius ierat in Italiam.

In Ms.A of Burchard the passage in brackets is missing. (p.14). Plainly, the scribe’s eye jumped from one imperio to the next.

(c) Dittography

The repetition of a letter or a syllable : e.g. lattere for latere (Burchard, p.2).

Care should be taken here, for medieval spelling was not classical spelling. Certain duplications found their way from the vernacular pronunciation into the texts or, in turn, double consonants were dropped, because the vernacular speaker did not “feel” the difference. Both can be valuable clues to the author’s (or scribe’s) background.

(d) Transposition

Transposition of letters, words, and phrases is common, and in poetry whole verses are frequently copied in the wrong order.

. . . filii Eginonis comitis de Urach quorum Cuonratus postmodum conferesse ad ordinem Cisterciensem (fuit abbas Cisterciensis) indeque per sedem apostolicam translatus fuit Romae episcopus cardinalis Portuensis videlicet et Sanctae Rufinae (Burchard, p.81).

The scribe of MS.A omitted the phrase in brackets. Having done so, he tacked the words on to the end of the sentence.

(e) Mistakes in Reading and Word Division.

The scribe of MS.A read olim ad vie instead of the correct olim a dive (p.15), vel in more instead of vel minorem (did he mishear what was being dictated to him?) (Burchard, p.32).

The scribe of MS.P has the nonsense sal in me bibi (in an inserted letter of Innocent III). He overlooked the abbreviation marks in his original : the correct reading is salutem in medio terre.

Abbreviations are a common cause of trouble : e.g. those for per, pro, and prae. So are minims, as in minimum. These mistakes will vary with the type of script being copied : e.g. : if a scribe confuses pr, rn, ns, if he writes hoc for autem, the odds are high that he is copying from an “insular” manuscript.

(f) Such mistakes give rise to Bungling Improvement.
E.g., the marginal glossator of MS.P above realised that *sal in me bibi* is nonsense, and corrected to *salvator in medio terre*. (Burchard, p. 100).

The scribe of MS.A has *inerunt* for *iverunt*. The manuscript he had before him probably had *iuerunt*. What must have happened was that the scribe read the word as *inerunt*, found it ungrammatical, and corrected to *inerunt*. (Burchard, p. 222).

(g) *Contamination.*

This does not mean full fledged interpolation or insertion. It applies to a case where a scribe has two or more manuscripts of the same text in front of him which contain variant readings which he then includes indiscriminately. e.g. Adam of Bremen (*History of the Archbishops*, p.194, entry for 1066):

*filia regis Danorum apud Michilenburg, civitatem Obotritorium, inventa cum mulieribus, nuda dimissa est.*

The scribes of MSS B and C have instead of *nuda dimissa* an alternative: *diu caesa*. Albert of Stade (author of *Annales Stadenses*, MGH SS 16) obviously had two MSS in front of him and wrote *diu caesa nuda dimissa est*.

If a passage is hopelessly corrupt an editor must use an *obelus* (†) to indicate that he thinks so. Or, she or he may write (*sic*) to indicate that the text is incomprehensible and no easy emendation can be offered.

(II) *Authenticity and forgery*¹⁸

Is the text what it says it is? The problem is of course a central one regarding charters—which is the task of Diplomatic—but can and should be asked of other texts as well: whether our source is what it appears (or is presented) to be on grounds of form and content. Forgeries of manuscripts, especially narrative texts, is quite rare, except, for example, in so-called cartulary chronicles¹⁹ that are prone to contain forged or interpolated deeds, Decisive arguments will emerge from an analysis of the contents, but some formal criteria (not unlike those used in diplomatic) may prove useful.

To begin with, one should not mix up “veracity” with forgery. Annals and chronicles may contain false dates, consciously (e.g., to prove an early date for the foundation of a town or a monastery) or because of insufficient information.


¹⁹ On these, see EMC 1: 256-9.
Confabulations, be their mythical or just invented, serving the interest of a certain person or group are not forgery. The critique of such matters belongs to the analysis of the source but not to the *distincio veri ac falsi*.\(^\text{20}\)

A distinction must be made between forgery by a contemporary and forgery or alteration by a later hand. A later forgery can be detected by comparison with undoubtedly genuine texts. Writing materials, ink, script, language should be compared. Style analysis can be used, but cautiously, for it is by no means infallible. Anachronism may be telling. The text must be examined for *lacunae*, and whether these are deliberate, or the mere oversight of a scribe. The question of motive must be gone into, for it will often lead to insights well beyond the mere detection of forgery.

A star case of a literary forgery and the unmasking of a forger is the *Vita* of Bishop Benno II of Osnabrück, (1068 - 1088). The text was edited by Wilmans in MGH SS 12, and rests on witnesses none of which are older than 1666. (That is not necessarily a bad thing. The age of a manuscript is no guide as to whether its text is good or not. It depends on the scribe and what he was copying.) Friedrich Philippi soon attacked its genuineness (*Neues Archiv*, 25, 1900, 767 ff). Paul Scheffer-Boichorst (1843-1902), one of the most learned scholars of his time, replied with arguments on grounds of medieval philology which, while admitting some tempering with the text, vindicated the *Vita* as such (*Sitzungberichte der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Berlin*, 1901, 132). He held that the core of the Life was genuine, but not five chapters contained in it, which had visibly been composed on the basis of the foundation charters of Iburg. Shortly after Scheffer-Boichrost’s death, Harry Bresslau found a collection of MSS on Osnabrück history dating from the mid-seventeenth century in the city archives of Cologne, one of which contained a text of the *Vita*. It differed from that printed in the *Monumenta* in a number of places—most notably, in omitting the five chapters whose authenticity had been doubted by Sheffer-Boichorst. Bresslau edited it in the MGH SSrerGerm and demonstrated (among other things) that the genuine text still existed at Iburg in 1652, and a newer one was prepared a little later, and that it plainly related to a quarrel between the then reigning abbot, Maurus Rost, and the bishop of Osnabrück in 1666 as to the bishop’s rights over Iburg. Verbal resemblances could be found between the five chapters and some Annals written by Abbot Rost, and

\(^\text{20}\) On these, see e.g. Franz-Josef Schmale, “Fälschungen in der Geschichtsschreibung,” in: *Fälschungen* as above, 1: 121-32.
this makes it certain that he was the forger whose work was transcribed in the manuscripts used by Wilmans, which certainly existed by 1683.

Another celebrated case of interpolation in this way is the text of Asser’s Life of King Alfred, which received attention from a number of forgers, but nowhere more obviously than where William Camden (1551–1623) inserted a passage to vindicate the antiquity of the University of Oxford. Archbishop Ussher (1581–1656), though an Oxford man himself, pronounced against it with cool impartiality, but it was over a century before the forgery was admitted by the University.

It will be noticed that both these examples are seventeenth-century ones, and that in the first, we are dealing in effect with an elaborate charter forgery. When charters occur in literary texts there is room for suspicion: mentions of legal privileges may be interpolations. Saints’ lives were occasionally written—or rewritten—in this spirit. Deliberate interpolation can often be spotted in an original text by the fact that it is written over an erasure. Often an erasure does not leave sufficient room, and the writing is cramped. Sometimes the interpolator tries to imitate an older hand, and he naturally does not have the ductus of the genuine hand.

But outright medieval forgery of literary texts or annals is decidedly uncommon. Less devious interventions are more usual. The process of copying or dictation, the inclusion of a gloss into the main body of a text may enlarge or change it; texts could be barbarously edited just as today; authors revised their own work or collaborators did so; polemical treatises were changed to fit new cases. But direct literary forgery is rare. To be sure, elaborate fictions were dreamed up, sometimes deliberately concocted. But Geoffrey of Monmouth cannot be called a “forger,” although he foisted a mythical history on Britain which is not dead yet. So, more solemnly, did the monks of Glastonbury, whose unceasing attempts to provide their ancient church with a good set of relics eventually led to the preposterous tales of Joseph of Arimathea and Arthur, with a full scale interpolation in William of Malmesbury’s De Antiquitate Glastoniensis Ecclesiae. But, again, we are in the world of claim to privileges. The fabulous list of princes in the Austrian Chronicle of Leopold Stainreuter (c.1390 - c.1400) shares the world, background, and mentality not only of the Privilegium Maius but also of the myths recorded by the Bohemian “Dalimil” and the genealogies presented to the Emperor Charles IV by learned Italian monks, proving the direct descent of the house

---

of Luxemburg from that of Christ Himself. They are tales of saints and heroes where the supernatural was as true—or truer—than the natural. They cannot be compared with the sober labors of charter forgers.

Thus, claims that a historical text is forged should be advanced with the greatest care and the strongest presentation of motive and justification. In 1870 Scheffer-Boichrost published a fundamental essay attacking the genuineness of the earliest Florentine vernacular chronicle, the *Istoria Fiorentina*, which purported to be written by Ricordano Malispini and continued by his nephew or grandson Giacotto. He compared its text with that of Giovanni Villani’s famous *Nuova Cronica XII libri* (written about 1345) and concluded that the *Istoria* was a late fourteenth century forgery, based on plagiarism from Villani. By and large the events in the *Istoria* which are not in Villani are designed to enhance the reputation of the Bonaguisi family, to whom the Malispini were related. It credits them with an ancient history (a Bonaguisa was the first to scale the walls of Damietta, and so on) and stresses their connection with more ancient houses. Scheffer-Boichorst began a scholarly controversy which lasted for a century. In 1969 the question seemed to be settled by Charles T. Davis.\(^{22}\) Scheffer-Boichorst was correct in suspecting the *Istoria*: none of the alleged authors can be unequivocally identified but seem to have lived in the thirteenth century (where the story ends, in 1286) and much of the text depends on Villani. It “has to be re-dated to the second half of the fourteenth century” (V. de Aprovitola in: EMC 1062) and thus the claim of its being the oldest vernacular chronicle is untenable. Why then did it take a century before his conclusions were accepted? First of all, in the last century no manuscripts of the *Istoria* were known, and while Scheffer-Boichorst’s textual analysis was exact and careful, he did not in fact search for the witnesses which were to be decisive. Secondly, his study would have required a closer analysis of Florentine family history. Thirdly, while great respect is owed to so great and perceptive a scholar, Scheffer-Boishorst had two weaknesses. He presented his conclusions in a tone of the triumph of German scholarship over Italian nationalism and emotionalism, and he was too eager to believe that men liked to forge and to plagiarize. This prejudice led him to question the *Cronica delle cose correnti ne’ tempi suoi* of Dino Compagni (c. 1246 - 1324).\(^{23}\) If the *Istoria* was indeed forged, then Compagni had the next claim to be the

---


earliest Florentine historian writing in Italian. Scheffer-Boichrost noted that Compagni got many of his details wrong, and suspected another case of over-credulous Italian patriotism, and of later forgery. However, he himself discovered a commentary on Dante written in 1343 which had extensive passages taken from Compagni, and after controversy with Isidoro del Lungo had to admit that Compagni was genuine, and that it was rash to try to date Italian vernacular texts without the assistance of scholars of early Italian.

Yet if here he was mistaken, and not least in the tone of his writing, Scheffer-Boichorst was right in pointing to the fact that national pride and prejudice have in modern times been an important motive both for forgery and the acceptance of fakes. A good example is the group of poems from early medieval Bohemia “discovered” by the Czech Slavist Václav Hanka in 1817 in the famous Könighof Manuscripts (Rukopisy královedvorské). These forgeries played an important role in the “Czech awakening” to national consciousness. To the end of his life the learned František Palacký remained unwilling to admit that this “evidence” of a glamorous and free Slav past was nothing but a figment of Hanka’s imagination.24

(IV) Dating and Localizing a Text

There are many literary sources which do not state explicitly when they were written. The criteria for dating them are then internal and external. Internal criteria come from the contents: e.g. if the author narrates a personal experience, or if he gives details which make it plain that he was an eyewitness, that can give a terminus post quem for he must have been writing after that date. If we can date his facts from other—preferably record—sources, that also helps. Astronomical dating can be helpful and is most reliable; for example, if the author mentions a solar or a lunar eclipse, that can be checked on HTTP://ECLIPSE.GSFC.NASA.GOV/SESEARCH/SESEARCH.PHP. But we must remember that what we have then is a dating post quem. The terminus ante quem, the date before which he must have been writing, is a good deal more difficult to determine. For example, suppose the text has “the present king Alfonso.” That places the passage after Alfonso’s accession: but Alfonso may have died before the author

24 From the extensive literature (mostly in Czech and German) on these forgeries, see Milan Otáhal, “The Manuscript Controversy in the Czech National Revival,” Cross Currents: A Yearbook of Central European Culture 5 (1986), pp. 247-77.
fair-copied his draft; or he may be copying a previous author. Very often the best outcome will be that a source can be placed as written between a certain range of dates.

For example, the biographer, Walter Daniel, tells us that St. Aelred of Rievaulx wrote his treatise entitled “When Jesus was twelve years old” before sickness compelled him to retire to a special cell. We know that that happened in 1157. There is nothing else in the treatise to date it by. Aelred certainly wrote it as a Cistercian (and therefore after 1134). His language suggests that he was an abbot at the time he wrote (therefore after 1143). Walter certainly implies that he wrote it at Rievaulx (therefore after 1147). He mentions the treatise after he mentions Aelred’s *Genealogia Regum Anglorum* which has the incipit “*Ante tamen hoc tempus*” and then the one beginning with “*Eciam ante illud tempus*” (‘When Jesus was Twelve’). Now we can, however, date the finishing of the *Genealogia* to between 24 May 1153 and 25 October 1154. It seems reasonable then to date “When Jesus was Twelve” to between 1153 and 1157. In other words, we have a definite *terminus ante quem*, but no certain, though a reasonably plausible *terminus post quem*.

There are texts of course where we do not know who the author was, or even in what century he was writing or where. Linguistic evidence can be helpful, though it can be dangerous and linguistic experts can change their minds (e.g. the shift of a number of undated Middle Irish texts back from the twelfth century to the tenth!). It is especially important for vernacular texts where traces of pronunciation can be detected: e.g., a Middle High German scribe who wrote *chaiser* for *kaiser*, *Lotag* for *Dienstag*, and repeatedly replaces *b* with *p*, is undoubtedly a Bavarian. If he writes *brengin* for *brengen* and *abir* for *aber*, he is rather more likely from central Germany.

External criteria derive from the MSS itself, such as the material on which a it is written, or its script. Script may betray an author’s nationality (e.g., Anglo-Saxon script is unlike anything written on the contemporary continent, but Anglo-Saxon scribes can be found working, inter alia at St. Gall as well). Expert knowledge of scripts and scriptoria is needed to determine this correctly. A tenth-century leaf of parchment survives of Widukind of Corvey’s *History of the Saxons*. Its script is minuscule, and it is folded as a contemporary of Widukind’s would have folded it. Still it cannot be the autograph. The monastery school of Corvey did not teach its students to write the style in which it is written.

---

**Editing**

The problems and decisions to be made in editing a text are considerable and have been mentioned in several contexts above. What follows are a few aspects which are relevant to the study of the editions we already have, and to the initial steps of preparing a new one.

First of all, one has to decide what kind of edition is appropriate to the text at hand. If there is only one known manuscript, the decision is made easy: it has to be transcribed, freed from any obvious scribal errors, and edited with an appropriate introduction (on which below). In the rare case of an autograph manuscript there are certain specific problems. In transcription and edition they must be followed with particular care. The author’s own special characteristics of spelling should be noted, e.g. whether he uses the *e caudata* for *ae*, and for which words (e.g., Eadmer, who did use it but not for *saeculum, aemulus*, and *aestimo*. And he regularly spelt *cumque* and *namque* with an *n*). Such things are important for establishing his linguistic and educational background. It does not follow that his usages have to be reproduced in the final text, but they must be noted and briefly discussed in the introduction. A few “modernizations” are nowadays tacitly accepted, so, for example, to change the *u* to *v* in such cases as *auus* to *avus*, but not every edition does this. (It should be noted in the Introduction, whether one does it or not.) It is also extremely important to note, but not necessarily follow, the author’s punctuation (see below).

When an original autograph does not exist, and there are several MSS available, the first decision is whether one opts for the traditional method of establishing a text which is as close as possible to what the author wrote: in classic phraseology, to “restore the Archetype.” The methods for doing so have been described above. The Lachmannian tradition is derives from the practices of editing classical literary texts. No originals exist for such texts: the texts nearest the originals are very few and far between, and confined to late and frequently unreliable witnesses. The learned editor of them could normally be fully confident that he knew more of the language and methods of their authors than did the scribe of the late MSS. Even so, the process of textual criticism of classical texts is far from being reducible to a series of purely mechanical processes, and no one would assert that the editing of them is finished and that there is nothing more left to be done; or that the solutions to the “best” reading of what was originally written are purely philological. To correct the work of a poet requires a
poet’s sensitivity to language, and some alternatives are bound to be chosen by subjective instinct.

We have already discussed the difficulties of making a *stemma* in the situation where a very large number of variants exist, or when a work has been copied at different stages in its writing. A less difficult form of the problem is very common, where we have four-five manuscripts, none of them autograph, all nearly contemporary with the author and showing strong variations. The one solution is a *variorum* edition in which the major versions are printed in parallel columns or some similar arrangement and it is left to the reader to decide which reading is preferable. Another option (the Bédier principle) is to print the text as it stands in one particular manuscript. If we have any indication that that MS (and/or its close “relatives”) was the most widely used version, i.e., the text that may be taken to have had the greatest impact on contemporaries and later readers, it may make good sense to print that one, regardless of its corruptions vis-à-vis the assumed but unknown “uncorrupted” original. Or we may have witnesses which are all late and of about equal value. Here an “eclectic” text has to be made. The “best reading” must be chosen in the sense that the language of the author, the literary practice of the time of writing (as far as they can be conjectured) should be represented correctly. Such a process puts less emphasis on the “grammatical norm” and the “philologically correct” than on what is “individual” and “unusual” in the author’s own use of speech and genre, for editors of historical documents are not only grammarians or literary critics: their task is to approach the text historically and produce an edition which is as true to the author’s age as possible. That does not of course mean supplying archaic spellings that none of the manuscripts contain!

The parts of a good edition and the convention for the presentation of the text are in all cases quite similar: it has to have a good introduction, a clearly printed, easily readable text, critical annotations and other aids to the user, and as many indices as possible and suitable.

(1) Introduction
The Introduction has two main functions: firstly, to summarize for the reader all that is known about the text (its author, its transmission, its contemporary use and survival) and to clarify the procedure by which the editor arrived at the format presented in print. In some series editors have opted for introductions in Latin, thus making the prefatory remarks accessible to all those who would be able to handle the text. Unfortunately, this
has gone out of fashion and by now it is a rarity to find a Latin preface (and Latin commentaries). Even the MGH SS have abandoned this practice, and print the corollary matter in German. Most recently, however, the new critical edition of Johannes Thuróczi’s *Chronica Hungarorum* was printed with a fine Latin preface and an entire separate volume of critical comments in Latin.26

An MGH SSrerG edition may still count as the standard for the structure of the preface, consisting usually of four major parts:

(i) The author

The character, length, and critical detail in this first chapter will depend even more than the rest on the given text. If the author is well known and his/her work extensively discussed in the scholarly literature, the presentation of the author will not have to be long when supplemented by the relevant bibliography in the notes. But if there are new insights, gained, for example, from the newly edited text or other sources, or if the author and the work are less well known, a detailed biography with special reference to the edited text (its place in the author’s life, the author’s social or political position while writing, and so on) will be appropriate.

(ii) The work(s)

Whether the edition contains more than work of the author or not, it is useful to place the edited text in the context of his/her entire literary activity, including the relationship of the works to each other. If several works are edited, all of them have to be discussed in the sequence as they are printed. Here questions of dating (under circumstances with reference to the author’s biography), the character of the work, its value as a source (authenticity, point of view, originality, etc.) and its contemporary or later medieval (and early modern) reception should be discussed. The use of the text by later writers may receive a special chapter if the work was especially influential and had many followers. By the same token, the sources of the author, the authorities used, the relationship to classical or earlier medieval authors should also be discussed.

(iii) Manuscripts and editions (translations)

This is the place to survey all the known manuscripts of the work, both those witnesses that were used for the edition and those not accessible to the editor (or lost and known only from references). The MSS have to be described according to the

---

scheme outlined above (or at least in an abbreviated form of MS description if they are otherwise known from good descriptions in modern catalogues), their character and use for the edition discussed and the decisions of the editor as to the priority of texts explained (either by reference to a reconstructed stemma or by arguing for some other procedure). If there are earlier drafts, different versions (by the author him/herself) their relationship to each other will be discussed here. It may be important to evaluate critically early printings and previous editions, for they may contain information from MSS now lost or editorial decisions which the present editor approves of or wishes to revise. If there were medieval vernacular (or other language) versions or early modern translations, they should certainly be listed, for these, too, may contain hints to the history and influence of the text. Further, it is useful to list (and consult) recent modern translations, for those may also contain additional critical notes, interpretations (every translation is an interpretation!) and scholarly comments. It may make sense, depending on the textual history, to discuss the later use of the text here, and to follow its “afterlife” in other authors and/or in historiography or scholarship, Humanist and modern.

(iv) Arrangement of the present edition

Having presented the arguments for the selection and structure of the edited text, in this last chapter the editor should explain the technical details of the procedure followed, the conventions used, the system of the critical apparatus, and so on. For example, in the recent edition of the letters of Hildegard of Bingen the editor decided to add two kinds of textual notes: an *apparatus comparativus* and an *apparatus criticus*. Since there are variants of the letters in collections overseen by Hildegard or corrected by her, the variants in these collections are listed in the first set of notes, while the second group contains the usual textual comments based on *emendatio* etc. It never goes amiss, either, to explain one’s procedure as to the marking of dates (on the margin) or the page/folio numbers of earlier editions or of the major manuscript and so on, even if these follow received practice.

(2) Text

The text should be printed in fairly standard letters (usually 12 pt) with wide margins. There were some early editorial projects that printed ancient texts in specially designed

---

archaic character set (e.g. the English Record Commission series). Such a practice is, of course, futile, as the purpose of the edition is precisely to make the text, written in a hand not easily read by everyone, accessible to the modern, paleographically untrained user. Passages that are verbatim taken over from another text—including the Bible and the Classics—are usually set into italics or petit (10 pt), or if there are different major blocks of borrowing, one of them can be set spaced. In such a case the origin can be marked on the margin or in a footnote. The margin can be used also for marking the actual date to which the passage or entry refers (especially in chronicles or histories), regardless of the source’s dating it, or dating it wrongly. If it appears necessary, the folio of the original MS (esp. in the case of editing from an autograph or a specially important MS) can be marked either within the text, usually [in brackets], or on the margin of the printed text, with a line signifying the exact point of page break.

It is widespread usage to number the lines on each page for easier reference (and sometimes used for the critical apparatus as well), usually on the inner margin. In poetry the line numbers often go through an entire section (part, canto, etc.), in prose they start anew on every page. Sometimes the line numbers include the notes as well, sometimes only the text. The inner margin can be used, for example, to indicate the folios of the witness (if one is printed) or the page number in an earlier, widely used edition, in order to facilitate reference to, for example, the MPL or the MGH SS in Folio.

(3) Notes
The apparatus criticus (usually in the form of footnotes, i.e., notes on the bottom of the page) consists of three kinds of commentaries: variant readings (if there is more than one MS), references to allusions and borrowings, and explanatory remarks on the contents. It is MGH convention to use lower case characters (a, b, c,) for the variant readings and numbers (1, 2, 3) for explanatory or critical notes. The textual notes refer to the MSS used by capital letters (cf. what has been said above on the abbreviations for a stemma). A frequent abbreviation is om. for “omitted in” which may refer to several words missing in a certain MS (or group of MSS), in which case a–a, b–b is the best way to mark the passage. Add. stands for “added in” when a word or passage in a MS (or MSS) was not included in the edited text. Lacunae (empty spaces) or truncations in the texts (caused, for instance, by a tear in the parchment, burns, missing leaves) should also be marked in these notes. Explanatory notes may cover various things. They may
refer to authorities used verbatim or in paraphrase by the author; in the latter case cf. 
(confer, compare) suggests the close but not verbatim quotation. They may identify 
persons or places by their vernacular or modern name, refer to other sources 
corroborating the text or, to the contrary, conveying different information, or simply 
state that the author is mistaken and give a reference to primary sources or scholarly 
literature that prove this.

In some series notes refer to the text “by chapter and verse” or by heading and 
line number or line number only, by this token avoiding encumbering the original text 
with little superscript numbers and letters.

(4) Indices should be compiled so that scholars interested in such divergent matters as 
persons, technical terms, or linguistic issues would all easily find reference to their 
particular subject. It is usual to have at least an “Index personarum” and an “Index 
geographicus,” (or both together in a Namensregister) but an Index locorum (of 
citations), an Index verborum (mainly of technical terms, but in a shorter text this can 
be to all words) (Sachreigster, Wortregister) that may include spelling variants may be 
valuable. If the edition is being prepared with a word-processing program, it is easy to 
generate indices of different sort with relatively little trouble. A subject index (Index 
erum) is helpful for legal, theoretical and scientific texts, but may be handy for a 
narrative source as well. It can be straightforward, referring to major subjects (such as 
“First Crusade”) or analytical, grouping the lemmata (lemma=entry) under a major 
heading and subheadings (e. g., “Crusade”; subdivided into: sermons on, preparations 
for, legal character of, and so on.). The indices should refer to page and line number or 
some other unequivocal and close definition of the text, not merely to a page, which, 
for instance, in a MGH DD in 4° may contain a charter of 600 words or more.

(5) Bibliography.

Anglo-American publications always, others usually have a separate bibliography 
containing the full title etc. of all works cited in the edition. This is quite useful for 
researchers working in the same field and also economical as the complete 
bibliographical data need not be included in the footnotes, since they can be found in 
the appendix. It is common practice to separate the bibliography listing:

(a) manuscript sources with full reference to pressmarks etc.
(b) printed primary sources
(c) secondary literature (books, articles, etc.).

For these sections the publisher’s house style or some accepted rules (MLA, Chicago Manual of Style, etc.) are to be observed.

(6) Maps and Charts, Illustrations
The inclusion of maps and other illustrations will depend on the character of the text and its problems. They may include facsimiles of the writing of the MSS cited, the reproduction of one or more passages, for example, colophons, incipits if these are relevant for the decision about the stemma or the filiation. For a chronicle or a travelogue a map of the region or the places mentioned may be useful, in other cases a table of concordance with earlier (printed) editions may be appropriate.

Translating
Considering that the knowledge of Latin, Greek, Old Church Slavonic and other “source languages” (such as Old Norse, Anglo-Saxon, Provençal, etc.) has been declining in recent decades even among medievalists, translations or bi-lingual editions have become ever more widespread and welcome. Moreover, interest in the Middle Ages among non-specialists (or, say, in Slavic texts among Latinist), demands that students of medieval texts make their sources available for a wider readership.

In the following few paragraphs, the lessons learned from editing the Latin-English bi-lingual Central European Medieval Texts series (CEU Press, Budapest-New York, 1989-) will be summarized.

To begin with, the best critical edition should be used as the basis of translation. It may not be necessary to include the complete apparatus criticus, as the interested read may consult that in the authoritative edition. Still, important variant readings, especially those where the translator is aware of controversial readings should be noted. For example, in the Gesta principum Polonorum (commonly referred to as that of “Gallus Anonymus”) the first historically documented ruler, Mieszko, is identified as primus nomine vocatus alio in the best MS Z but the editor (Karol Maleczyński) decided for prius vocatus nomine alio. We decided for the translation “the first of that name,” considering that is unclear what the “other name” refers to. We added a note about the
two readings.\textsuperscript{28} (Here, again, textual notes may follow the MGH system of being marked a, b, c.) In some cases, especially when the edition is very old, it may be necessary to go back to the “best MS,” but that is an exception for translations.

The translation should aim at a readable, modern presentation of the text, retaining as much of the original rhetoric and style, as possible, without, however, trying to be “archaic.” In most translations, an exception is made with Biblical quotations, which are usually given either in the King James Version or the Catholic Douay-Rheims translation [HTTP://WWW.LATINVULGATE.COM]. (For medieval texts the latter would be preferable. True, in CEMT we have abandoned the archaic declension of verbs in that translation. ) That translation always implies a certain amount of interpretation, and one should be careful not to go too far in that—rather leave unclear matters open and alert the reader to them in a note which may contain hints at different interpretations—is self evident and needs hardly to be underlined.

Considering that translations (and bi-lingual editions) are \emph{per definitionem} aimed at a readership beyond that of specialists, one should be generous with explanatory notes. Besides identifying persons and places (if possible, as usual) and dating events (often in contrast to the text, based on other evidence), the historical context, the local institutions, social groups, offices etc., need more comment that in a scholarly critical edition (usually in footnotes marked 1, 2, 3, &c.). It is the latter that often poses problems. The translation of terms specific for medieval government, society, and institutions of a region or country, necessarily different from—in the case of English translation—those of the British Isles is not always easy. This means that an English (or German, French, Spanish, Russian, whatever) word has to be found for those notions that originate in the past of the given region but rendered in “international” Latin in the text. Most medieval authors used Latin terms for local features, which they knew from their Classical readings, the Vulgate, or other medieval texts. For example, Cosmas of Prague (\emph{Chronica Bohemorum}, MGH SS NS 2) refers to the leading “freemen” (as Lisa Wolverton calls them in her translation\textsuperscript{29}) as \textit{comes/comites}. They were certainly neither members of “titled nobility,” such as counts, Grafen or \textit{comtes}, nor appointed royal officials like Carolingian \textit{comites}. They were probably called \textit{kmet} in the local


Slavic vernacular (as similar members of the elite were called *ispán* in medieval Hungary, also translated as *comes* in the sources). It would be certainly misleading to translate the word as “count,” unless there is reason to assume (based on the context or other evidence) that the given person is in fact something of a royal officer in charge of some kind of province or city (as, for example in Dalmatia, where one can translate Thomas of Split’s *comes* as count, probably called locally *conte*). There are several solutions for this quandary. One may introduce a new term, conspicuously indicating the neologism with a note at the first use—or even discussing this in the Introduction’s section on conventions (more below)—as Wolverton has done with “freemen.” Or, as the editor/translators of the Laws of King St Stephen of Hungary have done with the word *servus* there; having established that the persons thus referred to were not servile in the sense of serfs or slaves (e.g. one was commanding a castle), they used “bondman” (with the appropriate note) in order by the use of the less common word to alert the reader to the problem of interpretation. Another method of overcoming this difficulty is to retain in the translation the Latin (Greek, etc.) term, properly italicized as a foreign word (at least at the first instance) and, again, explain it in a note or the preface. (That’s what CEMT editors have done in some volumes with the *comites* in reference to the different medieval elites of the region.) However, too frequent inserts of strange words (especially, when they are in a less well known vernacular, such as Magyar or Lithuanian) makes the style heavy or awkward, so one should limit such procedure to the minimum. In the aforementioned legal series, only the vernacular term *ispán* for the Hungarian-Latin *comes* was retained.

On the other hand, it is worth exploring to what extent “local” specialties are indeed unique. For example, in many medieval kingdoms the highest officer of the realm was the *comes palatinus*, his position and privilege more or less “copied” from the medieval Empire. Thus, to translate his office into English as palatine, or count palatine (and likewise the offices of the Master of the Horse, Chief Justice &c.) may not be inappropriate. True, caution is needed: the term *palatinus* referred in the kingdom of Poland to regional officers, who were not at all similar to the *Pfalzgraf* or the

---


Hungarian palatine (Hung.: nádorispán). Naturally, all this has to be explained by the translator.

In summary: the problem of terminology has to be faced and explained and this presupposes knowledge of the given society. Thus: sources should be translated by—or in cooperation with—a scholar of the history and society of the region to which the text refers. There have been examples where this was missing and rather silly things came out. The major officer of the king’s household, the Master of the Doorkeepers (magister ianitorum), was in a translation (let it remain anonymous) called “master of the janitors,” which, in modern (American) English understanding refers to the boss of the cleaning company.

Another problem is the translation of personal names. Our authors, writing in Latin, often translate vernacular names into Latin; Cosmas of Prague calls a man Deocarus whose Czech name was clearly Bohumil (Preface to Bk. 2). Both narratives and charters Latinize the vernacular usage of naming a person by his or her father’s name: Johannes filius Pauli can be translated (as CEMT usage does) as “John son of Paul,” but in fact the contemporaries probably called him, something like Jan Pawlovcz in Slavic, Johan Pálsson in Scandinavian, or Pálfa János in Hungarian form. The name of the martyr saint of Bohemia, Václáv in Czech, is well known through a late successor of his as Wenceslas (the “good king”). It is entirely up to the translator to decide, which of the two to use. Václáv may be a bow to modern Czech patriotism, Wenceslas makes the text more familiar to the English reader. There seems to be a trend nowadays in favor of the vernacular; in some publications the first king of Hungary is now called István, a form for which there is no early medieval evidence, even though it is the modern Hungarian version of Stephen/Stephanos. In CEMT we always “Anglicize” names that come from the common Christian calendar (John, Henry, Louis, and so on)—especially in the case of rulers, well known by this name. Otherwise we give vernacular names if known (such as Boleslav or Gyula) or keep the original spelling of the text, if not. But other choices are possible.

Finally, place names. These are a major problem in Central and Eastern Europe (but sometimes in Western Europe as well, see Straßburg vs Strasbourg) where borders and thus the official name of locations and geographical features changed, sometimes more than once, in the course of the centuries. Our principle is to give the present official name (if the place can be unequivocally identified) that can be located on any good atlas—however anachronistic this may sound. Of course, if the city or region has
a name in English or whatever other language we translate into, then we use that: Cracow for Kraków, Prague for Praha. One could use Breslau for Wrocław (and many other German names for Central European settlements) if translating into German, but not if into English. It is not easy to decide which of these names are still alive: to call Regensburg Ratisbon or Livorno Leghorn may be needless and forced archaism. Considering the frequently present national or ethnic resentment about some modern border and name changes, one should beware that one is treading on dangerous ground. I lost a “patriotic” Hungarian collaborator who would not agree to write Košice for the now Slovakian town of Kassa/Kaschau that was for centuries part of the kingdom of Hungary.

If there is a significant number of place names that have several forms, the best solution is to add a Gazetteer to the end of the volume, in which the Latin (or whatever else) of the text, the form used in the translation and any other forms (historical or modern) are tabulated.

Considering all these problems, in the Introduction to a translation (or bi-lingual edition) the chapter on the “present edition” (p. 30, above) has to be expanded in order to clarify the editor/translator’s choice of conventions regarding technical terms, and names of persons and places. This is the place to explain why, for example, comes was left in the Latin form and Alba Bulgarorum is given as Belgrade.

**A note on medieval punctuation.**

The intention of classical punctuation of Latin (as described by Donatus) was to give direction to the reader, who was expected to be reading aloud. Three punctuation marks were recommended, the distinctio, media distinctio, and subdistinctio. All these had the form of a modern full stop/period, and were distinguished by their height above or below the line. The distinctio marked the end of the sentence, and was written above the line. The media distinctio marked a point about midway in a sentence where breath could be taken, and it was written on the line. The subdistinctio was, as its name implies, written below the line and indicated a breathing point where little of the sentence remained. The disadvantage of this system was that it required considerable delicacy in placing, gave considerable difficulty to transcribers, and did not indicate rise and fall in emphasis. The results were first the collapse of all stops into the media
distinctio, and second the elaboration in the Carolingian period of two stops to show first a point for pause and breath in a sentence where pitch was sustained, thus : and second to show where at the end of a sentence the voice was lowered, thus ; : in the thirteenth century Thomas of Capua called these signs the comma and periodos.

It is the indiscriminate use of the media distinctio or medial stop which is likely to give rise to the mistakes of the modern transcriber. A famous example occurs in the text of Bede in his description of the death of King Penda at the battle of the Winwaed: Inito ergo certamine fugati caesi pagani, duces regii XXX, qui ad auxilium venerant, pene omnes interfecti; in quibus Aedilheri, frater Anna regis Orientalium Anglorum, qui post eum regnavit, auctor ipsi belli, perditis militibus siue auxiliis interemptus est. (Ecclesiastical History, Bk. III c. 24, ed. C. Plummer, Oxford 1896, 1: 178). There has been a great deal of scholarly speculation as to why King Aethelhere of East Anglia should have caused the war. But, in fact, Plummer’s comma is a mistake. It was pointed out by J. O. Prestwich that the text should read: “. . . qui post eum regnavit. Auctor ipse belli . . .” Penda was the author of the war.

Perhaps this example is enough to show that considerable care has to be given to an author’s or a manuscript’s system of punctuation. It was considered part of the teaching of style in the Middle Ages and Artes punctuandi were attached to the Artes dictandi. When an autograph manuscript exists there may be good reason to reprint an author’s punctuation (as has recently been done in the Oxford Medieval Classics by Richard W. Southern for Eadmer and Marjorie Chibnall for Orderic Vitalis). Nonetheless the basic rule remains that punctuation should serve a modern understanding of the text as established by an editor who has given careful consideration to its meaning and style. Generally, the earlier a manuscript is the more care its punctuation requires, for in monastic manuscripts it is more likely to reflect the author’s. Systems of punctuation underwent considerable changes in the Middle Ages: our own system derives from the Italian Humanists of the fifteenth century.

An excellent treatment of this issue is now available in M. B. Parkes, Pause and Effect: An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West, Farnham: Ashgate 1992.