

GENIUS LOCI

LASZLOVSZKY 60

edited by
Dóra Mérai
and

Ágnes Drosztmér, Kyra Lyublyanovics,
Judith Rasson, Zsuzsanna Papp Reed,
András Vadas, Csilla Zatykó



ARCHAEOLINGUA

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Budapest 2018

The publication of this volume was generously funded by



CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY

ISBN 978-615-5766-19-0

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2018

ARCHAEOLOGUA ALAPÍTVÁNY

H-1067 Budapest, Teréz krt. 13

www.archaeolingua.hu

Copy editing and language editing: the editors

Layout: Zsanett Kállai

Map: Viktor Lagutov, Zsuzsa Eszter Pető, Mária Vargha, István Gergő Farkas

Front cover design: Eszter Bence-Molnár

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Post It: Notes from Thirteenth-Century St Albans

ZSUZSANNA PAPP REED*

“Books are things that hold things,” often things beyond their intended content, and “things in books not only draw us into a broader world of everyday objects. They also show us how things impress us [...]”¹ Some medieval books, for example, contain notes and drafts: loose sheets that were, at some point in their lifetime, poised on the verge of destruction but were either repurposed, accidentally preserved by oversight, or given a new lease of life by a user who re-evaluated their merits. Despite their usually subpar quality, the intended brevity of their existence, and assumed worthlessness once they fulfilled their immediate purpose, surviving notes and drafts are prized sources for medievalists. They are, however, usually preserved out of context or in too fragmentary a form to tell us about past practices of short-term memory keeping, drafting, and communication. Going beyond the text and looking for clues about how “things impressed” both the author and the readers/users of a note and its “container,” this brief essay will focus on a medieval note or draft as an everyday object, which lived through a great deal throughout its nearly 750-year-long existence.

Bound between the pages of a well-known thirteenth-century St Albans manuscript, now in the British Library,² the tiny leaf contains a hastily and chaotically written bunch of notes resembling a section of a *Liber provincialis* and a fragmentary index of place names beginning with L (Figs 1 and 2). At 120×180 mm, it is much smaller than the rest of the pages (250×380 mm) and it is now framed by a full-sized sheet of paper bound into the quire. It was probably inserted because it was thought to belong to the copy of the *Liber provincialis* (fols 163v-166v).³ It is, however, unknown who and at what stage inserted this fragment into the quire.

Neither does its placement in the middle of an otherwise contiguous copy of the *Liber provincialis* seem to make much sense. As will be shown, the anonymous collator was, however, perceptive: despite their differences, the clean copy of the province list and the inserted leaf indeed belong together in some way.

The manuscript

British Library, Cotton Nero D I is a miscellany of historiographical texts produced at St Albans, primarily by Matthew Paris (c. 1200-1259), whose various autograph pieces comprise the majority of the volume.⁴ The manuscript under scrutiny here is the so-called *Liber additamentorum* (*Addimenta*) which is an integral but separate part of Matthew’s opus magnum, the *Chronica majora*. Besides Matthew’s original historiographical and hagiographical work, such as the *Gesta abbatum* or the *Vita Offarum*, the 202 folios of the *Addimenta* are filled with a collection of lists, letters, memoranda and charters, all copied consecutively rather than inserting original documents as in an archive.⁵ The collation of the folios within the *Addimenta* is now jumbled, but originally may have been chronological.⁶ Internal evidence suggests that the quires were first rearranged in the fourteenth century (with later additions) and then by the renowned manuscript collector, Sir Robert Cotton (1571–1631).⁷

A copy of the *Liber provincialis* on fols 163v-166v within Quire 23, is placed among a number of papal documents, such as the list of popes continued in several different hands (fol. 162r-v).⁸ Based on the signature at the bottom of the first page of the pope list, Vaughan suggests that these folios were added to the *Addimenta* by Cotton.⁹ This, however, does not preclude Matthew’s authorship. The script of the *Liber provincialis* is very similar to Matthew’s autographs in

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the *Additamenta*, which may have been one of the reasons that led Cotton to attribute the quire to Matthew Paris and insert it in the codex—as well, he also may have known more about the provenance and authorship than we do.

The note

Notes are, and have always been, ephemeral by virtue: regardless of the culture and context that surrounds them, what makes them notes is that they are not preserved, they are intended to be destroyed or recycled.¹⁰ Not only universal, the practice of note-taking is also as old as literacy itself.¹¹ There is ample of evidence for such short-term texts from the earliest times and all over the world, for example, the mentions of various forms of classroom notes in the tenth-century *Colloquies of Aelfric Bata* or the famous *beresty*, birch bark notes from thirteenth-century Russia.¹² In a 1230s guidebook for students and teachers at the University of Paris, it is explained how a student should bring slips of parchment to class for taking notes.¹³ Brief messages, memos, receipts and legal writs are also known to have been jotted down onto scraps of parchment, which normally came down to posterity hidden in bindings or in other adventurous ways.¹⁴ However, this particular note is neither a piece of scrap parchment reused in a binding, nor a page in its own right. Importantly, inserting such a hastily written, fragmentary note into a prestigious volume is unlikely to have been the work of the medieval scribe or compiler.¹⁵ It is more likely that, similarly to the practice Erik Kwakkel describes about the medieval use of textbooks, the notes were kept with the book, folded into the quires—until their later discovery and rehabilitation.¹⁶

The writing on this particular leaf is a highly abbreviated hasty bookhand with cursive elements, especially visibly deteriorating towards the bottom of fol. 165r (Fig. 1). As Kwakkel, comparing medieval notes (*scedulae*) to modern text messages, summarises, “both the speed and short lifespan of text messages are responsible for its most peculiar features: they are written in a special language of short words and a high volume of abbreviations, and they come with the built-in understanding that there will likely be typos included.”¹⁷ Besides the

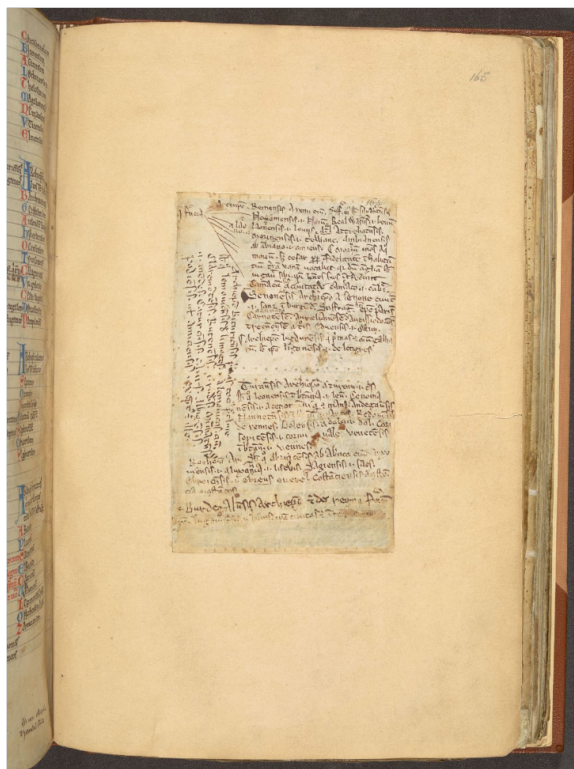
usual abbreviations, the scribe also used radial lines to represent the hierarchy of archbishoprics and their suffragan episcopates, whereby a couple of lines stood for the province lists’ endless formulaic repetition of “*Archiepiscopatus xy hos h[abe]t suffraganeos*.” The use of this graphical element also connects the leaf with a couple of cursive marginal notes on fols 164v (Fig. 3) and 166r. The evidence that the two codicological units, clean copy and note, are not entirely allo-genetic is that the marginal notes about synods on fol. 164v, and about patriarchs on fol. 166r, are in the same, albeit more cursive, hand, and use the same radial lines as those in the note.¹⁸

But can this note be considered a *scedula*? The format of *scedulae* is normally associated with the most common medium they were written on: off-cuts, a by-product of manuscript production. As Kwakkel describes, they were of an “odd size (long and skinny),” and “riddled with deficiencies, such as stains, discoloration and translucent patches.”¹⁹ The leaf on fol. 165r-v, however, is different. It is eminently rectangular and of a fair quality. Rows of pricking, perpendicular to the lines of the text, attest to the fact that the writing is sideways: the leaf was originally intended to be used rotated by 90 degrees. They also reveal that it was originally folded to make a small bifolium of appr. 90 x 120mm, perhaps one out of more leaves comprising a booklet somewhat smaller than a Moleskine® notebook.²⁰

In spite of the pricking and folding, the majority of the notes are hastily scribbled at a right angle to the direction of the intended ruling. But not all of them. The reader had to rotate the recto of the leaf counter-clockwise at a right angle to find out as much about the Archbishopric of Bourges as the rapidly disintegrating penmanship allows (Fig. 1). Similarly, the list of place names on the verso side continues upside down at the bottom of the page (Fig. 2), requiring the reader to turn the leaf upside down while reading. This arrangement suggests that the scribe had to economise because the text was written on the leaf once it was already cut to this size.

The text

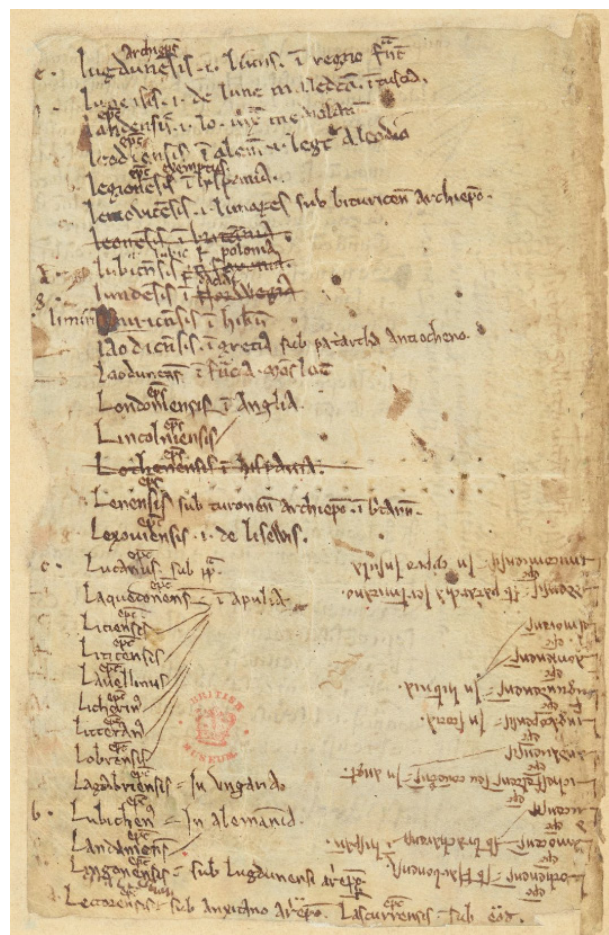
There is another tiny clue that connects the note and the quire, this time in the text itself. The



► Fig. 1. Recto of the inserted note © British Library Board (British Library, Cotton Nero D i, fol. 165r)

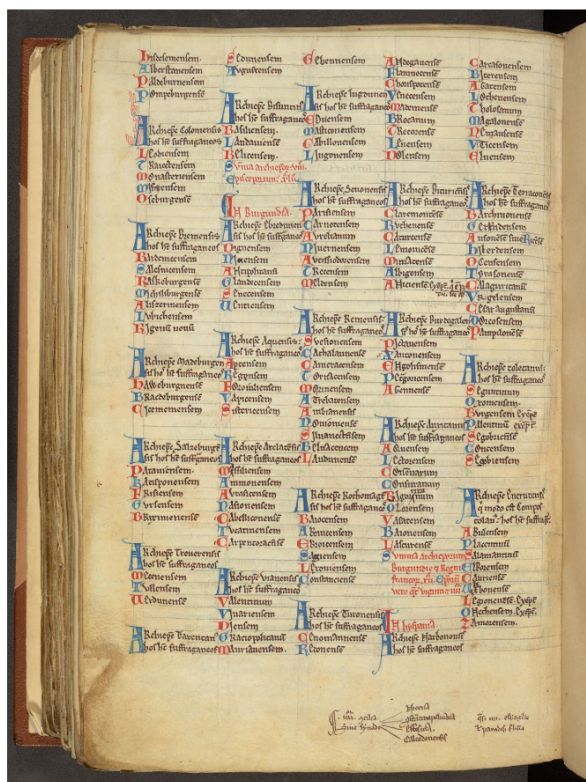
index of the place names on the verso contains the item *Lagabriensis episcopus – in Vngaria* (Fig. 3), which can also be found in the clean copy of the relevant section of the province list on fol. 164r: *Archiepiscopatus Colocensis hos h[abe]t suffraganeos / Ultrasilvanum / Lagabriensem / Raradiensem / Renadiensem / Sum[m]a duo Archie[piscopi] / episcopi vero decem.*²¹ While *Raradiensem* (correctly *Varadiensem*) is corrected to *Zaradiensem* by a seemingly later hand in different ink, *Lagabriensem* is elegantly, albeit rather subtly, corrected by the scribe, presumably by Matthew Paris himself with his characteristic lettering and red ink used for initials and rubrics. This misspelled form of *Zagrabiensem* (or *Zagabriensem*) is unique to the note and the clean copy (Fig. 4): other copies of the *Liber provincialis* normally correctly spell the city's name with a Z.²²

The fact that both the note and the clean copy contain *Lagabriensem*, corrected only in the main text, may suggest that the note preceded the clean copy. Is this one of Matthew's drafts, attesting to his writing process? The chance survival of this small note is in agreement of what scholars in-



► Fig. 2. Detail of the verso of the inserted note © British Library Board (Detail of British Library, Cotton Nero D i, fol. 165v)

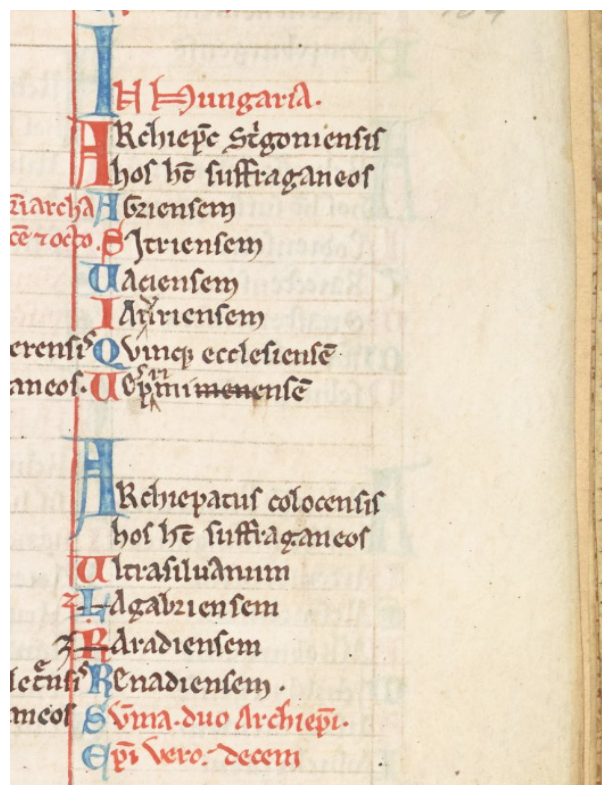
ferred from his historical narrative and chronology, for example, Giles suggesting that Matthew Paris stopped writing for a while in 1250 and resumed only after he “cleaned up,” ordered, and finalised his narrative of the previous years.²³ Matthew's working method was by no means unique at the time.²⁴ Is this single leaf one of his drafts for the clean copy? Tempting as this assumption may be, documents such as these province lists are unlikely to have been compiled out of random notes. They were accurately transcribed and updated copies prepared after a written exemplar. The differences between the clean copy and the note also show that the relationship between them is more complex than simple “draft to clean copy.” Quite the contrary, it seems that the note is a leaf or page out of a notebook that someone used to hastily excerpt information from the *Liber provincialis*: it is a tool for preliminary organisation for a specific purpose. As it is not found in other known copies, the misspelling of



► Fig. 3. Folio preceding the inserted note: the German, Burgundian, French and Spanish archbishoprics in the clean copy of the *Liber provincialis* © British Library Board (British Library, Cotton Nero D i, fol. 164v)

Lagabriensis confirms that the text used for the note was precisely this particular copy—the note-taker either preceded or glossed over the correction on fol. 164r.

There are very few surviving instances where the pre-writing process of the collection and organisation of material is visible. One such example is the fragment of the *Table of the Seven Custodies* (University of California, Rouse MS 96) which throws light on the making of an important mendicant reference work in a Franciscan school.²⁵ As Hindman summarises the process, “this bifolium (and a half) was from a manuscript of the *Table* or *Index of the Seven Custodies*, an index to incidental exegetical passages in the writings of the Church Fathers [...]. In a second stage, the drafts were reorganized by book and biblical chapter, and entered chronologically by author. When the *Table* was completed, these drafts were recycled as binding scrap.”²⁶ Our hastily scrawled working draft on fol. 165r-v is a similar undertaking—a draft to organise or index information. The differences, however, are notable regarding their afterlife. Our *liber provincialis* draft (or a



► Fig. 4. Detail of the clean copy of the *Liber provincialis*: the archbishoprics of the Hungarian province © British Library Board (Detail of British Library, Cotton Nero D i, fol. 164r)

part thereof) was preserved, and later even promoted to a full-size page, even though the work it had been prepared for was probably never finished.²⁷ The draft for the *Table*, on the other hand, was used to create the final copy of a surviving work and ended up as scrap.

In conclusion, this brief study pointed out that this surviving leaf may be a page out of a small unbound notebook, which may have been kept between the quires of the *Addamenta* until its ennoblement as a page in its full right. Regardless whether the note was indeed scribbled by Matthew Paris as the British Library’s catalogue suggests, or by a later user of the *Liber provincialis*, it has been established that these notes were not a penultimate draft for the clean copy but a rough working draft for some unknown undertaking that required an alphabetized list, not long after the clean copy was made. In addition to their proximity in the bound codex, internal evidence was presented to undergird the unquestionable link between clean copy and draft—their intimate relationship corroborated by both the unique (mis)spelling found in the two texts, and

the hand of the marginal notes in the clean province list.

Clean copy and draft: the two texts belonged together. More research is needed to confirm the identity of the hands and the time of writing, but it is certain that whoever bound the leaf into the *Additamenta*, whether Robert Cotton or an even later user, knew this too. Besides the use of paper (which may be a careful replacement for a similar previously executed insertion), disrupting the text of the clean copy by inserting this note clearly suggests post-medieval intervention—a compiler who understood the codicological significance of the relationship of both the note and the clean copy as historical artefacts, witnesses to scribal practices in St Albans rather than to practical information about papal provinces. This was an important moment in the history of the book itself: its user looked beyond the text, and highlighted new diachronic aspects of materiality and process.

I have briefly noted this strange note elsewhere, in an article written nearly ten years ago when I was poring over province lists for their relevance in the scholarship of Anglo-Hungarian relations in the Middle Ages.²⁸ This vast and long-standing historiographical field has been reanimated by József Laszlovszky—among his diverse achievements as archaeologist, historian, and cultural heritage expert—and a handful of his colleagues from the 1990s onwards.²⁹ In this present study of the same pint-sized leaf, I focused on a tiny detail, a misspelled place name, which eventually does shed some light on the kind of information that was available about thirteenth-century Hungary in an English Benedictine scriptorium. But more importantly, small but significant nuances were brought to light about its origins and function within the codex, especially its afterlife when a compiler sidestepped textual coherence in favour of preserving for posterity the medieval scribbles of a tired and impatient hand. The study, thus, follows in the footsteps of this compiler who, by saving and framing it, acknowledged the value of this draft as a vestige of the material culture of a bygone era. At the same time, it also follows in the footsteps of Jóska Laszlovszky, always eager to highlight the importance of blended methodologies in his own research, encouraging generations of students to open their

mind and appreciate the diversity of factors shaping the memory and interpretation of artefacts accumulating through time. Here is to many more years on this fascinating adventure.

Notes

- ¹ Andrew Piper, *Book Was There: Reading in Electronic Times* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 11.
- ² The manuscript is digitised: Cotton MS Nero D I, Digitised Manuscripts, British Library, accessed October 15, 2018, http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Nero_D_I. For the text of the note, see Matthew Paris, *Matthæi Parisiensis, Monachi Sancti Albani, Chronica Majora*, vol. 6 (London: Longman, 1882), 463–64.
- ³ Notably, the draft of the summary of French suffragan bishops is inserted after fol. 164v of the clean copy, which contains the same list about the French archbishopric, followed by the Spanish province. See Fig. 3.
- ⁴ Matthew Paris is best known for his massive *Chronica majora*. Several autograph manuscripts of it survive, the constituent parts of which are bound together with other works of Matthew, but separately from one another (sigla as in Luard's edition): A: Corpus Christi College, Cambridge MS 26; B: Corpus Christi College, Cambridge MS 16; C: London, BL, Cottonian MSS, Nero D V (the “fair” copy), R: London, BL, Royal MS 14 C VII. MS R contains the *Historia Anglorum* (probably written between 1250–1259), the last volume of the *Chronica majora*, and various other well-known items. Fols 165r–v are listed as Matthew Paris's autograph in the catalogue of the British Library: “Origin: Matthew Paris (b. c. 1200; d. 1259), Benedictine monk and historian: his autograph manuscript (ff. 30r–62r; 63r–68v; 146r–v; 165r–v; 185v) and drawings (ff. 4v; 5r; 156v; 146r–v; 156v; 169v; 185v; 186r).”
- ⁵ Matthew Paris, *Vita Offarum*: fols 25v–26v; *Gesta abbatum monasterii sancti Albani*, part 1, with attached documents: fols 64r–73v; part 2, followed by documents of 1255–1257, in roughly chronological order: fols 74r–84v.
- ⁶ Reconstructed quire structure in Richard Vaughan, *Matthew Paris* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 78–80. NB. shortly after the publication of Vaughan's book, fol. 120* was relabelled as fol. 121 and all subsequent folios were renumbered, meaning that most references after this point must be increased by one to find the folio as now labelled.
- ⁷ Manuscript catalogue of the British Library, based on Vaughan, 82.
- ⁸ Quire 23 comprises fols 162–167; the fourth folio (fol. 165r–v) is added, the sixth is cancelled.
- ⁹ Vaughan, *Matthew Paris*, 78.
- ¹⁰ Ephemeral as they may be, they cannot be considered the pre-print forerunners of *ephemera* due to the very criterion of intended destruction or overwriting. Although *ephemera* are often short and less prestigious, and for this reason less likely to be preserved, self-standing pamphlets, booklets, excerpts, pecia, broadsheets, miscellanies were copies or compilations to be used and reused rather than destroyed or recycled.
- ¹¹ Some suggest that the medieval codex actually evolved from the parchment notebook of the Romans (*pugillares membranei*), but as Szirmai argues, this is unsubstantiated. A. J. Szirmai, *The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 4.
- ¹² “The students write on tablets (*tabula, dyptica*), parchment scraps or rolls or pages (*sceda, scedula*), parchment (*pergamenum*), charters (*cartula* or single page?) or quires

- (*quaternio*) which the students themselves prick and rule.” Aelfric Bata, Scott Gwara, and David W. Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Conversations: The Colloquies of Aelfric Bata* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK – Rochester, NY, USA: Boydell Press, 1997), 54; Valentin L. Yanin, “The Archaeology of Novgorod,” *Scientific American* 262, no. 2 (1990): 89.
- ¹³ On the *De discipline scholarum*, see Erik Kwakkel, “New Evidence of Note-Taking in the Medieval Classroom,” accessed September 4, 2018, <https://medievalfragments.wordpress.com/2012/06/01/new-evidence-of-note-taking-in-the-medieval-classroom/>.
- ¹⁴ On notes in pragmatic literacy see Paul Bertrand, *Les écritures ordinaires: sociologie d'un temps de révolution documentaire (entre royaume de France et empire, 1250-1350)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2015).
- ¹⁵ It is notable that a few pieces of information were added as compared to the original *liber provincialis*: the scribe recorded some vernacular names along the Latin entries, e.g. Lemovicensem [id est] Limoges on fol. 165r, and Lugdunensis = Liuns, Laudensis = Lodi, and Lubicensis = Lubic in Polonia on fol. 165v.
- ¹⁶ Kwakkel, “New Evidence of Note-Taking.”
- ¹⁷ Erik Kwakkel, “Texting in Medieval Times | Medievalbooks,” accessed September 4, 2018, <https://medievalbooks.nl/2015/04/17/texting-in-medieval-times/>.
- ¹⁸ To use Johan Gumpert’s categories for different types of multi-text manuscripts, monogenetic codices are written by the same scribe, homogenetic codices originate within the same circle, and composites that contain units that are allo-genetic, i.e. imported from elsewhere. Johan P. Gumpert, “Codicological Units: Towards a Terminology for the Stratigraphy of the Non-Homogeneous Codex,” *Segno e testo* 2 (2004): 17–42.
- ¹⁹ Erik Kwakkel, “New Evidence of Note-Taking in the Medieval Classroom.”
- ²⁰ For medieval limp bindings (*sine tabula*), materials, and stitching techniques, see Szirmai, *The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding*, 285–317.
- ²¹ “The archbishopric of Kalocsa has these suffragan bishops: Transylvania, Zagreb, Várad, Csanád.” For the establishment and history of the archbishopric, also addressing the many uncertainties surrounding the suffragans, see László Koszta, *A kalocsai érseki tartomány kialakulása* [The development of the archiepiscopal province of Kalocsa] (Pécs: Pécsi Történettudományért Kulturális Egyesület, 2013).
- ²² E.g. British Library MSS, Cotton Domitian A XIII; Cotton Galba E IV; Arundel 18; Add. 46352. A similarly unique misspelling—which, as opposed to Zagreb, remains uncorrected in the province list—is *Renadiensem*, which other similar manuscripts correctly spell *Cenadiensem*. This, however, is not found in the note, only in the clean copy.
- ²³ Matthew Paris, *Matthew Paris’s English History. From the Year 1235 to 1273*, trans. J. A. Giles, vol. 3 (London: H.G. Bohn, 1852), 411. Vaughan also points out that “in a work of the scope and size of the *Chronica Majora*, the author must surely have recorded events in a first rough draft almost as soon as news of them reached him.” “Information seems to have been entered up on rough drafts more or less as he received it, and copied thence into the *Chronica Majora*, so that an approximate chronological order was usually achieved.” Vaughan, *Matthew Paris*, 9, 136.
- ²⁴ E.g. the Worcester Annals says “[i]t will be your business to see that there is always a sheet [*scedula*] attached to the book, on which may be noted in pencil deaths of illustrious men and anything in the state of the kingdom which is worth remembering, whenever the news comes to hand. But at the end of the year let a man appointed to the task – write out briefly and succinctly, in the body of the book, what he thinks truest and best to be passed down to the notice of posterity.” *Annales de Wigornia*, in *Annales Monastici*, ed. Henry Richards Luard, RS, 36, 5 vols (London: Longman, Roberts and Green, 1864–69), IV, 355. Translation in C. R. Cheney, “Notes on the Making of the Dunstable Annals, AD 33 to 1242,” in *Essays of Medieval History Presented to Bertie Wilkinson*, ed. T. A. Sandquist and M. R. Powicke (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 92.
- ²⁵ More on the *Table* (*Tabula*) and similar alphabetical indices, see Mary A. Rouse and Richard H. Rouse, *Authentic Witnesses: Approaches to Medieval Texts and Manuscripts* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 232–233.
- ²⁶ The fragment’s provenance is unknown, when the Rouses purchased it as part of the collection of binding fragments assembled by Philip Bliss, it was already separated from the book it was bound in. Sandra Hindman, “The Richard and Mary Rouse Collection of Medieval Manuscripts at The University of California, Los Angeles,” in *Medieval Manuscripts, Their Makers and Users: A Special Issue of Viator in Honor of Richard and Mary Rouse* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2011), 299.
- ²⁷ Though speculative, it is justifiable to suggest that if the work for which the author scribbled this draft had been completed sometime, the draft itself would have been discarded or reused, similarly to the *Table*.
- ²⁸ Not to be confused with the fifteenth-century William Lyndwood’s eponymous commentary upon the ecclesiastical decrees enacted in English provincial councils, various forms of province lists have been widely in use from the twelfth-century onwards, either as part of the *Liber censuum* summarising papal tax revenues, or on their own. In thirteenth-century England, they are often found in historiographical miscellanies, probably based on Bologna, Colegio de Espana, MS 275 or its derivative. It normally has no narrative elements, it is simply a list of all papal provinces, enumerating their archbishoprics and then the archbishoprics’ suffragan bishoprics using the formula “*Archiepiscopatus xy hos h[abe]t suffraganeos*.” (e.g. Fig. 1). See Michael Tangl, *Die Päpstlichen Kanzleiordnungen von 1200-1500* (Innsbruck: Wagner, 1894). A comparative analysis of Central European entries in English province lists published in Hungarian: Zsuzsanna Reed Papp, “Magyarország egy elfeledett forrástípusban: Tartománylisták a középkori Angliában” [Hungary in a neglected source: Province lists in medieval England], *Korall* 38 (2009): 91–111.
- ²⁹ József Laszlovszky, “Angol-magyar kapcsolatok a 12. században” [Anglo-Hungarian relations in the twelfth century] (Doctoral dissertation, Eötvös Loránd University, 1991). Many other contributions ensued following in the footsteps of such legendary predecessors as Sándor Fest in the 1930s. The research history in this field has been recently summarised in Attila Bárány, József Laszlovszky, and Zsuzsanna Papp [Reed], *Angol-magyar kapcsolatok a középkorban* [Anglo-Hungarian relations in the Middle Ages], 2 vols (Máriabesnyő: Attraktor, 2008). English translation under preparation.