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INTRODUCTION: NEW PERSPECTIVES AFTER THIRTY YEARS OF CARTULARY STUDIES

Introducción: nuevas perspectivas tras treinta años de estudios sobre cartularios

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Scholars often refer to the round table organised by the *École nationale des chartes* in Paris in 1991 (and the publication two years later of its proceedings in the volume *Les cartulaires*, edited by Olivier Guyotjeannin, Laurent Morelle and Michel Parisse) as the birth date of cartulary studies¹. There is no denying that the event and the volume represent a landmark, especially considering the remarkable and ever-growing body of publications and research projects which in the subsequent three decades have embraced the new approaches which the round table promoted. As a result, cartularies are no longer considered as mere repositories of documentary sources, but sources in their own right, whose study can cast significant light on the people and institutions that produced them, on the circumstances that led to their compilation and on the contexts in which they were subsequently used.

This journal's special issue on «New Perspectives on Medieval Ecclesiastical Cartularies» attests to the continuing vitality of cartulary studies, while also pointing the way to some of the most recent developments in this area, as well as possible future avenues for research. It gathers an international cohort of scholars from different institutions, backgrounds and career stages who share an active interest in digging deeper into the rationale behind the creation and subsequent uses of medieval documentary compilations. The examples on which they draw originated in ecclesiastical institutions from different

¹ Guyotjeannin, Parisse and Morelle (eds.), *Cartulaires*. See for example Chastang, «Cartulaires», 23.

western European regions and under different circumstances², but they all attest to comparable efforts. All five contributors underline the significance of «cartularisation» as a phenomenon which, from the late eleventh century and with a marked intensification in the twelfth and thirteenth³, can be observed throughout western Europe, but which is rarely commented upon in contemporary sources⁴. The interesting contrast between, on one side, a practice which was remarkably widespread and, on the other, the scarcity of contemporary justifications for cartulary production is probably at the origin of the many initiatives which aim to provide catalogues and surveys of all known cartularies from a given region or country⁵. Such efforts go hand in hand with scholars' attempts to find a definition for the term «cartulary» which is wide enough to accommodate the many typologies that can be ascribed to the «genre» as well as the different names (*liber, cartularium, becerro, tumbo* etc.) used both in the medieval period and by modern scholars to refer to these compilations⁶. In fact, the notion itself of «genre» is debated because of the numerous variants that emerge from all the above-mentioned catalogues and surveying initiatives.

Yet, while there is no denying that medieval cartulary typologies abound and that documentary compilations could originate from a wide variety of circumstances, behind all such initiatives it is still possible to identify a lowest common denominator, a kernel that is shared by all those manuscripts or rolls which modern scholars have identified as cartularies. Irrespective of the specific reasons why a given cartulary was produced, maintained, modified or consulted, its origins inevitably lie with someone's decision to copy a group of documentary texts, be it large or small, into a *codex* (or more occasionally a

² Although medieval ecclesiastical cartularies tend to attract most scholarly attention, important investigations have also explored lay cartularies, especially royal ones produced in the later Middle Ages; see for instance Lamazou-Duplan and Ramírez (eds.), *Cartulaires*.

³ A detailed pan-European chronological study of cartularisation is still a desideratum; however, a general outline of the phenomenon would have to begin with the earliest, ninth-century exemplars from the eastern Carolingian territories before moving on to tenth-century «chronique cartulaires» from northern France, such as that produced by Folcuin at St-Bertin, and the eleventh-century English cartularies from the cathedral see of Worcester. From that time onwards cartulary production started spreading throughout Europe. See Geary, *Phantoms*, 81-107, and Tucker, *Reading*, 8-9. For a useful chronological table of cartulary production in France and Belgium, generated through the data contained in the CartuLR database (<https://telma-repertoires.irht.cnrs.fr/cartulr/page/presentation>, accessed 18 February 2024), see Bertrand, *Écritures*, 24. It should be noted that cartularisation was not an exclusively medieval phenomenon, as cartulary production continued well into the modern period; on this point see Tucker's contribution to this issue.

⁴ As Joanna Tucker observes in her contribution, there are few contemporary references to the process of cartularisation. On this point see also Tucker, *Reading*, 13-4. Important exceptions can be found in Cozroh's ninth-century Freising cartulary (about which see Geary, *Phantoms*, 93-6), in Hemming's Cartulary, produced at Worcester in the late eleventh century (see Tinti, «*Si litterali*») and in the two cartularies produced in the mid-twelfth century in the monastery of Santa Cruz in Coimbra, the *Livro Santo* and the *Livro de Don João Teotónio* (see Gomes, *Limine*, 300-10). In all these cases special emphasis was placed on the memorial function of the compilation.

⁵ For a useful list of catalogues and surveys see Tucker, *Reading*, 8, footnote 19. For a catalogue of Spanish cartularies, see Sánchez, *Códices diplomáticos*, 187-454. Unfortunately, the corresponding digital resource (www.codicesdiplomaticos.com) is currently not available.

⁶ On definitions and the challenges they present see Joanna Tucker's and Robert Berkhofer's contributions to this issue.

roll). The significance of this decision and the subsequent actions which it unfolded cannot be overstated. By choosing to copy a series of charters into a manuscript, the people involved in cartulary production were not just transcribing those documents' contents onto a different medium, but were assigning to those texts a new meaning and a new value that were directly related to the position in which each charter was reproduced and the ensuing dialogue which it would thus establish with the other contents of the same manuscripts⁷.

On top of this shared kernel, or lowest common denominator, numerous other significant features, which depended on the specific context of production of any given cartulary, have been identified by the scholars who in the past thirty years have contributed to the growth of this field of study. They cannot all be discussed here, but a list of the most significant research lines should certainly include the following: 1) the materiality of cartularies, including their codicology and structure, as well as the identification of scribal hands and their respective roles; 2) the relations between cartularies and archives and the extent to which a given cartulary mirrors an institution's archive at the time that it was written; 3) the degree of faithfulness of the cartulary transcriptions to the original documents; 4) the role of texts other than charters and paratextual elements included in cartularies; 5) the identification of a cartulary's function(s), e.g. administrative, legal, memorial etc.; 6) the role played by cartularies in constructing institutional memories and providing a representation of the past which might serve the institution's more recent needs; 7) the alleged distinction between the predominantly memorial function of cartularies produced before the year 1200 and the more practical/administrative nature of later compilations⁸; 8) the production of multiple cartularies by the same institution or by institutions belonging to the same religious order or region.

While all these research lines are still considered central to any investigation on medieval ecclesiastical cartularies, the contributions gathered in this special issue highlight some of the more specific questions and research agendas which have been emerging in recent years. One of these is certainly the interest in identifying the first steps towards cartularisation, that is the earliest attempts within an ecclesiastical institution to create small dossiers of documents, or «protocartularies», as David Peterson calls them. By focusing on the earliest known activities of selecting, gathering and transcribing (faithfully or not) documentary texts onto a codex or a fascicule, scholars can get closer to what lay behind such initiatives, what circumstances caused them and what the people involved hoped to achieve. As Dr Peterson shows in his examination of a few cases from eleventh- and twelfth-century Castile, a variety of dynamics were already at play in these early stages: protocartularies could be contemporary with the documents they contain or be produced a century after; they could have a clear administrative function or represent answers to changing situations. The regional approach adopted by Peterson is especially rewarding as it hints at influences from one religious house to the other as a possible reason behind some of the Castilian protocartularies.

⁷ Chastang, «Cartulaires», 30.

⁸ About this and other research lines see Berkhofer's article in this special issue.

A similar interest in the origins of cartularisation processes can also be found in Leticia Agúndez's contribution, though in this case the focus is on a specific cartulary typology, namely bullaries, whose early appearance in the Iberian Peninsula is a particularly striking phenomenon which Dr Agúndez plans to investigate properly in a future project. Her analysis of the thirteenth-century *Becerro III* from San Millán de la Cogolla places this manuscript within an already well-established tradition of cartulary production at San Millán and highlights the reasons why a third, more specialised cartulary containing papal bulls was deemed necessary at a time when the community was keen to use papal protection as a new resource in the defense of their titles and privileges.

As well as displaying a marked interest in the origins of cartularisation, the contributions gathered here point to the other end of the process, namely the importance of the additions that were made to cartularies after the first stint of copying activities came to an end. Far too often scholars' interests in the rationale behind a cartulary production result in analyses which leave out later additions as something extraneous or only marginally relevant to the main cartulary contents. Joanna Tucker rightly reminds us that those cartularies which seem «messier» are the outcome of continuing reading and copying activities and that their «messiness» is what gets us closest to understanding their contexts of use. Hers is an invitation to centre the scribes' experience as readers and copyists as well as their interactions with the other, both contemporary and earlier, scribes involved in the same compilation, thus pushing scholars beyond the identification of typologies which has characterised the past thirty years of cartulary studies. Indeed, cartulary typologies are not necessarily as clear-cut as modern compilers of catalogues and survey would like them to be⁹, especially when one tries to encompass all the different layers of intervention displayed in a manuscript.

In several ways the last article in this issue, by Cristina Carbonetti Vendittelli, can be considered as a response to Joanna Tucker's opening observations. Professor Carbonetti Vendittelli describes her thirteenth-century exemplars from Città di Castello in central Italy as «open cartularies», that is collections meant to grow with the addition of new documentary materials, which contain marginal notes showing how the fascicules continued to be consulted and annotated. The interactions among successive scribes and readers are promptly identified, as well as the later interventions meant to reorganise the materials to meet new administrative and archival criteria.

While this brief excursus on the new perspectives on cartulary studies which have emerged in the last thirty years does not aim to be comprehensive, it certainly cannot fail to mention the important contribution of digital humanities, also considering the role that several authors in this special issue have played in this area. As Professor Berkhofer mentions in his article's concluding remarks, the digital revolution in charter and cartulary analysis has stimulated significant advances: thanks to digitisation, nowadays cartulary manuscripts can often be consulted online, as is also the case for digital catalogues such as CartulR¹⁰. Digital tools have also been designed to analyse and compare

⁹ On this point see also Berkhofer's contribution in this special issue.

¹⁰ See above note 3.

the arrangements of cartularies¹¹, but perhaps most significantly, digital editions aiming to supersede the limitations of traditional paper ones have also appeared¹². These are, however, labour-intensive and need to rely on multidisciplinary teams which require significant funding. Occasionally researchers may also encounter funding bodies which appear to be suspicious of the alleged «technical» nature of projects aiming to provide digital editions and related databases, thus making significant advances in this specific area more difficult to achieve¹³.

Despite such difficulties, cartulary studies continue to be a very active research area, as the initiatives planned for the year 2024 to mark (with a slight delay) the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of *Les cartulaires* indicate. This special issue of *Studia Historica. Historia Medieval*, which represents one of the outcomes of a research project based at the University of the Basque Country¹⁴, will be followed in July by a round table discussion on «The Past, Present and Future of Monastic Cartulary Studies» at the Leeds International Medieval Congress. Meanwhile, work is in progress for the organisation of an international conference provisionally entitled «Des copies aux cartulaires. La table ronde «Cartulaires» trente (-trois) ans après» to take place at the École Française of Rome in late October. Among the aims of the organisers there is the intention to expand cartulary studies beyond the traditional ecclesiastical, medieval and western European contexts which have so far dominated the field.

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¹¹ Escalona, Pérez-Alfaro and Bellettini, «Two Graphical Models».

¹² A pioneering initiative in this area was the digital edition of the Becerro Galicano of San Millán de la Cogolla, developed at the University of the Basque Country UPV/EHU and available at www.ehu.es/galicano (accessed 18 February 2024). Another comparable digital edition is that of the thirteenth-century Cartulaire de la Seigneurie de Nesle (<http://telma.irht.cnrs.fr/outils/nesle/index/>; accessed 18 February 2024), also mentioned by Joanna Tucker in her contribution.

¹³ For a more detailed discussion see Tinti, «Fuentes»; for an example of a funding agency warning prospective applicants about databases as the main result of a research project, see the section on «Eligibility» of the Leverhulme Trust Research Project Grants website (<https://www.leverhulme.ac.uk/research-project-grants>, accessed 17 February 2024), which lists among ineligible projects those «in which the balance between assembling a data bank or database and the related subsequent research is heavily inclined to the former».

¹⁴ The project (PID2020-115365GB-I00), directed by Francesca Tinti and Juan José Larrea, is funded by the Spanish Agencia Estatal de Investigación. This publication is also part of the activities of the research group IT1465-22, funded by the Basque Government.

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