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THE PROVENANCE OF THE EDINBURGH MARTIAL

By J. A. Stover

The most significant manuscript of a classical Latin author in the National Library of Scotland, and indeed one of the most significant in all of Scotland, is a ninth-century copy of the *Epigrams* of Martial (now. Adv. 18.3.1). It is one of about a half-dozen manuscripts considered essential for reconstructing the text of the Epigrams, as the premier representative of the C family.

It was first used for editing Martial by the great Scottish classicist W. M. Lindsay, with a collation published in 1902 and a critical edition published the same year.¹ But it was almost a century earlier that its importance had first been signalled, by the polymath Sir John Dalrymple, who published a short tract on the manuscript in 1811.² Neither Dalrymple nor Lindsay hazard any speculation on the history of the manuscript before it came to Edinburgh, where it is attested as early as 1710, beyond noting that it was produced somewhere on the continent.

In the century since, very little progress has been made on working out its medieval provenance. On palaeographic grounds, Bischoff assigned it to the third quarter of the ninth century, and placed its production somewhere in Western France.³ I. C. Cunningham characterized it more generally as belonging to the second half of the ninth century and produced « in a French scriptorium north of the Loire »⁴.

We can trace its travels and travails back to the seventeenth century, thanks to a note on the verso of the front fly leaf: « *Iacobus Marchant hunc librum possidet ex dono Francisci Desmeulieus amici sui, Sedani 3 decembris 1632* » (« Jacobus Marchant is the owner of this

¹ W. M. LINDSAY, *The Ancient Editions of Martial, With Collations of the Berlin & Edinburgh MSS*, Oxford, 1902, and his edition for *Oxford Classical Texts* of the same year.

² J. DALRYMPLE, *Some Account of an Ancient Manuscript of Martial's Epigrams*, Edinburgh, 1811.

³ B. BISCHOFF, *Katalog der festländischen Handschriften des neunten Jahrhunderts: Aachen-Lambach*, Wiesbaden, 1998, no. 1087

⁴ I. C. CUNNINGHAM, *Latin Classical Manuscripts in the National Library of Scotland*, in *Scriptorium* 27, 1973, p. 64-89 at p. 69-70.

book, which was a gift from his friend François Desmeulieux, Sedan, 3 December 1632. ») It has been thought that this Jacobus Marchant may have brought the manuscript to Edinburgh, but there is no evidence that he was English or Scottish. More likely he is the Catholic theologian Jacobus Marchant (1587-1648), who was born at Couvin, just thirty-five miles from Sedan. He taught theology at the Norbertine Abbey of Floreffe and the Benedictine Abbey of Lobbes, before returning to Couvin as pastor and dean in 1622.⁵ We do not know what use Marchant made of the manuscript, but he was not averse to quoting classical authorities in his preaching: Baring-Gould notes citations of Juvenal, Ovid and Virgil.⁶

How then did the manuscript come to Scotland? One potential clue is provided by the date. The decade in which Marchant got the Martial saw devastation wreaked by the armies on both sides of the Thirty Years' War in this region between France and Flanders. Fleurus, just ten miles from Floreffe saw a major engagement in 1622; Orval Abbey, twenty miles east of Sedan, was burnt and pillaged by French troops in 1637; a major battle was fought just outside Sedan at La Marfée in 1641; and a momentous battle took place at Rocroi, nine miles south of Couvin, in 1643.

At some of these engagements – particularly Rocroi – there was a substantial Scottish presence in the French army.⁷ Under Lord James Douglas, the eponymous Régiment de Douglas achieved substantial recognition for their discipline and valour in that battle.

In this context, the likely truth of how the Martial ended up in Edinburgh is likely a deal less innocent than the accepted story. The most plausible scenario for how a manuscript we know

⁵ S. BARING-GOULD, *Post Medieval Preachers*, London, 1865, 155-176; T. RÉJALOT, *Jacques Marchant de Couvin, sa vie et ses oeuvres*, in *Annales de la Société archéologique de Namur* 27, 1908, 19-104; E. DONNAY, *Une belle figure couvinoise Jacques Marchant (1587-1648)* in *Au Pays des Rièzes et des Sarts* 93, 1983, p. 388-396; and P. UHLIG, *Jacques Marchant, doyen de Couvin, vie et oeuvres (1587-1648)*, in *En Fagne et Thiérache* 163, 2009, 11-30.

⁶ BARING-GOULD, cit. n. 5, p. 158n.

⁷ In general, see M. GLOZIER, *Scots in the French and Dutch armies during the Thirty Years' War*, in S. MURDOCH (ed.), *Scotland and the Thirty Years' War, 1618-1648*, Leiden, 2001, p. 117-142. He estimates that there about 15,000 total Scottish troops in the French and Dutch armies, the vast majority in the former.

was in this region in 1632 could end up in Scotland within the next half century or so is that a Scottish soldier absconded with it. This would also account for how it so valuable a volume ended up in the Advocates' Library with no accession records and as part of no known bequest. Correctly identifying Jacobus Marchant may well be the key to understanding how a ninth-century continental manuscript ended up in Scotland at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Getting this provenance right may also help shed some light on the earlier medieval history of the manuscript. Indeed, new evidence shows that it had already been in that very region, namely the Diocese of Liège, for more than five hundred years.

On the last folio of the volume (f. 108v), amid a collection of *probationes pennae*, in the top right corner is a snatch of chant with neumes. The only person to have noticed them seems to be Bischoff, who notes succinctly « lit. m. Neumen (ca. s. XI) ». The text of these letters is, however, actually important: « in pueritia existimans pro nichilo omnia ».

Unlike most such notes, this is not a common phrase, not from the psalms or a common liturgical text. Thanks to the CANTUS database, however, it can be identified as part of a responsory for the feast of St. Lambert: « Sanctus Lambertus parvi pendeat praesentia veluti devoverat in pueritia aestimans pro nihilo omnia praeter quod erat aeternae salutis gratia ». (CANTUS ID 602157).⁸ The cult of St Lambert was particularly fervent in the Diocese of Liège, who was born in Maastricht around 636, was made bishop there in 669, and was killed in Liège around 705. He was subsequently buried in Maastricht and made patron of the diocese, although his successor translated his relics to Liège.

The text of the chant goes back to Sigebert of Gembloux's *Vita quinta Lamberti Leodiensis*, composed between 1075-1080: « Paruipendeat praesentia ueluti deuouerat in

⁸ <http://cantus.uwaterloo.ca/>

pueritia aestimans pro nihilo omnia praeter quod erat aeternae salutis gratia coelestibus animo inhaerens sese in holocaustum domino mactabat » (PL 160, 762d).⁹ If Bischoff is right about the date of the hand as being eleventh century, it could only have been written very soon after it was adopted into liturgical use.

So it is certain that the Edinburgh Martial was in or near the diocese of Liège from around 1090 to 1632. Where was it written? Here we reach one small puzzle. One of the foremost scholars active in this region in the eleventh century was Heriger of Lobbes (ca. 925-1007). He has a strong interest in the Latin classics, and we have surviving a florilegium that is demonstrably related to his poetic work (today Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Clm 6292).¹⁰ This florilegium contains lines a number of lines from books 1 through 6 of Martial's epigrams, and yet they do not match the readings contained in the Edinburgh manuscripts; indeed, they do not even seem to come from the same family.¹¹ However, the evidence for Heriger's own familiarity with Martial boils down to a single line (*epig.* 5.59.3) quoted in the preface to his *Vita Remacli* (p. 165 Koepke). There is good evidence that Heriger used a florilegium (probably no. 308 in the Lobbes catalogue discovered by Dolbeau), but that he also used complete texts.¹² Indeed, the text of Martial in the Friesing florilegium suggests that its compiler has access to differed manuscripts of Martial.¹³

One final note. In the acclaimed library of Lorsch in the ninth century, there was a copy of Martial (see, for example, the catalogue in Vatican City, BAV Pal. lat. 1877, fo.

⁹ The same chant is also used for St. Remaclus, who preceded Lambert's predecessor Theodard as bishop of Maastricht in a 12th century manuscript (St Gall, cod. 388, p. 300; CANTUS ID 602157); but the origin of the chant in Sigebert confirms that it was originally used for St Lambert.

¹⁰ R. G. BABCOCK, *Heriger of Lobbes and the Friesing Florilegium: A Study of the Influence of Classical Latin Poetry in the Middle Ages*, Frankfurt am Main, 1984.

¹¹ See BABCOCK, cit. n.10, p. 159-62.

¹² DOLBEAU, *Un nouveau catalogue des manuscrits de Lobbes aux XIe et XIIe siècles*, in *Recherches augustiniennes* 13, 1978, p. 3-34 and 14, 1979, p. 191-248. BABCOCK (cit. n. 10, p. 183) notes that for Horace, several lines Heriger quotes are not in the Friesing florilegium.

¹³ There is a double reading *vives vivis* at *epig.* 5.58.7, the first word being found in the A and C traditions (including in the Edinburgh manuscript), and the second in the B tradition. Cf. BABCOCK, cit. n. 10, p. 161.

30v).¹⁴ This manuscript has never been found, but like the Edinburgh Martial, it seems to have contained the epigrams on their own in a single codex.¹⁵ Given the strong connections between Lorsch and Diocese of Liège, it is an attractive possibility that Edinburgh manuscript is an apograph of the Lorsch manuscript.

That leaves at last the palaeographic problem. Localization of ninth-century Caroline minuscule is notoriously difficult, particularly when a text was not written at a well-known center like Lorsch, Fulda, or Tours. It is possible that the Edinburgh manuscript was written in Western France, but it is equally possible that it was written by a scribe from further West somewhere to the East and North. Even without knowing precisely where the codex was written, we can now account for its whereabouts for at least a thousand years of its existence.

¹⁴ A. HÄSE, *Mittelalterliche Bücherverzeichnisse aus Kloster Lorsch. Einleitung, Edition und Kommentar*, Wiesbaden 2002, p. 308, no. 338.

¹⁵ e.g. HÄSE, ed., p. 164: « Libri Marcialis poete in uno codice. »