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A Newly Discovered Fragmentary Troubadour Songbook (Barcelona, Arxiu de la Catedral, Miscel·lània, 23/1-12)

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ABSTRACT: A previously unknown fragmentary songbook at the Archives of Barcelona Cathedral (Barcelona, Arxiu de la Catedral, Miscel·lània, 23/1-12) transmits 17 troubadour poems, mainly the work of Peire Cardenal. The provenance is still to be ascertained but it could well have been in the ACB since the Middle Ages. The extant 13 paper leaves of this new Catalan troubadour manuscript witness probably constituted a (now defective) quire and have a striking similarity with another Catalan troubadour fragment known as *M^b* (Madrid, Real Academia de la Historia, 9-24-6/4579, n. 3). This new witness provides an additional, very interesting, piece for the reconstruction of the medieval circulation of troubadour lyrics in Catalan lands and beyond. The proposed siglum for this fragment is *B^c*.

KEYWORDS: troubadours, songbooks, Peire Cardenal, archival findings, Crown of Aragon, codicology.

This article offers a preliminary description of a substantial troubadour fragment, recently discovered in the archives of the Barcelona Cathedral (Arxiu de la Catedral de Barcelona, ACB).¹ In accord-

¹ This article has benefited from the support of the research project “Cultura escrita cortés en la Corona de Aragón: Materialidad, transmisión y recepción”

ance with its location and the attribution of sigla to other troubadour fragments, we propose to refer to this new witness as *B^c*. While the fragment is being restored and we work on a detailed analysis of its contents, material features and place in the troubadour songbook system, we can already provide a summary description and an assessment of its potential to aid the study of troubadour circulation, particularly in the Crown of Aragon. It is also worth highlighting that despite the occasional discoveries of troubadour manuscript fragments during the twentieth century, and the first decades of the twenty-first, the finding at the ACB is quite exceptional in its material consistency and therefore an important new object of research for troubadour studies.²

1. The Fragment in the ACB

The ACB is a rich repository of medieval textual treasures, such as Saint Gregory's Homilies (seventh or eighth century), the lavishly illuminated *Missal de Santa Eulàlia* (fifteenth century) or the original design of the Cathedral's façade by Charles Gautier (fifteenth century). The existence of the Chapter of the Cathedral of Barcelona is documented since 878 and its chapterhouse archives is known to have produced documents since that moment. The archives are housed in its current location since 1969, but there are two other known locations within the cathedral dating to 1420 and 1535. The medieval holdings date back to the fifth to seventh centuries for some papyri, along with 257 codices (most of them medieval), around 60 incunabula and 40,000 parchment

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²Vatteroni 1996 and Asperti 2009 discuss the discovery of troubadour fragments up to their publication date. Recently Mascherpa & Saviotti 2017 have added new items.

documents (ninth to sixteenth centuries).³ Currently, about 20% is not yet catalogued.

In March 2023, among those uncatalogued materials, the archives personnel found a fragmentary manuscript they believed to contain troubadour poems. Upon a first inspection, we were able to verify that the fragment includes 17 troubadour songs—all of them identifiable with poems extant in other manuscripts—and proceeded to note a number of interesting traits that deserved attention in this exceptional discovery.

The first one would be its provenance. Materials currently held at the ACB are those produced by the cathedral over the centuries, including donations of individuals upon their passing. However, despite the long history and long-standing location of the archives, provenance is not always easy to ascertain. The organization of the archives's holdings has been disrupted a few times, as far as we know. Notably during the nineteenth-century *Desamortizaciones* (the Spanish government confiscations), the archives were closed, and even though its holdings did not leave the building, they were abandoned and its series discontinued, causing a general disorder. During the Spanish Civil War, the whole archives was moved to different locations. In the first place, in order to save it from destruction, it was thrown from a window into a lorry and taken to a former convent near the basilica of Saints Justus and Pastor. This first relocation site was hit by a bomb, which fortunately did not explode, but the incident further disrupted the order of part of the documents. The archives's holdings were then taken to Pedralbes and Viladrau, and eventually returned to the cathedral after the war. Since 1943, a new catalogue of the holdings has been on-going, which for some sectors, particularly those involving paper fragments and bundles such as this one, has proved painstaking since there is no context to help with this task.

This recently identified troubadour fragment was probably part of a donation or part of the executorship of a will. Since the ACB, as mentioned, often received legacies or goods, this could point to a possible origin, which should be investigated carefully, as many other aspects of this important finding. This note intends only to serve as an introduction

³ See further details in the catalogue by Fàbrega & Baucells 1969.

and a presentation to the scientific community while we fully explore all relevant aspects of the document.

2. A New Troubadour Songbook Fragment

In its extant condition, the fragment consists of 13 leaves that were probably part of a single quire. The binding and the spine area are currently lost in their entirety, but the uniformity in the material aspects of all the remaining leaves assures they belonged to a single codex or group of quires. Since the texts in the recto of the first leaf and in the verso of the last are incomplete we must assume these 13 leaves were part of a larger codicological unit, maybe a quire of seven bifolia or a much consistent codex.

The paper support measures approximately 210×152 mm in the best-preserved leaves (3 and 4). The conservation is very poor, mostly due to water damage, while further mutilation has been caused by book-worms, particularly on the lower part of the leaves. None of the leaves has preserved all the matter and the ratio of conservation varies between 70 and 90%. Losses mostly affect the superior and inner margins. The codicological unit seems to have been made with good-quality paper, with wire-lines still visible, but its current condition makes it impossible to ascertain whether it has watermarks until after its restauration. Currently, the leaves are preserved separately, although it is possible to detect what side had been attached to the binding, and therefore to tell the recto and the verso apart (an observation that is also confirmed by textual continuity). There are remaining traces of the quire consistency in fol. 7, where fragments of the stitching thread can still be seen. This seems to be the centre of the quire, to which all leaves belonged. Unfortunately, there are no signatures or catchwords.

The width of the written surface oscillates between 100 and 120 mm and its height between 150 and 160 mm; each page has about 23 to 26 text lines, including blank spaces (Figure 1). There are no traces of any preparation, ruling or previous planning of the layout to mark the lines or delimit the area to be written. Mostly legible, the ink is however faded in some leaves and in others has been affected by water stains. The same

ink preparation is used throughout the fragment: probably dark brown in colour, judging by the places where there is no water damage.

Poems are copied in a layout that is consistent with that of most Catalan troubadour songbooks: one column per page, where lyrics are laid out as prose, with metrical points or slashes to mark the end of each verse, and one paragraph per strophe.⁴ Strophes are separated by blank spaces of circa 15 mm (that is, about two lines of text) following a practice coherent with the design of the Catalan fragment *M^b*, as we will discuss below, but highly unusual in most troubadour songbooks.⁵ The scribe has copied the entire fragment in a typical Catalan documentary cursive hand, which can be dated in a first inspection in the first quarter of the fourteenth century (Figure 2).⁶ The rubrics are simple and undecorated – a cartouche to highlight them excepted – and are located in the centre of the line (Figure 3). The beginning of every poem, except for Poem 15, is indicated by very plain initial letters of variable height (2–3 lines, such as in poems 2, 9, 11), which only on occasion show decorative pen work.

The contents are exclusively troubadour poems. The list that follows indicates the sequence of leaves, the rubrics, and our proposed attribution of the poems:

⁴ For an outline of the main characteristic of Catalan songbooks (both transmitting troubadours and later Catalan lyrics), Cabré 2011, esp. 13–14. See Radaelli 2022 about one salient example of lyrics copied in Catalonia between the end of the thirteenth century and the early fourteenth century and its usual layout.

⁵ This is by far the most unusual formal trait in *M^b*, as we observed and interpreted in Cabré & Boadas 2017, which is now also identifiable in *B^c*. Some other features, such as the cursive hand or the layout in one column, are also rare in the troubadour tradition with few exceptions such as troubadour songbook *f* (Paris, BnF fr. 12472; see Barberini 2012).

⁶ The only exception might be Poem 15 in fols. 12v-13r, which could have been copied by another very similar, contemporary hand, and exhibits some variations in the formal criteria.

Fols.	Rubric	Proposed identification: Author, BEdT incipit	BEdT	
1	1r-1v	...	Peire Cardenal, <i>L'arcivesques de Narbona</i> (frag.)	335.29
2	1v-2r	Jdem	Peire Cardenal, <i>Bel m'es qu'eu bastis</i>	335.10
3	2r-2v	Jd(e)m	Peire Cardenal, <i>Be teing per fol e per muzart</i>	335.11
4	2v-3v	Jdem	Peire Cardenal, <i>D'un sirventes far sui aders</i>	335.20
5	3v-4r	Jd(e)m	Guilhem Magret, <i>Mout me plai quan vei dolenta</i>	223.5a
6	4r-5r	Jd(e)m	Peire Cardenal, <i>Si tot non ai joi ni plazer</i>	335.51
7	5r-6v	Jd(e)m	Raimon de Castelnou, <i>Mon chantar voill retrair'al cominal</i>	396.6
8	6v-7r	Jd(e)m	Peire Cardenal, <i>De sirventes faire no'm toill</i>	335.17
9	7v-8r	...	Peire Cardenal, <i>Rics hom que greu ditz vertat e leu men men</i>	335.49
10	8r-8v	Jd(e)m	Peire Cardenal, <i>Seigner n'Eble, vostre vezi</i>	335.53
11	8v-9v	Jd(e)m	Peire Cardenal, <i>Pos ma boca parla sens</i>	335.41
12	9v-10r	Jd(e)m	Peire Cardenal, <i>Quals aventura</i>	335.43
13	10r-11v	Jdem	Peire Cardenal, <i>Tals cuja be</i>	335.52
14	11v-12r	Jd(e)m	Peire Cardenal, <i>Li cleric si fan pastor</i> (frag.)	335.31
15	12v-13r	J[...]	Peire Cardenal, <i>Totz lo mons es vestitz e abrazats</i>	335.62
16	13r-13v	Ffolq(ue)t	Falquet de Romans, <i>Quan be me sui apensatz</i>	156.10
17	13v...	Ffolq(ue)t	Falquet de Romans, <i>Quan cug chantar, eu plaing e plor</i> (frag.)	156.11

The rubrics *Jdem* (fols. 1v-12v) and *Ffolquet* (fols. 13rv) indicate the compilation can be considered an anthology that follows authorial attribution as the main organizing criterion. In the first extant leaves, *B^c* assembles 15 poems by the same troubadour, part of a fragmentary section that was quite certainly larger, since it must have begun in previous leaves with a rubric to identify the troubadour in the first poem. We assume this was Peire Cardenal, to whom most poems in the section are attributed by all other manuscript witnesses. The following author section is devoted to Falquet de Romans, in this case indicating the abbreviated name in each extant rubric, but only the beginning of this second section remains, making it impossible to know whether it also gathered a good number of poems by the same troubadour.

Unfortunately, the fragment shows no element that might indicate the intention of providing musical information: there is no trace of a stave nor a space prepared to draw it later.

3. *The Fragment within the Catalan Songbook Tradition*

B^c adds to our knowledge of a written corpus that attests to the vitality, circulation, and durability of troubadour culture in the Crown of Aragon. Since the beginning of the troubadour period, Catalan courts were part of a network of alliances, political contacts and family connections with the Occitan domain that formed the basis for the circulation of this culture as well as most likely its written witnesses. From at least the mid-twelfth century, troubadour poetry was adopted as the poetic tradition in the Crown of Aragon and these courts became important troubadour centres, while in later centuries both political and economic circuits provided ample occasion for manuscripts to continue circulating to and from the Crown of Aragon and other Western courts.⁷ Overall, the manuscript transmission of troubadour lyrics confirms the total integration of Catalan courts in the troubadour world, since Catalan manuscripts do not favour Catalan-born authors, while, conversely, these autochthonous troubadours are sometimes only extant in manuscripts produced in other areas. This highlights the need to further research the presence of Catalan sources within the overall troubadour songbook system, as well as the reception of Catalan troubadours elsewhere. On the other hand, there is a detectable tendency in songbooks compiled in the Crown of Aragon to transmit the works of troubadours that had been somehow connected to Catalan courts, which provides a certain guidance to undertake the analysis of troubadour circulation and reception in Catalan culture. This is particularly important, since some Catalan songbooks that transmit troubadour poems are also witnesses to later Catalan poetry. It is considered an unusual compiling choice in songbooks from other troubadour areas and suggests a close relationship between troubadour poetry and

⁷ In a preliminary estimate, about 121 troubadours had some contact with about 25 medieval Catalan courts (as detailed in the *TrobEu* site). Troubadour lyrics and ideology represent a core factor in the culture of the Crown of Aragon during the troubadour period and beyond, one of the defining traits of the patronage by the Catalan monarchy and inherent to the ideal profile of the nobility. This situation resulted in a durable medieval lyric tradition, where poets saw the troubadours as their immediate ancestors. For the details of this continuity, Cabré, Martí & Navàs 2009.

the later Catalan tradition (Cabré, Martí & Navàs 2009: 355–63; Cabré & Martí 2010: 119–26).

Given this situation, other than increasing the Catalan troubadour written corpus with an additional item, which would be already important in itself, the new evidence added by *B^c* could prove very useful when attempting a reconstruction of troubadour circulation in Catalan lands, and its role in the overall field of troubadour studies. All the factors mentioned need to be analysed with regards to this newly discovered written witness in order to complete our picture of troubadour circulation and to nuance or confirm previous assumptions.

According to current data, the earliest fragment that attests to troubadour written circulation in the Crown of Aragon could be *M^b*, which copies six poems in its four extant leaves, but could have constituted an anthology of at least 50 poems. As mentioned above, the study of both the hand and the layout strongly connects the fragment with the royal chancery of King James II, in the 1290s (or no more than two decades later). Although its date presents still some unsolved questions, another candidate to be the earliest witness is songbook *V* (Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Str. App. 11=278), where a Catalan hand copied 170 poems composed by 17 troubadours before the codex travelled to Italy in the mid-fourteenth century, resulting in the addition of more poems by an Italian hand (Zamuner 2003). In the later third of the fourteenth century the de-luxe songbook *S^g* (Barcelona, Biblioteca de Catalunya, 146) includes 127 poems by 10 troubadours, followed by an anthology of 40 poems composed in the fourteenth century. It was probably made under the commission of Count Pere II of Urgell, who might have had access to previously collected materials under his father Count James I, a royal prince (Cabré & Martí 2010: 130–33).

To these thirteenth- and fourteenth-century songbooks that transmit quite substantial troubadour collections, we need to add several fifteenth-century codices that include troubadour poetry among contemporary poems, from the 26 poems by 22 troubadours in songbook *V^{A^g}* (Barcelona, Biblioteca de Catalunya, 7-8) to fragments, *coblas*, or single poems in other songbooks or narrative anthologies, including some mar-

ginal additions made at later stages.⁸ It is worth highlighting, however, that in the late fifteenth century, a lost songbook seems to have still combined a very substantial troubadour anthology with the poems of fourteenth and fifteenth-century Catalan poets (Beltran 2006).

In total, despite some discrepancies in the criteria that lead to the inclusion of some manuscript witnesses and the exclusion of others, there are currently about 50 extant troubadour songbooks, copied between 1250 and 1400, the greatest number originated in the North of Italy, others in France, Occitania, and the Crown of Aragon.⁹ Within this written tradition, the Catalan lyric manuscripts have generally been held as scarce, particularly in comparison with the wealth of Italian troubadour songbooks.¹⁰ Several factors need to be taken into account, from the different nature and distribution of cultural centres to the typology of codices and the likelihood of their loss. A fragment such as *B*^c might help to give context to the circumstances of manuscript loss, as well as providing an example of Catalan typologies and their particularities in this regard. In the Catalan domain, songbook production seems mainly linked to the noble and royal courts, but we should need to pay close attention to their interaction with other centres (including those ecclesiastic), whether in terms of the possible location of *scriptoria*, the identity of patrons and the circles that stimulated poetic production in the first place. While the corpus of written witnesses to Catalan troubadour activity are an important source of information to analyse and characterize an essential aspect of medieval Catalan literature, they are also key to ascertain

⁸ For the reconstruction of *VA*⁹, see Alberní 2006. See Cabré 2018 and Cabré & Martí 2019 for further comment and details of troubadour circulation in the Crown of Aragon.

⁹ We follow the calculation in Asperti (2002: 529–30), who justifies it as follows: “È spesso indicato per i canzonieri trobadorici il numero di oltre 90. In realtà i canzonieri conservati, interamente o come frammenti, sono una cinquantina; i rimanenti sono manoscritti che ospitano, per lo più in forma del tutto avventizia, singoli testi o gruppetti di componimenti.”

¹⁰ See Cabré 2011 for an initial overall assessment of the Catalan lyric tradition, Cabré 2018 for an outline of the main troubadour manuscript witnesses in the Crown of Aragon, and Cabré, Martí & Navàs 2009 for a panorama of later witnesses. *Cançoners DB* provides details on individual lyric manuscripts.

its long-term reception and to study the models and dynamics that constituted the written culture in the Crown of Aragon.

At this very preliminary stage of the research, the most immediately striking aspect of this new fragment is its similarity with the fragment *M^b*. The common traits encompass the hand, date, and overall format, which might prove helpful to suggest a location and a chronological period for *B^c*. Two distinguishing features are also appreciable at first sight and both deserve further reflection: the difference in size and, judging by the extant leaves, the fact that *M^b* only had selected one single poem of each troubadour (albeit its fragmentary condition makes the comparison uncertain). An extremely interesting research direction suggested by the similarities between *B^c* and *M^b* is the relationship between this new fragment and the writing habits and graphic choices at the royal chancery as well as the layout that characterizes documentary practice. Regarding the choice of poems included in *B^c*, the most obvious point of interest concerns the reception of Peire Cardenal in the Crown of Aragon.¹¹ At this stage in our research, we can also highlight the presence of a poem by Guilhem Magret (to whom *M^b* attributes BEdT 392.19), albeit presumably attributed to Peire Cardenal in *B^c*, and the fact that Falquet de Romans is also transmitted by *M^b* (represented by the first poem in this section, BEdT 156.10).

This is only an overview of some of the aspects that deserve a more detailed study, which we are preparing. We are confident that a closer examination of the material make-up and a detailed analysis of the textual aspects will result in an even more interesting picture of this fragment and, most likely, will contribute to better understand the songbook system where it was created.

¹¹ Vatteroni 2013 indicates on several occasions the interest posed by Catalan witnesses and the Catalan reception of Peire Cardenal, including a number of mis-attributions.

Appendix

Figures

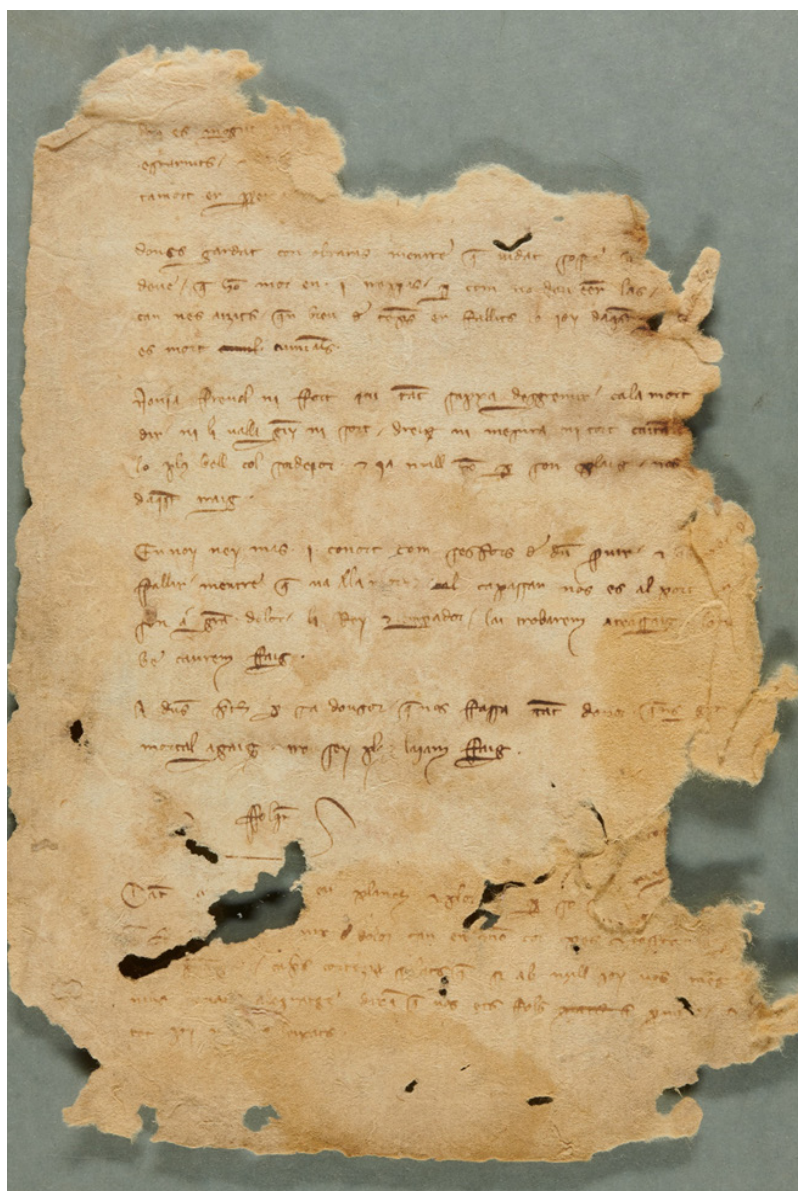


Figure 1. Troubadour fragment B^c (ACB, Miscel·lània, 23/1-12, fol. 13v, the last leaf). Copyright © Catedral de Barcelona.

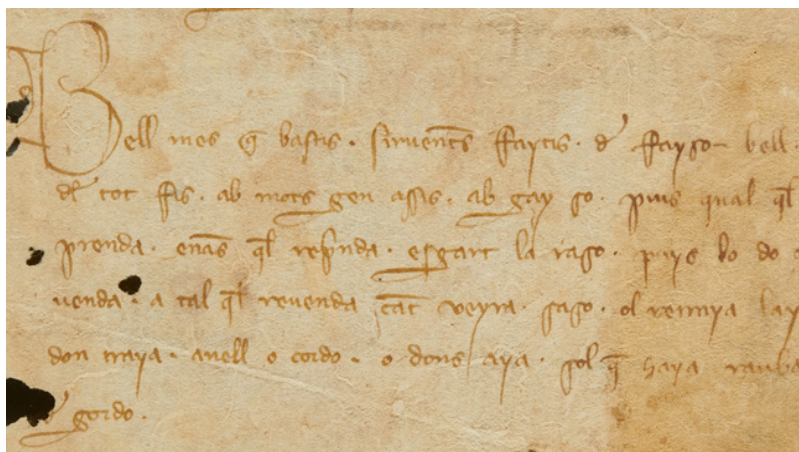


Figure 2. Detail of the main hand, fol. 1v. Copyright © Catedral de Barcelona.

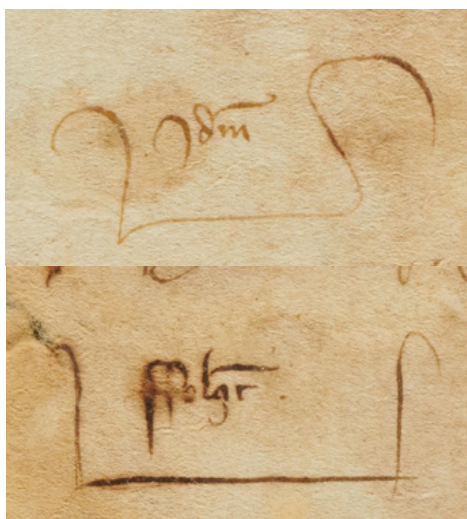


Figure 3. Detail of two rubrics, fols. 8v (above) and 13r (below). Copyright © Catedral de Barcelona.

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