

Biblioteca Academiei Române, Filiala Cluj-Napoca
Universitatea "Babeș-Bolyai" Cluj-Napoca, Centrul CODEX

Adrian Papahagi

A Transylvanian Puzzle

Reconstructing Medieval Culture from Manuscript Fragments

Most manuscripts copied or used in medieval Transylvania perished in natural and human calamities, or simply because liturgical and cultural evolution, and above all the printing revolution made them redundant. Before the awakening of bibliophile and antiquarian instincts, parchment leaves extracted from manuscripts and incunabula were commonly used as maculature. *Felix culpa*: this allowed medieval *fragmenta codicum* to survive in the bindings of early modern books. Almost two hundred such fragments – some of local provenance – have been identified at the Library of the Romanian Academy in Cluj. For the first time in Romania, the FRAGMED project restored, studied, digitised and exhibited some of this precious "evidence preserved by destruction".

Adrian Papahagi is associate professor of Medieval and Early Modern English Studies, and director of the CODEX Centre at the "Babeș-Bolyai" University of Cluj.



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Catalogue of an exhibition held
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8 February – 8 April 2022

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Cluj-Napoca
Presa Universitară Clujeană
2022



ACADEMIA ROMÂNĂ



FRAGMED

UN PUZZLE TRANSILVAN

RECONSTITUIND CULTURA MEDIEVALĂ DIN FRAGMENTE DE CODICE



MINISTERUL CULTURII



Project title:

FRAGMED – A Transylvanian puzzle: reconstructing medieval culture from manuscript fragments

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Project promoter: Romanian Academy, Cluj-Napoca Branch

Project partners: National Unity Museum, Alba Iulia (Romania), Bleraker LearningLab (Norway)

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Value of the non-reimbursable grant (85% SEE Grant and 15% national budget): 615 817.69 lei (128 775.57 euro)

Duration: 24 months

Carried out in: Cluj-Napoca, Alba Iulia (Romania), Oslo (Norway)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/Proiect-Fragmed-reconstituind-cultura-medieval%C4%83-din-fragmente-de-codice-102049364940963

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The EEA Grants represent the contribution of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway towards a green, competitive and inclusive Europe. There are two overall objectives: reduction of economic and social disparities in Europe, and to strengthen bilateral relations between the donor countries and 15 EU countries in Central and Southern Europe and the Baltics. The three donor countries cooperate closely with the EU through the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA). The donors have provided €3.3 billion through consecutive grant schemes between 1994 and 2014. For the period 2014-2021, the EEA Grants amount to €1.55 billion. More details are available on: www.eeagrants.org and www.eeagrants.ro.

RO-CULTURE is implemented in Romania by the Ministry of Culture through the Project Management Unit. The Programme aims at strengthening social and economic development through cultural cooperation, cultural entrepreneurship and cultural heritage management. The total budget amounts to almost 34 million EUR. For more details access: www.ro-cultura.ro

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Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai
Presa Universitară Clujeană
Director: Codruța Săcelean
Str. Hasdeu 51, 400371 Cluj-Napoca, România
Tel./fax: (+40)-264-597.401
E-mail: editura@ubbcluj.ro
<http://www.editura.ubbcluj.ro>

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The **FRAGMED** project, this exhibition and its catalogue were made possible by the cooperation and support of many people and institutions. Bogdan Crăciun, head of special collections at the Academy Library of Cluj supported and promoted my idea of studying and restoring medieval manuscript fragments. For several months in 2017 and 2018, we browsed through the library shelves in search of books containing precious *fragmenta codicum*, and we identified around two hundred such items. We were assisted in this treasure hunt by other librarians, including Ildikó Másody and Horea Furcovici. The initiative received the full support of Sorin Crișan, director of the Library. The team was soon joined by Codruța Cuceu, who accepted to manage the **FRAGMED** project, written in 2019; nothing would have been achieved without her dedication, competence and hard work.

An excellent team of experts led by Alexandru Știrban at the National Unity Museum in Alba Iulia has carried out the restoration of the fragments and of their host books. Creased, cracked, torn and sometimes illegible wrappers became impressive leaves or bifolia thanks to Maria Zgârciu and Maria Cernea, the torn and worn host volumes were rebound handsomely in leather by Marius Anghel, and the fragments were digitised professionally by Monica Druță.

Silvia Tanasă made conservation boxes and folders for the restored books and manuscript fragments.

In order to secure the international visibility of our fragments, I contacted Christoph Flüeler and William Duba, who were running the Fragmentarium project at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland. Thus, we became contributors to the most important project of studying and digitising medieval manuscript fragments worldwide, and the items described in this catalogue have also been published on Fragmentarium.ms.

The search for scattered fragments from the same manuscript (*membra disiecta*) has led me to Alba Iulia, Budapest and Győr. I enjoyed the friendly support of Adrian Cioroianu, director of the National Library of Romania, and of Cristian Mladin, head of the Batthyaneum Library. Tamás Kiss, head of the Diocesan Library, Győr, granted me access to the impressive Oradea Antiphonal. On several occasions, István Monok and Gábor Tóth made me feel welcome at the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest. I collaborated marvellously with Zsuzsa Czagány and Gabriella Gilányi from the Institute of Musicology in Budapest: we published articles together, supported each other with data and manuscript images, and became friends in the process. Xenia Jonica, archivist of the Franciscan Province of Transylvania has also been of assistance during my research.

A dynamic team led by Lavinia Filip produced the exhibition film (Lehel Dobondi) and this catalogue (Angéla Kalló).

My research assistants at the CODEX Centre, Carmen Oanea and Andrei Crișan, animated palaeography workshops for students and pupils during the exhibition. Lucreția Miu produced the parchment that was displayed during the exhibition.

Above all, the **FRAGMED** project was made possible by generous funding made available by the peoples of Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, and administered by the Romanian Ministry of Culture within the Ro-Cultura programme. Our warmest thanks go to the involved institutions and management teams.

A. P.

THE FRAGMED PROJECT: WHY AND HOW?

Most manuscripts produced or used in medieval Transylvania have been lost¹. Less than two hundred medieval manuscripts survive, for the most part in Sibiu, but also scattered all over Romania, and in various European libraries. Roughly two thirds of the circa five hundred Western medieval manuscripts kept in Romanian libraries were acquired at the end of the eighteenth century by the Catholic bishop of Transylvania, Ignatius Batthyány². Almost all medieval codices at the Academy Library of Cluj were purchased by the Romanian scholar Timotei Cipariu in the nineteenth century³. Manuscripts from the medieval diocese of Oradea survive only abroad⁴.

Given the scarcity of medieval manuscripts in our part of the world, every surviving fragment is precious evidence of a lost landscape of literacy and liturgy⁵. In Hungary and Slovakia, scholars have been cataloguing manuscript fragments for a long time. The catalogues of manuscript fragments published by a Hungarian team led over the past four decades by László Mezey, András Vizkelety and Edit Madas⁶, and the catalogues of musical manuscript fragments in Slovakia published single-handedly by Eva Veselovská⁷ have been a source of inspiration. This work has also benefitted from the model of three exhibitions organised in Tübingen, Stuttgart and Fulda⁸, and from the insights of a conference on manuscript fragments held in Ravenna⁹.

In Romania we are treading on virgin territory: **FRAGMED** is the first systematic and comprehensive approach to medieval manuscript fragments in this country. In deciding to detach a series of parchment wrappers from their host books, we took a calculated risk. Most scholars insist that fragments should not be detached systematically, and some argue that they should not be detached at all. One expert considers that such an intervention should be avoided if the fragment is less relevant than the host book, and if it produces irreversible information loss¹⁰. Another scholar stresses the following paradox: detaching a fragment provides information



Fig. 1-2. Cluj, BAR: the storage of Fragm. Cod. Lat. 12 and of its former host volume (U. 63177).

by revealing both sides of a manuscript leaf, but it also destroys information by discarding an early-modern binding. In deciding whether a fragment should be detached, this scholar argues, one should “sacrifice the information considered less important by most scholars”¹¹. For example, if the fragment contains a rare or precious text, or if the side of the fragment pasted to the boards can provide essential information, it may be detached. If it is a banal liturgical fragment, as most are, it is preferable to preserve the binding as it is. In any case, the host book and the fragments in its binding must be regarded as archaeological objects telling a story together. Even if a binding is dismembered, the process and all resulting elements should be documented redundantly¹². At any time, scholars must be able to connect the manuscript fragment, other elements extracted from the binding, such as the cardboard or headbands, and the former host volume.

When we decided to detach fragments, we made sure that the fragment and the host book (for example the paper pastedowns) would incur no text loss. To compensate for the information loss resulting from the separation of the parchment wrapper, the cardboard, and the block of the host book, we made sure to keep elements together whenever possible, or to indicate that a certain fragment is linked to a certain book (figs 1-2).

Unfortunately, in the communist period such standards were unknown. Thus, earlier librarians placed ten detached fragments in a box, without indicating their provenance (fig. 3).

Deciding what fragments to include in the FRAGMED project was relatively easy. During the two years of the financed project, the restoration team in Alba Iulia had the ability to restore twenty-two fragments. This included the ten fragments kept in the aforementioned box, and twelve further items, which needed to be detached. These fragments had to be of local interest, or of international relevance on



Fig. 3. Cluj, BAR. A box containing what are now Fragm. Cod. Lat. 1, 3-10, and 13, prior to their restoration.

account of their age, rarity, language or nature. Fragm. Cod. Lat. 2 (from R. 19) comes from the famous Oradea Antiphonal, as I was able to establish during preliminary research¹³ (showcase 7). Fragm. Cod. Lat. 19-21 (from C. 54660, C. 57795, and MS C. 83) are *membra disiecta* from the gradual of St Michael's church in Cluj, whose main bulk is being kept at the Batthyaneum Library in Alba Iulia under the shelfmark MS I.1 (showcase 8). The wrappers of the two printed books had been connected to the original manuscript in 1970¹⁴, and the third item revealed itself when all the books wrapped in manuscript fragments were grouped in one room.

Fragm. Cod. Lat. 14-15 are *membra disiecta* from the same antiphonal (**showcase 6**). Since the host of one of these fragments was a book by the Jesuit János Szilvási printed in Cluj in 1597 (BMV C. 218), I supposed that the wrapper came from a local manuscript, or at least from a manuscript maculated in our city. Dr Gabriella Gilányi, who saw the fragments, realised that two further leaves from the same manuscript were kept in Budapest. Further research confirmed that this was indeed a Transylvanian book¹⁵. Fragg. Cod. Lat. 26 was born when four unsuspected strips were found in the spine of C. 55090, from which Fragg. Cod. Lat. 15 had been extracted (**showcase 4**). Fragg. Cod. Lat. 22 and 22A were extracted from a second copy of Szilvási's book (BMV C. 219). Fragg. Cod. Lat. 11 displayed an impressive decorated initial, and was chosen for its artistic interest; moreover, it can be argued that the original book was the liturgical Psalter of the Franciscans of Cluj (**showcase 9**).

The remaining four fragments that were detached are of international relevance. Most wrappers mentioned so far come from late-medieval liturgical manuscripts in Latin, and of local interest. Conversely, Fragg. Cod. Lat. 12 was copied in the twelfth century, and transmits a famous chronicle completed by Otto of Freising in 1146-1147. Two cardboard pieces were also recovered from the binding of the host volume, U. 63177, and they tell a fascinating story (**showcase 3**). In retrospect, we feel that the decision to extract the fragment from the binding was justified: not only has all original information been preserved, but much insight has been gained.

The reasons for detaching the *membra disiecta* which are now Fragg. Cod. Lat. 16-18 are self-explanatory to anyone who knows how rare medieval antiphonals written exclusively in German are¹⁶. However, my expectations were exceeded when I was able to put together the pieces of a puzzle, and to reconstitute almost an entire leaf from nine small fragments wrapping the spine of MS C. 404, and the corners of MSS C. 177 and C. 404 (figs 4-5).



Fig.4. Cluj, BAR, MSC. 404.


Fig. 5. Cluj, BAR, Fragg. Cod. Lat. 17.



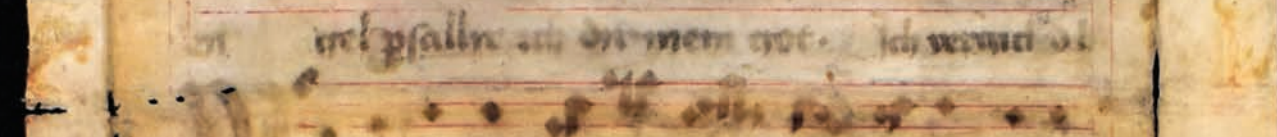
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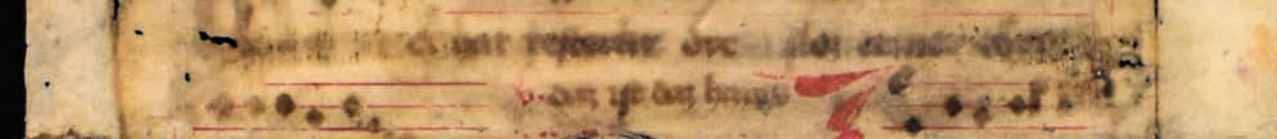
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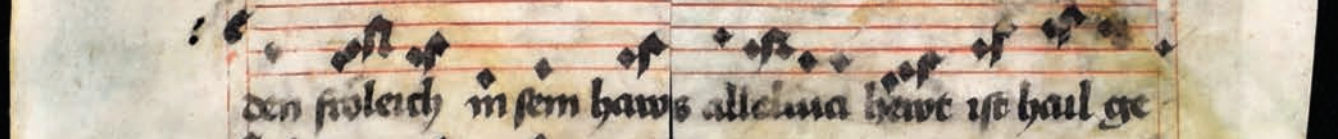


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 sehen dem haws vo...





Once again, no information has been lost, but so much has been gained by putting together the pieces of *Fragm. Cod. Lat. 17* (**showcase 4**). All in all, detaching the fragments was an inspired and useful enterprise.

After the fragments were detached and restored, they received shelfmarks. At the Academy Library of Cluj, "MSS" designates modern manuscripts, and "Cod. Lat." prefixes the shelfmarks of medieval codices. "Fragm. Cod. Lat." thus imposed itself as an appropriate label for the newborn collection of medieval *fragmenta codicum* in Latin script. Since we have only a handful of fragments in German and French, we chose not to create special "Fragm. Cod. Germ." or "Fragm. Cod. Fr." shelfmarks. However, there will be a small "Fragm. Cod. Hebr." collection. *Membra disiecta* from the same manuscript were attributed consecutive numbers.

Once detached, what used to be dirty and torn wrappers became new items in the collection of the Academy Library of Cluj. They now enrich the national heritage, and increase the value of our city's medieval book collections. They have been digitised and published online, and can be studied by the international community¹⁷. In a way, they have been redeemed from the debasement and neglect which triggered and followed their maculation. The medievalist can exult: they are vindicated.

NOTES

¹ Papahagi 2015.

² Papahagi/Dincă/Mărza 2018.

³ Jakó 1967a.

⁴ Jakó 1977, pp. 13-71.

⁵ Baroffio 2002 believes that there may be about 50 000 fragments of liturgical manuscripts in Italian libraries. I estimate the number of all Western medieval manuscript fragments in Romania to about 1000-1500.

⁶ Mezey 1983, Mezey 1989, Vizkelety 1993, Vizkelety 1998, Madas 2006, Vizkelety 2007.

⁷ Veselovská 2008-2019 (5 vols).

⁸ Klöckner 1990; Traub/Miegel 2011; Sorbello Staub 2015.

⁹ Perani/Ruini 2002.

¹⁰ Schlechter 2015, p. 26.

¹¹ Merlani 2002, p. 21.

¹² Schlechter 2015, p. 26.

¹³ Papahagi 2017a.

¹⁴ Szigeti 1970.

¹⁵ Gilányi/Papahagi 2019.

¹⁶ See, for example, Stephan 1998, and *Handschriftencensus*.

¹⁷ <https://fragmentarium.ms/partner-projects/transylvania>.

WHERE CAN MANUSCRIPT FRAGMENTS BE FOUND?

(SHOWCASE 1)

Fragments from medieval manuscripts can be found almost anywhere in more recent manuscripts or printed books. Entire or partial leaves or bifolia can wrap other books completely (fig. 6).

If the binder was careful to place the blank centre of the bifolium or the gutter between two columns of text over the spine (as in fig. 7), the shelved book appears to be wrapped in plain parchment. When browsing through the shelves in search of manuscript fragments, all the books bound in parchment must therefore be examined. In this case, the folding crease and the holes corresponding to sewing stations at the centre of the spine indicate that this is a recycled bifolium rather than plain binding parchment.

Binding books in parchment maculature certainly looks irreverent to us. Early modern binders may have regarded the result as cheap and unsightly; consequently, they sometimes tried to conceal the maculature by wrapping the spine in nicely tooled leather. Looking at the shelves, one notices only the white leather Renaissance binding of this copy of Heinrich Bullinger's commentaries to the Gospel of John (Zurich: Frosch, 1556), and does not suspect that the boards are wrapped in medieval manuscript fragments (fig. 8). In passing, one may deplore the fact that a modern shelfmark label was glued over the medieval fragment on the front cover of this book.



Fig. 6. Cluj, BAR, C. 54769.

Capitulum
Iudic.

16. 11.

16. 11.

Sicut dicitur in libro prophetarum
quia glumasti ro. et q's eius nos semp i cen
dicoe p'fice et ordone defendi **Ezechiel p.**
Similitudo uultu animalium facies hois et
facies leonis adextis ipoz q'tuor facies
at bonis a sinistis ipoz q'tuor facies at bonis
a sinistis ipoz quatuor **Et facies aqile de super**
ipoz q'tuor i facies eoz i pene eoz extete de
sup. Dne pene singlor iugebat i due tige
bat corpa eoz. Et unuq'q' cora facie sua
ambulabat ubi erat impet' sps illuc g'die
bat. Illa. v. S'ges ihs d'ns m' stas i medio disci
puloz dicit pax nob' m'xtu. In illo t. d. t. d. s.
Faculus e' camelu' p' forame' acus t'nsire
q' dicit' m'rie i regnu' celoz **Q' magis m'**
mirabat' dicit' ad semetipos. Et q's p't
saluus fieri i m'tues illos ihs ait. Apd ho
mies i'possibile e' s' no' apd d'm. Oia em. n
possibilia st' apd d'm. Et cepit ei peti' dice
Ecce nos dimulim' oia. et secuti sum' t'.
Respondens ihs ait. Amc dico uob' nemo e' q'

Fig. 7. Cluj, BAR, C. 56305.

Fig. 8. Cluj, BAR, U. 56810.

The aspect was not the main concern of students who needed to consolidate their notebooks, and parchment maculature was the cheapest available material. In the seventeenth and early-eighteenth century, the students of the Jesuit college of Cluj frequently used manuscript fragments in bindings. Cardboard notebooks displaying manuscript fragments in their half- and quarter-bindings are common in the collections of the Academy Library (fig. 9).

Some cases can be more spectacular. In MS C. 379 (fig. 10) fragments from Hebrew and Latin manuscripts were used to wrap the corners and the spine, but also as headband, tailband and inside the spine, pasted to the book block.

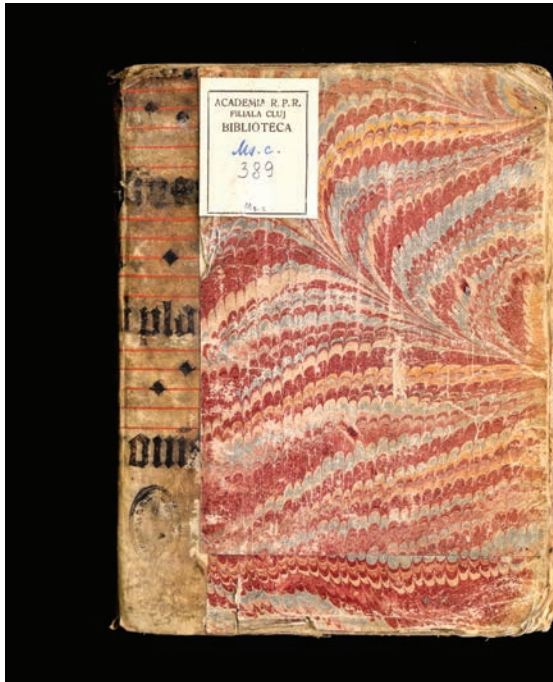


Fig. 9. Cluj, BAR, MSC. 389.



Fig. 10. Cluj, BAR, MSC. 379.





The question arises whether the youths who studied abroad bound their notebooks there with foreign material, or used fragments from Transylvanian manuscripts when they returned to Cluj. MSS C. 177, 404 (fig. 4) and 409 were copied at the Jesuit Academy of Graz, and thus the *membra disiecta* of an antiphonal in German extracted from their bindings must be Styrian rather than Transylvanian (Fragm. Cod. Lat. 16-17; showcase 4).

At times, manuscript strips are glued to the back of the quires, and are not visible unless the spine is broken or lies bare. In fig. 11 one can see two fragments from the calendar of a missal or breviary. In many cases, maculated fragments are pasted upside-down, to indicate that they need not be read – which is somewhat superfluous when strips are hidden under the spine wrapping. The spine of the book shown in fig. 12 was lost at an early date, since the nineteenth-century label was pasted directly onto the back of the quires, below two strips from a medieval manuscript.

Fig. 11. Cluj, BAR, CII. 167.



Fig. 12. Cluj, BAR, C. 53146.



Fig. 13. Cluj, BAR, Inc.S. 118.

Actually, many tiny manuscript fragments will forever remain hidden in the spines of intact early-modern bindings unless restoration works reveal them. What is now *Fragm. Cod. Lat. 15* was detached from the stately book *C. 55090*, and four strips from a *missale notatum* were discovered glued to the spine. Thus was born *Fragm. Cod. Lat. 26* (*catalogue nr 16*), an unplanned but welcome addition to our collection.

Medieval manuscript fragments can be encountered as flyleaves and pastedowns in incunabula and in other medieval manuscripts, whereas in modern books they are generally used as wrappers. In an incunabulum transferred from Satu Mare to the Academy Library of Cluj, a manuscript fragment is used to consolidate the spine, and is still visible as some sort of guard or partial flyleaf (*fig. 13*).

In another incunabulum, a part of the beautiful fourteenth-century bifolium functioning as pastedown was detached, leaving a mirror imprint on the wooden board (*fig. 14*). One can also notice the parchment strips linking the board to the spine, which would otherwise have remained hidden.

Cod. Lat. 8 is a fifteenth-century paper manuscript copied in Italy. In the nineteenth century, the manuscript was rebound, and the pastedowns were detached from the former wooden boards. Fortunately, they were not thrown away or glued to the new cardboard panels, but were kept as flyleaves. This allows one to read both sides of a precious eleventh-century copy of the *Opus imperfectum in Matthaem* in Beneventan script – the only sample of this South-Italian writing in Romanian collections¹. As can be seen, the writing on the side that had been glued to the wooden board is less readable (*fig. 15*).

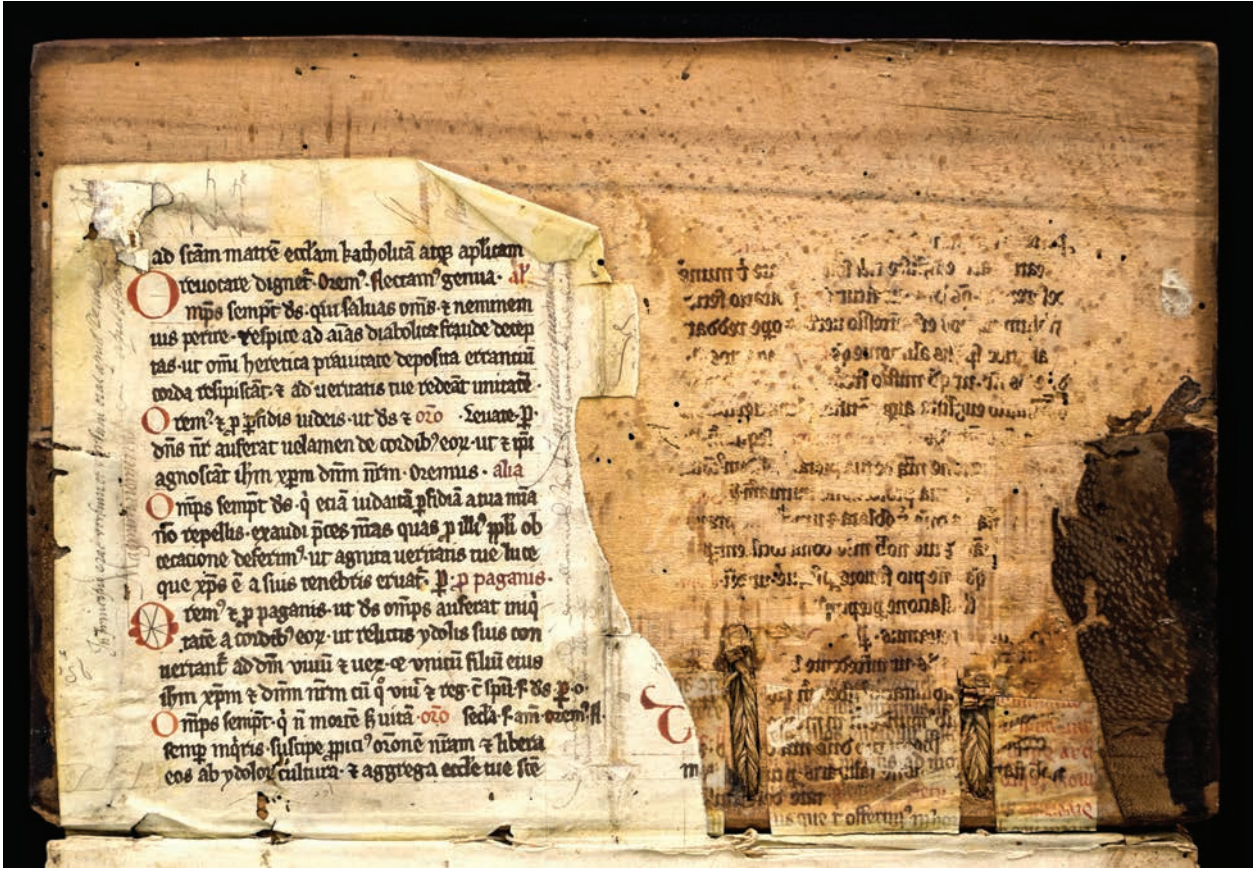


Fig. 14. Cluj, BAR, Inc. C. 59.

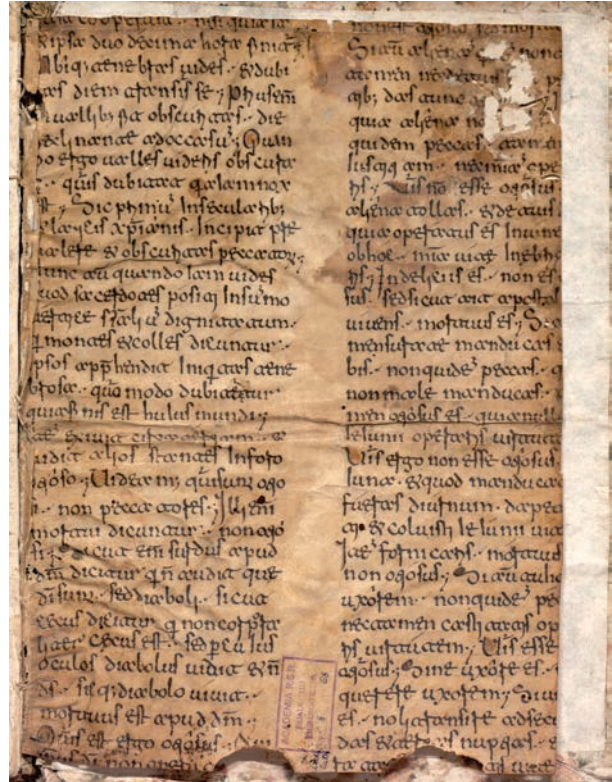
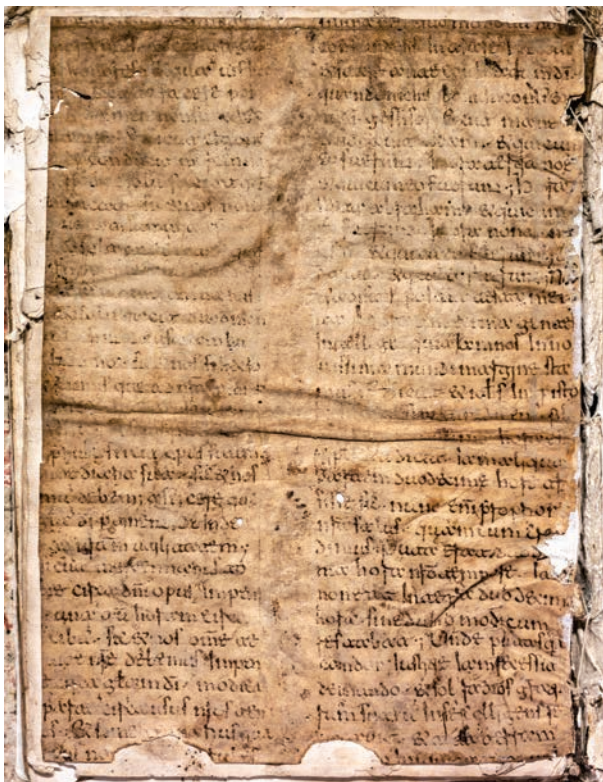


Fig. 15. Cluj, BAR, Cod. Lat. 8, f. 72r/v.

Sometimes, the pastedown was lost or stolen, and only the imprint on the wooden board has survived (fig. 16). Such is the case of a famous thirteenth-century fragment of the *Nibelungenlied* from the Batthyaneum Library of Alba Iulia. The pastedowns were photographed and published in 1898, but vanished after being detached from the host manuscript (MS III.70)².

Thin parchment strips were sometimes sewn at the centre of quires in paper manuscripts, in order to consolidate them. In Cod. Lat. 5, a fifteenth-century Italian manuscript, one can find strips from one or more bifolia of a fine thirteenth-century scholastic manuscript (fig. 17).

Manuscript fragments can also be found in various objects, such as shoes, lamps, liturgical vestments and furniture. For example, a bifolium containing Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl's *De dilectione Domini* was extracted from the mitre of Dominic Kázmér (1668-1716), vicar of the bishop of Transylvania (fig. 18)³.

Leaves from paper manuscripts can be glued together to make cardboard, but no such examples have been found in our collections.

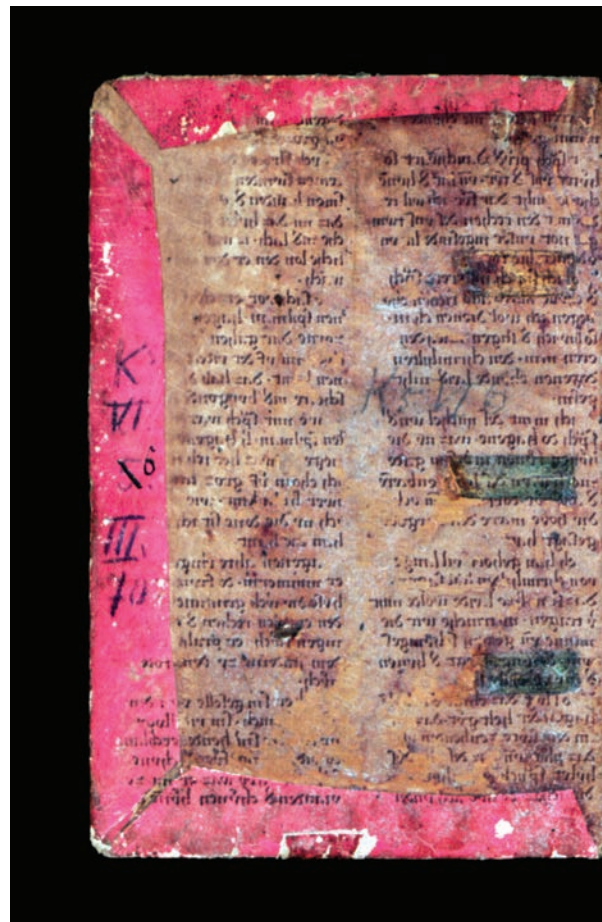


Fig. 16. Alba Iulia, Biblioteca Batthyaneum, MS III.70.



Fig. 17. Cluj, BAR, Cod. Lat. 5.

Fig. 18. Cluj, Biblioteca Centrală Universitară, MS 224, f. 1r.



NOTES

- ¹ Papahagi 2016.
- ² Alter 1898; Szentiványi 1958, p. 378; Wittstock 1995, pp. 79-82; Wittstock/Sienerth 1997, p. 101; *Handschriftencensus*, nr 2582; Papahagi/Dincă/Mârza 2018, nr 254.
- ³ Jakó 1967, p. 80; Kelemen 2010, pp. 19-20; Papahagi/Dincă/Mârza 2018, nr 359.

