

VITA SANCTI CUDBERCTI

The anonymous *Vita sancti Cudbercti* [BHL 2019] was composed at Lindisfarne, in the decade following the translation of Bishop Cuthbert († 687) in 698, and before the death of the Northumbrian king Aldfrith in 705¹. The Lindisfarne *vita* is thus the earliest written account of a saint whose cult soon spread throughout England and subsequently to many centres on the Continent². The anonymous *Vita S. Cudbercti* is very much a local production: its narrative bristles with names of the people St Cuthbert encountered and the places he visited; and for this reason it is an extremely valuable witness to early Northumbrian history. But as the fame of the saint spread beyond Northumbria, first to churches elsewhere in England, and then, with the eighth-century English missions to the Continent, to many continental centres, it soon became evident that the local topographical detail in which the anonymous *vita* abounds was of little interest to an audience outside Northumbria, with the result that Bede undertook to revise the anonymous *vita* in the years around 720, by eliminating nearly all the local detail and placing the saint and his cult in a more universal framework. Inevitably, given Bede's scholarly reputation, his prose *Vita S. Cudbercti* [BHL 2021] quickly eclipsed the anonymous Lindisfarne *vita*, with the result that Bede's *vita* survives in large numbers of manuscripts, but the Lindisfarne *vita* in very few.

The Lindisfarne *vita* was first edited by the Bollandists in 1668 from two late manuscripts³. The more recent edition by Bertram Colgrave⁴, published in 1940, was based on the seven manuscripts known at that time⁵:

1. These two events are narrated in the text at iv.14 (Colgrave [ed.], pp. 130-2) and iii.6 (Colgrave [ed.], p. 104, cfr. *infra* n. 4) respectively.

2. Bede's two *vitae* of St Cuthbert – the metrical *vita* [BHL 2020] and the later prose *vita* [BHL 2021] – are both based directly on the anonymous Lindisfarne *vita*.

3. *Acta SS.*, Martii III, Antwerp 1668, pp. 117-24, based on two manuscripts (O₁ and T). Subsequent editions by Joseph Stevenson (1841) and John Allen Giles (1843-4), in their individual collected editions of the works of Bede, simply reproduce the Bollandists' edition.

4. B. Colgrave (ed.), *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert*, Cambridge 1940, pp. 59-139.

5. Six of these manuscripts (omitting only BL, Harley 2800) are listed in the Bollandists' online database (BHLms), based on their published catalogues of hagiographical manuscripts.

- A Arras, Médiathèque de l'Abbaye Saint-Vaast 1029 (812) (St Augustine's, Canterbury, ff. 1r-26v [fragmentary], s. X/XI; later provenance Bath and then Arras)⁶
- B Bruxelles, KBR (olim Bibliothèque Royale «Albert I^{er}») 207-8 (3132), ff. 158r-163r (s. XIII¹)
- H London, British Library, Harley 2800, ff. 248r-251v (s. XII/XIII; Arnstein)
- O₁ Saint-Omer, Bibliothèque de l'Agglomération du Pays de Saint-Omer (olim Bibliothèque municipale) 267, ff. 67v-83v (s. X²; Saint-Bertin)⁷
- O₂ Saint-Omer, Bibliothèque de l'Agglomération du Pays de Saint-Omer (olim Bibliothèque municipale) 715, ff. 164r-168v (s. XII; Saint-Bertin)
- P Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 5289, ff. 55v, 49v-52v, 56r-58v (s. XIV; S. France)
- T Trier, Stadtbibliothek, Hs. 1151/453 4^o (422), ff. 135r-142r (ca. 1235 A.D.; St. Maximin, Trier)

Of these seven manuscripts, the earliest, and the only one written in England, is A. For those parts of the *Vita S. Cudbercti* for which it is extant, A offers a reliable, but not impeccable, text (cfr. below)⁸; but its lacunose state precludes its use as a base text. For this reason, Colgrave based his edition on the next oldest manuscript (O₁)⁹.

More recently, another manuscript of the anonymous *Vita S. Cudbercti* was discovered in Munich by the late Donald Bullough¹⁰:

- M München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 15817, ff. 100v-119v (s. IX^{2/4}; Salzburg)

6. On the manuscript, cfr. H. Gneuss - M. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A Bibliographical Handlist of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100*, Toronto 2014, no. 781, as well as the fuller discussion in M. Winterbottom - M. Lapidge (edd.), *The Early Lives of St Dunstan*, Oxford 2012, pp. LXXIX-LXXXI. Because of the damaged state of the manuscript, the text of the anonymous *Vita S. Cudbercti* is fragmentary, lacking text from Part II, c. 8 [n. 57] to Part IV, c. 1 [n. 15], that is, it lacks the entirety of Part III, possibly representing the loss of an entire quire of eight.

7. For the dating, cfr. B. Bischoff, *Katalog der festländischen Handschriften des neunten Jahrhunderts (mit Ausnahme der wisigotischen)*, cur. B. Ebersperger, vol. III, Wiesbaden 2014, p. 286 [unnumbered item].

8. In addition to the erroneous α -class readings discussed below, A preserves numerous nonsensical spellings: e.g. *cognomibatur* (for *cognominatur*: p. 68 n. 31), *habicula* (for *habitacla*: p. 70 n. 17), etc.

9. Colgrave (ed.), p. 45: «O₁ has been chosen as the basis of the text of the Anonymous Life, because it is the oldest MS. Had A been complete it would probably have been a more satisfactory MS to use as a basis».

10. D. Bullough, *A Neglected Early-Ninth-Century Manuscript of the Lindisfarne Vita S. Cuthberti*, «Anglo-Saxon England», 27 (1998), pp. 105-37. For the date and origin of the manuscript, see Bischoff, *Katalog der festländischen Handschriften* cit., vol. II, Wiesbaden 2004, no. 3286.

This recently-discovered Munich manuscript (**M**) is the earliest surviving manuscript of the *Vita S. Cudberti*; its witness helps to illuminate the transmitted text in various small, but important, ways.

Colgrave rightly saw that the surviving manuscripts divide into two classes¹¹, which I shall call α (AO_1O_2) and β (**BHPT**). The recently-identified witness, **M**, clearly belongs to class β , but because it is the earliest surviving manuscript, it often shares readings with the three α -class manuscripts¹², rather than with the much later (and scribally altered) β -class manuscripts, as a few examples will illustrate.

- a) i. 3 [p. 64 n. 23]¹³:

Tunc congregati sunt in campi planitie
planitie] *sic BHPT*, planitiem AO_1

In Classical Latin, *congregare in* is construed with the accusative¹⁴; here the reading *planitiem* (acc.) in AO_1 is confirmed by *planitiem* in **M**.

- b) i. 6 [p. 70 nn. 44-5]

panis calidus et caro inuolutus in panne linea diligenter ... emissus est
panne] *sic AO₁*, panno **BHPT**; linea] *sic AO₁*, lineo **BHPT**

The reading *panne* in AO_1 is clearly an error (there is no such word as **pannes*; and *pannus* is masc.); the correct reading *panno* in the β -manuscripts is confirmed by *panno* in **M**. The masc. noun *pannus* needs to be qualified by a masc. adjective: whence *linea* in AO_1 is an error for *lineo* in the β -manuscripts, which once again is confirmed by *lineo* in **M**.

- c) ii. 2 [p. 78 nn. 15-6]:

non erat in diuersorio nisi tamen micas pro benedictione panis
benedictione panis] **BHPT**, benedicto pane AO_1O_2

11. Colgrave (ed., p. 43) designated the two classes as X (AO_1O_2) and Y (**BH**), with the two remaining manuscripts (**PT**) standing «midway between these two groups». It is more conventional among editors of Latin texts to designate hypothetical hyparchetypes by lower-case Greek letters, as I have done.

12. Donald Bullough provides detailed collation of **M** as an appendix to his article (*A Neglected Early-Ninth-Century Manuscript* cit., pp. 131-7).

13. Lemmata are cited by page number of Colgrave's edition, together with the corresponding footnote number (Colgrave's *apparatus criticus* is keyed to the Latin text by means of footnote numbers).

14. Cfr. *TbLL* IV, coll. 290-4, esp. 292 (*additur quo vel ubi congregentur*), listing numerous examples of constructions such as (*congregare*) *in arcem, in ecclesiam, in locum, in unum*, etc.

Once again the reading *benedicto pane* in the α -class manuscripts is confirmed by *benedicto pane* in **M**.

- d) ii. 4 [p. 84 n. 6]
tres partes delfini carnis quasi humano manu cum cultella sectas
humano] *sic* O_1 BHMPT, humana A; cultella] *sic* AO_1 , cultello BHPT

The first of these readings as printed by Colgrave (*humano*) from O_1 and apparently supported by **BHPT** and **M**, is an obvious error, because *manus* is fem., not masc.: in this case **A** alone preserves the correct reading. But in the case of *cultella*, the reading preserved by AO_1 is mistaken: there is no such word as **cultella*. The form is correctly *cultellus* (masc.), so that in this case the reading *cultello* preserved in the β -class manuscripts, and confirmed by **M**, should be restored to the text: an example of a place where the β -tradition preserves the correct reading where the α -class manuscripts are in error.

- e) iii. 3 [p. 98 n. 16]
Samsonem quoque de maxillis asini sitientem
maxillis] *sic* O_1 (A *vacat*), maxilla BHPT

Here too the reading of the β -class manuscripts (*maxilla*) is clearly correct, and is confirmed once again by **M** (as well as by the biblical passage to which the Lindisfarne author is alluding, namely Iud 15, 19).

Colgrave's edition of the Lindisfarne *Vita S. Cudbercti* cannot be described as a "critical" edition in any meaningful sense of the word. It is a dutiful transcription of a single manuscript, O_1 , to which are appended variants in the other six manuscripts known to Colgrave. When the scribe of O_1 writes nonsense, Colgrave dutifully reproduces the nonsense in his edition¹⁵. The *apparatus* – it cannot be called an *apparatus criticus*, because it reveals no sign of judgement at any point – is simply a list of variant readings in the six remaining manuscripts collated by Colgrave, and is cluttered with trivial orthographical variants (e.g. *quedam* for *quaedam*, *spacium* for

15. As may be seen in examples (b) and (d), above; but note also the text printed by Colgrave on pp. 80 n. 2 (*inobstinata* is not a Latin word), 84 n. 25 (*supra* is an obvious error for *supradictis*: cfr. ii. 5 below, first line), 88 n. 2 (*fantas* is not Latin: read *fantasias*?), 88 nn. 31-2 (*ignem praecedit* for *ex igne procedit* A), 88 n. 69 (*reuersi sunt*, for *reuersus est* or *reuertitur*), 92 n. 59 (*effugata demone* for *effugato demone*), 92 n. 61 (*peruenerunt* for *peruenit*), 94 n. 14 (*mirabilia ... quam ... conatus sum scribere*, for *mirabilia ... quae*), 94 n. 15 (*fidelitatem* for *infidelitatem*), 94 n. 24 (*coacte* for *coactus*), etc.

spatium, etc.) and notes about the punctuation in O_1 (e.g. *capital letter in O_1 vel sim.*). The recent discovery of the Munich manuscript (**M**) helps to put the contribution of the β -tradition in perspective, and shows that a text more accurate than Colgrave's could be constructed by weighing readings of the α -tradition against those from the β -tradition. (The relationship of manuscripts within the two branches of the tradition can be represented by the stemma printed in the accompanying Appendix, below.) But there remain many places in the text where neither tradition offers a true reading, and where a future editor will be obliged to resort to conjecture.

Before undertaking such a (highly desirable) new edition, the prospective editor would be well advised to study carefully the Latin of the anonymous *Vita S. Cudberti*, even as it is purveyed by Colgrave's edition, in order to acquire some familiarity with the way this idiosyncratic author expresses himself. One of the glaring deficiencies of Colgrave's edition is that he nowhere in his Introduction discusses the language of the text, and there is not a single linguistic note anywhere in his accompanying Commentary (pp. 310-40). The anonymous author has various stylistic peculiarities, such as the habit of stringing together present participles, sometimes without connectives, with the result that such constructions inevitably confused later scribes and have at many points resulted in scribal nonsense. Consider the following example from Part III (ed. Colgrave, p. 102), describing the behaviour of two ravens who sought forgiveness from St. Cuthbert after he had banished them for stealing thatch from the roof of the monks' dwelling (I reproduce the text as it is printed by Colgrave, together with his misleading punctuation):

Illis igitur nec requies, nec mora patriam secundum preceptum eius deserentibus, post triduum alter e duobus reuertens ante pedes hominis Dei fodienti iam ei terram supra sulcum expansis alis, et inclinato capite, sedens et merens humili uoce ueniam indulgentie deposcens, crocitare cepit.

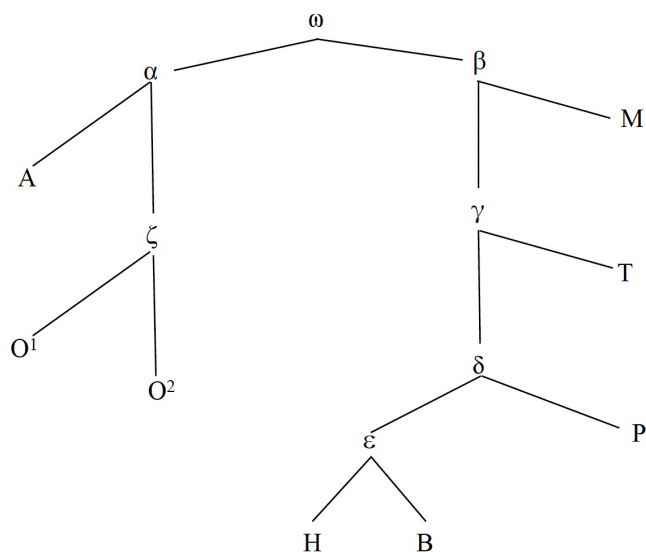
In this sentence, apparently, the phrase *nec requies nec mora* stands outside the grammar of the first clause (*illis ... patriam ... deserentibus*) and is adverbial, qualifying *deserentibus*. The subject of the sentence is *alter* in the following clause, qualified by the present participles *reuertens*, *sedens*, *merens*, and *deposcens*, is completed by the finite verb *cepit* at the end of the sentence. But what of the present participle *fodienti*? – is the apparent dative form *fodienti* an error for *fodientis* (qualifying *hominis*)? Or is *fodienti ... ei terram* the dative complement of a verb which has been lost during transmission, (say) *accedens* («the

raven approached him [the man of God] as he was digging up the earth»)? In which case the various participles need to be distinguished by punctuation and their relationship clarified by means of connectives: *alter e duobus, reuertens ante pedes hominis Dei, <accedens> fodienti iam ei terram <et> supra sulcum expansis alis et inclinato capite sedens, et merens humili uoce <et> ueniam indulgentiae deposcens, crocitare cepit* («one of the two [ravens], returning to the feet of the man of God, approaching him as he was digging up the earth <and> sitting on the furrow with its wings spread out and its head bowed down, and moaning with a humble voice <and> seeking the mercy of forgiveness, began to croak»).

In this example – and it is a typical specimen of the Lindisfarne author's Latin – I have supplied connectives in order to clarify the author's suspected meaning; but there can be no certainty that he himself had supplied them and that they have been lost in transmission. For these reasons, the constitution of the text is not a simple matter of choosing between variant readings offered by the α - and β -recensions: critical judgement (so woefully lacking in Colgrave's edition) and conjectural emendation will be essential.

Appendix

Relationship of the manuscripts of the *Vita S. Cudberti*



MICHAEL LAPIDGE

