

## Kirkjubæjarbók: Codex AM 429 12mo

The codex AM 429 12mo is an all-female legendary similar to, for example, Osbern Bokenham's (ca. 1393-ca. 1463) *Legends of Holy Women*,<sup>1</sup> the German *Passienbüchlein von den vier Hauptjungfrauen* and *Das Buch von den heiligen Mägden und Frauen*,<sup>2</sup> and in some respects the Danish *De hellige kvinder*,<sup>3</sup> but in Old Norse-Icelandic literature it is the only extant legendary devoted exclusively to legends of female saints.<sup>4</sup>

AM 429 12mo is a small, stout volume now consisting of 84 leaves, which are divided into 11 gatherings. The vellum is undoubtedly calfskin. The pages, which measure 11.5 x 8.8 cm., are regular in size, though the outer margin of fols. 60, 82, and 84 have been trimmed. The spine shows evidence of altogether eight cord sewings, from which it may be concluded that the codex was once bound. Presumably, the original cover was a leather cover. The codex has been rebound, probably during Árni Magnússon's time. The present cover consists of soft, grey cardboard plates. Fol. 1, which is part of the first gathering, is a pastedown and appears to be contemporaneous with the present binding.

There are 16-18 (occasionally 14, 15, and 19) lines of writing to the single-columned pages (except where a gap is left at the end of a section). At least four hands may be distinguished. Hand I is responsible for fols. 2r-13r, 15r-39v, 42, 40r6-44v5, and 44v9-84v. Hand II appears only twice and writing only a few lines, that is, fols. 39v12-40r5 and 44v6-8. It distinguishes itself from hand I primarily by its use of *æ* and *ǣ*. Hand III, which is found on fol. 13v (a Latin prayer to St Catherine of Alexandria) is altogether different from hands I and II. Its main characteristics as opposed to hands I and II are its single-storey *a* and triangular-shaped descender of *g*. Hand IV appears on fol. 59v (a Latin verse about and prayer to St Dorothy). It is quite similar to hand I, except that its long *s* does not descend below the line.

<sup>1</sup> Bokenham's legendary is preserved in a single manuscript, London, BL Arundel 327, written in Cambridge in 1447. Sheila Delany, trans., *A Legend of Holy Women: Osbern Bokenham, Legends of Holy Women* (Notre Dame and London, 1992), who appears not to be familiar with the German *Passienbüchlein* (see n. 2 below), claims that "Bokenham's *Legend* is unique in the history of hagiography, for it is the first all-female hagiography in any language" (xxvii).

<sup>2</sup> Sibylle Jefferis and Konrad Kunze, "Passienbüchlein von den vier Hauptjungfrauen," in Kurt Rüh, ed., *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon*, 2nd rev. ed. (Berlin and New York, 1989), cols. 325-328, esp. col. 326, date the *Passienbüchlein* to the first half of the fourteenth century, although the manuscripts and imprints preserving the work are considerably younger; the oldest manuscript is Uppsala, University Library C 497 from ca. 1400. Werner Williams-Krapp, *Die deutschen und niederländischen Legendare des Mittelalters: Studien zu ihrer Überlieferungs-, Text- und Wirkungsgeschichte* (Tübingen, 1986), p. 30, dates *Das Buch von den heiligen Mägden und Frauen*, extant in Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, cod. Licht. 69, to around 1460.

<sup>3</sup> *De hellige kvinder* is extant in Stockholm, Royal Library K 4 from the mid-fifteenth century. It is comprised of fourteen items, representing various genres of legends. The first two items, "om joachim oc anna oc maria" and "om vorherre födelssæ" make up the *Evangelium Pseudo-Matthaei*; the third item "Aff vorherre pyne" gives the story of the passion based primarily on Matthew; the fourth item is *Transitus Mariae*; and the fifth is *Visio Pauli*. These New Testament (apocryphal and canonical) narratives are followed by legends of seven female virgin saints (Margaret of Antioch, Christina, Cecilia, Catherine of Alexandria, Lucy, Agnes, and Sophia and her daughters). The thirteenth item is the legend of St Marina. The legendary concludes fragmentarily with miracles attributed to the Virgin Mary.

<sup>4</sup> AM 238 fol. I (ca. 1300) and fol. II (ca. 1300-1350) may be remnants of legendaries of female saints. The former manuscript now consists of only two leaves containing fragments of the legends of St Mary of Egypt and St Agnes. The latter manuscript consists of six leaves. The first four contain fragments of the legends of St Andrew the apostle and St Basil; the last two fragments of the legends of St Catherine of Alexandria, St Agnes, and St Agatha. Because of the different size of the last two leaves, Gustav Morgenstern, "Notizen," *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 11 (1895): 95-97, esp. 97, suggested that originally they did not belong with the first four, and it may be that they are the remaining part of a legendary devoted to female saints.

Hand I changes somewhat in the course of the manuscript. Among other things, the scribe begins on fol. 61r to make use of small capital *n* (*N*) to denote the geminate and starts on fol. 61v to regularly furnish *j* with a cross-bar, while the occasional use of small capital *s* (*S*) with a superior dot is abandoned after fol. 59r. The differences suggest that the manuscript was written over an extended period of time, during which the scribe's habits changed, but the possibility that more scribes were involved cannot be excluded.

Kr. Kålund, Jón Þorkelsson, and Didrik Arup Seip date the manuscript to around 1500.<sup>5</sup> C.R. Unger dates it to about half a century earlier.<sup>6</sup> His view is shared by Konráð Gíslason, who maintains that it is from approximately the same time as AM 621 4to, which he dates to the mid-fifteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Jón Helgason, however, comments, that Konráð Gíslason's dating is "hardly correct."<sup>8</sup>

The manuscript contains a prose legend of St. Margaret of Antioch (fol. 2r-13r), a Latin prayer to St Catherine of Alexandria (fol. 13v), a prose legend of St Catherine of Alexandria (fol. 15r-27r), a prose and a poetic legend of St Cecilia (fol. 29r-45v; 46r-47v), a prose and a poetic legend of St Dorothy (fol. 49r-57r; 57r-59r), a Latin verse about and prayer to St Dorothy (fol. 59v), a prose legend of St Agnes (fol. 61r-69r), a prose legend of St Agatha (fol. 69r-76r), a prose legend of St Barbara (fol. 76r-80v), and a prose legend of Sts Fides, Spes, and Caritas (fol. 81r-84v). All the texts are preserved in their entirety with the exception of the legend of St Catherine and the legend of Sts Fides, Spes, and Caritas. In the former, there is a lacuna between fols. 18v and 19r. It appears that a gathering consisting of 10 leaves is missing. Of the latter, the conclusion, corresponding to approximately 4 leaves of text, is missing. Considering the fact that fol. 84v is quite worn, the 4 leaves would seem to have been lost at an early date, if indeed the codex ever contained the complete text of the legend of Sts Fides, Spes and Caritas. It seems reasonable to assume that in its original form the codex consisted of 94 or 98 leaves.

Fol. 1r is blank; it was no doubt intended as a title page. Fols. 14r, 27v, 28r, 48r, and 60r were originally blank. On fols. 14r and 27v-28r, the alphabet is written in a seventeenth-century hand, along with the formulaic prayer indicating the sign of the cross. On fol. 27v is also written that "etta er bok Gudrunar ad leika sier ad 'ui hun rifnar ei 'o ostiltt sie med fared," which suggests that the manuscript was, at least at one point, in private possession. The scribbles on fol. 48r are most likely those of a child (perhaps Guðrún) practicing letters of the alphabet and are quite similar to those at the bottom of fol. 13v. At the bottom of fol. 59v, some lines from Hallgrímur Pétursson's *Passíusálmur* (that is, stanza 1 of hymn 44) are found, also in a seventeenth-century hand. The first couple of lines of stanza 1 appear again on fol. 60r, which includes also all of stanza 2 and the first line of stanza 3. Stanza 1 and the first line of stanza 2 are also found on the upper half of fol. 81r.

The originally blank space on fol. 81r was most likely intended for an illumination of Sts Fides, Spes, and Caritas in color or black, for the volume is copiously illuminated. The colors used are red and blue. Full-page, colored illuminations of Sts Margaret, Catherine, Cecilia, and Dorothy are found on fols. 1v, 14v, 28v, and 48v, respectively, and on fol. 60v there is a full-page illustration of St Agnes in black. All the illuminations are framed, and in appearance the five saints are virtually identical: they all have the same facial features and are

<sup>5</sup> Kr. Kålund, *Katalog over Den arnamagnæanske Håndskriftsamling*, 2 vols. (Copenhagen, 1889-1894), vol. 2, p. 480. Jón Þorkelsson, *Om Digtingen på Island i det 15. og 16. Arhundrede* (Copenhagen, 1888), p. 88. Didrik Arup Seip, *Palaeografi. B. Norge og Island*, ed. Johs. Brøndum Nielsen, *Nordisk kultur* 28.B (Stockholm, Oslo, and Copenhagen, 1954), p. 137.

<sup>6</sup> C.R. Unger, ed., *Heilagra manna sögur*, 2 vols. (Christiania [Oslo], 1877), vol. 1, p. xii.

<sup>7</sup> Konráð Gíslason, ed., *Fire og fyrretve for en stor deel forhen utrykte prøver af oldnordisk sprog og literatur* (Copenhagen, 1860), p. xi.

<sup>8</sup> Jón Helgason, ed. *Islærck mibaldakvæði. Isländske digte fra senmiddelalderen*, vol. 2 (Copenhagen, 1938), p. 341.

depicted with shoulder-length, wavy hair, and they are all richly dressed and wearing a crown (with the exception of St Cecilia). What distinguishes the saints are their attributes: Margaret with the staff of a cross, Catherine with the wheel, Cecilia with a book, Dorothy with a basket, and Agatha with a lamb. (Evidently, the illuminator confused St Agatha with St Agnes, whose characteristic iconographic emblem is a lamb; St Agatha's emblem is usually a dish with her breasts.) Smaller illustrations of a similar kind appear also on fols. 69r (St Agatha, in black) and 76r (St Barbara, in black). St Agatha is depicted with a torch in her left hand, a book in her right, and a lamb at her feet; and St Barbara with a sword in her left hand, a book in her right, and with what looks like a cactus, but what is probably meant to be a tower, in the background. Moreover, colored illuminations (black and red) are found within the text of the legend of St Margaret on fols. 7r, 8r, 10r, and 12v, depicting scenes from her passion. In addition, there are ornamental drawings in black of beasts (or parts of them) at the bottom of fols. 35r, 52r, 52v, and 57r, and similar beasts appear in the form of initials on fols. 49r (*J*; red) and 76r (*Á* black); the latter is almost identical to the beast on fol. 35r. Red chapter titles and initials (blue initials are found on fols. 6r and 29r) appear regularly in the first two-thirds of the manuscript. Some of the initials in red or black only are quite ornate. The last red initial is found on fol. 51r.

On a note accompanying the codex, Árni Magnússon gives the information that he received it from "Páll á Flókastaðum" and lists its contents. This Páll is most likely Páll Ámundason (ca. 1645-1716), son of Ámundi Þormóðsson at Skógar and Solveig Árnadóttir. Páll Ámundason was the administrator of the convent land of Kirkjubæjar from 1681 to 1708 or 1709 and died at Flókastaðir in Fljótshlíð, where his son-in-law, Björn Thorlacius, served as minister. Páll Ámundason's association with the codex and the nature of its contents make it reasonable to assume that originally it belonged to the Kirkjubæjar convent and remained there at least until shortly after the mid-sixteenth century, when the Icelandic monasteries were dissolved and all church property was confiscated by order of the Danish King Christian III. The Kirkjubæjar convent was leased to the minister Einar Árnason in 1554,<sup>9</sup> and what happened to its valuables remains unknown. It is possible that its treasures ended up in Copenhagen like those of the cathedral church at Hólar and the monasteries of Munkaþverá, Möðruvellir, and Þingeyrar.<sup>10</sup> The convent's collection of books and manuscripts, of which, according to the inventory of 1397,<sup>11</sup> it had a fair number, not only service books, but also twenty books in Latin and Norse ("xx latinv bækur og norrœnv"), was most likely dispersed. Eventually, many volumes were no doubt lost due to improper care; others were probably discarded or destroyed. The physical attraction of AM 429 12mo may explain why the codex was preserved, and its sturdiness (cf. the note on fol. 27v) why it withstood almost intact two centuries of wear and tear before it found its home in Árni Magnússon's collection in Copenhagen.

It is impossible to determine if the legends in AM 429 12mo are copied from a legendary or from individual lives circulating in Iceland. The latter seems likely, for although the codex is unified thematically in that the saints included are all virgin martyr saints, the arrangement of the legends is not *per circulum anni* and seems quite arbitrary.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Diplomatarium Islandicum. Íslenskt fornbréfasafn*. 16 vols. (Copenhagen and Reykjavík, 1857-1952), vol. 12, pp. 683-684. Hereafter abbreviated *DI*.

<sup>10</sup> *DI* 12: 328-330.

<sup>11</sup> *DI* 4: 238-239.

<sup>12</sup> The feast days of the saints are as follows: Margaret (20 July), Catherine (25 November), Cecilia (22 November), Dorothy (6 February), Agnes (21 January), Agatha (5 February), Barbara (4 December), and Fides, Spes, and Caritas (1 August).

There is nothing to suggest that any of the Icelandic legends contained in AM 429 12mo are original translations. All the legends are extant in manuscripts dating from before 1500 with the exception of the poetic and prose legends of St Dorothy, the latter of which is preserved in only AM 429 12mo. The Latin source for the legend has been demonstrated to be "a text which was in the main identical with *BHL* 2324, but which differed in regard to certain details, some of which are now found in *BHL* 2325d."<sup>13</sup> A number of errors in the text of the legend and the occasional omission of a word suggest that the prose text is a copy. AM 429 12mo is also the oldest manuscript preserving the poetic legend of St. Dorothy; the other manuscripts containing the so-called *Dorotheudiktur* or parts thereof date from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In Jón Helgason's view, the poem is recorded from oral tradition: "Digtet er uden tvivl nedskrevet efter mundtlig tradition."<sup>14</sup> He also notes that the order of the stanzas in the poem as represented by the extant manuscripts is erroneous, and if the description of St Dorothy's *passio* is to follow the prose legend and its Latin source, a rearrangement of the stanzas would be necessary. Whether AM 429 12mo is a copy of a now-lost manuscript or presents the original recording of the poem from oral tradition cannot be ascertained.

The legend of St Margaret is extant in numerous manuscripts ranging in date from ca. 1300 to ca. 1550. A thorough examination of all these manuscripts remains to be undertaken. Widding, Bekker-Nielsen, and Shook distinguish among three main versions of the legend and regard AM 428a 12mo (ca. 1300-1400) and AM 429 12mo as representatives of the so-called "Margrétar saga II."<sup>15</sup> They identify the source as *BHL* 5303, but note that the introductory section is omitted in the translation. Comparison with the Latin shows that AM 429 12mo is not a copy of AM 428 12mo, for in several places AM 429 12mo has superior readings or preserves text not included in AM 428a 12mo.

The legend of St Catherine is preserved in its entirety only in Stockholm, Royal Library Perg. 2 fol. (ca. 1425-1445); in AM 233a fol. (ca. 1350-1375) the beginning is missing, and in AM 429 12mo a middle portion is lost due to a lacuna in the manuscript (see above). Fragments of the legend are found in AM 238 fol. II (ca. 1300-1350) and AM 667 4to II (ca. 1400-1500). According to Peter Foote, the beginning and end of the Icelandic legend are derived from a text of the *Passio auct. Pseudo-Athanasio* (*BHL* 1659) with only the first half of the epilogue (*BHL* 1660) included.<sup>16</sup> Foote notes that many passages within the text suggest the same source, but observes that it is also possible to find matter and wording in the Icelandic legend which have parallels only in other versions of the legend, variously *BHL* 1657, 1663, and 1667. Of the five manuscripts, Stock. Perg. 2 fol. and AM 429 12mo appear closest to the Latin. On a number of occasions, AM 429 12mo preserves more accurate and, presumably, more original readings than Stock. Perg. 2 fol. The legend of St Catherine in AM 429 12mo thus cannot be derived from Stock. Perg. 2 fol.; rather, the two texts must go back to a common source.

AM 429 12mo is the only manuscript preserving the legend of St Cecilia in its entirety, although it does not include the appended account of the two miracles that took place in Iceland. This account is found only in Stock. Perg. 2 fol., which, like AM 235 fol. (ca. 1400), contains only a portion of the legend. The source is, according to Foote, a form of the longer recension of the *passio* (*BHL* 1495), though the introductory chapters 1-2 have been

<sup>13</sup> Kirsten Wolf, ed., *The Icelandic Legend of Saint Dorothy*. Studies and Texts 130 (Toronto, 1998), p. 76.

<sup>14</sup> Jón Helgason, ed., *Íslensk málaldarkvæði*, vol. 1, p. 359.

<sup>15</sup> Ole Widding, Hans Bekker-Nielsen, and L.K. Shook, "The Lives of the Saints in Old Norse Prose: A Handlist." *Mediaeval Studies* 25 (1963): 294-337, esp. 320.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Foote, ed., *Lives of Saints. Perg. fol. nr. 2 in the Royal Library, Stockholm*. Early Icelandic Manuscripts in Facsimile 4 (Copenhagen, 1962), p. 26.

omitted in the Icelandic legend.<sup>17</sup> In his edition of the legend, Unger based the text on Stock. Perg. 2 fol. and AM 235 fol. and used AM 429 12mo only to fill in the portion of text not covered by Stock. Perg. 2 fol. and AM 235 fol. Clearly, however, the text in AM 429 12mo is not derived from either of the two manuscripts, for often AM 429 12mo has superior readings or preserves text not included in Stock. Perg. 2 fol. and AM 235 fol. AM 429 12mo is also the oldest extant manuscript of the poetic legend of St Cecilia. The other manuscript containing the so-called *Ceciliudiktur* is AM 721 4to (ca. 1500-1550). In addition, there are copies of the two texts in late manuscripts. AM 429 12mo and AM 721 4to appear to be independently derived from a common exemplar, the date of which remains unknown. The poem differs from the prose text but appears to be related to the fourteenth-century *Heilagra meyja drápa*, stanzas 18-21 of which concern St Cecilia. Foote draws attention to the fact that both poems state that St Cecilia stood six days in the fire before her execution.<sup>18</sup> He also observes that *Ceciliudiktur* mentions the music at St Cecilia's wedding-feast, a detail not included in the prose legend.

Three versions of the legend of St Agnes are extant. The text of AM 429 12mo belongs to what Widding, Bekker-Nielsen, and Shook call "Agnesar saga meyar I,"<sup>19</sup> and it is the only manuscript which preserves the legend in its entirety. In Stock. Perg. 2 fol., the end is missing, and the fragments AM 235 fol., AM 238 fol. I and II cover only small sections of the text. The source of the legend is, according to Foote, the *passio* by Pseudo-Ambrose (*BHL* 156).<sup>20</sup> though Foote notes that the Icelandic text is slightly abridged and that the epilogue is omitted. Stock. Perg. 2 fol. has the better text, but on occasion AM 429 12mo preserves readings closer to the Latin or text omitted in Stock. Perg. 2 fol. For the portion of the legend not preserved in Stock. Perg. 2 fol., Unger based the text on AM 429 12mo, though in some instances the fragments AM 238 fol. I and II have superior readings.

Altogether five different versions of the legend of St Agatha have been preserved. The source of the various versions is, according to Foote, a form of the *passio*, *BHL* 133.<sup>21</sup> Stock. Perg. 2 fol. and AM 429 12mo represent what Unger calls "Agathu saga meyar I."<sup>22</sup> Stock. Perg. 2 fol. clearly preserves the better text, but in a number of instances AM 429 12mo has more accurate and, presumably, more original readings. Foote believes that the text of AM 429 12mo "was clearly copied from an archaic exemplar, one that might reasonably be assigned to c. 1200 and ultimately it would seem of Norwegian origin."

The legend of St Barbara is extant also in Stock. Perg. 2 fol. The Latin source is the version of the *passio* listed under *BHL* Suppl. 913a.<sup>23</sup> Stock. Perg. 2 fol. preserves the better text, but on a number of occasions the text of AM 429 12mo is closer to the Latin than that of Stock. Perg. 2 fol. Accordingly, both manuscripts would seem to be independently derived from the same exemplar, AM 429 12mo probably at several removes.

The legend of Sts. Fides, Spes, and Caritas is preserved in full only in AM 235 fol. In Stock. Perg. 2 fol., the first half is missing, and in AM 233a fol. (ca. 1350-1375), the latter half is missing. According to Foote, the Latin source is a form of *BHL* 2971 (cf. *BHL* Suppl., pp. 124-125, no. 3c); he notes, however, that the incipit is like that noted for *BHL* Suppl. 2968b.<sup>24</sup> AM 429 12mo shares some characteristics with AM 233a fol. as opposed to AM 235

<sup>17</sup> Foote, ed., *Lives of Saints*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>18</sup> Foote, ed., *Lives of Saints*, p. 27.

<sup>19</sup> Widding, Bekker-Nielsen, and Shook, "The Lives of the Saints," p. 298.

<sup>20</sup> Foote, ed., *Lives of Saints*, p. 27.

<sup>21</sup> Foote, ed., *Lives of Saints*, p. 27.

<sup>22</sup> Unger, ed., *Heilagra manna sögur*, vol. 1, pp. viii and 1.

<sup>23</sup> Foote, ed., *Lives of Saints*, p. 26. Kirsten Wolf, ed., *The Old Norse-Icelandic Legend of Saint Barbara*. Studies and Texts 134 (Toronto, 2000), p. 106.

<sup>24</sup> Foote, ed., *Lives of Saints*, p. 28.

fol., and on occasion the two manuscripts preserve missing or more accurate text than AM 235 fol. Generally, however, the text of the legend in AM 233a fol. appears to have undergone more revision than the texts in AM 235 fol., Stock. Perg. 2 fol., and AM 429 12mo.

The Latin verse about St Dorothy in AM 429 12mo is found also in AM 418 12mo, a Danish nun's prayer book from ca. 1500, but a connection between the two manuscripts seems unlikely. The Latin prayer to St Dorothy is not known from other Old Norse, Old Danish, or Old Swedish manuscripts, but it resembles the prayer prefacing the legend of St Dorothy as represented by *BHL* 2325d.<sup>25</sup> The Latin prayer to St Catherine is not preserved in other manuscripts, and its source has not been identified.

Considering the somewhat specialized content of AM 429 12mo, there can be little doubt that the codex was written for use by the nuns in the Kirkjubær convent. Indeed, several of the saints, whose legends are included in AM 429 12mo, appear to have been especially venerated by the nuns. It is known that the convent owned images of Sts Agnes, Catherine, and Cecilia.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, on becoming abbess of the content in 1344, Jörunn Hauksdóttir took the name Agnes,<sup>27</sup> and the name of Agatha Helgadóttir, abbess of Kirkjubær from 1293-1342, may also be a religious name. Guðný Helgadóttir, abbess of Staður ca. 1332-ca. 1368, appears to have taken the name Kristín on becoming abbess, and Þóra Finnsdóttir, abbess of Staður 1437-1461, seems to have taken the name Barbara. In fact, the saints celebrated in AM 429 12mo appear to have been among the most popular female saints in Iceland, with the exception of Sts Dorothy and Fides, Spes, and Caritas.<sup>28</sup>

However, the fact that the codex was probably written for the convent does not necessarily imply that it has its place of origin there. It is not unlikely that the legendary was compiled in the Augustinian monastery of Þykkvibær located only 35 km. southwest of the convent and donated to or purchased by the convent. Certainly, two of the abbots, Brandr Jónsson (1247-1262; d. 1264) and Runólfur Sigmundarson (1264-1307; d. 1307), are known to have engaged in literary activity. The latter is also said to be the one who asked Grímr Hólmsteinsson (d. 1298), priest at Kirkjubær, to compile a legend of John the Baptist. Moreover, the poems *Harmsól*, *Jónsdrápa*, and *Lilja* are all believed to have been composed by clerics at Þykkvibær. *Harmsól* and *Jónsdrápa* have been credited to Gamli, a canon in the monastery in the late twelfth century, and *Lilja* has been attributed to the monk Eysteinn Ásgrímsson (d. 1361). If the codex originates at Kirkjubær, it is reasonable to assume that it was written by the convent's male household staff, which would have included priests and possibly chaplains or vicars. As noted above, four hands may be distinguished, which may well reflect the number of the convent's male clerical household staff. It is not known how many priests were associated with the Kirkjubær convent around 1500; *Svinfellinga saga* mentions three priests as being at Kirkjubær in 1252 and makes reference also to a deacon.<sup>29</sup> The possibility that the nuns themselves held the quill is remote, for there is in medieval Iceland no trace of women occupying themselves with the copying of manuscripts. Obviously, it is unsafe to argue from silence that the nun did not copy manuscripts, but it is equally unsafe to argue that they did. If at all the nuns in the Kirkjubær convent were involved

<sup>25</sup> Wolf, ed., *The Icelandic Legend of Saint Dorothy*, p. 62. It also resembles the second prayer appended to the legend of St Dorothy in Lambeth Palace 432, ed. Carl Horstmann, "Prosalegenden," *Anglia* 3 (1880), pp. 293-360, esp. p. 328.

<sup>26</sup> *DI* 2: 781, 4:238, 8:5.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *Skálholtsannáll sub anno* 1344 (Gustav Storm, ed., *Islandske Annaler indtil 1578* [Christiania (Oslo), 1888], p. 210.

<sup>28</sup> St Dorothy figures only rarely in the Icelandic liturgical and historical sources, and evidence of a cult devoted to her is meagre. There is no evidence of a cult devoted to Sts Fides, Spes, and Caritas, and, like St Dorothy, they are not found in the majority of the extant Icelandic calendars.

<sup>29</sup> Jón Jóhannesson, Magnús Finnþogason, and Kristján Eldjárn, ed., *Sturlunga saga*, 2 vols. (Reykjavík, 1946), vol. 2, pp. 99 and 93.

in the production of the legendary, it would have been illuminating it, and since their skills in embroidery<sup>30</sup> and possibly other crafts<sup>31</sup> are mentioned in the sources, this possibility cannot be excluded.

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<sup>30</sup> The inventory of the Kirkjubæjar convent's possessions made in 1397 made at the request of Bishop Vilchin Henriksson shows that its wealth in embroideries and tapestries was considerable. Evidently, the bishop was impressed with the quality of the nun's work, for in *Lögmannsamtíll* it is related *sub anno* 1405 that he arranged for stately wall hangings to be made in Kirkjubæjar for all the walls in the large parlor in Skálholt and that he financed the work himself.

<sup>31</sup> Björn Th. Björnsson, "Myndlist á síðmiðöldum," in Sigurður Línal, ed., *Saga Íslands* 5 (Reykjavík, 1990), pp. 287-349, esp. p. 330, draws attention to the nickname "hin haga" (the handy) of the nun Guðný of Kirkjubæjar (d. 1386), but thinks that it may refer to her skills in carving.