

# LES ENLUMINURES

PARIS CHICAGO NEW YORK

[www.lesenluminures.com](http://www.lesenluminures.com)

## *Koning Voldemars Log: Sellanske Loug* (King Valdemar's Zealand law)

In Danish and Latin, manuscript on paper

Denmark, Stege (Møn), August 24, 1560 (dated); contemporary texts added at least until 1612

325 folios on paper, watermark: a small flower with four petals (unidentified), modern foliation in pencil, 1-325, lacking two leaves (collation i<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>10</sup> iii<sup>6</sup> iv<sup>10</sup> v<sup>6</sup> vi<sup>10</sup> vii<sup>6</sup> viii<sup>10</sup> ix<sup>6</sup> x<sup>10</sup> xi<sup>6</sup> xii<sup>10</sup> xiii<sup>6</sup> xiv<sup>10</sup> xv<sup>6</sup> xvi<sup>10</sup> xvii<sup>6</sup> xviii<sup>10</sup> xix<sup>6</sup> xx<sup>10</sup> xxi<sup>6</sup> xxii<sup>10</sup> xxiii<sup>6</sup> xxiv<sup>10</sup> xxv<sup>6</sup> xxvi<sup>10</sup> xxvii<sup>6</sup> xxviii<sup>10</sup> xxix<sup>6</sup> xxx<sup>10</sup> xxxi<sup>6</sup> xxxii<sup>10</sup> xxxiii<sup>6</sup> xxxiv<sup>10</sup> xxxv<sup>6</sup> xxxvi<sup>10</sup> [-2, lacking one leaf after f. 279, possibly with loss of text] xxxvii<sup>6</sup> xxxviii<sup>10</sup> xxxix<sup>6</sup> [-4, lacking one leaf after f. 304, possibly with loss of text] xl-xli<sup>8</sup> xlii<sup>4</sup> [the pastedown is the last leaf of quire]), no catchwords, frame ruled in hard-point, pricked holes in each corner (justification 162 x 97 mm.), written in brown ink in semi-cursive script on c. 27-28 long lines, contemporary and later sections in semi-cursive and cursive scripts, running titles in the upper margin, chapter headings underlined in red ink, capitals in the beginning of chapters at times touched in red ink, chapter numbers, original marginal notes and some titles in red ink, tears in the margins of ff. 47, 48, 249, water stain in the upper inner corner throughout the manuscript, other minor stains, in overall excellent condition. In its ORIGINAL SIXTEENTH-CENTURY BINDING of brown calf over wooden boards, covers blind-tooled and stamped with a very fine frame design, in the middle a panel formed of three foliage columns, first frame with medallions enclosing fine profile heads representing the Roman poet Virgil, the Trojan hero Aeneas (whom Virgil treated in his Aeneid), and other characters in Greco-Roman mythology, the medallions alternate with foliage arranged within rings, second frame decorated with small, individual flowers scattered sparsely, third frame with medallions enclosing profiles of mythological figures against a background of foliage and groups of small balls, fourth and outer frame composed of fillets, spine with three raised bands, on the spine was pasted a small book label (the number on it no longer legible), originally two pairs of clasps and catches, now lost, paper pastedowns, leather very worn and partly detached on the spine and covers, the fine blind-tooled decoration survives in large parts and binding in overall good condition. Dimensions 240 x 181 mm.

This fascinating manuscript of important provenance contains the provincial law of Zealand, one of the earliest attestations of laws in Scandinavia, providing an idea of how a legal society in medieval and premodern Denmark worked. Dated and localized, the volume also contains legal documents relating to Copenhagen and its citizens. In excellent condition, the manuscript survives in its original fine binding decorated medallions of heads of ancient heros. The manuscript is of interest especially to social and legal history, as well as the history of Danish orthography, phonology, morphology, lexicology, syntax, and style. We have not traced any copies of this manuscript in North American collections.

## PROVENANCE

1. The colophon on f. 1v, written by the scribe of the main text, states that the manuscript belonged to a Jørgen L... (?), "slotsfoged" (steward of the castle) at S... (?), and that it was written in Stege on the island of Møn on the day of St Bartholomew, 24 August, in 1560: "Oc hørev erlig oc fornūmistiges manudtt Jørgenn Laffues...(?) tüll Slotzfogedt (Slotsfoged) paa Steh..b (?) (Stenstrup?). Szom screffuenn er wdi Stege paa Møenn (Møn) anno domini mdlx [1560] Sancta Bartholomei dag."

An inscription above the colophon, shaped in the form of a cone, states the contents of the manuscript: "wdi thrune Bog finder thu thru Sülandske Log beskreffuen (beskrevet, described) wdi Zwennde (tvende, two) Logbøger oc hin Logbog wdi trennde smaa bøger befallhett huerr mett synn taffle." This translates as, "the law of Zealand described (written) in two books and the other law book in three small (short) books, each furnished with its own table (of chapters)." (We are grateful to Synnøve Midtbø Myking of the Royal Library of Denmark for her help with the provenance.)

More research is required to identify the steward, for whom the manuscript was made, as well as the castle, with whose governance the king had entrusted him.

2. In addition to the main text, the manuscript includes legal texts relating to Copenhagen and its citizens. New texts were added to the manuscript at least until 1612, as shown by the list of events concerning the kingdom on ff. 319-322. The dates that are attached to the other texts (some of which predate 1560) appear to refer to the years in which these legal texts were issued rather than copied to the manuscript.
3. In the collections of the Juel family at Valdemar's Castle on the island of Tåsinge in Denmark until 2023, when it was sold with TM 1317. The Juel family took possession of this castle in 1678, and there is every reason to believe that the manuscript remained there for the last three hundred and fifty years.

## TEXT

ff. 1-197v, f. 1, [titlepage], "Koning Voldemars Log."; [added in different script], "Sellanske Loug" (Zealand's law); [original script], "Lex est defuncta, indicis cum potest (?) manus uncta"; "colophon" [f. 1v], "wdi thrune Bog finder thu thru Sülandske Log beskreffuen wdi Zwennde Logbøger oc hin Logbog wdi trennde smaa bøger befallhett huerr mett synn taffle"; "Oc hørev erlig oc fornümistiges manudtt Jørgenn Laffues...(?) tüll Slotzfogedt (Slotsfoged) paa Steh..b (?). Szom ... er wdi Stege paa Møenn anno domini mdlx [1560] Sancta Bartholomei dag."; "Angilium meum a domino"; [f. 2r-v, preliminary poem(?)], incipit, "Vogle mærcklüg auticth oc glosu i logenn. Enn märk sølf er en lødi märk..." (?); [ff. 3-5, prologue], incipit, "fortalem. prologus. Mett log stall..."; [ff. 5v-6, list of chapters for the first book; f. 6, text, beginning with a chapter on inheritance], *Om arf .i.*, incipit, "Fader oc moder ære Szøn oc daather næst att ærsrue. Szøn tüll füld lott oc daather tüll halsf loott (tr. A son and daughter are nearest to inherit after their father and mother, the son a full lot and the daughter half a lot) ... her endes Sielandtzs Logbogh. Soli deo honor et gloria. Amen";

*Koning Voldemars Log: Sellanske Loug* (King Valdemar's Zealand law), edited by Erik Kroman in 1941, translated into English in Tamm and Vogt 2016, pp. 115-152 (the translation is based on Copenhagen, Arnamagnæan Institute, MS AM 455 12mo, copied by Johannes the Jute at the Cistercian abbey of Sorø in Zealand c. 1300, available online, see [Online Resources](#)).

ff. 198-201v, incipit, "Handfestning – Eller – Baartd Reettenn. Handfæstning eller gardts zætt ..."; [f. 202r-v, blank];

Handshake (swear while holding hands); see [Online Resources](#).

ff. 203-243, [Market town rights issued by King Hans (r. 1481-1513)], incipit, "Koning Hans giftnen. Dannemark Rigis ... Kiøbsted Retther ..."; [ff. 242v-244v, blank];

ff. 245-267v, [Recess dated 1547 issued by King Christian III (r. 1534-1559), concerning Copenhagen], incipit, "Receszenn F. Tsrinde partser. 1547. Wy Christian Med Gudtz Naade, Danmarckis, Suergis, Norgis, Wendiss och Gottes koning ... stad Københaffun (tr. We, Christian, by the grace of God, King of Denmark, Sweden and Norway, the Wends and the Goths ... city Copenhagen ...) ..."; [Followed by a table of chapters on ff. 266v-267v; f. 268r-v, blank];

ff. 269-293v, [Market town rights issued by King Christopher I (r. 1252-1259) concerning the citizens and congregation in Copenhagen], incipit, "Kong Christoffers Kiøbsted Reet. Wy Christian Med Gudtz Naade, Danmarckis, Suergis, Norgis, Wendiss och Gottes koning ... borgir och Meninghed i Kjøbenhaffun (tr., We, Christopher, by the grace of God, King of Denmark, Sweden and Norway, the Wends and the Goths ... citizens and congregation in Copenhagen ...), ..."; [Followed by a table of chapters (117 in total) on ff. 290v-293v];

ff. 294-297, Register of the king's privileges;

ff. 297v-302, [Listings of land ownership in the diocese of Copenhagen, beginning with the lands of the church], *Kjøbenhaffus Stifts Ordinandt*, incipit, "Om kirkens och andre Jorde ...";

ff. 302v-304v, incipit, "For Ordning..." [dated 13 December 1552 and concerning the Copenhagen castle, "Kjøbenhaffus Slot"];

ff. 305-311v, Inventories (?); [ff. 312-318v, blank];

ff. 319-322, Listing royal events between 1361 and 1612;

f. 322v, Family tree with the births of the first four children of James VI of Scotland (r. 1567-1625) and I of England and Ireland (r. 1603-1625) and Anne of Denmark: Henry, Prince of Wales, Elisabeth, Margaret, and Charles (future Charles I of England); [ff. 323-324v, blank];

f. 325, [A 5-line note], incipit, "Anno 1554...Landskrona (?) ..."; (perhaps about the Landskrona castle built by King Christian III in 1549-1559?);

f. 325v, [Short inscriptions ending the book], "Angilium meum a domino."; "Alting er forgengelig (everything is perishable) Sudts ord warer ... (God's word endures...)"; [4-line prayer asking for a successful reign for Frederick (II, King of Denmark and Norway, r. 1555-1588)], incipit, "Adde quaterdenos quingentos mille ... fridericus ... precor tanti sint illi exordia regnii crescat et in regem ...".

Medieval Denmark consisted of three major legal provinces, Scania, Zealand, and Jutland, each divided into a number of districts, *hæreth* (Tamm and Vogt, 2016, p. 4). King Valdemar's law of Zealand, contained in this manuscript, is one of the four principal medieval Danish laws, all written in Danish around 1200. Most manuscripts of these laws date from after 1300, and none of them survive in the original copy. The other three laws were the Law of Scania, King Erik's

law of Zealand (partly a supplement to Valdemar's law), and the Law of Jutland (a copy of which is *Les Enluminures*, TM 1317). Each district had a royal official, *unbuthsman* (or *bryte*, bailiff), to ensure the king received payment for labor, fines and other dues. The provincial laws were only abolished when they were partially incorporated into the Danish national law in 1683.

The oldest manuscripts of this law do not include the name Valdemar, and the text is not formally linked to the royal chancery. However, the likely date of the composition in the 1220s suggests that the attribution to King Valdemar II (r. 1202-1241), found in later surviving copies, is genuine (cf. Tamm and Vogt 2016, p. 111-112). The oldest surviving manuscripts date from the end of the thirteenth century. Ditlev Tamm and Helle Vogt report sixty-eight manuscripts of Valdemar's law between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries (no list is provided; there are six additional manuscripts copied by eighteenth-century researchers; cf. Tamm and Vogt 2016, p. 113). The manuscripts of this text can be divided into two groups, the earlier and later redactions, with the later including two additional chapters on slaves and on theft. The Valdemar's law of Zealand was based on the Law of Scania and the Book of Succession and Crime, the latter a law possibly concerning the entire kingdom, written in 1170 (Tamm and Vogt 2016, p. 112).

King Valdemar's Zealand law begins with concerns about inheritance and continues to explain the law in the cases of illness and disability, whether caused by accident or intent. There are separate chapters for the loss of eyes, ears, nose, lips, teeth, tongue, hands and fingers, and feet. If, for instance, "a man's ear has been cut off or chopped off or beaten off completely, then he shall pay half a man's compensation for it. But if it so happens that something is left of the ear, then a man shall pay a quarter of a man's compensation for it, because it can be covered with hair." (cf. Tamm and Vogt 2016, p. 128). The following chapters include cases of wounding by striking, with separate chapters for the instrument used, such as a club, stone, hand, staff, or bridle. A chapter is dedicated to a man who pulls another by the hair. Then follows chapters on homicide, adultery, gang crime, kidnap, illegitimate children, roads, selling and owning land, slaves, and theft.

Our manuscript is especially precious, because the text of Valdemar's law copied here is precisely dated to 1560, and in addition, a number of other legal documents, relating to Copenhagen, were also copied in our manuscript. More research is required to understand fully their historic value and to evaluate the relationship of the text contained here to the early printed editions. Erik's Law of Zealand, which postdates Valdemar's by several decades was first published by Gotfred of Ghene in 1505, reprinted in 1576, but it is unclear whether this edition included either Valdemar's Law or the Copenhagen municipal edicts, which would make our manuscript even more valuable as a research tool.

## LITERATURE

Brøndum-Nielsen, J., S. Aakjær and E. Kroman eds. *Danmarks gamle Landskabslove med Kirkelovene*, 8 vols in 11, Copenhagen, 1933-1954.

Jørgensen, P. J. *Dansk retshistorie*, 2nd edition, Copenhagen, 1947.

Kroman, E., ed. *Valdemars Sjællandske Lov*, in: *Danmarks gamle Landskabslove med Kirkelovene*, vols 7-8, gen. eds. J. Brøndum-Nielsen and P. J. Jørgensen (Copenhagen, 1933–1961, 8 vols), Copenhagen, 1942.

Tamm, D. and H. Vogt, *The Danish Medieval Laws: the Laws of Scania, Zealand and Jutland*, London and New York, 2016.

Riis, T. *Kongen og hans mænd: Danmarks politiske rigsinstitutioner ca. 1100-1332*, Copenhagen, 2018.

Thorsen, P. G. *Valdemars sællandske Lov og Absalons sællandske Kirkelov*, vol. 13 in the series *Nordiske Oldskrifter*, Copenhagen, 1852.

Uldaler, N. and G. Wellejus. *Gammeldansk læsebog*, Copenhagen, 1968.

### ONLINE RESOURCES

Copenhagen, Arnamagnæan Institute, ms. AM 455 12mo:  
[https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/en/AM12-0455/1?iabr=on#page/Fremra+spjald+\(v\)/mode/2up](https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/en/AM12-0455/1?iabr=on#page/Fremra+spjald+(v)/mode/2up)

Håndfæstning, 1282-1660:  
<https://danmarkshistorien.dk/vis/materiale/haandfaestning>

TM 1316