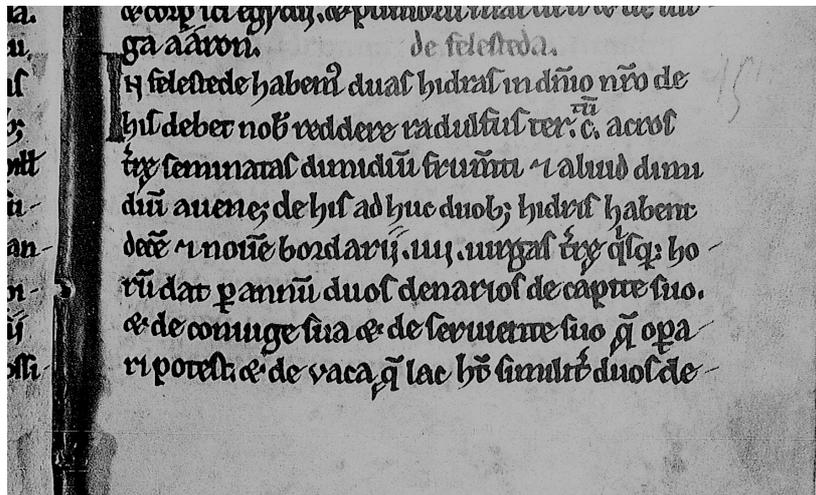


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Écrit et gestion du temporel dans une grande abbaye de femmes anglo-  
normande : la Sainte-Trinité de Caen  
(XI<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)



BnF, ms. lat. 5650, fol. 26r.

Sous la direction de Laurent FELLER, professeur à l'Université de Paris I  
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**Managing a Cross-Channel Estate. The Uses of Literacy in a Great Anglo-Norman Nunnery:  
Holy Trinity, Caen (eleventh–thirteenth centuries)<sup>1</sup>**

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**Short Abstract :** This PhD dissertation focuses on the administrative practices adopted by the nuns of Holy Trinity Abbey, Caen, to manage their large cross-Channel estates during the first two centuries of the nunnery's history. Founded around 1059 by William the Conqueror and Matilda of Flanders, Holy Trinity Abbey produced a cartulary (at the end of the twelfth century) and a series of surveys (twelfth–thirteenth centuries) which have no Norman equivalent, but in England belong to a more substantial group of documents, well-known and well-studied. The questions raised by the making of such documents in this Norman nunnery are the starting point of this study, which explores how administrative skills were linked to literacy, and seeks to reconstruct the management policy of the nuns – and more specifically that of their abbesses – from the end of the eleventh century to the mid-thirteenth century. Replacing these documents in the context in which they were written, in a great nunnery managed by powerful abbesses who fully participated in the administrative and cultural activities of the Anglo-Norman world, leads to a better understanding of the features of the cartulary and the surveys. As did every great ecclesiastical lord of this time, the Caen abbesses held firm to the prerogatives of their position, but they were also acutely aware of economic realities, and resolute in their efforts to preserve the monastic estate established and organized by Queen Matilda, who chose to be buried in the abbey's choir.

**Keywords:** England – Normandy – surveys – cartulary – nunnery – nuns – management – literacy – monastic estate – abbesses – gender

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank warmly Elma Brenner for having corrected the English draft of this text. The remaining mistakes are entirely mine.

## **I/. GENERAL SUMMARY**

This thesis addresses the links between literacy and management at Holy Trinity Abbey, Caen, between the years 1060s and 1260s. Although this abbey, founded by William the Conqueror and his wife Matilda of Flanders around 1059 and immediately closely linked to the activities of the couple, is very well known, its archives remain surprisingly understudied. Nonetheless, outside of the prestigious context of its foundation, the monastery has been recognized by French, British and American historians since the nineteenth century for having produced a particularly precocious cartulary and series of surveys. In England, the documents produced by Holy Trinity Abbey are included in studies of the rare and famous surveys and cartularies of the twelfth century, such as those of Glastonbury, Shaftesbury, Ramsey, Burton, Bath, Abingdon, Ely and Evesham. In Normandy, these archives have no equivalent: no other cartulary of this type is conserved for the end of the twelfth century, and the oldest of the surveys – some of which are preserved through their transcription in the cartulary – date back to the beginning of the twelfth century, nearly one and a half centuries before the appearance of a similar group of documents in the duchy. By broadly exploring the links between literacy and management at Holy Trinity Abbey, this study aims to establish why the documentation produced by the nuns was so original. How can we explain the fact that vast surveys, covering the whole estate of the abbey, were so frequently carried out at Holy Trinity, while Saint Stephen's Abbey at Caen, Holy Trinity's 'sister' house, founded in the same circumstances and endowed with equivalent possessions, conserved no documents of this type ? How can we move beyond the simple statement that the archives of Holy Trinity are unique ?

### **Introduction.**

The introduction summarizes the history of the abbey (its foundation, the elaborate foundation ceremony of 1066, and the formation of the estate) and describes the approach that previous historians have adopted towards the documentation produced by Holy Trinity. The wealth of information contained in the cartulary and the surveys has

led to these documents being viewed as rich quarries, which the historian of England or Normandy can mine for the elements useful to their research, mainly concerning the history of the duchy and English and Norman rural history. In this way, the question of the internal context in which these documents were made has been overlooked, with no consideration of the light they can shed, at a given moment in time, on the institution that produced them. Indeed, the cartulary itself carries meaning, as an organized, coherent transcription. The early use of these sources by British historians, using a quantitative approach, has brought them to a wide public – since the work of Michael Postan, Holy Trinity's surveys have been regularly cited in textbooks of English medieval history –, but has not served to shed light on the history of the abbey itself. This study adopts a different approach, and aims firstly to reinstate the actors who produced these documents, the nuns and, above all, the abbesses of Caen, at the heart of the analysis. It also aims to widen the perspective to encompass the full corpus of documents produced by the nunnery in this period, the only means of fully grasping the significance of the surveys and the cartulary, the latter of which rarely simply reflects the whole archive of the abbey.

This approach immediately encounters a double obstacle in the Anglo-Norman historiography: resistance to the notion that the nuns could have fully entered into the world of literacy, and resistance to viewing them as the key actors responsible for managing their estate. Returning to the sources produced by the abbey between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries enables us to disentangle ourselves from certain socially and historically constructed ideas, and to examine the specificities of the management decisions of the monastery in this period. This study is thus situated at the intersection of various current new approaches to medieval history, particularly attention to literacy and its practical uses, appreciation of the roles played by different actors, and analysis of gender. It is also inspired by the major re-interpretation of the Carolingian polyptychs, particularly by Jean-Pierre Devroey and Ludolf Kuchenbuch. These two historians have underlined the need to take full account of the intellectual and literary capabilities of the great Carolingian ecclesiastics, in order to understand the logic which underpinned the creation of these large inventories.

Finally, the introduction examines the decisive role played by Queen Matilda in the formation and organization of the Anglo-Norman estates of the abbey, and emphasizes a distinctive administrative characteristic of the abbey : it had no dependent priories in England, in contrast to many of the other continental religious houses endowed with English lands.

## **General Outline**

The thesis is then organized into four parts. Part One analyzes the overall corpus of documents considered in this study, a large number of which today are not classified, and are conserved in both England and Normandy. The second part aims to uncover the links between power and literacy at Holy Trinity Abbey throughout the period under study. An evaluation of the nuns' abilities in the domain of literacy is the basis of departure from which it is possible to appreciate the cultural universe within which these women operated – and their capacity to mobilize writing towards achieving the goals of management. Furthermore, in a great nunnery like Holy Trinity, the question of power focuses the analysis particularly on the abbess, the only protagonist who is truly visible in the sources until the mid-thirteenth century. Part Three thus addresses the role of the great abbesses of Caen in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, attempting to enter fully into the management logic of each abbacy. This in-depth analysis of the actions of each abbess serves to shed light, in Part Four, on the production of the cartulary in the end of the twelfth century, and that of the impressive series of surveys produced by Holy Trinity during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries – documents which mark the synthesis of the scriptural and administrative capabilities of the nuns of Caen in this period.

### **Part One. Literacy and management at Holy Trinity Abbey: the constitution of the documentary corpus**

The first part aims to examine the overall characteristics of the documents produced by the abbey, in order to overcome the initial difficulty posed by the fact that Holy

Trinity's archive in the Archives départementales du Calvados has not yet been properly catalogued – a fact which has until now inhibited research, and has led to there being greater interest in the documents contained in the cartulary in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF). Moreover, a certain number of sources are today preserved in England: it is therefore necessary to determine whether these documents were originally located in the abbey's archive, or whether they were directly held in the locality, in the manors belonging to Holy Trinity. The effort to reconstruct the logic of classification of the archive, and the route taken by these documents, is an important stage, which provides the first indicators regarding the management strategy adopted by the nuns. The unusual richness of the archive conserved in Caen in 'English' documents is directly linked to the lack of priories in England, and to the strong centralization of the administrative structure put in place by the abbey. In retracing the route taken by these documents, this part of the thesis also underlines the need to take account of how they were used in the nineteenth century. Holy Trinity's archive is emblematic of the traffic that English and Norman scholars had in Norman documents, mainly in the first half of that century. The fact that the archives of Holy Trinity Abbey have not been properly classified or catalogued should not, therefore, lead us to believe that the original deposit has been transmitted to us exactly in its state of the eighteenth century. The small cartulary 2H4, which immediately attracts attention because of its title '*cartulaire anglo-normand*', thus has nothing Anglo-Norman about it but the title given to it by Léchaudé d'Anisy in the 1830s, and reflects the manner in which archives were manipulated in order to fulfil the objectives of Anglo-Norman scholarship of the time. Similarly, with regard to England, the categories of classification of the abbey's documents since the end of the thirteenth century should be viewed with caution : the 'English' archives of Holy Trinity are now part of the 'Alien Priories Bundle' in the National Archives in Kew, even though, as we have seen, the abbey did not have any priories in England. This section thus aims both to reconstruct the structure of the archival deposits and the route taken by the different documents of the corpus under study, and to underline the importance of later (re)constructions, in order to draw out the first indications of the original administrative choices made by the nuns in managing their Anglo-Norman estate between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries.

## **Part Two. The staff and the quill : power and literacy at Holy Trinity Abbey**

The second part aims to reevaluate the capacity for action of the nuns of Caen in the management of their estate, firstly focusing on signs of the powers wielded by the abbesses of Caen (A), and then examining how these powers were linked to the broader culture of literacy in the Anglo-Norman world (B). Even though we know little about the abbesses of Caen, in terms of their names, origins and abbatial dates, the documents still reveal strong personalities, women who were skilled administrators and endowed with real capabilities in the domain of literacy, these latter two characteristics being closely connected.

The first sub-section takes as its point of departure Virginia Spear's analysis regarding the complex nature of the power held by women placed at the head of female monasteries. In the case of Holy Trinity, the succession of abbesses, from Matilda of Préaux to Juliana *de Sancto Serenico* (c. 1059 – c. 1264), shows a continuity in the uses of literacy, mobilized towards the goals of management and also serving as a mark of authority. Determining the exact nature of the power held by the abbesses firstly involves a consideration of their close links with the Anglo-Norman royal family. It is necessary to consider the case of Holy Trinity within the broader framework of the historiography of the great royal nunneries – studied particularly by Janet Nelson, Barbara Yorke, Karl Leyser, Elisabeth van Houts, Régine Le Jan and Pauline Stafford. From its earliest days, Holy Trinity was invested with the functions specifically devolved on this type of foundation, which is essentially oriented around the *memoria* of the royal lineage (and particularly the female side of that lineage). The decision of Queen Matilda to be buried in the choir of the abbey which she had founded, and to leave a certain number of precious objects to it, including her *regalia*, immediately established the symbolic and material power of the monastery. The fact that other female members of the royal family were buried in the abbey testifies to Holy Trinity's role as a mausoleum, dedicated to the female side of that family. Among these women also feature abbesses of Holy Trinity, royal princesses such as Cecilia and Isabel of Blois, indicating the maintenance of close links between royal power and that of the

abbesses of Caen. Holy Trinity also belongs to the groups of great nunneries of the west of France, such as Saint-Georges of Rennes, Notre-Dame of Saintes and, later, Fontevraud, which were headed by particularly powerful, charismatic abbesses. At Caen, the first trace of the power of these abbesses – before even the precise identification of each of them – is material : seals and tomb stones give precious indications of how these women wished to represent their own authority.

A second sub-section considers another aspect of the power of these abbesses, a theme at the heart of the thesis : the literacy of these women. Much power was derived from writing, as the work of Jack Goody in particular has underlined. This sub-section explores literacy in its broad sense, including literary writings, such as the letters and poems received by Abbesses Matilda and Cecilia, or the preambles to the great confirmation charters of the abbey. The women's participation in the "rouleaux des morts" (those of Abbess Matilda and Vital of Savigny) provides the strongest proof of their abilities in the domain of literacy. Finally, the production of fine manuscripts, closely linked to literary trends and the political situation of the period, demonstrates the abbey's full involvement in the Anglo-Norman culture of the period. Among these manuscripts, the collections with a juridical content, and the custumal addressing the procedure for electing the abbess, created from the end of the thirteenth century, reveal how these writings were used practically, and show the close links between the ability to mobilize literacy and the achievement of autonomy in management.

### **Part Three. The abbesses in action : the management strategies of the abbesses of Holy Trinity, Caen (late eleventh century–mid-thirteenth century)**

The third part examines in detail the actions of the different abbesses of Caen, from Matilda to Juliana, in order to reconstruct the management strategies of the abbey in this period. Four great figures emerge : Matilda and Cecilia in the early history of the monastery (A), then Johanna (B) and finally Juliana (C). In the case of a great nunnery like Holy Trinity, our lack of knowledge of the actions of the abbesses is due less to the

silence of the sources, than to the lack of a detailed study of this abbey. At Holy Trinity Abbey, as at Le Ronceray of Angers, Fontevraud and Saint-Georges of Rennes, these women, great aristocrats, did not fade into the background : on the contrary, they are omnipresent in the charters. The study of their administrative activity enables us, in most cases, to reconstruct the dates of the relevant abbacy and to give shape to the management practices of the monastery. At the intersection of prosopography, biography and micro-history, this approach aims, in an empirical fashion, to study these women in action, and to shed light on the management strategy of each of the great abbesses of Caen between 1059 and 1265 – the only means of fully understanding the cartulary of the end of the twelfth century (studied in Part Four).

The approach adopted here follows that of Robert Berkhofer, Mathieu Arnoux and Ghislain Brunel, who have underlined the need to take account of the personalities of those in charge when analyzing large administrative documents, and to be aware of the broader administrative logic behind these documents. Moreover, as Virginia Spear, Berenice Kerr and Penelope Johnson have shown us, gender is not a discriminating parameter in the domain of economic matters and the management of lands. Like their male counterparts drawn from the great Anglo-Norman aristocracy, the abbesses of Caen were in a position to mobilize literacy towards the ends of management, and to make rational choices about administrative and economic matters.

For the early period of the abbey's history (A), the study of the first abbesses, Matilda and Cecilia, extends the analysis of John Walmsley, and confirms his conclusions regarding the personal involvement of these women in the administration of the Anglo-Norman estate. The actions of these early abbesses testify in particular to their strong wish to perpetuate the works of Queen Matilda in favour of the monastery, by both firmly maintaining its economic position, and initiating new projects. The vast project of the reconstruction of the abbey church at this time reflects both the prosperity of the abbey, and the dynamism of the abbesses and their full participation in the cultural world of the period.

A second sub-section (B) focuses on the decisive abbacy of Johanna (c. 1182-1229/1230), who certainly ordered the making of cartulary now in the BnF, as shown in Part Four. This abbess was particularly energetic in asserting the prerogatives of the abbey, in England as well as in Normandy, from the beginning of her long administration. The management strategies of her abbacy are very characteristic of the Anglo-Norman world of the end of the reign of Henry II, and testify in particular to this abbess's ease in operating within the legal milieu of this period. Johanna's abbacy, which straddled the divide of 1204, also underlines the fact that this date did not decisively change the administration of the abbey's Anglo-Norman estate : after the political separation of England and Normandy, the abbess remained determined to hold onto the abbey's English lands, to make sure its prerogatives were respected, and even to invest in lands in England. Johanna was particularly preoccupied with getting rid of the farmer William of Felsted's grasp of the English estate of the abbey (William had inherited the position held by Simon, his father), and was responsible for the purchase of a house in London. She aimed to manage the English properties with the aid of competent officials, often trained in law, appointed for a term of years and revocable at will. The acquisition of the house in London coincided with the appointment of the first proctor of the abbey, to look after the legal interests of the nuns in England (this agent probably used the London house as a base to conduct legal business). The proctor was also responsible for coordinating the administration of the abbey's English lands, and had to deliver an account of his activities to the abbess in Caen. At the same time, like the great ecclesiastical lords in England, Johanna decided to take back into direct management some of the manors (Felsted, Minchinhampton and Avening), henceforth administered through demesne farming. This selective choice (Horstead, Tilshead and Tarrant were still run at farm) testifies to highly strategic thinking on Johanna's part, no doubt based upon the economic value of the different manors. The fact that the cartulary of the BnF was drawn up during this abbacy, and before the change in the manner of managing the English manors, is in itself very interesting, as we will see.

A final important point should be made about Johanna's abbacy: there was an advanced centralization of writing in this period, shown by the fact that charters concerning England and Normandy sometimes have the same witnesses, and, above all, were drawn

up by the same scribe. This homogeneity fits completely with Johanna's firm administration, and her omnipresence in both Norman and English affairs. The compilation of a cartulary as homogeneous as that conserved in the BnF, which fuses together the realities in England and Normandy, makes perfect sense during the administration of this particular abbess.

The last sub-section (C) examines the abbacies of Isabella of Crèvecœur and Juliana of *Sancto Serenico* (1229/1230-c. 1264), the two last abbesses in charge of the effective management of the abbey's Anglo-Norman estate in the period under consideration in the thesis. Even though these two last abbacies are less well known than that of Johanna, that of Juliana also merits particular attention. Juliana's administration, which just preceded the disappearance of English charters from the abbey's Norman archive, corresponds both with the visits of Eudes Rigaud (which provide the first direct information about the economic situation of the monastery), and with the completion of another administrative 'monument', the vast survey of the Norman estates made in 1257. This survey (or 'jurée'), reconstructed by Lucien Musset, provides for the first time proof of the personal involvement of the abbess in the production of these large surveys : the inquest, transcribed in the form of a book, was explicitly overseen by Juliana of *Sancto Serenico*, and in this way it replaces the cartulary of the BnF, while still serving to perpetuate Abbess Johanna's administrative practices.

#### **Part Four. Cartulary and surveys : literacy as a tool of management at Holy Trinity Abbey (late twelfth century)**

The fourth part focuses on the cartulary of the BnF and the surveys it contains (series A and B-C), outlining, in the introduction, the issues at stake in the study of this document. The cartulary offers the possibility of entering more deeply into the heart of the management strategy of Holy Trinity's nuns at the time of its completion, at the end of the twelfth century. The current renewal of the study of cartularies (which forms part of the broader research interest in literacy) has underlined how revealing these

documents are, reflecting a ‘strong moment’ in the archival, memorial and administrative history of the institution that produced them. Through the specific nature of its composition, being both very selective (it is a small volume) and very homogeneous in appearance (one single hand clearly transcribed the whole document, in a very short space of time), the cartulary of the BnF lends itself particularly well to an analysis of this type. It immediately reveals that very different choices were made at Holy Trinity than at Saint Stephen’s, Caen, whose monks completed the compilation of their own cartulary at the same date. The introduction to this section thus underlines the specific characteristics of the Holy Trinity cartulary, firstly with regard to its composition : apart from the charters and notices, classic to this type of document, it also contains a significant number of surveys. Surveys A (c. 1106-1130) and B-C (c. 1170-1180) alone represent more than half the volume. We do not find a similar composition of material in any other Norman cartulary of this date ; yet this composition is extremely common in contemporary English cartularies (such as those of Bath, Ely, Bury St Edmunds, Evesham, Abingdon and Peterborough). This section aims to explore the reasons for the production of such a cartulary, Anglo-Norman in its approach, by the nuns of Holy Trinity at the end of the twelfth century.

This line of enquiry firstly involves drawing a comparison between the British and French historiography, looking beyond the terminology used in each country, which can be misleading : in particular, the term ‘censier’ used in France to designate the surveys completed by Holy Trinity should be handled with care, in order not to overlook the existence of close links with the Carolingian world, and with the surveys and custumals completed in England in the same period. Finally, the analysis stresses the need to take account of the cartulary itself, which is by definition a constructed object : the surveys have only reached us in the form in which they were transcribed in the cartulary (the original surveys are now lost), and they were not transcribed in a neutral manner, as is shown by Michael Postan’s somewhat hasty interpretation regarding the commutation of labour services in Holy Trinity’s English manors<sup>2</sup>. A careful examination of the

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<sup>2</sup> POSTAN (M. M.), « The Chronology of Labour Services », *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th ser., vol. XX, 1937, p. 169-193.

cartulary shows that the surveys of Series B and C were not separated by many decades, and do not, as Postan thought, refer to completely different realities : in fact, these two series describe the same reality in different ways, and perhaps even result from the rewriting of the same survey (Survey B).

The first sub-section begins with a codicological analysis of the manuscript, particularly underlining the originality of its appearance (it is extremely homogeneous), the links which can be established with the cartulary of Saint Stephen's, Caen (with regard to the lettertrines), and the evident attention that the scribe paid to the page layout.

The second sub-section focuses on the dating of the manuscript, the key to its interpretation. The identification of the different hands that made later additions to the cartulary (from fol. 87r. onwards), enables us, through comparison with original charters from the period, to introduce a *terminus ad quem* for the production of the main part of the text : c. 1183-1184. These elements of dating are crucial to interpreting the cartulary of the BnF, which until now has been dated without great precision, to the end of the twelfth century or the beginning of the thirteenth century<sup>3</sup>. According to the dating scheme which has been accepted until now, the production of the cartulary could, as John Walmsley has suggested, fit into the context of 1204, and be explained by the sense that the abbey's Anglo-Norman estate was under threat : "Although the cartulary may be seen as part of the general transition from the 'age of charters' to the 'age of registers', part of a general movement towards a tidier, more legalistic approach to the keeping of important records at all levels of society, it probably also reflects a heightened concern by the abbey for the integrity of its property in England, France and the Channel Islands after the separation of England and Normandy in 1204"<sup>4</sup>.

The more precise dating of the cartulary to more than twenty years before 1204 suggests that the document cannot have been produced in this context. Dating from the years

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<sup>3</sup> CHIBNALL (M.), *Charters...*, p. xxii ; WALMSLEY (J.), *Charters...*, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Loc. cit.* Tamiko Fujimoto also believes that the cartulary fits into a context in which the abbey's English estates were under threat : FUJIMOTO (T.), « Autour du cartulaire de l'abbaye de la Trinité de Caen à la fin du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle : une approche de la gestion domaniale des deux côtés de la Manche », *Shigaku*, 70-3/4, 2001, p 101-133.

1183-1184, it thus corresponds with the first years of the administration of Johanna, an abbess who was particularly energetic and determined in preserving the economic interests of the abbey. As we have seen, there were no signs of serious threat to the abbey's English estates during Johanna's abbacy : on the contrary, she invested in these lands, and carried out important administrative reforms aimed at drawing more profit from them, both before and after 1204.

The final sub-section enters into more detail regarding the logic behind the composition of the cartulary, particularly analyzing the order in which the charters appear, and the position of the most prestigious charters, situated in the first section of the cartulary (fol. 1r.-20r.). Finally, the rubric of folio 20r.-20v., one of the longest in the manuscript (*'Hęc sunt reditiones honoris nostrę ecclesię sanctę trinitatis cadomi'*), probably provides the key to understanding the logic of composition of the cartulary, by linking the first section of the manuscript, particularly the budget (act n<sup>o</sup> 7), to the rest of the cartulary (charters, notices and surveys). It essentially describes the abbey's estates, according to a spatial logic which closely mixes together the economic, sacred and memorial aspects of the monastic patrimony.

## **Conclusion.**

The conclusion underlines the abilities of the nuns of Holy Trinity in the fields of management and literacy. Like most of their male counterparts, these nuns were in a position to participate in the literary culture of the twelfth century, and the abbesses who directed the abbey between c. 1059 and c. 1264 watched over and preserved the material interests of the house with determination. These women clearly enjoyed considerable authority, and had a solid sense of business affairs. The study also confirms the conclusions of Penelope Johnson and Berenice Kerr : the management of the estates of the great nunneries of the twelfth to thirteenth centuries was not affected by gender discrimination. These women were completely anchored in the world, and had an acute awareness of economic realities. Like the great abbots of the early Middle Ages who

ordered vast polyptychs, the abbesses of Caen behaved as rational actors, capable of organizing the economic affairs of their estates in a coherent manner, and of managing them effectively. As Jean-Pierre Devroey has underlined, the achievements of these great abbots were indissociable from their culture, being typical of the Carolingian elite.

In the same way, at Holy Trinity Abbey the abbesses appear as women completely familiar with the cultural and administrative practices of the Anglo-Norman court, also common to the greatest English ecclesiastical landlords of the period. It is indeed striking that the closest parallels with Holy Trinity's surveys are to be found at Shaftesbury abbey, another great royal nunnery closely linked to royal power, and at Glastonbury abbey, directed at one time by Henry of Blois, the brother of King Stephen of England and nephew of Abbess Cecily. Henry of Blois, the son of the powerful countess Adela of Blois and a former monk of Cluny, was, moreover, responsible for initiating the inventory produced at Cluny in the mid-twelfth century for Peter the Venerable. These links clearly testify to the cultural, political and religious horizons of this elite, which surpassed the limits of England and Normandy. Finally, the activities of the abbesses of Caen testify to their determination to preserve – notably through the means of writing – the Anglo-Norman estate of the monastery, as it had been constituted by Queen Matilda, buried in the choir of the abbey church. This concern for the heritage bequeathed by the queen reveals the unshakeable links maintained at Holy Trinity between concrete administrative preoccupations, memorial responsibilities, and participation in the cultural practices of the Anglo-Norman world.

## **II/ THE BnF CARTULARY, « A MONUMENT OR A TOOLBOX »<sup>5</sup>?**

This final section aims to extend the analysis of Part Four of the thesis, and to explore more deeply the implications of the study of the cartulary of the BnF. The central question raised here is that of what motivated the production of such a cartulary at Holy Trinity Abbey around 1183-1184, in order to demonstrate how the detailed study of this document contributes to the examination of the links between literacy and management in this abbey. For reasons of clarity, the discussion will be organized around three central themes, which enable a possible means of interpreting the cartulary to be presented.

### **1. An Anglo-Norman cartulary**

One of the first, obvious aspects which can be drawn from the analysis of the cartulary's composition is its Anglo-Norman approach. More than half the document is taken up by surveys, whose only equivalents at this date are to be found in England<sup>6</sup>. The first survey (A), was probably drawn up around 1113<sup>7</sup>, and is one of the earliest estate surveys of its kind : it is likely to be almost contemporary with the first series of Burton Abbey surveys (1114<sup>8</sup>) and a decade or two earlier than the very comprehensive and ambitious inquests of the abbeys of Peterborough (1125-1128), Shaftesbury (1127 x 1130) and Ramsey (c. 1161). If we add to this the existence of the second Caen survey (B), around 1170, these inquests and the cartulary share many similarities with the ones

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<sup>5</sup> « Monument ou caisse à outils ? » : this is an expression of Paul Bertrand, used with regard to the interpretation of cartularies: BERTRAND (P.), « À propos de la révolution de l'écrit (X<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle) : considérations inactuelles », *Médiévales* 56, spring 2009, p. 75-92, à la p. 82.

<sup>6</sup> For a comprehensive list of these twelfth-century surveys, see for example HARVEY (P.D.A.), *Manorial Records*, London, British Records Association, Archives and the User n°5, 1999 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1984), p. 19, n. 16 ; and for a comparison of the content of these documents (including the Caen surveys) : CLARKE (H.B.), « Evesham J and Evesham L : Two Early Twelfth-Century Manorial Surveys », *Anglo-Norman Studies*, n°XXX, 2007, p. 62-84, at p. 79-82.

<sup>7</sup> CHIBNALL (M.), *Charters...*, p. xxvi-xxxii ; WALMSLEY (J.), *Charters...*, p. 14, 53 ; ID., « The Twelfth-Century Surveys of Holy Trinity, Caen : A Comparative Study of Peasant Conditions », *Agricultural History*, vol. 65, n°3, 1991, p. 70-104, at p. 71 n. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Namely Burton B, printed in BRIDGEMAN (C.G.O.), « The Burton Abbey Twelfth Century Surveys », in *Collections for a history of Staffordshire*, The William Salt Archaeology Society, London, 1916, p. 209-300, at p. 212-47. On Burton surveys, see WALMSLEY (J.), *The Estate of Burton Abbey from the XI<sup>th</sup> to the XIV<sup>th</sup> centuries*, Birmingham University, unpublished PhD dissertation, 1972.

from Bury Saint Edmunds (*Feudal Book*), Battle, Glastonbury, and Evesham. On the English side of the Channel, these manorial descriptions obviously have something to do with Domesday Book (itself linked to Carolingian administrative practices<sup>9</sup>), which lived on as a model for later administrators. The fact that such surveys were drawn up at Holy Trinity shows that the abbey played a part in the evolution towards more sophisticated techniques of manorial administration in twelfth-century England – and also on the Continent, even if the traces of this process are there much scarcer<sup>10</sup>.

### a) The inquests of the first half of the twelfth century

As we have seen, the cartulary holds many lists and inquests of the first half of the twelfth century (see Appendix U). The most important of these documents is obviously Survey A, copied in two different parts of the second section of the cartulary (fol. 20r.-23v. and fol. 26r.-29v.). The dating of this manorial description is quite interesting if we see it in a broader Anglo-Norman context : as shown by Howard Clark, there was an upsurge of interest in manorial surveys during the reign of Henry I, which may be linked with the effect of the Domesday inquest (for example, at Evesham abbey solely, fifteen surveys date from the period 1086-1136<sup>11</sup>). This close link between ecclesiastical inquests and the *Domesday Book* is especially well-known for the documents produced at Ely (*Inquisitio Eliensis* and *Inquisitio Comitatus Cantabrigiensis*), Bury Saint Edmunds (*Feudal Book*) and Canterbury (*Domesday Monachorum*), but also concerns the Bath, Peterborough, Abingdon and Evesham surveys<sup>12</sup>. As pointed out by Marjorie Chibnall, it is also in this framework that we should locate Holy Trinity Survey A<sup>13</sup>. For example, at Caen, as in the Domesday inquest, the information concerning the

<sup>9</sup> On this point, see the introduction of Part Four of the thesis.

<sup>10</sup> BERKHOFER (R.F.), « Inventaires de biens et proto-comptabilités dans le Nord de la France (XI<sup>e</sup>-début du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle), in *Pratiques de l'écrit documentaire au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, O. Guyotjeannin, L. Morelle et M. Parisse (éd.), *B. É.C.*, t. 155, 1997, p. 339-349 ; ARNOUX (M.) et BRUNEL (G.), « Réflexions sur les sources médiévales de l'histoire des campagnes, de l'intérêt de publier les sources, de les critiquer et de les lire », *H.S.R.*, n°1, 1<sup>st</sup> semestre 1994, p. 11-35.

<sup>11</sup> CLARKE (H.B.), « Evesham J... », p. 65 ; HARVEY (P. D. A.), *Manorial Records...*, p. 18-19.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of these famous documents and their links with *Domesday Book*, see for example : GALBRAITH (V.H.), *The Making of Domesday Book*, Oxford, 1961, chap. IX (p. 123-145) ; ID., *Domesday Book : Its Place in Administrative History*, Oxford, 1974, chapt. V (« The 'Satellite' Surveys ») ; CLARKE (H.B.), « The Domesday Satellites », in P. Sawyer (ed.), *Domesday Book : A Reassessment*, London, 1985, p. 50-70.

<sup>13</sup> CHIBNALL (M.), *Charters...*, p. xxix-xxx.

description of each manor is very condensed, includes details on demesne lands (particularly the number of teams available to plough the arable and lists of livestock), and begins with a statement of the number of hides. One of the most remarkable features of the Holy Trinity survey lies precisely in the extremely detailed inventory of livestock and demesne resources (recording even the age and sex of horses, cattle, sheep and swine). This characteristic of the Caen inquest locates it very firmly in the administrative practices of Henry I's time : it is striking to see that this is exactly what the *Leges Henrici Primi*, written between c. 1113 and 1118, advises the lord to ask his farmer about<sup>14</sup>. Holy Trinity's Survey A is one of the only surveys of this time that reflects so precisely these requirements. As has been pointed out by Howard Clarke, a memorandum concerning manorial customs and services of comparable date can be found in Portswood, in Hampshire, which was a grant by Henry I to the church of Saint Denys at Southampton<sup>15</sup>.

Concerning Norman lands, we also know that Henry I was behind the inquest held in 1133 regarding the bishop of Bayeux's property, in order to restore it after the serious losses it had suffered during the rules of Odo's successors<sup>16</sup>. The fact that Holy Trinity Survey A was probably made during the very first years of Cecilia's effective administration (replacing the aged and feeble abbess Matilda) probably explains its closeness to the "official" policy concerning estate administration under Henry I. According to Marjorie Chibnall, « [Cecilia's] administration showed the vigour and practical ability that characterized both her father and her brother Henry. This close personal link with the king, added to the fact that several of the manors held by the abbey had at one time been royal demesne, may explain why the surveys are so early, and why the information in them is all of a kind that, according to the *Leges Henrici Primi*, was being sought at just that date on the royal demesne »<sup>17</sup>. The nunnery's links with the Norman royal family also appear in the writing of the cartulary, and especially

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<sup>14</sup> *Leges Henrici Primi*, L. J. Downer (ed.), Oxford, 1972, c. 56,3 ; CHIBNALL (M.), *Charters...*, p. xxix.

<sup>15</sup> CLARKE (H.B.), « Evesham J... », p. 80 ; HASKINS (C.H.), « The Manor of Portswood under Henry I », in *Mélanges d'histoire offerts à M. Charles Bémont par ses amis et ses élèves*, Paris, 1913, p. 77-83.

<sup>16</sup> Only a part of this famous Norman survey has been preserved (the returns of the inquest relating to military tenures) : HASKINS (C.H.), *Norman Institutions*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1925, p. 201-202 ; NAVEL (H.), « L'Enquête de 1133 sur les Fiefs de l'Évêché de Bayeux », *B.S.A.N.*, t. XLII, 1934, p. 5-80.

<sup>17</sup> CHIBNALL (M.), *Charters...*, p. xxxi.

the first words used in some notices. For example, as emphasized by Judith Green, the phrase used in order to date a gift to the nunnery by Hawise, the widow of Robert Marmion, “in the year in which Henry king of the English subjugated Normandy to himself” (*anno quo rex Anglorum Henricus Normanniam sibi subiugavit*<sup>18</sup>) refers exactly to the same idea (and wording) as the phrase used by King Henry I to confirm a will made by his friend, Robert count of Meulan (“after I subjugated Normandy to me by battle”)<sup>19</sup>. As has been previously stressed concerning the sculpture of the abbey church designed during the same period, the contents of the cartulary show that under the government of Matilda and Cecilia, Holy Trinity Abbey took an active part in the cultural and literary world of Henry I’s reign<sup>20</sup>.

This cultural and personal closeness to the royal court probably explains why Holy Trinity appears to have been completely up to date regarding the administrative tools of this period, which were not so widespread on the Continent at this time. The excellent level of education attained by the Caen abbesses probably helped them to put these administrative requirements into practice. Thanks to the work of Elisabeth van Houts, we know how active the women of the Norman royal family were in the literary field<sup>21</sup>. They were at least as efficient in the management of their lands, as shown by Laura Gathagan (on Queen Matilda) and Kimberly LoPrete (on Matilda’s daughter Adela of Blois – who was also Cecilia’s sister<sup>22</sup>). As we have seen, the Holy Trinity abbesses followed the same pattern : Matilda, the first abbess, was chosen by the queen, and has all the appearance of having been a very well-educated woman and an able administrator, whose aim was to continue the queen’s efficient action to the benefit of the nunnery, and who was in charge of Cecilia’s education. We can guess that Cecilia

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<sup>18</sup> Act n°16 of the cartulary.

<sup>19</sup> GREEN (J.), *Henry I : King of England and Duke of Normandy*, Cambridge, 2006, p. 97. Orderic Vitalis also uses a very similar phrase (« after King Henry had subjugated Normandy by war »), too : *loc. cit.* ; O.V., book vi, p. 136.

<sup>20</sup> This court culture has been studied by Judith Green : GREEN (J.), « Henry I and the Origins of the Court Culture of the Plantagenets », in *Plantagenêts et Capétiens : confrontations et héritages*, M. Aurell et N.-Y. Tonnerre (eds), Turnhout, Brepols, 2006, p. 485-495.

<sup>21</sup> VAN HOUTS (E.), « Latin poetry and the Anglo-Norman court 1066-1135 : The *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio* », *Journal of Medieval History*, 15, 1989, p. 39-62.

<sup>22</sup> GATHAGAN (L.L.), *Embodying Power ....* ; LoPRETE (K.A.), *A female ruler in feudal society : Adela of Blois (ca. 1067-ca. 1137)*...

took the same responsibilities on with her great-niece, Isabel of Blois, the third abbess of Holy Trinity, Caen.

Interestingly, Isabel was the sister of Henry of Sully, who became abbot of Fécamp (1140-1187), and also of abbot Ralph of Cluny (1173-1176), the biographer of Peter the Venerable<sup>23</sup>. Henry of Blois, Cecilia's nephew and Isabel's uncle, is another very interesting figure of the family<sup>24</sup>. The bishop of Winchester was especially well-known for attaching great value to the making of such surveys. As treasurer of the kingdom of England, he was the guardian of *Domesday Book*, of which he had a very fine knowledge according to Richard Fitz Nigel (the author of the *Dialogue of the Exchequer*)<sup>25</sup>. From his first important post, as a young abbot of Glastonbury, he was extremely active in the management of the property he was charged with. We can guess Abbess Cecilia shared the same involvement and dedication as that exhibited by her nephew Henry, who personally defended the economic interests of Glastonbury Abbey, tirelessly visiting the lands under him to correct abuses and to affirm, as a great aristocrat, his authority. Henry was the moving force behind major administrative documents at not only Glastonbury and Winchester, but also Cluny. In 1155, Peter the Venerable ordered a systematic survey, at the scale of all the domains of the abbey of Cluny, to establish the revenue of each one, in order to balance the monastery's budget, which was then in a bad state<sup>26</sup>. As Mathieu Arnoux has noted, it is by no means insignificant that this survey was carried out by Henry of Blois, former monk of Cluny : this testifies to the circulation of ideas and administrative techniques among the more enlightened management elites of northern Europe in the twelfth century<sup>27</sup>. Holy Trinity Abbey was fully a part of this cultural milieu : even though the Cluny inventory was

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<sup>23</sup> GAZEAU (V.), *Normannia monastica...*, t. I, p. 169, 190.

<sup>24</sup> On Henry of Blois' career, see for example : KNOWLES (D.), *The Monastic Order in England 940-1216*, Cambridge, 1940, p. 286-292 ; CHIBNALL (M.), *Anglo-Norman England 1066-1166*, Oxford, Cambridge (Mass.), 1993 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1986), p. 90-94.

<sup>25</sup> ARNOUX (M.) and BRUNEL (G.), « Réflexions sur les sources médiévales... », p. 29 ; GALBRAITH (V.H.), *Domesday Book : Its Place in Administrative History*, Oxford, 1974.

<sup>26</sup> DUBY (G.), « Le budget de l'abbaye de Cluny entre 1080 et 1155. Économie domaniale et économie monétaire », and « Un inventaire des profits de la seigneurie clunisienne à la mort de Pierre le Vénéral », in ID., *Hommes et structures du Moyen Âge*, Paris, 1984, p. 61-86, p. 87-101 ; GUERREAU (A.), « Douze doyennés clunisiens au milieu du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle », *Annales de Bourgogne*, 52, 1980, p. 83-128.

<sup>27</sup> ARNOUX (M.) and BRUNEL (G.), « Réflexions sur les sources médiévales... », p. 28-32 ; MENANT (F.), « Les transformations de l'écrit documentaire entre le XII<sup>e</sup> et le XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle », in *Écrire, compter, mesurer, vers une histoire des rationalités pratiques*, N. Coquery, F. Menant, F. Weber (eds), Paris, 2006, p. 33-50, at p. 41.

not, in a strict sense, a ‘censier’, M. Arnoux has underlined its close links in terms of vocabulary and form with not only *Domesday Book*, but also with the Caen inquests (the survey provides the same kind of synthetic assessment, manor after manor, of the lands, labour services and revenues).

**b) An Anglo-Norman cartulary (and inquests) typical of the end of Henry II’s reign**

As we have seen, the most important part of the BnF cartulary is taken up by the second survey (B-C), dating from the 1170s to the 1180s, and thus almost contemporary with the making of the cartulary itself. The drawing up of this survey is typical of the progress in the Anglo-Norman world «from Domesday descriptions to manorial extenta»<sup>28</sup>, which saw an increase in documents containing an astonishing wealth of manorial detail. The Caen inquests have much in common with the Glastonbury abbey survey drawn up in c. 1171 by Hilbert the Precenter, which provides an impressive range of information (on demesne stock, freeholds, money rents, labour services, and the different types of tenements). It also belongs to a similar mind-set as that of the contemporary second Shaftesbury abbey survey<sup>29</sup>, and is contemporary with the *Boldon Book* of the bishopric of Durham (1183) and the survey made of the Templars’ estates in England in 1185<sup>30</sup>. Most of these late twelfth-century manorial descriptions, as at Caen, begin with a list of jurors, who gave the required information under oath – following the royal legal practices developed precisely at this time<sup>31</sup>. The 1180s appear to have been a decisive moment in the writing of this kind of surveys<sup>32</sup>: this very productive period also saw the making of, for example, the royal Assize of Arms, the *rotuli de dominabus*<sup>33</sup>, and surveys carried out by Durham and St Paul’s Cathedrals.

<sup>28</sup> CLARKE (H.B.), « Evesham J... », p. 79.

<sup>29</sup> *Charters and Custumals of Shaftesbury Abbey, 1089-1216*, N.E. Stacy (ed.), Records of Social and Economic History, New Series 39, Oxford and New York, 2006 ; *Surveys of the estates of Glastonbury Abbey, c. 1135-1201*, N.E. Stacy (ed.), Records of Social and Economic History, New Series 33, Oxford and New York, 2001.

<sup>30</sup> HARVEY (P.D.A.), *Manorial Records...*, p. 19.

<sup>31</sup> LENNARD (R.), « Early Manorial Juries », *E.H.R.*, vol. 77, n°304, 1962, p. 511-518 (the case of Holy Trinity, Caen, is studied among the other contemporary English surveys).

<sup>32</sup> CLANCHY (M.T.), *From Memory...*, p. 73.

<sup>33</sup> *Widows, Heirs and Heiresses in the Late Twelfth Century. The Rotuli de Dominabus et Pueris et Puellis*, J. Walmsley (ed. and transl.), *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies*, vol. 308, Tempe (Arizona), 2006.

These documents, like those from Glastonbury, Shaftesbury and Caen, show the same need for precision, which was partly the consequence of the legal developments and methodical royal administration that mark the reign of Henry II. They are typical of the care for detail that characterized Henry II's housekeeping and government, as shown for example in the inquest of the Avranchin of 1171, where every bushel of grain and every penny of cash had to be recorded<sup>34</sup>. In the Anglo-Norman world, this requirement to make surveys had long-lasting effects, and spread more widely in the thirteenth century, becoming standardized, as the treatises testify<sup>35</sup>. For example, the *Rules*, the earliest of the four treatises edited by Dorothea Oschinsky, compiled for the use of the Countess of Lincoln between 1240 and 1242 from a Latin text written by the scholarly bishop Robert Grosseteste<sup>36</sup>, shows the continuous links existing in the Anglo-Norman world between the culture of the dominant class and efficient administrative practices<sup>37</sup>.

To conclude on this point, we can see that Carolingian traditions and Anglo-Norman influences pervade the Caen cartulary, and its Norman uniqueness has thus to be kept in the perspective of the fact that it belongs to the Anglo-Norman cultural world, in which great ecclesiastical landlords produced an astonishing series of cartularies, often composed with surveys and lists of various kinds (as at Ely, Bury St Edmunds and Durham, for example)<sup>38</sup>. In this context, the Holy Trinity cartulary was probably a document of a very fashionable kind, as were the cartularies produced at the same time at Ely, Bath, Abingdon, Peterborough and Evesham. As we have seen, this can be explained by the precise context in which it was drawn up : it was produced in a great royal Anglo-Norman nunnery – and more precisely at the beginning of the

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<sup>34</sup> HASKINS (C.H.), *Norman Institutions...*, p. 192.

<sup>35</sup> HARVEY (P.D.A.), *Manorial Records...*, p. 15-24.

<sup>36</sup> OSCHINSKY (D.), *Walter of Henley and Other Treatises on Estate Management and Accounting*, Oxford, 1971, p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> BEAUROY (J.), « Sur la culture seigneuriale en Angleterre : un poème anglo-normand dans le Cartulaire des barons de Mohun », in C. Duhamel-Amado and G. Lobrichon (ed.), *Georges Duby. L'écriture de l'histoire*, Bruxelles, 1996, p. 341-364. Nevertheless, C. Dyer has stressed the limited effectiveness of the barons of Mohun in the management of their estates : DYER (C.), « The Ineffectiveness of Lordship in England, 1200-1400 », in *Rodney Hilton's Middle Ages : an Exploration of Historical Themes*, C. Dyer, P. Coss and C. Wickham (eds), *Past and Present*, Supplement 2, Oxford, 2007, p. 69-86, at p. 75.

<sup>38</sup> GENET (J.-P.), « Cartulaires anglais du Moyen Âge », dans *Les Cartulaires, Actes de la Table ronde organisée par l'École nationale des Chartes et le G.D.R. 121 du CNRS (Paris, 5-7 décembre 1991)*, O. Guyotjeannin, L. Morelle et M. Parrisé (eds), Paris, 1993, p. 343-361, at p. 355.

administration of Johanna, whose abbacy marks a high point in the history of Holy Trinity Abbey.

## 2. The Cartulary of an Abbess : Johanna

As already mentioned, a close study of the cartulary shows that it was probably drawn up in around 1183, which corresponds with the very beginning of Johanna's abbacy. This specific context obviously created the circumstances that led directly to the writing of the cartulary, and probably also to the recording of the Norman surveys B, some years later than the second series of English surveys, which were conducted in the wake of the controversial farmship of Simon of Felsted<sup>39</sup> in c. 1170, during Dametta's abbacy. In the Anglo-Norman world, commissioning a survey was a common practice for any great ecclesiastical landlord, during the first years of his rule, in order to obtain an overall view of his property. A famous excerpt from the Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond describes the reasons why Abbot Samson of Bury Saint Edmunds (elected at almost the same time as Johanna, in 1182) conducted this kind of survey: "At his order a general description [*descriptio generalis*] was made in each hundred of leets and suits, hidages and corn dues, payments of hens, and other customs, revenues and expenses, which had hitherto been largely conceded by the farmers; and he had all these things set down in writing, so that within four years from his election there was no one who could deceive him concerning the revenues of the abbey to a single pennyworth"<sup>40</sup>. This excerpt obviously recalls both the well known passage of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* which emphasizes (and exaggerates) the thoroughness of the Domesday survey<sup>41</sup>, and the narrow investigations typical of Henry II's reign. It also stresses the strong personal involvement of Abbot Samson in the management of the abbey's estates. Similarly, Abbess Mary of Shaftesbury (c. 1159-1216) – who is likely to have been Henry II's half-sister – had a transcript made of surveys and charters drawn up in her "*landboc*",

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<sup>39</sup> See act n°26 of the cartulary, which was obviously part of this survey.

<sup>40</sup> *The Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond*, H. E. Butler (ed.), London, 1949, p. 29; quoted by CLANCHY (M.T.), *From Memory...*, p. 72. More recently, see the translation of this passage by D. Greenway and J. Sayers : J. DE BRAKELOND, *Chronicle of the Abbey of Bury Saint Edmunds*, D. E. Greenway and J. E. Sayers (eds. and transl.), Oxford, 1998, p. 27.

<sup>41</sup> For a comment on this famous excerpt, see for example CLANCHY (M.T.), *From Memory...*, p. 18.

now lost, but whose material has survived through a copy in a cartulary made in the early fifteenth century<sup>42</sup>.

A number of pieces of evidence suggest that Johanna instigated the Norman surveys B<sup>43</sup>. No doubt, one of the most significant indications of this is the fact that the process of making the *summae*, at the end of each manorial description, was begun but not completed : although this information was obviously not in the original roll, the scribe intended to calculate these totals – which means he still considered them useful – and to insert them at a later date (a gap of four to nine lines was left blank in the manuscript for this purpose)<sup>44</sup>. As did Samson of Bury Saint Edmunds, and Mary, abbess of Shaftesbury, Johanna thus had her own landbook, and the fact that this abbess appears in the nunnery’s archives as a particularly able administrator, devoting a great amount of time and money to clarifying the abbey’s rights on both sides of the Channel, throw much light on the motivations which lay behind the making of the cartulary. Two cases won by Johanna in Caen in 1182, and copied into the codex (acts n°**3** and n°**30**), show that this abbess did not hesitate personally to defend the abbey’s legal interests, grasping the opportunity to use the great assize held by Henry II in 1182 for her own business. The assize recorded in act n°**32** of the cartulary is another case won by this abbess (in 1185), and is most revealing: to support the abbey’s claim to the advowson of the church of Carpiquet against one of her tenants, Ralph fitz Eude (who also appears in survey B<sup>45</sup>), Johanna spoke herself in front of the *curia regis*, and supported her arguments with the help of the oldest and most prestigious charters of the abbey – exactly the ones she had just had transcribed into the cartulary. The first legal victories of Johanna (acts n°**3**, n°**30** and n°**32**) are thus copied at the very beginning and at the very end of the cartulary, and show that this abbess was fully aware of how important these documents were. Moreover, they demonstrate that she was able to use them herself (without the help of an attorney) before a court, and to build a legal line of

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<sup>42</sup> *Charters and Custumals of Shaftesbury Abbey...*, p. 1-2.

<sup>43</sup> Some of these clues are detailed in WALMSLEY ( J.), “The Twelfth-Century Surveys...”, p. 71, n. 6.

<sup>44</sup> The *summae* also appear at fol. 63r. (Carpiquet), fol. 73r.-74r. (Escanneville, Gonnevillle, Beauvoir), fol. 77r. (Bavent), fol. 82r. (Ranville).

<sup>45</sup> See Carpiquet B, 54, 43; Escanneville B, 25; and John Walmsley’s remarks on this document (WALMSLEY (J.), *Charters...*, n. 1 p. 130).

argument from them: it was precisely thanks to her expert knowledge of the abbey's charters that the last case was won.

The Holy Trinity cartulary was probably not intended simply to be a juridical tool<sup>46</sup>, but it is striking to note that many instigators of cartularies were also obstinate defenders of their houses' rights before the courts (for example, Peter Diacre at Monte Cassino in the twelfth century, and John Wessington at Durham in the fifteenth century)<sup>47</sup>. What is more, concerning the cartulary of Holy Trinity, this codex is a perfect product of the legal world of Henry II's reign, and shows how a great abbess like Johanna could be part of this world: she embodies a typical member of this "élite d'un monde féodal structuré par l'ordre royal" (M. Arnoux)<sup>48</sup>. This probably explains why no papal bulls, and no episcopal charters, were copied into this cartulary: act n°32 underlines the fact that a case concerning *darrein presentment* for the church of Carpiquet was not brought to an ecclesiastical court, but rather to a secular (ducal) court – in accordance with Norman and English custom<sup>49</sup>. Moreover, Johanna was obviously aware – as was Mary, the probable half-sister of Henry II – that this « royal order » also implied the regular completion of vast surveys.

Finally, Johanna's decision to make a cartulary as soon as she took over the headship of the abbey underlines her willingness to follow the efficient estate administration of her famous predecessors. Johanna thus chose to copy into the cartulary many documents dating from the years 1059-1127, during which Matilda, Cecilia and Isabel were in charge (see appendix U, last column, and appendix V, which shows that the whole section II (b) of the cartulary is focused on the end of the eleventh century and the beginning of the twelfth century). But this wealth of ancient administrative documents –

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<sup>46</sup> On the idea of a cartulary also being an "arsenal juridique", see MORSEL (J.), « Ce qu'écrire veut dire au Moyen Âge. Observations préliminaires à une étude de la scripturalité médiévale », in *Écrire, compter, mesurer. Vers une histoire des rationalités pratiques*, N. Coquery, F. Menant, F. Weber (ed.), Paris, 2006, vol. 2, [www.presses.ens.fr](http://www.presses.ens.fr), p. 4-32, at p. 7 ; MORELLE (L.), « Les chartes dans la gestion des conflits (France du Nord, XI<sup>e</sup>-début du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle) », *B.É.C.*, 155, 1997, p. 267-298, at p. 297.

<sup>47</sup> FELLER (L.) and CHASTANG (P.), « Classer et compiler : la gestion des archives du Mont-Cassin au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle », in *Écritures de l'espace social. Mélanges d'histoire médiévale offerts à Monique Bourin par ses élèves et amis*, Paris, 2010, p. 345-368, at p. 347 ; GENET (J.-P.), « Cartulaires, registres et histoire : l'exemple anglais », in *Le métier d'historien au Moyen Âge*, B. Guenée (ed.), Paris, 1977, p. 95-138, at p. 107.

<sup>48</sup> ARNOUX (M.), « Essor et déclin d'un type diplomatique : les actes passés *coram parrochia* en Normandie (XII<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles) », *B.É.C.*, vol. 154, n°2, 1996, p. 323-357, at p. 331.

<sup>49</sup> See WALMSLEY (J.), *Charters...*, p. 30.

some of them more than a century older than the cartulary<sup>50</sup> – raises a serious question : what use could they have been by the late twelfth century for the management of the abbey's property ? The excerpt quoted above concerning Abbot Samson of Bury Saint Edmunds throws precisely this kind of doubt on the effective use of the abbot's codex : “Now this book, in which were also recorded the debts which he had paid off, Samson called his *kalendarium*, and he consulted it almost every day, as though he could see therein the image of its own efficiency as in a mirror”<sup>51</sup>. If this passage testifies to the daily use of the document, it also shows the abbot's classical education (Samson called his survey a *kalendarium* because in classical Latin that word had meant a list of debts due at the calends of each month), and the fact that the codex was also designed to be a “mirror”, an image, rather than a purely effective tool. Similarly, was the Caen cartulary chiefly aimed at glorifying Johanna's action, as would be the *Gesta Abbatum*<sup>52</sup>?

Again, these remarks fit perfectly with the widespread practices among the great religious houses of the Anglo-Norman world during the same period. The monks of Evesham, for example, chose to preserve two early twelfth-century surveys (Evesham J and L) in cartularies made at the end of the twelfth century<sup>53</sup>. At Ely, Abingdon, Battle and Ramsey, during the reign of Henry II, new cartularies were made from ancient materials, so as to adapt to the crucial changes of Henry II's reign, and to a new bureaucratic and professional world : as has been underlined by David Bates, « the past had once more to be re-ordered in order to negotiate the present »<sup>54</sup>. In a broader context, it is also striking that old administrative documents were often copied by energetic abbots, aiming to reform the management of their estates : for example, at

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<sup>50</sup> The most revealing example of this is the Ouireham survey (n°25), which probably describes a situation prior to the gift of this estate to Holy Trinity.

<sup>51</sup> *The Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond*, H. E. Butler (ed.)..., p. 29; quoted by CLANCHY (M.T.), *From Memory...*, p. 72-73.

<sup>52</sup> Concerning the link between cartularies and the *Gesta Abbatum*, see : GEARY (P.), « Entre gestion et 'gesta' », in *Les Cartulaires, Actes de la Table ronde...*; and concerning twelfth century registers compiled to glorify the administration of efficient abbots (like Suger at Saint-Denis or Henry of Blois at Glastonbury) : ARNOUX (M.) and BRUNEL (G.), « Réflexion sur les sources médiévales de l'histoire des campagnes... », p. 30-31; BERKHOFER (R.F.), « Inventaires de biens et proto-comptabilités dans le Nord de la France (XI<sup>e</sup>-début du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle) »..., p. 348-349.

<sup>53</sup> CLARKE (H.B.), « Evesham J and Evesham L... », p. 65-66.

<sup>54</sup> BATES (D.), « Re-ordering the Past and Negotiating the Present in Stenton's First Century », *The Stenton Lecture 1999*, University of Reading, 2000, p. 20.

Saint-Denis, Abbot Suger emphasized the necessity to support his *renovatio* through an expert knowledge of the abbey's old charters and documents<sup>55</sup>. Should the obvious intention to develop a section of the Holy Trinity cartulary on the theme of the past threats to the abbey's estate<sup>56</sup> – including very old ones – be seen as having been a means of justifying such a reform of the Caen properties? According to the scribe of the Caen Cartulary, Simon of Felsted was in particular responsible for considerable destruction of woodland at Horstead, Minchinhampton and Avening, a great deal of unauthorized encroachment on the demesne, and a number of illegal assarts (act n°26). Simon was the father of William of Felsted, the farmer of the English lands at the time that the cartulary was composed. He then had Holy Trinity's whole English estate at farm. Ten years later (in 1192), a final agreement between Johanna and William enabled the abbess of Caen to recover these manors<sup>57</sup>, and to take the most profitable of them into direct management.

### **3. A crucial moment for the management of the Cross-Channel estates: the cartulary as a toolbox and a monument**

#### **a) A toolbox**

In fact, when the cartulary was drawn up, the real threat to the economic interests of the abbey in England was probably not the disruption caused by Simon and his son William's terms of office, but the sudden inflation and rising population of the 1180s and 1190s<sup>58</sup>. In this well known context, which entailed a diminishing value of lords'

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<sup>55</sup> See the preface of the *Gesta Sugerii abbatis* : SUGER, *Oeuvres*, F. Gasparri (ed. and trsl.), Paris, 1996, p. 54-57 ; GEARY (P.), « Entre gestion et gesta... », in *Les cartulaires...*, p. 13-26. On Suger's administrative reform, also see the thesis of Stéphane Leturcq: LETURCQ (S.), *Un village, la terre et les hommes. Toury en Beauce (XII<sup>e</sup>-XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, Paris, 2007, p. 360 and following.

<sup>56</sup> See section III (b) of the cartulary (Appendice **B** and **U**).

<sup>57</sup> On this agreement, see CHIBNALL (M.), *Charters...*, p. xli.

<sup>58</sup> On this context, see : HARVEY (P.D.A.), « The English inflation of 1180-1220 », *Past and Present*, n°61, 1973, p. 3-30 ; ID., *Manorial Records...*, p. 5-6 ; DYER (C.), *Making a Living in the Middle Age : The People of Britain, 850-1520*, Londres, 2002, p. 119-137; ID., « Villeins, Bondmen, Neifs and Serfs: New Serfdom in England, c. 1200-1600 », in *Forms of Servitude in Northern and Central Europe. Decline, Resistance and Expansion*, P. Freedman and M. Bourin (eds), Turnhout, 2005, p. 419-435, at p. 423-424 (« Why did serfdom (villeinage) develop around 1200? »); SCHOFIELD (P.R.), « Seigneurial Exactions in eastern England, c. 1050-1300 », in *Pour une anthropologie du prélèvement seigneurial dans les campagnes médiévales (XI<sup>e</sup>-XIV<sup>e</sup> siècles). Réalités et représentations paysannes. Colloque tenu à Medina del Campo du 31 mai au 3 juin 2000*, M. Bourin and P. M. Sopena (ed.), Paris, 2004, p. 383-409.

incomes, difficult choices had to be made<sup>59</sup>. As has been underlined by Christopher Dyer, “[t]he landlords’ world fell apart when the apparent fixities in their lives shifted”<sup>60</sup>. The fact that the nuns of Caen took the decision quite early on to retreat from the farm system, which provided a steady income, and to take the most important manors under their direct control, shows that they were fully aware of the economic realities, and able to take them into account to adjust their policy. As suggested by Marjorie Chibnall, the English surveys of series D (which were not copied into the cartulary) are typical of documents made when the practice of direct exploitation of the estates through baillifs had replaced administration by farmers. In all likelihood, the earlier part of this series, concerning the Gloucestershire manors (Minchinhampton and Avening), was made shortly after the farmer William of Felsted relinquished his hold on the English manors<sup>61</sup>.

The Caen cartulary was therefore drawn up a few years before a major administrative change for the abbey’s English property : after 1192, it appears that Minchinhampton, Avening and Felsted came back under the direct control of the abbess – whereas Horstead, Tarrant and Tilshead remained at farm. This early decision is interesting, pointing to strategic thinking and to a certain astuteness, so as to adapt to the local circumstances of each manor, and to limit the risks and administrative costs created by direct management. Abbess Johanna obviously chose to put a great deal of energy, planning and investment into the most profitable manors. As stressed by Paul Harvey, the movement away from leasing as the normal method of running a large estate is a general trend from the mid 1180s, but “it occurred only in England and represents a break with the normal practice throughout Europe”<sup>62</sup>. This remark underlines once again the fact that Holy Trinity Abbey – and its abbesses – were fully up to date with the administrative and cultural practices of the Anglo-Norman world of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The contents of the Holy Trinity surveys B-C show the very first signs of this shift in the preoccupations of the abbesses of Caen. The information sought in these inquests

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<sup>59</sup> On the various options lords had to consider in relation to the exploitation of their estates at the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century, see DYER (C.), *Making a Living...*, p. 119-137.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>61</sup> CHIBNALL (M.), *Charters...*, p. xxxvii.

<sup>62</sup> HARVEY (P.D.A.), *Manorial Records...*, p. 5.

slightly differs from one manor to the other, but a common matter of concern was to establish the type of tenements, ascertaining which were service tenements, and which were freehold tenements, owing (almost) only money<sup>63</sup>. Unlike the first series of surveys, whose succinctness is typical of a moment when the lands were leased out for a fixed annual farm, and when the need for precise information was limited, these inquests testify to the nuns' interest at this time in having a detailed account of local circumstances. These manorial descriptions show an obvious wish on the part of the nuns to secure their rights over their tenants, and are typical of the great landlords' claim of total control over the part of the peasantry henceforth classified as villein (unfree) : they coincide with the growth of the Common Law and the legal reforms of the reign of Henry II that forced distinctions between the free and the unfree. They were copied into the cartulary at the beginning of the crucial period (the 1180s and the 1190s) which saw the depression of status for a large part of the rural English population.

One of the essential pieces of evidence regarding the status of tenants was precisely the test of the performance of weekly labour services. The precision of the inquests on this point can therefore be explained both by economic necessity (the labour force was becoming vital in a system of direct management) and by the nuns' willingness to assert control over tenants. One of the most conspicuous features of Survey C – probably a second attempt at drafting the same material as that contained in Survey B – is the stress laid on the recurrent phrase “*ad voluntatem abbatisse*”, which exemplifies this twofold concern : the uncertainty implied by this phrase points to the strong control exercised by the abbess over her (unfree) tenants, and to the fact that customary dues were liable to fluctuations depending on the decision of the abbess, who adapted to prevailing economic conditions (especially the price of waged labour and market circumstances). As shown by Marjorie Chibnall and John Walmsley, Surveys B-C reveal the insistence of the nuns on labour, rents in kind and demesne lands : on both sides of the Channel, the movement of commutation had affected a small number of tenements, and seems to have been checked<sup>64</sup>.

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<sup>63</sup> On the English surveys B-C, see CHIBNALL (M.), *Charters...*, p. xxxiii-xxxvi.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xlix-lii ; WALMSLEY ( J.), “The Twelfth-Century Surveys...”, p. 95-96. On the theme of commutation of services, see recently : *Calculs et rationalités dans la seigneurie médiévale : les*

Contrary to Michael Postan's assumption, villein labour did not disappear altogether at Minchinhampton, and, even in the late thirteenth century, account rolls show that very few works were sold<sup>65</sup>. Like other great ecclesiastical landlords (for example Ramsey, Bury Saint Edmunds and Battle Abbeys, and Saint Paul's Cathedral<sup>66</sup>), Holy Trinity made extensive use of labour services, especially in the Gloucestershire manors (Pinbury, Minchinhampton and Avening), where villeins were burdened with very heavy labour services<sup>67</sup>. The Caen surveys B-C mark the beginning of a sharp distinction between tenants, according to the week-works or boon works they owed (and, thus, to their status) : as stressed by Rosamund Faith concerning the Minchinhampton E custumal, drawn up in the very first years of the fourteenth century (c. 1306), "different groups among [tenants] were worlds apart", and "a social gulf, as well as geographical distance, separated these various groups of tenants"<sup>68</sup> (see Appendix 0.6). Similarly, in Normandy, John Walmsley has underlined the fact that cash payments were extremely limited and that a clear emphasis was laid on grain rents, especially champart, which probably also contributed to depressing the economic conditions of Norman villeins, creating a "wide gulf between the village élite and the traditional core of the village population"<sup>69</sup>.

This strong, coherent policy in the English and Norman lands of the nunnery at the end of the twelfth century points, again, to a high degree of centralization in the process of decision-making. The appearance of the BnF cartulary is thus most revealing and should be taken seriously : the broad perspective of the codex, which encompasses the whole Anglo-Norman estate of the abbey, is typical of the rule of a strong abbess, and of a period when the economic initiative was assumed by this firm administrator. This appearance was obviously not only an image<sup>70</sup>: as for the land-surveys of the

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*conversions de redevances entre XI<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles. Actes de la table ronde organisée par le LAMOP à Auxerre les 26 et 27 octobre 2006*, L. Feller (ed.), Paris, 2009.

<sup>65</sup> CHIBNALL (M.), *Charters...*, p. lii.

<sup>66</sup> SCHOFIELD (P.R.), « Seigneurial Exactions... », p. 390-391.

<sup>67</sup> On Pinbury, see DYER (C.), *Making a Living...*, p. 92-94; and on the onerous labour services due from virgaters and half-virgaters at Minchinhampton and Avening : WALMSLEY ( J.), "The Twelfth-Century Surveys...", p. 96.

<sup>68</sup> FAITH (R.), *The English peasantry and the growth of lordship*, Londres and Washington, 1997, p. 238-239.

<sup>69</sup> WALMSLEY ( J.), "The Twelfth-Century Surveys...", p. 101.

<sup>70</sup> On doubts concerning the validity of the information given in surveys, and the risks of misinterpretation, see HARVEY(P.D.A.), *Manorial Records...*, p. 8.

Carolingian period, the carrying services detailed in the Caen surveys show that decisions were taken according to a centralized estate strategy, whose result was the linking of each manor to the others – even from Avening to Horstead and Felsted<sup>71</sup> (see Appendix W for a summary). Moreover, the witness lists of the charters surviving from Johanna and Juliana's rule testify to a single administration : for deeds issued at various manors, the same witnesses appear, hailing for example from Horstead, in Norfolk, in a charter concerning Minchinhampton, in Gloucestershire (see Appendix X). It is interesting to note that the BnF cartulary was drawn up at the precise moment when this highly centralized administration begins to appear clearly in Holy Trinity's archive. Was this codex a tool, designed to help Johanna to make her decisions ? As pointed out by Monique Bourin, this kind of document, shedding light on the context in which decisions were taken, is extremely rare<sup>72</sup>. It is obviously not possible to answer this question definitively : as has been often stressed, a cartulary was more than simply a direct tool of management, and complex motivations lay behind its confection.

### **b) A monument**

This crucial moment for Holy Trinity Abbey, which occurred at the very beginning of a new abbess's rule, and a few years before a major shift in the management policy of the nunnery's Cross-Channel estate, was also a time of change in the nature of the nuns' lordship over their tenants. In this context of the redefinition of the abbey's lordship – and thus of its power and identity –, the making of a cartulary was highly significant. As

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<sup>71</sup> For details of these carrying services, see WALMSLEY ( J.), "The Twelfth-Century Surveys...", p. 97. For a parallel with Carolingian land-surveys, see DEVROEY (J.-P.), « Gérer et exploiter la distance. Pratiques de gestion et perception du monde dans les livres fonciers carolingiens », in *Les élites et leur espaces. Mobilité, Rayonnement, Domination (du VI<sup>e</sup> au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, P. Depreux, F. Bougard et R. Le Jan (ed.), Turnhout, 2007, p. 49-65 ; ID., *Études sur le grand domaine carolingien*, Aldershot et Brookfield, 1993 (II. and III. : « Les services de transport à l'abbaye de Prüm au IX<sup>e</sup> siècle », p 543-569 ; « Un monastère dans l'économie d'échanges : les services de transport à l'abbaye de Saint-Germain-des-Prés au IX<sup>e</sup> siècle », p 570-589) ; and for comparison with other English examples of this system : DYER (C.), *Making a Living....*, p. 124.

<sup>72</sup> " (...) même dans les situations documentaires privilégiées, l'écriture médiévale de la pratique est laconique sur les mobiles et les motifs des actes qu'elle enregistre ou consigne. Au mieux, elle nous permet de décrire des situations (...), mais le contexte précis de la prise de décision est en général imperméable à l'historien qui doit le reconstruire. À lui de mettre les choses en perspective en fonction d'éléments qu'il perçoit comme constituant le contexte général de la modification intervenue, et de ses propres représentations", BOURIN (M.), « Propos de conclusion: conversions, commutations et raisonnement économique », in *Calculs et rationalités dans la seigneurie médiévale ....*, p. 297-324, at p. 301.

we have seen, an important part of this codex is focused on the past, and especially on deeds in which not only Queen Matilda, but also the first abbesses (Matilda and Cecilia), are present (see Appendix U). The content of the cartulary therefore points to a wish, at this crucial moment, to summon up the past. As has often been stressed since the work of Patrick Geary, a cartulary was also a tool of memory, which helped to draw a link between the past and the present, and thereby to serve the immediate interests of the religious institution which compiled it. As underlined by Michel Lauwers, cartularies, tombs and architecture could promote ‘complementary commemorative strategies’, and especially the maintenance of the founders’ and benefactors’ *memoria*, and, thus, the preservation of the religious house’s identity and power<sup>73</sup>.

As we see at the end of Part Four of this thesis, the whole cartulary – and not only the surveys – could be interpreted as a thorough description of the nunnery’s property. In this description, past and present are closely linked, to such a point that an image of fixity emerges. The choice to copy the very old Ouistreham survey (n°25), describing a structure which had disappeared a long time earlier, is quite emblematic of this. Similarly, John Walmsley was struck, in his comparative analysis of Surveys A and B, by the fact that they show very little change: “[i]n many instances the earlier survey could well stand as a summary of the later one, so much that a good reason for the survival of the former may have been its usefulness in serving as a yardstick on which to base and test the work of the later jurors”<sup>74</sup>.

It is noteworthy that this demonstration of the timeless strength of the abbey’s lordship appears precisely at a moment of evolution. Again, as for the Carolingian land-surveys, considerable doubts could arise from this remark: were the cartulary and the surveys copied into it only a theoretical image, totally cut off from reality ? In fact, Jean-Pierre Devroey has shown that the ‘illusion of immobility’ conveyed by Carolingian surveys should be taken seriously, and regarded as a deliberate construction, according to ideological, but also pragmatic, motives : “le polyptyque est une image fixe et un

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<sup>73</sup> ‘des stratégies commémoratives complémentaires’ : LAUWERS (M.), « *Memoria*. À propos d’un objet d’histoire en Allemagne », in *Les Tendances actuelles de l’histoire du Moyen Âge en France et en Allemagne. Actes du colloque de Sèvres (1997) et de Göttingen (1998)*, J.-C. Schmitt and O.G. Oexle (ed.), Paris, 2002, p. 104-126, at p. 110.

<sup>74</sup> WALMSLEY ( J. ), “The Twelfth-Century Surveys...”, p. 75.

facteur de fixité”<sup>75</sup>. In this respect, the use of the intellectual tools implied by the making of surveys was an essential means of asserting the abbey’s authority and identity. This link between identity and description appears clearly in the BnF cartulary : among the various (earthly) items listed as making up the nunnery’s property are mentioned, without any distinction, its relics (act n°12) and the *regalia* bequeathed by Queen Matilda (act n°9)<sup>76</sup>. This fusion of time (past and present), space (England and Normandy), and sacred and earthly goods in the codex should probably not be interpreted in terms of a lack of discrimination, or poor geographical skills, on the cartularist’s part : rather, it testifies to a desire to mobilize all these elements in order to assert the nunnery’s *dominium* over its estates at the end of the twelfth century. As underlined by Pierre Chastang: “[l]’affirmation de l’identité et du pouvoir des monastères (...) est en partie affaire de scribe et d’écriture”<sup>77</sup>. The BnF cartulary thus exemplifies the symbolic and pragmatic implications of the literacy of the nuns of Caen.

**Conclusion.** To conclude, the analysis of the cartulary drawn up at the end of the twelfth century at Holy Trinity Abbey shows the striking links between form and substance in this document – and the need to take seriously the mere appearance of the codex. Moreover, this study has aimed to underline the fact that the effective, rational implications of the making of such a cartulary and surveys should not be underestimated. Concerning Holy Trinity, Lucien Musset was especially struck by the long-lasting manorial structure described in the twelfth century Norman surveys : six centuries later, documents preserved in the abbey’s archive show the amazing stability of this structure, as opposed to the fragmentation and emphasis on cash rents at Saint Stephen’s Abbey. The management policies of Holy Trinity and Saint Stephen’s probably began to diverge as early as the twelfth century, and the very different cartularies produced by these two houses at the end of this century are most revealing. Moreover, as underlined by Musset, the monks of Saint Stephen’s appear not have felt

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<sup>75</sup> DEVROEY (J.-P.), *Études sur le grand domaine carolingien...*, IV « Les premiers polyptyques rémois, VII<sup>e</sup> -IX<sup>e</sup> siècles », p. 78-97, at p. 93- 96. Concerning literacy as a combination of symbolic and efficient power, also see : NELSON (J. L.), « Literacy in Carolingian government », in *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe*, R. Mc Kitterick (ed.), Cambridge, 1990, p. 258-296.

<sup>76</sup> This broad notion of the abbey’s property can be found in other contemporary cartularies : see for example BERKHOFER (R.F.), « Inventaires de biens... », p. 346.

<sup>77</sup> CHASTANG (P.), *Lire, écrire, transcrire...*, p. 23.

the necessity to commission (and/or preserve) vast surveys or ‘jurées’ like those drawn up at Holy Trinity<sup>78</sup>. The choices made at Holy Trinity at the end of the twelfth century by Johanna were pursued during a major part of the thirteenth century : the emphasis on rents in kind from the Norman peasants is still one of the conspicuous features of the ‘jurée’ drawn up in 1257 at Abbess Juliana’s instruction. The text of this survey is full of evidence of this : for example, at Escanneville, ‘*omnes predicti villani debent portare apud Cadomum ad grangarium domine abbatisse totum bladum de dominico, de decima et de feodirmariis (....)*’, and tenants were also to carry their own rents in grain, eggs and poultry to the abbey at Caen<sup>79</sup>. These services again exemplify the symbolic and efficient authority exercised by the abbess over her tenants. In England, this lordship appears in the mere name of the manor of Minchinhampton (‘the nuns’ *ham-tun*’<sup>80</sup>), which is also the manor for which the largest number of surveys were kept, and where the abbess of Caen seem to have imposed particularly onerous labour services.

If the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were on the whole a period of prosperous and efficient administration of the abbey’s estates, and point to the ability of the nuns quickly to adapt their management policy according to economic and legal circumstances, one should of course not underestimate the fact that this administrative structure was locally maintained through local agents and a peasant elite (members of which probably appear among the witnesses of Appendix X). This reappraisal of the nuns’ literacy and agency in administrative matters should not underestimate the necessary interaction with peasant communities, which were by no means passive – as has been stressed for example by Mathieu Arnoux for Normandy, and by Philipp Schofield and Christopher Dyer for England. As shown by Christopher Dyer, the language used in surveys can for example be analysed as a telltale sign of this dialogue<sup>81</sup>. Similarly, the impressive tithe barn, still preserved at Ouistreham (see Appendix 3.2), just next to the parish church – the latter being in many respects a

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<sup>78</sup> MUSSET (L.), « Les censiers du Mont Saint-Michel... », p. 290.

<sup>79</sup> ‘Jurée’ of 1257, § 48.

<sup>80</sup> FAITH (R.), *The English peasantry...*, p. 238.

<sup>81</sup> DYER (C.), « The Language of Oppression. The Vocabulary of Rents and Services in England, 1000-1300 », in *Pour une anthropologie du prélèvement seigneurial dans les campagnes de l’Occident médiéval (XI<sup>e</sup>-XIV<sup>e</sup> siècles). Les mots, les temps, les lieux*, M. Bourin and P. Martinez Sopena (ed), Paris, 2007, p. 71-108 ; and on the necessity to beware of exaggerating the efficiency of English landlords : ID., *Making a Living...*, p. 137 ; ID., « The Ineffectiveness of Lordship in England, 1200-1400... ».

replica of the abbey church at Caen – should not be interpreted too hastily as a display of power only from the nuns : the fact that the tithes were kept on the manor, and not carried to Caen like other goods, also underlines the Ouistreham community's ability to assert its power over these grains, which could be used for its own benefit, in order to generate income to maintain the parish church, or in cases of starvation or a bad harvest<sup>82</sup>.

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<sup>82</sup> ARNOUX (M.), « Remarques sur les fonctions économiques de la communauté paroissiale (Normandie, XII<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles) », in *Liber Largitorius. Études d'histoire médiévale offertes à Pierre Toubert par ses élèves*, D. Barthélemy and J.-M. Martin (dir.), Geneva, 2003, p. 417-434, at p. 422 and following ('Pour une histoire des dîmes ecclésiastiques').

## Écrit et gestion du temporel dans une grande abbaye de femmes anglo-normande : la Sainte-Trinité de Caen (XI<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)

discipline : histoire médiévale

**Résumé** : Cette thèse étudie les pratiques de gestion adoptées par les religieuses de La Trinité de Caen pour administrer leur vaste temporel anglo-normand durant les deux premiers siècles de l'histoire du monastère. Fondée vers 1059 par Guillaume le Conquérant et Mathilde de Flandres, l'Abbaye-aux-Dames a élaboré un cartulaire-censier (fin du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle) et une série d'enquêtes (XII<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles) sans équivalent parmi les archives normandes, mais qui s'insèrent outre-Manche dans un *corpus* documentaire plus développé, bien connu et étudié. L'interrogation soulevée par la réalisation de ces documents dans cette abbaye normande constitue le point de départ de l'étude, qui explore la question des rapports entretenus entre compétences scripturaires et administratives, et qui tente de restituer les stratégies de gestion mises en place par les religieuses, et plus particulièrement leurs abbesses, durant les XI<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles. Replacer cette documentation dans son contexte de production, celui d'une grande abbaye de femmes, dirigée par des abbesses puissantes et pleinement insérées dans l'univers des pratiques culturelles et administratives anglo-normandes, permet de mieux appréhender les enjeux de la réalisation des enquêtes et du cartulaire de l'Abbaye-aux-Dames. Comme tout grand seigneur ecclésiastique de cette époque, les abbesses de Caen témoignent d'une attention pointilleuse pour le respect de leurs prérogatives, mais aussi d'une conscience aiguë des réalités économiques, et d'une grande détermination dans leur démarche de préservation du temporel établi et organisé par la reine Mathilde, qui a souhaité être enterrée dans le chœur de l'église abbatiale.

**Mots-clefs** : Angleterre – Normandie – enquêtes – cartulaire – abbaye de femmes – religieuses – gestion – écrit – temporel – abbesses – genre

### **Managing a Cross-Channel Estate. The Uses of Literacy in a Great Anglo-Norman Nunnery: Holy Trinity, Caen (eleventh–thirteenth centuries)**

**Summary**: This PhD dissertation focuses on the administrative practices adopted by the nuns of Holy Trinity Abbey, Caen, to manage their large cross-Channel estates during the first two centuries of the nunnery's history. Founded around 1059 by William the Conqueror and Matilda of Flanders, Holy Trinity Abbey produced a cartulary (at the end of the twelfth century) and a series of surveys (twelfth–thirteenth centuries) which have no Norman equivalent, but in England belong to a more substantial group of documents, well-known and well-studied. The questions raised by the making of such documents in this Norman nunnery are the starting point of this study, which explores how administrative skills were linked to literacy, and seeks to reconstruct the management policy of the nuns – and more specifically that of their abbesses – from the end of the eleventh century to the mid-thirteenth century. Replacing these documents in the context in which they were written, in a great nunnery managed by powerful abbesses who fully participated in the administrative and cultural activities of the Anglo-Norman world, leads to a better understanding of the features of the cartulary and the surveys. As did every great ecclesiastical lord of this time, the Caen abbesses held firm to the prerogatives of their position, but they were also acutely aware of economic realities, and resolute in their efforts to preserve the monastic estate established and organized by Queen Matilda, who chose to be buried in the abbey's choir.

**Keywords**: England – Normandy – surveys – cartulary – nunnery – nuns – management – literacy – monastic estate – abbesses – gender