

ABOUT THE SO-CALLED BENEDICTINES IN THE NA SLOVANECH MONASTERY NEAR PRAGUE¹

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Abstract: ĆOSIĆ, Dajana – VELA, Jozo. *About the So-Called Benedictines in the Na Slovanech Monastery near Prague.* It is generally accepted in scholarship that in the mid-14th century, the newly founded monastery *Na Slovanech* near Prague (later known as *Emmaus*) was settled by Croatian Glagolitic monks who were members of the Benedictine order, and that the monastery initially operated as a Benedictine monastery. While no one questions the Benedictine affiliation of the Croatian Glagolitic monks, scholars have mainly discussed which monastery on the Croatian coast they may have come from. The Benedictine designation may have been uncritically applied and accepted here. This article analyzes the extant fragments of liturgical manuals preserved from the “Na Slovanech” monastery to determine whether they are truly of the Benedictine type. These fragments were recently collected and published together, which facilitates analysis. The analysis shows that the manuscripts for the Divine Office are undoubtedly of a non-Benedictine type, as they clearly indicate they were intended for a Liturgy of the Hours organized according to secular use, not monastic Benedictine use. If the Croatian Glagolitic monks and their local brethren at the *Na Slovanech* monastery prayed their daily prayers (Divine Office) using the books from which these fragments remain, then they did not pray them as the Benedictines had done for centuries.

Keywords: *Na Slovanech Monastery; Prague Emmaus Monastery; Benedictines; Croatian Glagolites; Croatian Church Slavonic; medieval liturgy; medieval Divine Office; monastic use; secular use*

Introduction

“Je všeobecně známo”, It is common knowledge – to quote the esteemed Czech Paleo-Slavist Václav Čermák (2020, 39) – that in the middle of the 14th century to the newly founded Benedictine monastery *Na Slovanech* (later called *Emmaus*) near Prague Slavic Benedictines from the Croatian coast were brought. These Benedictines preserved Church Slavic liturgy of the Catholic rite and the Glagolitic script and in scholarly literature they are known as Croatian Glagolites. The belief that the Croatian monks who came to Prague were Benedictines is indeed widely accepted. Čermák is undoubtedly one of the leading experts on this subject, being the author of recent major surveys on the Church Slavonic literacy of the *Na Slovanech* monastery (Čermák 2014), the Croatian roots of that Church Slavonic literacy (Čermák 2017), and the Glagolitic literacy in any way related to the monastery in question (Čermák 2020, 39-175). Furthermore, Čermák has collated and

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published in Latin transliteration more than thirty surviving parchment fragments of liturgical books and manuals written in the Croatian Church Slavonic language and in the Glagolitic script, which were either brought by the Croatian Glagolites to the *Na Slovanech* monastery or created by copying the books they brought in the monastery's scriptorium (Čermák 2020, 177-295). This publication is accompanied by liturgical, linguistic, palaeographic, and codicological analyses of the fragments.

Čermák is far from being the only one who claims the Benedictine affiliation of the Croatian monks who came to the *Na Slovanech* monastery. The assertion that Croatian monks who came to the newly established Prague monastery – besides practicing the Church Slavic liturgy of the Roman rite and using liturgical books written in Glagolitic script – were also Benedictines is taken as fact in almost every study on the topic by Czech, Croatian, or international Paleo-Slavists, literary historians, and historians, past or present. This is evident in the works of E. Hercigonja, J. Hamm, M. Mihaljević, F. Pechuška, I. Ostojić, L. Pacnerová, B. Lomagistro, J. Verkholtantsev, M. Kramarić, T. Galović, and M. Pohunek (Hercigonja 1975, 61-62; Hercigonja 1994, 74; Hercigonja 2000, 194, 217-218; Hamm 1970; Mihaljević 2017, 194; Mihaljević – Reinhart 2005, 34; *Pěchuška* 1940; Ostojić 1960; Ostojić 1964, 201, 227; Pacnerová 2008; Lomagistro 2009, 127; Verkholtantsev 2014; Verkholtantsev 2016; Kramarić 2019, 45-50; Galović 2016, 145; Pohunek 2022). Likewise, the role of the Croatian Benedictines in the foundation of the Prague monastery *Na Slovanech* is included in scholarly surveys on the history and evolution of the Order of Saint Benedict, such as that by James G. Clark (2011, 259-260). Thus, it is indisputable that the Croatian Glagolites brought to the Prague monastery were Benedictines. Scholars only debate from which Benedictine monastery on the Croatian coast they were summoned. Some favour the Benedictine monastery of Saints Cosmas and Damian on the island of Pašman, while others argue for one of the few Benedictine monasteries located in the town of Senj or its vicinity (Galić – Kozak 2024, 68).

However, while reading the surviving Glagolitic fragments of the liturgical books used in the *Na Slovanech* monastery mentioned above, we have noticed that they do not conform to Benedictine ones. On the contrary, they are of the non-monastic, non-Benedictine type. Here is what we mean by that.

Monastic use vs. secular use

It is well known that during the Middle Ages in the West, the Divine Office was celebrated according to one of two fixed patterns and – as J. Billet aptly puts it – “any student of the Divine Office must be able to tell the difference between the two” (Billet 2014, 13). One way of celebration, usually labelled as ‘monastic use’ or ‘monastic cursus’, was used in Benedictine monasteries and in the monasteries of related orders (Camaldolese hermits, Cistercians, Carthusians, etc.). On the other hand, ‘secular’, ‘Roman’, or ‘cathedral’ use or cursus refers to the pattern by which the Office was sung in secular cathedrals, collegiate churches, and, from the 13th century onwards, in the monasteries of the mendicant orders of friars (Franciscans, Dominicans, Paulines, etc.). The monastic use was based on the prescriptions given by St Benedict of Nursia, mainly in chapters 8–20 of his *Regula s. Benedicti* (RB). As research has shown, the form prescribed by St Benedict was essentially the way the Divine Office was sung in Rome in the sixth century and with which St Benedict was familiar. When the ‘Roman’ use changed in the following centuries, monks who observed the RB (Benedictines and reformed Benedictines) adhered to the old custom prescribed by the RB.

Both monastic and secular uses are similar in many ways. Some differences between the two are very subtle. However, there are areas where the two forms differ significantly. Two fundamental

differences are evident: one is the distribution (*cursus*) of the 150 psalms with canticles over the course of one week; the other concerns the number and arrangement of musical pieces (antiphons and responsories) that accompany the psalms and readings (of the Night Office).

Both uses distribute psalms in numerical order and both rely on the principle that all 150 psalms are sung in one week, so repetitions of a psalm are generally avoided. Both uses start the sequence with Sunday at Matins and both divide the psalms into two groups, 1–108 and 109–150, using them mostly at Matins and mostly at Vespers, respectively, with some psalms being removed for use at other canonical hours. The chief differences are that Benedict designated the majority of psalms 1–19 to be sung on weekdays at Prime and has twelve psalms at Matins and four at Vespers every day, while in the secular *cursus*, psalmody starts with Psalm 1 sung at Matins on Sunday, eighteen psalms are sung at Sunday Matins, twelve on the other days, and five every day at Vespers (Hughes 2004, 51). There is no need to describe all the details of the differences between the distribution of psalms in monastic and secular use here. The monastic and secular weekly *cursus* of psalms are usually best presented in tables (Billet 2014, 16–19. Harper 1991, 258–259. Hughes 2004, 52), from which the differences between the two are most easily seen. We find it unnecessary to present similar tables here. In our analysis of the surviving Glagolitic fragments from the *Na Slovanech* monastery, we shall refer to them as needed. Besides the weekly *cursus*, monastic and secular use also distributed psalms differently on feast days. A useful selection of proper psalms for feast days that was used more frequently is given in Harper's overview (Harper 1991, 260–263).

Except for the way the 150 psalms are distributed over the eight daily offices in one week, the fundamental and most apparent differences between monastic and secular use may be found in the office at Matins on Sundays and feast days. While the secular use had three readings with responsories in each of three nocturns (nine in total), the monastic festal Office had four (twelve in total). Also, following the prescriptions given in RB 11, the monastic festal Office uses three Old Testament canticles instead of psalms in the third nocturn, accompanied by a special antiphon labelled *antiphona ad cantica* (Billet 2014, 20–21).

Glagolitic fragments of Office books

Fundamental differences between monastic and secular use can sometimes be difficult to discern in medieval Office books. To know the exact manner in which the canonical hours were sung, one would need to possess a directory (*directorium*) prescribing it in detail. Unfortunately, no such directory has survived among the Croatian Church Slavic liturgical material used in the *Na Slovanech* monastery. As for the medieval liturgical Office books, they always relied on some degree of familiarity with the psalmody and customs, so only the necessary guidelines are usually given in the rubrics. Even so, the surviving fragments contain enough material to assess whether they follow monastic or secular use.

Fragments of Psalter

On column *a* of the verso sheet of the second folio of the fragment Turský zlomek 1 D c 1/4A of the *Emmaus breviary psalter*, a rubric is written: *V(e)č(e)rna v pon(e)d(ě)l(a)k*, indicating the beginning of Monday Vespers. This rubric appears before the Psalm *Vzlûbihŭ êko*, which is written with a large, distinctive initial *V*. This is Psalm 114, *Dilexi quoniam*. Psalm 114 is sung at Monday Vespers in both the monastic and secular *cursus*; however, only the secular *cursus* begins the psalmody of this canonical hour with this Psalm. In the monastic *cursus*, Monday Vespers have

Psalm 113 before Psalm 114 (Billet 2014, 16-19). It is clear that the rubric indicates the secular distribution of psalms, not the monastic.

On the first folio of the fragment Borotický zlomek 1 D c 1/13 of the *Emmaus breviary psalter*, within the text of Psalm 118, there is a rubric (1a) which reads *K n(o)n(ê) ps(alm)*. After this, a large initial letter D marks the distinctive beginning of line 129 of Psalm 118: *Divna sv(ê)d(ê) niê* (*Mirabilia testimonia*) (Čermák 2020, 199). Because of its length, Psalm 118 is divided into sections and used for the daily hours of Prime, Terce, Sext, and None in both monastic and secular cursus; but different sections are used. The rubric in the Croatian Glagolitic fragment from the *Na Slovanech* monastery perfectly conforms to the secular cursus, where Psalm 118: 129-176 (three sections of 16 lines each) is used daily at None. In contrast, the monastic cursus uses Psalm 118: 129-152 not at None, but at Sext, and not each day of the week, but only on Monday (Billet 2014, 16-19).

The first folio of the Dobřichovický zlomek 1 D c 1/12 of the *Emmaus breviary psalter* contains the rubric, which Čermák transcribes as *V p(e)t(a)k v(e)č(er)b* (1c), clearly indicating that the following Psalm(s) should be sung at Friday Vespers (Čermák 2020, 202). This rubric appears before Psalm 137 *Ispovêm se t(e)bê ... êko* (*Confitebor tibi ... quoniam*) and is another indication that the psalter was prepared for secular use. In the secular cursus, psalmody for Friday Vespers begins with Psalm 137. Monastic practice differs, as Friday Vespers begin with Psalm 141 and Psalm 137 is placed at the end of the psalmody for Wednesday Vespers (Billet 2014, 16-19).

Before Psalm 143 *Bl(agoslovle)nъ g(ospod)b b(og)b moi* (*Benedictus Dominus Deus meus*) in Turský zlomek 1 D c 1/4B of the *Emmaus breviary psalter*, there is the rubric *V(e)č(er)na v s(o) b(o)tu* (2b), marking the beginning of the psalmody at Saturday Vespers (Čermák 2020, 205). The rubric closely resembles the secular cursus, where Psalm 143 is the first of five psalms (from Psalm 143 to Psalm 147) sung at Saturday Vespers, and has no connection with the monastic cursus, where the second part of Psalm 144 is used at the beginning of Saturday Vespers instead (Billet 2014, 16-19).

The second folio of the Borotický zlomek 1 D c 1/13 is the only fragment of the *Emmaus breviary psalter* that contains Old Testament Canticles. Before the Fifth Cantic *G(ospod)i uslišahъ sluhъ tvoi* (Hab 3: 2-19), which begins with a large and distinctive Glagolitic initial G, there is a rubric indicating the distribution of psalms that accompany this Cantic. The rubric is *V p(e)ti mat(uti)na* (2b), meaning *At Friday Lauds*. Three psalms are then mentioned by their incipits, along with their antiphons, followed by the full text of the Fifth Cantic (Čermák 2020, 209). From the number of psalms preceding the Cantic at Lauds, it is evident that this is a secular cursus, which has three psalms, rather than a monastic one, which has four. However, as liturgical books always assume some familiarity with the customs involved, it is not necessary to list everything in detail, and much can be omitted that is implied; the exact selection of psalms should confirm the assumption based on the number of psalms. The first psalm mentioned, *P(o)m(i)lui me b(ož)e*, clearly Psalm 50, is not a point of divergence, as both the monastic and secular cursus include it at Lauds on weekdays. However, the second, *G(ospod)i usliši*, and the third, *B(ož)e b(ož)e*, which can be identified as Psalm 142 and Psalm 62 respectively, correspond exactly to the secular cursus psalmody. Needless to say, this has nothing to do with monastic use, where, as prescribed by RB 13, two variable psalms, Psalm 75 and Psalm 91, are sung at Friday Matins (Billet 2014, 16-19).

In addition to the rubrics that explicitly indicate the distribution of psalms across the canonical hours according to secular rather than monastic practice, there are further, subtler indications that the Croatian Church Slavonic psalters used at the *Na Slovanech* monastery were not intended for monastic use. These indications concern the absence of evidence for the Benedictine practice of dividing certain psalms into two parts. To meet St Benedict's prescribed structure for each canonical hour, the monastic cursus split some longer psalms, counting them as two separate

psalms (Billet 2014, 15). There is no evidence of this practice in the surviving Glagolitic psalter fragments.

In the so-called *Emmaus Glagolitic Psalter fragment 1 D c 1/22*, there is no indication whatsoever of a Benedictine division of Psalm 106 into two parts at line 25, *Reče i vsta d(u)hb* (1d) *Dixit et stetit* (Harper 1991, 248). The line begins with a rubricated versal letter, as do all other lines of that psalm. There is neither a rubric nor any sign indicating that line 25 and the subsequent lines of Psalm 106 should be regarded as a separate psalm (Čermák 2020, 190, 314). In monastic tradition, Psalm 106 is sung at Saturday Matins in the second nocturn, but it is divided into two parts to satisfy the requirement of six psalms. In the secular cursus, Psalm 106 is also sung at Saturday Matins (in a single nocturn), but it is sung in its entirety without division, as it is one of the twelve psalms used at that canonical hour (Billet 2014, 16-19).

Similarly, in the Glagolitic fragment *Karlínský zlomek 1 D c 1/10* of the *Emmaus breviary psalter* (Čermák 2020, 194), there is no indication of the Benedictine division of Psalm 9 into two parts in line 20, *Vskrsni g(ospod)i* (1d) *Exsurge Domine* (Harper 1991, 243). In the monastic cursus, Psalm 9 is divided into two parts: the first is sung as the last of three psalms at Tuesday Prime, and the second as the first of three psalms at Wednesday Prime. The secular cursus uses Psalm 9 in its entirety in the first nocturn at Sunday Matins (Billet 2014, 16-19).

Also, Psalm 103, written on the fragment *Turský zlomek 1 D c 1/4A* of the *Emmaus breviary psalter* (Čermák 2020, 194), is not divided into two parts at line 25, *se more* (1b) *Hoc mare* (Harper 1991, 247). Indeed, due to a change in line boundaries in the Glagolitic text, not even the letter *s* of the pronoun *se* (*hoc*) is written as a distinctive versal marking the beginning of a line (Čermák 2020, 195). Psalm 103 is used undivided in the secular cursus as one of twelve psalms in a single nocturn at Saturday Matins, while in the first nocturn of the same canonical hour in the monastic cursus, it is divided into two parts to satisfy the requirement of six psalms (Billet 2014, 16-19).

In addition to containing the rubric *K n(o)nê ps(alm)* within the text of Psalm 118, which, as previously described, clearly indicates a secular distribution of psalmody, fragment *Borotický zlomek 1 D c 1/13* of the *Emmaus breviary psalter* also provides evidence that Psalm 118 is not arranged for monastic use. In the monastic cursus, the lesser hour of None on Monday begins with Psalm 118,153 *Vide humilitatem* (Harper 1991, 249). In the fragment, the corresponding Croatian Church Slavonic line *Viždь smêrenie* begins with a rubricated versal *V*, written in a completely unremarkable manner, like any other versal at the beginning of any other line of the Psalm (Čermák 2020, 199).

When discussing the division of psalms into parts that function as separate psalms and are counted as such, fragments of Psalm 118 deserve closer inspection. While the monastic cursus divides many psalms, Psalm 118 is the only psalm in the secular cursus that is permitted to be divided into parts. Psalm 118, which is partially preserved on fragment *Borotický zlomek 1 D c 1/13* of the *Emmaus breviary psalter*, contains three large distinctive initials within the text. The initial letter *D*, marking the beginning of line 129 of Psalm 118: *Divna sv(ê)d(ê)niê* (*Mirabilia testimonia*), has already been mentioned, as it is preceded by the rubric *K n(o)n(ê) ps(alm)*. The second initial, the letter *V*, stands at the beginning of line 145: *Vbzvahь vsêmb sr(ъd)c(e)mь moim* (1b), and a large initial *K* marks the beginning of line 161: *Knezi prognaše* (1c) (Čermák 2020, 199-200). These initials divide Psalm 118 into three distinct sections comprising lines 129-144, 145-160, and 161-176—the very three sections of 16 lines each that are used in the secular cursus at None each day (Harper 1991, 249). The adherence to the secular cursus here is unsurprising. What is important to note is that the *Emmaus breviary psalter* recognises the practice of dividing psalms into parts and possesses the graphematic means (in this case, large initial letters) to do so properly when required. It seems that the psalms *are* divided, just not in accordance with monastic practice.

Psalms that are divided into parts only in monastic use appear undivided. There is no indication of a division of Psalm 138 on the fragment Turský zlomek 1 D c 1/4B (1r) of the *Emmaus breviary psalter* at line 14, *Isp(o)v(ê)m se t(e)bê êko*. In the monastic cursus, Psalm 138 is divided into two parts at line 14, *Confitebor tibi quia* (Harper 1991, 250), but the Glagolitic fragment shows no evidence of such a division (Čermák 2020, 206). The same applies to Psalms 143 and 144, written on the second folio of the same fragment. In monastic use, these psalms are divided at line 9, *Deus canticum novum*, and line 10, *Confiteantur tibi Domine*, respectively (Harper 1991, 250). In the Glagolitic fragment, there is no clear division of the psalms at the corresponding lines, *B(ož)e pêsny novu* (Ps 143,9; 2c) and *Isp(o)vêdetb se t(e)bê g(ospod)i* (Ps 144,10; 2d), nor at any other line (Čermák 2020, 206). Psalms 138, 143, and 144 are used at Vespers in both monastic and secular practice. However, in the secular cursus, the complete Psalm 138 is sung as one of five psalms on Friday, and the complete Psalms 143 and 144 are sung as two of five psalms on Saturday. In contrast, in monastic use, the divided Psalm 138 accounts for two of four psalms on Thursday; the divided Psalm 143, together with the first half of Psalm 144, accounts for three of four psalms on Friday; and the second half of Psalm 144 is sung on Saturday (Billet 2014, 16-19).

Fragments of the temporal and sanctoral feasts

The fragments of the psalter used in the Prague monastery *Na Slovanech* provide the best evidence that the liturgical books intended for the Divine Office in that monastery were prepared according to secular practice, as they contain several instructions from which the distribution of the psalms can be deduced. However, other fragments from other parts of the breviaries also show some indications of secular use, although these are less frequent.

The Office of St Vitus written on the first folio of the fragment Svatotomášský zlomek breviáře 1 D c 1/14 has the text of the legend of St Vitus distributed in six readings (not eight) before the homiletic reading on Gospel (Čermák 2020, 217-218) as in secular cursus. Readings are indicated three times by the rubric *čtenie* 'reading', and otherwise by a large distinctive initial letter, six in total. There is also a rubric *rêš(poni) .e. (= 6) iči ot m(u)č(eni)kb*, which explicitly confirms that the number of readings is six – three per nocturn, not four.

The second folio of the same fragment, containing the text of the Office of the Nativity of John the Baptist, also has three readings (not four) in the second nocturn. Before these readings, the psalmody for the second nocturn is indicated by the incipits of the psalms (2a). The same applies to the third nocturn (2d), of which only rubrics for the psalmody and the beginning of the first homiletic reading on the Gospel are preserved. These are psalms mentioned by incipits. For the second nocturn: Psalm 4 *Vneg(da)* (*Cum invocarem*), Psalm 5 *G(lago)li* (*Verba mea*), and Psalm 8 *G(ospod)i g(ospod)b* (*Domine Dominus noster*); for the third nocturn: Psalm 10 *Nb g(ospod)a* (*In Domino confido*), Psalm 14 *G(ospod)i kto o(bitati)* (*Domine quis habitabit*), and Psalm 20 *G(ospod)i sil(oû)* (*Domine in virtute*) (Čermák 2020, 219-220). The preserved selection of psalms reveals nothing about the affiliation of the office to secular or monastic use. Both patterns use the same psalms in the same order for the feast days of martyrs – the category to which St John the Baptist belongs. However, the distribution of psalms shows that we are dealing with psalmody arranged for secular, non-monastic use. The secular cursus has Psalms 4, 5, and 8 at the second nocturn, and Psalms 10, 14, and 20 sung at the third nocturn (Harper 1991, 260), exactly as preserved in the Glagolitic fragment. The monastic cursus, by contrast, uses psalms only in the first and second nocturn, distributing Psalms 4, 5, 8, and 10 in the first nocturn and beginning the psalmody of the second nocturn with Psalms 14 and 20 (Harper 1991, 261).

The Glagolitic fragment Trutnovský zlomek breviáře 1 D c 1/6, which forms part of the temporal, follows the same cursus as the Svatotomášský zlomek breviáře 1 D c 1/14, which belongs to the sanctoral. Fortunately, even more text is preserved here, making secular use even more apparent. On the Glagolitic bifolium, almost the complete office of St Stephen Protomartyr for Matins is written. Thus, we are again dealing with the office for the feast days of martyrs. Three readings (not four) at the first nocturn (1v) and three readings (not four) at the second nocturn (2r) are clearly discernible. Likewise, Psalm 4 *Vnegda*, Psalm 5 *G(lago)li moe*, and Psalm 8 *G(ospod)i* (1d–2a) are prescribed by incipits for the second nocturn, and Psalm 10 *Nb g(ospod)a upvaû*, Psalm 14 *G(ospod)i kto*, and Psalm 20 *G(ospod)i siloû* (2c) for the third nocturn; just as in the aforementioned Office of the Nativity of John the Baptist. In addition, psalmody for the first nocturn is also preserved (1b): Psalm 1 *B(la)ž(e)nb m(u)žb* (*Beatus vir qui non abiit*), Psalm 2 *Vskuû* (*Quare fremuerunt*), and Psalm 3 *G(ospod)i čo se* (*Domine quid multiplicati*) (Čermák 2020, 225–228). The distribution of psalms fully corresponds to the secular cursus and differs from the monastic one (Harper 1991, 260–261).

Some of the fragments believed to have been used in the *Na Slovanéch* monastery for the celebration of the Divine Office are in poor condition. Since the text on these fragments was reconstructed using external sources – specifically, by comparison with preserved Croatian Church Slavonic plenary breviaries – we will not discuss them here, as they do not provide solid evidence that they follow the secular cursus. However, it is important to emphasize that even in these fragments, there are no traces of monastic use. While the abundance of material supports secular use, there is no indication of monastic use in any of the preserved fragments of the manuscripts used for the Divine Office.

Conclusion

Our analysis clearly showed that at many points of divergence between the monastic and secular cursus, the surviving fragments of liturgical books for the Divine Office used in the *Na Slovanéch* monastery near Prague follow the secular cursus and were intended for non-monastic, secular use. We observed no evidence of adherence to the monastic cursus in any relevant detail. The preserved fragments unequivocally show that they once belonged to books of the Liturgy of the Hours of a non-monastic type.

The scholarly literature states that the *Na Slovanéch* monastery was settled by Benedictines from Croatia, who brought with them the necessary liturgical books written in Croatian Church Slavonic and Glagolitic script, and that the monastery – at least in its beginnings – was Benedictine. It is possible that this claim is uncritically accepted in scholarship. Were the Croatian Glagolitic monks who came to Prague actually Benedictines? Did they identify themselves as Benedictines, or were they (mis)identified as such by others? We do not know. We leave these questions to historians and literary historians. What we do know, based on the preserved fragments of the books they used for the Divine Office, is that their books were not Benedictine; they were of a secular, non-Benedictine type.

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