

took stock of more than a quarter of a century of new research. In it, she argued persuasively that the interpretation of customaries as normative documents is only relevant from the late eleventh century onwards, when they became key tools to train adult converts and to impose on dependent houses the customs of a mother institution¹². And in a follow-up publication from 2016 she noted that the intended purpose of earlier customaries was “first and foremost to inspire the recipient community: one aspiring to a life of perfection would read about great customs as one would read the *vita* of a great saint”¹³. To this Cochelin added that to make the genre’s inspirational nature clear to contemporary readers, these texts “were usually and voluntarily written, and even more often kept and transmitted, without an authoritative voice”¹⁴. Suppressing that voice (and in some cases even outright anonymizing the text) arguably meant that its potential normative power was neutralized and that readers would easily recognize the texts’ true intended purpose as a means to reflect on, and improve, their own practices and customs¹⁵.

Cochelin’s argument is definitely paradigm shifting. But at the same time, it is important to realize that she formulated it in opposition to the earlier interpretation of Cluniac customaries as normative instruments for creating a homogeneous network of affiliated monastic houses, by imposing on these houses the obligation to strictly follow the Cluniacs’ observance. And that in postulating the absence in these and other customaries of institutional or normative claims to authority as well as that of an authoritative/authorial voice, she left out of consideration two notable things. One is that in the Middle Ages, authority and authorship were very closely linked concepts and

sous la direction de Michel Parisse / Otto Gerhard Oexle (Collection Lorraine, 1993) p. 183–192. Somewhat outdated in light of these studies is the categorization of extant customaries in DAVRIL / DONNAT / IOGNA-PRAT / PALAZZO, *Moines et chanoines* (as in n. 1) p. 74, which labels the former two Cluniac ones as “normative” documents, the *Liber tramitis* as “prescriptive”, and the non-Cluniac ones as “descriptive”.

12) COCHELIN, *Customaries* (as in n. 2) p. 33.

13) COCHELIN, *Downplayed or Silenced* (as in n. 1) p. 155. Also refer to earlier comments by DONNAT, *Les coutumiers* (as in n. 5) p. 13f., and Isabelle COCHELIN, *Le pour qui et le pourquoi (des manuscrits) des coutumiers clunisiens*, in: *Ad libros! Mélanges d’études médiévales offerts à Denise Angers et Joseph-Claude Poulin*, sous la direction de Jean-François Cottier / Martin Gravel / Sébastien Rossignol (2010) p. 121–138.

14) COCHELIN, *Downplayed or Silenced* (as in n. 1) p. 154.

15) *Ibid.*, p. 173.