

An Unknown Seal of the Convent of Cluj-Mănăştur

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Abstract: The present paper wishes to examine the possibility regarding the existence of an unknown seal of the convent of Cluj-Mănăştur, one of the two major places of authentication in Late Medieval Transylvania. Starting from original documents dating back to the first decades of the 14th century, preserved by the national archives systems of Hungary and Romania, after detailed analyses one could observe the presence of several sealing traces of an ogival form, in contrast to the two round seals known by the subject's historiography and used successively up to the mid-16th century. Therefore, the purpose of the present work is to bring several clarifications regarding these seal fragments, which in the end reveal themselves as one of the fundamental characteristic from the beginnings of this place of authentication.

Keywords: sealing practice, ogival seal, *loca credibilia*, diplomatics; abbot,

Rezumat: Un sigiliu necunoscut al conventului de la Cluj-Mănăştur. Lucrarea de faţă îşi propune să examineze posibilitatea existenţei unui sigiliu rămas până în prezent necunoscut al conventului benedictin de la Cluj-Mănăştur, unul dintre cele două locuri de adevărire majore ale Transilvaniei Evului Mediu Târziu. Pornind de la documente originale datând din primele decenii ale secolului al XIV-lea, păstrate în sistemele arhivelor naţionale din Ungaria şi România, în urma unor analize detaliate, s-au putut observa conservarea unor fragmente sigilare de formă ogivală, spre deosebire de cele două sigilii rotunde cunoscute istoriografiei subiectului ca fiind utilizate succesiv până la mijlocul secolului al XVI-lea. Prin urmare, scopul prezentului demers este de a aduce o serie de lămuriri cu referire la aceste resturi sigilare, care se dezvăluie drept una dintre caracteristicile fundamentale ale începuturilor acestui loc de adevărire.

Cuvinte-cheie: practică sigilară, sigiliu ogival, *loca credibilia*, diplomatică, abate,

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Specific institution of the Hungarian pre-modern legal system by means of literacy and writing experience in the sphere of private law and participation in various procedures of public law¹, the place of authentication from Cluj-Mănăștur² was the most important institution of such kind in Late Medieval Transylvania, a position highly challenged, especially in its early stages, by the competition and rivalry of the episcopal chapter in Alba Iulia³. The rich historiography of this Benedictine abbey dealt with aspects related to its institutional history and specific activities, or its social and cultural influence in the region, some of them referring just in part to details regarding the seals used in the diplomatic issuing practice. According to the custom of these offices, to integrate in their seals the representation of the holy patron of the church institution they were subordinated to⁴, the convent of Cluj-Mănăștur used, during its long medieval existence, two consecutive round seals – with minimal differences – charged with the image of the Holy Virgin. The change of the first round seal occurred in the early 1380s due to the drafting of several false charters by *Stephanus*, the lay notary of the convent, who was eventually burned at the stake for his crimes⁵. The earliest evidences

¹ The historiography of the places of authentication is extremely vast, among the most recent and comprehensive contributions are: Martyn Rady, *Customary Law in Hungary: Courts, Texts and the Tripartitum* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 37-43; László Solymosi, 'Die glaubwürdigen Orte (*loca credibilia*) Ungarns im 14-15. Jahrhundert', *Archiv für Diplomatik, Schriftgeschichte Siegel- und Wappenkunde*, 55 (2009): 175-190; Zsolt Hunyadi, 'Administering the Law: Hungary's *Loca Credibilia*', in Martyn Rady (ed.), *Custom and Law in Central Europe* (Cambridge: Center for European Legal Studies, University of Cambridge, 2003), pp. 25-35. The most extensive work on the subject remains: Franz Eckhart, 'Die glaubwürdigen Orte Ungarns im Mittelalter', *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, 9 (supp.) (1914): 3[396]-166[558].

² Emőke Gálfi, 'Transylvanian Places of Authentication and Ecclesiastical Intellectuals in the Middle Ages', *Transylvanian Review*, 21/supp. 2 (2012): 139-153; *A kolozsmonostori konvent jegyzőkönyvei 1289–1556* [The Protocols of the Cluj-Mănăștur Convent] (henceforth: *KmJkó*), ed. Zsigmond Jakó (2 vols, Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990); Gábor Sipos, 'A kolozsmonostori konvent hiteleshelyi működése' [The Activity of Cluj-Mănăștur Convent as a place of authentication], in Elek Csetri et al (eds), *Művelődéstörténeti tanulmányok* [Studies in the History of Culture] (București: Kriterion, 1979), pp. 33-50.

³ *Az erdélyi káptalan jegyzőkönyvei 1222-1599* [The protocols of the Transylvanian Chapter, 1222-1559], eds Zsolt Bogdándi, Emőke Gálfi (Cluj-Napoca: Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, 2006); Károly Vekov, *Locul de adevărire din Alba-Iulia (secolele XIII-XVI)* [The Place of Authentication from Alba Iulia (13th – 15th Centuries)], (Cluj-Napoca: Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2003).

⁴ Imre Takács, *A magyarországi káptalanok és konventek középkori pecsétjei* [The Medieval Seals of the Hungarian Chapters and Convents] (Budapest: MTA Művészettörténeti Kutató Intézet, 1992), pp. 20-22.

⁵ Susana Andea, 'Considerații referitoare la practica falsificărilor de acte în Transilvania (sec. XIII-XVII)' [Considerations regarding the practice of falsifying documents in Transylvania (13th – 17th Centuries)], *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie „George Barițiu” din Cluj-Napoca*, 54 (2015): 339-348,

of this first essential instrument were found on a charter issued on November 11th 1336⁶.

However, the beginnings of specific activities at Cluj-Mănăştur were placed by historians – Francisc Pall⁷, Sipos Gábor⁸ or Jakó Zsigmond⁹ – at the turn of the 14th century, relatively late compared to other places of authentication that functioned in Benedictine establishments¹⁰. The earliest surviving original charter was issued in September 8th 1308¹¹ and it referred to the cession of a mill place on Someş river, done by the abbey in exchange for 1.5 marks of silver received from two Cluj burghers, *Otthon Gilnicer* and *Theodericus Sliger*. As a result, the first known documents of the place of authentication from Cluj-Mănăştur preceded with about three decades the oldest information regarding the use of a round shaped seal.

Therefore, the purpose of the present inquiry is to explore the features of the sealing practice from Cluj-Mănăştur in the period prior to the use of the first round seal, a time interval from which survived four original charters (issued on: September 8th 1308; October 8th 1310¹²; August 13th 1311¹³; November 13th 1315¹⁴), four confirmations in *inspeximus* form (issued on:

especially 341; Zsigmond Jakó, 'A kolozsmonostori apátság hamis oklevelei' [False Charters of the Cluj-Mănăştur Abbey], *Levéltári Közlemények*, 55 (1984): 111-139, especially 136-137.

⁶ Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár [Hungarian National Archives] (archives.hungaricana.hu/hu/charters) (henceforth MNL), DF 281031; *Documente privind Istoria României. Seria C, Transilvania. Veac XIV* [Documents Regarding the History of Romania. C Series, Transylvania. 14th Century] (henceforth *DIR. C-XIV*), eds Ion Ionaşcu et al. (Bucureşti: Editura Academiei RPR, 1954), vol. 3, nr. 307 p. 398; *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen* (henceforth *Ub*), eds Franz Zimmermann, Carl Werner (Sibiu: W. Krafft, 1892), vol. 1, nr. 529, p. 481; *Codex Diplomaticus Transsylvaniae. Erdélyi Okmánytár* (henceforth *CDTrans*), ed. Zsigmond Jakó (Budapest: Magyar Országos Levéltár, 2004), vol. 2, nr. 915, p. 332.

⁷ Francisc Pall, 'Contribuţii la problema locurilor de adevărire din Transilvania medievală (sec. XIII-XV)' [Contributions Regarding the Problem of the Places of Authentication from Medieval Transylvania (13th - 15th Centuries)], *Studii şi Materiale de Istorie Medie*, 2 (1957): 398-399.

⁸ Sipos, 'A kolozsmonostori konvent', pp. 37-38.

⁹ *KmJkv*, vol. 1, pp. 23-25.

¹⁰ Kornél Szovák, '...sub testimonio literali eiusdem conventus... Benedictine Places of Authentication (*Loca Credibilia*) in Medieval Hungary', in Imre Takács (ed.) *Paradisum plantavit. Bencés monostorok a középkori Magyarországon* [*Paradisum plantavit. Benedictine Monasteries in Medieval Hungary*], (Pannonhalma, Pannonhalmi Bencés Főapátságban, 2001), pp. 601-613, especially p. 604.

¹¹ MNL, DL 29067; *DIR. C-XIV*, eds Ion Ionaşcu et al. (Bucureşti: Editura Academiei RPR, 1953) vol. 1, nr. 96, p. 68; *CDTrans*, vol. 2, nr. 84, p. 60.

¹² MNL, DL 73633; *DIR. C-XIV*, vol. 1, nr. 126, p.177 and pp. 392-393; *CDTrans*, vol. 2, nr. 171, p. 89.

¹³ MNL, DL 40336; *DIR. C-XIV*, vol. 1, nr. 154, pp. 195-195, *CDTrans*, vol. 2, nr. 189, p. 94.

¹⁴ Arhivele Naţionale ale României - Sistemul Informatic Integrat al Arhivelor Naţionale [National Archives of Romania - Integrated Information System of the National Archives]

November 9th 1315¹⁵; May 6th 1321¹⁶; July 6th 1329¹⁷; October 28th 1334¹⁸) within documents belonging to several different issuers and even a false document drafted in the 16th century¹⁹. The research method targeted not only the physical sealing traces on surviving original charters, but also took in consideration several aspects of chancery formulary, especially the title, the corroboration clauses or the critical survey referring to the *inspeximi*, which served as sources for better understanding and contextualization of the early diplomatic issuing practice. Starting from these eight authentic documents and from the considered criteria, the detection of the early sealing profile of the convent of Cluj-Mănăștur revealed itself to be extremely complicated. In order to avoid the sterility of various interpolations necessary to deconstruct the entire phenomenon, during this examination they will be reduced to essential, while the synoptic table at the end will condense all the information obtained as a result of applying the proposed research strategy.

The most interesting sealing traces come from the original documents issued in 1310 and 1315, both of them preserving on their back residues of brown wax from an ogival seal, quite different from the one considered to be the oldest seal of the convent of Cluj-Mănăștur (1336). Thus, the central issue of the present inquiry is the question to whom belonged these seals, since in their early stages several places of authentication used to authenticate their documents with two seals in the same time, one belonging to the abbot and one to the convent²⁰. It seems that this phenomenon was not entirely unknown at Cluj-Mănăștur, all the more since the privileged document issued in 1308 preserves the cords of two pendant seals. On the other hand, the corroboration clause does not clarify this situation at all, claiming its authentication with only one seal and without any further comment. The same charter is mentioned in a 1427 inventory with the assets of the abbey, stating this time the authentication with two seals, but without any details regarding their contents²¹. Therefore, the presence of the two pendant seals is a contemporary one, dating back to the

(www.arhivamedievala.ro) (henceforth ANR - SIIAN), CJ-F-00457-1-4; MNL, DF 252695; *CDTrans*, vol. 2, nr. 257, pp. 116-117.

¹⁵ MNL, DL 28717; *DIR. C-XIV*, vol. 1, nr. 234, pp. 242-243 and pp. 411-412, *CDTrans.*, vol. 2, nr. 255, pp. 115-116.

¹⁶ MNL, DF 277255; *DIR. C-XIV*, eds Ion Ionascu et al. (București: Editura Academiei RPR, 1953), vol. 2, nr. 30, pp. 8-9; *CDTrans*, vol. 2, nr. 396, p. 159.

¹⁷ MNL, DL 41296; *CDTrans*, vol. 2, nr. 655, pp. 244-255.

¹⁸ MNL, DL 73800; *DIR. C-XIV*, vol. 3, nr. 218, pp. 339-340; *Uib*, vol. 1, nr. 510, pp. 463-464; *CDTrans*, vol. 2, nr. 830, pp. 302.

¹⁹ MNL, DL 31074; *CDTrans*, vol. 2, nr. 812, p. 296.

²⁰ Szovák, '...sub testimonio literali', p. 604; MNL, DL 181.

²¹ *Item littera Haydenrici abbatis ... factis sub duobus sigillis pendentibus in filis sericeis unius coloris scilicet brunatici ...*; according to *Kmjko*, vol. 1, nr. 24, p. 192.

period when the document was drafted, and not a later addition, most probably one of them belonging to the abbot and the other to the convent. Moreover, the privileged document issued in 1311 preserves only the parchment tag of a single pendant seal, a detail also indicated by the corroboration clause, but without any wax residues that could suggest its exact form.

Coming back to the original documents issued in 1310 and 1315, the sealing traces on the back are not identical only in shape, but their sizes are more than similar, their measurement on a digital support generating a difference of maximum 2 mm. With approximately 45 mm in height and 30 mm in width, it is very likely that the two imprints were produced with the same seal matrix, whose owner – the abbot or the convent – remained essentially unknown, both assumptions needing further examinations.

A first suggestion in assigning this seal to the abbot in office would actually be the presence of his name in the titles of the first five known documents, preceding each time the mentioning of the convent. It was also appreciated the importance of the abbatial office in the early phases of the place of authentication from Cluj-Mănăştur²². In other words, the first five documents were firstly issued in name of the abbot and only second in the one of the convent, thus arguing the (co)presence of his seal as it might had happened in the case of the 1308 charter. Although there were two holders of this office in the period up to 1315, *Haydenricus* (1308?-1315?) and *Nicolaus* (1315-1327?)²³, the two original document even naming each one of them, it was possible that both of the abbots used the same seal matrix if they were not nominally included in the seal legend. For example, the charter issued on June 2nd 1342²⁴ by the provincial chapter of the Benedictine order preserves eight of the nine pendent seals belonging to the abbots who participated at the reunion. At least two of their seals do not contain in the legend the names of their owners - *Sigillum abbatis de Zoborio* (seal no. 4; Zobor, today part of Nitra, Slovakia) and *Sigillum abbatis de Clovs*²⁵ (seal no. 5; Veľký Klíž, Slovakia). Considering the two seals as a feasible practice of the era, it was not excluded

²² *KmJkv*, vol. 1, pp. 23-29.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

²⁴ MNL, DL 3492; *DIR. C-XIV*, eds Ion Ionaşcu et al. (Bucureşti: Editura Academiei RPR, 1955), vol. 4, nr. 90, pp. 94-95; *CDTrans*, ed. † Zsigmond Jakó (Budapest: Magyar Országos Levéltár, 2008), vol. 3, nr. 97, p. 67.

²⁵ This seal was incorrectly related to the abbey of Cluj-Mănăştur by the authors of the Transylvanian history treaty edited by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, claiming that it had actually belonged to an abbot named *Johannes*; according to László Makkai et al., *Erdély Története. Első kötet. A kezdetektől 1606-ig* [History of Transylvania. First Volume. From the Beginning until 1606], (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1986), vol. 1, plates 81.5 and 82.1. The error is to some extent justified since an abbot with the same name had been indeed in charge here between 1338 and 1345. See *KmJkv*, vol. 1, p. 95.

that the abbatial office seal of Cluj-Mănăștur could have had a similar structure and function, while the nominal absence of its owner could allow its use by several holders of this office. It was therefore possible that the two seal impressions on the two surviving original documents could have been produced by a single seal matrix, which belonged subsequently to both *Haydenricus* and *Nicolaus*.

Regarding the assigning of the seal to the convent of Cluj-Mănăștur, the existing evidences in this direction denote a slightly lower presumptive level. One of the documents known in its *inspeximus* form intercalated chronologically the two original documents from 1310 and 1315, even preceding the later with only a few days. Its critical diplomatic survey from the main document noted that the authentication was done with the old seal of the convent of Cluj-Mănăștur, but without providing any further information. Therefore, it was unlikely that the seal attached to the charter issued on November 9th 1315 would have been different than the one whose wax residues are still kept on the document issued only four days later. In other words, the old (or the oldest) seal of the convent of Cluj-Mănăștur seems to have an ogival shape.

Several innovations in the activity of this place of authentication are suggested by a document issued in 1321, also kept in an *inspeximus* form. Although the critical survey done by the main document noticed its authentication with the seal of the convent, the title did not contain anymore the name of the abbot in office, but the one of the prior, *Johannes*. In fact, the situation of nominating this office in the title was singular among the documents issued by the convent of Cluj-Mănăștur, most probably marking a phase in series of more extensive changes regarding the activity of this place of authentication. The same *Johannes* is considered to be the first known member of the convent, other than the abbot in office²⁶. Unfortunately, in the absence of any other sources, it is quite difficult to follow the entire range of these changes. It is a certain fact that, starting with this decade, the frequency of diplomatic issuing at Cluj-Mănăștur had increased and the title of documents had been standardized even before 1336, subsequently maintaining itself and making reference only to the convent in different forms and formulas. Therefore, the full scale debut of specific activities within this place of authentication, placed by Sipos Gábor in the 1330s²⁷, had its first impulses a decade earlier. It is not excluded that the first round seal of the convent could have been introduced in this period, while the development of a more complex activity would argue in fact the necessity of replacing the ogival shaped seal.

Both theories are in fact assumptions based on the merging together of several variables and ideal scenarios. As a result, any additional information,

²⁶ *KmJkv*, vol. 1, p. 96.

²⁷ Sipos, 'A kolozsmonostori konvent', p. 38.

trustworthy and based on valid historical sources could tip the scale in favour of any party. However, until the discovery of new details in this matter, it should be admitted that less speculative is the second theory. An important argument of this scenario is the intercalation of the two original documents containing the residues of an ogival seal by the *inspeximus* issued on November 9th 1315, about which the main document stated it had been authenticated with the old seal. Regarding this situation, it should be stressed out that the main document was issued by the king of Hungary in 1418, thus more than a century later than the document it transcribed. The royal chancery had been for sure aware of the sealing practice within this place of authentication, but is difficult to estimate how far it went back in time and how accurate it was. The absence of any further sealing details from the critical survey referring to the *inspeximus* suggests its acknowledgment without any problem, being most likely identical to the ogival seal attached to the two original documents. In other words, assuming that the document issued on November 9th 1315 was authenticated with the first round seal of the convent – its critical survey by the main document, correctly observing the presence of the old seal, since the royal chancery knew without any doubt in 1418 about the succession of the two round seals in the early 1380s – it arises the question why the two documents issued on October 8th 1310 and November 13th 1315 were authenticated with the seal of the abbot and not with the seal of the convent, since the existence of the latter was already attested in 1308? Obviously, it is difficult to justify the answer to such a question, the simplest solution and, in fact, the same pointed out by the existing evidence better suggests that the ogival seal belonged to the convent and not to the abbot in office.

To conclude, the absence of richer historical sources makes it difficult to fully establish the assigning of this seal to the convent of Cluj-Mănăştur, but does not close the possibility of making several assumptions. An ogival seal was for surely used in 1310 and 1315. With the same seal matrix had been probably authenticated documents in 1308, this time together with the seal of *Haydenricus*, in 1311 and again in 1315. On the other hand, the development of the activity of this place of authentication, starting with the third decade of the 14th century and the existence of the first round seal already in 1336, had determined for sure its annulment. In other words, the ogival seal of the Convent of Cluj-Mănăştur was used for approximately 30 years, a period of time overlapping the early phase of the diplomatic issuing practice, thus revealing itself as one of its main but previously unknown feature.

Nr. crt.	Document	Surviving form	Document type	Title clause	Corroboration clause	Sealing traces / Critical survey
1.	1308, September 8 th	original	<i>litterae privilegiales</i>	<i>Nos Haydenricus miseratione divina abbas totusque conventus monasteri beate Marie de Clus...</i>	<i>In cuius rei testimonium et robur perpetue firmitatis sigillum nostrum duximus presentibus appendendum</i>	cords of two pendant seals
2.	1310, October 8 th	original	<i>litterae clausas</i>	<i>Nos H. divina miseratione abbas in Clusmonasterio totusque conventus eiusdem loci...</i>	—	wax residues of an ogival seal on the back of the document
3.	1311, August 13 th	original	<i>litterae privilegiales</i>	<i>Nos frater H. abbas de Clusmonstra et conventus eiusdem loci...</i>	<i>Nos itaque communis iuris devito provocati predictum libellum appellationis de verbo ad verbum presentibus inseri facientes in testimonium facte appellationis sigillum nostrum apponi fecimus eidem</i>	parchment tag of a pendant seal
4.	1315, November 9 th	<i>inspeximus</i> 1418, March 13 th Sigismund, king of Hungary	<i>litterae patentes?</i>	<i>Nos Nicolaus frater divina miseratione abbas de Kolusmonstra totusque conventus loci eiusdem...</i>	—	<i>...quasdam litteras religiosi conventus de Clusmonstra sub eorum antiquo sigillo...</i>
5.	1315, November 13 th	original	<i>litterae patentes</i>	<i>Nos frater Nycolaus divina miseratione abbas de monasterio Clus totusque conventus eiusdem loci...</i>	—	wax residues of an ogival seal on the back of the document
6.	1321, May 6 th	<i>inspeximus</i> 1321, July 13 th Benedict, bishop of Cenad	<i>litterae patentes?</i>	<i>Nos frater Iohannes prior de Clusmonstora totusque conventus loci eiusdem...</i>	—	<i>...sub sigillo conventus de Clusmonstora confectis...</i>
7.	1329, July 6 th	<i>inspeximus</i> 1357, February 26 th Chapter of Alba Iulia	<i>litterae privilegiales</i>	<i>Nos conventus monasteri beate Marie virginis de Clus...</i>	<i>In cuius rei testimonium ac robur perpetue firmitatis sigillum nostrum ad petitionem parciun utrarumque duximus presentibus appendendum</i>	<i>...quoddam privilegium conventus ecclesie de Culusmunstra...</i>
8.	1334, October 28 th	<i>inspeximus</i> 1392, November 12 th Convent of Cluj-Mănăștur	<i>litterae privilegiales</i>	<i>Conventus ecclesie beate Marie virginis de Clusmonstra...</i>	<i>In quorum premisorum testimonium litteras nostras privilegiales eidem Iwanka duximus concedendas</i>	<i>...in nostra sacristia seu conservatorio dicte ecclesie nostre in registris diligenter requirentes...</i>

Table 1. Synoptic overview of the documents issued by the Convent of Cluj-Mănăștur between 1308 and 1334.

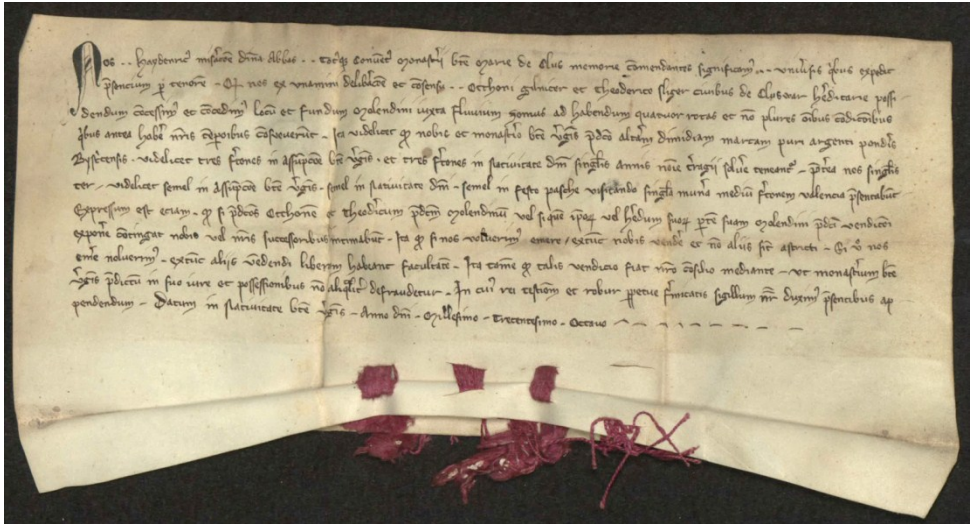


Figure 1. The earliest original preserved charter of the Convent of Cluj-Mănăştur issued on September 8th 1308. Source: MNL, DL 29067;



Figure 2. Detail with the seal attached to the document issued on October 8th 1310. Source: MNL, DL 73633;



Figure 3. Detail with the seal attached to the document issued on November 13th 1315.
Source: ANR – SIIAN, CJ-F-00457-1-4;