THE CODE AND CONTEXT OF *MONASTERIALES INDICIA*: A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF LATE ANGLO-SAXON MONASTIC SIGN LANGUAGE

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1. Introduction. The manuscript and Benedictine contexts of *Monasteriales Indicia*

Monasteriales Indicia is an Old English description of the sign language used by the Benedictine community at Christchurch, Canterbury, and possibly at other monastic establishments of late Anglo-Saxon England. The text is preserved in folios 97v-101v of the mid-eleventh century manuscript *Cotton Tiberius A.iii*, now at the British Library. The manuscript also contains a glossed copy of Ælfric's *Colloquy* and Latin versions of the *Regula Sancti Benedicti* as well as some of its adaptations in the Carolingian and Anglo-Saxon worlds: the *Memoriale Qualiter*, the *Collectio Capitularis* and, especially, the late-tenth century native consuetudinary, the *Regularis Concordia*, with an Old English gloss.[1] The

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[1] The sixth-century *Regula Sancti Benedicti* was enacted as the authority over the spiritual, liturgical and everyday aspects of early medieval monastic communities by Benedict of Aniane in the Capitula of Aachen (816-817), and was later enforced by a diversity of consuetudinaries which adapted its contents to the particular circumstances of the different Cluniac monasteries. The *Rule* of St. Benedict was introduced in England in the second half of the seventh century by bishop Wilfrid, when he returned from Rome in the company of Benedict Biscop and Theodore. Throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, the *Rule* must have been a key religious text, as attested by its preservation in seven manuscripts from the eighth to the eleventh centuries (Dumville 1993: 7-15) and by a complete prose translation into Old English attributed to bishop Æthelwold (c. 970) (Gretsch 1973; 1974: 61-87). The *Regularis Concordia Anglicae Nationis Monachorum Sanctimonialiumque* was the consuetudinary promoted by archbishop Dunstan and bishop Æthelwold and sanctioned by the Anglo-Saxon abbots and abbesses at the Council of Winchester (c. 970). It was highly inspired by the Carolingian texts of the Benedictine reformation (the Capitula of Aachen, the *Memoriale Qualiter*, etc.) and, as the complete title indicates, was enforced throughout the Anglo-Saxon monastic world.

gathering together of key writings on the reformation of English monasticism, like the *Rule* of St. Benedict and the *Regularis Concordia*, and practical or educational texts, like Ælfric's *Colloquy* and the *Indicia*, makes it possible that the manuscript was compiled with a didactic intention. It is well-known that novices were read the *Rule* several times during their first year at the *cella novitiorum* and throughout this preparatory period they may have also been taught Latin, by means of the *Colloquy*, and the signs prevalent at each monastery, with the help of *Monasteriales Indicia* (Porter 1994). As Banham suggests, this manuscript context may imply that the aim of *Cotton Tiberius A.iii* was to make the reform and its basic texts comprehensible to English speakers (1997). In fact, the similarity between the Anglo-Saxon list and contemporary continental codes written in Latin – like the one included in William of Hirsau's *Constitutiones* (late eleventh century) and the lists by Bernhard (1075) and Udalrich (1083) (Jarecki 1981) – may point to a common Latin source, which was possibly compiled at Cluny and extended geographically with the reform movement. Indeed, the fact that the Anglo-Saxon *Indicia* is the only list translated into the vernacular may also point to the didactic aim of the manuscript: the original Latin text may have been translated so that the novices who did not have an adequate command of Latin could learn the signs, possibly because this language was harder to acquire by the Anglo-Saxons than by their continental French contemporaries (Banham 1991: 11).[2]

Despite its obvious interest for comprehending the characteristics of reformed monastic life in England, not much attention has been given to this text. The exceptions are an early edition by Klüge (1885) and the textual notes by Logeman (1899) and Swaen (1920). A recent description and translation of the system by Sherlock (1989), the semiotic discussion by Barley (1974) and the latest edition by Banham (1991) have all contributed to revive scholarly interest in the sources and functions of this medieval system of non-verbal communication.

Two Latin copies have been preserved in mid-eleventh century manuscripts from Christchurch, Canterbury (*BL, Cotton Faustina B.iii* and *BL, Cotton Tiberius A.iii*, the latter including an interlinear gloss) as well as a complete translation into the vernacular (*Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 201*) (Hill 1991; Kornexl 1993; 1995: 95-130).

[2] In addition to *Monasteriales Indicia* four other English descriptions of monastic sign language have been preserved: two fourteenth-century lists from Bury St. Edmunds (Jarecki 1981; Sherlock – Zajac 1988), one from Ely Cathedral library and another from the fifteenth century Bridgettine nunnery at Syon (Aungier 1840). See Banham (1991: 12) for further details on these texts. Kornexl (1995: 95-130) accepts the proposal that parts of manuscript *BL, Cotton Tiberius A.iii* may have been useful to novices who were not at home with Latin; this may have been the reason for the interlinear glosses in Ælfric's *Colloquy* and the *Regularis Concordia*. Nevertheless, she believes that the complete manuscript was not really used as a class-book, but rather was a library copy or a book of reference, containing standard Benedictine texts.

In this paper I intend to explore some aspects of the Old English text which may be of interest for the interpretation of late Anglo-Saxon monastic culture. Firstly, a review of the contents of the *Indicia* and the comparison with contemporary Cluniac sign lists may provide evidence on everyday details of Anglo-Saxon monastic life. Secondly, the application of modern semiotics to this code of communication may allow us to observe the different procedures used for the construction of these signs, in order to reach conclusions on how the surrounding world was viewed and represented by the members of these religious communities.

2. The monastic context of *Monasteriales Indicia*

The *Rule* of St. Benedict supplies the immediate cultural context which induced the compilation of sign lists like *Monasteriales Indicia*. The *Rule* considered silence indispensable for divine contemplation – both as an *instrumentum bonorum operum* (4: 51-54) and a means of achieving *humilitatis gradum* (8: 56-58) – as well as necessary for the regulation of religious life.[3] Consequently, monks were exhorted to minimize the use of words: "perfectis discipulis ... rara loquendi concedatur licentia" (6: 3) ['perfect disciples ... seldom will be given licence to talk']. Silence was especially prescribed – *æfter regoles bebode*, as the introduction to the *Indicia* states – on several occasions of a monk's daily life: a) in church and related monastic dependencies where religious duties were attended, b) at the refectory, where a *summum silentium* was required so that only the voice of the reader was heard ("ut nullius musitatio vel vox nisi solius legentis ibi audiator", 38: 5), and c) in the dormitory, during the nocturnal hours following compline, when any breach of this precept carried with it severe punishment ("Quod si inventus fuerit quisquam praevaricare hanc taciturnitatis regulam, gravi vindictae subiaceat", 42: 8-9). At first, the substitution of words for signs was allowed by the *Rule* only in case of utmost necessity at the Refectory: "Si quid tamen opus fuerit, sonitu cuiuscumque signi potius petatur quam voce" (38: 7) ['If however there shall be any need, let the thing be asked for by means of signs rather than by speech']. As the use of signs became widespread in this and other dependencies, the need to codify them in writing must have been felt, and the first nomenclatures started to appear, particularly among the Cluniac monks of the tenth century, where silence was strongly enforced (Southern 1980: 135; Lawrence 1984: 148).

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[3] Quotations from *Monasteriales Indicia* as well as references to this text and translations from it are all drawn from the edition by Banham (1991). References to the *Rule* of St. Benedict are from the Latin/Spanish edition by García Colombas – Sansegundo – Cunill (1954). Translations into English of this text are my own. A recent translation of the *Rule* into English is supplied by Kardong (1997).

The Old English *Monasteriales Indicia* comprises 127 signs; most of them common nouns for the persons and objects which a monk was likely to encounter and use during the everyday life at the monastic establishment. In this sense, the indications of the *Rule* on the contexts where silence was to be observed in the monastery may help to classify them. The prescription to keep silence in the church implies that a great number of signs refer to books, utensils and religious vestments used there or in related dependencies, such as the chapter house. In general, each group is preceded by a description of the sign applied to the building itself: *cyrcean* (7) and *capitellus* (44). In this particular case, explicit headings also distinguish the signs for books used during divine services – "þara boca tacn þe mon on cyrican to god cundun þeowdome notigan sceal", like *antiphonaria* [8, 'gradual'], *mæsse boc* [9, 'sacramentary'], *pistolboc* [10, 'epistolary'], *troper* [11, 'troper'] and *langwyrpe boc* [12, 'rectangular book'], from the books that were used at matins – "þara boca tacna þe mon æt uhtsange notian sceal" – *biblioðece* [29, 'bible'], *martirlogium* [30, 'legendary'], *oþer boc ... þe god spelles traht on sy* [31, 'any other book ... in which there is a Gospel text'], *salter* [32, 'psalter'] and *hymner* [33, 'hymnal']. Signs for religious vestments and utensils are interspersed between the two lists of liturgical books: *superumerale* [13, 'superhumeral'], *halba* [14, 'alb'], *gyrder* [15, 'girdle'], *stola* [16, 'stole'], *mæssan hacele* [17, 'mass vestment'], *handlin* [18, 'maniple'], *offrung* [19, 'offering cloth'] are listed in the order in which the priest would put them on. *Calic and disc* [20, 'chalice and paten'], *oflæt* [21, 'mass-bread'], *win* [22, 'wine'], *winhorn* [23, 'wine-flask'], *storfæt* [24, 'censer'], *tapers* [25, 'taper'], *candel-sticca* [26, 'candlestick'], *smæl candel* [27, 'thin candle'] and *candel bord* [28, 'candle board'] precede the sequence of signs for books used in the church, which is followed by *leohtfæt* [34, 'lamp'], *micel rod* [35, 'large cross'] *litel rod* [36, 'small cross'] and *gewæd candel-sticca* [37, 'small candle stick']. Only four signs for books and utensils used at the chapter house are included in this list: *gehwædne martirlogium* [45, 'small martyrology'], *Regol* [46, 'the *Rule*'], *gyrd* [47, 'rod'] and *swypa* [48, 'scourge']. They are indicative of the functions of this room, where monks met to discuss daily business, to read the *Rule*, to confess one's faults to the community and receive penances or punishments accordingly (Lawrence 1984: 143). Prescription of silence in the church may have affected actions, as it is implied in the description of signs referring to sitting down (38 and 40), standing up (39) or rejecting and accepting an offering (41, 42, 43). It is possible, however, that these signs were also used in other dependencies of the monastery, particularly at the refectory. In general, most of these signs coincide with the ones described in contemporary Cluniac lists, and minor differences between them could simply be related to slight liturgical discrepancies. For instance, Banham refers to the inclusion in Hirsau's *Constitutiones* of a separate sign for a homiliary – combining the signs for book and bishop – and proposes that this may point to the responsibility of the bishop in preaching homilies in medieval Germany (1991: 66).

A description of the sign for the refectory (*beoddern*) – "sete þu þine þry fingras swilce ðu mete to muðe do" ['place your three fingers as if you were putting food into your mouth'] – is followed by a long list of gestures referring to utensils and food to be used or consumed there: *setrægel* [50, 'seat cover'], *fyldstol* [51, 'folding stool'], *sceat oþþe wape* [52, 'cloth or napkin'], *disc* [53, 'dish'], *laf* [54, 'bread'], *syx* [55, 'knife'], *sticca* [56, 'skewer'], *gesodenra wyrta* [57, 'boiled vegetables'], *grene wyrta* [58, 'raw vegetables'], *læces* [59, 'leeks'], *briw* [60, 'pottage'], *pipor* [61, 'pepper'], *beana* [62, 'beans'], *peosenan* [63, 'peas'], *cyse* [64, 'cheese'], *butere oþþe smeoru* [65, 'butter or fat'], *meolc* [66, 'milk'], *ægera* [67, 'eggs'], *scealt* [68, 'salt'], *hunig* [69, 'honey'], *fisc* [70, 'fish'], *æl* [71, 'eel'], *ostre* [72, 'oyster'], *æpple* [73, 'apple'], *peru* [74, 'pear'], *plyme* [75, 'plum'], *cyrsen* [76, 'cherry'], *slan* [77, 'sloe'], *sealtflæsc* [78, 'salt meat'], *cuppe oþþe institia* [79, 'cup or measure'], *hlid* [80, 'lid'], *micel bledu* [81, 'large bowl'], *lytel drencefæt* [82, 'little drinking vessel'], *gedrypt win* [84, 'dripped wine'], *beor* [85, 'beer'] and *wyrtdrenc* [86, 'herbal drink'].[4] All these signs, together with one indicating the action of drinking (83), pertain to the prescription of the *Rule* to keep silence at meals. The complete list of signs for the different kind of food to be consumed at the refectory is useful for diagnosing how everyday life was at late Anglo-Saxon monastic communities. In general, it reflects a spirit of moderation, which, in the absence of references to diet in the native *Regularis Concordia*, agrees with the *Rule* and is contrary to the popular idea that life in the medieval monastery was a hard one. The brief indication in the *Rule* to eat two boiled meals everyday accompanied by bread, but if there are fruits or raw vegetables a third can be added ("duo pulmentaria cocta ... sufficiant, et si fuerit unde poma aut nascentia leguminum addatur et tertium", 39: 3) is made explicit by the indications of *Monasteriales Indicia*. Sufficient food – except at times of prescribed fasting – seems to have been provided, and the diet in Anglo-Saxon monasteries may have included boiled and raw vegetables, bread, a pottage of boiled cereals and vegetables, cheese, butter, milk, eggs, honey, fish, eels, oysters, fruits, salt meat,

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[4] Editors have proposed different emendations to some items in this section of the manuscript. The original reading *cesena* for sign 63 has been corrected to *pesena* by Banham (1991: 34). Barley (1977: 326) proposes the correction of *wicelre* to *micelre* in the text for sign 81, which is also accepted by Sherlock (1989: 21) and Banham (1991: 38). Finally, the original word in the manuscript for sign 86 is *þuburhreste*, whose meaning remains unknown. Barley replaces it for *beordrest* which he interprets in relation with the previous sign (*beor*) as 'dregs of beer' (1977: 227). Banham believes that this is a compound sign, which combines one indicating herb and another mimicking the action of drinking, thus she proposes *wyrtdrenc*, 'herbal drink', as a more appropriate heading (1991: 77).

dripped wine and beer (Hagen 1992: 99-102; Lawrence 1984: 51-52).[5]

The references to eels, salt meat and wine deserve a special commentary. The former should not be taken as an indication that monks and novices at English monasteries indulged in a luxurious life. They were common food in medieval England, as proved by references in *Domesday Book* to fisheries and marshes sometimes paying their rents in this fish (Banham 1991: 73). The sign for salt meat (78) is qualified by the phrase *for hwylcere neode* ['for any reason'] which does not disagree with the prescription of the *Rule* that everyone should abstain from eating meat of four-footed animals ("carnium ... quadrupedum omnimodo ab omnibus abstineatur comestio", 39: 11; 36: 9). Abstinence from meat seems to have been general throughout English monasteries in the Anglo-Saxon period (Hagen 1992: 99) except, in accordance with the *Rule*, by monks who were very sick ("praeter omnimo debiles aegrotos") and, if we adhere to Ælfric's *Colloquy*, little children under the care of the monastery, who might have had it daily.[6] Finally, the inclusion of the sign for wine (22) among those to be used in the church may imply that it was restricted in England to sacramentary uses. If we follow the *Rule*, only a kind of dripped wine was consumed at the refectory, either by the weekly *lector* who was allowed to drink before he started reading ("Frater autem lector ebdomadarius accipiat mixtum priusquam incipiat legere", 38: 10), or by any mature member of the community, since the *Rule* did not forbid it, but only recommended moderation and a special control whenever the brotherhood was settled in a region where wine was not produced and importing it would be prohibitive (40: 3-4). This seems to have been the case of Anglo-Saxon England where, as Ælfric's *Colloquy* indicates, the expensive price of wine made beer and water the commonest drinks in monastic establishments:

> *And hwæt drincst þu? Ealu, gif ic hæbbe, oþþe wæter gif næbbe ealu. Ne drincst þu win? Ic ne eom swa spedig þæt ic mæge bicgean me win; and win nys drenc cilda ne dysgra, ac ealda and þisra* (Garmonsway 1981: 47). 'And what do you drink? Ale if I have it, or water if I have no ale. Don't you drink wine? I am not rich enough to buy myself wine, and wine isn't a drink for children or the foolish, but for the old and wise.'

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[5] These inferences on dietary habits at Anglo-Saxon Benedictine communities are supported by Ælfric's references in lines 288-289 of the *Colloquy* to "wyrta and æigra, fisc and cyse, buteran and beana and ealle clæne þing?" ['vegetables and eggs, fish and cheese, butter and beans and all clean things'] (Garmonsway 1981: 46).

[6] "Hwæt ytst þu on dæg? Gyt flæscmettum ic bruce, forðam cild ic eom under gyrda drohtniende" ['What do you eat in the day? I still enjoy meat, because I am a child living under instruction'] (Garmonsway 1981: 45-46). The *Rule* of St. Benedict does not mention this dietary practice with infants, but allows less rigour and a greater frequency in their meals (37: 2).

The prohibition to speak during the nocturnal hours explains the inclusion in *Monasteriales Indicia* of signs to describe objects and actions used or performed in dependencies related to this period: the dormitory (87, *slæpern*) and the bath-house (95, *bæðern*). A brief description of the sign applied to the building is followed in each case by explicit indications on how to signal: *blæcern* [88, 'lamp'], *bedreaf* [89, 'bedcover'], *pyle* [90, 'pillow'], *swyftlera* [91, 'slippers'], *socca* [92, 'socks'], *sceona* [93, 'shoes'], *heafod þwean* [96, 'wash one's head'], *wæter* [97, 'water'], *sape* [98, 'soap'], *nægelsyx* [99, 'nail knife'], *camb* [100, 'comb'], *hemeþe* [101, 'shirt'], *bræc* [102, 'underpants'], *wynynga* [103, 'leg bands'], *hosa* [104, 'stockings'], *pylece* [105, 'pelisse'], *cugle* [106, 'cowl'], *scapular* [107, 'scapular'], *glofa* [108, 'globe'], *scearra* [109, 'scissors'] and *nædle* [110, 'needle']. A similar spirit of moderation is derived from the signs applied to utensils and clothes used in the dormitory. In contrast to Cluniac codes and the *Rule* which allowed mat, bedcover, blanket and pillow for the dressing of beds ("stramenta autem lectorum sufficiant matta, sagum et lena et capitale", 55: 15), the Anglo-Saxon list has only signs for bedcover (*bedreaf*, 89) and pillow (*pyle*, 90), which may point to a less comfortable way of life in English monasteries, compared to continental ones. Clothes – listed in the order in which the monk would put them on: shirt, underpants, legbands, stockings, pelisse, cowl and scapular – were suitable to English climate contingencies, and therefore agree with the indication in the *Rule* of St. Benedict to give monks clothes according to the nature of the places they live in ("vestimenta fratribus secundum locorum qualitarem ubi habitant ... dentur", 55: 1). The inclusion of signs indicating articles and utensils used at the bath house – like water, soap, nail knife or the action of washing one's head – may point to a certain concern about hygienic customs in Anglo-Saxon England. In fact, neither the sign for bathhouse, nor that for washing one's head appear in contemporary continental sign lists, which only refer explicitly to the action of washing the feet in church, as an act of Christian charity (Banham 1991: 80). In fact, continental practices accord with the spirit of the *Rule* which does not encourage hygienic practices except for monks who were sick; as some consuetudinaries attest, exception made of the washing of one's hands and face in the cloister after *tertia*, complete baths were only taken voluntarily three times a year: at Christmas, Easter and Whitsunday (Lawrence 1984: 149).

References to buildings and dependencies of the monastery are completed with the signs for privy (94, *tun*) and bake house (111, *bæcern*). The former – "sette þinne swyþran hand brad linga ofer þinne innoð and þu be þam tacne þe leafe scealt æt þinum ealdre abyddan gyf þe þyder lyst" ['put your right hand flat over your belly and by this sign you must ask permission of your superior, if you want to go there'] – is not necessarily related to the nocturnal period, but simply indicates the action of requesting permission from a superior in case of

utter necessity. The association of the activities performed in the bake-house to this nocturnal period of monastic life is possible, given the analogy with modern times when baking usually takes place at night; the absence of explicit signs for utensils and tools used in the premises may imply that the imposition of silence did not extend to this dependency, although the fourth century *Rule* of St. Pachomius encouraged silence in the place. Even though the *Rule* of St. Benedict did not prescribe silence at the *Scriptorium* it is obvious that the intellectual or artistic activities performed in the cloister also required quietness. Thus signs are given for several instruments applied to copying and illuminating manuscripts: *græf* [112, 'stylus'], *weax bred* [113, 114, 'wax tablet'], *reogol-sticca* [115, 'ruler'], *blec horn* [116, 'inkwell'] and *fiþer* [117, 'quill'].

Finally, these lists of signs for utensils, food and actions connected to the basic instances and dependencies where silence was prescribed by the *Rule*, are accompanied by signs applied to designate members of the abbey – *abbud* [1, 'abbot'], *diacan* [2, 'dean'], *profost* [3, 'prior'], *hordere* [4, 'cellarer'], *magister* [5, 'master'], *cyricweard* [6, 'sacrist'], *munec* [121, 'any monk'] – and people outside, whether they are clerics or not: *cyning* [118, 'king'], *cyninges wife* [119, 'king's wife'], *bisceop* [120, 'bishop'], *mynecenu* [122, 'nun'], *mæssepreost* [123, 'priest'], *diacon* [124, 'deacon'], *mædenneshad preost* [125, 'celibate priest'], *lædeman* [126, 'layman'] and *ungehadod wif* [127, 'laywoman']. It is interesting to observe that both sequences are arranged in order of principality, and that references to the everyday life of late Anglo-Saxon monastic communities can be traced behind them. For instance, as Banham points out, the indication to hold one's hair in the sign for abbot – "mon his twegen fingras to his heafde asette, and his feax mid genime" ['one puts one's two fingers to one's head, and takes hold of one's hair with them'] – suggests that haircuts were not excessively short, apart from the compulsory tonsure, and the inclusion of the sign for a celibate priest (125) may imply that they were not always celibate at the time, in spite of the exhortations by the ecclesiastical hierarchy (Banham 1991: 57, 84). Some of these signs may also point to specific aspects of English monastic reform. In this sense, the appearance in this list of signs for the king (118) and the queen (119) may be related to the special role conferred on the Anglo-Saxon royalty by the *Regularis Concordia*. The native consuetudinary differs from Cluniac ones in emphasizing the mutual contribution of clerics and lay power in the governance of the kingdom, and in promoting the king as protector of monasteries, in contrast to the independence from secular power sought by St. Benedict and the Carolingians. This may simply refer to the role of king Edgar (943/944-975) in the Council of Winchester, but it may also point to the actual contributions of the Monarchy to the reformation, particularly granting land to monastic communities or allowing them certain privileges, franchises and duty exemptions. In exchange, monks were obliged to pray for the king and queen after all liturgical offices, except *prima*, and bestowed on the monarch the authority to control the appointment of abbots (Knowles 1966: 44-45; Lawrence 1984: 135-136/166; Deshman 1988).

3. The semiotic context of Anglo-Saxon monastic sign language

The semiotic interpretation of medieval monastic sign language falls within the general scope of kinesics, a subject which deals with the processes whereby body movements and gestures convey meaning non-vocally. Poyatos (forthc.) supplies a complete definition of the discipline in *Nonverbal communication across disciplines*:

> Conscious and unconscious psychomuscularly-based body movements and intervening or resulting still positions, either learned or somatogenic, of visual, visual-acoustic and tactile or kinesthetic perception, which, whether isolated or combined with the linguistic and paralinguistic structures and with other somatic and objectual behavioral systems, possess intended or unintended communicative value.

Monastic sign language, however, shows certain peculiarities which preclude the strict application of this definition. It is an artificial system of communication used in direct interaction when the usual channels of communication are deliberately closed, or fade into the background as a result of cultural or environmental factors, either conventionally determined or imposed and consciously learned (Barley 1974: 227; Poyatos 1977: 204-205; 1994, 1: 27, 125). This means that we are not concerned here with the application of kinesics as part of the Basic Triple Structure of Human Communicative Behaviour, where gestures and body motion are simultaneous with verbal language and paralanguage. On the contrary, we are dealing with kinesics as an independent system, in which gestures are used autonomously as the functional equivalent of a complete speech act (Kendon 1986: 23). A final restriction impinges on the complete application of the above definition of kinesics to medieval sign language; the gestures included in *Monasteriales Indicia* can only be analysed in the written medium where they have been preserved, and this hinders the complementary analysis of the manners – "body attitudes that ... are mainly learned and socially prescribed according to specific situations" – and postures – "conscious or unconscious ... positions of the body, ... learned or somatogenic, ... modified by social norms ... and used less as a communicative tool" (Poyatos 1977: 206, 207-208) – which, either in connection with the 'uttering' of these signs or independently from them, prevailed in the monastic communities of late Anglo-Saxon England.

The peculiar characteristics of monastic sign language imply that gestures within this system are of a special kinesic kind: consciously learned body move-

ments, made mainly with the head, the face, the hands and the limbs, and serving as a primary and prescribed communicative tool, instead of having a merely informative or idiosyncratic function (Poyatos 1977: 205-206). For methodological purposes, the dimensions of semiosis formulated by Morris (1938: 1-13), widely accepted in this field of studies, will be applied in the semiotic analysis of these signs. Firstly, within the syntactic dimension, the construction of gestures and their formal interrelationships will be observed. Secondly, within a semantic framework, each gesture will be considered as a communicative act and the relationship of the signs with the objects they are applied to will be traced with the aim of noticing how they encode meaning, in correspondence with a referent in the world of the monastery. The impossibility of reconstructing completely the cultural context where this system would have been used makes it difficult to deal accurately with the pragmatic dimension of this sign system – with the psychological, biological and sociological processes that pertain to it –, although the contextual analysis offered in sections one and two above may be considered part of this field.

3.1. The syntactic dimension[7]

A first distinction within the syntactic level of analysis is that between simple and compound signs. The former are made up of one gesture, while two separate gestures are combined together in the latter. For example, the sign for dean (2) is a simple one:

> *Ðæs diacanes tacen is þæt mon mid hangiendre hande do swilce he gehwæde bellan cnyllan wille.*
> 'The sign for the dean is that one makes as if one were ringing a small bell, with one's hand hanging down.'

The sign for master (5), being made up of two gestures, is a compound one:

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[7] As mentioned above, syntax does not refer to the textual or verbal constructions used in the written description of the signs. In this respect, three main patterns are generally used in the *Monasteriales Indicia*: a) a copulative construction whose subject contains a genitive phrase expressing the referent of the sign: "[X genitive] tacen is þæt ..." -; b) a conditional clause normally expressing the context where the sign is required, followed by a sentence in the imperative describing the sign itself: "gyf þu mæsse boc habban wille þonne wege þu þine hand ..." ['if you want a sacramentary, then move your hand...']; and c) a time adverb clause with the same function as the conditional one, followed by an imperative sentence: "þone þu stolan habban wille do mid þinum twam handum..." ['when you want a stole, put your two hands ...'].

> *Ðæs magistres taccen is þe þa cild bewat þæt man set his twegen fingras on his twa eagan and hebbe up his litlan finger.*
> 'The sign for the master, who looks after the children, is that one puts one's two fingers to one's eyes, and holds up one's little finger.'

The restricted input of this system of communication implies that most signs in the list are compound ones. It is interesting to observe that individual, simple gestures may be linked together, making up compound signs and enlarging the possibilities of this restricted code to designate new objects. By analogy with linguistic theory it is possible to distinguish between the reference to a new object by combining two or more gestures which individually have their own denotata – proper compounds –, from the association of signs which, behaving as affixes in derivation processes, are applied to a new referent by adding specific information to another gesture. An example of the first type is the sign for large bowl (81), which combines the gesture for dish (53) and the one mimicking the action of drinking (83):

Dish (53):   *... hefe þu up þine oþre hand and tospræd þine fingras.*
                  '... lift up your other hand and spread your fingers'.

Drinking (83):   *... lege þu þinne scete finger and lang þines muþes.*
                  '... lay your index finger along your mouth'.

Large bowl (81): *... þu arære up þine swyþran hand and to spræd þine fingras and lege syþan þinne scyte finger to þinum wælerum and rær up þinne þuman.*
                  '.. you lift up your right hand and spread out your fingers, and then lay your index finger on your lips and raise your thumb'.

The combination of the sign for book, without independent existence in the list, – "wege þu þine swiþran hand" ['move your right hand'], imitating the use of pages – with other markers which, as iconic references to function, may help to specify a particular kind, is a good example of derivation. Thus, a gradual (8), the book of verses sung by the choir at Mass, or a troper (11), a service book containing musical interpolations, combine the sign for book with others which imitate musical notation: crooking the thumb ("crip þinne þuman forþon he is genotod"), or signalling on the chest ("tyrn mid þinum swiþran scyte fingre ofer þine breost fore weard"). A sacramentary (9), which contained the prayers said by the celebrant at Mass, combines the sign for book with the gesture imitating the act of blessing ("do swilce þu bletsige"). An epistolary (10) adds to it the sign of the cross on the front of the head to indicate that it contains the word of God ("wyrce crystelmæl on his heafde foran mid his þuman"); a martyrology

(45) blends it with the imitation of the action of cutting the throat ("lege þinne scyte finger ofer þine þrotan"), and the book of the *Rule* (46) with the simulated drawing of the action of ruling ("stryce mid þinum scyte fyngre andlang þinre wynstran handa swylce þu regolige").[8] The sign for candle (27) – "blaw þu on þinum scyte fingre" ['blow on your index finger'] – is also combined with other gestures to describe various objects and utensils connected with it. For instance, by combining it with dish (53) – "hefe þu up þine oþre hand and tospræd þine fingras" ['lift up your other hand and spread your fingers'] – a proper compound is created for lamp (34): "tospræddum fingre rær up þine swiðran hand and pyf on þinne scyte finger" ['lift up your right hand with outspread fingers and blow on your index finger'].

The construction of signs in this list often makes use of different fingers to qualify objects as large or small; in the first case the thumb is usually raised, while in the second the little finger is used. The comparison between large cross (35), small cross (36), large bowl (81) and little drinking vessel (82) helps to illustrate this qualifying function assigned to fingers:

Large cross (35):   *... lege þu þinne finger ofer þinne swyðran finger and rær up þinne þuman.*
'... lay your finger over your right finger and hold up your thumb'.

Small cross (36):   *Litelere rode tacen is ealswa rær up þonne litlan finger.*
'The sign for a small sign is just the same; raise the little finger'.

Large bowl (81):   *... þu arære up þine swyþran hand and to spræd þine fingras and lege syþan þinne scyte finger to þinum wælerum and rær up þinne þuman.*
'... you lift up your right hand and spread out your fingers, and then lay your index finger on your lips and raise your thumb'.

Little vessel (82): *... rær þu up þine þry fingras and lege þinne swyþran scyte finger to þinum wælerum and rær up þinne lytlan finger*
'... raise your three fingers and lay your right index finger to your lips and lift up your little finger'.

The thumb is used with the same function in the sign for a large book like the epistolary (10) – "mon wecge his hand and wyrce crystelmæl on his heafde foran mid his þuman" ['one moves one's hand and makes the sign of the cross on the front of one's head with one's thumb'] – while the little finger is an important component for the signs applied to smaller books like the hymnal (33) – "mon wæcge bradlinga his hand and rære up his litlan finger" ['one moves one's hand sideways and holds up one's little finger'] – and the small martyrology (45): "wege þu þine hand and lege þinne scyte finger ofer þine þrotan and rær up þinne litlan finger" ['move your hand and lay your index finger over your throat, and raise your little finger']. The same qualifiers are used to specify the little size of peas (63) – "mon sette his þuman on his litlan finfer fore weardne" ['one puts one's thumb on the front of one's little finger'] – in contrast with the length of beans (62): "sete þu þine scyte finger fore weardne on þines þuman forman liðe" ['put your index finger forward on the first joint of your thumb']. Qualifications regarding size are occasionally represented by situating the right hand at the expected length on the left arm. The signs for rectangular book (12) and large tablet (114) illustrate this practice:

Rectangular book (12): *... strece þu þine wynstran hand and wege hi and sete þine swyþran ofer þine wynstram earm be þære boce læncge.*
'... stretch your left hand, and move it about, and put your right over your left arm at the length of the book'.

Large tablet (114): *... stric þu mid þinum twam fingrum on þine breost fore wearde swilce þu dylige and stryce þinne earm and sete þine hand on þines wynstran earmes byge.*
'... stroke with your two fingers in front of your chest, as if you were erasing, and stroke your arm, and put your hand on the elbow of your left arm'.

A final distinction within the syntactic level of analysis is that between free and bound gestures. Poyatos defines the former as "a kinetic act or position performed by one or more parts of the body or limbs in space, that is, by themselves, without contacting other parts or assisting themselves of any props provided by the objectual world". The latter are "any movement or position in which the hands come in contact with other parts of the body or with each other, or in which any part of it comes in contact with other bodies, or, mainly, with objects" (1977: 211-212; 1994, 2: 202). Both types are extensively used in *Monasteriales Indicia* and freely combine to make up compound signs, as the one for sacrist illustrates (6): "mon sette his twegen fingras on his twa eagan and do mid his handa swylce he wille ane hangigende bellan teon" ['one puts one's two fingers to one's two eyes, and makes with one's hand as if one were to pull

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[8] It is interesting to observe that monastic sign language is not free from polysemy. This is illustrated by the sign "stryce mid þinum scyte fyngre andlang þinre wynstran handa swylce þu regolige" ['move your hand and stroke with your index finger along your left hand as if you were ruling'] which is used for both the ruler used at the *Scriptorium* (115) and the book of the *Rule* read at the chapter house (46). Obviously, the context would ensure an adequate comprehension in each case.

a hanging bell']. Bound signs may be further subdivided into 'self-adaptors', when contact is established between the speaker's hand and any other part of his or her own body, 'alter-adaptors', when it is established with another person's body, 'body-adaptors', in which case contact takes place with objects or substances related to the action of feeding and caring the body, and 'object-adaptors', when contact involves elements or utensils in the surrounding world (Poyatos 1994, 2: 202-203). Only 'self-adaptors' and 'body-adaptors' are represented in this list.

'Self-adaptors' involve most parts of the body, whether they act as active elements in the construction of the gesture – left and right hands, small, middle fingers and thumb – or as passive ones: head, hair, eyes, ear, mouth, tongue, cheek, chin, neck, throat, shoulders, elbow, arms, chest, belly, hips, thigh, shin and foot. It is interesting to observe that in the minute description of gestures in this list, the index finger (*scyte fingre*) and the right hand (*swiðran hand*) are privileged. The reason, in the case of the former, is obviously its universal deictic function. An explanation for the special use of the right hand over the left has to be looked for within contextual or pragmatic circumstances. The right hand is privileged in the Bible, and must have been given a prominent role by the ecclesiastical hierarchy when, after a period when all secular gestures had been rejected as sinful expressions of the body, they came to be separated from gesticulation and accepted as a means to achieve salvation; particularly when they expressed feelings and moral values: the inner movements of the soul, like charity, penance and piety (Schmitt 1991: 64-67; Le Goff 1994: 40-64). 'Body-adaptors' are used in *Monasteriales Indicia* with a deictic function. For instance, one of the gestures usually involved in the signs describing clothes and objects with a textile component is the action of moving one's own clothes with the hand ("... wege þu medemlice þin reaf mid þinre handa") – as in alb (14), offering cloth (19), seat-cover (50), bedcover (89) – or touching the appropriate part of one's own clothes: the sleeve to indicate shirt (101) ("nim þu slyfan þe on hand"), the left cuff for a pelisse (105) ("strece forð þin wenstre hand stoc"), or moving sleeve and hood to refer to the cowl (106) ("wege þu þinne earmellan and foh to þinum hode"). Other 'body-adaptors' appear in the sign for any monk at the monastery (121) which requires the action of touching one's hood ("nim þu þe be þinum hode") and in the signs for scissors (109) and needle (110) which mix the actions of taking hold of one's clothes and imitating the practices of cutting or sewing them:

Scissors (109):   *... wecge þinne scyte finger and þone midemistan on þinre swiðran hande to somum claðe swilce þu hine mid scearan ceorfan wille.*
'... move your index finger and the middle one on your right hand on some cloth as if you were going to cut with scissors'.

Needle (110):   *... feald þu mid þinre swiðran hande þane hem þines wynstran earm stoces ofer þinne wynstran scyte finger and do þær ofer mid þrim fingrum swilce þu seowian wille.*
'... fold the hem of your left sleeve over your left index finger with your right hand and do over it with your three fingers as if you were sewing'.

3.2. The semantic dimension

The semantic analysis of this system of non-verbal communication is mainly concerned with the way each sign encodes meaning in connection with a specific objet, person or action within the context of the monastery. The exclusive dependency of this nomenclature on the context of the monastery implies that all the gestures in *Monasteriales Indicia* are extrinsic or externally motivated ones.[9] The methodological distinction of the 'base' from the 'referent' of each gesture is useful for the semantic classification of signs. The base of the gesture is "... the object, action or abstract entity that the gestural form may be regarded as being modeled upon", while the referent is "... whatever the gesture is used to refer to" (Kendon 1981: 152). In this sense, a universal kind of gesture is the iconically motivated one, which represents the referent by the mimetic imitation of some or all of its attributes. This means that the base of the gesture represents the referent "all at once ... in a global-synthetic manner ... like a holistic depiction, a picture or an enactment of content, presented in a single moment of time" (Kendon 1988: 132). Iconically motivated gestures, like the majority of the signs represented in *Monasteriales Indicia*, are also called "mimic gestures" (Morris et al. 1979: 20-21), and correspond, in broad terms, to the characterization of "icons" established by classical semiotics: signs showing a topological similarity between a signifier and its denotata, which, as a result, carry the clue to their decoding in their own appearance (Peirce 1935-1966, 1: 313, 383, 502; Ekman – Friesen 1969: 60; Sebeok 1994: 28). Within this type of gestures a general distinction is established between "primary" and "derived" iconicity. In primary iconicity the association of base with referent is direct, either because an object is deictically pointed, or because the base is pictorical and encodes meaning by simulating the drawing of an event, object or person, or it is kinetic and executes all or part of an action performance (Ekman – Friesen 1969: 61-62). Gestures based on derived iconicity, also called "metaphorical gestur-

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[9] In addition to extrinsic gestures, a class of intrinsic gestures is recognized when the action performed does not resemble or stands for its signification, but it is its own signification. An illuminating example is the expression of 'aggression' by means of a fist blow, instead of by merely showing a menacing fist (Ekman – Friesen 1969: 60; Poyatos 1994, 1: 81-82).

ing", tend to present in imaginistic form aspects of more abstract meanings and the relationship between base and referent is deferred by synecdoche, metonymy or metaphor.

3.2.1. Primary iconicity

Indexicality – the human action of pointing deictically to objects, persons or events in the world – is recognized as one of the most important categories within semiotics (Sebeok 1994: 61-66). Nevertheless, directly pointing to an object or person is not part of any of the gestures compiled in *Monasteriales Indicia*. We may assume that this universal substitute of verbal communication must have been used in the monastery and that the reason for its absence in the list is the redundancy of its written compilation. As stated above, most signs in this medieval repertoire are iconically motivated and, within this category, some are shaped by deictically pointing to an object related to the gesture referent, i.e. entering into the mimetic imitation of one or all of its attributes: touching one's own clothes to indicate any object with a textile texture – alb (14), offering cloth (19), seat-cover (50), bedcover (89), shirt (101), pelisse (105) and cowl (106) –, signalling the part of the body where clothes are worn, like the thigh in the case of underpants (102) ("strice mid þinum twam handam up on þin þeah"), the foot in the case of shoe (93) ("sette forð rihte þinne scete finger uppon þinne fot"), and the hands in the case of gloves (108) ("stric þu þa oþre hand mid þære oþre bralinga"), or even pinching one's own flesh to indicate meat (78) ("twenge þu mid þinre swiðran neoþe wearde þine wynstran þær se lyra þiccost si"). As the last example suggests, none of these signs is an index in the classical semiotic sense of "a sign which refers to the object it denotes by virtue of being equally affected by that object" (Peirce 1935-1966, 2: 248, 305; Sebeok 1994: 65); pinching one's own flesh, for instance, does not indicate 'the monk's flesh' but is part of a wider process which iconically leads to the interpretation of this gesture as designating the meat of a four-legged animal.

A number of signs which rely on primary iconicity are pictorial or kinetic. Depicting the sign of the cross (35, 36) by laying one's left index finger over the right one ("lege þu þinne finger ofer þinne swyðran finger") is a clear pictorial gesture. Some signs for vestments used in church or articles of clothing in general are created by imitating the action of putting them on, and, therefore, are proper examples of kinetic gestures: moving the fingers from the top of the head downwards along the cheeks and towards the arms ("stryc þu of ufwerdum heafde mid þinum twam scyte fingram nyþerweard forð for þine earmas andlang þinra hleora") is the sign for a superhumeral (13), putting the hands around the neck and moving them downwards ("do þu mid þinum twam handum on butan þinne sweoran and stric siððan ofdune") stands for a stole (16), striking with the right hand on edge over the left ("stric þu mid þinre swyðran handa eclinga ofer

þine wynstran") indicates the part of the body where the maniple hangs (18), and striking upwards on the shin with two hands ("stric þu upweard on þinum sceancum mid þinum twam handum") refers to stockings (104). Pictorial gestures for articles of clothing include, for instance, putting the hands below the navel and striking to one's two hips ("sete þu þine handa fore wearde wiðneoþan þinne nafolan and stric to þinum twam hyþum") to refer to a girdle (15), or putting the index finger on one's foot and striking the two sides of it for slippers (91): "... sete þu þinne scyte finger uppon þinne fot and stric on twa healfa þines fet". Signs based on primary iconicity also designate the different food consumed at the refectory and the utensils used for it. In any of these cases, they kinetically imitate the action performed with the object in question, like closing the cup for a lid (80) – "hafa þu þine wynstran hand sam locene and eac swa swa þa swyþran and hwylf hy syþþan ofer þa wynstran" ['lift up your left hand half closed and likewise the right, and then curve it over the left'] –, or pictorically, they tend to draw the shape of the object, as the sign for bread (54) illustrates: "sete þu þine twegen þuman to gædere and þine twegen scyte fingras æðerne foran ongean oþerne" ['put your two thumbs together, and your two index fingers one against the other in front'].

3.2.2. Derived iconicity

Signs based on derived iconicity do not connect their base and referent in direct imitative terms – deictically, kinetically or pictorially – but link them indirectly by means of synecdoche, metonymy and metaphor. In the case of gestures constructed indirectly on the basis of synecdoche, the referent is replaced by the depiction or drawing of a single part of it. Wine (22), for instance, is represented by kinetically drawing with the finger the action of undoing the tap of a cask ("do þu mid þinum twam fingrum swilce þu tæppan of tunnan onteon wille"), and pillow (90) by pictorially depicting a feather inside the left hand ("... mid þinum scyte fingre sume feþer tacnum ge strice on þyne wynstran hand ..."). Regarding metonymy, the referent is expressed by reproducing iconically an aspect contiguously related to it. Here are some examples of the use of metonymy to encode the meaning of certain gestures in *Monasteriales Indicia*:

a) Members of the monastery or people outside are sometimes designated by pointing to an object metonymically associated with them: common monks (121), for instance, by taking hold of one's hood ("nim þu þe be þinum hode"). Occasionally they are referred to by drawing with the fingers a prototypical article of clothing or any other characteristic feature: picturing a veil indicates a nun (122) ("strice ... adune andlang þinra hleora on þæs halig ryftes tacnunge"), drawing a beard stands for a layman (126) ("mid ealre hande be þinum cynne nime swilce þu þe be bearde niman wille"), a headband represents a laywoman (127) ("mid fore weardum fingrum þin fore wearde heafod fram þam anum

earan to þon oþrum on bindan tæcne"), and a crown, the king (118) ("eallum fingrum on cynhelmes tacne").

b) Most signs designating articles used in the different dependencies of the monastery also rely on derived iconicity and, particularly, they connect their base and referent through a metonymic process in which the object is replaced by the action performed with it. A pantomimic depiction of the action of hitting ("wege þine fyst swilce þu swingan wille") indicates the implements used to inflict physical punishment at the chapter house: the rod (47) and the scourge (48). Imitating the action of censing by turning the hand downwards and moving it stands for a censer (24): "wend þu þine hand of dune and wege hi"; the act of slicing represents a knife (55): "snid þu mid þinum fingre ofer þonne oþerne"; cutting – "þu mid þinum scite fingre do ofer þinne oþerne swilce þu ceorfan wille" – and shaving – "straca ... on þin leor mid þinum fingre swilce þu scearan wille" – indicate a nail-knife or razor (99); the action of washing one's hands by rubbing them together stands for soap (98): "gnid þu þinne handa togædere"; a simulated kinetic act of combing by striking downwards on the hair with the fingers represents a comb (100): "stric þu mid þinum fingrum on þin feax nyþer weard"; an ink-well (116) is kinetically designated by imitating the action of dipping the pen – "hafa þu þine þri fingras swilce þu dypan wille" –, and a quill (117) or a stylus (112) by mimicking the action of writing: "styre þine fingras swilce þu writan wille"; finally, the action of washing one's hands stands for water (97) – "do þu swilce þu þine handa þwean wille" –, and mashing by rubbing one hand on the other represents beer (85): "þu gnide þine hand on þa oþre".

c) Metonymy is extensively used in the coding of signs applied to the different food consumed by monks. In this case, the referent is replaced by the simulated drawing of the way of cooking or preparing it, or by any other related operation. Imitating the action of shredding vegetables by moving the hand downwards by the side stands for boiled vegetables (57): "do mid þinre oðre handa nyþer weard be þære sidan swylce þu wyrtan scearffian wille"; mimicking the act of stirring indicates pottage (60): "wecge þine fyst swilce þu briwhrere"; the action of pressing by putting the two hands together flat – "sete ... þine twa handa togædere bralinga" – represents cheese (64); the process of milking by striking the left finger with the right hand stands for milk (66): "strocca þu þinne wynstra finger mid þinre swyþran hande"; peeling, by scraping with the finger up the left thumb – "scrapa þu mid þinum fingre up on þinne wynstran þuman" – represents an egg (67); the action of opening an oyster with the fingers stands for this shellfish (72): "do ... mid fingre swilce þu ostran scenan wylle"; the process of crushing herbs represents a herbal drink (86): "wege þu þine fyst swilce þu wyrta cnocian wille"; imitating the action of grinding pepper by knocking with one index finger on the other – "cwoca þu mid þinum scyte finger ofer

oþerne" – stands for this spice (61), and that of salting by shaking the hand with the three fingers together stands for salt (68): "geþeoddum þinum þrim fingrum hryse þine hand".

d) Finally, metonymy is also applied to the coding of the signs naming the different dependencies of the monastery. Each particular place is represented by mimicking a prototypical action performed there. The sign for church (7), for instance, involves, among other components, imitating with the hands the action of ringing a bell ("þu mid þinum twan handum swilce þu bellan ringe"), the chapter house (44) is depicted by bowing, as if asking forgiveness ("sete þu þine hand on þin heafod foran and hwon hniwa swilce þu þe for gyfenesse bidde"), the privy (94) by graphically laying the hand flat over the belly ("sette þinne swyþran hand brad linga ofer þinne innoð"), the bath house (95) by depicting the action of washing one's chest and belly ("stric þu mid þinre swiðran hande bralinga ofer þine breost and ofer þinne innoð swilce þu þe þwean wille"), and the bake-house (111) by reproducing the process of kneading dough with both half-closed hands together ("mon mid bam sam locone handum to gædere swilce þu dah brædan wille").

In contrast with the profusion of signs constructed on the basis of metonymy, there is just a handful whose derived iconicity relies on metaphor. This is the case of the gestures applied to the superior members of the monastery: the abbot (1) and the prior (3), who dealt with the day to day running of the monastery and its states. Both involve a movement of the fingers to the head: one finger to indicate prior – "rær þu þinne scytefinger ofer þin heafod" – and two to designate the abbot: "... mon his twegen fingras to his heafde asette, and his feax mid genime". Obviously, the head, as superior part of the body, is expected to be metaphorically interpreted as an indication of their principality. The origins of this orientational metaphor whereby the upper position is privileged over the lower one must also be seen within a Christian context. The upper position was possibly granted this basic role in view of its connection with the aim of ascending towards God, whose realm, in the Bible and related religious texts, is always situated above (Schmitt 1991: 64-67). In this sense, it is expected that in the context of *Monasteriales Indicia*, the upper position of the body designates superiority and the principals of the monastic community.

Other signs applied to members of the monastery connect their base and referent indirectly by means of metaphor. The dean (2) is portrayed by depicting the action of ringing a small bell: "... mon mid hangiendre hande do swilce he gehwæde bellan cnyllan wille". This was not a function of deans, who were concerned with the direction and care of groups of ten monks, but can only be understood as a metaphorical representation of his capacity for ruling. Similarly, the cellarer (4), who was in charge of the properties and economy of the com-

munity, is metaphorically designated by mimicking the process of unlocking a lock: "... mon wrænce mid is hande swilce he wille loc hunlucan".

Metaphor is also used in the construction of signs applied to various objects used in the monastery. The gesture representing sleeping, putting the hand flat against the cheeks, ("sete þine hand brad linge to þinum leore") is combined with the imitation of the use of pages ("wege þu þine hand") to form compound signs for the books used at matins: the Bible (29), the legendary (30) or the Gospel text (31). This may be interpreted as a metaphorical indication that they were used in the service between midnight and dawn. The base of signs for books used in the church may also involve a gesture which only metaphorically can be related to its referent. Mimicking the act of blessing – "wege þu þine hand do swilce þu bletsige" – stands for the sacramentary (9), which contained the prayers and texts said or read by the celebrant at Mass, just as the sign of the cross on the forehead ("... mon wecge his hand and wyrce crystelmæl on his heafde foran"), metaphorically introducing the word of God in the Christian liturgy, indicates the epistolary (10) and the Gospel (31). The sign of the cross on the forehead is also used for deacon (124) ("wyrc cristes mæl on þin heafod foran on þæs halgan godspelles getacnunge"), the cleric official who assisted the priest at mass, possibly by reading the Gospel. Metaphor and metonymy are clearly combined in the coding of this gesture: the former applies to the relationship between the sign of the cross and the Gospel text, and the latter connects the person with one of the functions he performs in church.

There are, finally, some special cases of synaesthetic metaphor in the signs for leeks (59), cherries (76) and honey (69). In the first one, the special smell of this vegetable is the base of the gesture, represented by placing the hand flat to one's nose: "do þu mid þinum fingre swilce þu borige inn on þine hand and do bralinga þine hand to þinre nasan swilce þu hwæt gestince". In the second, the action of pinching the top of the little finger ("sette þinne winstran þuman on þines lytlan fingres lið and twenge hine siððan mid þara swiþran hande") makes it acquire a reddish colour, which is associated with the colour of this fruit. Finally, taste, represented by placing the finger on the tongue ("sette þinne finger on þine tungan") is taken as a prototypical characteristic of honey and metaphorically stands for it.

3.2.3. Emblems

Some specific emblems can also be traced in *Monasteriales Indicia*. In classical semiotics, emblems are a type of symbolic signs with only a conventional link between the signifier and the denotata (Peirce 1935-1966, 1: 588; Sebeok 1994: 33). As such, emblems are symbolic gestures (Morris et al. 1979: 20-21) which function as complete utterances in themselves and can be given a verbal gloss with a certain ease. In this sense, they are established coded forms within a group or a community, for whose members the gesture stands by itself as a single and complete act of communication (Efron 1941; Ekman – Friesen 1969: 63-64; Kendon 1981: 135; 1988: 134; Poyatos 1994, 1: 82). It is interesting to observe the process whereby some gestures become emblems since it may help to clarify the reason why some of these signs were included in this medieval repertoire. Emblematic gestures originate in gestural actions which are iconically related to a pattern of action or to the appearance of an object. The process leading from iconic gestures to emblems has been equated by Kendon to lexicalization: when a closed community of users – like medieval Benedictine groups of monks – hinder the availability of spoken language, so that gestures can entirely and on a routine basis be used to refer to units of meaning, then repeated use may eventually reduce the original iconic signs, in a process of stylization, whereby gestures become apparently quite arbitrary in form. Freed from the requirement of picturing an object or an event, the gesture now may take on a general meaning or be combined with others, participating in compound signs (Kendon 1981: 152; 1986: 23; 1988: 136-137).

In fact, this process may explain that a number of signs in this list are apparently incomprehensible, like raw vegetables (58) – "sete þu þinne finger on þine wenstran hande" ['put your finger on your left hand'] – or butter (65) – "stric þu mid þrim fingrum on þine innewearde hand" ['stroke with three fingers on the inside of your hand'] –; the reason may be that their original iconic reference had been lost or become unnecessary, so that they functioned as conventional emblems for the restricted community using them. In the same way, the indication to strike with the hands over each shoulder and move them down over the chest ("strice mid þinre hande ofer æðere eaxle niþerweard ofer þine breost") (120) may be a stylized and almost arbitrary version of what originally was the proper depiction of the *infulae* or twin tabs on a bishop's mitre, just as the action of putting one's two fingers to one's eyes ("mon sette his twegen fingras on his twa eagan"), in the signs for master (5) and sacrist (6), may be a cultural emblem suggesting by agreement the actions of being in charge of someone, or looking after something.

The process of simplification and stylization which contributes to the creation of emblems can be seen at work when the compound sign for king's wife (119) is compared to the two simple signs combined in its construction: king (118) and laywoman (127). The careful depiction of a crown on the top of one's head in the sign for king – "wende þine hand adune and be foh þine heofod ufeweard eallum fingrum on cynhelmes tacne" ['turn your hand downwards and hold the top of your head with all your fingers in the sign of the crown'] – is reduced to the mere action of placing the hand on top of the head in king's wife: "sete ... þine hand bufon þin heofod"; in the same way, the precise 'drawing' of a headband which stands for laywoman (127) – "þu mid fore weardum fingrum

þin fore wearde heafod fram þam anum earan to þon oþrum on bindan tacne" ['(stroke) with the tip of your finger on the front of your head from one ear to the other in the sign of a (head) band'] – is simplified to the act of striking round the head to refer to queen: "strece onbutan heofod". The operation whereby the meaning of arbitrary emblems is widened so that they can participate in compound signs can be illustrated with the sign for apple (73): "cryp þu þinne swiþran þuman to midde wearde þinre handa and befoh hine mid þinum fingre and rær up þine fæste" ['crook your right thumb into the middle of your hand and take hold of it with your fingers and lift up your fist']. A plain simulated drawing like this probably resulted from the simplification of a more precise one which had a direct iconic relationship with its referent. This simplified character led to an arbitrary association of the gesture which favoured its combination with other signs. As a result, it is applied to plums (75) and sloes (77), mixed with the pictorical depiction of characteristic qualities of each fruit: striking with the index finger along the fist ("stric mid þinum scyte fingre anlang þinre fyste") represents the cleft between the two halves of a plum, and poking with the index finger into the left hand ("pyt mid þinum scyte fingre in þine wynstran hand") may refer to the thorn that the blackthorn grows.

A number of cultural emblems included in *Monasteriales Indicia* were possibly not restricted to Benedictine communities in late Anglo-Saxon England, but they may have been used by other members of the population, just as they are still used – alone or in combination with verbal language – by many communities in Western Europe: the sign to indicate silence by putting the right index finger to the mouth ("sete þinne scytefinger to þinum muþe"), the sign for food by moving three fingers together to the mouth ("sete þu þine þry fingras swilce ðu mete to muðe do"), and drink by moving the fingers along the mouth ("lege þu þine scete finger and lang þines muþes"), or the depiction of sleeping by laying one's hand under the cheek ("lyge þu þinne swyþran hand under þin swyþre hleor"). These are all cultural emblems used respectively in the representation of church (7), refectory (49), drinking vessels (82), dormitory (87), bedcover (87) and pillow (90). Other cultural emblems, possibly widespread out of the monastic context, are used in this nomenclature as the base of gestures designating common actions: standing up (39) by moving the hand upwards ("wend þu þine hand and hi be dæle up abræd"), sitting down (40) by turning the hand downwards ("wend þu adune and hi bedæle adune læt"), and accepting or rejecting (42, 43, 41), respectively by moving the hand on edge towards the object or the person offering ("wende he his hand eclinga adune and wonlice wið his wyrd styrige"), and by turning the hand downwards in a horizontal position and moving it slightly ("wend þu his hand bradlinga adune and astrehtre hwonlice hy styrige").

4. Conclusion

As a conclusion, it is necessary to point to the significance of the preceding two-fold analysis of *Monasteriales Indicia*. Firstly, the review of its contents within a Benedictine context has afforded a very realistic picture of everyday life conditions at reformed monastic communities: in general, customs agreed with the prescriptions and instructions included in the *Rule* of St. Benedict and in the *Regularis Concordia*. Additionally, this review has confirmed some specific aspects of monastic life in Anglo-Saxon England, like dietary habits or dressing and hygienic practices, as well as certain characteristics peculiar to the reformation in this country, like the special function of the king as protector of reformed houses. Secondly, the semiotic analysis of this sign system suggests different ways how Benedictine monastic communities represented the world kinesically. The study of the syntactic and semantic processes involved in the construction of these gestures points to some universal means of creating sign language, particularly relying on the establishment of an iconic relation between the base and referent of each gesture. A special attention should be given, within the semantic field, to the gestures whose referent is "mapped" into the base indirectly, by means of metonymy and metaphor, as well as to certain symbolic, conventional gestures known as cultural emblems. The former are widely used in *Monasteriales Indicia*, in view of the restricted input of this system of communication, and their analysis sanctions the special function of metonymy within the cognitive system that lay behind many of these signs; in addition it allows us to trace some early instances of "orientational metaphors", like "up is superior" or "up indicates a higher status", which, possibly promoted by the ecclesiastical worldview, are now prevalent throughout the western world. Finally, as regards emblematic gestures, it is possible to assume that some of them, like the signs for silence, eating, drinking, sleeping, etc., may have been extensively used outside the walls of Christchurch, by the Anglo-Saxons at large.

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