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Regula, Correctorium et Ceremoniale fratrum ordinis minorum sancti Francisci de Paula [Rule, Correctorium, Ceremoniale for the Order of Minims of St. Francis de Paula]

In Latin, manuscript on paper

Italy, Rome?, after 1528, probably c. 1530s, with additions little after 1560

81 ff. , complete, collation (i³ [of 4, missing iv], ii-iv⁴, v¹², vi⁴, vii¹², viii⁶, ix², x¹⁰, xi⁸, xii⁸ [with viii of quire used as lower pastedown]), on paper, with watermarks close to Briquet, types 6292-6299 (Florence, 1518-1528; Rome, 1527-1566; Fabriano, 1554-1576), also close to Briquet, no. 6291, conveniently Rome 1561-1562, written by two hands in semi-humanistic scripts (hand 1, ff. 4-54; hand 2, ff. 1-3; ff. 54-81), on a single column, ruled for 18 lines in black ink (justification: 100 x 80 mm.), contemporary quire signatures, initials, explicits, and some initials with elaborate line-drawn acanthus-leaf sprays, some corrections and some marginal annotations (particularly ff. 72v-73v). Bound in contemporary (c. 1560? or little after) blind-stamped calf over pasteboards, back sewn on 3 raised thongs, double frame composed of triple blind fillets, intermediate panel with fleur-de-lis at angles and roll-stamp designs of birds and floral and foliate motifs [including a pomegranate stamp], double fleur-de-lis displayed head-to-tail in central panel, traces of holes for two ties (small burn to center of lower board, remains of paper label on spine that reads: Reg[ula] Fr[a]trum minor[um], a small number of leaves with damage from corrosive ink (see ff. 1 and 7 for example), else in good condition). Dimensions 138 x 102 mm.

This small manuscript in its original blind-stamped binding survives intact as a precious early record of the Order of the Minims shortly after the canonization of Francis in 1518. It is an Italian copy of an imprint of 1528 from the Convent of Nigeon-Chaillet (Passy, near Paris). The manuscript was likely copied in Italy, perhaps Rome where the Minims installed their famous convent Sta Trinità dei Monti on the Pincian Hill. It includes the three central texts of the Order, of which there is no modern edition, nor a satisfactory census of the extant manuscripts and early imprints.

PROVENANCE:

1. Copied in Italy, perhaps Rome, as suggested by the script (by two distinct hands) and confirmed by the watermark found in paper clearly of Italian origin. The first portion of this manuscript (ff. 4-54) is a copy of a work as stated in a end note found on f. 54, revealing the Rule and "Correctorium" were printed in 1528 by a certain Hugo de Varenne(s) in the Convent of Nigeon ("monastère des Bonhommes de Chaillet"). Apparently the Minims of Chaillet or Nigeon had set up a printing press within the convent and printed books related to their order: Nigeon printed the Rule of the Order and ancillary texts in 1525, again in 1528 (the edition referred to in this manuscript, printed by a Minim Brother Hugo de Varennes) and 1533-1535. The edition of Nigeon, 1528 is recorded in Moreau, *Inventaire chronologique des éditions parisiennes du XVI^e siècle*, II, no. 1596 (see also 1533-1535 edition, B.

Moreau, IV, no. 1414) and discussed also in Whitmore, 1967, pp. 60-61. If the manuscript is indeed copied in Rome (as suggested by watermarks), the small codex might have been planned for use in the convent founded by King Charles VIII of France, that is Santa Trinità dei Monti, a French enclave of Minims in Rome, closely tied to the Order in France (see Whitmore, 1967, pp. 100-101; see also Bonnard, *Histoire du couvent royal de la Trinité du Mont Pincio à Rome*, 1933).

2. A second (later) hand copied c. 1560, or little after, a substantial portion of this manuscript as suggested by a date found on f. 54v: "Datum rome apud sanctum petrum anno incarnationis dominice 1560...." These parts are ff. 1-4, ff. 54-54v, and ff. 56-81. The binding appears to date from this time.
3. The book records the reception (of a novice?) on 28 April 1561 as per the inscription written upside down at the base of f. 81, unfortunately with the name thoroughly erased: "Anno domini 1561 fui receptus in [...] die vero 28 aprilis." There is a monastic pressmark "I ° 29" at the base of f. 1. Further studies on the libraries of the Minims, for which many 16th and 17th century catalogues survive, including catalogs of manuscripts once owned by Minims (of Nigeon-Passy, of Santa Trinità dei Monti, in Rome, and others) might allow for a better identification of this shelfmark.
4. Umberto Saba of Trieste (1883-1957); perhaps sold in the 1930s when the University of Bologna also acquired manuscripts from his collection: a cutting from a sale catalog is pasted inside front board with the collector's name and year of death added.

TEXT

ff. 1-3v, [Office of the reception of novices], heading, *Sequitur modus induendi novitium*, incipit, "Et primo ponatur sedes in medio chori et sacerdos ...; explicit, "[...] omne datum optimum et omne donum";

ff. 4-17, [Life and Rule of the Brothers of the Order of the Minims of Saint Francis de Paula], heading, *Incipit vita et regula fratrum ordinis minimorum Sancti Francisci de Paula. De saluti fera preceptorum ne veterum observantia. Capitulum primum*, incipit, "Huius ordinis minimorum universi fratres..."; explicit, "[...] sempiternam feliciter consequamini. Amen";

ff. 17v-54, *Correctorium* [Code of penance to be inflicted on those who transgress the Rule, confirmed in 1506], heading, *Incipit correctorium fratrum ordinis minorum sancti francisci de paula capitulum primum*, incipit, "Si quis deliquens contra primum capitulum huius ordinis minimorum..."; explicit, "[...] in future gloria fruatur perenni. Amen. Datum rome [...] kalendas augusti anni domini 1506. Pontificatus sanctis julii papae secundi anno tertio. Deo gratias" [followed by a sort of colophon] Ad laudem et honorem et gloria sanctissime et individue trinitatis patris et filii spiritu sancti...explicit correctorium fratrum ordinis minimorum sancti francisci de paula solerti cum fratris hugonis de varenna in palestra niogemana impressum anno domini 1528. Jesus Maria Franciscus de Paula"; [addition, dated 1560] Ceterum quia difficile foret presentes literas ad quecumque loca....Datum rome apud sanctum petrum anno incarnationis dominice 1560 quinto kalendas augusti pontificatus nostri anno tertio";

The *Correctorium*, in French "Correctoire," drawn up by Francis de Paula, was a method of enjoining penances. Designed to instill a stricter observance of the Rule, the *Correctorium* determines the penance to be inflicted on those who transgress its precepts. The *Correctorium* contained ten chapters corresponding to the number of chapters in the Rule. Over the entire order presided a "Correcteur general" who governed the different provinces. There is another sixteenth-century copy of the *Correctorium* in Paris, Bibl. Mazarine, MS 1788-1.

ff. 55-55v, blank;

ff. 56-81 [with f. 81 used as pastedown], [Cereemoniale, description of the Rites of the Order], *Sequitur cerimonie observantissime ordinis fratrum minimorum tam in officio divino quam in aliis exercitiis spiritualibus potissimum observande...*; incipit, "De modo pulsandi canpannas pro officio divino..."; explicit, "[...] Expliciunt cerimonie fratrum ordinis minimorum sancti francisci de paula" (nota bene: ff. 77v-81, struck through by a vertical line in brown ink).

The Order of Minims ("the least of religions," referring to their great abstinence) was founded by Francis de Paula (1416-1507), himself a Calabrian Franciscan friar, aesthetic and mystic who lived a life of great penance and abnegation. As a youth, prayer to St. Francis of Assisi cured the potential loss of his eyesight, and at the age of thirteen, he entered a Franciscan convent. Known for his great gift of prophecy, as well as his healing abilities, Francis was much sought after. When King Louis XI was in his last illness he sent an embassy to Italy to beg the saint to visit him. Francis went to the King at Plessis-les-Tours and was with him at his death. Louis's successor, King Charles VIII, was also an admirer of Francis and during his reign kept him near the court and frequently consulted him. This King built a monastery for the Minims at Plessis and another at Rome on the Pincian Hill (the famous Santa Trinità dei Monti above the Spanish steps). Francis de Paula's influence on later French mysticism was paramount. Close to the court, protected by the conciliar families, the Bricconnet and the Beaune, entreated by Louise of Savoy for fertility, Francis was popular in France. It was the French crown that was instrumental in seeking his canonization (Potter, 1995, pp. 212-213). On the death of St. Francis de Paula, Jean Bourdichon was commissioned to paint two portraits of the saint, and tradition has it that one was sent to the Pope on the occasion of his canonization (see Mac Gibbon, 1933, p. 55). Pope Leo X canonized Francis in 1518-1519.

Pope Sixtus IV granted the order the privileges of mendicant friars in 1473, and in 1493 the first version of their rule was confirmed by Pope Alexander VI by the papal bull *Meritis religiosae vitae*. Francis de Paula amended and modified the rule of the new Order throughout his existence. A second version of the rule is approved in 1501, confirmed in 1502 by papal bull *Ad fructus uberes*. The Rules of 1493 and 1502 were published in the *Chronicon generale*, with the papal bull (La Noue ed., *Chronicon generale...*, 1635, respectively pp. 54-72 and pp. 73-90). Judged to be a bit too strict, Francis de Paula (aged 90 years old) presented a third version of his rule in 1506. The inscription on f. 54 makes it clear that this manuscript contains the third version of the rule (the one that is still observed by the order today), which was confirmed by Pope Julius II on 28 July 1506: "Datum rome...anno domini 1506 [...]" (f. 54). The third version of the rule imposed, among other penances, strict abstinence from the eating of red or white meat, as well as eggs and all milk products: indeed the article of "perpetual fasting" was proper to the Order of Minims. The earliest

example of the Rule of the Order is a fragment in French in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal: of uncertain date, it is most certainly contemporary with the earliest stages of the development of the Order. The Rule of the Minims was printed as early as 1525 for use in the convent of Nigeon. The printed *Regula Fratrum Minimorum* (Nigeon, 1528) is a similar production to the work of 1525, but adds to it sections dealing with ritual and with the privileges conferred upon the order. Our manuscript refers directly to the 1528 Nigeon, Hugo de Varenne(s) [printer or typographer, a brother from the Order of the Minims] imprint in a note on f. 54 (see text below) as the source for the present manuscript. For a splendid copy of this rare imprint, printed on vellum, see London, BL, C. 29. b. 16 (on the successive Nigeon imprints of 1525 and 1528, see Whitmore, 1967, pp. 60-61).

This manuscript also contains copies of three other related texts, all fundamental to the young Order. At its beginning it has the "Office for the reception of novices." There is also a copy of the saint's own *Correctorium*, which consists of ten chapters corresponding to the parts of the rule, determining the penance to be inflicted on those who fail to adhere to the articles in the Rule. The manuscript ends with a *Ceremoniale* or "Description of the Rites of the Order," with entries detailing the actions, prayers, and readings appropriate for a wide range of the activities of the friars, such as *De modo celebrandi missam* ("the method of celebrating mass"), *Modus recipiendi fratres ad professionem* ("the method of receiving brothers to profession"), as well as more mundane items such as *De conformitate habitum* ("On the uniformity of monastic habits"). The *Correctorium* and the *Ceremoniale* were published in 1528, and in 1533-1535 (see Literature below).

This is a manuscript from the first decades of the existence of this order, written only a decade or so after the canonization of the Saint. Written in Italy, it clearly shows the important ties between the French communities and the new convents that progressively were diffused through Europe. The new convents relied heavily on the principal communities in France, especially the Minims of Chaillot or Nigeon, located in Passy near Paris (an area now incorporated in the 16th arrondissement in Paris), which was founded in 1493 (liberally endowed by Anne of Brittany, amongst others), alongside sister houses at Plessis-les-Tours and Amboise founded little after the order was introduced into France by royal favor in 1482 (On Nigeon–Couvent de Chaillot dit des Bonshommes, see Biver, *Abbayes, monastères et couvents de Paris*, "Le monastère des Bonshommes de Chaillot," pp. 418-424). Further research on the manuscripts and books of the new mendicant order, including how they were lent and exchanged, copied and organized, would certainly yield interesting results. We have located in Paris, Bibl. de l'Arsenal, MS 5763 a "Catalogue des livres ayant appartenu aux Minimes de Passy," as well as a copy of "Rules" in Paris, AN, L 951, "Règles" undated, but copied towards the end of the sixteenth century. Another manuscript perhaps worth consulting would be Paris, BnF, MS n.a.f. 5474, "Catalogue des manuscrits des bibliothèques de l'Ordre des Minimes."

Since the Order was not yet widespread in the sixteenth century (the Order would spread widely later in the seventeenth century), manuscripts of its rules and rites are exceedingly rare. The Schoenberg Database records only one other copy of the present text, written in 1501 and last sold in 1836. There is no systematic census of manuscript of the Rule, and it was apparently last edited in the seventeenth century (see Literature below for the successive sixteenth- and some seventeenth-century editions).

LITERATURE

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