



Ricketts 198 (134v)

13. *Instructiones de Officiis Ordinis, Constitutiones, Papal Bull, and Buch der Ersetzung*: Rules and Regulations for the Dominican Nuns and Supplement with History of the Order

Nürnberg, 1450s

Ricketts 198

244 leaves; 29.4x20.6cm. (19.8x13.3cm.); paper and vellum
Gothic bastarda; in German and Latin; one full-page miniature,
twenty-four historiated initials, one decorated initial
15th-century blind-tooled pigskin, over oak boards with straps
and brass clasps

Translations of rule books for nuns into the vernacular appear to have been common in Medieval Europe because nuns were not sufficiently learned to read Latin. Composed by Humbert of Romans, fifth master general of the Dominican Order (1254-63), the *Instructiones de Officiis Ordinis* is a manual of practical advice for newly-elected officeholders in the Dominican community. Humbert's work assumed the status of a quasi-official guide to the Order, and was even appended to printed editions of the Constitutions as late as the nineteenth century (Brett, 134). For an insider's view of the medieval period, however, the Rule book has proven to be a most valuable treatise, describing religious duties about which little is written elsewhere, and offering a detailed picture of communal life in Dominican houses.

A German translation of the *Instructiones* is the first of several texts in Ricketts 198 (1r-116r), copied from a 1454/55 model made by an unnamed friar at the priory at Basel for the Dominican nuns in the German province. Texts in the second half of the manuscript include the *Regula* and *Constitutiones* of the lay brothers and sisters (116v-125v), a 1405 bull of Pope Innocent VII (126r-133v), and a *Buch der Ersetzung*, a largely historical supplement to the *Instructiones* and *Constitutiones* (134v-244v). The fact that this work generically addresses Dominican nuns of the German province bespeaks a book produced for "mass" distribution to cloisters there. Ricketts 198 was made at and belonged to the Dominican cloister of St. Catherine in Nürnberg.

The text is well-preserved, not showing obvious signs of frequent use, though several lower margins among the vellum leaves have been cut and removed for later reuse. Despite its carefully

planned almost mechanical layout, the volume is modestly produced. This is in accord with a Dominican concern for the durable and legible, rather than costly and artistic books (Brett, 145; Hinnebusch, II, 195). It also reflects the fact that this book was intended for the use of nuns and not for an aristocratic audience. The manuscript consists of 244 folios, with leaves missing between folios 119 and 120, 187 and 188, and between 214 and 215. When complete, it comprised twenty sexternia with one inserted, illustrated vellum leaf in the twelfth quire (134v), and half-quire of six folios.

The outer leaf of each quire is of sturdy, protective vellum and, except for the full-page miniature (134v), the remaining leaves are paper, many bearing a Nürnberg watermark of a circumscribed scale, now only partially visible along the seam of the binding. The first six folios of seventeen quires are numbered. The pages are pricked and ruled for two columns of text consistently covering two-thirds of each page but varying between twenty-six and forty lines. Running heads on the pages help locate the text. Errors are simply crossed out and corrections inserted. Four large ink splotches in the text have been hastily covered with paste-downs on which the text is continued (23v, 24r, 218v, 219r). Smaller splotches are common in the bottom margins of many of the folios.

The manuscript is in its original binding of scored oak boards with bevelled edges covered with white pigskin and fastened with straps and brass clasps. Lozenge-shaped stamps containing the initials "PO" (Prediger Order) and "SK" (Sankt Katharina) decorate both the front and back covers. The scraped, warped front lining sheet is a palimpsest; here ultraviolet examination reveals at least two layers of text in Latin, perhaps commentaries with glosses, in Gothic cursive script characteristic of the late fourteenth century. The back sheet is lost.

Four colophons in the text serve to date the manuscript and simultaneously reveal the time needed to copy such a lengthy work. The introduction of the *Instructiones de Officiis Ordinis* is dated 1454 (3v); the text of this treatise ends with a double colophon on folio 116r, dating its completion first to the Octave of the Visitation of the Virgin [July 2], 1458 and then to the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul [June 29], 1454. The colophon to the final text of Ricketts 198, the *Buch der Ersetzung* or supplement, dates the completion of the entire volume to the eve of St. Thomas Aquinas [March 7], 1455

(244v), about nine months after completion of the *Instructiones*.

Surrounded by colophons dating at least three years earlier, the 1458 date (116r) might be read as a scribal error. However, since this is the latest date in the book and since the Feast of the Visitation (July 2) associated with it incorrectly precedes the Feast of SS. Peter and Paul (June 29), the 1458 colophon, perhaps an unconscious digression and not a merely transcribed date, seems to reflect the actual date by which the Lilly *Instructiones* was copied.

Ricketts 198 is the work of two scribes whose scripts represent variations on Gothic bastarda (Kirchner, 1966, plates 35a and 66; Thomson, N. 52). Hand A, responsible for the first two quires (1r-24v), is distinguished by neat, distinct letters in a slight backhand. Hand B completed the book (25r-244v) in a more cursive and erratic style. Consistent spelling peculiarities (such as an initial "p" for "b" and "ay" for "ei") point to their origins in south Germany (see Eis, 82 and 84). A later hand, probably a librarian at St. Catherine's, recorded on the front wrapper that the book belonged to the cloister of St. Catherine at Nürnberg. Using a more cursive bastarda script, a fourth hand glossed the *Buch der Ersetzung*, making corrections and recording events such as the reopening of the cloister at Engelpört in 1466 (163r) and the 1469 death of Gertrud Gwichtmacherin, the first prioress of St. Catherine's since its reform in 1428 (212v). These glosses predate 1474 since the master general newly-elected in that year is not entered in the list of master generals on folios 214r-214v.

Decorative elements in Ricketts 198 are used to mark text divisions and, as might be expected, those on vellum leaves are better preserved than those on paper. Rubricated headings and simple enlarged initials introduce subsections throughout the manuscript. One full-page miniature depicting a dreary-eyed, tonsured friar preaching to a group of nuns (134v), twenty-four historiated initials, and one decorated initial introduce major divisions such as books and chapters. Twenty-one historiated initials appear in the *Instructiones*, most illustrating nuns performing their specified duties as, for instance, the sacristan shown ringing a bell (23r). These initials range in height from six to eighteen text lines and are blue with simple zoomorphic or vegetal motifs on the frames of the letters. Simple blue and red scrollwork extends from these initials into the margins. Figural decoration fills the interstices of the letters and is carefully but almost childishly drawn. The figures are quite per-

sonable: robust (even stout) nuns are garbed in habits, their round faces enlivened with dark eyes and ruddy red cheeks. Little attempt is made to depict volume, and perspective is awkward. Checkered convent floors, tables, and lecterns are consistently shown from an oblique aerial view. Backgrounds are flat, often filled with a brocade-like sunflower pattern. The bright palette includes white, red, blue, orange, and green; a silver-colored metallic paint is used in the haloes of male church leaders depicted in the initials on folios 136v and 172r. These historiated initials and the full-page miniature are stylistically similar. A single decorated red initial with its zoomorphic motifs and blue penwork (157r) is different in type but appears to be by the same artist.

An inscription copied from the model identifies the Dominican friar/scribe at Basel as the artist of the exemplar (136r). The style of the Lilly miniatures, however, calls for comparison with the manuscript tradition at Nürnberg (Fischer, 69), and specifically, with that at St. Catherine's. The Lilly miniatures were heavily influenced by a well-known miniaturist/nun, one Barbara Gwichtmacherin, a prolific artist at the cloister from ca. 1450 through the 1460s, and a relative of the prioress, Gertrud Gwichtmacherin (Fischer, 69). It appears that Gwichtmacherin worked in close collaboration with a student on Ricketts 198. Though Nürnberg manuscripts generally contained the signatures of both artist and scribe on either the front or back lining sheet (Fischer, 70; Ruf, 570), it is unfortunate for the Lilly manuscript that this information, probably recorded on the back sheet, is now lost.

Hallmarks of Gwichtmacherin's style evidenced in the Lilly miniatures include a linear drawing technique and figures with short, squat proportions whose hands and faces are accented with doll-like features. Other parallels to Ricketts 198 are found in decorative elements such as the predilection for floral ornament, the style of scrollwork surrounding and extending from the initials, the zoomorphic motifs (See Fischer, plate 29 and Ricketts 198, folio 5r), and starry skies as in the full-page miniature. Like those of the Lilly manuscript, Gwichtmacherin's colors are bold, with a special fondness for bright green lawns carpeted with flowers, as seen in the miniature of the gardener (112r).

Compositional precedents for some of the Ricketts miniatures are found in earlier fifteenth-century manuscripts at the Dominican houses in Nürnberg (for example, compare Fischer, Plates 11 and

12 with Ricketts 198, folios 136v and 105r). The identification of the Gwichtmacherin workshop in Ricketts 198 and the inclusion of the 1458 colophon (116r) point to a manuscript illustrated at Nürnberg, having been copied from and closely following a model written at Basel. The watermark, which corresponds in design and scale to that used at Nürnberg beginning in 1446 (Briquet, 184, no.2467), secures that city as the center at which the book was transcribed.

Although book copying was never a full-time occupation for Dominicans, it was common practice, representing the prime method for increasing a given library's holdings. Bindings for such volumes written at St. Catherine's can be shown to have been made at the Dominican priory at Nürnberg, the typical example comprising wood covered with sheep or pigskin, decorated with lines or stamps, and closed with leather straps and brass clasps (Ruf, 573). That of the Ricketts manuscript fits this description and, coupled with the personalized stamped "SK," it is probable that this book was also bound there.

The text of this Lilly manuscript, in particular the *Instructiones de Officiis Ordinis*, is important for what it relates about communal life in Dominican female cloisters which were otherwise inaccessible to the public. The *Instructiones* or Rule book comprises the first 116 folios of Ricketts 198. In the first of two prologues the scribe of the exemplar identifies himself as a friar at the Dominican priory at Basel. His purpose, he writes, is to translate Humbert's work from Latin into German for the nuns of the Order so that they, traditionally less educated than the friars, might have access to the Rule book and, thus, foster their spiritual life. The colophon of this prologue dates to the same year (1454) that the *Instructiones* was first translated into German by Johannes Meyer, a friar also at Basel (Ruf, 598), and a chronicler and leader of the fifteenth-century reform movement in Germany (Hinnebusch, I, 388; 407, n.75). This Lilly manuscript is based on the Meyer archetype. The second prologue is that originally composed by Humbert. It is followed by the register of the treatise on folio 4r.

The text of the Ricketts *Instructiones* is adapted from the male Latin of Humbert specifically for the use of nuns. For the most part, however, so little distinguishes the offices and duties of the nuns from those of the friars that feminine endings have simply been added to the titles. Divided into twenty-three chapters, the primary offices described here are those of prioress, subprioress,

provost, procurator, custodian of the wine cellar, sacristan, cantor, corrector of the household, attendant of the sick, mistress of novices, mistress of lay sisters, counselor, prefect of works, librarian, mistress of garments, cook, refectorian, table server, reader at meals, corrector at table, mistress of matters entrusted for safekeeping, custodian of the dormitory, and gardener. Lesser positions such as those of porter, mistress of hospitality, of servants, and of lessons, have been incorporated into the major offices.

The latter half of Ricketts 198 contains the Dominican rules and constitutions for the lay brothers and sisters, a bull of Pope Innocent VII that reiterates basic regulations, and a *Buch der Ersetzung*, a supplement to the *Instructiones* and *Constitutiones*. The *Buch* opens with "Audi filia et vide" echoed by the monk addressing nuns and novices in the full-page miniature on the singleton opposite (134v). While the authoritarian impression left by the friar illustrates the generally accepted view of the relationship between friars and nuns, it sharply contrasts the more independent status of nuns with respect to daily matters implied in the *Instructiones* and illustrated, for example, by the nun overseeing a construction worker in the miniature of the prefect of works (88r).

In the prologue to this supplement, the scribe of the archetype introduces himself as from Basel, that he is both scribe and artist, and that his work has been approved by the provincial master, one Peter Wellen (135r-136v). In the text of the *Buch* he discusses names, privileges, and deeds considered noble, as well as listing the Dominican female cloisters of the German province and providing a brief history of the Order; the manuscript ends with instructions on how to choose a prioress.

The section listing the German Dominican cloisters is especially informative, specifying within which priory's supervision each cloister lay and indicating which were reformed. St. Catherine at Nürnberg is among them, having accepted the reform in 1428 under the direction of Johannes Nider, another leader of the movement. A prior at the reformed priory at Nürnberg from 1425-1429, Nider later filled that same position at Basel before being appointed vicar general of the German province (Hinnebusch, II, 262). A lengthy gloss on folios 212v-213r discusses the event: that the reform was supervised by Nider; that ten nuns from the cloister of Schönensteinbach in the bishopric of Basel were brought to St. Catherine's to help carry out the reform; that the first prioress since the cloister's

reform held that office until her death in 1469.

With the acceptance of the reform, religious and intellectual life at St. Catherine's took on a new tenor. Renewed interest in books led to the rapid growth of the cloister library which included a great many spiritual works of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and which, by the sixteenth century, ranked among the top in female cloisters of south Germany (Ruf, 570; Hinnebusch, I, 385). The collection was increased by gifts, several of which are listed in catalogues as having been specifically ordered from Basel by Nider himself (See Ruf, 615, Cat. 116, 117v). Like Ricketts 198, most books, however, were transcribed by the nuns at St. Catherine's (Ruf, 570; Hinnebusch, I, 385).

Book catalogues were kept at St. Catherine's prior to 1455. One particular library catalogue from this cloister (Nürnberg, Stadtbibliothek Cent. VII, 79), however, appears to have been directly influenced by a chapter in Ricketts 198 which outlines the rules for organizing a topical catalogue in a monastic library. This Nürnberg catalogue, which follows the specifications delineated in the Lilly *Instructiones*, dates no earlier than November 1455 and may be as late as 1461. The terminus post quem of 1455 corresponds with the completion of the archetype of Ricketts 198 in March of that year.

Following the closing of St. Catherine's in 1596, many of the books of the cloister library were acquired by the Stadtbibliothek, Nürnberg.

PROVENANCE

A.A. Smets of Savannah, Georgia, 1830; sold to an unnamed buyer, 1868; C.L. Ricketts after 1870; Lilly Library, 1961

H.B.F.