

JOHANN NEUDÖRFFER, *Ein gute Ordnung, und kurtze unterricht...* ; calligraphy samples copied by HANS JACOT

In German, Latin, and French, copperplate print and manuscript on paper
Germany (Nuremberg), 1538-1543, and March 12, 1590

Imprint followed by manuscript leaves. Imprint: i + 111 copperplate prints and counterproofs on paper, mixed contemporary watermarks on printed folios, two versions, one large and one small, of an imperial eagle with single head and F on chest, similar but not identical to Briquet 140 and 147 (western Germany), and two versions of a small Nuremberg coat of arms, similar but not identical to Briquet group 916-926, modern pencil foliation in upper recto corners, occasional erroneous foliation in modern pencil in upper recto corners, appears complete as intended (barring loss of final flyleaf), copperplates of varied sizes (most 130 x 200/210 mm), various calligraphic scripts with decorative scrollwork, ff. 1-111 usually printed in pairs of counterproof and print (51 reversed plates with 51 counterproofs, 9 "right-reading" impressions), most pages nearly pristine, occasional minor flecking, staining, and fingerprints (see esp. f. 39v). Manuscript: 16 manuscript folios on paper, small watermark of two towers with windows and crenellation and pointed-roof building in middle, possibly identical to Briquet 15951 (Wurzburg), modern pencil foliation in upper recto corners, occasional erroneous foliation in modern pencil in upper recto corners, apparently complete (all singletons), varied justification, no ruling, written in various calligraphic scripts with scrollwork in dark brown ink, gold highlights on ff. 124-126, some original ink blots and bleed-through, some trimming of scrollwork but no loss of text, ink corrosion on f. 124 but no loss of text, wear to outer edge, vertical folding of f. 126.). Late sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century paperboard binding in mottled brown with red spine and corners, spine with 5 raised bands, paper pastedowns, red sprinkled book-block edges, some wear and chipping, especially at board edges and spine but intact. Oblong in shape, Dimensions 186 x 280 mm. [fold-ins ff. 104-111: 160 x 390 mm.]

A fine copy of Johann Neudörffer's groundbreaking *Ein gute Ordnung* published in Nuremberg in 1538. Neudörffer, a renowned "Schreibmeister," was the father of Fraktur script, and this writing manual is its first appearance in print. A hybrid book, containing both copperplate prints and counterproofs, as well as handwritten calligraphy samples made by a Dutchman, Hans Jacot, in 1590, this unique and charming volume is an excellent testament to the art of writing after the rise of the printing press.

PROVENANCE

1. This book begins with an imprint of the famous writing manual by Nuremberg master scribe Johann Neudörffer (1497-1563), *Ein gute Ordnung, und kurtze unterricht, der fürnemsten grunde aus denen die Jungen, Zierlichs schreybens begirlich, mit besonderer kunst und bebendigkeyt unterricht und geübt mögen werden* (A good arrangement and short lesson, primary techniques by which youths, eager to learn fine writing, should undoubtedly be taught by using exceptional art). Most of its copperplates were first printed in 1538 with others subsequently added in Neudörffer's later years. Some plates include dates, with 1543 being the latest (f. 103).
2. The sixteen manuscript folios are signed on the final folio by a Hans Jacot. Although his paper seems likely to have been made in Bavaria given its watermark, Hans Jacot was a Dutchman: before his name, he designates himself "dienst willighe" (ready to serve). Jacot, born in 1570, appears in contemporary Dutch records: he is registered by an Amsterdam city notary on 7 May, 1617, concerning merchant debt (Amsterdam City Archives 5075.434.114039; see Online Resources).

3. This book shows no evidence of subsequent ownership. A note in modern pencil on the inner front pastedown reading "110 pag + 16 pag manuscr" was written by the same modern hand that added the occasional erroneous foliation (there are rather 111 printed folios). It has presumably remained in European private collections since production.

TEXT

ff. 1-2, incipit, "Ein gute Ordnung, und kurtze unterricht der fürnemsten grunde ... Im Jar der geburt Jhesu Christi unsers herren und seligmachers, M.D.XXXviii. NVLLA DIES SINE LINEA";

Title page copperplate counterproof and print, with attribution to "Johann Neudörffer Burger und Rechenmaister zu Nürnberg" and the year of publishing, 1538.

ff. 3-103, incipit, "In dem ersten Buchtem hab ich ...; [f. 103] five ornate diagrams of interlaced scrollwork named for columns (e.g. "corinthia", "ionica") dated 1543;

Fifty-five printed plates: forty-seven in sets of copperplate counterproof (right-reading) with print (mirrored), with nine in right-reading print only, all only on recto. Text in numerous types of hybrida, late gothic cursive, Canzley (chancery), Fraktur ("Quadrangel," e.g. ff. 59, 91-93), Latin cursive, and Roman capitals, with varied slant, ductus, and hairline decoration, and many alternate letter forms. Features instructive pages, alphabets, proverbs, Scripture, and sample documents including letters with familiar and formal addresses. Some texts repeat in different scripts. Almost all texts are German, with three in Latin included.

Of Albert Kapr's facsimile of all known Neudörfer plates, this volume appears to contain the full 1538 *Ein gute Ordnung* set, with some plates appearing in a different order than in the facsimile. This variety seems to be the norm; see, for example, Munich, BSB, no. VD16 N 563. The plates present only in singular right-reading prints, instead of the usual right-reading counterproof/mirrored print set, may be those added after 1538; several indeed contain dates ranging from 1538-1543.

ff. 104-111, Four sets of fold-out folios, right-reading counterproofs and prints, featuring heavily scrolled uppercase alphabets;

ff. 112-123, Manuscript calligraphy exercises and samples: [f. 112] Six numbered variations of hybrida script with letters broken into stroke-by-stroke steps, sample alphabets in lower- and uppercase; [f. 113] incipit, "War du furminst ..."; [f. 114] Sample alphabets in hybrida; [f. 115] Eccl. 1:30-31, followed by 1:10-20 from a Lutheran Bible, incipit, "Mein Sohn wiltu weise woerdenn ..."; [f. 116] Sample alphabets in hybrida; [f. 117] Unidentified prayer, "Herr Almochtiger [sic] Gott Erbarm dich ..."; [f. 118] Five numbered lowercase Fraktur samples with letters broken into stroke-by-stroke steps, sample alphabet; [f. 119] Fraktur sample alphabet in lower- and uppercase; [f. 120] Psalm 51, "Miserere mei deus ..."; [f. 121] Unidentified sample text about "Handelschrift" (business cursive chancery script), incipit, "Wie nuß und nott ..."; [f. 122] Sample letter, incipit, "Vonn Gottes genaden ..."; [f. 123] Unidentified prayer, incipit, "Mein Gott und Herr ... hailandts Jesu Christi Amen";

ff. 124-126, Sample alphabets in bâtarde with short extracts, incipit, "Controuveurs de Mensonges ... les mains d'un tel mesdisant etc."; [f. 125] Multiple scripts, incipit, "L'écriture dict que Dieu ne tiendra ... ANNO MDXC DEN 12 MARTE"; [f. 126] Multiple scripts, incipit, "Science Pour tout Bien. Destourne les yeux dict David ... en la gehenne du feu, etc."

Three short excerpts found in *Le conseil des sept Sages de Grèce* (The Council of the Seven Sages of Greece), by Gilles Corrozet (1510-1568). *Le conseil* presents wisdom on a variety of ethical topics attributed to the Seven Sages, a group of philosophers, lawmakers, and statesmen of sixth-century Greece. First published in 1544, it was popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries throughout France and the Low Countries and was republished in numerous editions. Although the version used by Hans Jacot is unidentified, in the Ghent, 1550 edition, see pp. 42, 47, and 51 for the extracts.

f. 127, incipit, "A lhonneur de Dieu le Roy de toute gelorre[?] je serav mes escrils D'eternelle memoire dienst willighe Hans Jacot".

A short rhyme to sign off on his work, the colophon identifying Hans Jacot as the scribe also identifies him as a Dutch speaker.

Johann Neudörffer (1497-1563) stands at the beginning of a long tradition of German writing masters and their manuals. After the rise of printing in the mid-fifteenth century, Gothic script was used as the model for printed letters in Germany, thus retaining its forms long after Humanist scripts supplanted Gothic elsewhere in Europe. Neudörffer's *Ein gute Ordnung* introduced a new script inspired by Gothic, which he calls "Quadrangel" (e.g. ff. 59, 91-93) but known more commonly as Fraktur. Although only adopted in Europe's German speaking regions, Neudörffer's Fraktur persisted for nearly 400 years, and even spread to North America in the books and documents of German immigrants (Whalley, 1980, p. 146). Thus, Neudörffer is known as "the greatest of the Renaissance writing masters in the north" (Anderson, 1969, p. 141).

Published in Nuremberg first in 1538 and again in 1544, *Ein gute Ordnung* is Neudörffer's principal work. A total of sixty different plates, most with texts in German and in German scripts but a few with Latin in other European hands, are represented here, with fifty-one of these existing in mirrored duplicates. In copperplate, if a text is engraved in the direction in which we normally read or write ("right-reading"), the print will consequently be a mirrored image. All the mirrored duplicates in this copy of *Ein gute Ordnung* are indented where the copperplate and its frame were impressed upon the paper: this means that they were the original press, and the right-reading plates are counterproofs, made by pressing a fresh sheet of paper onto the mirrored image while the ink was wet. Neudörffer's first book in 1519 (known as *Fundament*) was produced via woodcuts. His switch to the *intaglio* method of copperplate engraving, popularized by Nuremberg artist and friend Albrecht Dürer, was innovative in the writing manual and copybook genre (Meurer, 2014, pp. 66-68). In this volume, the right-reading plates without duplicates also show copperplate impressions, indicating that these (probably later) plates were engraved in mirror to print right-reading.

Some copies of Neudörffer's manual are printed on nearly transparent paper so that the image can be read from the non-printed side; this is not the case with this copy, as the paper is sturdier

and not all details of the plates show through clearly to the other side. However, one can imagine that these mirrored plates could still be useful to the insecure student: if placed over a window or light box, they can be traced. Some copies of *Ein gute Ordnung* also include hand-drawn red frames around the edges of the plate, or red prints, but neither are present here.

The sixteen manuscript pages written by Hans Jacot in 1590 are demonstrations of the scribe's skills, apparently learned in part from this copy of Neudörffer's *Ein gute Ordnung*. Indeed, ff. 112 and 118 include Jacot's copies of the stroke-by-stroke exercises found on Neudörffer's ff. 15-27, and his sample alphabets use Neudörffer's as a model. However, the three extracts Jacot provides in French (ff. 24-26) demonstrate his experience with *bâtarde*, a script common in France and the Low Countries (the former of which was, or became, his home region). According to records, Jacot would have been twenty years old when he made these samples, and was at least the second owner of this volume. Presumably proud of his achievement, he had his handiwork bound together with his copy of *Ein gute Ordnung*.

While copies of Neudörffer's master work do occasionally reach market, they are not abundant, and are even less commonly bound with manuscript calligraphy samples, as this copy is. Thirteen institutional examples are noted and described in Doede, 1957, pp. 20-29 and Doede, 1958, pp. 38-39, ranging from 42-147 folios, with two in the US at Columbia University (NY) and the Library of Congress (DC); there are also copies at Harvard, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Newberry Library (Becker, 1997). Notably, this copy of *Ein gute Ordnung* is in remarkably fine condition and features more plates than some copies in institutions and available on the market.

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Amsterdam City Archives 5075.434.114039, registration of Hans Jacot
<https://www.openarch.nl/show.php?archive=saa&identifier=4a5309b2-59b5-53a1-c4de-34b5d447b753&lang=nl&six=1>.

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<http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/~db/0006/bsb00065307/images/>.

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