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Miniature Almanac

In Latin and German, illustrated manuscript on parchment

[Germany, Diocese of Bamberg, likely Nuremberg], dated 1480-81, 1492, 1497

46 folios, perhaps lacking one folio at the end (i⁴⁺, 14 canceled, ii⁴, iii¹⁰, iv¹⁰⁻¹), written in red, black, green and blue ink, in a neat fraktur script in the style of Nuremberg writing masters, by 2 scribes, title on ff. 1v and 2r in Roman capitals, rubrics in red, green and blue numbers in the tables, calligraphic capitals and descenders, 7 colorful astronomical and astrological circular diagrams, one with multi-colored patterned centerpiece, cut out and mounted, f. 30, probably as issued, pinhole for volvelle (not present) in one diagram on f. 37r. Bound in contemporary pigskin, probably in the nineteenth century, with pastedowns from a fifteenth-century antiphonal, also in Germanic script. Dimensions 76 x 52 mm.

Fascinating almanac in miniature format, including a calendar, unusually extensive astronomical calculations, astrological and astro-meteorological tables, and popular texts on the humors, the signs of the zodiac, etc.. Calligraphically written in the style of Nuremberg writing masters and colorfully illustrated, this unique miniature book is also dated and has an important later provenance, forming part of one of the greatest collections of miniature books of all times, that of Arthur Houghton, Jr.

PROVENANCE

1. Almost certainly made in the diocese of Bamberg, likely in Nuremberg based on the saints included in the calendar (Nuremberg's patron saint Sebaldus, 19 August; Agidius, 1 September, in large red capitals; Bamberg saint Kunigundus with translation; Henricus, 13 July). Oddly dated four times: on f. 8, in the lower margin of the calendar in red "1492"; on f. 40, in the lower right "1497"; in the roundel on f. 28v, twice "1480" and "1481."
2. Note in ink on front flyleaf "Ex Bibl. Panzer": George Wolfgang Panzer (1729-1805), Nuremberg bibliographer, pastor, librarian, and major book collector. His

principal bibliographic publication, *Annales Typographici ab Artis Inventae Origine ad Annum MD* (Nuremberg, J. E. Zeh, 1793-1803), in eleven volumes systematically researches early printing, covering books in all languages other than German up to 1536, arranging them alphabetically by place of printing and within each place chronologically.

3. Arthur A. Houghton, Jr. (1906-1990), his sale, Christie, Manson and Woods, December 5, 1979, no. 223, illustrated.

TEXT

f. 1r, Table indicating the days from Purification, February 2, to the beginning of Shrove Tide, with the dominical numbers A to G across the horizontal axis and the golden numbers 1 to 19 down the vertical axis;

ff. 1v-2r, Canon explaining the use of the tables accompanying the calendar section, incipit, "Canon Huis Kalendaris, Volens Cognosce ... Dies Solis. Maria Jesus";

ff. 2v-26r, Calendar table in 19 columns across two folios, major feast days in red, the left-hand (verso) portion giving the dates of the rising sun and moon, in the following order: or(iens) or East, occ(idens) or West, di(es), or day, no(x) or night, also specifying the *Tabulares septuagesime, quadragesime, pasce, rogationum, and pent(costes)* for the calculation of the movable feasts;

ff. 26v-27r, Table across two folios indicating the status of the day, unfavorable, good, and indifferent moments (*malum, bonum, indiferens*) based on the interaction of the 19-year lunar cycle and the age and location of the moon in the zodiac, the golden numbers across the horizontal access, the signs of the zodiac down the left vertical axis;

ff. 27v-28r, Table across two columns giving the number of days from one specified feast to another, based on the 19 year lunar cycle, the dominical letters, and *littera tabulares*;

f. 28v, Roundel showing the Easter calculation for 1480-1481;

f. 29, Roundel divided into four quarters, each representing one of the Four Elements, *are* (air), *terra* (earth), *ignis* (fire), and *acqua* (water);

f. 29v, Roundel for calculating the hours and minutes in the day based on the state of the moon;

f. 30, Rondel pasted in and missing its volvelle with the signs of the zodiac and the numbers alternating xv and xxx;

ff. 30v-34v, rubric, *Inventio oppositionum solis et lune*, explicit, *Sequitur novilunium* [New Moon] *magistri johannes de monte reggio* [Johannes Müller, named Regiomontanus (1436-1476)] *due cicli*, Canon for the tables that follow on ff. 31r-33v, listing the months January through December across the top of three folios and the numbers 1 to 31 down the vertical axis, and giving the dates and times for the rising of the new moon throughout the 19-year lunar cycle;

ff. 35-37, rubric (35v) *De inpositione historiarum*, Old Testament evening readings on the first Sundays of the month, preceded by a table of the Old Testament books of the Bible (35), and followed by tables of the sun and moon calculation, with a simple planet clock for the good, bad, and indifferent days for blood-letting (37);

f. 37v, blank;

ff. 38-40, Calendar sayings for the different months of the year;

ff. 40v-43v, rubric, *Sequentur virtutes 12 signorum*, the virtues of the signs of the zodiac, including indications of the parts of the body affected for each sign;

ff. 44, rubric, *Nota de dietis minorum*, incipit, "Prima dies vene gaudet moderamine cene," Notes on the days for bloodletting;

ff. 44v-45v, rubric, *De quattor complexionibus* (the Four Humors);

f. 45v-46v, rubric, *De planetis nota*, incipit "Corpore formosum solis profert et generosum" (Hans Walther, *Initia carminum ac versuum medii aevi posterioris latinorum*, 1, Gottingen, 1959, 3344).

Medieval Calendar manuscripts are often in the form of girdle books, worn at the waste and unfolded for consultation. We know of no other example where the calendar is in miniature book form as occurs in the present manuscript.

LITERATURE

Evelyn Edson, "World Maps and Easter Tables: Medieval Maps in Context, *Imago Mundi* 48 (1996).

Online Resources

Online Calendar of Saint's Days

<http://www.the-orb.net/encyclop/religion/hagiography/calendar/home.htm>

Medieval Calendar Calculator

http://www.wallandbinkley.com/mcc/mcc_main.html

Medieval Calendar Tools by O. Lieberknecht

<http://www.lieberknecht.de/~prg/calendar.htm>

Miniature Book Society

<http://www.mbs.org/collectors.htm>