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[NOTARIAL DEED] Beatrice, daughter of Guecellone da Camino
In Latin, manuscript on parchment
Italy, Porcia [Friuli], dated 20 November 1397

10 sheets of vellum, sewn together and folded concertina-fashion, written in a tight and highly abridged Italian cursive documentary script (littera cursiva gothica) in light brown ink (justification / width 180 mm), notarial signature at the bottom of deed [M] for "Melchior" quoted in the final paragraph at the bottom, other notarial signatures marking division between each sewn sheets (some staining to parchment, never hindering legibility). Overall dimensions: 503 mm.

Extraordinary survival of a testamentary document from a known family of historical prominence and noteworthy for the evidence it sheds on the rights of women (widows) to the estates of their husband; equally interesting as a physical object, the lengthy document, folded concertina style, preserves the system of notary marks signatures overlapping the seams of the pieces of parchment and designed to guarantee the legal authenticity of the document.

PROVENANCE

1. Analysis in Italian on first opening recto of folded sewn pieces of parchment (nineteenth-century hand): "Anno 1397 . 20. 9^{bre}. Beatrice figlia di Guecellone da Camino, vedova di Giacomuzzo di Porcia e madre di [Zan] [Johannis] Antonio pupillo figlio de [...] [erased], fa estanza al R[everendissimo] Patriarca d'Aquileia affinché autorizzi a noterii a esaminare in Porcia le testimonii intorno al taglio dell'asserte [?] testamento tutte dal detto Signore Giacomuzzo [Jacobucii], e ciò per causa della peste che oprime tutta la Patria. E pubblicazione di questi testimonii."

2. Germany in the nineteenth century: pasted on opening recto, a printed analysis of the document in German (from an old auction or sale catalogue).

TEXT

Incipit, "In Christi nomine Amen, Iste est processus factus et actitatus per spectabilem ac famosum militem dominum Rizarchum de Valvesono comisarium in hac parte per reverendissimum in Christo patrem et dominum dominum Antonium dei gratia sancte sedis Aquilegensis dignissimum patriarcham specialiter deputatum seu coram ipso domino comisario super examinationibus et publicationibus quorundam testamentum ut inferius continentur ac scriptus per me Melchiorem notarium filium quondam magistri Baldasani [...] de Valvesono sub millesimo trecentesimo nonagesimo septimo [1397] indictione quinta diebus [...] Rizarchus miles de Valvesono comisarius in hac parte per reverendissimum in Christo patrem et dominum dominum Antonium dei gratia sancte sedis Aquilegensis dignissimum patriarcham ad infrascripta specialiter deputatus egregie domine Beatrici filie quondam dominum Guezelonis de Camino et uxori relicte quondam nobilis viri Jacobucii comitis de Purcilleis et matri nobilis Johannis Antonii pupilli et filii olim...";

Explicit, "[...] Et ego Melchior filius nostram magistri Baldasarii Cirugici de Valvesono publicus imperiali auctoritate notarium et prelibatum comisarium electus et asumptus as contribendum processum hunc scriptum omnibus et singulis [...] in processu eodem contentis presens fui et rogatus fideliter scripsi ac in publicam formam [...] signumque meum sepius apposui consuetum in testimonium predictorum".

Guecellone da Camino (circa 1320/1340-died before 1392) played a significant role in the long drawn out contention in the fourteenth century between Hungary and Venice for the Friuli region. He was part of the alliance promoted by Genoa (the other members were the king of Hungary, the Patriarch of Aquileia, the Duke of Austria and Francesco I of Ferrara) which fought Venice in the War of Chioggia. Beatrice is mentioned as one of his two daughters (*Diz. degli Italiani*, vol. 17, p. 254-55). Daughter of Guecellone da Camino, widow of Giacomuzzo di Porcia (near Pordenone), Beatrice requests authorization to examine the witnesses' evidence for her deceased husband's missing will: the reason for this request is the plague afflicting the country.

At each seam, the document includes notary signs or marks ("seing manuel," in French), personal marks particular to each public notary and certain professional scribes. Such documents bear no seals, because the notary's mark and the accompanying declaration written beside it serves to validate the document.

There has been little research on women's testaments in the later Middle Ages. A near-contemporary of Beatrice in France, Christine de Pizan (died c. 1430), for example, fought in the courts for ten years to have access to her deceased husband's pension, but this document has not survived. Therefore, the present document warrants further research in the context of the legal rights of women at the end of the Middle Ages.

LITERATURE

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