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Ordinances and Proceedings (Posturas?) for the Cofradía mayor de Medinaceli (Diocese of Sigüenza)
In Spanish (Castilian), illuminated manuscript on parchment
Spain, Castile and León [town of Medinaceli, province of Soria], before 1383, with additions dated 1392

Single parchment leaf, folded in three, written on recto (with later notes on verso, mostly illegible because of faded ink), written in a gothic script in brown ink, with at least four different hands, text blocs juxtaposed one after the other or side by side in three columns, decorated initials in red, some with pen flourishing, miniature in upper left-hand corner (dimensions 80 x 95 mm.), representing a standing bishop (with miter and crosier) and two kneeling tonsured monks in prayer, on a blue ground with stars, notes or text block completely erased at the bottom of the document (Good general condition, some fading to ink in few instances, some text erased or scratched, with corrections and modifications).
Dimensions 525 x 485 mm.

This is the official copy (for presentation?) of the ordinances of the Spanish Cofradia Mayor in Medinaceli, written entirely in Castilian and illuminated. Ordinances of confraternities transcribed on single sheets are extremely rare. This one, which is unpublished and previously unknown, appears to be the oldest surviving document of this particular confraternity perhaps founded c. 1370 with the sponsorship of the Count of Medinaceli, Bernard de Bearn y Foix.

PROVENANCE

1. This document was copied and illuminated for the Cofradía Mayor of the town of Medinaceli (Castile y León, Province of Soria). There is a later inscription in the upper margin that reads: "Hermandades" [Brotherhoods] and an erroneous date "28 febrero 1436" [28 February 1436]. On the verso of the document, one reads: "Cofradía de cavalleros" [Confraternity (or Brotherhood) of knights] and again the erroneous date is repeated, in Spanish: "El final es de 28 diciembre de 1436" [The last one dates from 28 December 1436]. In reality, the only secured date in the present document is that of 1392, in the ordinances added by a later (but nearly contemporary) hand (third column to the right). Thus it seems fair to say that the core of the document antedates the additions and is most certainly datable in the 14th century. Later inscription referring to the date found in the added "ordinances" of the third fundación [sic] de la hermandad de los cavalleros." The *intitulatio* (or superscription, "suscription" in French) of the Ordinances reads as follows: "Nos don bernaldo por la gracia de dios, obispo de Sigüenza, et todos los cofrades

de la cofradía mayor de medina celim...” The superscription is thus tri-fold: there appears to be firstly a Don Bernaldo, secondly a Bishop of Sigüenza and thirdly the Brothers of the Cofradía mayor of Medinaceli. There was a possibility that the superscription could be read partly as an apposition rather than an enumeration: “Don Bernaldo by the grace of God Bishop of Sigüenza.” But this appears improbable, because there simply was no Bishop of Sigüenza forenamed Bernard(us) or Bernal(dus) in the 13th through the end of the 15th century (see Eubel, *Hierarchia catholica medii aevi*, vol. I, p. 444; vol. II, p. 235). However, there is a central figure in Medinaceli named Don Bernaldo or Bernal or Bernard. This is Don Bernal de Béarn y Foix who married Isabel de la Cerda Perez de Guzmán in 1370. Legitimized son of Gaston III Phoebus and captain of Du Guesclin, Don Bernal was to become the first Count of Medinaceli (the title later becoming the famous Dukes of Medinaceli). If the “Don Bernaldo” quoted in the present superscription is indeed Don Bernal de Béarn, first Count of Medinaceli, the core text of this document must have been copied before 1383, when the first Count de Medinaceli dies and is buried in the Cistercian Abbey of Santa Maria de Huerta (Province of Soria) in the “claustro de caballeros.” This would have been a fitting place of burial for a member of a Brotherhood of knights (caballeros). One wonders whether the monks represented in the miniature aren’t in some way tied to the Cistercian monastery of Santa Maria de Huerta, or perhaps they are simply local clerics. Style of miniature and script confirm a second quarter of the 14th century date for this document. There is a reference to two abbots related to the Cofradía, respectively Juan Ferrens “abbot de los dichos cavalleros” and Bartolome Martinus de l’Aguila, called “mayor de la cofradía.” The Aguila were also a very prominent local family. In this same added paragraph [this is the one dated 1392], there is a reference to a church of San Antonio del Mercado. We have not been able to trace this church.

TEXT

Paragraphs of text are juxtaposed on the recto of the parchment leaf, with major text blocs as follows:

1) Incipit, “A honor de dios de sancta maria et de todos los sanctos. Nos los cofrades de la cofradria mayor de medina celim todos a una voluntad llamada gracia de sancti spiritus tenemos por bien et ordenamos que todos nuestros ordenamentos et nostras posturas et la iura que iuramos a los nuestros antecessores et sobre dios et nostras animas...”;

Lack of space, or wish to be as brief as possible, has obliged the scribe to abbreviate the Gospel extracts or pericopes, providing for instance for Mark 16, 14-20 the first words and then a series of initials, which are in fact the first letters of the following words of the extract. Thus one reads, for Mark: “In illo tempore. Recumbentibus undecim discipulis. a. i. i. et e. i. c. i. et d. c...” With the Vulgate in hand, one can easily reconstruct the Biblical citation.

2) Gospel Excerpts from the four Evangelists; rubrics, *Inicium sancti evangelii secundum iobannem*, *Secundum mattheum*, *Inicium sancti evangelii secundum lucham*, *Secundum marchum*;

3) Ordinances for the “Cofradía mayor” of Medinaceli, rubric, *Aqui comiencan nuestros ordenamentos et nostras posturas*; incipit, “Nos don Bernaldo por la gracia de dios, obispo de Sigueça [Sigüenza] et

todos los cofrades mayor de medina celim ordenamos todos a una voluntad que si acayeciére que algun cofradre enferme fuera dela villa o que aya de finir a un dia andadura que todos los cofrades sean tenidos a yr por ell.et trahelle a la villa enfermo o finado..."; explicit, "[...] Otrossi establescemos que fagamos dos seyias en el ano, la una el dia de omnium sanctorum et la otra el dia de seotuagesima";

4) Proceedings [or Positions ?](*Posturas*) adopted by the "Cofradía mayor" of Medinaceli, rubric, *Aqui començan nostras posturas*; incipit, "Todo cofradre que desmentiere a su cofradre en cabillo o sobre mesa o peyare con el peche .v. [mlrls] [abbreviated form for *maravedises* ? or another medieval currency ?) aquel de qui salliere la culpa..."; explicit, "[...] los abbades que dieren manteles in escuchellas a nadi peche .x. [mr] (again medieval currency) a cabildo el sayon que nolo dixiere peche .v. [mrs]";

The present "posturas" (proceedings? decisions?) provide mainly the different situations that call for monetary fines to be paid by members of the confraternity. The fines were to be paid in case of transgression or unbrotherly conduct as penalties.

5) Additional ordinances [change of hand], incipit, "Martes veynt et siete dias de octubre [26 October] todo el cabildo legado tovieron por bien de ordenar que la muger de cofradre que sea coseror que cumplan todo su officio bien..."; change of hand: "Otrossi ordenamento y iuramento martes de la sebruagesima benyte dias de enero..."; explicit, "[...] Et ordenaron que quando acasciere muerte de cofrade o de coseror que canten por cada uno dies missas. Et esto que sea tenido et guardido so pena de la [...] (?) que dize en la carta";

6) Additional ordinances [change of hand], incipit, "Otrossi ordenamento et juramento martes de la sebruagesima benyte dias de enero [20 January] que todo cofrade que ferrere a su cofrade..."; explicit, "[...] sopra de la jura que en la carta dise"(end of this paragraph considerably scratched out: this is likely due to fact that the ordinance concerns the payment owed by cofrades when they enter the cabildo (chapter), and this, as any monetary contribution, fluctuated over time);

7) Last paragraph, with decorated initial in brown ink, incipit, "Jueves post cinero dia de febrero anno del nascimento del nostro Salvador ihu [ihesu] xpo [christo] de mill et .ccc. et noventa et dos [1392] [...] este dia en medina celim el cabillo de los cavallos estando ayuntados en la su camara segunt que lo avian de huso et de costunbre...en la elesia de *sant an[tonio] del mercado* quarenta missas enl'altar de la trinidad..."; explicit "[...] fue el primero que fisse estas dichas missas por los vivos et finados juan ferrens abbat de los dichas cavallos del noble ayutamento de la cofradía mayor de esta villa de medina celim este es padre bartolomeo de l'aguila el qual bartolomeo [...] de l'aguila es el mayor de sus [...]" (text interrupted).

The present document contains the normative Ordinances for the Confraternity or Brotherhood–Cofradía mayor–of Medinaceli (Spain, Castile et León, Province of Soria, Diocese of Sigüenza), located northeast of Madrid, past Guadalajara, going towards the city of Soria. The city of Medinaceli was reconquered from the Arabs by Alfonso I de Aragón in 1124 and remained a possession of the Crown until it became a County and later a Duchy in 1479. The Dukes of Medinaceli were to play a very important role in Spanish governance. The Archivo de la Casa ducal

de Medinaceli was housed till 1958 Plaza de Colón in Madrid (before moving to Seville), with an important collection of charters, deeds and manuscripts, some of which were bought by the collector Bartolomé March.

The term confraternity (*cofradía* or *bermandad*) is used to designate a group or congregation of devout persons that sought to perform works of piety and charity. Such groups were ubiquitous in towns and cities throughout Europe: they performed charitable activities (such as providing food and alms to the poor, caring for the sick), administered hospitals, and functioned as mutual aid and burial societies. The purpose in joining confraternities was to exercise Christian piety, particularly charity, long heralded by medieval theologians as the most desirable of the cardinal virtues. In one of the most inclusive of all definitions of confraternities, Gabriel Le Bras called them "artificial families in which all members were united by voluntary fellowship; confraternities had as their objective to satisfy within a narrow group the most poignant needs of body and soul" (Le Bras, 1940-1941, p. 310). A number of ordinances deal with the obligations of the "cofrades" towards their brothers in terms of burial rites, funeral wakes, financial and spiritual assistance for the remaining family members of a deceased brother etc.

The majority of confraternities were lay religious organizations and most often placed themselves under the patronage of a particular saint. The present Ordinances and *Posturas* are illustrated by a miniature representing a standing bishop (with miter and crosier) and two kneeling tonsured monks in prayer, on a blue ground with stars. It is not clear however that the Confraternity was placed under the patronage of a bishop-saint. Instead, this could be a representation of the Bishop of Sigüenza invoked in the superscription, but this has yet to be clarified. The Bishop of flanked by two kneeling tonsured figures, clad in red robes. There is no mention of a patron saint in the Ordinances. There were different types of confraternities, some devotional, others penitential, some social, others related to a specific craft (craft guilds or *gremios*), some popular and others noble. We are here in the presence of the exclusive *Cofradía Mayor* which was an aristocratic devotional lay confraternity, whose members were admitted on the basis of their belonging to the social order of "cavalleros" or knights. The "cofrades"—and "coserores" as women were generally admitted to the *cofradía*, and widows were encouraged to join because of the sizeable inheritances—pledged brotherly aid and mutual assistance. They assembled in formal chapters (*cabildos*), a recurrent term in the present document.

In his monograph on the *Cofradías* of Astorga (Province of León, further north), G. Cavero Dominguez (1992) provides a very thorough study of the phenomenon of medieval confraternities, exemplified by the city of Astorga. The same could be done for many Spanish cities, especially with such early sources as the present Ordinances. Cavero Dominguez discusses (and publishes) Ordinances as one of the major sources for the study of the *Cofradías* (see in particular Cavero Dominguez, 1992, pp. 259-263). Interestingly, Cavero Dominguez states that most often the Ordinances for a specific *Cofradía* were bound together with other documents pertaining to the Brotherhood such as Statutes or Chapter Proceedings. It is thus apparently rare to find a set of Ordinances laid out on a single sheet of parchment in such a manner. We have not found examples in the published studies on medieval confraternities and their documents. However, a fuller inspection of Spanish archival resources would yield either other examples or complimentary documents to write the history of the confraternities of Medinaceli, including the very exclusive

and prestigious "Cofradía Mayor." For the time being, this appears to be the oldest source on this confraternity.

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

The City of Medinaceli

<http://www.medinaceli.info/>

On the Dukes of Medinaceli

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duke_de_Medinaceli

On Confraternities

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04223a.htm>

<http://www.hermandades-de-sevilla.org/hermandades/historiahermandades.htm>