

**Inventory of the Church of San Benedetto in Orsago
In Latin and Italian, manuscript on parchment
Italy (Orsago), 1400-1576**

24 folios on parchment, modern foliation in pencil in top right recto corner, likely now bound out of order, as shown by the contemporary pagination top outer corner starting at f. 5v, numbered 2-39, pagination continues on ff. 1-2, numbered 40-42, f. 3 is numbered 56 (collation i⁴ ii-iii¹⁰), unruled, written in humanist cursive (inside front cover to f. 4v; f. 23v to inside back cover) and Gothic cursive (cancelleresca) (ff. 5-24v) in many different hands, second and third gatherings are loose in the binding, several tears on the folios, ink spots and staining throughout, two entries are nearly faded on f. 24v, fair condition. ORIGINAL LIMP VELLUM BINDING, heavily stained, with some text on the front cover (perhaps a table of contents) nearly completely faded, fair condition. Dimensions 236 x 152 mm.

Spanning nearly two hundred years, this inventory records the holdings of the parish church of San Benedetto in Orsago, a commune of Treviso in the Veneto. The many named notaries and historical personages illuminate the history of this small commune, and the many hands that recorded the entries show a developing notarial and scribal practice from Gothic cursive in the early entries toward Humanist cursive in the later entries. The inventory of the movable goods of the church includes their liturgical books; evidence of book ownership at the parish level is quite rare and always of special interest.

PROVENANCE

1. The main inventory, written by the notary, Benevenutus, was composed in 1400 in Orsago. Later supplements, many of them signed by notaries, continue until the year 1576 (f. 4v).

The medieval church of San Benedetto was most likely founded by Benedictines in the eleventh century, but the construction of the current church started in 1676. Orsago appears very rarely in the historical record of the *terraferma* of the Veneto. It is not, for example, included at all in Marino Sanudo's *Itinerario*, a record of his journey through the mainland of the Veneto in 1483.

2. Maggs, London; a receipt, dated January 8, 1965, reads: "Church of St. Benedict Ursago. Record of bequests. MS on Vellum. 15th/16th centuries."
3. Purchased by Marvin Colker (1927-2020), Professor of Classics at the University of Virginia, and renowned paleographer, who catalogued the manuscripts of Trinity College Library, Dublin, and who assembled an impressive collection of medieval material. Colker's shelfmark is at the bottom left of f. 1, "MLC 74."

TEXT

Front cover, [A title and table of contents(?), now mostly effaced and nearly illegible], incipit, "Roc... Li UR[S]AGO...";

Inside front cover, [List of donation of goods and prayers for the dead (benefactors of San Benedetto)], incipit, "In Christi nomine Amen. Anno Domini m^o cccc^o 46^o volens facere iuratus secundum [ecclesie] sancti Benedicti memoriam et memoriale omnibus hiis ... Item iii[?] pro animas illorum de Pria<bbo?>" ;

ff. 1-4v, [Fourteen donations to San Benedetto; originally followed f. 24v, discussed below], incipit, "Millesimo quadringentesimo nonagesimo quarto: Indictione 12^{mo} vero 28 Mensis Ianuarii...Condigni [.....]";

Dated donations: 1494, 1501, 1507, 1512, 1519, 1522, 1526, 1521, 1532, 1540, 1553, and 1576.

ff. 5-23, [Inventory of real property of San Benedetto, dated 1400], incipit, "In Christi nomine Amen. Anno nativitatis eiusdem millesimo quadringentisimo, Indictione octa die tertio mensis martii sub lobia communis Ursaghi in plena regula...a monte Sancti Nicolai de monte s. et a";

ff. 23v-24v, [Inventory of movable goods of San Benedetto], incipit, "Infrascripte sunt res mobiles spectantes et pertinentes Ecclesie Sancti Benedicti de Ursagho...singulo anno <vel?> eorum <?> final line is faded and difficult to interpret>."

Inside back cover, [Two(?) donations to San Benedetto, dated 1473], incipit, "Unam peciam terre pratium portianam in ipso regulatu...a monte Sancti Nicolai de Montesela."

A collection of legal documents pertaining to the property owned by San Benedetto in Orsago, this manuscript has never been edited. The earliest and longest portion of the inventory, dated to 1400, begins on f. 5, where the notary Benevenutus, writing in a neat Gothic cursive, identifies himself as the scribe and authenticator of the following inventory. The inventory records the goods (*bona*), real property (*possessiones*), and tithes (*decimae*) belonging to the church of San Benedetto. The typical entry records the type of land and its rents, followed by the location of the land and the donators, e.g., no. 22 on f. 8v, "Item decima et omne ius decimae unius pecie terre aratorie, plantate, et arborate..." (*Item*: the tithe and all the rights to the tithe of a piece of plowed, planted, and forested land...). Most of the bequests to San Benedetto come from citizens of Orsago ("Ursagho" in the manuscript). Later additions written in humanist cursive annotate some of the entries in the inventory, notably on ff. 7v, 9, and 10. Ff. 20-23 contain later additions to the inventory signed by different notaries, dated 1451, 1441, 1457, and 1473.

Of special interest in the list of movable goods appended to the inventory (beginning f. 23v) are the books listed among other precious objects kept at the church, such as silver chalices and thuribles. The books described as *uetus* here could be of considerable antiquity, since San Benedetto was founded sometime in the eleventh century. The list is evidence that the church of San Bendetto was, at least by this point in its history, quite well-equipped with the necessary liturgical manuscripts for the Mass and Divine Office.

Among the books listed are two liturgical books for Matins, "unum librum mattitunale...unum alium mattitunale"; a legendary, probably for local saints, "unum legendarium"; a small book, "unum librettum"; an old psalter, "unum salterium uetus"; four Missals, "unum missale uetus

secundum usum pat[rum]?, "unum messaletta uotium quasi nouum," "unum librum secundum usum modernorum," and "unum messalectum uotium uetus"; an antiphonary, "unum antiphonarium uetus"; and an office of the dead, "liber unus in quo continetur officium mortuorum." Many of the books are carefully listed with their incipits and explicits. At the bottom of ff. 23v-24, are additions to the inventory of movable goods, dated 1543; two more additions in Italian were added to f. 24v.

The later donations of land, tithes, and prayers for the dead (copied on the inside front cover and continuing to f. 4v) to the church follow the same general formula described above and are recorded as late as 1576. The cover of the manuscript seems to contain a table with names and corresponding numbers as well as the scarcely legible capitals "URSAGO," likely a table of contents corresponding to names and entry numbers contained in the numbered inventory.

The current structure of the manuscript probably represents a later rearrangement of the material. Starting on f. 5v a contemporary scribe numbered the pages in the second and third gatherings (ff. 5v-24v) as pp. 2-39. On f. 1 the pagination continues with pp. 40, 41, and 42, and then stops. The two gatherings of 10 folios, then, were probably originally placed first in the manuscript at some time before they became loose and were replaced out of order. Within the main inventory, the items are numbered 1-96 on ff. 5v-19; on ff. 19v-22v, the items are numbered 39-57, perhaps because of a misreading of the Arabic numerals on the previous folios. In any case, the second and third gatherings constitute a distinct and complete codicological unit.

This manuscript is an important witness to the local history of Orsago and the fortunes of its church in the Quattrocento and Cinquecento. The inventory and later bequests of real property contains dozens of names of the citizens of Orsago as well as many local placenames. The list of movable goods presents a vignette of the devotional and literary life of the church during the early Renaissance.

LITERATURE

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Petrucchi, Armando. *Notarii: Documenti per la Storia del Notariato Italiano*, Milan, 1958.

ONLINE RESOURCES

"Orsago," *Diocesi di Vittorio Veneto*,

<https://www.diocesivittorioveneto.it/territorio/parrocchie.asp?for=6&parr=98>

"Notarial Documents" by Dianne Tillotson

<https://medievalwritings.atilto.com.au/word/notary.htm>

"Authentication of legal and administrative documents" from University of Nottingham, Manuscripts and Special Collections

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/manuscriptsandspecialcollections/researchguidance/medievaldocuments/authentication.aspx>

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