

Personalized version of the *Libellus statutorum Cisterciensis ordinis* [*Libellus antiquarum definitionum*] (Little Book of Cistercian Statutes, or Old Definitions), and additional statutes to 1327

In Latin, manuscript on parchment

Northern France, c. 1327-1350 (likely soon after 1327)

84 folios on parchment, modern foliation in black ink, 1-84, lacking two vellum flyleaves in the beginning without loss of text, and four leaves at the end with loss of text (collation i<sup>s</sup> ii-vii<sup>12</sup> viii<sup>s</sup> [-5, -6, -7, -8, lacking four leaves after f. 84, with loss of text], alphabetical quire signatures in capitals in brown and red inks in the middle of the upper margin of the recto and verso of each leaf of the quire (the same letter on each leaf, no numbers), beginning in the second quire of the book ("A, A, A, A, ... G"), horizontal catchwords, ruled in brown ink (justification 78 x 63 mm.), written in brown ink in a cursive Gothic bookhand on 19 lines (the first line of text written above the top ruled line), rubrics underlined in red, paragraph marks (pieds-de-mouche) in red, paragraph numbers in Roman numerals in red in the margins, capitals touched in red, 1-line initials in red, occasionally decorated with simple penwork in red, last page stained and text partly illegible, large tear on f. 44, without loss of text, a fine medieval repair of a tear on f. 8, stains and signs of frequent use, otherwise in overall good condition. CONTEMPORARY (ORIGINAL?) LIMP VELLUM BINDING, stained, rubbed and torn, lacking the back cover, in poor condition. Dimensions 103 x 85 mm.

This tiny manuscript (just 4 x 3.3 inches) contains a very personal, likely unique, version of early fourteenth-century Cistercian legislation governing life in the monasteries of the Order. The contents of the collection known as the "Old Definitions" from 1316-1317 have been rearranged and (likely) abridged and then supplemented by more recent legislation up until 1327. Physically this is as distinctive as it is rare textually, copied in an informal early cursive script, and bound in a limp vellum binding that could well be original.

## PROVENANCE

1. The manuscript was written in 1327, or soon after, as indicated by the latest date included in the rubrics that introduce the legislations made in that year. Other dates included in the rubrics are 1289, 1317, 1318, 1320, 1321, 1322, 1323, and 1326.
2. Private European collection.

## TEXT

[f. 1, blank]; ff. 1v-84v, [ff. 1v-5, list of contents], *Incipiunt tituli sequentis libelli diffinitionum*, incipit, "De abbatiis et ecclesis fundandis et ordini incorporandis .A.i.ii.iii.iiii.v., De uniformitate ordinis in moribus libris cantu campanis et cymiteriis .A.vi.vii.viii.ix.x.xi.xii.xiii ... Ne pueri decem annos habentes in abbazia morantur G. xxix,"; [ff. 5v-8v, blank except for the pious invocation, "myseremini mei miseremini mei et saltem vocem amici mei" on f. 7]; ff. 9-84v, *Incipit libellus statutorum excerptorum et concordatorum cysterciensis ordinis illorum videlicet que ad regularem observantiam correctionem morum viteque disciplinam pertinere noscuntur. In primis. De abbatiis et ecclesis fundandis et ordini incorporandis. Distinctione iii. capitulo. i., incipit, "Quoniam Dei genitricis Marie vita inclita immensa*

dignitas sanctitas eximia cunctas illustrat ecclesias ... Anno Domini M° CCC° XXIII° Cum virtute orationis devote motus temperantur illiciti, reducuntur errantes(?), divina indignatio reflectitur et inter dissensus(?)// [Ending imperfectly, lacking four leaves at the end].

In 1316-1317, the Cistercian Order issued a new codification of their statutes; this text, known to modern scholars as the *Libellus antiquarum definitionum*, begins with the rubric, *libellus statutorum cisterciensis ordinis illorum videlicet que ad regularem observantiam correctionem morum viteque disciplinam pertinere noscuntur*, that is, "A little book of the Statutes of the Cistercian Order, namely those that are known to belong to regular observance, correction of manners, and discipline of life" (cf. the title in TM 494 on this site, and Lucet, 1965, p. 257, printing the title without "observantiam"). In our manuscript the opening rubric, although following the expected wording closely, adds two key words. This is not simply a "little book of Cistercian statutes", but rather a "little book of Cistercian statutes, excerpted and "concordatorium" (literally, "agreeing," but perhaps here the meaning is rearranged?). The compiler of our manuscript did arrange the statutes in a new order, beginning his collection, for example, with the first chapter of *Distinctio 3* (ed. Séjalon, 1892, p. 395). A careful analysis of the text in our manuscript is needed to understand exactly what it contains and will shed light on the interesting question of the logic behind this rearrangement (and perhaps abridgement?) of this essential Cistercian text.

The book of Cistercian "definitions" included in this manuscript, entitled "libellus diffinitionum" on f. 1v and "libellus statutorum" on f. 9, contains the codification of 1316, with additions until 1327. Twenty-one manuscripts of the 1316-7 codification are listed in FAMA (Online resources). The text has only been printed in a nineteenth-century edition (Séjalon, 1892). For background on this text, as it was established in the thirteenth century see Lucet, 1965, and Lucet, 1977. The text provides information on how the Cistercian order was organized, with rules concerning the administration, liturgy, economy, discipline, and all matters concerning the life in the abbeys of the order.

In order to facilitate the use of the manuscript, a list of contents was provided at the beginning of the manuscript. It refers to the corresponding sections in text by the quire signature followed by a list of paragraph numbers within that quire. The paragraph numbers are provided in red for each quire within the book.

Cistercian legislation began soon after the order was founded by Robert de Molesmes in 1098, supplementing the Rule of Saint Benedict with both Constitutional Law, which includes the organic or "primitive" founding documents of the Order (such as the *Carta caritatis*) and non-constitutional Law that organizes the Cistercian order and a non-constitutional law that governs the everyday lives of all abbeys belonging to the order. The general assembly (or General Chapter) of all abbots of the Cistercian order was, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, held once a year in Cîteaux. In theory, each abbot of each abbey was required to attend the General Chapter (over time, this became increasingly difficult). Because of the difficulty tied to questions of logistics, it became necessary to appoint a smaller executive committee called the *definitorium* to be in charge of arranging the major decisions and statutes to be then presented to the assembled delegates present at the General Chapter. The first systematic collection of codified statutes was compiled in 1202 under the influence of Arnaud Amaury by the General Chapter under the name *Libellus definitionum* (Book of Definitions) and in 1204 the General Chapter required all abbeys to own a copy of the book for internal reference.

The *Libellus* was then updated and enlarged in 1220, 1240 and 1257. A more fundamental revision and eventually revised *definitiones* were issued in 1289, and in 1316 the General Chapter ordered yet again a new compilation approved in 1317. The text of the present manuscript is based on this "new" *Libellus antiquarum definitionum* (Book of Old Definitions), revised and customized as noted above (Lucet, 1965, pp. 256-257).

## LITERATURE

Auberger, J. B. *L'unanimité cistercienne primitive: mythe ou réalité?*, Achel, 1986.

Bock, C. *Les codifications du droit cistercien*, Westmalle, 1955.

Bondeelle-Souchier, A. *Bibliothèques cisterciennes dans la France médiévale: Répertoire des abbayes d'hommes*, Paris, 1991.

Canivez, J.-M. *Statuta capitulorum generalium ordinis Cisterciensis*, vol. 3 (1262-1400) (Bibliothèque de la Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique 11), Louvain, 1935.

Lefèvre, J. and B. Lucet, "Les codifications cisterciennes aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles d'après les traditions manuscrites," *Analecta sacri ordinis cisterciensis* 15 (1959), pp. 3-22.

Lucet, B. *La codification cistercienne de 1202 et son évolution ultérieure*, Rome, 1964.

Lucet, B. "L'ère des grandes codifications cisterciennes (1202-1350)," *Études d'histoire du droit canonique dédiées à G. Le Bras*, Paris, 1965, vol. 1, pp. 249-262.

Lucet, B. *Les codifications cisterciennes de 1237 et de 1257*, Paris, 1977.

Séjalon, H. *Nomasticon Cisterciense*, Solesmes, 1892.

Waddell, C. *Narrative and Legislative Texts from Early Cîteaux*, *Studia et documenta*, vol. 9, Cîteaux, 1999.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

*Libellus antiquarum definitionum ordinis Cisterciensis* (1316) in FAMA, IRHT/CNRS  
<https://fama.irht.cnrs.fr/oeuvre/326940>

TM 1334