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Noted Pontifical (part) of Etienne Poncher, bishop of Paris (1503-1519)

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment

France (Paris), c. 1503-1519

One miniature by the Master of the Parisian Entries (Jean Coene IV?)

*i (parchment) + 30 + i (parchment) folios on parchment, modern foliation top outer corner recto, every ten folios, 1-30 (collation i<sup>8</sup> [missing the original first leaf; present f. 1 added from another quire] ii-iii<sup>8</sup> iv<sup>8</sup> [-3 and 4, missing two leaves after f. 26, with loss of text]), with catchwords, ruled in ink (justification 195 x 130 mm.), written in dark brown ink in an accomplished bâtarde script in two columns on 33 lines, capitals touched with yellow, music in square notation on red 4-line staves, rubrics either in red or red underlining, rubrics for intermediary sections underlined in red, line-endings in gold on red or blue grounds, one- to two-line decorated initials throughout in gold on blue or red grounds, three-line decorated initials in gold on red or blue or red and blue grounds, or blue on red grounds, flourished in gold, ONE MINIATURE in the lower border (43 x 75 mm.), accompanied by a full-page border of gold and blue acanthus, red, blue, gold, and green flowers, and strawberries, first folio a bit loose on the upper end, else in excellent condition. Bound in an eighteenth-century stiff vellum binding, spine with three raised bands, gilt-tooled with "Preces fragm. Mss." in the upper compartment and initials "C.G." with a crown and feather in the lower compartment, some stains, else in good condition. Dimensions 285 x 190 mm.*

This manuscript contains a substantial fragment (30 folios) of a Pontifical that was written and richly illuminated for Etienne Poncher, bishop of Paris from 1503 to 1519. This charming volume now begins with one folio from the Blessing of a Cemetery or a Chapel, with a miniature by the Master of the Parisian Entries depicting the prelate in prayer before his patron saint St. Stephen. The Dedication of a Church follows, notably including both the Greek and Latin Alphabets copied in large capitals (the alphabets were traced on the church floor during this service). Less common than Missals and Breviaries, Pontificals in the late Middle Ages were often expensive, illuminated volumes, and this is an excellent example.

## PROVENANCE

1. This section of text and illustration (30 folios) comes from a richly illuminated Pontifical commissioned by Etienne Poncher (1446-1524), bishop of Paris from 1503 to 1519. He appears in prayer before his patron saint St. Stephen in the lower border of the first folio, kneeling before a prie-Dieu bearing his coat of arms, blazoned *gold a chevron gules, charged with a moor's head, accompanied with three sable shells*.

Councilor to the Paris Parlement in 1485, Etienne Poncher became president of the Chamber of Enquiries in 1498 and was elected bishop of Paris in 1503 with the support King Louis XII (r. 1498-1515). The King later named him chancellor of the Duchy of Milan, and Keeper of the Seals of France from 1512 to 1514. Poncher then served as a counselor to King Francis I (r. 1515-1547); he was elected archbishop of Sens in 1519 and died in 1524.

2. French private collection.
3. European private collection.

## TEXT

f. 1, incipit, "[con]dis habitaculum auxiliare populo supplicanti ... amplificetur augmentis. Per dominum"; [concluding text of an unidentified service (six lines), ending top col. a, remainder blank];

ff. 1v, *Benedictio cimiterii vel capelle*, incipit, [liturgical directions, underlined in red], "In primis debent affigi quinque cruce lignee in terram ...; ... *Exorcismus aque*, Exorciso te ... nomine dei";

ff. 2-30v, incipit, "[me omnes qui opera [Psalm 6:9] ... [Post-communion prayers],... Deus qui de vivis et electis lapidibus eternum maiestati tue con[dis]."

The verso of the first leaf of our manuscript includes the beginning of the service for the Blessing of a cemetery or a chapel; the text is not identical with that found in Durandus, Book 2, V (Andrieu, beginning 3:504). It is now followed by most of the service for the Dedication of a Church, one of the richest and most solemn ceremonies included in a Pontifical, here beginning and ending imperfectly and missing two folios following f. 26.

The text of the Pontifical by William Durand (c. 1290-1296), written in the years 1292 to 1295 while he was bishop of Mende, proved to be extremely influential and became the basis for the edition printed in Rome in 1485 by Stephan Plannck, edited by Augustinus Patritius Piccolomini (c. 1435-1496) and Johannes Burchardus (1420-1506). Local liturgical requirements and the influence of other Pontificals often resulted in variations in the content of particular copies, as seems to be the case here. On the text of Durand's pontifical, see Andrieu, 1940, volume 3, pp. 327-683; on the later history of the text after Durand, see Dykman, 1985.

A Pontifical is the liturgical book that includes the ceremonies reserved specially for a Bishop. Richard Kay's Repertorium (Online Resources), lists 1,249 Pontificals and Benedictionals (his criteria for inclusion in this list is very broad, and many different types of liturgical manuscripts are included). Since Pontificals were books reserved for the use of bishops, they were never as common as Missals and Breviaries. They include not only the text of the prayers, but also either the opening words of the chanted texts, or, as in this manuscript, the full text of the chants with musical notation. They also include complete liturgical rubrics, that is instructions that tell the participants how to perform the liturgy correctly. This combination of preserving both liturgical texts and music and very complete descriptions of the liturgical ceremonies makes them an invaluable source for liturgical historian.

The ceremonies described in Pontifical, often of great antiquity, are both fascinating and accessible. The ceremony for the Dedication of a Church, for example, includes the practice of writing the Greek and Latin alphabets with the point of the pastoral staff in ashes which have been sprinkled on the floor of the church. Some Pontificals do not include both alphabets; others include only the names of letters in the Greek alphabet. Other Pontificals, however,

including the one described here, include both the Greek and Latin alphabets, a fact of interest to historians studying the knowledge of Greek in the Latin West during the Middle Ages.

Later medieval Pontificals were often expensive, illuminated volumes; the Pontifical described here must have once been just such a manuscript. Including a miniature at the beginning of the Blessing of a Cemetery is unusual and bears witness to the likely very extensive decoration of its parent manuscript. Etienne Ponchon owned a pontifical in two volumes, each illuminated only with one small miniature at the beginning (Paris, BnF, MSS latin 956-957; see Kay, Online Resources, nos. 644 and 645). Ours is thus evidence that the bishop also owned a more ambitious and luxuriously decorated Pontifical, complementary to this much simpler two-volume Pontifical.

## ILLUSTRATION

f. 1v, Etienne Poncher, bishop of Paris, kneeling before a prie-Dieu with his coat of arms, in prayer before his patron St. Stephen, holding the stone of his lapidation.

The lower miniature and full floral border introducing the rite of the Blessing of a Cemetery was commissioned by Etienne Poncher from the Master of the Parisian Entries, active in Paris from c. 1490 to c. 1520. A frequent collaborator of Jean Pichore and his workshop, the Master of the Parisian Entries has been tentatively identified as Jean Coene IV. Characteristic features of style include the thick black outline of the figures, the puffy eyes dotted with white, and the pronounced red lips. St. Stephen and Etienne Poncher's faces here appear as carefully modelled, with facial features drawn in black with a thin brush, shaded with washes of grey, and highlighted with red hatching on the cheeks and lips. This miniature especially compares to the style of a copy of the *Sacre de Claude de France*, dated from 1517 onward (London, British Library, Stowe MS 582). The fact that a secondary section such as the Blessing of a Cemetery was introduced by a miniature indicates that the parent manuscript, of which no other fragment has been identified, was extensively illuminated.

A prolific artist active in Paris under Kings Louis XII (1498-1515) and François I (1515-1547), the Master of the Parisian Entries was first named after a manuscript recording the royal entry of Mary Tudor in 1514, second wife to Louis XII (London, British Library, Cotton Vespasian MS B II), and another devoted to the *Sacre, couronnement, triomphe et entrée de la reine et duchesse Madame Claude de France* in 1517, first wife to François I (Paris, BnF, MS fr. 5750; fr. 14116: fig. 5). A group of thirty manuscript copies of Pierre Choque's *Commemoration et advertissement de la mort d'Anne, reine de France*, illuminated soon after of Anne of Brittany's funeral in 1514, demonstrates his capacity to produce a great number of manuscripts in a relatively short period of time (Delaunay, 2008; Avril, 2011). The Master of the Parisian Entries was identified with Jean Coene IV in 1997 by Eberhard König on the basis of an inscribed painted frame in the Crucifixion of a Missal that purportedly reads "De Jos Coene" (König, 1997, p. 320). Jean Coene IV would have belonged to a well-known family of Bruges artists that had settled in Paris in the early fifteenth century.

## LITERATURE

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### ONLINE RESOURCES

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