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**BERNARDUS DE MAGDUNO** (fl. c. 1133?, d. no later than 1299), *Ordo dictaminis*  
(Collection of model letters)

In Latin, decorated manuscript on parchment

Northern France or Rhineland, c. 1280-1300

16 parchment leaves, foliated 1-16 in arabic numerals upper right corner rectos, presumably complete but possibly lacking an undetermined number of leaves at the end (i-ii<sup>4</sup> iii<sup>8</sup>), 40 horizontal lines and 2 full-height vertical lines lightly ruled in lead (justification 145 x 100 mm.), 40 long lines written in tiny gothic script by a single hand, rubrics in red, red initial letters entered in left margins, natural flaws to a few blank margins, blank outer margin to f. 3 cut away, lower margins of ff. 3, 5, 7-10, 13, 14 cut away and mended with later parchment without loss of text, dark stains to text area of ff. 1-3 (text still legible), several leaves creased and rubbed, some marginal initials rubbed, text on f. 16v darkened to the point of impairing legibility, but likely recoverable using modern techniques of enlargement and digital enhancement. Text block resewn and recased in eighteenth-century binding of brown leather over pasteboards, spine repaired, endleaves renewed with modern parchment. Dimensions 170 x 130 mm.

Unpublished and heretofore unstudied, this manuscript offers extensive possibilities for literary and historical research. A collection of over 200 model letters attributed to the noted *dictator* Bernard of Meung, who taught in the renowned cathedral school of Orléans, it provides a window into the practice of the discipline of dictamen, i.e., rules for composing letters. Copied and modified repeatedly in Northern Europe between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, this example is relatively early in the transmission of the text and furnishes an opportunity to study more closely the social, political, and religious issues of the day.

## PROVENANCE

1. Changes to manuscripts of Bernard's text provide valuable evidence for the dating and localization of specific versions of the letters. For example, if a particular version of the collection refers to Popes Clement III (1187-1191), to Celestine III (1191-1198), or to later popes, these names indicate that the collection in question was formed no later than the time of the papacy in question. The present manuscript, although it reduces most proper names to initials, begins by quoting a letter from Pope Gregory VIII (f. 1r), who ruled for only two months in 1187, indicating that the version of the collection found in this codex was compiled in or soon after his time. The only earlier pope to be named in some copies of this compilation was Urban III (ruled 1185-1187), thus providing an approximate date for the original compilation. Furthermore, although there are references to the archbishops of Mainz and Cologne, the emperor of the Romans (Holy Roman Emperor), and the Duke of Saxony, the great majority of geographical references relate to France, to the see of Orléans, to the Dukes of Aquitaine, Brittany, and Berry, the Bishop of Chartres, the Counts of Toulouse, Poitou, and Limousin, and to students studying in Paris, whereas manuscripts copied later, especially in German-speaking areas, tend to substitute local names of persons and places. Thus, the evidence for probable date, together with the predominant geographical references, indicate that the collection from which this copy was derived was compiled at a time and place when

the French references predominated, in other words c. 1280-1300. Script and physical features corroborate this dating.

2. Deep erasure to top margin, f. 1, presumably obliterating a previous ownership mark.
3. Occasional contemporary corrections in margins (sometimes cropped) and in text.
4. Early scribbled notes in a few margins, ff. 1rv, 2, 4.
5. Perhaps the manuscript sold at Antiquariat Dr. Helmut Tenner, Heidelberg, Auktion 100-101, October 23-24, 1974, no. 1 (Vulliez 1977, p. 150, n. 3).
6. Sold at Hartung & Karl, Munich, Auktion 53, 1986, no. 406.
7. Private collection of Dr. Hablitzl, Ansbach, Germany (Worstbrock 1990, p. 61, no. 9.38).

## TEXT

ff. 1-16v, incipit, "Gloriosum habent qui recte sapiunt ad communem non ad suum solummodo suspirare profectum. Isto siquidem ductus intuitu sociorum crebris impulsus precibus presens opus quasi quoddam exemplar in dictandi sciencia profectum querentibus ex magistri nostri saporatis et splendore rethorico coloratis dictaminibus prius tamen dispersis et scriptorum corruptis vicio secundum diversos gradus tam ecclesiasticarum quam secularium personarum compilare proposui ... *Ordo dictaminis magistri Bernardi secundum ordinem tam ecclesiasticarum quam secularium personarum primum ergo papa ecclesiasticis personis* ... Gregorius episcopus servus servorum dei venerabili fratri .G. sacre sancte ecclesiastice romane cardinali maguntino sedis archiepiscopo salutem et apostolicam benedictionem. Ad honorem cedit ... [f. 16] *Clericus clerico ut de statu suo faciat eum certiorum*" [text continues in damaged form on f. 16v].

Bernardus de Magduno, *Ordo dictamenis* [collection of 286 model letters], a part of his *Flores dictaminum* (see below). Unpublished in this version. The letter collection from which this text derives is also unpublished except for miscellaneous excerpts transcribed from various manuscripts (Auvray, 1892; Redlich, 1894; Cartellieri, 1898; Delisle, 1899).

Relatively little is known about the life and career of Bernardus de Magduno (Bernard of Meung). He is named in a number of manuscripts, including the present one, as the author of works on dictamen (Worstbrock, 1990, pp. 43-62; Polak, 1993, 1994, 2015). Despite the speculations of nineteenth-century scholars, he is now generally recognized as the Bernardus de Magduno who was active in the late twelfth century, when he was attested as a canon of St. Lifar (Liphard) at Meung-sur-Loire, a village near Orléans, where the bishops of Orléans had a castle and where there was a renowned school (Vulliez, 1993). He is presumed to have taught in the school, and he may have worked in the bishop's chancery (Worstbrock, 1990, p. 46; Vulliez, 2015, p. 152, n.3).

The discipline of dictamen (*ars dictaminis*, *ars dictandi*), that is, the rules for prose composition, especially for letters, had its origin in Italy, where it was developed primarily in Bologna during the twelfth century (Haskins, 1927; Schmale, 1957; Klaes, 1990). From there it spread to

France, where it was cultivated principally at Tours and Orleans. Of the *dictatores* associated with these centers, Bernard, whose works were assembled by his students (see prologue above) is considered to be the one whose works were most frequently copied or modified and who exercised the greatest influence on contemporaries and posterity (Schmale, 1958, p. 2; Worstbrock, 1990, p. 45; Schaller, 2000, cols. 2000-2001).

Bernard's works on dictamen were widely circulated but often copied separately. In the manuscripts they are variously referred to as *Summa magistri Bernardi*, *Summa Bernardina*, or *Summa dictaminis*, but in modern scholarship are usually subsumed under the title *Flores dictaminum* which is attested in two manuscripts of German origin now in Munich (Worstbrock, 1990, p. 52, nos. 9.15, 9.16; Polak, vol. 3, p. 52).

Bernard's treatise on the composition of letters identifies five parts of a letter: salutation (*salutatio*), introduction (*proverbium* or *exordium*), narration (*narratio*), petition (*petitio*), and conclusion (*conclusio*). In addition, he composed a treatise on the composition of documents (*privilegia*), which may include comments on the *cursus* (rules for the rhythmical termination of sentences), and the *indiction* (a method of reckoning time inherited from antiquity); this section is sometimes accompanied by sample documents. Most pertinent to the present discussion are two collections of model letters, a shorter one, sometimes designated *minor compilatio*, and a longer one, identified in some manuscripts as, *maior compilatio*, (Koller, 1951; Schmale, 1958; Auer, 1970). It is the latter that is found in the present manuscript.

Manuscripts such as this one provide valuable evidence for dating and localizing the different versions of this popular and influential letter collection, as well as representing the wider cultural context embodied in each iteration or modification of the collection. In his treatise on the composition of letters (not included in this manuscript) Bernard placed special emphasis on the correct forms of salutations, which were to be organized according the ranks of ecclesiastical persons and then of secular dignitaries, ranging from naming persons of higher rank first – letters from the pope to cardinals and archbishops, from cardinals and archbishops to bishops, from bishops to clergy of various ranks, and among persons of each rank communicating among themselves; for secular persons, the hierarchy ranged from emperor to princes, from kings to nobles and soldiers, and down to simple laymen (Constable, 1977; Patt 1978; Vulliez 1984, Vulliez, 2015). The organization of the letters in this manuscript to a great extent reflects this hierarchy, and the rubric introducing each letter gives a precis of the subject matter, ranging from ecclesiastical concerns to matters of secular governance to letters from students to their teachers and families (Haskins 1927; Vulliez, 2015). As Bernard's collection of model letters was copied and recopied, especially in England, the Rhineland, Bavaria, and Austria, it was regularly updated with deletions of letters, insertion of new letters, whether historical or fictive, and changes of names for senders or recipients, as well as the updating of geographical references.

No portion of any of Bernard's works has been published in edited form, and the manuscript tradition has never been fully analyzed. Worstbrock lists thirty-eight manuscripts, including the present one, that contain versions of these texts, to which Vulliez adds six or seven more codices (Worstbrock, 1990, pp. 43-62; Vulliez, 2015, p. 145, n. 3); Polak identifies at least forty manuscripts containing works by Bernard or influenced by him (Polak, 1993, 1994, 2015). Significant holdings are those now in European libraries: in Germany, France, Austria, Great

Britain, the Vatican, and Spain. Only one manuscript, and that containing the present letter collection, is found in an American institution, Getty Museum, Cod. XII 6, formerly from the Ludwig collection (Worstbrock, 1990, p. 52, no. 9.13).

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