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Ferial Psalter (Cistercian Use)

In Latin, illustrated manuscript on parchment and paper

Southwestern Poland, Silesia, c. 1300-1350; with later additions (late 16th or early 17th century?)

218 folios on parchment and paper (202 on parchment), modern foliation in pencil, 1-202 (including 44bis), followed by 15 folios on paper added later, no watermark visible, with modern foliation in pencil, 203-217, original parchment section, complete (collation i⁸ [-8, lacking one leaf after f. 7 (probably blank), without loss of text] ii-iii¹² iv¹⁰ v-xv¹² xvi¹⁰ xvii¹⁴ xviii⁶), lacking two leaves with text from the added section on paper (collation i⁶ ii¹² [-5, -10, -12, lacking one leaf after f. 212 and one leaf after f. 216, with loss of text; the final removed leaf was blank]), no catchwords or signatures, ruled in brown ink (justification 119 x 90 mm.), written in dark brown ink in gothic textualis bookhand on 18 long lines (except ff. 196-202 on 20 long lines), ascenders on the first line of text often decorated with human faces, 1-line initials in red, 2-line initials alternating in red with blue penwork and in blue with red penwork, eight 4- to 6-line particolored initials with penwork flourishes in red and blue, signs of use and small stains, several original holes on the parchment (the scribe wrote around them and decorated them with red ink, e.g. ff. 26, 29, 105, 162, 164), lacking part of the lower margin on f. 16 with minor loss of text, a tear on f. 43, wormholes in the section on paper, but overall in good condition. Bound in brown leather over wooden boards in the late sixteenth- or seventeenth(?) century blind-tooled with a frame design made with foliage rolls, fleur-de-lis and fillets, spine with three raised bands, brass clasps with the monogram of the binder "LH," leather very worn but with modern restorations, overall in very good condition. Dimensions 171 x 127 mm.

Manuscripts made for nuns (and sometimes by nuns) have increasingly garnered attention in recent years. This is one of them, a Psalter made for Cistercian nuns in a foundation in Silesia in Poland. Important as it is for gender studies, the present Psalter also offers evidence for the inclusion of Poland, which was a meeting place between East and West, into a more inclusive narrative of Western Europe. Here the clear script, accomplished penwork initials, and early blind-tooled binding testify to westward influences on manuscript production in Poland.

PROVENANCE

1. The script, style of the initials, and the saints included in the calendar are evidence that this manuscript was made for use of Cistercian nuns in Silesia in Poland c. 1300-1350, possibly at the Trzebnica Abbey (see below), or another Cistercian foundation in Silesia.

Included in red in the calendar with 12 lessons is the feast day of Hedwig of Silesia (15 Oct), Duchess of Silesia and of Poland, canonized in 1267. She is the patron saint of Silesia (the historic region around Wrocław in Poland and across the modern border with the Czech Republic), of the Archdiocese of Wrocław, of the diocese of Görlitz, and of Andechs in Bavaria, the origins of her noble family. The feasts of St. Stanislaus of Szczepanów (8 May) and St. Wenceslaus of Bohemia (28 Sept), both entered in red with twelve lessons, confirm the use of this manuscript in Silesia. St. Stanislaus, the first Polish-born saint, was an eleventh-century bishop of Kraków. St. Wenceslaus was a

tenth-century duke of Bohemia, venerated as a patron saint in the Czech lands and in Poland. Even in the Middle Ages, the Virgin was especially venerated in Poland during the month of May; here we find the "Commemoration of the Holy Mother" in red on May 2. The text also includes several Germanic saints (especially from Cologne and the Rhine valley) demonstrating their importance in the Silesian liturgy.

The text also provides evidence that the manuscript was made for Cistercian nuns. The feast of St. Bernard of Clairvaux is included in red with twelve lessons in the calendar, and he is also included in the litanies. The petitions following the litanies include supplications for "abbatissam nostram" (our abbess) and for "famulam tuam N" (your servant, where the "N" stands for the name of the supplicant, who in this case must be female, given the form of the word "servant" in Latin), indicating that the manuscript was made for nuns. The litanies also contain more virgins than martyrs or confessors.

The Cistercian liturgy was carefully regulated by the Order, which often means Cistercian manuscripts can be closely dated by the feasts included in the calendar (Backaert, 1950-1951 and Online Resources). The calendar in our manuscript departs from the Cistercian calendar mandated by the statutes; additional saints are included, some feasts are omitted, and the rank granted a number of feasts by Cistercian statutes from the second half of the thirteenth century is not reflected here. This may reflect the relative geographic isolation of the abbey where this was copied. Nonetheless, the evidence allows us to state that this must date after 1267 (canonization of St. Hedwig), and perhaps after 1276 or 1278, when her feast was mandated for Polish monasteries by the statutes (Backaert, 1950-1, p. 109).

2. Evidence of the active liturgical use of this manuscript include early marginal additions of noted antiphons written in brown ink on four-line staves, and the texts copied on paper added to the end of the manuscript in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century.
3. Ex libris in brown ink on the front pastedown: "Anno domini (name crossed out) 1606."
4. Modern booksellers's notes, front pastedown.

TEXT

[f. 1, blank]; f. 1v, table of Dominical letters, [added, but contemporary with the making of the manuscript];

ff. 2-7v, Graded calendar for Cistercian use;

ff. 8-150v, Ferial Psalter with most psalms followed by the Gloria, antiphons, and verses; the text is complete with the 150 psalms;

ff. 150v-165v, Liturgical canticles, hymns and Athanasian Creed: Confitebor (Isaiah 12), Ego dixi (Isaiah 38:10-21), Exultavit (1 Kings 2:1-11), Cantemus (Exodus 15:1-20), Domine audivi (Habakkuk 3), Audite celi (Deut. 32:1-44), Te Deum, Benedicte omnia, Benedictus dominus, Magnificat, Nunc dimittis, Quicumque Vult;

ff. 164v-167v, Litanies, including Gotthard of Hildesheim (venerated especially in eastern Europe, Switzerland and Scandinavia), St. Gall, St. Othmar (the founder of the Abbey of St. Gall), St. Maternus of Cologne, St. Afra of Augsburg, St. Anne and St. Ursula of Cologne (both included twice), and St. Otilia of Alsace (her relics were found at Corbie, Prague, and Einsiedeln); followed by prayers;

ff. 167v-175v, Lessons for the Office of the Dead, incipit, "Parce mihi Domine, nihil enim sunt dies mei ...";

ff. 175v-181v, Prayers for Sundays, beginning with the first Sunday after Pentecost, incipit, "Deus in te sperantium fortitude ...";

ff. 181v-195v, Hymns for the liturgical year, beginning with "Primo dierum omnium" and concluding with "Aurora iam spargit polum";

ff. 196-202, Brief Offices for Lauds (with Antiphons, versicles and prayers) for the liturgical year;

f. 202v, [Capitulum added in the sixteenth century], incipit, "Capitulum. benedictus deus et pater domini nostri ies(u) christi pater misericordiarum et deus totius consolationis, qui consolatur nos in omni tribulatione nostra";

ff. 203-217, Hymns, prayers, antiphons and other texts for the Office added in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century; [f. 217, blank].

ILLUSTRATION

Eight large decorated initials that mark the liturgical divisions, with seven large initials marking the first psalm at Matins, on each day of the week according to secular use, and another large initial at Psalm 109, the beginning of Vesper psalms: f. 8, Ps. 1, "Beatus vir ..."; f. 29, Ps. 26, "Dominus illuminatio mea ..."; f. 43, Ps. 38, "Dixi custodiam ..."; f. 55v, Ps. 52, "Dixit insipiens ..."; f. 68v, Ps. 68, "Saluum me fac deus ..."; f. 85, Ps. 80, "Exultate deo..."; f. 100v, Ps. 97, "Cantate domino ..."; f. 118, Ps. 109, "Dixit dominus"

This manuscript is a Ferial or Liturgical Psalter copied for the use of Cistercian nuns. The psalms were central to the liturgy of the church. The weekly recital of the 150 psalms was the heart of the Divine Office, the daily cycle of prayers sung in common by monks and nuns, members of other religious orders, and the secular clergy. The psalms here are presented in the order of the Bible and are interspersed with other short texts for the daily Office (including antiphons and verses). The manuscript also includes a liturgical calendar, the canticles, a litany, texts from the Office of the Dead, hymns, and other Office texts.

The manuscript may have been made for use at the Trzebnica Abbey, a convent for Cistercian nuns in Trzebnica, north of Wroclaw in Silesia. The convent was founded in 1203 by duke Henry I the Bearded and duchess Hedwig of Andechs. Their daughter, Gertrude, was its second abbess. When Hedwig was widowed in 1238, she went to live at the Trzebnica Abbey and was buried there. She was canonized in 1267. Her feast was celebrated with 12 lessons at

the Cistercian convent where our manuscript was used. Trzebnica Abbey was the first of the four daughter houses of Lubiaz Abbey that were founded in the first half of the thirteenth century in Silesia, before the Mogila Abbey (1222), Henrykow Abbey (1227) and Kamieniec Abbey (1249, former Augustinian house). Lubiaz itself was founded in 1175; by the fourteenth century it had become a cultural center for all East-Central Europe, with a notable monastery school and scriptorium (see Online Resources).

In 2002, Constant Mews observed that the history of Poland was seldom incorporated into the historical narrative of Western Europe, and this seems to be true even today. As she noted, we read about the Crusades and the European attempts to conquer the Holy Land much more often than we read about European expansion (colonization is perhaps a more accurate term), into Eastern and Central Europe. The Cistercian foundations in Poland and other countries of Eastern Europe beginning in the second half of the twelfth century, were part of this movement eastward.

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