

**Prayerbook for Franciscan use
In Dutch, decorated manuscript on paper
Northeastern or Eastern Netherlands(?), c. 1470-1490**

ii + 214 + i folios on paper, two watermarks: "amphore à couronne à trois fleurs-de-lys et à fleuron à quatre feuille" (unidentified) and "lettre p gothique à long jambage bifurqué à fleuron à quatre feuille" similar to Briquet 8606, Troyes 1470 (the watermark is wide-spread throughout northern Europe in 1450-1530, see Briquet 8588-8653), modern foliation in pencil, 1-214, lacking an unknown number of leaves in the beginning and end, in addition to eight leaves within the surviving text block (collation i-iii^s iv^s[-2, lacking one leaf after f. 25, with loss of text] v^s vi^s[-5, -8, lacking one leaf after f. 43 and one leaf after f. 45, with loss of text] vii^s[-8, lacking one leaf after f. 52, with loss of text] viii^s ix^s[-7, lacking one leaf after f. 66, with loss of text; this quire is bound out of order, see description of text below] x¹² xi¹⁰ xii^s[-6, lacking one leaf after f. 94, with loss of text] xiii⁶ xiv² xv⁶ xvi^s xvii^s[-5, lacking one leaf after f. 123, with loss of text] xviii-xxi^s xxii^s[-5, lacking one leaf after f. 162, with loss of text] xxiii⁶ xxiv-xxvi^s xxvii¹⁴ xxviii⁵[ending imperfectly; this irregular quire is pasted to the previous one]), no catchwords or signatures, ruled in brown ink (justification 85 x 69 mm.), written by a number of scribes in brown ink in gothic hybrid bookhand in a single column on 15-20 lines, rubrics in red, capitals touched in red, 1-line initials in red, 2- to 4-line initials in red decorated with patterns left in reserve, an initial infilled with a profile of a man drawn in brown ink on f. 8, TWO LATER ETCHINGS, added later (at the earliest in the 18th century) before f. 1 and f. 101v (described below), several stains, the edges of the pages are dirty and have frequent tears, despite the wear the text is legible throughout and manuscript otherwise in good condition. Bound in its ORIGINAL FLEMISH BINDING of dark brown calf, covers blind-tooled with two frames, the outer frame made with a roll of roses within circles alternating with small fleur-de-lis, the inner frame has an inscription mostly worn out "...filium...", spine with three raised bands, modern inscription in white ink on the spine "148," a pair of original brass catches and brass clasps mounted on leather straps survive, first quire detached from the binding and sewing broken in several other places, leather very worn, otherwise in good condition. Dimensions 138 x 105 mm.

Most likely made for a Franciscan nun, this charming vernacular Prayerbook still in its original binding is notable for its rare texts, including the Hours of St. Anne and the Hours of St. Margaret. It survives as a fascinating example of the marriage between print and manuscript, since it is now illustrated with two prints, which were added to the book late in its history (in the eighteenth century at the earliest). One of them is by the Dutch artist Jan Verbruggen (1712-1781).

PROVENANCE

1. The styles of script and decoration suggest localizing the making of this manuscript in northeastern or eastern Netherlands around 1480, c. 1470-1490. The rubric to prayers for St. Francis on f. 75, introducing him as "onsen heiligen vader franciscus," reveals the Franciscan use of this manuscript. The numerous prayers and Hours for female saints in our manuscript, venerating St. Catherine, St. Barbara, St. Margaret and St. Anne, suggest that the book was made for a woman, probably a Franciscan nun.
2. Continued in active use into the modern era, when two eighteenth century religious

etchings were added.

TEXT

ff. 1-11v, [Hymns, beginning imperfectly], "///te werden overmits onsen heer ihesum christum Amen," rubric, "een ymmen," incipit, "Dat eerbaer choer der heiligen propheten hier suoer maels ghesongen heest vol van den heiligen geest..."; [with an etching added before f. 1, see illustration, below];

ff. 11v-13, Extracts from the Book of Hosea;

ff. 13v-15v, Extracts from the Book of Exodus;

ff. 16-36, Passion of Christ according to St. John, followed by prayers and commentaries;

ff. 36-52v, Office for the Holy Cross, the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Sacrament [text continues on f. 61][;]

ff. 52v-60v, Prayers to saints Peter, John the Evangelist, Paul, Andrew, James, Philip;

ff. 61-67v, [Quire ix, bound out of order; the text continues from f. 52v, in the Office for Holy Sacrament [ending imperfectly];

ff. 68-90, [Continuing from f. 60v], Prayers to saints Anthony, Stephen, Lawrence, Cornelius, Quirinus, Francis (on f. 75 beginning "onsen heiligen vader franciscus"), Martin, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Bernard, Nicholas, Simon and Jude, Bartholomew, Matthew, and Matthias;

ff. 90-105v, Hours, beginning with midday;

ff. 106-129, Hours of St. Anne; [f. 101v, blank, with an added print];

ff. 129v-134v, Seven prayers attributed to St. Anne, followed by more prayers of St. Anne;

ff. 135-145v, Hours of St. Catherine;

ff. 145v-161v, Hours of St. Barbara;

ff. 161v-165v, Hours of St. Margaret;

ff. 166-181, Prayers, hymns and antiphons to Christ;

ff. 181v-214v, Prayers for Epiphany, followed by an office for Candlemas, ending imperfectly.

ILLUSTRATION

Two etchings added later:

Inserted before f. 1, a signed eighteenth-century etching by Jan Verbruggen (1712-1781), Dutch engraver, representing *Woman of the Apocalypse*, surrounded by a pope, a cardinal, and a bishop on the left, three kings or emperors on the right;

f. 101v (Inserted before f. 102), an eighteenth-century(?) etching representing *Virgin and Child*, an inscription written on the frame: "Singulare privilegium in quo qui moritur aeternum non patietur incendium."

The Latin Book of Hours was translated into Middle Dutch in 1383-1384 by Geert Grote (1340-1384). The Northern Netherlands was not the only country in the medieval Latin world to translate the Book of Hours into the vernacular; for example, in France the Hours of the Virgin and of the Holy Cross were translated into French verse. However, it was only in Northern Netherlands that the vernacular text became more popular than the Latin one. This had enormous consequences for the development of lay spirituality, as it transformed everyday prayer from the hieratic, abstract formulae written in the Latin of the clergy to a language that laymen could easily understand, thus providing them with more direct and personal access to the divine (cf. König, 2012, pp. 10-11).

Addressing a wide audience of different social statuses and with different financial means, many vernacular manuscripts copied in the Netherlands were not illuminated with miniatures, but included only decorated initials, as in our manuscript. Eberhard König has suggested that once the text was understandable to Dutch readers, they no longer felt the need for images, realizing that the conventional narrative cycles in Books of Hours were far removed from the text itself; the *getijdenboeken* "were made truly to be read" (König, 2012, pp. 12-13, 16).

The two eighteenth-century prints added to this manuscript are a particularly interesting feature: one, with the Virgin Mary represented as the Woman of the Apocalypse, was inserted at the beginning of the book, and another, showing the Virgin and Child, was inserted within the Hours of St. Anne on f. 101v. "Hybrid book" is a term used today for mixed-media volumes that combine hand-written and printed texts and illustrations (Hindman and Farquhar, 1977; Hindman, 2009; Rudy, 2019). The addition of prints so late in our Prayerbook's history affirms its active use for centuries after it was made.

The numerous prayers and Hours for female saints in our manuscript, venerating St. Catherine, St. Barbara, St. Margaret and St. Anne, suggest that the book was made for a woman, probably a Franciscan nun. Instead of the more common Hours of the Virgin Mary, and Grote's translation of the Hours of Eternal Wisdom (although perhaps initially included in the lacking sections), our manuscript contains Dutch translations of the rare Hours of St. Catherine and the Hours of St. Barbara, and the very rare Hours of St. Margaret and the Hours of St. Anne. These rare texts add substantially to the interest and importance of our manuscript.

Dutch manuscripts can often be localized by the penwork flourishes that decorate the initials, because each large town or region came to have its own style. Unfortunately, our manuscript includes no penwork flourishes; the decoration is limited to initials drawn in red ink leaving areas of the initial's body unpainted to form decorative motifs: small flowers, ribbons, lines, leaves, circles, dots, S-shapes, and so forth. The geographic variation is more difficult to establish for the decoration in the body of the initial alone, in comparison to the penwork

flourishes, which allowed the illuminator more artistic freedom. However, the decorative forms used especially in manuscripts from the Northeastern Netherlands offer some similarities with those in our manuscript. In Groningen, the Benedictine double convents of Selwerd and Thesinge produced several vernacular Prayerbooks at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries, some of which were not destined for their own use, but for use by Franciscan nuns; see for instance the Franciscan Prayerbook made at Thesinge in 1529 (Copenhagen, The Royal Library, MS Thott 8° 131; cf. Online resources) and the Ferial Psalter made for a Franciscan sister at Selwerd around 1470-1490 (The Hague, KB, MS 74 G 10). For further research, see especially the studies published by Jos Hermans and Anne Margreet As-Visjvers, as well as the database *Medieval Manuscripts in Dutch Collections*.

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Copenhagen, The Royal Library, Thott 8° 131

<http://manuscripts.org.uk/chd.dk/thott/thott131.html>

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<https://www.mmdc.nl/static/site/>

Monasticon Trajectense: Repertory of Franciscan convents in the diocese of Utrecht

<https://www2.let.vu.nl/oz/monasticon/index.php>

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