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MS 791

Italy (Cosenza [Calabria]?), 1523

Antonino Ponti, *Rhomitypion*

1. f. 1r Pontii Rhomitypion. ff. 1v-2r blank
2. f. 2v Painted coat of arms of Giovanni Ruffo de' Teodoli, Archbishop of Cosenza (1511-1527), surmounted by a cross and placed in a floral wreath, above two distychs: [1] *Quinque rotae radii, restat Rhamnusia, volve / Summus, perfectum sic tibi fiet opus.* [2] *Pontus de se: Ponte, sub his radiis exspectans mollior unda / Fies puniceo numine tutus. Ama.*

Both distychs mention the spokes in the wheel in the archbishop's arms; the Teodoli (Rome) arms are: a six-spoked wheel in gold on a field of gules; the marquis Theodoli (Rome) arms, however, a five-spoked wheel in the same colours (as in our manuscript) according to Rietstap. "Rhamnusia" is a name for Nemesis, and "puniceum numen" supposedly alludes to the archbishop's dress of the dedicatee.

3. ff. 3r-20v *Antonini Ponti Consentini Rhomitypion ad reverendum dominum, dominum Ioannem Rufum, archiepiscopum Consentinum quam dignissimum, incipiebat prooe<mium>* [5 lines blank]. *Etsi homo temporis apparens praestigium, Rufe antistes oculatissime, duplici compactus substantia, corporea hac, caeca tamen et fluida, ac mentali illa divina et semper existente, inter tot naturae filicato nexu viventia solus est intellectivus ...* [f. 4r, text:] *Quom igitur ego in aetatum medio per multa semirudis tum maria insulasque, tum urbes, praesul benignissime, tranando peregre ivissem ... verum frigidae noctis umbra ab ortu iam tetrum caput extollente, per antiquas Andreae Vallae cardinalis [Andrea de Valle, d. 1534] statuas in illustris viri domini Francisci Capharelli splendidas domos nocturni subivimus corpusque curavimus. Explicit Rhomitypii pars prima. Incipit secunda.*
4. ff. 21r-41r A. Pontii Con(sentini) dialogica Rhomitypii pars secunda incipiebat. Pontus, Cato interlocutores, ac inde Vincentius, Hieronymus, Iacobus fratres. Aurora autem albescente, Rufe antistes dignissime, quo tempore frigidus sol ab inferis rediens primum ***goceri punctum ascendebat ... Attamen, si quid est quod meo animo ingerat stuporem, abs te, sicut iubes, paucis perconctabor. Ca(to): Age, age quid vides. Finit Rhomitypii pars secunda. Incipit tertia.*
5. ff. 41v-58v A. Ponti Cons(entini) dialogica Rhomitypii pars tertia incipiebat. Interlocutores Pontus et Cato. *Studenti mihi, sapientissime Cato, tuae citae voluntati pro temporis angustia gerere morem, tantus quidem undarum cumulus oculis extollitur, ut, dum natare levis conor, penitus immergar ... Hoc dumtaxat obdura eo aequae viae te non capiet oblivio ac pro viribus hunc eximia virtute virum honorato. Cato: enim tertius est et quem tibi quaeris bonus Mecoenas [sic]. Antonini Ponti Consentini Rhomitypion finit. Laus Deo et Matri. M CCCC V XXIII° [l. M CCCCC XXIII°].*

Artt. 1-5: Antoninus Pontus (Antonino Ponti from Cosenza, s. XVI¹), *Rhomitypion*. An allegorical treatise in three parts on the past and present state of Rome and Italy, topography, cosmography, geography, etc. The title is explained as “species Romae”. The first part (art. 3) reflects on the great men of ancient Rome and its buildings, describes its topography in detail, laments its decay and ruins, but sees a return of better times in the evocation of numerous illustrious contemporaries. The next day (second part, art. 4) the author in a vision meets Cato the Censor in the Pantheon and ascending with him into heaven they discuss virtue, the universe and its structure, etc.; they are joined by the souls of three brothers, Vincent, Jerome and James and meet a series of illustrious deceased persons; from high above earth they make an ideal voyage through all parts of the world, including the Cape of Good Hope, Antilia, Hispana insula, Mundus Novus, etc. After this geographical survey they return to “Romae lamentabilis ruina”. In the third part (art. 5) the dialogue between Antonino and Cato continues. It opens with a new vision in which the decay of Rome and Italy is lamented again, but ends with a prognostication of the return of a Saturnian age: the present abuses of secular and regular clergy will be combatted by the virtuous pope Hadrian VI (1522-1523) with the help of Giovanni Ruffo de’ Teodoli, Archbishop of Cosenza, the author’s patron, with whose panegyric the work ends. The date of composition (and obviously of this manuscript, see art. 5), is 1523, before 14 Sept., the date of the death of pope Hadrian VI. The work was printed in an altered form the next year (Rome, Antonio Blado, March 1524).

Paper, ff. 58, 210 x 145 mm. At many places the paper is damaged and the reading impaired by the acidity of the ink.

I² (ff. 1-2), II-XV⁴ (ff. 3-58). Quire marks, from “a” to “p”, are written at right in the lower margin of the first page of each quire.

Almost invisible ruling (board?) for one column of 26 lines above top line (?), 163 x 100 mm.

Copied by one hand in a slightly uneven upright Humanistica Cursiva Formata. The verses in art. 2 are probably by the same hand. Headings and explicit-incipit formulas in capitals in blue or black ink.

At the head of each part a 6-line silver initial (Capitalis), outlined with black ink, on a square red or blue background with silver foliate decoration. A small purple initial in the space for a 4-line initial on f. 4r (beginning of text of art. 3).

Original presentation binding: light brown leather over pasteboard. Spine with three raised bands, gauffered and gilt edges. Both covers are decorated with two frames of blind-tooled quadruple fillets surrounding rich gold-tooled frames with in the centre on the front cover the coat of arms of the dedicatee (with six-spoked wheel), on the rear cover a large rosette.

Remainders of two pairs of ties.

The manuscript is apparently unique and probably an autograph fair copy. It belonged to the dedicatee, Giovanni Ruffo de’ Teodoli, Archbishop of Cosenza (1511-1527); the bookseller Vincenzo Raineri, of Brescia, s. XVIII (see note on the front pastedown: “Vincentii Raineri Brixienis **** bibliopola”); the book-collector Giuseppe Bossi (his name on the front pastedown; see *Catalogo della libreria del fu cavaliere Giuseppe Bossi* [Milan, 1817], p. 164); the book-collector Luigi Celotti (c. 1768-c. 1847); his sale, London, Sotheby’s, 14 March 1825, lot 21, to Thorpe; Sir Thomas Phillipps, MS 887 (his stamp; this printed number below the stamp

and on the spine); W.H. Robinson, Ltd.; H.P. Kraus; his catalogue no. 85 (1957), no. 96 and pls. 29-30; Major J.R. Abbey (bookplate, note on rear pastedown: "J.A.6841, 8.11.1957", and his coat of arms in gold on the box). On the rear pastedown also the unexplained s. XIX-XX note "DSEVNJNT". Purchased from ... on the Edwin J. Beinecke Fund.

R 14.04.10

Albert Derolez