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**CASPAR DRATZ, *Kurze ahnlaitung Schönnnes und Bierliches schreibens ...* (Short introduction to beautiful and delicate writing ...)**

**In German, manuscript on parchment**

**Germany, (Nuremberg), c. 1600-1605**

*4 folios on parchment, modern foliation in pencil, 1-4, complete (collation i-ii<sup>2</sup>), a contemporary paper leaf attached to the second quire with a watermark of a coat of arms containing an eagle and surmounted by a crown (unidentified), no catchwords or signatures, no ruling, written in brown and red inks in 8 different Gothic and Renaissance presentation scripts in single column on 7-13 lines, decorative touches in liquid gold throughout the text, very fine and elaborate calligraphic initials, minor stains and a tiny wormhole, otherwise in excellent condition. Unbound, housed inside a contemporary paper bifolium, no watermark, small stains and tears, in good condition. Dimensions 180 x 263 mm.*

Showcasing the elaborate and beautiful scripts and decorated letters that were fashionable in seventeenth-century Germany, this manuscript copy evidently preserves the only surviving manuscript by Caspar Dratz (var. Tratz), a writing master from Nuremberg. These few folios thus constitute an invaluable sample to compare with his script as it appears in printed copybooks, including those published in Nuremberg by Balthasar Caymox beginning in 1605.

## PROVENANCE

1. The manuscript was written by the Nuremberg calligrapher, Caspar Dratz (Tratz, Dracz, Trotz), probably in Nuremberg around 1600-1605. He gives his name on f. 1.
2. A modern bookseller's mark "114" in pencil on f. 2.

## TEXT

f. 1, [Title page, copied in a gothic script (black letter), with large decorated capitals 'K' and 'S' in the top line], incipit, "Kurze ahnlaitung Schönnnes und Zierliches schreibens Daraus dann ein jeder fleissiger begirlicher jung wie auch andere den rechten grundt unnd fundament und aller handtschriefften lehren und begreifen kan allen lieb habenden an die handt gegeben unnd beiordnet worden durch Caspar Dratz"; [From Pliny, in capitals (Roman block letters), "Nulla Dies Sine Linea";

f. 1v, [Psalm 55:1-7, copied in an italic script (Roman cursive), with large capitals 'M' and 'D' in the first line], incipit, "Miserere mei Deus quoniam ... et abscondent ipsi, etc." [Below, in capitals (Roman block letters)], incipit, "Usus Facit Artem";

f. 2rv, [Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews, chapter 1; copied in a gothic script (black letter) with large decorated capitals 'N' and 'D' in the first line], incipit, "Nach dem vorzeitten Gott manchmal ... gesagt du bist mein Sohn, etc."; [Alphabet in flourished capitals]; f. 2v, incipit, "Die dumvel exshlen ...";

f. 3rv, [Copied in a gothic script (black letter), with large decorated capitals 'E' and 'G' in the first line, and 4 lines of verse below in a smaller script], incipit, "Empiethen dem Durchleuchtigsten Grossmechtigen Fürsten unnd hern Ferdinanden zu hungern und Behaimb etc...."; f. 3v, incipit, "Folge must drinnen ...";

f. 4, [Copied in Gothic script, with flourished 'D' and 'M' in the first line, and concluding with 4-line of verse on the coming of Christ in a smaller script; cf. Ecclesiasticus 9:24], incipit, "Das werk lobent denn Meister ...";

f. 4v, [Copied in Kurrent schrift], incipit, "Ehrngeachter und fürnehmer Euch seÿen <?> mein gantz fründtlich und willige dienst ...."

Even after the invention of printing in the mid-fifteenth century, the ability to copy books and documents in a formal script continued to be a valued skill, taught by professional writing-masters, both in person and by means of copybooks (providing alphabets and passages in different scripts for students to copy) and writing manuals. In Germany, the earliest printed copybook is *Ein gute Ordnung ...* by Johann Neudörffer the Elder, published in Nuremberg in 1538. Printed writing master's copybooks rest on an unavoidable contradiction, since the writing samples they contain were reproduced by mechanical means (in the early examples, with woodblocks or etchings, and later, with copper plates). Writing masters, however, continued to produce manuscript copybooks (less common, and generally less well-studied than printed examples). The copybook described here follows in the tradition of Neudörffer, but crucially, is handwritten, and thus presents writing samples directly from the hand of the writing master Caspar Dratz, without the intermediary of an engraver.

Caspar Dratz (variant spellings, Tratz, Dracz), named on the first page of our manuscript, was a calligrapher, writing master (Schreibmeister), and arithmetic master (Rechenmeister) from Nuremberg, who died on February 26, 1634. In 1602-3, he apparently violated a dress code and was reprimanded as an "unskilled commoner and writer" (*Nürnbergischer Künstlerlexikon*, 2007, p. 1536). The Nuremberg city accounts record a payment to Caspar Dratz for his work on Council documents in 1632. He owned a house at 42 Ob. Schmiedgasse (no. 58 had belonged to Albrecht Dürer), as well as the smaller house behind it, 29 Am Ölberg (*Nürnbergischer Künstlerlexikon*, p. 1536).

In 1605, Dratz produced examples of scripts ("Schriftvorlagen") for a writing manual destined for teaching students (the title page states it was a work of beautiful scripts for "lieben Jugend"). Dratz's models were engraved on copper plates by Heinrich Ulrich and published by Christoph Fabius Brechtel and Balthasar Caymox. The earliest editions in 1605 of this copybook, [Ettliche Zierliche Schöne Schrifften der lieben Jugend zuvorderst zu nutzlichem underricht ...](#), include a number of samples that are extremely similar in script and layout to those in our manuscript (Online Resources; cf. for example the sample signed by Caspar Dracz, f. 31, and f. 1 in our manuscript).

Although our manuscript could similarly have been intended as a model for a printed book copybook, we have not been able to identify it. On f. 1, Dratz calls our manuscript "a quick guide to beautiful script for eager youth," and it seems more likely that he copied this

manuscript to provide handwritten models for his students. To our knowledge, this is the only manuscript surviving in his hand.

## LITERATURE

Becker, David P. *The Practice of Letters. The Hofer Collection of Writing Manuals 1514-1800*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1997 (nothing by Caspar Dratz included).

Doede, Werner. *Johann Neudörffer und seine Schule im 16 und 17 Jahrhundert*, Munich, 1957.

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"Caspar Tratz," in *Nürnberger Künstlerlexikon*, ed. M. H. Grieb, vol. 1, A-G, Munich, 2007, p. 1536.

Sporhan-Krempel, L. and T. Wohnhaas, "Zum Nürnberger Buchhandel und graphischen Gewerbe im 17. Jahrhundert," *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens* 13 (1973), pp. 1021-1080 (for Tratz, see p. 1075).

Whalley, Joyce Irene. *The Pen's Excellencie: Calligraphy of Western Europe and America*, London, 1980.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

VD-17, "Caspar Dracz"

[VD17 - Das Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachraum erschienenen Drucke des 17. Jahrhunderts - 1.28 \(k10plus.de\)](#)

*Ettliche Zierliche Schöne Schrifften / der lieben Jugent zuvorderst zu nutzlichem underricht, und dann Den ... Burgermeister und Rathe der Statt Nürnberg ... dedicirt und in Druck verfertigt Durch Hainrich Ulrichen Burgern und Kupfferstechern daselbst*, Nuremberg, 1605

VD17 23:299246N

[VD17 - Das Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachraum erschienenen Drucke des 17. Jahrhunderts - 1.28 \(k10plus.de\)](#)

VD 17 VD17 75:709195P

[VD17 - Das Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachraum erschienenen Drucke des 17. Jahrhunderts - 1.28 \(k10plus.de\)](#)

Wolfenbütteler Digitalen Bibliothek (WDB), *Ettliche Zierliche Schöne Schrifften*, 1605

<http://diglib.hab.de/drucke/fb-sbd-1-2s/start.htm>

*Schöne zierliche Schrifften der lieben Jugend zu nützlichen unterricht*, 1613

<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O755486/schöne-zierliche-schriften-der-lieben-print-heinrich-ulrich/>

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