

Franciscan Books and their Readers

Friars and Manuscripts in Late Medieval Italy



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René Hernández Vera

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	7
Illustrations	9
Abbreviations	11
Notes on Transcriptions	13
Introduction	15
1. The Ideal Regulations and Franciscan Manuscripts in Padua	33
2. The Space Libraries and Franciscan Manuscripts in Padua	63
3. The Form The Manuscripts	101
4. The Readership Reading Franciscan Manuscripts in Padua	145
Conclusions	175
Appendix 1	179
Appendix 2	187
Appendix 3	193
Bibliography	215
Index	239





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Illustrations

Fig. 1	Distribution of volumes in the Biblioteca Antoniana of Padua, 1449.	88
Appendix 2	The Set of Corrections of the Manuscripts of Bonaventure's Commentary on the First Book of the <i>Sentences</i> , Padua, Biblioteca Antoniana, MSS 120, 123, 124 and 125.	187
Plate 1	Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Amiat. 1, fol. 2r.	193
Plate 2	Padua, Biblioteca Antoniana, MS 573, fol. 30r.	194
Plate 3	Padua, Biblioteca Antoniana, MS 120, fol. 13r.	195
Plate 4	Padua, Biblioteca Antoniana, MS 123, fol. 37v.	196
Plate 5	Padua, Biblioteca Antoniana, MS 124, fol. 55r.	197
Plate 6	Padua, Biblioteca Antoniana, MS 125, fol. 10v.	198
Plate 7	Padua, Biblioteca Antoniana, MS 125, fol. 127v.	199
Plate 8	Padua, Biblioteca Antoniana, MS 125, fol. 143r.	200
Plate 9	Padua, Biblioteca Antoniana, MS 418, fol. 17r.	201
Plate 10	Padua, Biblioteca Antoniana, MS 419, fol. 116r.	202
Plate 11	Padua, Biblioteca Antoniana, MS 527, fol. 36v.	203
Plate 12	Padua, Biblioteca Universitaria, MS 1030, fol. 78r.	204
Plate 13	Padua, Biblioteca Universitaria, MS 586, fol. 164r.	205
Plate 14	Padua, Biblioteca Universitaria, MS 736, fol. 1r.	206
Plate 15	Padua, Biblioteca Universitaria, MS 1159, fol. 33r.	207
Plate 16	Padua, Biblioteca Universitaria, MS 1789, fol. 176r.	208
Plate 17	Padua, Biblioteca Universitaria, MS 1851, fol. 8r.	209
Plate 18	Padua, Biblioteca Universitaria, MS 2103, fol. 21r.	210
Plate 19	Padua, Biblioteca Antoniana, MS 267, fol. 3v.	211
Plate 20	Padua, Biblioteca Antoniana, MS 112, fol. 7r.	212
Plate 21	Padua, Biblioteca Universitaria, MS 736, 117v.	213
Plate 22	Padua, Biblioteca Universitaria, MS 1159, fol. 188r.	214





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Abbreviations

- AF* *Analecta Franciscana sive Chronica aliaque varia documenta ad historiam Fratrum Minorum spectantia*, ed. by the Fathers of the Collegii S. Bonaventura, 17 vols. (Quaracchi: Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1885-2010)
- AFH* *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*
- ALKG* *Archiv für Literatur und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters*, ed. by Heinrich Denifle and Franz Ehrle, 7 vols. (Berlin/Freiburg im Breisgau: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1885-1900)
- CHL* *Chronologia historico-legalis seraphici Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Sancti Francisci*, I (Naples: Michaele Angelo, 1650)
- CHLB* *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland*, ed. by Elisabeth Leedham-Green and Teresa Webber, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)
- PL* *Patrologiae cursus completus: series latina* (Paris: Typis L. Migne)
- RIS* *Rerum Italicarum scriptores*, 2nd ser., 34 vols (Città di Castello: Lapi, 1900-17; Bologna: Zanichelli, 1917-75)





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Notes on Transcriptions

The transcriptions follow the original text and do not attempt to correct the source's spelling. The main intervention in the original text is the addition of punctuation.

Modern interventions, comments or paratextual information are provided within square brackets, [].

For the transcription of poems and marginal comments, a single slash, / marks the end of a line of script, while a double slash, // indicates the end of a paragraph or a stanza within the same textual unit.

Uncertain transcriptions are placed between angle brackets, < >.





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Introduction

The book is simultaneously a thing, a force, an event, a history.¹

In the western part of Colombia, facing the Pacific Ocean, lies Chocó, a region entirely covered by tropical rainforest. This place has some of the heaviest rainfall levels on the planet and perhaps it is the most humid place in the world. Thanks to these particularly challenging conditions, Chocó became a refuge for enslaved men and women who fled from the wealthy colonial centres of the Caribbean, beginning in the seventeenth century. Today, every year, from mid-September to mid-October, the whole population of Quibdó, its capital city, participates in the most important celebration of the entire region, the festival of San Pacho, a celebration of the African heritage of the community, and commemoration of the figure at the centre of their cultural agency: brother Francis of Assisi.² The colourful festival of San Pacho illustrates the extent of the success of Franciscan missionary work, a worldwide campaign inspired by the example, words and figure of a thirteenth-century preacher from a small city on the hills of central Italy.

The impact of Franciscan preaching was possible thanks to a demanding programme of training based on intensive study. Thus, we may assume that books were at the core of Franciscan identity from its origins, but this did not mean that the relation between Franciscans and books was ever smooth. From the very beginning, Francis wanted the order to rely on something more fundamental than intellectual achievement, and feared that affection for books could endanger the original apostolic spirituality of the community. Nevertheless, Franciscans soon became an order of learned individuals, that is, intellectuals who were familiar with the complexities of the cultural practice of medieval universities, and who contributed to all areas of knowledge. Despite the warnings of their founder, Franciscan

1 Dane, *What Is a Book?*, p. 7.

2 *Pacho* is the colloquial word used in Colombia to refer to those named 'Francisco', that is, Francis.

friars fell in love with books and tried by all means available to reconcile the spirit of Francis with their devotion to manuscripts and learning.

This book will explore the relation between Franciscans and books in terms of the interaction between friars and manuscripts in the male convents of the city of Padua from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries. To do so, four aspects, or dimensions, of the Franciscan manuscripts will be discussed. First, the ideal, as expressed by the regulations on study and the use of books; second, the space, that is, the libraries where these manuscripts were collected, read, studied and written; third, their purpose, as revealed by their physical characteristics; and finally, their readership, that is, their interaction with their writers and readers. This layered consideration of the reality of manuscripts used and produced by Franciscan friars in northern Italy will allow us to gain a better understanding of key transformations in manuscript culture, especially in readership, that paved the way for significant developments in literacy, among which humanism. But before considering these features in detail, it will be helpful to explore briefly the development of our knowledge of the relationship between the Friars Minor and manuscripts during the Middle Ages.

Franciscans and Manuscripts: An Overview

Our insight into the manuscripts used by the Franciscans derives from fields of study such as the history of Franciscan education, the history of Franciscan libraries, the development of Franciscan regulations on study and books, and the discussion of the modalities of the use of books by friars within Franciscan schools or *studia*.

The history of Franciscan education is one of the most developed fields of research and has undergone a remarkable and constant growth. In its early phases, from the end of the nineteenth century, it focused on editing sources, mainly the constitutions regulating the discipline of study.³ In 1904, Hilarin Felder published the first comprehensive study of the development of education and intellectual training in the Franciscan order, a work that was swiftly translated into French and Italian.⁴ Felder explored themes such as the relation of the Franciscans to the establishment and growth of the schools and the organization of studies during the thirteenth century. The effort to make comprehensive and accurate editions of the sources

3 See, for instance, Ehrle, ed., *Die ältesten Redaktionen*.

4 Felder, *Geschichte der wissenschaftlichen Studien im Franziskanerorden*.



continued during the first part of the twentieth century, as shown by the work of Andrew G. Little and the editions carried out by the Collegio di Quaracchi.⁵ As a result, the evidence needed to explore certain problems and cases became available. The first studies of the history of education in the order were carried out mainly by its members, who focused on three main topics, namely the biographical profiles of renowned Franciscan masters, the study of canon law, and the role of Franciscan friars as masters at the University of Paris.⁶ A more structured view of the process of education and the development of the network of Franciscan schools was achieved thanks to contributions to the congress in Todi in 1976.⁷ The papers at the congress explored the role of schools, comparing the processes of training and learning of the Franciscan friars to the model of the Dominican experience. The contributions also explored methodological questions, for example, how the availability of the sources shaped the perspectives of scholars on their fields of research. This explains how the presence of a structured and specific corpus of Dominican sources on learning conditioned the perception of early Franciscan scholarship. Other fields proposed by the congress were the diffusion of the mendicant schools, the constitution of networks of centres for training, and the techniques of teaching and learning, as revealed by the sources. Concerning the relation of the mendicants, and in particular the Franciscans, to manuscripts, the contribution of Gabriella Severino Polica on books, reading and practices of learning in mendicant schools has become a fundamental reference for the study of book culture within the order.⁸ As will be discussed further on, the papers at Todi are a significant contribution to scholarship on Franciscan intellectual history and further validate the idea of a Dominican influence on Franciscan book culture.

In 1988, the Sixteenth Congress of the Società Internazionale di Studi Francescani in Assisi investigated the relation between the Franciscan order and the culture of medieval universities. As a result of the new approaches proposed by the contributions, the role of masters such as Anthony of Padua and Bonaventure of Bagnoregio as promoters of scholarly culture was explored within the wider context of the institutional development

5 A. Little, *Grey Friars in Oxford*; A. Little, 'Franciscan School at Oxford'; A. Little, 'Definitiones capitulorum generalium'; A. Little, 'Statuta provincialia'; Abate, ed., 'Memoriali, statuti ed atti'. For an overview of the editorial work of the Collegio di Quaracchi, see Iozzelli, 'Le edizioni scientifiche'.

6 Benoffi, 'Degli studi nell'Ordine dei Minori'; Brlek, *De evolutione iuridica studiorum in ordine*; Glorieux, 'D'Alexandre de Halès à Pierre Auriol'; Doucet, 'Maîtres franciscains de Paris'.

7 *Le scuole degli ordini mendicanti*.

8 Severino Polica, 'Libro, lettura, "lezione"'.



of the order.⁹ More recently, there have been attempts to explore new fields within the scholastic culture of the mendicants, for example, the vocabulary of the mendicant schools.¹⁰ To achieve a better understanding of the complexities of the Franciscan educational system, scholarship has recently focused on the actual practices of learning, training and reading in the Franciscan schools to relate them to the general development of the order.¹¹ Nevertheless, the efforts of scholarship focus almost exclusively on the early history of the order and on the rise and affirmation of Franciscan scholastic thought – particularly at the University of Paris – and usually do not venture further than the beginning of the fifteenth century. As a consequence, the role of Franciscan Observance has been neglected. In this context, the work of Bert Roest is particularly relevant for several reasons: first, it has gone beyond the fourteenth century and has explored the educational context of the Franciscan Observance; second, it has proposed bringing Franciscan libraries into analytical focus as parts of a system of training; and third, it has proposed a study of the ‘lectors’, or instructors at the schools, as agents of Franciscan intellectual achievement.¹² His description of the Franciscan curriculum of studies and the organization of the network of schools within the provinces has been discussed recently by William Courtenay, who warns against the perils of generalizations and suggests focusing on the specific characteristics of the provinces.¹³ Luigi Pellegrini, however, returned to the topic of the relation between mendicant orders and medieval universities, proposing that they were medieval innovations or ‘inventions’ that reflected the dramatic transformations of the social and cultural context, providing new answers and interpretations to the question of why mendicants engaged so quickly and effectively with universities.¹⁴ More recent studies have explored an approach to Franciscan learning in the specific context of the order’s provincial organization. An interesting example is Emanuele Fontana’s work on the relation between friars, books and modalities of teaching in the province of Sant’Antonio, in northern Italy.¹⁵ His work also discusses the organization of studies, the practices related to production and acquisition of books and study in the province, and

9 *Francescanesimo e cultura universitaria*.

10 Pacheco, ed., *Le vocabulaire des écoles des mendiants*.

11 For example, Maierù, ‘Formazione culturale e tecniche’.

12 Roest, *History of Franciscan Education*; Roest, ‘Role of Lectors’; Roest, ‘Sub humilitatis titulo’; and Roest, *Franciscan Learning, Preaching and Mission*.

13 Courtenay, ‘Franciscan Learning’, p. 59.

14 Luigi Pellegrini, *L’Incontro tra due invenzioni*.

15 Fontana, *Frati, libri e insegnamento*.



the works of some of the lectors in the convent of Sant'Antonio. Fontana's contribution is a suitable continuation of the work previously carried out by Paolo Marangon, who significantly enhanced our understanding of the development of Franciscan scholastic culture, and explored the relation between friars, the university and the study of philosophy and natural sciences in the school of the convent of Sant'Antonio.¹⁶

The recent work of Neslihan Şenocak discusses a wide range of issues such as the historiographical debate about the 'Franciscan question', or the original intention of Francis regarding his own order, the influence of the members of the order on early Franciscan historiography, and the overstatement of the apparent incompatibility between using books, on the one hand, and the Franciscan rule and vow of poverty, on the other.¹⁷ As will be seen in Chapter 1, even the most rigorous reconstruction of the 'intentio' of Francis does not entail condemning the use of books. Additionally, Şenocak argues that, concerning learning and the use of books, historiography has so far considered the question of humility a secondary topic and has focused instead almost exclusively on poverty. With regard to learning and study, Şenocak also discusses the fact that even though Franciscans argued that preparation for preaching and pastoral care was the reason to pursue a course of study, their level of training, active participation in all fields of scholastic discussion, and achievements as intellectuals clearly go beyond the simple task of fulfilling pastoral duties. Additionally, she explores the questions of why friars engaged so profoundly in the scholastic culture of their time and whether this engagement by the Franciscans and mendicants in general reflected a process of glorification of learning which was characteristic of medieval society.

In the context of scholarship on Franciscan learning, the present volume assesses Franciscan regulations to understand the distance between the ideal proposed by the rule and the actual practice of learning. The application of reception criticism and its categories, such as the interpretive community and the analysis of manuscript evidence, offers insight into the friars as flexible readers who integrated the world of their audiences into their discipline of writing.

As to the second field of research, that is, the history of Franciscan libraries, one could say that it has mainly been about Franciscan institutional developments or Franciscan education.¹⁸ Further research has produced

16 Marangon, *Ad cognitionem scientiae festinare*.

17 Şenocak, *Poor and the Perfect*.

18 Clark, *Care of Books*, pp. 199–207; Abate, 'Manoscritti e biblioteche'; Humphreys, *Book Provisions*; Humphreys, *Friars' Libraries*, and Roest, *History of Franciscan Education*.



editions of library inventories, complemented by the identification and description of the volumes registered in those documents.¹⁹ Another set of studies has focused on processes such as the creation of regulations for the libraries and the acquisition and circulation of books within the Franciscan houses.²⁰ Recent contributions focus on the description and assessment of the book collection with the help of inventories and legal documents, and explore the modes of circulation and use of the library as a resource within the convents.²¹ In regard to the regulations of the community on study, books and libraries, research has produced a significant contribution in terms of the edition of the sources and more recently a comparative study of the Franciscan regulations and their relation to the order's internal debate on the ownership and use of books.²²

The consideration of manuscripts in Franciscan environments as an independent object of study had its origin in the description of sets of manuscripts that could be considered Franciscan in terms of their provenance.²³ Scholars such as Attilio Bartoli Langeli, Nicoletta Giovè Marchioli and Neslihan Şenocak have explored and discussed the circulation of books in the Franciscan order and have contributed significantly to the transformation of the topic of books and mendicant orders into a field of study in its own right.²⁴ Their work continues to offer interesting results and to introduce prospective fields of inquiry such as the dynamics of the circulation of books within reformed houses, the signatures of the saints of the Franciscan Observance, and the dynamics of writing and reading within female Franciscan communities.²⁵ Two topics are particularly relevant to the object of this book, and they are, first, the real extent of the Dominican

19 Humphreys, *Library of the Franciscans of the Convent of St. Antony*; Humphreys, *Library of the Franciscans of Siena*; Cenci, ed., *Bibliotheca manuscripta*; Frioli, 'Gli antichi inventari della Biblioteca Antoniana di Padova'; Govi, 'Il fondo manoscritto'; Pantarotto, *La biblioteca manoscritta*; Frioli, 'Gli inventari delle biblioteche degli ordini mendicanti'; and Somigli, 'Hoc est registrum omnium librorum'.

20 Gavinelli, 'Per una biblioteconomia'; Şenocak, 'Book Acquisition'.

21 Grauso, 'La biblioteca francescana medievale di Assisi'; Cicarello, 'Tra grandi biblioteche e grandi lettori'; Granata, 'Dalle povere origini alle grandi biblioteche'.

22 The main contributions to the field are due to Pietro Maranesi. For instance, Maranesi, *Nescientes litteras*, and Maranesi, 'La normativa'.

23 Lopez, 'Descriptio codicum franciscanorum'; and Tosti, 'Descriptio codicum franciscanorum'.

24 Bartoli Langeli, 'I libri dei frati'; Giovè Marchioli and Zamponi, 'Manoscritti in volgare'; Giovè Marchioli, 'I protagonisti del libro'; Giovè Marchioli, 'Circolazione libraria e cultura francescana'; Giovè Marchioli, 'Scriptus per me'; Giovè Marchioli, 'Il codice francescano'; Giovè Marchioli, 'La cultura scritta al Santo'; and Şenocak, 'Circulation of Books'.

25 Giovè Marchioli, 'Sante scritture'; see also Benvenuti, 'L'Osservanza e la costruzione'; and Giovè Marchioli, 'Scritture (e lettere) di donne'.



influence on Franciscan book culture and, second, the nature and typology of the books used by Franciscan friars.

Franciscans or Dominicans? A Question of Influence

The discussion of the role of books in Franciscan life has been determined by a useful but inevitably schematic opposition between Franciscans and Dominicans built up in the historiography of both these orders. Previously, scholarship on the role of books within mendicant orders defined the field, by suggesting a model according to which book culture was adopted by Franciscans under the influence of the Dominican success. One of the clearest examples of this approach is the contribution presented by Gabriella Severino Polica at the congress in Todi in 1976, where she discussed mendicant practices of study, as well as the use of books during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.²⁶ One of her main conclusions was that the Dominicans represented a cultural and intellectual avant-garde that succeeded in making study into an essential part of their identity from the very beginning. Franciscans, however, barely managed to follow the Dominican example, since they were dramatically limited by their internal conflicts.²⁷ Accordingly, although both orders reproduced the dynamics of the university *lectio* in their own schools, their divergent cultural ideologies determined opposite roles for books within each community.²⁸ Moreover, although preaching was a distinctive element of the orders' identity, Dominican preaching had the purpose of fighting heresy, while the purpose of Franciscan preaching was the call to penance. Consequently, the preparation for preaching reflected the difference between the orders. For the Dominicans, only intensive study could provide the necessary exegetical tools to guarantee the proper interpretation of scripture. For the Franciscans, preaching was essentially an apostolic exhortation and therefore based rather on living in an exemplary way than on learned reflection. As a consequence, an incomplete Franciscan theological interpretation developed later.²⁹ This approach suggested that

26 Severino Polica, 'Libro, lettura, "lezione".'

27 Severino Polica, 'Libro, lettura, "lezione"', pp. 381-83.

28 Severino Polica's analysis proposed an ideology focused on intellectual achievement for the Dominicans, as opposed to a Franciscan ideology centred in the apostolic exhortation to penance. See Severino Polica, 'Libro, lettura, "lezione"', pp. 378-81.

29 'Risulta chiaro a questo punto che l'ideologia del libro elaborata dai Domenicani esprime un rapporto di consapevole e approfondita continuità fra cultura scritta e predicazione [...] I Francescani, al contrario, stenteranno sempre ad inquadrare la riflessione del libro in un'ottica

only Dominicans considered intensive study and use of books to be essential to pastoral care, which reinforced the perception of the Dominican order as an intellectual community centred on study. This assessment is emphatically conditioned by the assumption that mendicants should have a suitable model of intellectual development, a model that Franciscans could not provide, at least not in the early phases of their history.

Any set of observations on the very early phases of the Franciscan cultural experience is unquestionably useful but still insufficient to understand phenomena such as the role of books in, say, fifteenth-century Observant preaching. Since the kind of analysis Severino Polica undertook was based on a scheme that opposed 'active Dominicans' to 'passive Franciscans', it was natural to arrive at the conclusion that the Dominican book was essentially a 'scholastic' tool adapted to the intellectual vocation of an order focused on study, while the Franciscan book, as expected, was a continuous source of conflict.³⁰ This kind of perception has its roots in the overstatement of the conflict between the presence of books and the poverty of the order, and a lack of understanding of the role of humility in the whole picture. As shown in the first chapter, even the most rigorous interpretations of the rule did not condemn books in themselves. Nevertheless, the conflictual approach to the question of study and books has been very influential. One of the reasons for its success is that it is inherently schematic and therefore useful in simplifying complex phenomena. Another reason is the fact that it followed a comparative approach that focused on the differences between the orders, providing a simple characterization of the communities during their complex early phases: 'intellectual, disciplined Dominicans' were the opposite of and complementary to 'apostolic, passionate Franciscans'. Only very recently has this approach been questioned, particularly by Bert Roest, Neslihan Şenocak and Nicoletta Giovè Marchioli.³¹ In fact, there are two important problems with the traditional approach: first, it implies a value-judgement in terms of the perception of the early phase of Franciscan history as some kind of failure in terms of scholarly achievement; and second, it fails to establish clearly the extent of the influence of the Dominican example.

culturale-professionale, proprio perché il nesso fra acquisizione della scienza e sua professionalizzazione, fra cultura scritta e predicazione, fra esegesi e comunicazione, si afferma presso di loro in modi incerti, sfocati, segnati da un non risolto rapporto con una vocazione "evangelica". See Severino Polica, 'Libro, lettura, "lezione"', p. 408.

³⁰ Severino Polica, 'Libro, lettura, "lezione"', pp. 387-93 and 402-3.

³¹ Roest, *History of Franciscan Education*; Şenocak, *Poor and the Perfect*, pp. 16-20; and Giovè Marchioli, 'I protagonisti del libro', pp. 51-53.



The Franciscan Book: Ideal Models and Perspectives

In 2004, during the Thirty-Second Congress of the Società Internazionale di Studi Francescani in Assisi, Nicoletta Giovè Marchioli offered the results of her research on the books used and produced by Franciscans in her search for a specific type of book to be considered especially Franciscan.³² Indeed, to identify a model for the Franciscan book, Giovè Marchioli discussed what she labelled as the ‘physiognomy’ of the Franciscan manuscript, that is, the set of physical characteristics of the manuscripts used and produced by Franciscan friars. One might think that the books used by the early community of friars would provide such a model, but Giovè Marchioli points out that a question then arises regarding which kind of manuscripts produced by the early Franciscans constituted this model: the humble miscellany of devotional texts gathered and copied by the first friars or the liturgical books for the divine office?³³ Liturgical books such as breviaries and missals were perhaps the first manuscripts available in Franciscan houses, even before the foundation of any library. However, they arrived through donations or bequests; and even when they were later produced by the convents themselves, they followed established patterns that left no room for the affirmation of any original Franciscan style. As a consequence, the liturgical books used by Franciscans had only two possible variations: a big manuscript for collective use with a high level of ornamentation or breviaries of a smaller dimension intended to be portable books to be carried by the friars. The manuscripts produced by the friars in the early stages of the history of the order were mainly devotional texts, not tools for study or for the friars’ preparation for preaching. The appearance of manuals and compilations of sermons within the Franciscan convents reflected the further engagement of the community in forms of preaching beyond the exhortation to penance. These manuscripts, which usually contained sermons, had a low level of sophistication, were smaller than books for study and contained a great variety of hands and decorative elements. For these reasons, the Franciscan compilations of sermons did not fit the model of any archetypical Franciscan book.³⁴

To find a suitable archetype, Giovè Marchioli proposed to start by formulating an independent ideal of the Franciscan book, that is, a manuscript

32 Giovè Marchioli, ‘Il codice Franceseano’.

33 Bigaroni, ‘Catalogo dei manoscritti’, pp. 10-11; see also Giovè Marchioli, ‘Il codice Franceseano’, p. 382.

34 Giovè Marchioli, ‘Il codice Franceseano’, pp. 394-95 and 406-9.



written by a Franciscan friar, containing the work of a Franciscan author and belonging to a Franciscan house.³⁵ In these respects, the volume Assisi, Biblioteca del Sacro Convento, MS 338, a compilation of early writings on Francis of Assisi, is the realization of such an ideal.³⁶ However, a manuscript that satisfied the requirements of the ideal was rather exceptional, and therefore it becomes practically irrelevant to the nature and readership of the Franciscan book. Some Bibles used by friars in Franciscan convents were unequivocally made to be part of a Franciscan library, as shown by the decoration depicting Francis and Franciscan saints. Nevertheless, they were magnificent manuscripts of large dimensions, far from reflecting any humility or poverty.³⁷ At the same time, the production within a Franciscan centre is not a necessary condition for a manuscript to be Franciscan. There are some examples of Franciscan manuscripts whose scribe was a layman living outside the convent, as happens with the volume Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS 1287, a miscellany with excerpts from Bonaventure and other Franciscan masters, written by Dino Brunaccini, a wool merchant who transcribed the book for himself and for his heirs.³⁸

As already mentioned, Franciscan manuscripts containing sermons were usually far from the proposed ideal. At the beginning, Franciscan sermons were gathered into compilations that reproduced the format of the manuscripts used as tools of study in the university, that is, they were parchment manuscripts of regular size, usually between 300 × 200 and 330 × 220 millimetres, written in gothic script, normally by a single hand, and with a *mise en page* organized in two columns. The more modest paper volumes of sermons, written in cursive script, with a smaller size, were incorporated later, usually as miscellanies, and were characteristic of the Observant reformed convents.

Evidence shows that books used and produced by Franciscans had a remarkable variety: they were written in many different scripts, from the formal gothic to the most informal cursives, and had an enormous

35 Giovè Marchioli and Zamponi, 'Manoscritti in volgare', p. 312.

36 A complete description of the manuscript can be found in Cenci, ed., *Bibliotheca manuscripta*, I, pp. 236-37.

37 Examples of this kind of manuscripts are the volumes Cesena, Biblioteca Malatestiana, MS D.XXI.1, 2, 3, 4, and Trento, Castello del Buonconsiglio, Monumenti e collezioni provinciali, MS 1597, or the Bible in various volumes: Padua, Biblioteca Antoniana, MS 267, 274, 276, 277, 280, 283, 284, 285, 289, 309, 310, 313, 316 and 342, and Assisi, Biblioteca del Sacro Convento, MS 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 15. See Giovè Marchioli, 'Il codice Francescano', p. 385.

38 'Per se e per le sue erede del libro dello armario dello studio del chonvento di frati minori di Firenze.' See Giovè Marchioli, 'Il codice Francescano', pp. 401-2; see also Giovè Marchioli and Zamponi, 'Manoscritti in volgare', pp. 314-16.

variation in size, style of decoration, and *mise en page*. These volumes contained single works, compilations of works by one author, miscellanies of excerpts or even composite volumes, being the result of the process of assembling several manuscript unities. A similar variety can be found in the types of books and their size. At least three different kinds of manuscript were employed by friars: the big liturgical book, the medium-size book of study that followed the model of the books used in the universities and the small, portable book. With respect to the general dynamics of production, it seems that the same types of manuscript were continuously reproduced, with one significant variation. The unreformed friars of the Community, or Conventuals, continued using books, but there are indications that by the late fifteenth century they no longer produced many new manuscripts: the number of colophons indicating the convent as the place of production decreased dramatically. It seems that those who undertook the task of producing new books were the Observant friars.³⁹ Until the end of the fifteenth century, the three main forms of the Franciscan book continued to be the book of study, characterized by the influence of the university book; the compilation of sermons; and the book with a high level of realization, destined for devotional purposes but certainly not a book of study. Taken altogether, these considerations led Giovè Marchioli to question the existence of a single model that could summarize the different types of book produced and used by Franciscan friars during the Middle Ages.⁴⁰ The proposal of the ideal Franciscan book, or rather, its failure, is helpful in understanding that the complex reality of the manuscripts written and read by Franciscan friars escapes any attempt at methodological simplification in terms of a unitary model, and this understanding constitutes one of the findings of this book.

The discussion proposed by Giovè Marchioli was a significant contribution to the discovery of new paths for Franciscan codicology as a field of research, and constituted a sound alternative to the approach of a sector of Franciscan historiography that separated preaching from an intensive discipline of study. Actually, evidence shows that preaching had an important role in university studies and that it was at the centre of book circulation

39 Giovè Marchioli, 'La cultura scritta al Santo', p. 375.

40 'Non esiste un codice francescano con un'identità certa e assoluta, o comunque non esiste un modello dominante, quanto piuttosto esiste una costellazione di modelli simili ma tutti devianti o deviati, quasi fossero una rifrazione, una scomposizione all'infinito di un'immagine e dunque di una realtà solo inizialmente o astrattamente nitide e poi sempre più complesse.' Giovè Marchioli, 'Il codice Francescano', p. 381.



in Franciscan houses.⁴¹ Thus, a broad conception of study – one closer to actual practices in the use of books in Franciscan culture – is necessary to gain a better understanding of the role of books in the order.⁴² As a result, Giovè Marchioli further explored the question of whether her model might be useful in the description of the manuscripts in use during the fifteenth century. The most relevant preliminary result of her research is perhaps the presence, from a codicological standpoint, of a ‘deconstructed’ Franciscan book by the end of the Middle Ages.⁴³

Franciscans Manuscripts: Elements of the Late Medieval Book

Manuscripts written, collected and read by Franciscans have been the object of study of different disciplines, for example, codicology, which has offered a complete description of the physical characteristics of some of the manuscripts collected in Franciscan convents. Histories of libraries have focused on the development of collections of books, including the edition and description of valuable sources such as medieval library catalogues. Religious historians have explored the manuscripts written, collected and used by Franciscans as a significant element in the general debate on the ‘Franciscan question’, that is, the historiographical discussion of the original intention of Francis for the development of the order. Cultural historians have outlined the significant role of books in the development of the scholastic culture of the Franciscans. Despite their great significance, these lines of enquiry have only further underlined the fact that the manuscripts written, collected and used by Franciscan friars have been an important piece of evidence in the historiographical debate. However, apart from Giovè Marchioli’s assessment, Franciscan manuscripts have rarely been studied for their own sake, by engaging directly with their ‘Franciscan’ distinctiveness. A clear example of this is the historiographical approach to Franciscan manuscripts as an element of potential conflict between the rule and the vow of poverty. As shown recently by Neslihan Şenocak, historiography has overstated the conflict between the vow of poverty and use of books within the order

41 Roest, *History of Franciscan Education*, pp. 281-84 and 290-97. Neslihan Şenocak argues that preaching played a fundamental role in the life of the order, not as the ultimate purpose of intellectual training, but rather as a means to justify the centrality of learning in the life of the friars. See Şenocak, *Poor and the Perfect*, pp. 145-48.

42 Giovè Marchioli, ‘Il codice Francescano’, pp. 404-6.

43 Giovè Marchioli, ‘Note sulle caratteristiche dei codici francescani’.



and has downplayed the role of humility.⁴⁴ By doing so, scholarship has inadvertently also participated in the reconstruction of Francis's 'intentio'.

Apart from these areas of scholarly debate, other important fields of study concerning Franciscan manuscripts have remained unexplored. The most recent discussion of the topic does not go beyond the fourteenth century, and even in the few cases where consideration is given of manuscripts or libraries in the fifteenth century, it refers almost exclusively to the friars and libraries of the unreformed Community, excluding the centres of production and study of the Franciscan Observance.⁴⁵ A second area in need of research is related to the fact that current analysis of the book within the Franciscan order focuses on the scholastic model of reading used in the universities.⁴⁶ The reception of Franciscan manuscripts employed for devotional purposes, for pastoral care and as tools for preaching, especially during the second half of the fifteenth century, remains unexplored. A discussion of practices of reading is necessary in order to improve our models of analysis, particularly in the case of the Observant manuscripts, and would constitute a solid base from which to propose a more accurate typology of the Franciscan manuscript. A third field left unexplored concerns the use of a comparative approach to study cases of Franciscan libraries and their organization to verify whether it is possible to establish a particular type of manuscript in relation to reformed or unreformed communities of the order. Another area of extraordinary importance is the consideration of female Franciscan communities and their relation with writing and reading manuscripts, which has been so far painfully neglected by scholarship.⁴⁷

This book fills some of these gaps by studying the manuscripts written, collected and read in the male Franciscan convents of Padua from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century. As mentioned, Padua was one of the most important Franciscan centres and could count on the presence of two convents that had a school and a functioning library from two different branches of the order during the second half of the fifteenth century: the unreformed convent of Sant'Antonio and the reformed or Observant convent of San Francesco Grande. The study of these manuscripts is undertaken

44 Neslihan Şenocak presented a set of considerations on the matter in the paper 'Making of Franciscan Poverty', presented at the International Medieval Congress in Leeds in 2012.

45 Remarkable exceptions are Giovè Marchioli, 'Note sulle caratteristiche dei codici francescani'; Bartoli, 'La biblioteca e lo *scriptorium* di Giovanni da Capestrano'; and Pellegrini, 'Cultura del libro e pratiche'.

46 Hamesse, 'Scholastic Model of Reading', pp. 108-11.

47 Among the few exceptions are the studies of Gabriella Zarri, especially Zarri, 'Le monache e i libri', and Giovè Marchioli, 'Scritture (e letture) di donne'.



using an interdisciplinary approach, and explores the relation between Franciscan friars and their books, as well as whether this relationship reflects a particular conception of the book. It will also discuss the question of the 'Franciscan book' by establishing a difference between the 'Franciscan book' as an abstraction and the 'Franciscan manuscript' understood as a category encompassing the concrete volumes analysed and studied. In what follows, a more detailed description of this work will be presented, but it is necessary first to dedicate some words to the terminology adopted and the fields and questions that this book does not cover.

'Conception' is understood in a wide sense as the inner representation or a set of ideas related to an external physical object. Accordingly, the conception of the book is the way in which Franciscans, through interaction with manuscripts, perceived the book in multiple forms: as an object that was a recipient of information, as a source of information, as a tool for the preparation for preaching, as a recipient of their own thoughts, as a portable library and as a defining element of their identity. It is clear, then, that the Franciscan conception of the book was not a unitary one.

'Book' and 'manuscript' as individual words and as nouns both in the singular and the plural – book/books, manuscript/manuscripts – are practically interchangeable in this work and refer to a material object in a specific time and place which is a written recipient of information in the form of a codex.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, as explained earlier, this study will discuss the theoretical notion of the 'Franciscan book' as opposed to the reality of 'Franciscan manuscripts'. The 'Franciscan book' is used for the conceptualization of an ideal unitary model for the books written, collected and used by Franciscan friars. 'Franciscan manuscripts' refers to the concrete handwritten volumes or books that were used by friars as the source of information for the practices of reading and study. I have tried to avoid confusion by reducing to a minimum the instances where the 'Franciscan book' is employed.

The term 'library' refers not only to a space where the books were collected and kept but also to a system of collection, circulation and retrieval of written volumes characterized by specific patterns of organization. It also acquires the sense of a collection of works, and that is why, as will be seen in Chapters 3 and 4, it could also refer to a single manuscript that contains a melange of different works.⁴⁹ The term 'study' is understood in its medieval scholastic

48 Teeuwen, *Vocabulary of Intellectual Life*, pp. 168-69.

49 Teeuwen, *Vocabulary of Intellectual Life*, pp. 159-60.



sense of 'to devote or apply oneself to one's books'.⁵⁰ It implies mainly the act of reading, and in the case of the Franciscan interpretive community, also the act of writing. To study therefore was a form of interaction with the text, as examined in Chapter 4. 'Learning' has a broader general sense, and comprises the multiple practices of study but also the teaching methods and all the forms of intellectual training of the friars. In this sense, learning was a long-term process that implied a continuous devotion to study and consequently to book culture. 'Study' and 'learning' usually appear together in this work, but they are not interchangeable, although they were closely related. 'To read' and 'reading' will be understood as the process of interaction between an agent, the reader and a written object, the text, within the specific context of an interpretive community, that is, the community of shared values and practices of writing to which the reader belongs. A detailed description of the sense of 'reading' and 'interpretive community' is offered in Chapter 4.

It is also necessary to mention the fields this work does not discuss for reasons extending from the methodological to the practical. For example, concerning the community of readers, this book will not explore the female branch of the Franciscan order. Also, in regard to the book collections, the manuscripts kept in the sacristy of the convents usually employed for the divine office are not included in this analysis, mainly because, from the point of view of the interpretive community, they were not part of the book collection but rather of the valued goods of the sacristy. Another type of book that is not the object of analysis in this work is the printed book. Franciscans enthusiastically welcomed printed books into their collections, but these volumes were no longer the result of the physical action of a scribe. As such, the texts reached their readers in the form of unitary, complete and finished objects; and even though they could be personalized in different ways, they were not the kind of intellectual tools that, for example, were intended to satisfy the specific needs of an individual scribe. They were books, certainly, but no longer manuscripts.

Now, concerning the main topics of this book, Chapter 1 may be said to explore the first aspect of the Franciscan manuscript, namely the ideal, by discussing the relation between the regulations of the order and the use of books in the Franciscan convents. Using books became a problematic issue for Franciscans as a result of the warnings of their founder against the glorification of study and learning. This chapter proposes that the Franciscan rule, as established by Francis, aimed to preserve a balance in the

50 Teeuwen, *Vocabulary of Intellectual Life*, pp. 139-40.



presence of unlearned and learned members of the community. The order's intellectual achievement was possible thanks to a tradition of interpretation of the rule that reconciled the parts of it that seemed to prohibit learning as a goal in its own right with a dedication to the study and use of books. This chapter traces the interpretation of the rule proposed by the friars of the Community, to which the convent of Sant'Antonio belonged, and the reformed friars of the Franciscan Observance, to which the friars of the convent of San Francesco Grande belonged. The chapter focuses on assessing the ideal Franciscan relationship to books, as revealed by the regulations – both implicitly and explicitly. According to this ideal, the 'intention' of the founder could be reconciled with the intellectual agency of the friars because the latter was justified by the need for preparation for preaching and pastoral care. Again, the remarkable achievement of Franciscans in all areas of intellectual endeavour surpassed the stated aim of helping to fulfil pastoral duties. This chapter also shows how the ideal book, as described in the first versions of the regulations, was perhaps never used, mainly because it could not satisfy the expectations and needs of the friars. Accordingly, the regulations had to evolve and reflect the needs of a community that came to share certain intellectual expectations. The main sources used to carry out the analysis in this chapter are the two versions of the Franciscan rule and the different interpretations of the masters of the order under the form of answers to particular questions, treatises on the proper observance of the rule, admonitions, letters and commentaries on the rule.

Through a study of the Franciscan libraries in Padua, Chapter 2 explores the second dimension of the Franciscan manuscript, that is, the space. The starting point is the discussion of the development of the medieval library with the help of two models of book collection: the first is the library as it was conceived and used by Boethius, that is, as a scholar's personal library that reflects the expectations and needs of its owner; the second is represented by Cassiodorus, who assembled the book collection of Vivarium, his monastery in southern Italy. The library of Vivarium was intended to satisfy the needs of a community whose members shared reading and writing skills, and it became the predominant type of library during the Middle Ages. With the development of scholastic culture, significant transformations occurred in the setting of this type of communal library. One of the most important was to split the book collection into two: one part made up of books chained to the tables, and the other of copies available for loan. The mendicant orders, and particularly the Franciscans, both adopted and improved on this model of the library. This chapter offers new insights into the field of study by comparing the libraries of the two Paduan convents. After describing the history, size and

main characteristics of each book collection, this chapter analyses the distribution of volumes and the composition of the library. Although both libraries were intended to be the repositories of a collection focused on the education and training of Franciscan preachers, the comparison reveals interesting differences in the topics and physical characteristics of the manuscripts collected. The older library of Sant'Antonio seems to have been devoted to the study of the 'classic' masters of Franciscan culture, while in the library of the Observant convent there is a significant presence of treatises on cases and procedures related to pastoral care and devotion. Most of the manuscripts collected in the Observant library are modest in format and materials and appear to be miscellanies written as personal copies, that is, books to be used by their own scribes. The presence of this kind of manuscript challenges the assumption that a functional, personal collection of books returned only with the rise of humanism. The study of these Franciscan libraries also shows that friars were highly skilled readers, capable of reading more than one manuscript at a time; they were also readers who employed manuscripts as a source for producing new manuscripts, and in this respect their libraries show that Franciscans were agents of writing. The main sources for this chapter are the medieval inventories of the Paduan libraries, contained in surviving manuscripts in Padua and in the Vatican Library.

Chapter 3 studies the physical characteristics of a representative set of volumes collected in the Paduan libraries, as well as traces of use that can be found in them, in order to explore a further dimension of the Franciscan manuscript that could be called, in the Aristotelian sense, as its form. To do so, it establishes two sets of manuscripts, one from the library of Sant'Antonio and the other from the library of San Francesco Grande. The set from Sant'Antonio is constituted by the copies of a theological treatise and a collection of sermons, while the set from San Francesco Grande is constituted by manuscripts used as tools for the composition of sermons and collections of sermons. These two sets are representative selections from the two libraries that exemplify some of the larger issues treated in this work. The study of the manuscripts begins with a codicological examination, before comparing the volumes from the same set and finally comparing the two sets. This codicological comparative approach reveals unknown features of the organization of the library of Sant'Antonio; for example, it has made it possible to establish the order of arrival of the copies of the Bonaventure of Bagnoregio's commentary on the first book of the *Sentences*. At the same time, interesting information is also discovered on the way in which the library guaranteed the availability of manuscripts. The overall comparison allows one to establish common features in the manuscripts, depending



on their library of provenance. The library of the convent of Sant'Antonio held mainly parchment manuscripts of study and theological treatises of medium size, the library of the convent of San Francesco Grande was a repository of mainly paper manuscripts of smaller dimensions that were usually compilations for devotional purposes or tools for pastoral care and preparation of sermons. These manuscripts contained works of different genres in both Latin and the vernacular.

Chapter 4 explores the fourth dimension, namely, the readership, through the assessment of the practices of reading within the Paduan convents. Using methodological tools from the history of reading and reception theory, as well as codicological and palaeographical tools, this chapter establishes a relation between the manuscript evidence and the notion of an interpretive community, and applies it to the convents to identify not only particular forms of reading within the convents but also a characterization of Franciscan friars as readers. This chapter also discusses models of analysis of medieval readers as proposed by historical criticism, and shows that in relation to their interpretive community, Franciscans were professional agents of culture characterized by an outstanding flexibility as readers and writers. As readers familiar with different levels of writing and, in the case of Observant friars, as users of personalized collections of works, Franciscans challenge the definition of the lay humanist reader as the pioneering figure of a readership characterized by its flexibility, multilinguistic competence and cultural agency through personal libraries. The main sources for the discussion of the practices of reading in the convents are the manuscripts read by the friars, specifically the traces of use that can be identified in the form of marginal comments, notes, cross references and ownership inscriptions.

In summary, the present work explores four dimensions of the Franciscan manuscripts: the ideal of these manuscripts, as expressed in the regulations on study and use of books; the space of the Franciscan manuscripts, that is, the libraries where they were collected; the purpose of the manuscripts, as reflected by their physical characteristics; and the readership of these manuscripts, as revealed by textual evidence. At this point one might justifiably ask why this book focuses on Franciscan manuscripts instead of broadening the field to the Franciscan book. As will be shown, the notion of the Franciscan book is unhelpful as a category of analysis, which is an additional reason why it is proposed instead to focus on the Franciscan manuscript as a concrete, functional and verifiable reality that reveals the interaction between Franciscans and the written page, showing that medieval Franciscan friars are worthy of further study as writers, readers and agents of literacy.

