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## Book Acquisition in the Medieval Franciscan Order\*

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The need to provide the friars with a sound theological formation for preaching and pastoral care forced the Franciscan order to establish a hierarchical network of convent schools in the Middle Ages. This inevitably necessitated the acquisition of books, both individually and institutionally, through the foundation of convent libraries. There were three main ways through which the friars enlarged their book collections: donations and bequests, purchase, and, to a limited extent, book production within the order. The evidence coming from the testamentary records and possession notes on the Franciscan manuscripts, combined with the testimony of the order's statutes, reveals the enthusiasm of the friars to collect and keep books, and the difficulties it prompted.

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While there has been considerable interest in the monastic libraries of the period before the twelfth century and the humanist libraries of the fifteenth century and afterwards, surprisingly very little has been published on the libraries of the mendicant orders.<sup>1</sup> No comprehensive study has been performed on the acquisition of and trade in books by individual friars. In the case of the Franciscans, which will be dealt with here, the problem was partly the lack of evidence, as the order's constitutions for the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries are relatively few in number and do not contain sufficient information on the regulations concerning books and libraries. However, a rich source of evidence, hitherto overlooked by historians, are the Franciscan

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1. K. W. Humphreys, *The Book Provisions of the Medieval Friars 1215–1400* (Amsterdam: Erasmus Booksellers, 1964); K. W. Humphreys, ed., *The Friars Libraries* (London: British Library, 1990); The two definitive articles on the subject are J. Lenhart, "Franciscan Libraries of the Middle Ages," *Franciscan Educational Conference* 28 (1947): 344–94 and G. Abate, "Manoscritti e biblioteche francescane nel medio evo," in *Il Libro e Le Biblioteche, Atti del Primo Congresso Bibliologico Franciscano Internazionale, 20–27 Febbraio 1949*, Part II (Roma: Pontificio Ateneo Antonianum, 1950): 77–126; Two of the most recent contributions are F. Costa, "Biblioteche Francescane Medievali Tipologie, Contenuti, Vicende Storiche," in *Archivi-Biblioteche Beni e Centri Culturali, Atti del Convegno, Assisi, 19–21 settembre 1990*, ed. Gino Zanotti (Assisi: Centro Studi C.I.M.P., 1991), 215–83 and B. Roest, *A History of Franciscan Education (1210–1517)* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 197–234.

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manuscripts themselves. Numerous manuscripts that were once in the possession of the Franciscans contain notes concerning the ownership and purchase of books, along with testamentary notes and colophons written by the scribes. These notes provide invaluable evidence on the acquisition and circulation of books and on the trade in books.

Two facts surface from the investigation of this evidence. First, the Franciscan order formed quite a sophisticated system for the institutional accumulation, circulation, and maintenance of books, which paralleled the high degree of intellectualisation that the order underwent both in practice and attitude during the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.<sup>2</sup> Such a sophisticated system would have been totally redundant if there had not been an extensive educational network. Second, along with this development, friars acquired and kept books privately. Although they were only allowed the use of books, in practice it appears that they enjoyed full rights over them, including the right to sell them. This transformed book acquisition into a means of investment for friars with material ambitions; it also thereby eventually sowed the seeds of severe internal conflict within the order.

The acquisition of books in the Franciscan order was not initiated from the very start, as was the case with the Dominicans, but rather it took place gradually with the entry of scholars into the order, and with the establishment of an educational network. Saint Francis of Assisi, founder of the order, had no intention of welcoming many books into the order.<sup>3</sup> In the general chapter of 1220, when the order was under the vicariate of Peter Catani, a decree was passed that prohibited the possession of books.<sup>4</sup> However, the founder's intentions are not always the most influential factor in determining the course of a new religious order, and that was largely the case with the Franciscans. Due to a deliberate settlement policy adopted by the provincial ministers, the friars established themselves quickly in university towns like Paris, Oxford, and Bologna, and, before long, started to frequent the theology classes. After the death of Francis in 1226, the first signs of an educational organisation appeared. The first mention of the term *lector* as an office of the order dates from the year 1228, in the chronicle of Jordan of Giano. Two years later, a Franciscan delegation complained to the pope about the strictness of the rule and asked whether they really had to get rid of their books even if they served the study of theology.<sup>5</sup> The result was the first and one of the most important pieces of papal legislation concerning books. As a pope who believed in the significance of theological education in the fight against heresy, Gregory IX saw no harm

2. For the evolution of the educational organisation and attitude towards learning of the Franciscan order in the thirteenth century, see N. Senocak, "The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life: The Rise of Learning in the Franciscan Order, 1210–1310," (PhD diss. Bilkent University, 2001). For a thematic approach to the intellectual activities of Franciscans, see Roest.

3. As Brother Leo notes, Francis reveals this wish to a friar when the latter asks him whether he should get rid of his theological books. See *Scripta Leonis, Rufini et Angeli Sociorum S. Francisci. The Writings of Leo, Rufino and Angelo Companions of St Francis*, ed. and trans. R. Brooke (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 202.

4. *Codex Redactus Legum Fratrum Minorum in Synopism Cum Indice Copioso. Ex literis Joannis Cervantes Cardinalis S. Petri ad Vincula legati a latere ad XXXVI. Capitulum generale Assisii habito lectis anno MCDXXX. die XXI. Junii in eodem capitulo* (Rome, 1796), 1.

5. *Chronica XXIV Generalium Ordinis Minorum in Analecta Franciscana* 3 (1897): 213.

in allowing friars to study theology. He declared the papacy the possessor of all the friars' books, and that the friars would merely have the use of them.<sup>6</sup> After 1230, provincial and general chapters passed many statutes dealing with the acquisition, treatment, and maintenance of books within the order. The papal statutes of 1336, which encouraged and regulated the intellectual activities of both Franciscans and Dominicans, demanded that convents should acquire a sufficient number of copies of works on grammar, logic, philosophy, and theology according to their size, number of residents, condition, and status.<sup>7</sup>

The influx of books into the medieval Franciscan order seems to have taken place through three main channels, which shall be discussed in this paper: donations and bequests, purchase, and writing and copying.

### Donations and Bequests

From early times onwards, the great popularity of the Franciscans enabled them to accumulate a large number of books through donations and wills. There is considerable evidence from the thirteenth century, when cardinals, bishops, and other prelates left books to Franciscans. For someone outside of the order, there were two ways of donating the books. Either the book would be donated directly to the *armarium*, that is, the library of the convent, and become a common property, or it would be donated for the use of a friar on the condition that, after the friar's death, the book would go to the convent, in which case the friar could not sell or exchange the book.

In the early days of the order, when friars had not yet started to possess books individually, most of the book donations were of the first type. The evidence suggests that a majority of book donations were made to convents where there was a school of theology. The earliest substantial book donation I have found was in 1224 when a certain Bartholomew de Bruyeres donated ten books to the Paris convent.<sup>8</sup> The same year, a canon of Padua Cathedral, Master Aegidius, donated a manuscript containing the sermons of Saint Anthony of Padua to the Franciscan convent of Padua, where there was one of the earliest Franciscan schools.<sup>9</sup> Around 1240, a canon and archdeacon of the same cathedral, Master Ugutio, donated to the same convent (Padua) twenty-five volumes of the Bible with commentaries by the church fathers, written in Parisian letters.<sup>10</sup> Jocelyn of Wells, bishop of Bath and Wells between 1206 and 1242, donated to the Bristol friars the Etymologies of Isidore of Seville.<sup>11</sup> By the time Jocelyn was dead, the Bristol convent already

6. See the bull *Quo Elongati*, 28 September 1230, edited in *Bullarium Franciscanum*, ed. J. H. Sbaralea, I (Rome, 1759), 68–70.

7. "Ordinationes A Benedicto XII Pro Fratribus Minoribus Promulgatae Per Bullam 28 Novembris 1336," ed. M. Bihl, *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 30 (1937): 356.

8. L. Beaumont-Maillet, *Le Grand Couvent des Cordeliers de Paris — Etude historique et archéologique du XIIIe siècle à nos jours* (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1975), 12.

9. G. Abate and G. Luisetto, *Codici e Manoscritti della Biblioteca Antoniana Col Catalogo delle Miniature*, I (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1975), xxvii.

10. Abate and Luisetto, *Codici*, xxvii; See A. Sartori, *Archivio Sartori-Documenti di Storia e Arte Francescana*, ed. G. Luisetto, I (Padova: Biblioteca Antoniana, 1983–88), 1264.

11. Bristol, Central Public Library, MS 3; See N. R. Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, 2 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 202 and *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain. A List of Surviving Books*, ed. N. R. Ker, 2nd edn (London: Royal Historical Society, 1964), 13, 231.

had a *studium*.<sup>12</sup> Friar Ralph Maidstone, who served as bishop of Hereford and died in 1243, gave the Canterbury Franciscans glossed Gospels,<sup>13</sup> and a glossed copy of the Epistles of Paul to the Oxford Franciscans.<sup>14</sup> The most remarkable book donation of these early years was the bequest of the famous bishop of Lincoln, Robert Grosseteste. At his death, he left his entire library to the Franciscan convent in Oxford.<sup>15</sup> In 1266, fourteen books were donated to the convent of Exeter, which had a school, by the archdeacon of the town.<sup>16</sup> In 1271, Cardinal Henry of Susa left to the Franciscan convent of Montpellier, another convent with a well-established *studium*, a *Biblia Postillata* in two volumes.<sup>17</sup> One of the two significant book donations of the late thirteenth century was the bequest of the Franciscan cardinal Bentivegna Bentivegni, who left all his books to the convent of Saint Fortunato of Todi in his testament dated 1286.<sup>18</sup> The other was the donation of another Franciscan cardinal, Matteo d'Aquasparta, who gave half of his seventy-six books to the convent of Todi, and the rest to the Assisi convent in 1287.<sup>19</sup>

From the second half of the thirteenth century onwards, the evidence points to the frequent occurrence of the second type of donations, where a designated friar was to have the use of books in his lifetime. Cardinal Vicedominus Vicedomini, in his testament dated 1 July 1276 at Rome, left to the Franciscan convent of Piacenza Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, and Bonaventura's commentary on the third and fourth book of the *Sentences*. The cardinal stipulated that his nephew, Philip Vicedomini, should have the use of the said books.<sup>20</sup> Cardinal John Cholet (1281–1292) bequeathed all his books of logic and natural philosophy and his *Originalia* of church fathers to the friar Peter of Songeons, to be handed on to the Parisian convent of the Franciscans after Peter's death.<sup>21</sup> Lay people similarly followed the convention of leaving books to their

12. *Fratris Thomae vulgo dicti de Eccleston Tractatus de Adventu Fratrum Minorum in Angliam*, ed. A. G. Little (Manchester University Press, 1951), 49–50.

13. London, British Library, MS Royal 3 Cxi. *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain*, 48, 246.

14. London, British Library, MS Harley, 3249. *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain*, 142, 288.

15. A. G. Little, *The Grey Friars in Oxford* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892), 56; See also R. W. Southern, *Robert Grosseteste: The Growth of an English Mind in Medieval Europe*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 27.

16. Humphreys, *Book Provisions*, 99.

17. A. Paravicini-Bagliani, *I Testamenti dei Cardinali del Duecento* (Rome: Presso la Societa alla Biblioteca Vallicelliana, 1980), 140. Postilla means "a short addition made between the lines or margins of text, particularly by the author himself or in terms of updating the text": M. Maniaci, *Terminologia del libro manoscritto* (Milan: Editrice Bibliografica, 1996), 223. For a detailed discussion of postilla see B. Smalley, *The Study of Bible in the Middle Ages*, 3rd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 270–1.

18. "Item volumus quod omnes libri nostri quod emimus, preter Decre/tales, dentur conventui fratrum Minorum de Sancto Fortunato Tudertino. Libri vero quos a provincia Sancti [Francisci] habuimus provinciali capitulo resignentur." Paravicini-Bagliani, 236.

19. For the list of books donated by Matteo d'Aquasparta, see Enrico Menestò, "La Biblioteca di Matteo d'Aquasparta," in *Francesco d'Assisi, Documenti e Archivi, Codici e Biblioteche, Miniature* (Milano: Electa, 1982), 104–8.

20. "Item legamus conventui fratrum Minorum de Placentia librum Sententiarum, sed volumus quod Philippus possit uti dicta/ [ . . . ] ipse liber. 81. Item legamus fratribus Minoribus de Placentia tercium et quartum librum domini Albanensis (s. Bonaventura) supra Sentenciis, sed volumus quod dictus Philippus possit uti." Paravicini-Bagliani, 174.

21. "Libros autem philosophicos, tam logicos quam naturales, fratri Petro de Sonions capellano et penitenciaro meo do lego; ita quod post ipsum ad conventum fratrum Minorum Parisiensium revertantur." Paravicini-Bagliani, 264, No. 134.

Franciscan relatives or friends. For example, around 1260, a resident of Lucca bequeathed all his books to his Franciscan son, on the condition that the convent of Lucca would have them after the son's death.<sup>22</sup> By bequeathing the book to a friar with the post-mortem condition that the books would go to the convent library, he prevented the friar from selling or exchanging the books during his lifetime. Some book bequests seem to have the same purpose of all other types of alms-giving: in the year 1383, a certain Ser Dominicus Allegri from Florence donated the books of Concordance of Joachim of Fiore to the friar Thebaldus de Casa in the presence of a notary and witnesses with the request that the friar should pray for his soul.<sup>23</sup>

Why did these donors take such pains to enunciate that their beneficiary was to have the use of the books for life? Was it not enough just to give the book to the friar? According to the papal regulations of 1336, it was not. If a donation or a bequest was made to a friar without a condition for use (*sine determinato usu*), then this friar had to inform his superiors that the bequest was of this nature. In that case, the guardian would take the responsibility of the bequeathed items. If the friar already had sufficient number of books to study, or was not able to use the books left to him, the guardian could give the books to some other friar.<sup>24</sup>

Along with the donation of books, giving money for the purchase or copying of books was also quite common. In 1237, Leone da Perego, later Archbishop of Milan, gave a subsidy to the Franciscan convent in Milan for the purchase of books.<sup>25</sup> In 1253, a layman Zilio Teco da Marostica left one hundred lire to the convent of Vicenza *pro facere libros*.<sup>26</sup> The Franciscan Cardinal Bentivegna Bentivegni left money to Friars John and Jacobello for books and other necessities.<sup>27</sup> In an interesting will, dated 1289, the widow of the count of Vicenza, Zilborga, left to the young layman Artuxio two hundred lire for books if he would enter the Franciscan order, and nothing otherwise.<sup>28</sup> The countess also left money to a number of friars for the express purpose of buying books, and added the condition that after the death of these friars the books

22. "Faitinellus Mordecastelli quondam Baldinecti adiudicavit et reliquit, legavit et concessit conventui fratrum Minorum de Luca omnes libros quos dictus Faitinellus dedit et daturus est fratri Salomoni filio suo, volens et disponens quod dictus conventus eos habeat et habere debeat post mortem dicti fratris Salomonis filii sui." *Le Pergamene del convento di S. Francesco in Lucca (secc. XII-XIX)*, ed. V. Tirelli and M. Tirelli (Roma: Ufficio per i beni archivistici, 1993), 122.

23. "Ser Dominicus Allegri . . . mihi Fratri Thebaldo donavit, & libere largitus est hunc Librum Concordiae Ioachim veteris & novi testamenti, ut ego pro eius anima rogarem Deum . . ." Florence, Bibliothecae Mediceae-Laurenziana, MS Bib. S. Croce, Plut VIII Dext. Cod. X, fol. 166. cf. *Catalogus Codicum Manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Mediceae Laurentianae*, ed. A. M. Bandini, 4 (Leipzig: Zentral-Antiquariat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1961), 382.

24. "Ordinationes A Benedicto XII," 358-9.

25. P. Sevesi, "Documenta hucusque inedita saeculi XIII pro historia almae Fr. Minor Provinciae Mediolanensis [se Lombardie]," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 4 (1911): 290.

26. This evidence comes from Vicenza, Biblioteca Bertoliana, S. Lorenzo, Pergamene b. I: Sartori, *Archivio Sartori*, 1, 1264.

27. "17. Item fratri Iohanni domini Henrici pro libris et aliis necessitatibus suis centum libr. corton. 18. Item fratri Iacobello pro libris et aliis necessitatibus suis quinquaginta libr. Corton." Paravicini-Bagliani, 236.

28. Abate and Luisetto, *Codici*, xxvii.

bought with the money she left would go to the *armarium* of the Franciscan convent of Saint Anthony in Padua.<sup>29</sup> One cannot help thinking that at least one of the *fidecomissarii* of the countess was a Franciscan from the convent of Padua who had counselled her to add this particular condition to the will. We come across a similar condition in the year 1300 in the testament of a lay woman, Beatrice Tolomei. She left twenty-five lire to five Franciscan friars, and ten lire to one friar, for books on the condition that “after the death of these friars, the books they have bought with the bequeathed money were to go to the *armarium* of the convent of St Anthony in Padua, and they were not to be exchanged or damaged in any way.”<sup>30</sup> It seems that in the later thirteenth century, some friars were openly asking money from relatives and seculars to buy books. This practice was discouraged by the constitutions of the order, unless it was accompanied by an official licence of petition.<sup>31</sup>

The friars’ ambition to collect books facilitated the expansion of the Franciscan libraries through internal donations and bequests. A great source of books for the convent libraries was the works left by deceased friars. Often, friars bequeathed their books to their convents while they were yet alive. In 1285, Friar Henry of Circulis noted down in his book of Isaiah and Jeremiah, and in his psalter, that he had given these books to the convent of Florence, so that no one should remove them from there. However, he reserved to himself full right of their use during his lifetime.<sup>32</sup> Thebaldus de Casa, who was the guardian of the Franciscan convent in Florence between 1380 and 1410, wrote similar versions of the following note into numerous manuscripts in his possession: “This book is for the use of brother Thebaldus de Casa. He, while yet living, has conceded this book to the *armarium* of the Convent of Friars Minor in Florence.”<sup>33</sup> The motive of putting such a note into the book itself was obviously to prevent the misappropriation of the books by other friars or convents, or probably even by the provincial chapter, which claimed the right to the books of the deceased friars. According to the provincial constitutions of Padua, after a friar’s death, all his books were to be transferred to the provincial chapter by the custodian of his convent,<sup>34</sup> and then the books were to

29. Abate and Luisetto, *Codici*, xxvii.

30. “Empti libri, post mortem praedictorum, deveniant ad *armarium* loci S. Antonii de Padua fratrum minorum et aliter non possint distrahi vel comutari.” Sartori, *Archivio Sartori*, 1, 1264.

31. “Non petant fratres ab aliis quam a parentibus pro libris vel rebus aliis, nisi prius a ministro vel custode licentiam in scriptis habuerint de petendo.” “Statuta Provincialia Provinciae Aquitaine et Franciae (saec. XIII–XIV),” ed. M. Bihl, *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 7 (1914): 471.

32. “Istud volumen dedit Frater Henricus de Circulis Fratribus Minoribus Florentini Conventus anno Domini MCCLXXXV, ita quod alienari a dicto Conventu non possit, reservata sibi plena potestate utendi et prout sibi placuerit in vita sua.” Florence, Bibliothecae Medicea-Laurenziana, MS Bib. S. Croce, Plut III Dext. Cod. V, fol. 1, cf. *Catalogus Codicum Manuscriptorum*, 341. The exact same note is also found in Florence, Bibliothecae Medicea-Laurenziana, MS Bib. S. Croce, Plut VII Dext. Cod. IX., fol. 1: *Catalogus Codicum Manuscriptorum*, 371.

33. “Iste Liber fuit ad usum Fratris Thebaldi de Casa, quem vivens assignavit Armario Fratrum Minorum Flor. Conv.” Florence, Bibliothecae Medicea-Laurenziana, MS Bib. S. Croce, Plut VIII dext Cod X, fol. 1. *Catalogus Codicum Manuscriptorum*, 382.

34. “Item libri fratrum defunctorum de cetero per custodes ad provinciale capitulum transmittantur.” “Ordinazioni dei Capitoli Provinciali Umbri dal 1300 al 1305,” ed. C. Cenci, *Collectanea Francescana* 55 (1985): 16.

be sold by the custodian to the friars of their custody for three-quarters of their normal price.<sup>35</sup> It is particularly worth noting that if the deceased friar was a lector, the situation was even worse for the convent. In that case the books were not sold, but were reserved to the discretion of the provincial minister and chapter, who would distribute the books equally to those whose books had to be assigned by the minister.<sup>36</sup> It is possible that some lectors transferred their books to the convent once they quit the office. For example, in 1353, the officials of the Todi convent made a list of twenty-six books placed into the convent library of Todi, which once belonged to friar Raynaldus Francisci.<sup>37</sup> It is possible that Raynaldus quit his office around this time perhaps out of old age, because in 1356 a monetary transaction was recorded in the Franciscan convent of Assisi regarding the garments of a friar Raynaldus, who was referred as “*olim lector*.”<sup>38</sup>

The friars who were entering the order also contributed to the expansion of the convent libraries by bringing their own books into the Order. For example, a Franciscan novice, Lambertinus Cazaninici of Bologna, in his testament written in 1249, reserved four hundred lire for himself to buy books after his profession. If he were to die before joining the order, the money would go to the convent of Bologna for books and other necessities.<sup>39</sup> It seems that, like Lambertinus, many friars brought with themselves either money or books to the order.<sup>40</sup> The practice must have been well established as the 1310 general chapter declared that novices could not leave themselves anything in the will they made upon entering the order; however, they could be provided with the books they bequeathed to the convent.<sup>41</sup>

### Purchase

In 1357, the famous bibliophile, Richard Fitzralph, Archbishop of Armagh, complained in the presence of a papal audience in Avignon that he was not able to find “any useful book for sale; for they have all been bought up by the friars, so that every convent has a large and noble library, and every friar with standing in the *studia* has a noble library.”<sup>42</sup> Although there might be exaggeration

35. “Et minister cum diffinitoribus ponat duos fideles qui praedictos libros aestimant fideliter, secundum communem aestimationem sicut unus frater vendit alteri librum suum; et secundum illam aestimationem custodes vendant eos in custodiis suis fratribus qui primo petierint, dimissa eis pretii quarta parte aestimationis factae ut dictum est.” “Ordinazioni dei Capitoli Provinciali Umbri,” 16.  
36. “Item libri lectorum morientium-non-vendantur, sed reserventur provisioni ministri et capituli provincialis, qui eos aequaliter distribuatur vel distribui faciat per custodias per illos qui ad hoc per ministrum debeant assignari.” “Ordinazioni dei Capitoli Provinciali Umbri,” 16.

37. Todi, Biblioteca Comunale, MS 185, fol. 42v–43r. The list has been edited in E. Menestò, “Gli inventari trecenteschi della biblioteca del convento francescano di San Fortunato di Todi,” in *Immagini del Medioevo, Saggi di Cultura Mediolatina* (Centro Italiano di Studi sull’alto Medioevo: Spoleto, 1993), 229–30.

38. “Pro indumentis fr. Raynaldi olim lectoris.” *Documentazione di vita assisana 1300–1530*, Vol. 1, ed. Cesare Cenci (Collegii S. Bonaventurae Ad Claras Aquas, Grottaferrata, 1974), 120.

39. *Chartularium Studii Bononiensis S. Francisci*, ed. C. Piana in *Analecta Franciscana* 11 (1970): 14\*.

40. Humphreys, 49; Roest, 222.

41. Humphreys, 65.

42. M. A. Rouse and R. H. Rouse, *Authentic Witnesses: Approaches to Medieval Text and Manuscripts* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 413.

in this statement, other evidence supports the thesis of Fitzralph that Franciscans were fervent buyers of books both at the institutional and individual level. Although donations helped the convents to expand their *armarium*, naturally friars could not depend on them to run a sophisticated educational organisation. There was a need for the regular acquisition of books to maintain the continuity of intellectual studies in the order.

Starting from early times onwards, the convents bought books from alms through the initiative of guardians. These purchases were primarily directed towards providing the friar-students with the appropriate textbooks for their studies in the convent schools. For example, Brother Guido de Fraxia, the guardian of the Florentine convent, bought the *Decretum* of Gratian in 1246 for nineteen Pisan lire from a layman in Florence for the use of friars in the convent of Florence. The transaction was realised by the papal procurator of Franciscans.<sup>43</sup> In 1319, the guardian of the same convent, Monaldo, bought a book containing parts of the *Metaphysics*, *Ethics*, *Politics* and *Economics* of Aristotle for the *armarium* of the convent for three Florentine lire.<sup>44</sup> These examples can be multiplied easily, as many Franciscan manuscripts bear such purchase records. The students who were sent to a *studium generale* also purchased books regularly. They were given money by the convents to provide themselves with the necessary books.<sup>45</sup>

The purchase of books was regulated by the constitutions of the order. Although it was a considerable expenditure that was not easily reconciled with the mendicancy of friars, the purchase of books for common use was nevertheless tolerated by the spiritual wing of the order. However, the purchase of books by individual friars and books reserved for private use infuriated those friars who wanted to observe strictly the rule and the primitive Franciscan ideals.<sup>46</sup> Spirituals like Ubertino di Casale claimed that the reason why so many friars bought books was not the pursuit of knowledge, because even those who were not engaged in studying were collecting books. According to Ubertino, friars were buying books not with the intention of studying, but as a financial investment:

Very expensive and unnecessary books acquired through various ways multiply in the Order. There is a great deal of appropriation of books; that is, only a few would share the books with his brothers freely. Many have too many books, and many do not even know how to use them. Many make a treasure out of their books, saying "when I get sick, I will provide for myself by selling my books." and they sell and

43. "Istum librum emit Frater Guido de Fraxia tunc temporis Guardianus Florentinus anno Domini millesimo CCXLVI. Fuit autem emptus pro libris XIX Pisanorum et dimidia ab Ugone Florentino filio. Instrumentum vero factum fuit inde a Domino Bono de Arlotto Bentivenni de Arlotto recipienti procuratorio nomine pro Domino Episcopo Ostiensi ad usum, et utilitatem Fratrum Minorum Conventus Florentini." Florence, Bibliothecae Medicea-Laurenziana, Santa Croce, Plut. I Sin. Cod. I, fol. 339. Cf. *Catalogus Codicum Manuscriptorum*, 21.

44. "Iste Liber fuit emitus a matre magistri Iohannis de Tassa pretio Florenorum trium per Fratrem Monaldum Guardianum Florentini Conventus pro Armario dicti Conventus anno Domini MCCCXIX." Plut. XIII Sin Cod. VI, fol. 1. Cf. *Catalogus Codicum Manuscriptorum*, 105.

45. Roest, 224–5.

46. For the names of some of the friars who built up a substantial collection of books, see Roest, 225–8.



buy books within the Order or better outside of the Order, whenever they can. Many sell the books to their own brothers at a higher price than they bought, following the custom of merchants.<sup>47</sup>

Both the evidence gathered from the notes in the manuscripts, and the decrees made in the order's constitutions, testify that Ubertino was actually right about what was going on in the order. For example, in order to stop the friars buying books out of material ambition rather than for intellectual purposes, the 1310 general chapter that met in Padua decreed that no friar was to be allowed to have the duplicate of a book, and no friar could have a book that he could not use.<sup>48</sup> As books were the only item of material value that friars were allowed to purchase, it became the main commodity for the financial transactions of friars. The constitutional regulations prove that books were used to pay debts and that they were mortgaged for monetary allowances. In 1285, the provincial chapter of Aquitaine decreed that custodians and guardians had to compel friars, who were in debt to other friars and to secular people, to pay their debts. If the friars did not pay, then their books and other things were to be taken away and sold within the order, so that the debt could be paid and great scandals avoided.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, the thirteenth-century provincial constitutions of Provence decreed that if a friar who was in debt to his convent was transferred to another convent, then the guardian or vicar of the original convent was to keep the friar's books as a pledge to his creditors. Eventually, the friar would be deprived of his books and other things in return for his accumulated debts.<sup>50</sup> In the provincial constitutions of the province of Saint Anthony celebrated in Treviso in 1290, it was decreed that no friar was to sell, mortgage, or exchange any book without the special licence of the minister or the custodian, and with the approval of *discreti* of the convent.<sup>51</sup>

47. "Hinc multiplicantur salme librorum preciosorum et curiosorum superflue acquisite diversis viis a quolibet taliter qualiter; et tanta est apropiaciio librorum, quod valde pauci inveniuntur, qui de accomodacione sint suis fratribus liberales. Et multi superfluos libros habent, et multi, qui nesciunt eis uti. Et multi de eis faciunt thesaurum dicentes: 'Si ego infirmabor, ego michi providerem de libris meis;' et vendunt et emunt ea intus ordinem et extra, melius quam possunt, et multi suis fratribus carius quam emant, more mercatorum." Ubertino di Casale, *Declaratio* in "Zur Vorgeschichte des Councils von Vienne No. 4: Vorarbeiten zur Constitution Exivi de Paradiso vom 6. Mai 1312," ed. F. Ehrle, *Archiv für Literatur- und Kirchengeschichte* 3 (1887): 73.

48. "Item iniungitur ministris omnibus ut nullum fratrem permittant habere librum aliquem duplicatum, nec aliquem fratrem permittant habere librum quo uti non possit." "Le Costituzioni Padovane del 1310," ed. C. Cenci, *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 76 (1983): 535.

49. "Item custodes et gardiani fratres sibi subditos compellant ad solutionem debitorum, que debent fratribus vel aliis personis, assignato ad solvendum termino competentis. Post quem, si solum-non-fuerit, accipiant libros et res alias fratrum non solventium eo modo quo dictum est, et impignorent vel vendant intra ordinem, ut sic debita persolvantur, cum ex huiusmodi magna scandala oriantur. Qui vero solvere-non-poterunt, graviter puniantur." "Statuta Provincialia Provinciarum Aquitaine et Francia," 478.

50. "Item, si frater debitis obligatus ad conventum transferatur aliquem, gardianus conventus, unde recessus est, seu eius vicarius libros eius et suppellectilem aut pignus habundans retineat, unde possit plenarie satisfieri creditoribus; et omnis viciosus in contrahendis debitis, custodis iudicio, libris et rebus privetur aliis, donec sufficienter apparuerit emendatus." "Constitutiones Provinciae Provinciae (saec. XIII-XIV)," ed. F. Delorme, *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 14 (1921): 422.

51. "Item ordinat, quod nullus frater vendat, impignoret seu commutet librum aliquem, calcicem, seu paramenta, sine ministri licentia speciali vel custodis cum discretorum loci consilio. Et ad hoc per obedientiam firmiter teneantur. Et qui contrafecerint, provinciali capitulo accusentur." "Statuta Provincialia Provinciae Francia et Marchiae Tervisinae," 462.

The trade in books between the friars in the fourteenth century seems to be also quite commonplace. In a manuscript in the Biblioteca Antoniana, which contains John of Erfurt's and Bonaventura's abbreviated commentary of the third Book of Sentences, I have found the following note written in a fourteenth-century hand: "Brother Hugo of Arquada has bought this book from brother Facino de Sancto Zaccharia of Montesilice for 6 solidos grosso."<sup>52</sup> Similarly, in 1397, Friar Giovanni da Todi purchased the *Expositiones* of Saint Jerome on the Bible from friar Gentile da Todi for one and a half florins.<sup>53</sup> It is quite possible that both friars were in the same convent, that is, Saint Fortunato in Todi, where the manuscript is kept to this day.

For individual friars, convent libraries were a constant source for book acquisition. Apart from the books they were given freely for a limited period of time, friars purchased or rented books from convent libraries if they wanted to have the book for life or for a long period. In the case of renting, the friar would pay a pledge, that is, a certain amount of money, to the convent treasury, and would have the book he wanted until he died. After his death, the book would be taken back to the *armarium*. An example of such a transaction was recorded in one of the manuscripts in the Biblioteca Antoniana. The *Postilla Super Evangelia Dominicalia* of Bertrand de Turre was bought by Friar John de Plebe from the *armarium* of the convent of Padua for sixteen small lire in 1343. The transaction was made in the presence of the guardian and the vice-guardian of the convent.<sup>54</sup> The fourteenth-century inventory of books in the Franciscan convent of Saint Fortunato of Todi informs us that a copy of the Apparatus of Innocent IV on Decretals was given to friar Vengnante under a pledge of four florins, and was to be taken back when the convent paid this sum.<sup>55</sup> A book containing *Sermones festivi* was sold to friar Francesco di Burgonovo,<sup>56</sup> and a *Liber Moralium* was sold to friar Giovanni di Roma.<sup>57</sup> Apparently, there was also trade in books between the convent libraries, as the Inventory of Saint Fortunato of Todi records that a bible was sold to the convent of Aquasparta.<sup>58</sup>

52. "Istum librum exegit fr. Hugo de Arquada a fratre Facino de Sancto Zaccharia de Montesilice pro sex sol. Grossis:" Padua, Biblioteca Antoniana, MS 128, fol. 116r. Cf. Abate and Luisetto, *Codici*, 166.

53. Todi, Biblioteca Comunale, MS 102, flyleaf. L. Leonii, *Inventario dei Codici della Biblioteca Comunale di Todi* (Todi, 1878), 38.

54. "Ista Postilla est fratris Johannis de Plebe ad usum sibi concessa," and below by the same hand: "Sciant fratres universi praesentem litteram inspecturi fratrem Johannem de Plebe emisse Postillam domini Bertrandi super Evangelia Dominicalia, totius anni, quae pertinebat ad conventum Paduae pro cuius solutione assignari fecit libras sexdecim parvorum fratri Corrado custodi Archae beati Antonii pro conventu Paduae, in praesentia fratrum Reprandini tunc Guardiani Paduae et Bartholomaei de Arquada Vicarii. Anno Domini MCCCXLIII, die secundo februarii. In cuius rei testimonium sigillo conventus praesentem cedulam fecimus praemuniri:" Padua, Biblioteca Antoniana, MS 440, fol. 239v. Cf. Abate and Luisetto, *Codici*, 361.

55. "Habet frater Vengnante sub pignore quatuor florenorum, et debet reddere quando fratres reddant sibi quatuor florenos." Todi, Biblioteca Comunale, MS 185, fol. 28r. Leonii, *Inventario dei Codici*, 63.

56. "Fratris Francisco de burgo novo libere fuerunt venditi." Todi, Biblioteca Comunale, MS. 185, fol. 25v. Menestò, *Gli inventari*, 209.

57. "Venditus est fratri Johanni de Roma:" Todi, Biblioteca Comunale, MS. 185, fol. 9r. Menestò, 201.

58. "Vendidit conventus loco aquasparte:" Todi, Biblioteca Comunale, MS 185, fol. 1v. Menestò, 199.

Sale of books within the order was an awkward thing when one remembers the original Franciscan creed. More awkward still, however, was a friar's purchase of expensive and deluxe editions. Certainly, buying an expensive, nicely illuminated copy when a cheaper version was available was not only against the rule, but also against the theory of *usus pauper* (that the friars should use the cheapest and poorest of all things), approved pontifically in 1279. Indeed, the order tried to take precautions as early as 1239 against the acquisition of expensive books. In the constitutions of Rome, it was decreed that no Bible was to be bought that was more expensive than twenty lire of Tours.<sup>59</sup> While the guardians, buying for the *armarium* of the convents, probably obeyed the rule, individual friars buying books for their own use did not always do so. For example, the famous inquisitor and historian, Paul of Venice, also a lector of the order, was reprimanded by the guardian of his convent for buying expensive parchment to write his books, and for purchasing and ordering lots of books to be written from the money he made as an inquisitor.<sup>60</sup>

At the institutional level, the guardians enjoyed great control over the acquisition and sale of books. That opened the way to abuses, which the general and provincial chapters relentlessly tried to prevent. The provincial chapter of Aquitaine in the late thirteenth century declared that no custodian or guardian could sell, exchange, mortgage, or accept books and other valuable things into the convent without necessity, and without the consent of his convent.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, the provincial chapter of upper Germany in 1303 prohibited the guardians from selling their own books or the books of the convent either in the convent, in the city, or outside the town walls.<sup>62</sup>

Frequently, when a book was not readily available in the market, Franciscans paid the professional scribes for the writing of a book. This method was employed both by individual friars who paid from their private alms, and by the convent administrators. A manuscript, now in Fribourg, carries a note from the provincial minister of Strasbourg saying that he had this book written by a scribe called Gregorius in 1384.<sup>63</sup> In some provinces the employment of non-Franciscan scribes was even institutionalised to provide a continuous expansion of the convent libraries. In the late thirteenth century, the province of the Marches of Treviso made a decree that in the convents of Padua and

59. "Et nulla biblia emenda pretium XX librarum turonensium excedat:" "Constitutiones Pre-narbonenses," ed. C. Cenci, *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 83 (1990): 77.

60. "Vidi insuper quod emebat pelles nimis delicatas de agnello existens Inquisitor. Unde scolares videntes dicebant me audiente quod non erant ille pelles secundum ordinis paupertatem, ea quod ita pulchre non invenirentur Venetiis . . . Libros insuper multiplicavit scribi faciendo et emendo et satis est credibile quod de bonis officii:" A. Ghinato, "Fra Paolino da Venezia O. F. M., Vescovo di Pozzuoli (d. 1344)," *La Venezia Francescana* 93 (1949-50): 93.

61. "Nolumus quod custodes vel gardiani res conventus notabiles, sive sint libri sive alia, possint vendere, commutare, impignorare vel aliquo modo alienare, absque conventus sui requisitione pariter et consensu, et de ministri licentia speciali:" "Statuta Provincialia Provinciarum Aquitane et Franciae," 471.

62. "Ordinamus sub eodem praecepto, et nullus guardianus vel frater quicumque libros suos vel conventus nec domos infra aream fratrum vel extra in civitate vel in terminis vendat nec petitiones futuras obliget vel vendat . . . absque Ministri licentia speciali:" "Statuta Provinciae Alemaniae superioris annis 1303, 1309 et 1341 condita," ed. Geroldus Fussenegger, *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 53 (1960): 245-6.

63. *Colophons de Manuscrits Occidentaux des Origines au XVIe siecle*, ed. Bénédictins du Bouveret, 2 (Friburg: Suisse, Editions Universitaires, 1965), 248, No. 5580.

Venice, and in other convents wherever it was possible, a scribe was to be kept, who would write books necessary and useful for the *armarium*.<sup>64</sup>

However, the practice of a friar employing professional scribes to copy a book he himself had written — especially in places of intense book circulation like Paris or Oxford — was discouraged by the constitutions. The main reason was that the scribes sometimes would make a copy for themselves without telling the author or the owner of the book. This problem of handing over the manuscripts to secular scribes arose in 1254, when a Franciscan student, Gerardo di San Donino, went public with his work, *Introduction to the Evangelical Gospel*, which was later condemned as heretical. The secular scribes of Paris, however, continued to publish the book through the copies they had acquired for themselves. The situation was described vividly by Jean de Meun in his *Roman de la Rose* where it was said that “anyone in Paris who wished, could find a copy of the Eternal Gospel on the parvis in front of Notre Dame and arrange a copy to be written.”<sup>65</sup>

Following this unfortunate event, the Franciscan general chapter of 1260, summoned under the Minister General Bonaventura, declared that no one was to hand a copy of new writing to a scribe outside of the order, unless it had been examined carefully by the general and provincial minister.<sup>66</sup> One friar who suffered from this situation was the famous Roger Bacon. At the beginning of his *Opus tertium*, he tried to excuse himself to the pope for the delay in sending his works. He claimed that only secular scribes could copy his books adequately, but then they would have made copies for themselves and for other people without his consent, as often writings multiplied in Paris through the deceitful behaviour of scribes.<sup>67</sup>

### Writing and Copying

The last and presumably the least common way of obtaining books was through writing and copying by the friars themselves. In an interesting article, Guglielmo Cavallo wrote about how the monasteries of Europe in the early Middle Ages, famous for their *scriptoria* and their centrality in book production, were replaced in time by the convents of the mendicant friars who, rather than copying books, were mainly engaged in the collection and preservation of books for studying.<sup>68</sup> Although, as Cavallo suggested, the friars did not have a *scriptorium* in their convents, they nevertheless did still copy

64. “Item ordinat minister et diffinitores cum provinciali capitulo, quod in conventu Padue et Veneciis et aliis conventibus, qui sustinere poterunt, teneatur continue unus scriptor, qui scribat libros necessarios et pro armario opportunos:” “Statuta Provincialia Provinciae Franciae et Marchiae Tervisinae,” 460.

65. R. H. Rouse and M. A. Rouse, *Manuscripts and Their Makers: Commercial Book Producers in Medieval Paris, 1200–1500* (Turnhout, Belgium: Harvey Miller, 2000), 74.

66. “21. Item inhibemus, ne de cetero aliquoad scriptum novum extra Ordinem publicetur, nisi prius examinatum fuerit diligenter per glem Ministrum vel provlem et definitores in capitulo provli. Et quicumque contrafecerit, tribus diebus tantum in pane et aqua ieiunet et careat illo scripto:” “Statuta Generalia Ordinis,” 73.

67. Roger Bacon, *Opus Tertium*, in *Opera Hactenus Inedita*, ed. J. S. Brewer (London, 1859), 13.

68. G. Cavallo, “Dallo scriptorium senza biblioteca alla biblioteca senza scriptorium,” in *Dall'eremo al cenobio: la civiltà monastica in Italia dalle origini all'età di Dante*, ed. G. C. Alessio et al. (Milano: Libri Scheiwiller, 1987), 329–442.

books and maintain professional scribes, though admittedly never on a great scale. The great majority of the friars' books came through donations, wills, and buying rather than copying.

In the constitutions of 1239, there was an item asking the convent prelates to compel all friars to write.<sup>69</sup> The same item was repeated later in the Narbonne constitutions of 1260.<sup>70</sup> The famous Franciscan chronicler, Salimbene of Adam, for example, mentions that he was copying Joachim of Fiore's *Expositio Super Quattuor Evangelistas* for minister general John of Parma.<sup>71</sup> Besides, some friars were scribes by profession, like Bartholomeo Guiscolo who worked as an illuminator and scribe in Parma and France, respectively, in 1246 and 1248.<sup>72</sup>

Lectors and masters played an important role in the multiplication of books. As the experienced lectors and *magisters* in theology were those most heavily engaged in producing books such as Bible commentaries or theological treatises, they were assigned a *socius*, a younger friar who had spent a number of years in the schools and who possessed a decent knowledge of Latin grammar. It would usually be this *socius* who actually wrote the book down as it was dictated by the lector or *magister*. The 1294 provincial chapter of the Marches of Treviso asked lectors to finish the books they had started. Those who did not were to be deprived of their *socius*, and their exemption from attending the divine office was to be withdrawn.<sup>73</sup> The theological training of the lectors would also give them authority in the multiplication of controversial theological books. In the 1282 general chapter, it was ordered that provincial ministers should see that the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas was not to be multiplied except under the supervision of the lectors who understood the text.<sup>74</sup>

Students, particularly those attending the lectures in the *studium generale*, would also write books frequently in the form of lecture notes or compilations. There are many extant examples of these in the modern libraries. One such manuscript has survived from the year 1387, which a certain brother Bartholomeo di Mantua had written when he was a student in Piacenza.<sup>75</sup>

69. "Fratres tam clerici quam laici compellantur per suos superiores in scribendo et in aliis sibi competentibus exerceri. Quod si ipsi superiores negligentes in hoc fuerint, a visitatoribus puniantur." "Constitutiones Prenarbonenses," 91.

70. "Statuta Generalia Ordinis," 69.

71. Salimbene de Adam, *Cronica*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, Scriptores, 32 (Hanover, 1888), 294.

72. J. W. Bradley, *A Dictionary of Miniaturists, Illuminators, Calligraphers and Copyists*, 2 (New York: Burt Franklin, 1958), 80.

73. "Ordinat et vult minister et provinciale capitulum, quod lectores iuxta statutum capituli generalis suas ordinarie continent lectiones, et libros inceptos perficiant fideliter, sicut possunt. Quod si contrarium fecerint, priventur socio, et vadant continue ad officium, et nihilominus provinciali capitulo accusentur." "Statuta Provincialia Provinciae Franciae et Marchiae Tervisinae," 464.

74. "Item Minister generalis imponit ministris provincialibus, quod non permittant multiplicari Summam fratris Thome nisi apud lectores rationabiliter intelligentes, et hoc non nisi cum declarationibus fratris Wilhelmi de Mara, non in marginibus positis sed in quaternis." "Definitiones Capituli Generalis Argentinae celebrati anno 1282," ed. G. Fussenberger, *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 26 (1933): 139.

75. Bouveret, *Colophons*, 1, 225, No. 1803.

Although evidence for the copying of books in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is scarce, for the fifteenth century, as a result of a renewed practice of composing colophons, Franciscan scribes left written names frequently on the manuscripts.<sup>76</sup> For the period of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries I have been able to find the names of ninety Franciscan friars who were engaged in copying books for themselves or for a superior.<sup>77</sup>

In some exceptional cases, Franciscans acquired books through papal initiative. For example, in 1239 Pope Gregory IX sent an edict to the archbishops of France, England, Aragon, Navarre, Castille, and Portugal asking them to seize the books of Jews and Jewish books in the hands of clerics and lay people and place them in the convents of Franciscans and Dominicans.<sup>78</sup> Although the edict seems to have been directed rather towards the religious books of Jews, no doubt any other books of scholarly value were also captured.

Another similar occasion of papal assistance took place in 1249, when Pope Innocent IV asked the monks of S. Maria de Capitolio to hand over the monastery to Franciscans, together with the books inside.<sup>79</sup> This must not have been a joyful event for the monks, and some monks apparently resented such pre-emptory behaviour of the popes. In 1256, Pope Alexander IV asked the Benedictines to give the Church of S. Maria Maggiore in Tiburtina, Rome, to the Franciscans.<sup>80</sup> However, the Benedictine monks took away books and ornaments of the church, which the pope, in an edict in 1258, asked them to return to the friars within fifteen days under the threat of excommunication.<sup>81</sup>

### Conclusions

What is striking in the picture described above is first of all that, contrary to general belief, medieval Franciscans not only collected and preserved books communally but also often individually. This was realised through the alms given to them and through the donors. Although constitutionally friars did not have the *dominium* of these books, they nevertheless sold, exchanged, or mortgaged them. Hence, the border between use and ownership practically disappeared in the handling of books. The permission of this private use led to the practices like renting a book from the convent library for life, which obviously prevented poorer friars from having access to books.

A second characteristic of Franciscan book acquisition seems to have been the great eagerness accompanying it. Many Franciscan friars were devoted to

76. For a more detailed study of colophons and their use, see A. Derolez, "Pourquoi les copistes signaient-ils leurs manuscrits," in *Scribi e Colofoni*, ed. E. Condello and G. De Gregorio, *Atti del seminario di Erice X Colloquio del Comité international de paléographie latine (23–28 Ottobre 1993)* (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi Sull'Alto Medioevo, 1995).

77. In relation to a study on the Franciscan colophons, I have gone through all six volumes of Bouveret's work on colophons and noted down the names of the Franciscan scribes. The results of this study will be published soon.

78. *Bullarium Franciscanum, Romanorum Pontificum, Constitutiones, Epistolae ac Diplomata continens Tribus Ordinis S. P. N. Francisci spectantia*, ed. H. Sbaralea, 1 (Rome, 1759–1768), 268–9, No. 94–5.

79. *Bullarium Franciscanum*, 1, 530–1, No. 304.

80. *Bullarium Franciscanum*, 2, 129, No. 184.

81. *Bullarium Franciscanum*, 2, 315, No. 459.

the study and teaching of theology, and consequently sought and collected books. However, there is enough evidence to think that some friars collected books as a means of financial investment. The statutes of the order were directed at preventing the abuses that arose from this eagerness. Nevertheless, the trade in books among the friars or with laymen in the cities, which exhibited friars as merchants to the outside world, was clearly conceived by the Spirituals as a violation of the Franciscan way of life and of the essential ideals of poverty, peace, and humility. It seems to be the prevalence of these abuses and violations that embittered the Spiritual Franciscans like Angelo Clareno and Ubertino Casale. Their dissent was formed around these, rather than around a wholesale rejection of intellectual activities or book acquisition.