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A MYSTERIOUS IMPRINT, NARRATING THE STORY OF A LOST RELIC

No. 4620

FREMPERGER, Thomas. *Historia translationis tunicae Jesu Christi*. Cologne: Ludwig von Renchen, 1500.

ONLY ANTIQUARIAN EDITION. A strange work—part legend, part memoir—that narrates the history of a splendid Christian relic. The book is materially odd as well. It is undated, but with a misleading date (1474) in the last sentence. It was printed with a mixture of Dutch and German types, possibly by someone other than the printer named in the colophon. It is illustrated by five woodcuts (one repeated), certainly cut for this specific work, all but one of which were based on famous engravings. And it was printed on paper manufactured in the Low Countries.

In 1474, Thomas Fremperger, chaplain and physician at the court of Frederick III, traveled to Cologne with the Emperor and his fifteen-year-old son, the future Maximilian I. While in the city, they visited the Convent of the Magdalens of the White Sisters, a Dominican monastery founded in 1229, where was held a fabulous relic: the Christ child's blue tunic, with the left sleeve removed. In our short book, Fremperger recounts the legend and history of the tunic, beginning in the middle of the 13th century, when the Hungarian queen Mária Laszkarisz's court chaplain began praying fervently for a vision of Christ. God appeared to the chaplain, and offered him a choice: he may see Christ in his suffering, or Christ as a child. Unwilling to bear the pain of seeing the Savior on the cross, the chaplain chose to see Christ as a child, who appeared in a great light, dressed in a blue silk tunic. Christ vanished, but the tunic remained. The Chaplain gave the holy relic to his Queen, who sealed it in a gilded coffret. In 1262, a soldier in the service of the Teutonic Knights of Jerusalem, who'd fought for the Hungarian king in their war against the Tartars (Fremperger erroneously referred to them as Turks), asked the aging queen for this tunic in exchange for his services, so that he could give it to a nun residing in the monastery of the Magdalens of the White Sisters in Cologne. The queen agreed, but kept the left sleeve, which became a prized relic at the Dominican Convent on Margaret Island in Budapest. The tunic itself traveled to Cologne and was given to the nun, but she soon died with her secret, and the tunic, in its splendid coffret, was forgotten for a century and a half. On 12 June 1412, a group of

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Hungarian pilgrims on their way to Aachen stopped at the Cologne convent, and asked to see the tunic; the sisters were surprised, having no knowledge of it. The pilgrims said it had but one sleeve, and was stored in a beautiful gilt box. The sisters found it, and it was placed in a reliquary in the convent for all to see. Fremperger concludes the legend of the tunic with the story of the Emperor, the archduke Maximilian, and royal entourage viewing the tunic in the convent of the Weißen Frauen in Cologne in 1474. The tunic was lost when the convent was dissolved in 1802.

Two manuscripts of the text exist; one is perhaps a Fremperger autograph, with colored drawings of the tunic. The tense of the narrative suggests that Fremperger wrote it sometime shortly after 1474, which date occurs in the last sentence of the text. A number of very competent early bibliographers of incunabula (including Hain and Copinger) erroneously interpreted this as the date of the imprint. But the BMC, and independently, Voullième, assign a date of "after 1500," based on type analysis, asserting that some of the characters in the title fount are of Dutch origin, c1500. (GW conjectures *um 1500?*; Schüling c1505, without authority.) A pot watermark in the paper stock is clearly of Low-Country origin (most closely related to WILC 58380: Antwerp, c1496). Adding to this stewpot of biblio-facts is a note in TW that suggests some of the printer Ludwig von Renchen's assigned works may have actually have been printed by Ulrich Geyswinz of Heidelberg. Most of von Renchen's 89 imprints are before 1495; only a handful of undated works are assigned by GW and other authorities as 1500 or later. We note with extreme interest that in 1486, Pope Innocent VIII restricted printing of "heretical" books in the HRE with his bull *Inter multiplices nostrae sollicitudinis curas contra impressores librorum reprobatorum*—targeting Cologne in particular—and printing activity there slowed. But in 1501, 14 Cologne printers (Ludwig von Renchen possibly, but not certainly, among them) challenged this directive in court. The outcome of this suit is unknown. Was Fremperger's text considered heretical in these salient years? Why is the paper stock, and the title fount, of Low-Country origin? Was it printed in 1501, after the Cologne printers' lawsuit, suggesting the suit was successful?

The designer and engraver of the five woodcuts are not known. The Virgin and Child on the title was certainly based on Martin Schongauer's "The Small Madonna and Child," (c1480), and Christ as Savior of the World, also on title (and repeated verso), is based on Schongauer's "Das segnende Christuskind" (c1470-90). The third woodcut on title, illustrating angels introducing the one-sleeved tunic to the sublunary world, has no obviously identifiable source, but its style (particularly in the modeling of the angels' garments) is consonant with the other two title cuts. The final woodcut, of "Hairy" Mary Magdalene's Assumption by four angels (verso of the last leaf), seems to have been inspired by Michael Wolgemut's cut for the Nuremberg Chronicle, f.CVIII (1493).

Tipped to the lower pastedown is H. P. Kraus's early 1980's typewritten and xeroxed description of the book. In the corner of the pastedown is a cataloguer's penciled note: "1/9 12995 OOB." In 1982 a copy of Fremperger's book was bound as the first work in a

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Sammelband with eight other early 16th-century works, and sold at Sotheby Parke Bernet as part of the the property of German Mailhos and Johana Auersperg de Maihos, of Montevideo, Uruguay, for an unknown amount. The "1/9" in Kraus's penciled note suggest this copy of Fremperger is from that *Sammelband*.

The *Historia translationis tunicae* was very likely produced as a souvenir for sale to pilgrims visiting the convent of the Weißen Frauen in Cologne at the end of the 15th century. The unusual book demands study by incunabulists, historians of Christian relics, and scholars of book censorship in the early letterpress era. One copy located in US libraries (Princeton; the Goldwater copy, lacking title).

Quarto, 194 x 143 x 4 mm (binding), 191 x 141 x 1 mm (text block). π4, [8] pp. Modern drab boards, titled on spine. *Interior*: good antiquarian condition.

Provenance: Senhor German Mailhos and Senhora Johana Auersperg de Maihos, of Montevideo, Uruguay (the first work in a *Sammelband* with eight other early 16th-c works), sold Sotheby Park Bernet 14 June 1982; in the stock of H. P., Kraus later that year. Apparently offered in a retail catalogue by Konstantinopel Books in 2020.

GW 10324; ISTC if00309000; Goff F309. Nelson, "The Fifth Lateran Council and Preventive Censorship of Printed Books," *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. Classe di Lettere e Filosofia*, Series 5, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 67-104; Schüling, *Die Inkunabeln der Universitätsbibliothek Gießen*, Universitätsbibliothek Gießen 1966, introduction and *passim*; Schramm, *Der Bilderschmuck der Frühdrucke VIII*: 26 & illus. 47; W. Salgó Ágnes, [*Modern translation of Fremperger into Hungarian, with introductory essay*], Budapest: Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, 2007; Potthast, *Bibliotheca historica medii ævi* I: 616; Sajó Géza-Soltész Zoltán: *Catalogus incunabulorum quae in bibliothecis publicis Hungariæ asservantur*, Vol. 1., Budapest: 1970, no. 1360; Simon, Andre, "L'ordre des Penitentes de Ste. Marie-Madeleine en Allemagne au 13e siecle." [Dissertation] Fribourg: 1918. On the manuscript tradition of Fremperger's text, see: Köln, Hist. Archiv der Stadt, Best. 7020 (W*) 128, and Best. 7050 (Hss.-Fragm.) A 75. Full references on request.

ILLUSTRATIONS BELOW:

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15
Historia translationis Tunice Jesu Christi de hū
garia ad inclitā civitatē Coloniensem ad mo
nasteriū Albarum dominarum ubi tā a' incous
q̄ extraneis incredibili honore veneratur.



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Omnibus et singulis xpifide

libus presentibus et futuris hanc presentem paginam inspecturis graciosè innorescat. Quoniam altissimè benignissimusq; saluator noster dominus Ihesus xps non modica solationis iocunditate. speciali diuini luminis irradiatione miro modo cū suis et in suis amabiliter esse solet fauorose

Hat enim quidam deuotus ac multum religiosus presbiter in Hungaria Capellanus cuiusdā Illustrissime Regine Hungarie Qui dicitur presbiter. xxxiiij. annis absq; esu carnum fecit ieiunasse perseveranter. plerisq; vicibus fideliter ac deuote in suis orationib; prostratus orans concupiscendo videre dñm Ihesum christum sicut ipse in mundo humaniter in vita sua sanctissima fore consueuerat. Tandem diuinitus tali deuoto viro omnne bonum desideranti. in quadam sua nocturnali visio ne pie ac consolanter inuestigatum erat. Vtrum saluatorem suum in puericie aut passionis sue apparatu vellet intueri. Qui respondit. qd desideraret et vellet eum videre in statu suo puerili. Vnde insuper idem religiosus presbiter nō modico diuine cōsolationis rore replet; ac mystico spiramine accensus. quasi nō valens spiritū suum apli; p̄ amoris dulcedine in cōsum erga saluatorem suum ferre Tunicam de serico blaues puerilem fieri fecit. et eandē tunicā tpe celebrationis sue misse super altare posuit. sicut ei iussum fuerat per diuinan reuelationem. Elevationē corporis a sanguinis Ihesu Christi facta. Saluator noster in apparatu puerili dicta Tunicā induit. dco sacerdoti apparuit.

Qua propter idē presbiter visione hmoi exhalatus
in celebratione missae moram fecit diuinam in pūta
Regine Hungarie quasi ad tres horas. Sicqz domi
na Regina Hungarie de mora sua ammirata que
sunt ab eodem diligenter et affectuose quare celebra
tionem hmoi pro tunc plus p̄ alio tempore protrauisset.
Celebratione completa vocauit ad se Regina presar
tum sacerdotem cupiens inuestigare de mora celebra
tionis et de visione. Cum autem dno Ihesu compla
cunt ab oculis sacerdotis emanuit. et Tunicam blauer
coloris in altari sacerdoti reliquit et consolationis cau
sa dimisit. Qui sacerdos satis motus propter Regine
preces instantes. eidem Regine licet reuolvens secreta
sua hmoi reuelauit. Hec enī ab ipso Regina audita
eidem sacerdoti instantius ad hec pro eadem Tunica
supplicauit. et suis precibus multisqz per ipsius sa
cerdotis traditionem et assignationē dictam Tunicā
presata Regina fuerat adepta et consecuta. Deinde
quibusdam annis reuoluit. Erat quidā dominus
et frater honestus valde et religiosus ex diuitis hospita
lis beate Marie huiusmodi Hierosolomitā. ha
bens sororem virginem claustralem monasterij brē
Marie magdalene ad Albas dominas infra Ciuita
tem sanctā Coloniē. Qui dicitur honestus dominus
Comendator venerat cū magno exercitu ex Pūssia
in auxilium Regi Hungarie ad debellandum pesti
dos Turcos. Cum ille dominus Comendator obui
misset victoriam de inimicis. voluit Rex Hungarie
eadem Comendatori mercedem laborum suorum red
dere. vtz Aurum argentum et alia munera pretiosa.
Quibus omnibus a dicto domino Comendatore spie

ris nil neqz in pecunijs neqz in elemosijs habere voluit
a Rege. sed magno cordis affectu postulauit a Re
gia maiestate sibi illam domini nostri Ihesu Christi
datam Tunicam quam Regina cum suis reliquijs ha
beret ad conditam. Tunc Rex cum multis precibus
a Regina impetrauit ac postulauit illam Tunicam
Ihesu Christi quam apud se haberet cū suis reliquijs de
modijs. Et deo omnipotenti disponente et Regina sa
niente et amnente qd postulauerat Rex Hungarie
impetrauit ad laudem dei et honorem a sua vore.
Hec tamen eiusdem Tunicam manca sinistram ad
perpetuam huius rei memoriam. Quam Tunicam
idem dominus Comendator vltimus sorori sue pre
scripse moniali in monasterio presato dedit. et sub bo
na fide comendauit ac in scēno deaurato quinqz se
ria bene munito plicatam imponi fecit assignant et
cum literis suam sororem adiret. vt nulli homini
neqz tunicam neqz miraculum manifestaret. quoad
vix ille venit ad presatam virginem sororem suā.
Sed deo volenti cuius conditione cuncta posita sunt
idem dominus Comendator diem suum clausit exre
mum anteqz ad patriam suam rediret. Denota vero
virgo summo desiderio mandatum fratris implere
cupiens. posuit seruum cū Tunica et alijs reliquijs
in capillam bene munitam et nulli homini illud indi
cauit. Sed deo aucta cognoscenti anteqz frant dis
ponente eadem virgo etiam migravit a seculo in tra
centimum suum quem deus et construerat. Et sic in
eodem scēno ante eius reuelationem. Et quinquā
ginta annis pro alijs reliquijs sanctis Tunica condit
sa p̄manet. Postea autem Anno dñi. M. cccc. vij.

venit quidam peregrini de Hungaria tempore septem
tunice visitationis beate Marie Aquei. cum magna
multitudine instanter postulati ipsi ostendi Tunica
Ihesu abscondita. v. g. in monasterio sancte Marie magdale
ne abscondita. Allegati ipsi ex fama et speciali mun
divine inspirationis eis revelati fuisse. q. in eodem mo
nasterio Tunica ferrea blance coloris sinistra manica
carante pro interseguo. ut ipsi assererunt recodita esse
Que quide manica sinistra eius de Tunice. in quoda
clausro beate Margarete in Hungaria infra insu
lam supra Danubium prope Budam devote et reu
erenter coleretur. petieruntq. instanter ipsas virgines
dicti monasterij quatenus eis hinc Tunica monstrare
dignarentur. dicentes semilarem? ab ecclesia recessi
ros nisi prius hinc Tunica vidissent ibidem rece
dit. in. Quibus ita diligenter scrutantibus et perenti
bus ut promittitur. sepelire virgines de eadem tuni
ca penitus ignare captas in earum ecclesia dicta posi
tas in quibus reliquias esse noverant aperiebant Tu
nicam vero non reppererunt. Hungaris em recedere
nolentibus nisi Tunica audita prius visa. Apertebat
capsula una quinq. feris solidis munita. in qua. Tun
icam hinc plicatam ac in sericeo auro locata invenie
tes. dictis peregrinis ad eorum vota (deo grae agen)
publice demonstrarunt. Videntes igitur dicti pere
grini ipsam Tunica multum gauisi laudarunt dnm
deum cum in silo dicentes quia verax est in sermone
bus suis at. Sicq. prefata Tunica primo inventa est
et ostensa. que non solum ab Hungaria et in colio Ci
uitatis Coloniensis sed etiam a diversis diversarum par
tium peregrinis Coloniensis ad dictum monasterium con

venitibus magna devotione veneratur. Ad laudem
et honorem omnipotentis dei semper gloriosi.

Nec autem revelatio seu inuenio Tunice pueri
Ihesu per revelationem divinam et internam inspi
rationem dnm nostri Ihesu Christi devotis peregrinis
in Hungaria positus miraculose mani estata. facta
est Anno dmi. M. cccc. vij. vicesima die mensis Junij
In illo tempore dicta tunica in maiori reverentia no
olum ab Hungaris sed etiam ab incolis Coloniensis.
et aliarum nationum peregrinis cum devotione visitata
est et indices magis ac magis visitatur cum devotione.

Go Thomas Fremperger. Sacularis artium
et Medicane tunc temporis Capellanus Il
lustrissimi principis et dmi domini Maximi
liani ducis Austrie Stirie Carinthie proficis me
vidisse manica sinistra hinc tunice Iesu que
est recodita in monasterio sancte Marie magdale
ne ordinis Canonicorum regularium ad Albas domi
nari Coloniensis tempore Regis Ladislai in Ciuitate
Buda que dicitur insula in monasterio beate vir
ginis Margarete. Ego et q. plures alij qui viderunt
et qui etiam presentes fuerunt in Colonia cum serenissi
mo Imperatore Frederico et Illustrissimo Maximi
liano eius filio Anno. M. cccc. lxxvij

Umpressum Coloniensis per Lodovicum Kantsen

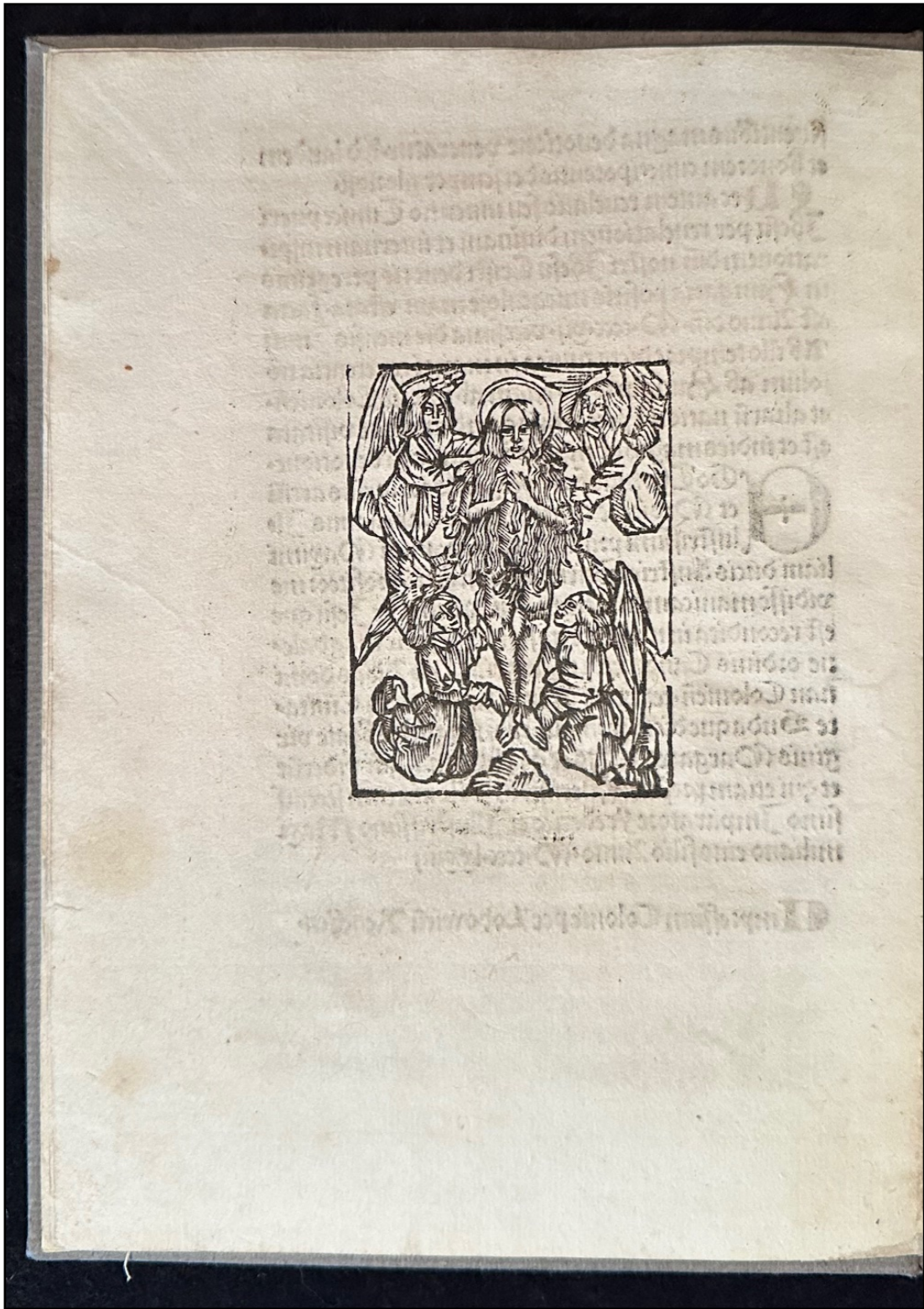
te Buda que dicitur insula in monasterio Beate vir-
ginis Margarete. Ego et q̄z plures alij qui viderunt
et qui etiam presentes fuerunt in Colonia cum serenis-
simo Imperatore Frederico et Illustrissimo Maxi-
miliano eius filio Anno. M. cccc. lxxiiij

Umpressum Colonie per Lodovicū Kenchen.

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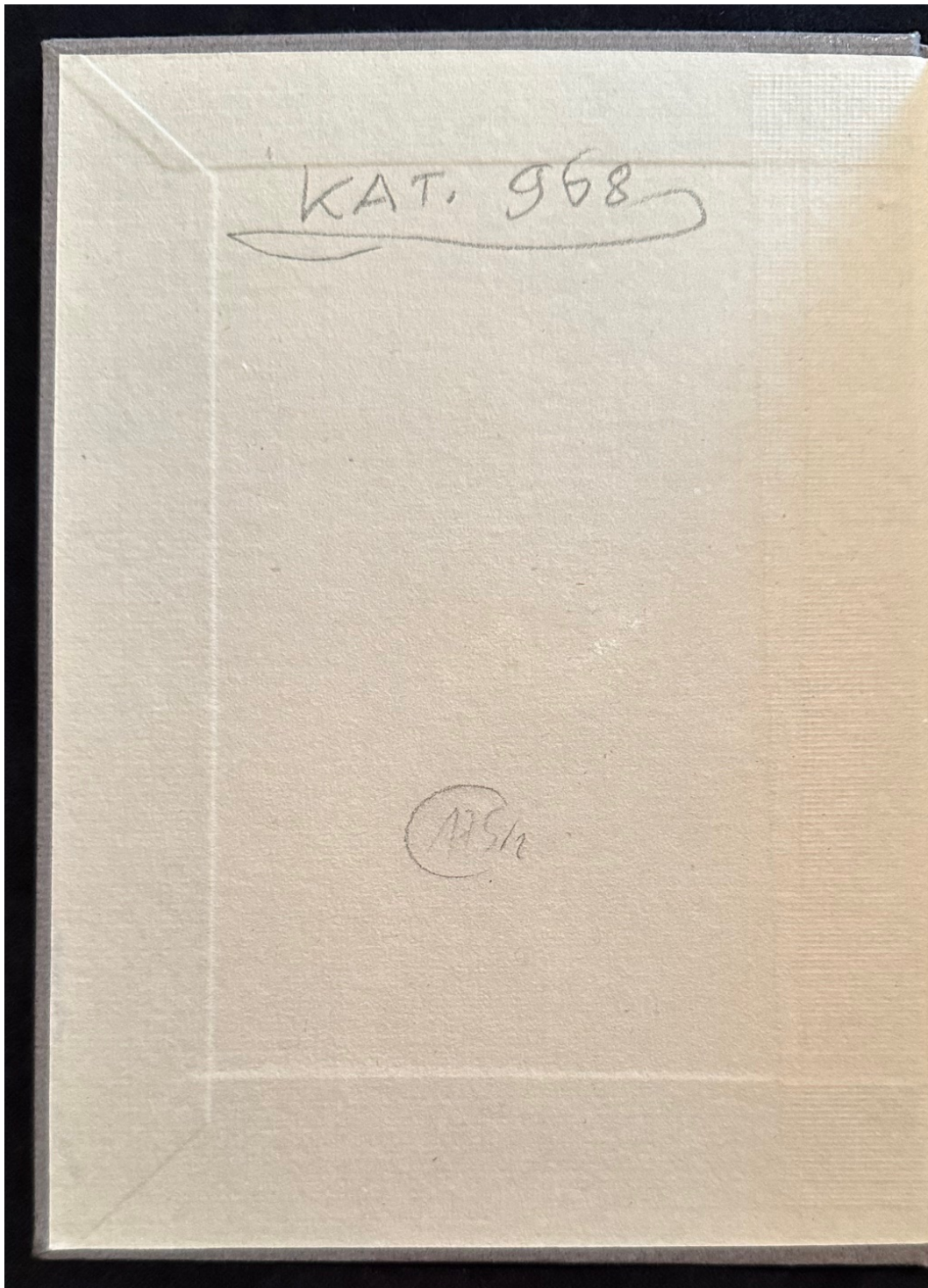
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Fremperger, Thomas. *Historia translationis tunicae Jesu Christi de Hu[n]garia ad inclita[m] Civitate[m] Coloniensem...*

Cologne, Ludwig von Renchem, (after 1500?).

Gothic type. 31 lines. [4]ff. Title-page woodcut of Virgin and Child; to the right the Christ Child, wearing a little open shirt, blesses the world; overhead, two angels carry the holy tunic. The cut of the Christ Child is repeated overleaf. On the last page four angels bear St. Madeleine up to heaven. 4to. Modern boards.

First edition. The BMC assigns the work to the post-incunabular period on the basis of the types and Voullieme states that it is not before 1500. Fremperger was chaplain to Maximilian of Austria and he relates how the Tunic of the Child Jesus was brought from Hungary to Cologne. A very devout priest prayed for a vision of Jesus. After many years his prayer was granted and the Christ Child appeared to him wearing a white silk tunic, which was left on the altar after the vision disappeared. The tunic was given to the Queen of Hungary, but she relinquished it to a certain Prussian lord in payment for his services in defeating the Turks. This same lord sent it to his sister in a convent of St. Mary Magdalene near Cologne where it lay hidden for many years. Finally it was sought out by a group of Hungarian pilgrims, who had received divine intimation as to its whereabouts and many of the faithful came to Cologne to venerate it. Fremperger declares that he saw in in that city in the company of the Emperor Frederick and his son, Maximilian.

Hc 7359=H 8721*; BMC I, 269; Goff F-309; Voullieme 428; Schreiber 4064.

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