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## Codex: Sarzana Introduction

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# CODEX SARZANA

Transcribed and edited  
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The document called Codex Sarzana contains the earliest known version of the Common Rules and the Constitutions of the Congregation of the Mission, dated as early as 1653. These documents were unknown to the Congregation until their discovery by Father Angelo Coppo, C.M. He discovered them by chance in the archives of the house at Sarzana (now closed), and for some years he studied the text and published brief excerpts <sup>(i)</sup>. Coppo also served as the editor of *Vincentiana*, and probably transferred the manuscript to the archives of the Congregation of the Mission in Rome, where it remains today. He died 9 August 1973. Since that time, Codex Sarzana has remained unexamined. The purpose of this publication is to make this important Vincentian document available to the members of the Congregation in an accurate transcription for their further study.

In this preliminary edition, it does not appear necessary to repeat the detailed studies which Coppo did on the background and history of the text. The manuscript is itself a transcription of an authenticated copy of an early version of the Rules and Constitutions. It concludes with the authentication by two notaries, and exhaustive study of the signatures of the notaries along with analysis of the paper and watermarks removes any doubt about the nature of the document.

Comparing the title of Codex Sarzana <sup>(ii)</sup> with the printed edition of the Common Rules is instructive. This comparison shows how Saint Vincent's publication of the CR alone sufficed, in his mind, to fill the lack of more orderly constitutions for the Congregation of the Mission. The CS reads: "Regulae Communes, et Constit[utio]nes Congregationis Missionis;" and CR: "Regulae seu Constitutiones communes Congregationis Missionis." The title of CS is in some ways more accurate than that of CR, since CS contains

a version both of the Common Rules and of the Constitutions (along with other materials.) The CR, by contrast, contains only the Common Rules, which it calls "Common Constitutions."

Codex Sarzana did not simply come out of nowhere in 1655. Rather, it was connected with the previous experience of the Congregation, as the following four points will show. Yet, in the cases noted below, the rules, constitutions and customs were not published in the Founder's lifetime, and have remained largely unpublished, at least in the version in which Vincent drafted them.

In the first place, the Common Rules speak of other rules and constitutions. See for example, CR 7:1: "the special rules dealing with decorum," ("regulae particulares modestiae.") CR 10:11, mentions the formulary for giving an account of one's conscience ("juxta formulam in Congregatione tradi solitam"), and the customary order of the day. Even more, CR 12:14 mentions particular (speciales) rules for individual offices.

In the second place, we read occasional observations which Saint Vincent himself made in his letters about the development of other rules. Among the most interesting is letter 722, to Bernard Codoing, 12 August 1644: "I shall send you a copy of the offices, especially that of the General. All of that will have to be summarized and only the sense of it retained." On 11 November of the same year, Vincent wrote to Jean Dehorgny (letter 731): "We are trying to have our common rules approved here, as well as those for the general, for elections, and for the visitor." In letter 824, 22 July 1646 to Antoine Portail, Vincent agrees with the latter's suggestions about rules for the local superior. The following letter, 825, written to Jean Bourdet the same day, includes lengthy rules on how to make a visitation (iii). All these indications—and there are surely many others—show the founder's concern about the full range of rules and constitutions.

A comparison between CR and CS shows that the title of CR, "Regulae seu Constitutiones," does not appear in CS, either as its title, or in the several places corresponding to CR (iv). This probably means that Saint Vincent himself, or someone who aided him in the editorial task, reviewed the material in CR carefully when it was decided not to publish the Constitutions. As a result, he then used the expression from the title page throughout the CR: "Rules

or Constitutions." The constitutions themselves were not published in their entirety until after the French Revolution (v). It is clear from the letters cited above that Vincent was interested in the issue of constitutions, and made provisions for them (vi).

In the third place, a source for examination of the materials in CS is the text submitted for revision by the General Assembly of 1668 (vii). Unfortunately for our research, the text cited there does not agree fully with CS. Only certain expressions occur in both versions. Questions of authorship and editing between the dates 1653 for CS and 1668 for the Assembly arise because of this lack of correspondence.

In the fourth place, we may ask whether the version of the Common Rules in CS is the same as the original version of CR published by Saint Vincent in 1655? (viii). Did he really withdraw them because of printers' errors, or were they actually meant to be improved? On the basis of the existence of the text of CS, copied in 1655, we may conclude that his intention was to improve further at least the rules. In any case, we will probably never know, since no copies of the 1655 edition have come down to us.

The remaining question deals with the authorship of CS: Who wrote these rules and constitutions? Only further study and fortunate discoveries could answer the question with more authority. Yet it appears that Saint Vincent himself could be called the author, at least indirectly. In other words, if he did not do the actual writing, he at least was involved in the preliminary ideas and in the editorial presentation of the text. The Assembly of 1651 reviewed the early unpublished rules. As to the rest of the material, Vincent's role is less certain. It is nevertheless easy to imagine that he drafted much of this material, and even perhaps sent it around to other confreres whom he trusted to obtain their views. More study of the text and its interests would help clarify this question.

Since Codex Sarzana has never before been published in its entirety, this publication hopes to provide the text to the Congregation in an accurate printed form, for it to become the basis for further studies and possible translations. It is hoped that this edition will make even more of Saint Vincent's work better known.

The editor wishes to express his thanks to Father Luis Huerga, C.M., for his help in making corrections and major revisions in the transcription of the text. Any faults are those of the editor, however. Issues such as punctuation, the use of capital letters and spelling conventions occupied a large portion of editorial time and transatlantic consultation. The issues and our solutions are as follows.

(1) *Individual lines*: each line of the transcribed text represents the text in the original, except where the line is too long for the margins on the printed page; in that case, the original line continues on the following line, towards the right margin.

(2) *Capitals*: many of the letters are not evidently capitals or lower-case letters. The words have been transcribed as accurately as possible, despite the confusion and lack of consistency of the original copyist.

(3) *Punctuation*: This is not our modern style, nor is punctuation done consistently. Our solution was to give the punctuation occurring in the text as it was, rarely adding or subtracting items as it appeared necessary for easier reading.

(4) *Spelling*: This was not consistent either, as the following examples will show. *Adibatur/adhibeatur; adnotare/annotare; caelestis/coelestis; orificium/orifitium; scholasticos/scolasticos; seculare/saeculare; tintinabulum/tintinnabulum*. Our solution was to present the spelling as it was, without correction. On the few occasions where obvious errors appear, we used *[sic]*.

(5) *Abbreviations*: where abbreviations occur, these have been spelled in full, with the added letters marked with brackets, as "Ap[osto]lica. "

(6) *Other issues*: the long form of the letter "i" ("j") has been included to reflect the handwriting of the manuscript; "u" has

always replaced "v." Accent marks appear occasionally in the manuscript, but these have been omitted entirely in this publication because of their inconsistent use by the copyist.

Other special editorial indications have been added to the text as follows.

(1) *Square brackets* have been used, as mentioned above, to fill out abbreviations. Also, they have been used to mark doubtful readings, and also the indication "[sic]" for errors.

(2) *Curly brackets* have been employed to mark original words which were later corrected or blotted out. If they are still visible they are spelled in full within the brackets; if not, they are marked with dashes, as "{...}"

(3) *Bars* mark added text, usually given between the lines, or after a correction, as "l...l"

(4) *Back slashes* have been used to mark the syllables or full words at the end of a page to simplify reading the opening words at the top of the following page, as "/.../"

(5) *Underscoring* appears occasionally for words or entire lines in the original. This has not been reproduced in this edition, since it was the work of a later scribe.

(6) *Marginal numerals* were, however, used by this scribe. These have been transcribed as: "+3+."

(7) *Page numbering* of the manuscript is somewhat confused. Almost every page bears two numbers. These appear together joined by a hyphen in this edition, although the numerals are often on different margins of the same page in the original.

(8) *Parentheses* appear in the original manuscript, and have been copied as they were written. They are not used for any other editorial purposes in the transcription.

Lastly, an outline of the contents is given here to simplify reading and study of CS.

	Pages
I. Regulae Communes .....	1-1
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IV. Regulae Superioris Generalis .....	46-47
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- i Angelo Coppo, "La prima stesura delle Regole e Costituzioni della Congregazione della Missione in un inedito manoscritto del 1655," Rome: Edizioni Vincenziane, 1957. (=Supplement to *Annali della missione*, 1957.) Also notices in *Vincentiana* 6, 7-8 (1957), pp. 62, 73-74; 16 (1972) pp. 115-24.
- ii Abbreviated CS; Common Rules abbreviated CR.
- iii Letter 772: Coste, *CED* 2:475; letter 731, *CED* 2:488; letter 824, *CED* 2:613; letter 825, *CED* 2:615-18.
- iv See CR 2:3; 2:11; 2:12; 8:12; 9:8; 12:1; 12:11; 12:13; 12:14.
- v *Collectio Bullarum, Constitutionum ac Decretorum quae Congregationis Administrationem spectant*. [Paris] 1847. Since this edition was intended for a specialized audience, not set in type but merely handwritten. The "Constitutiones Selectae," a selection of 20 of the most important items in the Constitutions, were approved by Clement X in 1669, and were printed for general use in *Acta Apostolica. Bullae, brevia et rescripta in gratiam Congregationis Missionis*. Paris: Chamerot, 1876.
- vi *Recueil des principales circulaires des supérieurs généraux de la Congrégation de la Mission*. Vol. I. Paris: Chamerot, 1877, p. 3
- vii See *Collectio Completa Decretorum Conventuum Generalium Congregationis Missionis*. Paris: Pillet et Dumoulin, 1882; pp. 27-38.
- viii Letter to Charles Ozenne, 12 March 1655; Coste *CED* 5:337.
- ix Coste, *CED* 13:283-86.