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GUILLAUME DE NANGIS, *Chronique amplifiée des rois de France* (Amplified Chronicle of the Kings of France)

In French, manuscript on paper
France, c. 1450-1500

i (parchment) + 403 folios on paper (Catherine Wheel with crank on one side and small bird standing in profile(?) on other side, unidentified in Briquet, Gravell, Bernstein, or Piccard), medieval Roman numeral foliation in very light brown ink at upper recto margin of ff. 8-230, modern foliation in pencil in top recto corner, incomplete at end (*i*¹⁶ *ii*¹⁸ *iii*^{xvii} *xviii*¹⁶ [-2, lacking in positions 1 and 16, with text loss] *xix*-*xxiv*¹⁶ *xxv*¹⁶ [+3 loose singletons at front], lacking unknown number of quires at back), vertical catchwords inner bottom margin on all quires except *xviii* and *xxv*, leaf signatures outer bottom edge of recto on first half of all quires, frame ruled in plummet (justification 180 x 130-140 mm.), written by a single scribe in an expert Bâtarde script in 32 long lines, yellow wash on majuscules, occasional red line-fillers, red paraps marking breaks in text and inset rubrics at chapter incipits, ascenders and descenders often extended into top and bottom margins with yellow wash and flourishing (e.g. ff. 146v-147, faces on ff. 145v and 160), red two-line initials, minor worming throughout but concentrate at front and back, minor flecking and staining including fingerprints throughout with some larger stains, limited folding and tears at folio corners and edges, ff. 66 almost loose, ff. 385-387 loose, final quire detached, ink bleed-through resulting in reduced legibility on ff. 196-245 (perhaps 10% text loss). ORIGINAL FRENCH BINDING of cushioned wooden boards cut flush with bookblock, covered with brown leather stamped with four petal flowers and fillets, parchment pastedowns attached but lifting, delicate condition: front board with nearly all leather covering lacking, remnants of two straps with original brass nails, insect damage and bottom corner heavily chipped at spine up to bottom support, spine fully exposed, supports detached at all but top endband and middle support, back board entirely loose, insect damage and chipped top corners, c. 60% of leather cover intact but heavily abraded, top clasp lacking barring one small nail, bottom clasp featuring detailed relief of the standing Agnus Dei with nimbus and holding cross standard. Dimensions 280 x 205 mm.

Guillaume de Nangis, Benedictine monk and librarian at the royal Abby of St.-Denis, was the official chronicler of the kings of France responsible for the "continuations" of the *Grandes Chroniques de France*. Not only does this volume survive as an unrecorded witness to his translation into French of one of the most important medieval French chronicles, it is of extraordinary rarity. The last available copy was on the market in 1909, and it is represented in the United States by a single example. The large-format manuscript is in its original binding. There is no modern edition.

PROVENANCE

1. Copied in the second half of the fifteenth century in France by an experienced and probably professional scribe as indicated by the Bâtarde script featuring documentary-style embellishments. The rapid cursive hand, customarily used for texts in the vernacular, use of paper rather than parchment, simple red initials, and yellow wash on majuscules were economical choices. Nonetheless, the resources required to produce such a long text in a volume of this size would have made it an expensive endeavor, and it was probably made for an unknown person or community of at least modest wealth.

2. Seventeenth-century(?) signatures on the front pastedown read "Acostard" and "Antony [?]", but they are not wholly decipherable, and therefore unidentified. On the parchment flyleaf, written upside-down and diagonally at the bottom are "Gaspard Crescendo" and "Celeste Tinel"; the latter wrote his name twice, and is the likely owner of the monogram of "CST" drawn three times. There appear to be other signatures (or perhaps short notes) on the flyleaf, but they are illegible from intentional erasure.
3. On the verso of the parchment flyleaf is an autograph note by Jean-François Du Guet (1660-1724). It describes the manuscript's contents, attributes it to his library, and is dated February 1703. The text's title, *chronique de Guillaume de nangis moine de saint denys*, and "DuGuet curé de Feurs" are found in the top and bottom margins of f. 1. Du Guet (sometimes 'Duguet') was an Oratorian Doctor of Theology and priest of Feurs, Loire; he is known for composing a history of Feurs (ed. Durand [1880] 2000). Du Guet was the younger brother of Jacques-Joseph Du Guet (1649-1733), a former Oratorian and prolific author on issues surrounding Jansenism, best known for his *Lettres de morale et de piété* (Cognet 1970 [1981]. p. 89).
4. Four French notes by three unknown twentieth-century hands in black ink are inserted on small sheets of paper between ff. 16-17, 58-59, 83-84, and 92-93. They describe: the deeds of Charles Martel (discussed on f. 23v); the Tower of Babylon, Noah's Ark, and Guy of Lusignan, labelled as "l'interès personnel!" (inserted amongst discussion of the Plantagenet/Angevin kings); part of a sermon(?) with agricultural analogies; and a fragment titled "*Témoignages De la Tradition en faveur Du regne de mille ans. St Irénée, Disciple de St Polycarpe qui l'etoit lui méure de St Jean L'Evangeliste*". The final two are in the same elegant hand.

TEXT

ff. 1-8, Table of contents for the *Chronique amplifiée des rois de France*, 295 chapters marking historical events related to the kings of France;

ff. 8-181, *Ci commencent les croniques d'france extraites des croniques de saint denis en france par frere guillaume de nangis ...*, incipit, "Pour ce que moult d'gens et mesmement les haulx hommes et les noubles qui souvent viennent en l'eglise monseigneur saint denis ... [f. 179] "Item sensuit la teneur D'une priere quis di sorent en chantant quant ils se batorent d'leurs scourgees ..."; [f. 180] *Cy parle de la madame Jehanne de Bourgogne Royne de France*, incipit, "En est lan xlix mourut a medame des champs pres de paris ... [f. 181] ...et les contez dartois de boulogne et dannergne et aultres terre plusieurs";

Guillaume de Nangis and anonymous, *Chronique amplifiée des rois de France* (Amplified Chronicle of the Kings of France), no edition (compared for completeness with BnF, MS français 2598).

Beginning mythically with Priam of the Trojans, and continuing more accurately with the Merovingians, Guillaume de Nangis' history of the kings of France reaches to c. 1300. Here, as with other manuscripts of the *Chronique amplifiée*, the text has been extended by anonymous chroniclers of St.-Denis into the fourteenth century. This section continues to 1349, marking the death of Joan II of Navarre, followed by extracts of the rule, in Latin, of the *Flagellatores*

(flagellants) of Bruges and Tournai, and a French song devoted to the Virgin Mary. The Flagellant movement, surfacing in the late thirteenth century, grew exponentially across northern Europe in 1349 in the wake of the initial outbreak of the Black Death. Clement VI condemned them in a papal bull of 1349 and instructed Church leaders to suppress them.

ff. 181-403v, *Comment Raoul caours et plusieurs aultres . . .*, incipit, "L'an mil ccc Cinquante en l'entree Du moys d'aost se combatit . . . [f. 269] *Le mandant que le Roy . . .*, incipit, "Charles fils du Roy de France regent . . ." [f. 403v] . . . "Ensemble lui et le conte de foiz mais certain traictie fut fet entre"//.

Les Grandes chroniques de France, vol. 6, Paris, 1838, pp. 1-476; the text beginning where the *Chronique amplifiée* left off, September 26, 1350 at the coronation of John II (the Good) of France. Now ending abruptly, and it is unclear whether the complete manuscript once continued to 1381 or to 1384 (as discussed below). The scribe has made a misleading error on f. 402v: in the account of the arrest of Hugues Aubriot, the disgraced provost of Paris, the date should read 1380 ("mil iii^c lxxx") but instead reads 1390 ("mil iii^c lxxxx"). The final incomplete annal begins to recount the dispute between the Comte de Foix Gaston Phoebus, and Jean duc de Berry, over the government of Languedoc.

The distinction between the *Chronique amplifiée* and the *Grandes chroniques* – known as the pinnacle of medieval French historiography – is somewhat artificial. The *Chronique amplifiée* was used to extend the *Grandes chroniques* in the fourteenth century, and the *Grandes chroniques* were in turn used to augment the *Chronique amplifiée* (Hindman and Spiegel 1981, p. 383). Thus, although this manuscript shares text with manuscripts of the *Grandes chroniques*, it is still properly identified as a copy of the *Chronique amplifiée*.

Guillaume de Nangis (d. 1300) was librarian and archivist at the Parisian monastery of St.-Denis, where he used the abbey's books to compile several chronicles. St.-Denis had become "the official custodian and interpreter of royal history" (Spiegel 1978, p. 7), since the abbacy of Suger in the second quarter of the twelfth century, and Guillaume became the most important French historian of the thirteenth century. His most popular contribution was the Latin *Chronicon abbreviatum regum Francorum* (Short Chronicle of the Kings of France). Our manuscript contains a French translation of the *Chronicon* made by Guillaume himself for a broader, presumably secular audience, which was expanded by several authors after his death. Because of their "amplification," the textual tradition of this work is split: nine copies of his original *Chronique abrégée* survive, alongside over thirty copies of the expanded *Chronique amplifiée*. The latter group, to which this belongs, is found in five different versions identified by Delisle, which extend to various dates: Group F, reaching to 1384, is the latest recension (Delisle 1873, p. 361). However, several manuscripts contain single-copy expansions into the fifteenth century (Hindman and Spiegel 1981, 383). The present manuscript may belong to Delisle's Group E, ending in 1381, or to Group F.

The *Chronique amplifiée* resembles other contemporary chronicles: it recounts the victories and failures of royalty, intended to edify and entertain, while also legitimatizing the divine right of the French kings by providing the monarchy with a spectacular lineage from ancient times. Many of the surviving manuscripts of this text are richly decorated, commissioned by the elite of fifteenth-century France. There is no scholarly edition of the pre-1350 entries of the

Chronique amplifiée and no early printed editions exist. A Latin edition of the *Chronicon* was published by H. Géraud (Paris, 1843), and two partial French versions by M. Bouquet (Paris, 1811) and F. Guizot (Paris, 1825); however, the French versions are translations from the Latin, not editions using the surviving French manuscripts. Comparison of this manuscript with Paris, BnF, MS français 2598 indicates that its text veers away after 1350 and is instead more consistent with the Paulin Paris edition's final volume of the *Grandes chronique* (1838, vol. 6).

According to a 2013 study by Isabelle Guyot-Bachy, there are 31 whole or partial manuscripts containing the *Chronique amplifiée*; JONAS lists 33. This manuscript is not present on either list. Twenty manuscripts are held at the BnF, and only one – Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery MS W.306, terminating in the year 1285 – is in the United States. No known copies have reached market since the Walters acquisition in 1909 (de Fribois, 2006, p. 76). As witness to one of the most popular and influential medieval chronicles, it deserves further study to determine its place in the tradition of the *Chronique amplifiée des rois de France*.

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