

Writing-Master's Copybook
In Dutch, German, and French, illuminated manuscript on parchment
The Netherlands, 1630 and 1633

ii (paper) + 26 + i (paper) on parchment, modern foliation in pencil bottom outer corner recto, 1-27, with the final flyleaf numbered as f. 27, complete (collation, i² ii² iii-vi⁴ vii⁶), no catchwords or signatures, lines of text are not ruled but red ink is used to frame the text on most folios, with layout of each page determined by design, text written in a variety of calligraphic scripts copied on the recto only (justification 145-130 x 185-167 mm.), pen flourishes and small initials in red, five black or gold initials infilled and on grounds of elaborately scrolled pen-work, fourteen large and elaborate cadel initials of varying sizes, f. 15, very fine drawing of Moses, with full-page frame in gold and black ink (described below), slight hole in cadel initial, f.4, initials slightly damaged (flaking ink), on ff. 8, 12, and 14, initial, f. 11, more extensively damaged, paper flyleaves are stained, parchment leaves with occasional stains and cockling, many initials reinforced on the verso with modern (?) parchment (for example, ff. 1, 2, 4, 5-7, 9-12, and so forth), but overall in very good condition. Original 17th-century brown leather covers in an oblong format elaborately gold-tooled with an outer border of circular filigree ornament, bounded by triple fillets, and a rectangular center panel with a diamond-shaped center piece and filigree border of small circles, laid down on a modern brown leather binding, preserving the original wooden (?) boards, smooth spine, in good condition. Dimensions 148 x 195 mm.

This is a fine example of a writing-master's manuscript copy-book, two of the samples are signed by Pierre loosten en Hanna, and many are dated 1630 and 1633. Included are twenty-six full-page writing samples, copied on the recto only, which display the writing-master's equally virtuosic skill in handling numerous different types of scripts in several languages, as well as elaborate initials and other decorative pen-work. This represents the rare opportunity to acquire a copy-book by an expert scribe and artist who is apparently otherwise undocumented.

PROVENANCE

1. Written and decorated by the writing-master who signs his name "Pierre loosten, 1630" in the roundel of the Lord's Prayer at the top of f. 14, and at the bottom of f. 15, "Escript par moy Pierre loosten en Hanna, Anno domini 1630."

This writing-master and artist has not been identified with any certainty (he is not for example mentioned by Croiset van Uchelen, 1974 or 1984, or in Wurzbach, 1906). There was a "Pieter loosten," who signed the Dordrecht Confession of Faith adopted by a Dutch Mennonite Conference in Haarlem in 1632; Pieter Goos (1616-1675) was a copperplate engraver and map-maker, who contributed a plate to the writing book by Jodocius Hondius, *Theatrum artis scribendis* ..., published in Amsterdam in 1594.

2. Seventeenth-century (?) practice script on f. 26v, inside front cover, and on the flyleaves, with a name on f. 26v, Müller Alzeyya, Palatinus."

3. "Ed. Lang," inside front cover, in pen, nineteenth- or twentieth century.

4. Modern dealers' notes in pencil, inside front cover, "31/72," in pencil, and L226689."

TEXT

f. 1, incipit, "Het is' goet den Heere betrouwen/ Psalm. Cxviii, v. viii.; Salomon dat. vii. Cap, vers ii. Gewaert wyn ghebodt ...";

Begins with a half-page cadel initial, copied in a late gothic bookhand; flourish below the initial with date 12/12 (December 12).

f. 2, Incipit, "Craignons tous nostre Dieu luy portant reuerene ...; Cependant qui Jesus Criste est ...";

Begins with a half-page cadel, initial, copied in a roman script and in a cursive script; flourish below initial, 6/13 (June 13).

f. 3, top margin, Lord's Prayer in Dutch, copied in a tiny script in a circular format, then saying in French, "Fay que ton oeuil tousiours le droit regarde ..." in Italic, and "Faut receuoir la foy de Dieu ..." with two lines in gothic display script, and remainder in a very small version of a gothic cursive;

Begins with half-page cadel, with the date, 1633, 6/13, copied in flourish below the initial.

f. 4, incipit, "O mensch bedencke wol dein ellend ...; Gott ist in Juda ... [Psalm 76:1]";

Begins with a half-page cadel initial, copied in a chancery italic, gothic display script, and a German cursive script.

f. 5, incipit, "Der mensch gehrt hin ausz dieser weldt ...; In alle saken daer yet angelegghen is ...";

Begins with a very large half-page cadel initial; copied in a chancery Italic, gothic display script and a cursive script.

f. 6, incipit, "Das leben thut dem schatten gleichen ...; Kein faus gelewetz ..."

Begins with a half-page cadel initial; text written with three types of script.

f. 7, incipit, "Wie kan der mensch nach hoffart sorgen ...; De Chrestien doit avoir une vie ...";

Begins with elaborate half-page cadel; copied using three types of script.

f. 8, incipit, "Mauuais ne sois, mais bon et debonnaire/ Sy au Seigneur Iesus tu veux complaire"; [below, display script in German:] "Mein hertz dich, tet ein Feines lie./ Ich will singen von einem König meine zün, ge ist ein Grieffel eines guten Schreibers? [Psalm 45:1]";

Begins with a cadel initial, dated 1633; display script is a gothic script, each letter formed by a double line.

f. 9, incipit, "Het best dat ick hebbe ghelesen ...; Keerstich behoort ...";

Begins with cadel initial, dated 1633; copied in three types of script.

f. 10, incipit, "O Seigneur tout puissant qui es la haut es Cieux ...; Ostons nos aureilles ...";

Begins with an initial, infilled and on a square ground filled with pen-work spirals; roman script, and a showy display script using capitals.

f. 11, incipit, "Passer le temps conuent ...; Penser ou sentir dedans soy aucune chose ...ce que tesmoigne bien le poete Ouide."

Similar initial to f. 10; three scripts, Italic, roman capitals, and a version of chancery italic.

f. 12, incipit, "Quand nous auons vescu ...; Qui gardera sa langue ...";

Similar initial to f. 10; three scripts based on italic.

f. 13, incipit, "Godt is mein Schepper, Heer Christus mein ..; Roeyt vvt v sondighe ...";

Similar initial to f. 10; Gothic bookhand, display script, and a gothic cursive.

f. 14, top, Lord's prayer in French, copied in a very tiny hand, and signed and dated by the scribe, "Pierre loosten, 1630," flanked by a text copied in a very small cursive script, bordered in red, and a prayer, copied in a fanciful display in script, incipit, "Seigneur mon Dieu, qui es tout mon bien...";

Initial similar in style to f. 10; below, text in a complicated decorative knot.

f. 15, the Ten Commandments in French.

Ten Commandments copied within two gold double arches, with Moses at the top, and with a border of two ornamental urns and foliage, touched with gold, a peacock, turkey (?), two bees and an owl; signed, "Escript per moy Pierre loosten en Hanna. Anno Domini 1630."

ff. 16, 17, 18, Similar in style to the samples on ff. 2-7, and 9; beginning with large cadel initials, and copied in three types of script; sample on f. 18 is dated 6/15, and includes a circular text copied in a microscopic script.

f. 19, incipit, "Xenocrates iadis tout home admonnes toit ...; Xenocrates philosophe estans par aucuns ..";

Begins with a large cadel initial; three types of script.

f. 20, Saying in French, with text and decorative borders written in one continuous script formed from a line of tiny pleats; the later copy-book by John Stonestreet, c. 1690, includes a sample in this type of script (Whalley and Kaden, 1980, p. 65, no. 110).

f. 21, incipit, "Zerobabel fut vn saint personnage ...; Zachee homme ...:"

Begins with large cadel initial, copied with three types of script; dated, Le 30 Juin anno domini 1633.

f. 22, Full-page sample, copied in a reverse font in white roman letters and capitals on a dark ground; this type of reverse script was featured in a number of writing books, for example, Francisco Lucas, *Arte de escrever*, of 1577 (Whalley and Kaden, 1980, p. 46, no. 76).

f. 23, incipit, "Die heusch is van monde ...; Alle de gene die de manieren van pennen willen leren ... Sy waren gehouden en wel geheert. Daerom salmen die kinderen leeren schryven ende leesen, So sullen sy in Landen ende Aeden willecom wesen";

A direct statement to the writing-master's prospective students, copied in a flowing Italic script, each line beginning with red capitals.

f. 24, incipit, "Vust Gods ende ...; O pennen const hoogh verheuen ...";

Similar in style to f. 23.

f. 25, Elaborate text copied in a decorative knot, bordered by decorative penwork in red, and dated "Anno 1633."

f. 26, Full-page sample, copied in flowing capitals, all formed by two-lines of script, and interlocked to form a complex design, beginning "Lalphabet ..."

This copy-book of a previously unknown writing-master from the Netherlands, who signs his name as Pierre loosten (see Provenance above) includes twenty-six samples of script, most accompanied by decorated penwork initials, copied on the recto only. The copyist shows great mastery of different types of italic script, based on the chancery italic developed by Italian writing-masters, as well as scripts based on gothic bookhands and cursive scripts. The scripts used in his samples, copied in three languages, Dutch, German, and French, vary according to the language used. Fourteen folios include elaborate cadel initials, most of which are accompanied by three types of script (ff. 1, 2-9, 16-19, and 21). He also delights in exhibiting his skills as a calligrapher, sometimes at the expense of legibility. He demonstrates a number of elaborate display scripts, including one written with double-lines, arranged so the letters hang off a decorative horizontal bar that runs through the middle of each line (ff. 3, 8, 13 and 17), very small, almost microscopic scripts, and texts copied within circles, or in patterns of intertwining lines (ff. 14, 15, 18, and 25). His tour-de-force as a scribe and artist is found on f. 15, which includes a very skillful drawing of Moses in pen and ink, accompanied by the Ten Commandments copied in a very small script, enclosed in gold, arched frames, with a beautifully drawn border of flowers, urns, and animals.

Even after the invention of printing in the mid-fifteenth century, the ability to copy-books and documents in a formal script continued to be a valued skill, cultivated and taught by professional writing-masters, both in person, and by means of copy-books and writing manuals that circulated as manuscripts and in printed copies. The two earliest printed examples are Italian, *La Operina* (1522) by Ludovico degli Arrighi, who was employed in the Papal chancery, and Giovanni Antonio Tagliente, *Lo presente libro ...* (1524). Tagliente taught handwriting in the

Venetian chancery. *Ein gute Ordnung ...* by Johann Neudörffer the Elder, published in Nuremberg in 1538 stands at the beginning of a long tradition of German copy-books.

The two most well-known Dutch writing books are Jodocius Hondius (1563-1611), *Theatrum artis scribendum*, published in Amsterdam in 1594, an international anthology of samples by different writing-masters, including Jan van den Velde, Salomon Henrix, Felix van Sambix, and Pieter Goos from the Netherlands, as well as many plates by Hondius himself, and Jan Van den Velde (1568-1623), who published *Spiegel der schrijffkonste (Mirror of the Art of Writing)*, c. 1609. Van den Velde's volume is both a writing manual and a copy-book, with models in many language and different scripts, displaying a virtuosic melding of pen ornamentation and script. Other seventeenth-century Dutch writing-masters including Maria Strick and David Roelands are less often discussed in English-language surveys of writing-books, but deserve to be better known (Becker, 1997, for example includes only seven sixteenth- and seventeenth-century printed writing books from the Netherlands). Their work, part of the blossoming of art and culture of the seventeenth-century Netherlands, forms the immediate context for the copy-book described here.

In general, writing books fall into two categories, manuals that discussed the actual skill associated with writing, from the construction of letter forms, to paper, quills, and ink, and copy-books that supplied writing models to be copied. The manuscript described here is an example of a copy-book. Manuscript copies of these writing books are less well-known and, understandably, much rarer than the printed editions. Some printed copy-books had manuscript samples bound into them, including those of Neudörffer (for a brief discussion of these, see Becker, 1997, no. 49).

As Joyce Irene Whalley has explained, (Whalley, 1980, p. 181), the social status of the writing-master in the seventeenth century was ambiguous. Earlier teachers, especially in Italy, were associated with the Papal Court or other chanceries and enjoyed considerable academic status. By the seventeenth-century, many writing-masters were primarily teachers rather than scholars. Their links with higher learning is exhibited by the use of multiple languages in their copy-books, and a wide variety of texts to exhibit their learning; the unidentified writing master of this manuscript was certainly concerned to exhibit both.

LITERATURE

Anderson, Donald M. *Calligraphy. The Art of Written Forms*, New York, Dover Publications, 1968.

Becker, David. *The Practice of Letters. The Hofer Collection of Writing Manuals 1514-1800*, exh. cat., Cambridge, MA., The Harvard College Library, 1997.

Bonacini, C. *Bibliografia delle arti scritte e della calligrafia*, Bibliotheca bibliografica italica, 5, Florence, 1953.

Croiset van Uchelen, Anthony R. A. "Schreibmeisterbücher," in *Lexikon des gesamten Buchwesens*, 2. Aufl., VI 601-604.

Croiset van Uchelen, Anthony R. A. *Deliciae: over de schrijffkunst van Jan van den Velde aan de hand van een inleiding op Van den Velde*, Haarlem, Enschede, 1984.

Croiset van Uchelen, Anthony R. A. *Nederlandse Schrijfmeesters uit de eventide eeuw: Tentoonstelling 16 Juni tot en Met 19 Augustus 1978*, The Hague, Rijksmuseum Meermanno-Westreenianum, 1978.

Hondius, Jodocus. *Theatrum artis scribendi: varia summorum nostri seculi, artificiam [sic] exemplaria complectens, novem diversis linguis exarata* (Amsterdam, 1594), facsimile edition, Nieuwkoop, Miland, 1969.

La Fontaine Verwey, "The Golden Age of Dutch Calligraphy," in *Miniatures, Script, Collections. Essays Presented to G. I Lieftinck*, ed. J. P. Gumbert and M. J. M. de Haan, *Litterae textuales*, 4, Amsterdam, 1976, pp. 69-78.

Marzoli, Carla C. *Calligraphy, 1535-1885; A Collection of Seventy-two Writing-books and Specimens from the Italian, French, Low Countries and Spanish schools, Catalogued and Described*, Milan, La Bibliofila, 1962.

Sprenger, Kai-Michael. *Zug um Zug: die Schreibmeister und ihre Kunst vom 16. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert*. Mainz, Gutenberg-Museum, Frankfurt am Main, 1998.

Whalley, Joyce Irene, and Vera C. Kaden. *The Universal Penman ... Catalogue of an exhibition, held at the Victoria and Albert Museum*, London, 1980.

Whalley, Joyce Irene. *The Pen's Excellence. Calligraphy of Western Europe and America*, London 1980.

Wurzbach, Alfred von. *Niederländisches Künstler-Lexikon : auf Grund archivalischer Forschungen bearbeitet*, Vienna and Leipzig, Halm und Goldmann, 1906-11.

ONLINE

RESOROURCES

Julie Melby, Princeton University, Graphic Arts, on Jan van den Velde:

http://blogs.princeton.edu/graphicarts/2010/04/la_voix_se_perd_lecriture_deme.html

Palaographie, Schreibmeister (bibliography):

http://www.phil.uni-passau.de/histhw/bibliographie/5g_Allgemeines.html

The History of Graphic Design, Legacy of Master Writing Teachers:

http://aplacecalledspace.com/Handwriting_pages/WritingMasters.html

TM 453