

BELON, PIERRE. *Les observations de plusieurs singularitez et choses memorables, trouvées en Grece, Asie, Iudée, Egypte, Arabie, et autres pays estranges...*

Antwerp, Chrispher Plantin, 1555

In French (with some Latin), imprint on paper with added manuscript section on paper

In-8° format, preceded by a single paper flyleaf, imprint: [1r-8v], 1r-375v, [376r-408v] + manuscript: 21 ff. followed by 2 paper flyleaves, complete (collation: &^s, A-Z^s, a-z^s, &^s, AE^s, †^s, *^s, □[]^s; errors 75-76-79-78-77-80, 262 for 266, 367 for 365, 365 for 367), manuscript portion copied on paper with text in a justified frame traced in light red, Italic and Roman type, 45 woodcuts, a few folding out, typographical ornaments, 17 pen drawings in the added manuscript portion in brown ink, some passages underlined in brown ink. Bound in full rigid vellum, smooth spine with brown ink title: "Belon du Mans. Singularitez en Grèce etc. 1555," speckled edges (A bit of foxing to the first leaves, front cover a bit warped, else in fine condition). Dimensions 145 x 105 mm.

Hybrid book of the third edition of the popular *Observations* by Pierre Belon, chemist, physician, and one of the first naturalists, along with a substantial manuscript section containing 17 pen drawings of floor plans and elevations in Jerusalem perhaps by a sixteenth-century pilgrim. This is the first edition printed at Antwerp by the humanist printer and publisher Christopher Plantin at the start of his career in 1555. It launched his interest in scientific titles and would also be the last scientific work he printed before he died in 1589.

PROVENANCE

1. Printed at Antwerp by Christopher (or Chistofle) Plantin, in 1555. The Plantin Press at Antwerp was one of the focal centers of the printed book in the 16th century, and one of the most successful publishing and printing establishments ever. Christopher Plantin (c. 1520-1589) of Touraine, was a influential humanist, who initially trained as a bookbinder, fled from Paris, where at least one printer had recently been burned at the stake for heresy (Etienne Dolet), to Antwerp, where he bound books, became a citizen, and by 1555 began to print books, at first for distribution by other publishers. The city was already an established center of printing woodcuts, engravings and books. For over two hundred years the Plantin press had a monopoly, granted by the papacy, for the printing of liturgical formularies. Christopher Plantin's interest also went towards scientific and medical works; his first "scientific" printing was Belon's *Observations* in 1555, and many others were soon to follow (see a list of Plantin's medical and scientific works in J. Tricot-Royer, *L'imprimeur Plantin et les sciences médicales*, Paris, n.d. [1923]). Interestingly the list in Tricot-Royer begins with Belon and Plantin's 1555 edition, and finishes with Belon and Plantin's 1589 edition of the same *Observations*. Plantin died in 1589.

Plantin's publication is a reprint of the first (Paris, G. Corrozet, 1553) or second (Paris, G. Cavallet, 1554) editions of the *Observations* by Pierre Belon. A number of copies of this work printed by Plantin received a title-page with the imprint of the Antwerp publisher Joannes Steelsius (indeed Plantin printed for other publishers before establishing his own publishing company). The Antwerp edition

was issued in 1555, the year Christopher Plantin founded his printing establishment. Plantin was a Frenchman, and doubtless sensitive to successful titles from his native country.

2. An unknown owner, contemporary or near-contemporary based on the script, added a substantial manuscript portion to this exemplar, personalizing the copy, and adding relevant floor plans and elevations of the Holy Land, especially of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Calvary.
3. Inscription in brown ink on the upper pastedown: "Edition la plus rare de ce ouvrage; elle a l'avantage de contenir une table des matieres qui ne se trouve pas dans les autres" (Brunet). Above this inscription, in black ink, a shelfmark : "L1.k.2." Added notes with page references compiled by a later 18th (?) hand on the verso of the last paper flyleaf.
4. European Continental Collection.

TEXT

This exemplar contains the complete printed text of 1555 and an additional manuscript portion (19 ff), in a contemporary or near-contemporary hand, which has been detailed below.

Imprint:

[1ro], Title-page: LES // OBSERVATIONS // DE PLUSIEURS SINGULA- // ritez et choses memorables trouuées en Gre- // ce, Asie, Iudée, Egypte, Arabie et au- // tres pays estranges, Redigées en // trois Liuvres, par Pierre // Belon, du Mans. // Reveuz de rechef, et augmentez de figures avec // une nouvelle Table de toutes les ma- // tieres traictées en iceux // EN ANVERS. // De l'Imprimerie de Christofle Plantin, // pres la Bourse neuve. // 1555. // Avec Privilege.

[1v], Table (in italic font): "Le catalogue contenant les plus notables choses de ce present livre";

[2r], Nicolas Denizot du Mans, a Pierre Belon son voisin et amy;

[2r], Illustrated portrait of the author, *anno aetatis 36*; Sonnet of G. Aubert dedicated to Pierre Belon du Mans;

[3r-6r], Dedication: "A tres-illustre et reverendissime Seigneur, François, Cardinal de Tournon... Pierre Belon..." [Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Paris, 1553];

[6v-8v], Preface;

1r-375v, Text, in italics, with parts and marginals in Roman type;

375v, Colophon: "De l'imprimerie de Christofle // Plantin";

[376r], Privilege, Brussels, 20 August 1555, signed De Zoete;

[376vo], blank;

[377ro-386vo], Table of chapters;

[387r-408v], Index, on two columns: "Table des choses memorables contenues es trois livres des Singularitez par Pierre Belon du Mans".

The title of this work renders accurately the content of this very popular book. It is indeed not a diary of Belon's travels, but rather random and interesting notes ("Observations") on what the author has seen and had been interested in during his stay in the Turkish Empire and the Middle East, with special attention paid to plants and animals and to the customs of the inhabitants. Headings to the different chapters give a good idea of the content: "De nostre arrivée au Caire, & de ce que nous y avons veu" (f. 187). Book I speaks about Crete, parts of Greece (Lemnos, Mount Athos), Macedonia, and Constantinople and the Levant. Book II discusses the coasts and islands along Asia Minor, and discusses Egypt, Sinai, Palestine, Syria. Book III details life in Asia Minor.

Pierre Belon (Petrus Bellonius Cenomanus, 1517-1565) was a French chemist and physician, also geographer, botanist, zoologist whose works enjoyed an immense popularity, well into the seventeenth century. One of the great naturalists of the sixteenth century, Belon was one of the early proponents of the use of French rather than Latin in scientific writings and an adept of direct observation of natural life. His own life is well known, largely due to the autobiographical information found in his works. At Wittenberg, he followed the lessons of the great chemist Valerius Cordus (1540-1541) and became chemist of Cardinal de Tournon, who remained his great patron and financed his trips abroad. A remarkable naturalist and an indefatigable traveller, Belon visited a large part of Europe and the Near and Middle East. "Eschollier du roy" appointed by Francis II in 1559, licentiate in medicine at the Paris faculty in 1560, he was murdered in the Bois de Boulogne in 1564 in strange circumstances, perhaps related to his staunch Catholic positions. On his works and life see *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises. Le XVIIe siècle* (Paris, 2001), pp. 128-131; see also P. Delaunay, *L'aventureuse existence de Pierre Belon du Mans*, Paris, 1926.

Belon's *Observations* are partly the fruit of his readings, but he was far from being an arm-chair traveller. Belon set off on a long journey to the Near and Middle East, collecting information and first-hand experience for his work. An embassy led by the Sieur d'Aramont was sent in 1546 by Francis I to attempt some sort of reconciliation with the Turks, and with this embassy joined two "scientific attachés": Pierre Gilles, of Albi and Pierre Belon, of Le Mans (see J. Ursu, *La politique orientale de François Ier, 1515-1547*, Paris, 1908). Gilles was charged by the cardinal d'Armagnac to gather manuscripts in Greek and antiquities for the King. Belon was mandated by the Cardinal de Tournon to report and collect plants and curious objects from the Levant. With d'Aramont, Belon traveled through Greece and the Levant. In Constantinople, Belon joined another ambassador M. De Fumel, with whom he traveled through Egypt, Sinai, Cyrenaique. He reached the Holy Land and like most pilgrims was lodged by the Cordeliers (Franciscans), usual hosts to the Latin Pilgrims. He returned to Europe in 1549 aboard a Venetian vessel. Upon his return in France, his protector Cardinal de Tournon was no longer favored at the French Court in the late 1540s (see Paviot, 1987, pp. 381-392). He traveled with the Cardinal to Rome, then on to England: Cardinal de Tournon managed to secure lodging for Belon at the Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés from which he signed his dedicatory preface to his *Observations*: "De vostre maison en l'Abbaye de Saint Germain des Prez, les Paris. 1553."

His first published work was *L'histoire naturelle des estranges poissons marins avec la vraie peinture et description du Dauphin...*, Paris, Regnaud Chaudière, 1551. Soon to follow were a number of editions of the present *Observations*: (1) first edition, *Observations de plusieurs singularitez et choses memorables...*, Paris, Gilles Corrozet, 1553; (2) second edition, *Observations de plusieurs singularitez et choses memorables...Reveuz de nouveau et augmentez de figures. A monseigneur le cardinal de Tournon*, Paris, Gilles Cavellat, 1554 (some with colored woodcuts); (3) Paris, Gilles Corrozet, 1555; (4) Anvers, Jean Steelsius, 1555 [Pettegree and Walsby, 2011, no. 3359; some copies, such as the present one,

present the device of Christophe Plantin "au vigneron", who was the printer of the Steelsius edition, see Pettegree and Walsby, 2011, no. 3360]; (5) Paris, H.de Marnef and veuve G. Cavellat, 1588, with in appendix the "portraict du mont Sinai." There are Latin versions of the Observations: *Petri Bellonii Cenomani Plurimarum Singularium et memorabilium rerum in Graecia, Asia, Aegypto, Judea, Arabia...*, Anvers, C. Plantin, 1579 and again in 1605.

These successive French and Latin editions are witnesses of the success of this work. Not all was correct in the work, and Belon was criticized: for instance André Thevet in his *Cosmographie* noted some approximations. Nonetheless, the work enjoyed a good reception and was used by visitors who visited the Near and Middle East, often used by pilgrims and visitors to distant and fascinating lands. It was something of a "natural history" travel guide and accompanied many travellers in their voyages. To wit, the manuscript section that was appended to the printed exemplar contained hand-drawn floor plans and elevations of monuments in the Holy Land. These drawings are not signed, nor does the accompanying "Description of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre" bear any trace of authorship. They appear to have been added by a visitor or pilgrim to the Holy Land who would have thus compiled his own "guidebook" for his travel (or after his travels) to the Holy Land. The references in the short text describe a pilgrim's devotions ("Nos petites devotions estants faictes audit Saint Sepulchre, cheminames quise pas plus avant..." (f. 18v)) and chanting ("...toujours chantans allasmes faire a visite en la chapelle de la prison Nostre Seigneur..." (f. 14v)), as he visits the Holy monuments.

Manuscript:

ff. 1-13v, 17 pen and ink drawings with captions (see ILLUSTRATION);

ff. 14-19v, Description of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, heading, *Des choses qui se font et voyent en l'eglise du Saint Sepulchre*; incipit, "ceste eglise a environ neuff cens pas de longueur et cinquante cinq de largeur..."; explicit, "[...] Mais ce lieu pour estre en la rue publique n'est tenu en reverence telle que besoin seroit. Non Hierosolimis fuisse, sed hierosolimis bene vixisse laudendum est. D. Hieron. ad Paulam. Finis."

This last formula comes from Jerome's Epistle LVIII to Paulinus of Nola: "Non Hierosolymis fuisse, sed Hierosolymis bene vixisse laudandum est [What is praiseworthy is not to have been at Jerusalem but to have lived a good life while there]" (ed. Saint Jérôme, *Lettres*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1953, t. III, p. 75). In this his second letter to Paulinus of Nola Jerome dissuades him from making a pilgrimage to the Holy Places, and describes Jerusalem not as it ought to be but as it is. The words of Jerome to Paulinus are a reminder to each pilgrim to the Holy Land that he should travel with Jerusalem at heart not as an ordinary traveler. If he cannot do this, he should refrain from going altogether (see P. Maraval, "Saint Jérôme et le pèlerinage aux lieux saints de Palestine," in *Jérôme entre l'Occident et l'Orient. XVI centenaire du départ de saint Jérôme de Rome et de son installation à Bethléem*, ed. Yves-Marie Duval, Paris, Etudes Augustiniennes, 1988, pp. 345-353). The presence of this quote from Jerome at the end of the brief description resolutely places the work in the context of Pilgrimage literature.

ff. 20-21v, blank.

References: *Belgica Typographica 1544-1600*, no. 289. – Voet, L. *The Plantin Press (1555-1589). A Bibliography of the Works Printed and Published by Christopher Plantin at Antwerp and Leiden, 1980-1983*, no. 637a. – Pettegree, A. and M. Walsby, *Netherlandish Books. Books Published in the Low Countries and Dutch Books Printed Abroad before 1601*, Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2011, no. 3360 (records 7 copies but there are undoubtedly more). – Pettegree and Walsby, *French Venacular Books. Books Published in the French Language before 1601*, Leiden, Brill, 2007, no. 3335. – Atkinson, G. *La littérature géographique de la Renaissance*, I, 1927, no. 100. – Nissen, *Die botanische Illustration*, II, no. 132. – Tobler, T. *Bibliographia geographica Palestinae*, Leipzig, 1867, p. 72, no. 1547.

ILLUSTRATION

There are 45 woodcuts, in varying dimensions, showing mostly plants and animals, together with some maps, representations of people (Egypt, Turkey) and a portrait of the author. Many bear the monogram of the woodcutter Arnold Nicolai. They are copied from the Parisian edition of Belon's *Observations*. In fact, the figures in this Anvers 1555 edition are reduced versions of the woodcuts found in the 1553 and 1554 Paris editions, sometimes reversed. The 1553 and 1554 woodcuts were also cut by Arnold Nicolai.

ff. 1-13v, Seventeen drawings (traced in brown ink, uncolored) of floor plans and elevations of sacred places of the Holy Land, with captions in French. There is a possibility that the present drawings are influenced by famous works on the Holy Land, such as Bernhard von Breydenbach whose *Peregrinatio in terram sanctam* was published in Mainz in 1486. They are accurate drawings, and would serve and guide the pilgrim in his travels. It is quite interesting that such drawings should be appended to a work on travel Observations by Belon.

f. 1, Captions for drawing found on f. 1v

f. 1v, *Via dolorosa*, with important monuments, from *Porte de S. Estienne, Porte de la place du Temple, Le temple moderne de Salomon, La piscine probatique...* etc.

The Via Dolorosa (Latin, "Way of Grief" or "Way of Suffering") is a street, in two parts, within the Old City of Jerusalem, held to be the path that Jesus walked, carrying his cross, on the way to his crucifixion. The winding route is a celebrated place of Christian pilgrimage.

f. 2, Grotto of the Betrayal; caption, "Le lieu ou le Sauveur sua sang et eau" [The place where Our Saviour sweated blood and water];

Located (like the Garden) at Gethsemane, the Grotto of the Betrayal, is here depicted with captions placed on the right. The Grotto of Gethsemane, which was known as the Grotto of the Betrayal became a pilgrimage site for devout Christians since the 4th century. It was once thought that the grotto was where Jesus's agony had occurred, causing it to be referred to as 'The Grotto of the Agony' as well. But it is now largely agreed upon that the place of Jesus's agony and that of his betrayal are two separate sites.

The first documentation to perhaps erroneously suggest the agony of Christ occurring in the very grotto itself was written by a German Dominican named Wilhelm von Boldensele on 1333. It was during this time that the confusion occurred between the place of the agony and the betrayal. It is generally accepted that Jesus's agony occurred at the Garden of Gethsemane, while his betrayal occurred at the grotto. The Garden and grotto have been used interchangeably in some depictions for either the betrayal, the agony, or both.

f. 2v, Plan of Jerusalem, caption, "Hierusalem" [Jerusalem];

f. 3, Captions for drawing found on f. 2v;

f. 3v, Tomb of the Virgin Mary (Church of the Sepulchre of Saint Mary), caption, "Sepulchre de la G. V. Marie";

Church of the Sepulchre of Saint Mary informally known the Tomb of the Virgin Mary refers to an enshrined empty Christian tomb located in the Kidron Valley, on the foothills of Mount of Olives, just outside Jerusalem. It is regarded as the burial place of Mary, the mother of Jesus by many Eastern Christians.

f. 4, Floor Plan of the Church of the Sepulchre of Saint Mary, caption, "Le plan de l'église de S. Sepulchre de la Glorieuse Vierge Marie";

f. 4v, Representation of the Holy Sepulchre of Our Lord, caption, "La forme du S. Sepulchre de Nostre Seigneur";

The Holy Sepulchre refers to the tomb in which the Body of Jesus Christ was laid after his death upon the Cross. The drawing here represents the corpse laying between two slabs of stone.

f. 5, blank;

f. 5v, Hermitage of Saint John the Baptist in the Desert, caption, "Le desert de S. Jean...";

The hermitage of St. John in the Desert commemorates the place where the Precursor of Christ, John the Baptist, found refuge after fleeing from the Massacre of the Innocents.

f. 6, blank;

f. 6v, Church of Saint John the Baptist, caption, "L'église de S. Jean Baptiste...";

The Church of Saint John the Baptist includes the spring (la fontaine), the house of Zachariah and Elisabeth and a farm (métairie).

f. 7, blank;

f. 7v, Grotto of the Nativity of Our Lord, caption, "Praesepe domini", followed by "Le lieu ou le Redempteur nasquit" [The Birthplace of the Redeptor];

f. 8, blank;

f. 8v, Grotto of Nativity; Plan of the subterranean galleries that are beneath the Birthplace of the Our Lord, caption, "Pland [sic] des lieux souterrains que sont au lieu de la nativité du Redempteur";

The holy site, known as the Grotto, that the Church of the Nativity sits atop, is today associated with the cave in which the birthplace of Jesus of Nazareth occurred.

f. 9, Arch of a Roman gateway, incorporated in the Church of Ecce Homo, caption, "Ecce homo";

Ecce Homo Church is a Roman Catholic church on Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem, along the path that according to tradition Jesus walked, carrying his cross, on the way to his crucifixion. The church is now part of the Convent of the Sisters of Zion. The church contains one arch of a Roman gateway, (here depicted) which has a further arch crossing the Via Dolorosa outside.

f. 9v, Interior of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, caption, "Pars interior ecclesiae S. Sepulchri";

f. 10, Church of the Holy Sepulchre, caption, "Ecclesia SS. Sepulchri";

The site is venerated as Golgotha (the Hill of Calvary), where Jesus was crucified, and is said also to contain the place where Jesus was buried (the Sepulchre). The church has been a paramount pilgrimage destination since at least the 4th century, as the purported site of the resurrection of Jesus.

f. 10v, blank;

f. 11, The Hill of Calvary or Golgotha, caption, "Mons Calvariae";

The Hill of Calvary or Golgotha is the site outside Jerusalem's early-first-century walls, where the Crucifixion of Jesus occurred.

f. 11v, Shrine or Chapel on the Hill of Calvary where Christ hung on the Cross, caption, "Sacellum montis calvariae ubi Christus pependit in cruce";

f. 12, Another shrine or Chapel on the Hill of Calvary where Christ was nailed hung to the Cross", caption, "Alterum sacellum montis calvariae ubi cruci affixus est";

f. 12v, blank;

f. 13, Floor plan of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Hill of Calvary, caption, "Le plain de l'église de S. Sepulchre et de la montaigne de Calvarie de Nostre Seigneur" (fold-out drawing);

f. 13v, Captions for fold-out drawing found on f. 13;

LITERATURE

Barsi, M. *L'énigme de la chronique de Pierre de Belon, avec édition critique du manuscrit Arsenal 4651*, Milan, 2001.

Delaunay, P. *Un adversaire de la réforme. Les idées religieuses de Pierre Belon du Mans*, Laval, 1922.

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Paviot, J. "Autour de l'ambassade de D'Aramon: érudits et voyageurs au Levant 1547-1553," in *Voyager à la Renaissance*, Actes du colloque de Tours 30 juin-13 juillet 1983, Paris, 1987, pp. 381-392.

Tricot-Royer, J. *L'imprimerie Plantin et les sciences médicales*, Paris, n.d. [1923].

Zinguer, I. "Narration et témoignage dans les *Observations* de Pierre Belon (1553)," *Nouvelle revue des sciences sociales* 5 (1987), pp. 25-40.

ONLINE RESOURCES

On Pierre Belon

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre_Belon

<http://www.summagallicana.it/lessico/b/Belon%20Pierre%20du%20Mans.htm>

On Christopher Plantin:

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Catholic_Encyclopedia_%281913%29/Christophe_Plantin

http://spcoll.library.uvic.ca/Digit/physiologum/commentary/bio_plantin.htm

On Pilgrims and "learned pilgrimages"

F. Tinguely, "Janus en Terre sainte: la figure du pèlerin curieux à la Renaissance"

http://www.unige.ch/lettres/framo/articles/ft_rsh245.html

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