

Marriage certificate for Mermet Frère and Jeannette Paquelon In Latin, illuminated document on parchment France, Lyons, dated 1476

Single sheet of parchment, 8 lines written in a gothic hand, lines alternating in gold and blue, full illuminated border of colored acanthus, flowers, and gold ivy-leaves, four burnished gold crosses in the center of each border. Dimensions: 385 x 250 mm.

The tradition of illuminated marriage certificates flourished in the Lyonnais region (Berlioz, 1941, pp. 1-26), although this type of illuminated document remains exceptionally rare on the market. We know a few extant examples from the sixteenth century (see Burin, 2001, no. 104, 105); the ones datable to the fifteenth century are relatively scarce, with the oldest recorded illuminated certificate dated 1453. Some of these marriage certificates were painted by documented artists such as Pierre Vanier, who collaborated with Guillaume Leroy. The layout and illuminated frame of the Frère-Paquelon certificate compares closely with another certificate from Lyons, now in the Musée de Saumur, though dated later (1511), whose border decoration is tentatively attributed to Pierre Vanier (Lévy, 2014, no. 59). Illuminated marriage certificates were invested with a strong symbolic meaning, blessed by the priest at the same time as the nuptial band and given by the groom to his bride.

This certificate commemorates the marriage of Mermet Frère of Brussieu and Jeannette Paquelon of Courzieu on 30 June 1476. The two families lived west of Lyons – Brussieu and Courzieu are less than four miles apart. The couple is attested in the Lyonnais parish records (Archives départementales du Rhône, fonds Poidebard), and they had two children, Barthélémy and Simon. Mermet Frère died in 1533. In the second half of the seventeenth century, the Frère family acquired the Castle of Charfetain which remained in the family's possession until 1793. The present manuscript may well have once been part of their family archive.

LITERATURE

Berlioz, P.B. *Les chartes de mariage en pays lyonnais*, Lyons, 1941;

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Christin, O. dir. *Les chartes de mariage lyonnaises. Journée d'études du 13 mai 2002*, Musée Gadagne, Lyons, 2004;

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