

LES ENLUMINURES

PARIS CHICAGO NEW YORK

www.lesenluminures.com

La Chronique anonyme universelle jusque à la mort de Charles VII

In French, illuminated manuscript scroll on parchment

France (Paris?), c. 1461

One sheet of a scroll (705 mm.) with a small portion of the following sheet (117 mm.), on parchment, lacking at top and bottom, dorse covered with heavy paper, ruling indiscernable (justification 425 mm. wide), written in brown ink in a bâtarde script by a single scribe, text copied in two columns (each 195 mm. wide), approximately 115 lines per sheet, genealogical medallions in red ink (35 mm. diameter, drawn with a compass) connected by red lines, 3-line polished gold initials throughout filled with dark salmon on a blue background (or vice versa) with white geometric tracery, 1-line paragraph markers throughout in same scheme, FIVE MEDALLION MINIATURES with cusped borders (73 mm. diameter), sheets attached by paste with 20 mm overlap, no spindles, some water stains and tearing at edges, but otherwise in excellent condition. Dimensions 853 x 548 mm. (originally approximately 18 meters long).

One sheet, and a small portion of the following one, from the beginning of a popular universal chronicle, once part of a long illustrated scroll, of which other fragments – many of them published – are known in public and private collections. This fragment presents a very engaging section of the text, which retells biblical history and begins the genealogy of mankind with Adam and Eve. Historical genealogies in roll format were especially popular among the nobility of late medieval Europe. An important example of this genre, our fragment is copied in an elegant script, and graced by five miniatures from the workshop of the Maître François, the preminent artist in the French capital at this time.

PROVENANCE

1. Written in northwest France, probably Paris, around the year 1461 in the same workshop that produced copies of the *Chronique* currently preserved in Leeds, London, Paris, and Princeton, New Jersey (see ILLUSTRATION, below). Because two of these, Leeds and BnF, MS nouv. acq. fr. 1493, represent the same recension as the present copy and can be dated to around 1461 based on the conclusion of their genealogies, this copy was likely produced at the same time.

Part of the fragmentary scroll given the siglum X by Lisa Fagin Davis (see Davis, 2015, pp. 112-114; we thank Lisa Fagin Davis for sharing her expertise on this text and the extant manuscripts). Based on the amount of missing text, it can be calculated that there were around thirty-one sheets in the original scroll and that it would have about 18 meters, nearly the same length as Leeds and BnF, MS nouv. acq. fr. 1493. There is unfortunately no way to ascertain the original chronological extent of the scroll, so this calculation is approximate. The scroll was fragmented by 1921, when the portion formerly belonging to Eugène Rodrigues (1853-1928) was offered in Frederik Muller & Cie, *Catalogue d'une vente importante de dessins anciens: collection R..., de Paris, principalement des écoles des Pays-Bas et de l'Allemagne ... miniatures sur velin, etc.* (2 vols) 12 July 1921 [1], lot 281 (Kidd, 2020).

Other segments of this same roll, all with identical written space, artist, and script, and other codicological features, including a pencil number in the right margin indicating the original sheet number found in several segments, include: a fragment at Yale University, Beinecke Library (MS 712.153); two sheets in a private collection in the United States (*Flowering of Medieval French Literature*, no. 9); two sheets at Dartmouth College (MS 461940); a sheet formerly belonging to Eugène Rodrigues (Kidd, now untraced); and the sheet preserved at the Centre Jean d'Arc in Orléans (MS 35).

2. Private Collection (Switzerland).

TEXT

Col. 1, begins imperfectly, “//Après que dieu ot fait adam et eve.../...la lignee royale qui nostre seigneur porta etc.” (Davis, 2015, 156:30a – 166:5a);

Col. 2, begins imperfectly, “//recouvree. Texte. Et quant adam ot pechie.../...ceulx qui firent faire la tour de babiloine etc.” (Davis, 2015, 156:33b - 164:36b).

La Chronique anonyme universelle jusque'à la mort de Charles VII, this section of the text from near the beginning of the chronicle is a vernacular retelling of biblical narrative, from the the Temptation of Adam and Eve; the Expulsion from Eden; the descent of Noah; and The Great Flood. The genealogy of mankind begins here with Adam and Eve, and will continue with their offspring, and the descendents of Cain and Seth. These biblical genealogical diagrams are directly based on the work of Peter of Poitiers in his *Compendium Historiae in Genealogia Christi*. Unlike the layout in later sections of the scroll which include four-columns read chronologically from top to bottom, this initial biblical section reads as one text divided into section in a sort of a zig-zag.

The sheet begins in the middle of the story of Adam and Eve. After creating Man and Woman, God places them in Eden and shows them the forbidden Tree of Knowledge. Satan, in the form of a serpent, appears in the tree and tempts Eve to take the fruit herself and offer it to Adam, whereupon they gain awareness of their nakedness and cover themselves with leaves. God curses them both for their disobedience—Adam with the necessity of working the land for food and Eve with the pain and danger of childbirth—and an Angel drives them from Paradise. The narrative then tells of Cain and Abel, the murder of Abel, the descendants of Cain and Seth, and Noah and the Great Flood. After the Flood, Noah's sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth divide the world between them.

In its original complete form, this *Chronique* would have told the history of the world from creation to the fifteenth century, including the stories of the Bible, the Trojans, King Lear, and King Arthur, among many others. All known copies conclude with Pope Urban VI, the coronation of Emperor Louis IV in 1328, and the coronation of the English King Henry IV in 1399. The French section is expanded to reach the scribe's present day, in this case probably extending at least as far as the death of King Charles VII in 1461.

ILLUSTRATION

Five medallion miniatures by the artist of copies preserved at the University of Leeds (MS Brotherton 100), the Princeton University Art Museum (MS 5), the British Library (Add. MS 27539) and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF, MS nouv. acq. fr. 1493 and 1495),

distinguished by perspective interiors with arched doorways at the sides and arched leaded windows at the back, green tiled floors, gilt drapery, and gold-scroll backgrounds. Facial features are somewhat hurried and indistinct, although careful attention is paid to architectural and sartorial detail. Marigold Norbye states that they are in a style reminiscent of that of the Maître François, active in Paris c. 1460-80, and F. Avril has confirmed this attribution (Norbye, 2004, p. 121). In each case, the heading of the following paragraph also functions as a caption for the miniature. In this portion of the scroll, the miniatures (and text) alternate across columns, with the miniature series beginning in the upper right corner.

Subjects as follows:

God confronts Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, gesturing at the bare Tree of Knowledge (Davis, 2015, Miniature 10);

The Robing of Adam and Eve. An angel offers clothing to Adam and Eve (Davis, 2015, Miniature 11);

(Two-miniature series) The Toil of Adam and Eve; at left, Eve spins with a distaff; at right, Adam works broken ground with a scythe (Davis, 2015, Miniatures 12.1 and 12.2);

Noah's Ark. This miniature was excised from the following (missing) sheet and adhered to its present position by a scotch-tape hinge (Davis, 2015, Miniature 13).

The *Chronique anonyme universelle* (a supplied title) was originally compiled around the year 1415. The earliest copy is preserved at the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg (MS fr. folio v I.9 and MS fr. folio v IV.14) and can be dated between 1409 and 1415 based on the conclusion of its genealogical tree. Later copies extend the French section to include the reigns of Charles VI and Charles VII, with some extending as far as Louis XI. The manuscript is laid out as a chronicle that begins with biblical history in two columns (as in the present sheet) and expands to four, from left to right the Bible and Popes, Emperors of Rome and the Holy Roman Empire, the history of France, and the history of England, with a discursion into the Crusades briefly displacing the British matter at the far right. Richly illustrated and accompanied by detailed genealogical diagrams, the *Chronique* was almost certainly intended for a noble audience, designed to emphasize the nobility of the French royal family by tracing its descent from the Trojans and Charlemagne.

National genealogies were very popular in the fifteenth century, and served to validate the ruling houses of one country while simultaneously disproving the royal claims of another. The scroll format was ideal for presenting such genealogies as it allowed for "scrolling" through a family tree easily and clearly. Several copies are known to have a noble provenance. The copy now at the Bibliothèque Royale in Brussels is known to have belonged in the fifteenth century to Artus de Montauban, Archbishop of Bordeaux (1468-1478), connected to the royal family through his mother Beatrice d'Armagnac. The copy at the Houghton Library of Harvard University bears the fifteenth-century arms of the Gavre family of Liedekerke. The Hauck copy (private collection) is said to have been part of the French royal library, looted during the Revolution in 1792.

The last complete copy of the *Chronique* to come on the market was the Hauck scroll sold at Christie's in June 2006 (lot 111), now in a private collection in Connecticut. The present copy is closely related to the Leeds scroll, perhaps copied from it, and may be the exemplar for the copy at the Boston Public Library, with which it shares several unique readings.

OTHER COPIES (with Davis, 2015 sigla):

- 1493 Paris, BnF, MS nouv. acq. fr. 1493
- 1494 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS nouv. acq. fr. 1494
- 1495 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS nouv. acq. fr.. 1495
- 15373 Paris, BnF, MS fr. 15373
- 15374 Paris, BnF, MS fr. 15374
- A Arras, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 146
- B Boston, Massachusetts, Boston Public Library, MS Pb. Med. 32
- Be Berlin, SMB-PK Kupferstichkabinett, MS 78 F 2
- BL London, British Library, Add. MS 27539
- Br Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, MS IV 1003
- Cr London, Borough of Croydon Archives, no number
- F Cambridge, England, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 176
- H1 Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University, Houghton Library, MS Typ 41
- JR Manchester, John Rylands University Library, MS fr. 99
- K Krakau, Czartoryski Museum, MS Czart. 2851
- L Leeds, University Library, Brotherton MS 100
- M New York City, J. Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.1157
- N New York City, New York Public Library, MS 124
- O Orléans, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 470
- P Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Art Museum, MS 5
- R Rouen, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 1137
- SG Paris, Bibliothèque St.-Geneviève, MS 522
- SP St. Petersburg, National Library of Russia, MS fr folio v I.9 and MS fr. folio v IV.14
- T Tours, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 975
- V Sold by Semenzato (Venice), May 2003, lot 148 [untraced]
- W Connecticut, Private Collection
- X (fragment)
 - Hanover, New Hampshire, Dartmouth College, Rauner Library, Mss 461940
 - New Haven, Connecticut, Yale University, Beinecke Library, MS 712.153
 - Orléans, Centre Jeanne d'Arc, MS 35
 - Paris, Eugène Rodrigues collection [now untraced]
 - United States, Private Collection
- Y (fragment)
 - Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University, Houghton Library, MS Fr 495
 - Tübingen, Germany, Private Collection of Mark Mersiowsky, Fragment ms. 318
 - University of South Carolina, Hollings Special Collections Library, Early Ms 148

LITERATURE

Bergeron-Foote, Ariane, and Sandra Hindman. *Flowering of Medieval French Literature: "au Parler que M'aprist Ma Mère,"* Paris, Les Enluminures, 2014.

Davis, Lisa Fagin. *La Chronique Anonyme Universelle: Reading and Writing History in Fifteenth-Century France*, London, 2015.

Davis, Lisa Fagin. "[La Chronique Anonyme Universelle jusque'à la mort de Charles VII]," *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, Leiden, 2009.

Fossier, F. "Chroniques universelles en forme de rouleau à la fin du Moyen Age," *Bulletin de la Société nationale des antiquaires de France*, 1980-81, pp. 163-183.

Hurel, Nathalie. "La Chronique universelle d'Orléans: un manuscrit d'histoire enluminé," *Histoire de l'art* XXIX (1992), pp. 29-40.

Hurel, Nathalie. "Les Chroniques Universelles en Rouleau (1457-1521): Une Source pour l'Iconographie Religieuse," *Revue d'Histoire de l'Église de France* (fol. 80, 1994), pp. 303-314.

Norbye, Marigold Anne. "Genealogies and dynastic awareness in the Hundred Years War. The evidence of *A tous nobles qui aiment beaux faits et bonnes histoires*," *Journal of Medieval History*, 33 (2007), pp. 297-319.

Norbye, Marigold Anne. "The king's blood: royal genealogies, dynastic rivalries and historical culture in the Hundred Years War. A case study of *A tous nobles qui aiment beaux faits et bonnes histoires*," PhD dissertation, University College London, January 2004.

Norbye, Marigold Anne. "A popular example of 'national literature' in the Hundred Years War: *A tous nobles qui aiment beaux faits et bonnes histoires*," *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 51 (2007), pp. 121-142.

Norbye, Marigold Anne. "*A tous nobles qui aiment beaux faits et bonnes histoires*' – the multiple transformations of a fifteenth-century French genealogical chronicle," E. Kooper, ed., *The Medieval Chronicle V*, 2008, pp. 175-196.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Kidd, Peter. "The Illuminated Cuttings and Leaves of Eugène Rodrigues (1853-1928)"
<https://mssprovenance.blogspot.com/2020/01/the-illuminated-cuttings-and-leaves-of.html>

Boston, Massachusetts, Boston Public Library, Ms. Pb. Med. 32
<https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:np193j76j>

Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University, Houghton Library, Ms Typ. 41
<https://iif.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:48309543>

Connecticut, Private Collection
<https://sims2.digitalmappa.org/34>

Leeds, University of Leeds, Brotherton MS 100

https://library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections/view/857/320_biblical_and_genealogical_chronicle_from_adam_and_eve_to_louis_xi_of_france_bc_ms_100

New York City, New York Public Library, MS 124

<https://digital-scriptorium.org/xtf3/search?rmode=digscript;smode=bid;bid=41;docsPerPage=1;startDoc=122;fullview=yes>

TM 1139