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**GUIDO DA COLONNA, *Historia destructionis Troiae* (History of the Destruction of Troy); Extract from the Sibylline prophecies
In Latin, decorated manuscript on paper
Northern France (probably Troyes), c. 1445-1465**

74 folios on paper, 2 watermarks, coat of arms similar to Briquet 1039, Troyes 1464, Douai and Rouen 1465 (ff. 1-48), and bull's head similar to Briquet 14252, Troyes 1442 and 1446, Paris 1446 (ff. 49-74), foliated 1-74 in modern Arabic numerals upper right corner rectos, complete (collation 1-5¹² 6¹⁴), catchwords lower right margin last versos, two sets of early signatures lower right corners rectos of leaves in first half of each quire, single full-length vertical bounding lines and two horizontal bounding lines faintly ruled in lead, prickings visible in upper, lower, and outer margins (justification 200 x 135 mm), written by a single scribe in a small neat gothic cursive script in a single column of 44 lines, 2 to 5-line initials alternating red and blue most with reserved white spaces as decoration, those on ff. 1-35 infilled with flourishing in pale brown ink with a few incorporating grotesque faces, large 9-line initial Y (f. 14v), large 15-line initial I (f. 55v), large opening initial S parti-colored in red and blue with predominantly red flourishing accompanied by a NARROW FOUR-SIDED BORDER in alternating red and blue flourishing (f. 1), notes for rubricator in extreme lower margins but no rubrics supplied in the spaces left in the text, occasional contemporary marginal notes or corrections, first and last pages somewhat darkened, ff. 1-4 slightly frayed at fore-edge and with worm track in blank lower margin, a few other small worm holes, most leaves with extreme upper and lower corners slightly bumped or frayed, ff. 73-74 slightly frayed at extreme top margin, f. 67 with tear in blank lower margin, deckle edges often visible, generally in sound original condition. CONTEMPORARY LIMP PARCHMENT BINDING SEWN ON TWO TACKETS, spine reinforced with strip of printed textile (perhaps Northern Italian 18th century), losses to front and back covers, a few wormholes, edges frayed, some shrinkage. Dimensions: 300 x 220 mm.

One of the most popular texts in the Middle Ages, influencing both literary and historical writing, this work shaped the understanding of the history of Troy for centuries. It was translated and retold in numerous vernacular versions in England, including those by Lydgate and Chaucer, and the Latin text was a principal source for Caxton's *Recuyell of the Histories of Troy*, the first book printed in English. The large corpus of extant manuscripts testifies to its importance, but it is nonetheless rare on the market (only two copies have been offered for sale in the last twenty years).

PROVENANCE

1. Copied in Northern France probably just after the middle of the fifteenth century, c. 1445-1470, based on the evidence of the watermarks. Both are found on paper manufactured in Troyes, the coat of arms on paper attested in Troyes in the 1460s and the bull's head on paper attested in Troyes in 1442 and in Paris in 1446.

Many manuscripts of this text were elaborately illustrated for important patrons. The simplicity of this copy indicates that it was made for a reader of lesser means, who nevertheless was able to read the Latin text and valued the neatness with which it was executed. This origin is also reflected in its contemporary binding sewn on tackets

(tackets were a quick and inexpensive way of assembling a manuscript, but such volumes almost never survive in original condition).

2. Partially illegible note (18th century?) on back cover attributing the text to Dares Phrygius and dating the manuscript to the twelfth century.
3. Note on a slip of paper laid in (19th century): "Aegidius Columna, *Historia Trojana* in Latin. Paper, early fifteenth century, 74 leaves (30 x 22 cm = 12 x 8 ½ inches). Written in Northern Italy. Old limp vellum wrapper."
4. Belonged to Mrs. G. Winship Taylor of Baltimore; described by De Ricci in the 1930s when it was in her collection (De Ricci, 1936, vol. 2, p. 229,), who recorded that she inherited it from her father who purchased it c. 1900.
5. Pencil notation on front pastedown "1716," presumably the number of the manuscript in a modern catalogue.

TEXT

ff. 1-74, incipit, "Si et cotidie vetera recentibus obruant nonnulla ... [f. 1v], incipit, "In regno thessalie de predictis scilicet pertinenciis romane ... ; ... [f.72v], De narrando igitur mortem vlixis aliis omissis ad presens historia stilus acuitur... [f. 74] Ego guido da calumpna predictum ditem grecum in omnibus sum sequutus pro eo quod ipse perfectum et completum fecit in omnibus suum opus ... Finitur presens opus anno dominice incarnationis M° cc° lxxxvij° eiusdem prime indictionis feliciter. Et [?] est finis sit laus et gloria trinis. Amen";

Guido da Colonna, *Historia destructionis Troiae*, edited by N. E. Griffin in a composite text derived from five of the earliest dated manuscripts (Griffin, 1936). The present manuscript differs somewhat in the divisions of the text, and there are variant readings, but as a whole the text of the manuscript appears to follow Griffin's edition.

f. 74r, incipit, "Prorum [sic, i.e., Trorum (sic)] protector danaum metus hic iacet hector ... condidit et merens accumulavit humo"; incipit, "Pelides ego sum thetides notissima proles ... cum pressi hostili fraude peremptus humum";

These two verse epitaphs, one for Hector, one for Achilles, were frequently included in manuscripts of the *Historia destructionis Troiae* and also appear with that text in early printed editions. Griffin's edition places them ahead of Guido's colophon, whereas in this manuscript they were copied following it.

f. 74v, incipit, "Illustrissima turba danaum quatinus g[r]ay[c]os eventus ... resonet in terrorem. Qui scripsit scripta sua dextra sit benedicta. F[inis?]."

Extract from an oracle attributed to the Erythraean Sibyl that survives in about 70 manuscripts dating from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries, edited by Holder-Egger 1890 and Jostmann 2006 (see also Online resources). The textual tradition of the oracular pronouncements attributed to the Sibyls, legendary prophetesses of Antiquity, is complex. Including elements of Christian, Jewish, pagan, and classical traditions, and not infrequently

"prophesying" events that had already taken place, the earliest compilations are sometimes dated to Late Antiquity. Recent scholarship, however, considers that the compilation of the Latin verses attributed to the Erythraean Sibyl emerged in Italy in the mid-thirteenth century. This passage, which "predicts" the defeat of Troy by the Greeks, more commonly begins "Exquiritis me illustrissima turba Danaum . . ." Composed in Latin hexameters but copied here as prose by the scribe who wrote the entire manuscript, it was perhaps selected by the original owner of the codex, or someone before him, as a fitting supplement to Guido's text. Research into the manuscripts of the *Historia destructionis Troiae* could reveal to what extent this prophecy forms part of its textual tradition.

Guido da Columna (also "delle Colonne" and "de Columnis") was an inhabitant of Messina, who held office as a judge in the thirteenth century and wrote this work on the history of the destruction of the legendary city of Troy, following the theme of an earlier Latin work attributed erroneously to the Ancient Greek Dares Phrygius, while drawing on the Old French *Roman de Troie* by Benoit de Sainte-Maure (d. 1173). An interest in drawing up the genealogies of major noble families from France to Iceland throughout the Middle Ages led to this interest in the history of Ancient Troy and its figures, inspiring the handful of medieval "histories" that survive – each more in the realm of literature and medieval romance than actual history.

The work claims that its author wrote it in 71 days, from 15 September to 25 November of an unspecified year, but with the full text certainly finished by 1287. It was extremely popular. Griffins reported 136 manuscripts (the Repertorium Chronicarium website of Mississippi State University records 113; Online Resources), and it was translated into Catalan in 1367, Middle English by Lydgate in 1412-1420, French and Old High German in the fifteenth century, and Old Polish during the sixteenth century. ISTC lists 31 incunable editions in Latin, Czech, Dutch, German and Low German, Italian, Spanish, and French (Online Resources). The work (and its derivatives) influenced the popular understanding of Trojan history for hundreds of years, certainly until the beginning of the eighteenth century. The impact of this text was especially important in England, where it was translated and retold in numerous vernacular versions, including those by Lydgate and Chaucer (Benson, 1980; Simpson, 1998). The Latin text was a principal source for Caxton's *Recuyell of the Histories of Troy*, the first book printed in English.

Despite its popularity, the text is rare on the open market. None have appeared at auction since 1977, and only two copies have been offered by bookdealers in the last twenty years. The Schoenberg Database records that Sotheby's has sold only five copies in the last century (i. 24 July 1924, lot 113; ii. 7 December 1931, lot 59, which reappeared on 14 June 1937, lot 508; iii. 17 July 1950, lot 13; iv & v. 11 December 1968, lot 186 & 13 July 1977, lot 59, both ex-Thomas Phillipps), while Kraus had two copies in the same period (first in his cat. 86, 1958, no. 200, now at Yale, and the second in cat. 159, 1986, ex-Thomas Phillipps and listed by the Robinsons in their cat. 83, 1953, and subsequently reappearing in Tenschert, cat. 41, 1998, no. 10 and again cat. 16, *Catena Aurea*, 2000, no. 7), and Quaritch offered one from the library of Sidney Cockerell in their cat. 767 (1957), no. 8. Jörn Günther offered a single copy in his bulletin 19 April 2001, no. 1, again in a bulletin for October 2003, no. 8, and finally in his cat. 8, 2006, no. 12.

LITERATURE

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https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.medievalacademy.org/resource/resmgr/maa_books_online/griffin_0026.htm#hd_ma0026_head_00

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Keller, Wolfram. *Selves and Nations: The Troy Story from Sicily to England in the Middle Ages*. Heidelberg, 2008. [not available for consultation]

Simpson, James. "The Other Book of Troy: Guido delle Colonne's *Historia destructionis Troiae* in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century England," *Speculum* 73 (1998) 397-423.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Bayerische edder Wissenschaften. Geschichtsquellen des deutschen Mittelalters. Vaticanium Sibyllae Erithreae.

<http://www.geschichtsquellen.de/werk/4608>

Briquet Online

<http://briquet-online.at/>

Guido de Columnis. The Trojan War.

<https://lewianstudies.org/guido-de-columnis>

ISTC: Incunabula Short Title Catalogue

<https://data.cerl.org/istc/search>

Mirabile: Archivio digitale della cultura medievale / Digital Archive for Medieval Culture
<http://www.mirabileweb.it/title/sibylla-erythraea-title/171545>

Mississippi State University, Repertorium Chronicorum
<http://www.chronica.msstate.edu/search.php?type=chronicle&q=Historia+Troiana+%28Historia+Destructionis+Troiae%29>

Schoenberg Database of Manuscripts
<https://sdbm.library.upenn.edu/>

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