

Psalter (Anonymous French translation)

In French (rubrics in French and Latin), illuminated manuscript on parchment
France (Paris), c. 1410-1420

ii (paper) + i (parchment) + 140 + i (parchment) + ii (paper) folios on parchment, watermark of Nicolas Lebé, papermaker in Troyes (Briquet 8077-8083, dated 1566-1594) on the front flyleaves, nineteenth-century pagination in black ink, 1-280, complete (collation i-xvii^s xviii⁴), horizontal catchwords, ruled in brown ink (justification 160 x 96 mm.), written by a single scribe in brown ink in Gothic book script (textualis) in single column on 24 lines, rubrics underlined in red, capitals touched in yellow, 1-line initials in burnished gold on grounds divided in dark pink and blue with white penwork begin verses throughout, 2-line initials in the same style begin the psalms, canticles and prayers throughout, paragraph marks and line-fillers in the same style throughout, EIGHT LARGE INITIALS WITH BORDERS, initials are 4- to 6-lines, painted in blue or dark pink infilled with ivy vine in blue and red with white penwork on burnished gold grounds with compartments in dark pink or blue with white penwork, accompanied by bars in burnished gold, blue and dark pink and very fine rinceaux borders framing half the page with the hairline sprays decorated with small flowers and leaves in crisp colors and burnished gold, slight smudging on the decorated border on p. 1, the sewing of the first quire is almost detached, some minor stains, in overall very good condition. EARLY VELVET BINDING from the end of the sixteenth century (as suggested by the watermark of the flyleaves) in light pink velvet over pasteboards, lettered in black ink on the spine in the sixteenth or seventeenth century: "Psautier français MS sur Velors" (sic), velvet very worn and partly lost on the spine and corners (but its delightful original color still visible under the partially detached pastedowns), lacking original ties, spine and front cover detached from the text block, modern case in red buckram with a printed label on the spine "Psalms & hymns France 14th century Manuscript 1915.536" (in very good condition). Dimensions 261 x 182 mm.

Translations of the Bible in the vernacular during the Middle Ages are a topic of real importance. The rich tradition of translations of the Psalms into French can tell us much about the religion of the laity and access to the Bible. The translation of the Psalms in this manuscript is part of this story that has not yet been told. The luxurious decoration with small flowers painted in crisp, rich colors, like precious gems, and the dazzling, generous use of gold, evoke a prestigious commission from a talented Parisian artist, undoubtedly made for a member of the royal family or an aristocratic member of its close circle. In the sixteenth century the manuscript belonged to the treasurer-general of France, Nicolas Moreau d'Auteuil, who may have had it bound in the precious pink velvet binding it still preserves today. It's nearly unbroken provenance adds interest and importance.

PROVENANCE

1. The style of illumination suggests that the manuscript was made in Paris c. 1410-1420 (see below). The lack of a liturgical apparatus (antiphons, versicles, responses, calendar, and so on) suggests that it was not intended for liturgical performance or chant. Instead, the decorative divisions and mise-en-page as prose paragraphs suited for meditative reading imply that it was intended as a private, contemplative Psalter. The luxurious material aspects of the manuscript indicate that it was made for a wealthy, aristocratic person in the close circle of king Charles VI of France (see below).

2. The manuscript belonged to Nicolas Moreau d'Auteuil (1544-1619(?)), treasurer-general of France. On p. 1 are found his coat of arms, motto "A l'ami son cœur," forming an anagram of his name, and his ownership inscription, "C'est a moy Nicolas Moreau d'Auteuil / tresorier general de France / a Paris." There are further signatures by Moreau throughout the book, and he recorded the births of his children on the opening parchment flyleaf, beginning with Madeleine in 1573 and ending with Françoise in 1580.

His collections are known to have included several important religious and secular works in French translation, including *Les œuvres morales et meslées*, a 1572 translation of Plutarch by the humanist Jacques Amyot (now Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, MS Inv. LA252). Moreau also owned another early fifteenth-century Psalter in French, now Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS NAF 10044 (on Moreau, see Shapovalova, 2014; Vidier, 1913; and Jean-Luc Deuffic, Online Resources).

3. Henri Gaugain (1799-after 1834), who gave the manuscript in 1830 to Langlois (see below).
4. Eustache-Hyacinthe Langlois (1777-1837), the celebrated painter, engraver and writer; his ownership inscription dated 1830 is found on the opening parchment flyleaf, and the calligraphic ex-libris recording the gift from Gaugain is found on the final parchment flyleaf. Below the inscription, an illuminated cul-de-lampe surrounded by foliage contains his name EH Langlois. The manuscript has not been identified in his sale in Rouen on January 22, 1838.
5. Anatole Claudin (1833-1906), bibliophile and bookseller, who sold the manuscript to the bookseller de Lalaine (see below).
6. Pottier de Lalaine, publisher and bookseller; cat. 1-2, January-March 1872, no. 61.
7. Henri-Léonard Bordier (1817-1888), literary historian; not in his sales of 1889 and 1894.
8. Ernest Strœhlin (1844-1907), author; his sale (Paris, 1912, II, no 462).
9. Lucien Gougy (1863-1931), Parisian bookseller.
10. Wilfrid Voynich (1865-1930), Polish revolutionary, antiquarian and bibliophile, who is remembered for the celebrated "Voynich manuscript" now at the Beinecke Library, Yale University. Our manuscript was likely purchased for the Art Institute of Chicago following Voynich's exhibition there in 1915, October 7-November 3.
11. Art Institute of Chicago (described in Jonas, Online Resources, and De Ricci, 1935, vol. I, p. 515), deaccessioned 2023.

TEXT

pp. 1-279, [Psalter in French], *Cy commence le livre des pseaulmes, des hymnes, ou des seuls parlers de david le prophete. Beatus vir qui non abiit, et cetera.*," incipit, "Benois est li hommes qui n'ala pas ou conseil des felons et qui ne estut pas en la voye des pecheurs, et qui ne sist pas en la chaire de pestilence ... Ceste est la sainte foy la quelle se chascun ne la croit fermement et leaulment il ne peut estre sauve. Deo gracias. Ci fenist le psautier en francois. Deo gracias"; [p. 280, blank].

The bilingual rubrics in our manuscript give a brief identification of each psalm in French and its incipit in Latin; see for instance the rubric on p. 3, preceding Psalm 3, "Pseaulme de david comme il s'en fuist de la face absalon son fils. Domine quid multiplicati sunt qui tribulant me et cetera."

There were many different translations of the Psalms into French during the Middle Ages (see below). The prose translation in our manuscript has not yet been the subject of serious study to determine how it fits into this tradition. It has been suggested (Jonas, Online Resources) that it is related to the translation found in Psalter-Hours from the second half of the thirteenth century that has been attributed to Douai (Hunt, 2007, p. 161), and Arras (Wirth, 2008, p. 100-2), Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, MS 9391, which includes the Psalms copied with alternate verses in Latin and French. A preliminary comparison of their texts shows verbal similarities, but also some differences (for example, cf. the word inversion in the incipit of the Psalm one). This is an important matter for further research.

The contents are as follows:

pp. 1-153, Psalms 1-150;

pp. 253-279, [Liturgical canticles and Athanasian Creed], *Cy commencent les pseaulmes qui sont appelees cantiques d'autres que de david. Confitebor tibi et cetera*, incipit, "Mon seigneur je me confessere a toi (Confitebor) ... Et ceulx qui auront bien fait yront en vie pardurable ceulx qui auront mal fait en feu pardurable. Ceste est la sainte foy la quelle se chascun ne la croit fermement et leaulment il ne peut estre sauve. Deo gracias. Ci fenist le psautier en francois. Deo gracias."

The usual liturgical canticles for the week in French translation: *Confitebor* (Isaiah 12), *Ego dixi* (Isaiah 38:10-21), *Exultavit* (1 Kings 2:1-11), *Cantemus* (Exodus 15:1-20), *Domine audiui* (Habakkuk 3), *Audite celi* (Deut. 32:1-44), *Benedicite omnia opera*, *Benedictus dominus*, *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis*; ending with Athanasian Creed.

ILLUSTRATION

Eight large 4- to 6-line painted initials designate the groups of psalms as follows: p. 1, Ps. 1; p. 38, Ps. 26; p. 63, Ps. 38; p. 85, Ps. 52; p. 108, Ps. 68; p. 135, Ps. 80; p. 163, Ps. 97; p. 192, Ps. 109.

This is the traditional liturgical division of the psalms according to secular use, each group beginning with the first psalm at Matins for each day, concluding with the first psalm at Vespers on Sunday.

The high-quality decoration and the elegant material aspects of our manuscript place it firmly in the context of deluxe manuscripts prepared for the royal circle in Paris around 1415. Very similar rinceaux borders are found in a small number of exceptionally fine manuscripts, mainly

manuscripts for private devotion and vernacular literature, made for the royal family and its close entourage.

In particular, we note that the rinceaux border decorated with small pink and blue flowers in our manuscript is essentially identical to the rinceaux border surrounding the miniature pages painted around 1413 by the Bedford Master in the Breviary of the Dauphin of France, Louis de Guyenne (Châteauroux, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 2, ff. 106, 282v, 387v; Online Resources, Taburet-Delahaye, 2004, pp. 143-4, and Villela-Petit, 2003). The Bedford Master can quite certainly be identified with Haincelin de Haguenau, the official illuminator and *valet de chambre* of the dauphin. The secondary decorator working with the Bedford Master also painted rinceaux borders elsewhere in the dauphin's Breviary, accompanying miniatures painted by the Orose and the Boucicaut Masters, but the comparison with our manuscript is especially striking on these three pages with the Bedford Master's full-page miniatures. The small pink and blue flowers, the burnished gold leaves and small balls, and the delicate hairlines joining all the motifs, are all rendered in the same manner. One flower type has the tips of the petals painted in either pink or blue, and another type has a center painted in either dark pink or blue with petals in a lighter tone alternating with small gold balls. Black hairline tendrils emanate from the center of the flowers. These flowers are found in other Parisian manuscripts made in the second decade of the century, but the same quality and crispness of the forms and colors in the Breviary of Louis de Guyenne are a compelling comparison with our manuscript. Moreover the large dimensions of our Psalter are also very comparable with the dauphin's breviary (270 x 197 mm.), suggesting further that these manuscripts were painted around the same time. Although our manuscript has no miniatures, the luxurious decoration and the large size of the book with very generous creamy white vellum margins, indicate that it was a prestigious commission worthy of a prince.

Our illuminator may have also worked on the secondary decoration in the so-called Mazarine Hours painted in Paris at the same time, around 1415 (Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 469). Here, in association with the Mazarine Master, the small pink and blue flowers are rendered in a very similar manner. Other contemporary manuscripts providing good comparisons of very similar rinceaux borders are a Book of Hours for use of Paris illuminated by the Boucicaut Master c. 1415-1420 (Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, MS 1279; Online Resources), a Book of Hours for use of Paris painted around 1415 by the Spitz Master (Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 66; Online Resources), and an Apocalypse in French painted around 1415 probably in Paris (Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 28, f. 36; Online Resources). An idiosyncratic detail in the hairline rinceaux can be observed in the Breviary of Louis de Guyenne, the Mazarine Hours and our manuscript: two very short parallel strokes, which in places cut through the hairline, and in other instances mark a break, after which the hairline tendril continues and terminates in a small hoop. Its use is not necessarily found only in the work of our artist, but analyzing such details of the decor will aid in future research to reconstructing his work.

There were numerous translations of the Psalms into French during the Middle Ages, both for stand-alone Psalters, and in vernacular Bibles (see, for example, the online Jonas database, Répertoire des textes et des manuscrits médiévaux d'oc et d'oïl, at IRHT-CNRS for thirty different French translations of the Psalter in verse and prose). The earliest translations of psalms into French are found in the Reichenau Glossary (eighth century, northern France), although these are literal explanations of individual words and phrases for the use of the clergy,

not proper translations. The Eadwine Psalter, written around 1150 in England, contains the three main Latin versions of the Psalms, the Gallican, the Roman and the Hebrew versions, the last of which is accompanied by an interlinear gloss providing a translation in Anglo-Norman (Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R. 17.1). The Anglo-Norman translation of the Gallican Psalter, the most important and the oldest of the French translations, was probably made by Geoffrey, the abbot of Saint Albans, for Christina of Markyate around 1140, and survives in the Oxford Psalter (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 320, also called the Monteboug Psalter, after the Norman monastery that owned it in the fourteenth century; ed. by F. Michel, Oxford, 1860; Short, 2010 and 2015), from the first half of the twelfth century. Like our manuscript, the Oxford Psalter is monolingual and copied in a single column, as opposed to the more numerous bilingual Psalters that contain one column for the Latin text and another for the French. This was the most extensively copied translation of the Psalms and Old Testament Canticles in England. It is independent of the so-called Orne Psalter, another Anglo-Norman gloss on the Gallican Psalter, which survives in a twelfth-century fragment at the Archives Nationales de Paris. New translations continued to be made in the thirteenth century and later, including, for example, the verse translation known as the Lorrain Psalter (incipit. "Beneois soit"; conserved in three complete manuscripts and fragments, see Online Resources; ed. by F. Bonnardot, Paris, 1885, F. Apfelstedt, Heilbronn, 1881).

The translation in our manuscript differs from those mentioned above, and from the near-contemporary revised translation of the Bible made by Raoul de Presles for King Charles V (r. 1364-1380) (The Psalter of Raoul de Presles also circulated independently and is conserved in seven manuscripts; see Online Resources for the list of copies and for the digitized copy of Paris, BNF, MS Fr. 962). Our translation, possibly a revised translation of the text found in the Psalter-Hours now in Brussels (Bibliothèque Royale, MS 9391) should be studied in relation to the group of early French humanists that were all clerics attached to the royal chancellery around 1400 and educated at the Collège de Navarre: Jean de Montreuil, Gontier Col, Nicolas de Clamanges, Laurent de Premierfait, Jean Courte-Cuisse, Jean Lebègue, and others. Jean de Montreuil (d. 1418), secretary to the king Charles VI from 1390 until his death, played a role as a mentor to the young princes, Charles d'Orléans and Louis de Guyenne (Taburet-Delahaye, 2004, especially pp. 236-7). Although in its present state our manuscript contains no obvious indication of its original owner, the possibility that it was made for one of the young princes is worth considering.

The translation contained in our manuscript is important not only for the history of the Psalms, but also in the wider context of vernacular literary culture. As Geoff Rector has shown, "stylistic adaptations in the different French translations of the Psalms show (...) how they were read as courtly lyrics or as romanced" and that "Psalms were every bit as poetic as they were devotional" (Rector, 2010, pp. 14-15). Our manuscript is immensely important for cultural and artistic history, but also presents a highly precious luxury artefact from the court of Charles VI of France.

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Described listed in Jonas, when in the Art Institute of Chicago, Anastasia Shapovalova, notice, "CHICAGO, Art Institute, cote inconnue" in Jonas-IRHT/CNRS (permalink : <http://jonas.irht.cnrs.fr/manuscrit/81303>).

Jean-Luc Deuffic, "Nicolas Moreau" (Provenance)
<https://sites.google.com/view/manuscritsetprovenances/nicolas-moreau>

Illustration:

Breviary of Louis de Guyenne, Châteauroux, BM, MS 2
<https://arca.irht.cnrs.fr/ark:/63955/md05s7528c2g>

Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, MS 1279
<https://arca.irht.cnrs.fr/ark:/63955/md80ht24xh2w#Galerie>

Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 66
<https://arca.irht.cnrs.fr/ark:/63955/md93gx41q55p>

Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 28
<https://arca.irht.cnrs.fr/ark:/63955/md042r36v138>

On this translation, compare:

Cécile Bruneau, "Psautier, Anonyme" in Jonas-IRHT/CNRS
(permalink : <http://jonas.irht.cnrs.fr/oeuvre/18247>).

Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, MS 9391 (digitized online)
[Livre d'heures - Belgica \(kbr.be\)](http://kbr.be)

Cécile Bruneau, "Bruxelles, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, 09391" Jonas-IRHT/CNRS
(permalink : <http://jonas.irht.cnrs.fr/manuscrit/10332>).

Other translations of the Psalter in French:
Psalter of Raoul de Presles, Paris, BnF, MS Fr. 962
<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b52521560p/f41.item>

Psalter of Raoul de Presles in Jonas-IRHT/CNRS
<http://jonas.irht.cnrs.fr/oeuvre/11890>

Oxford Psalter in Jonas-IRHT/CNRS
<http://jonas.irht.cnrs.fr/oeuvre/15095>

Psalter of Pierre de Paris in Jonas-IRHT/CNRS
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Lorrain Psalter in Jonas-IRHT/CNRS
<http://jonas.irht.cnrs.fr/oeuvre/20106>

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