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Livre des métiers de la ville de Gisors
In French, manuscript on parchment
France, Normany, Gisors, 1538-1594

135 ff., complete (collation i², ii-xxii⁴, xxiii⁴⁺⁺, xxiv⁴, xxv⁶, xxvi⁴, xxvii⁸, xxviii⁴, xxix⁸, xxx-xxxix⁴), ff. 6v, 103, 107, 119, 127 blank, written in a cursive hand in brown ink on between 27 and 35 long lines on relatively coarse parchment, some reused pieces, text block ruled, not consistently the same (c. 140/160 x 250 mm.), parts of some folios left blank, some marginal notations, different scribal hands, throughout, interspersed with transcriptions on old paper (by Passy), with his page numbers and the folio numbers he is copying, many notes throughout. Contemporary sixteenth-century binding of dark brown calf over wooden boards, covers paneled with triple frame composed of triple fillets, with outer and intermediary compartments left bare and central compartment stamped with fillets forming a lozenge, spine sewn on six raised bands (Binding restored, entirely rebacked). Dimensions 311 x 206 mm.

Precisely dated and in its contemporary binding, this rare manuscript includes the regulations governing the everyday trades in the Norman village of Gisors in the late medieval period. Although published in its entirety, this large volume is still likely to yield much information on the making of such types of books, which are exceedingly rare, as well as in comparison with other contemporary French "livres des métiers."

PROVENANCE:

1. Made in and for the citizens of the city of Gisors, a medieval town in the Eure in upper Normandy, as stated in the prologue and dated between 1538, the day the decision was taken to compile the manuscript, and 1594, when it was completed.
2. On f. 91v, there are emblems, signatures, and cachets from 1593 to 1690, including "Le Cauchoys," "Brodechal 1590," "Rensial," "Pierre Berthault," and "Pensical."
3. Louis Passy, mentioned in the sale of 1958 (below), his signature on the flyleaf; Passy likely owned the manuscript when he published his edition in 1907 (see Literature below).
4. Sale, France, Paris, *Catalogue précieux manuscrits héraldiques et enluminés en très riches reliures aux armes de Henri III et Louis XIV*, 1958, lot. 29.
5. Private Collection, France.

TEXT:

These ordinances are published in their entirety by Passy (see below) based on the present unique extant manuscript.

f. I-IIv, [Table of Content of the Ordinances of the trades in Gisors], incipit, "Table et répertoire des ordonnances des mestiers de la ville de Gisors contenuz en ce present volume fait par ordonnance de justice le dixneufiesme jour de novembre l'an mil cinq cent trente huit";

f. III-VI, [History of the making of the volume of the Ordinances of the trades in Gisors], incipit, "L'an de grace mil cinq cens trent huit, le lundi vingt ungiesme jour d'octobre, a Gisors, devant Guillaume Michel, écuyer licencié es loix, lieutenant général de monseigneur le bailly et capitaine de Gisors et ajourné par Guillaume Rouget, sergent à la requeste du roi ... il soit par nous dict, ordonné, que ung papier et registre en parchemin se fera, auquel sont insérées et incorporées de mot à mot toutes les ordonnances des mestiers de ceste dicte ville faictes et à faire, et collationnez au greffe aux depens desdictz maistres jurez, pour, ce fait ledit registre et papier estre feablement gardé et mis au coffre de la chambre de la ville soubz bonne et seure garde..., explicit, les faultes et abbuz qui s'il pevent commenter."

ff. 1-2v, Ordinance of the drapers and textile workers (drappiers foulons), 14 March 1449;

ff. 3-4v, Ordinance of locksmiths (serruriers), 26 April 1456;

ff. 5-7v, Ordinance of barbers and surgeons (barbiers and cirugiens), 20 January 1463;

ff. 7v-13, Ordinance of the butchers (bouchers), 3 March 1463;

ff. 13-15v, Ordinance of the leather-workers (courayeurs), 10 December 1476;

ff. 16-19, Ordinance of the weavers (tisserans en toilles), 16 March 1479;

ff. 19v-23v, Ordinance of the farriers and metal tool-makers (mareschaux, taillandiers), 9 September 1489, and (22 August 1524);

ff. 24-26, Ordinance of the hat-makers (chappeliers), 20 December 1491 to 23 August 1524;

ff. 26v-29v, Ordinance of the shoemakers (cordouenniers), 15 May 1492 to 22 August 1524;

ff. 30-33, Ordinance of the bakers (boullengiers), 27 March 1503 and 17 September 1539;

ff. 33-36v, Ordinance of the furniture-makers (menuisiers), 20 February 1505 to 22 August 1524;

ff. 36v-39, Ordinance of the fleece-makers (estaynmiers), 28 June 1512 to 22 August 1524;

ff. 39-43, Ordinance of the furriers (pelletiers), 15 March 1513;

ff. 43-46, Ordinance of hemp carders/ hacklers (peigneurs and cardeurs) of 3 October 1530;

ff. 46v-49, Ordinance of stocking weavers (drapiers, chaussetiers) of 2 September 1532; tembre 1532,

ff. 49-51v, Ordinance of bonnet-makers (bonnetiers) of 23 August 1524;

ff. 52-55v, Ordinance of the mesgissier (sort of tanning operation) and glove-makers, 12 December 1536;

ff. 56-61v, Ordinance of the thread-makers (merciers), 18 November 1476 to 18 November 1538;

ff. 62-65, Ordinance of the tanners (tempneurs), 4 March 1449, 15 March 1447, and 30 August 1507;

ff. 66-71v, Ordinances of the dress-makers (couturiers), 30 July 1457, 30 November 1463, 15 November 1468, and 16 October 1480;

ff. 72v-74, Ordinances on white bread and brown bread (pain bizet), 21 October 1538;

ff. 75-80, Ordinance of apothecaries, 25 May 1540;

ff. 81-83v, Ordinances of saddle-makers (selliers, collaisiers and bastiers), 15 March 1529; du 15 mars 1529,

ff. 84-87v, Rule concerning the trade of baker, 24 February 1560, 14 March 1560, 11 April 1561, and 8 October 1592, with mention of prices (f. 88-88v);

ff. 89-91, Ordinance of the pastry makers and roasters (paticiers, rotisseurs), 31 January 1547, 4 February 1576;

ff. 92-93v, Ordinance of the chariot- and cart-makers (cherons), 30 January 1547;

ff. 94-97, Ordinance of the cloth-weavers (tisserans en draps), 24 January 1547;

ff. 98-102v, Ordinance of the vessel-makers (fustailleurs, gobergers), 20 April 1580;

f. 103, blank;

ff. 104-106v, Ordinance of the masons and carpenters, 5 January 1579;

f. 107, blank;

ff. 108-115, Ordinance of the trim- and ribbon-makers (passementiers), 29 February 1583;

ff. 116-118, Ordinance of barrel-makers (tonneliers and fustailleurs), 27 January 1592;

f. 119, blank,

ff. 120-126v, Ordinance of nail-maker, also stirrups, and small pieces of metal (cloustier and lormier), 28 April 1594;

f. 127, blank;

ff. 128-131, Ordinance of cobblers and traveling shoe-repairmen (savetiers and carreleurs), 26 November 1590;

ff. 132-135v, Ordinance of the makers, repairers and sellers of cooking utensils and equipment (chaudronniers).

The decision to make the volume and gather together the ordinances was taken between 21 October and 19 November 1538 before Guillaume Michel, Captain of Gisors, and Guillaume Rouget, Sargeant, at the request of the Masters Jean le Blanc and Jean le Pelletier, procurers of the king. It was decided to transcribe the ordinances on parchment in order to constitute the present volume. The prologue is quite specific: the volume is to be well bound and "dûment accoustré," which may mean that it was encased in a box or case. The text also specifies that a duplicate copy was made on paper. Most of the original documents which served for the copy were furnished by members of the trades. The original ordinances had been produced in the court of the Parliament of Rouen. In certain cases, minutes were used (cf. f. 7v, on the butchers). These have disappeared. Numerous ordinances were recopied and collated by a notary named Fichet in 1538 and 1539 and those in 1541 and 1547 by Berthault. Those of the years 1570 to 1580 were collated by L Laboissière, and those of the 1590s are signed by the hand of Frontin. The manuscript, made at the expense of the sworn masters was kept in the safe of the chamber de ville. It served to mediate in conflicts that arose concerning the rights of the masters between the police, the justice, and the masters. The manuscript was destined for the inhabitants of the town of Gisors, as is indicated by an ex-libris on ff. 119 and 127 with the specific mention "Pour les habitants de Gisors quand contre les habitants de Chaumont."

This juridical text reflects the wide array of trades of the period, of which some have since disappeared: drapers, locksmiths, barbers, bonnet-makers, glove-makers, masons, trim-makers, and so forth. Each group of tradesmen (and/ or women) is governed by ordinances that cover details of the practice of their profession. How many apprentices they are allowed (usually no more than one), how long an apprentice must practice before becoming a master (usually three years), what days and hours they are allowed to work, where they can trade, etc. The bakers, for example, are subject to three different sets of ordinances written between 1503 and 1561. After a three-year apprenticeship, the would-be-master must give two pounds of wax, destined to maintain the candles of the confraternity at the Church of Saint Vincent in the town of Gisors. The apprentice officially becomes a master-baker by swearing a sermon and paying a membership fee, on condition that he has passed an exam and created three "chef d'oeuvres": one of white bread, one of brown

bread (pain bourgeois) and one "pain retraicté" (re-used or retreated bread?). The size and the prices of bread are carefully regulated in a special ordinance of 1592 (f. 88-88v).

Such texts provide a wealth of information on everyday life among the tradesmen in medieval towns. For example, barrel-makers and carpenters cannot make furniture (this is restricted to furniture-makers considered a different trade, the "menuisier"). Under penalty of a fine, wood-workers cannot work before 4 o'clock in the morning or 9 o'clock at night. The same restrictions apply to other, but not all, trades. Some ordinances specify that in certain trades—the thread-makers and the ribbon-makers, for example—a widow may carry on practicing her husband's trade, provided there are no male sons. Thread-makers cannot keep workers in different houses, dress-makers must cut as well as sew their dresses and not use less cloth than provided, wood-workers can't use rotten wood and are required to use the wood provided by a client.

Books of trades are rare. The most famous and best-studied is the *Livre des métiers* written in 1268 by the Provost of Paris, Etienne Boileau, and taken from testimony of senior members of each corporation or guild, which for the most part had not been written down before that date. There are four known four copies of Etienne Boileau's text (Paris, Archives Nationales de France and the Bibliothèque nationale de France.), which has been twice edited and reprinted. There is a book of ordinances of the trades of the city of Metz (1382-1590) from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Paris, BnF, MSS fr. 8709-8710, unedited). And, in addition to the present manuscript of Norman origin, there are two other Norman books of trades: the Ordinances of Evreux of Jacques Dablaiges of 1385-1387 in the Archives départementales de l'Eure at Evreux (see Giffard below) ; and those of Lisieux of Robert Maudit housed in Archives of Calvados in Caen (F 7910, unedited). There is also a book of trades for Bourges (see below). A comparative study of the French books of ordinances on the trades that would take into account the character of the original manuscripts constitutes a valuable project for future study.

LITERATURE

Boileau, Etienne. *Les Métiers et les corporations de la ville de Paris. XIIIe siècle. Le Livre des métiers d'Étienne Boileau*, ed. René de Lespinasse and François Bonnardot, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1879 (*Histoire générale de Paris* ; reprint Slatkine, 1980).

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Passy, Louis. *Le livre des métiers de Gisors au XVIe siècle*, Pointoise, Société historique du Vexin, 1907.

Tourbeau de Maisonneuve, E., ed. *Anciennes Corporations. Les ouvrières à Bourges. Cayer des reglemens & ordonnances sur plusieurs estats et mestiers de personnes demourantes en la ville et faulxbourgs de Bourges, 1561 à 1633, publié d'après l'original conservé aux Archives de la Mairie, Bourges, Pigelet & Fils & Tardy, 1881.*

ONLINE RESOURCES

Names of the trades in Old French

http://www.vieuxmetiers.org/lettre_g.htm