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[GILLES L'OLIVIER and AUGUSTIN DOURDIER]. *Recueil de l'origine et fondation de l'abbaye de Fontenelles avecq les sepultures, epitaphes et armoiries qui solloyent estre en ladicte abbaye*

In Latin and French, illuminated manuscript on paper

France, Hainaut (Valenciennes), dated 1587 with later 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> c. additions

[V] + 106 ff (of which ff. 78-106 are blank, with pen trials and scribbling), apparently complete (collation i<sup>3</sup> [+ 3, including a folding-out plan], ii-iii<sup>10</sup>, iv<sup>9</sup>, v<sup>10</sup>, vi<sup>6</sup>, vii<sup>10</sup>, viii<sup>6</sup>, ix-x<sup>10</sup>, xi<sup>18</sup>, xii<sup>9</sup> [of 18, other leaves of quire missing or cancelled], with last two quires xi and xii ruled but left blank), on paper (watermark apparently unrecorded, not in Briquet or Piccard), written in a rather upright cursive hand in brown ink, with later cursive additions in a number of different hands, some in darker ink, full text pages on up to 28 long lines between two horizontals and two verticals, paper ruled in light red ink (justification 230 x 160 mm.), title-page colored in wash and tempera (fol.4), genealogical diagrams and family trees drawn in ink and colored in wash and tempera (ff. 5-8), 52 emblazoned heraldic shields (sometimes up to 6 per page) drawn in ink and colored in wash and tempera, a number of planned heraldic shields with crozier that remained hollow (e.g. ff. 37v-41 and a few others), added 19<sup>th</sup> century letter and fold-out ground plan, numerous pen trials and scribbling on blank leaves (perhaps a child's doing?). French binding of contemporary brown calf over pasteboard, sides with frame of blind and gilt fillets enclosing a gilt roll with foliate and winged cupid heads motifs, central gilt ornament, sides remounted and restored, spine sewn on five raised thongs [rebacked], with gilt title: "Abbaye de Fontenelles MSS", gilt and decorated edges (Upper joint cracked, some scuff marks on covers, rip to fol. 2, but with no loss of text).

Dimensions 320 x 230 mm.

The rediscovery of this long-lost manuscript recording the history of the art, buildings, and residents of the Cistercian foundation of Fontenelle in Cambrai permits a reassessment of the convent's importance. Once majestic, though now entirely destroyed, the "courtly" convent of Fontenelle boasted royal patronage and housed many influential high-born occupants from its founding in the early thirteenth century until its sale and destruction in 1792. The manuscript is generously illustrated with plans, coats-of-arms, and drawings of artistic monuments.

## PROVENANCE

1. The main part of this manuscript was copied and decorated in Valenciennes in 1587, as stated in the dedicatory preface found ff. 2-3. The Sisters of the Abbey of Fontenelle (Cistercian foundation located near the small town of Maing [Nord], a town between Valenciennes and Cambrai) had a "refuge" or urban dwelling in Valenciennes, where they retreated during and after the attacks waged against religious foundations by the Huguenots during the Wars of Religion, and throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries during warfare. The

Hainaut region was particularly struck by warfare and destructions in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Successive additions in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries most likely date after the manuscript was returned to the Abbey of Fontenelle (Cottineau, II, col. 1183-1184), reconstructed under the prelatore of Marie Le Poivre (died in 1606). The Abbey underwent continued attacks and mass destructions throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, constantly forcing the nuns and abbesses to retreat to safer havens. The additions could have been added in Fontenelle or in one of the numerous retreats during wartime, in particular Valenciennes.

2. Owned and studied by Arthur Dinaux (1795-1864), as indicated in the concluding note on f. 77. The manuscript was included in the sale dedicated to the scholar's collection: *Catalogue de la Bibliothèque de feu M. Arthur Dinaux...Troisième partie. Ouvrages relatifs au nord de la France et au midi de la Belgique*, Paris, 1865, lot. 60: "Manuscrit de la plus grande beauté, rédigé en français et enrichi des blasons des abbesses...." Arthur Dinaux was editor of the journal entitled *Archives historiques et littéraires du nord de la France et du midi de la Belgique*, published from 1829 to 1854. He was a member of the Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, and a recognized erudite and local historian. Dinaux was also an important collector of French and Belgian historical and artistic material, to wit the sales held in the 1860s in Paris of parts of his collection (Paris, 1864, *Catalogue des estampes sur l'histoire du nord de la France et de la Belgique...formant le cabinet de feu M. Arthur Dinaux; Catalogue de la Bibliothèque de feu M. Arthur Dinaux...*, Paris, 1864 and 1865). On Arthur Dinaux as a collector see the prefaces signed "Le bibliophile Julien" published in Paris, 1864 and 1865 (*Catalogue de la Bibliothèque de feu M. Arthur Dinaux...*, Paris, 1864 and 1865). See also J. Delecourt, *Notice sur Arthur Dinaux...*, Mons, 1866.
3. Engraved ex-libris pasted on the upper pastedown of Merlin d'Estreux de Beaugrenier ("d'azur à trois haches d'or"). The same ex-libris is found in a copy of Jean d'Intras, *Le Pressoir mystique*, Paris, 1609 [Paris, BnF, Res. D-80423], with an interesting note: "Vente Hotel Drouot 29 novembre 1949 Fr. 8 500." The ex-libris is recorded in Meyer-Noirel and Laget, *Répertoire général des ex-libris français...* (2005), vol. XIII, p. 135, who give the dates 1835-1906 for Merlin d'Estreux, and quote Denis du Péage, *Ex-libris de Flandres et d'Artois*, 1934, p. 211.

## TEXT

ff. II-IIv, Letter addressed by the mayors of the towns of Thiant, Maing et Monchaux to the Sous-Préfet of the arrondissement de Douai, requesting the authorization to base allied Russian troops (Cossacks) in the former monastic buildings belonging to the Abbaye de Fontenelle, incipit, "Le cazernement des troupes alliées cantonnées dans les communes étant devenu l'objet de toute la sollicitude de l'autorité supérieure....";

f. III-IIIv, blank;

f. IV, Fold-out ground plan of the remaining monastic buildings and projected establishment of allied troops (project never realized): "Croquis de la ferme de Fontenelles et de tous les batimens qui en dependent dont une partie peuvent servir au cazernement d'un escadron de cosaques russes cantonnés dans les communes de Maing, Thiant et Monchaux, canton de Valenciennes (Sud)";

Both the letter and fold-out plan of the remnants of the Abbey must date circa 1815-1818 since the Russian troops were stationed in France after the defeat of the Battle of Waterloo as part of the allied troops that occupied France. The allied troops left France in 1818 after payment of war indemnities. The plan to station the troops in the conventual buildings never succeeded, resulting in their further abandonment and destruction.

ff. V-V<sub>v</sub>, blank;

ff. 1-1<sub>v</sub>, blank

ff. 2- 3, Dedication to Marie Le Poivre, abbess of Fontenelle by Gilles L'Olivier and Augustin Dourdier, incipit, "A reverende dame Madame Le Poivre, abbesse de Fontenelles. Anciennement Madame les roix, princes et grans seigneurs n'ayant encorre cognoissance du vray Dieu, pour eterniser leurs noms faisoient faire par leurs peuples et subgects des grans et superbes bastimens, tesmoings les murs de babilone, les piramides d'egipte, le mausole, l'eguille de Rome et autres telz m[a]gnifiques ouvraiges..."; explicit, "[...] priant nostre bon dieu vous donner en tresbonne santé longue et heureuse vie de Valenchiennes au mois de janvier 1587. Par voz treshumbles et tresobeissans damps Gilles L'Olivier pater, et Augustin Dourdier, religieux de Cambron";

f. 3<sub>v</sub>, blank;

f. 4, Title-page, with title set in a Mannerist decorated cartouche with colored strapwork designs, flowers and fruits: *Recueil de l'origine et fondation de l'abbaye de Fontenelles avecq les sepultures, epitaphes et armoiries qui solloyent estre en ladicte abbaye*,

f. 4<sub>v</sub>, blank;

ff. 5-8, Heraldic genealogical trees of the Le Poivre family, beginning in 1273, traced in brown ink and colored in wash and tempera; Marie Le Poivre is found on f. 7: "Damoiselle Marie Le Poivre";

f. 8<sub>v</sub>, blank;

ff. 9-12, Series of six full-page coat-of-arms, colored in wash and tempera; f. 9: Coat-of-arms of the Abbey of Fontenelle (on a scroll: "Abbaye de Fontenelle"): *d'azur semé de fleurs de lis d'or, sur écu en losange, propre aux abbeses crossées, surmonté de la crosse abbatiale*; f. 9<sub>v</sub>, Coat-of-arms of Clairvaux; f. 10, Coat-of-arms of the Cistercian order; f. 12: Arms of Marie Le Poivre, Abbess of Fontenelle;

f. 12<sub>v</sub>, blank;

ff. 13-17<sub>v</sub>, Gilles L'Olivier and Augustin Dourdier, *Recueil de l'origine et fondation de l'abbaye de Fontenelles avecq les sepultures, epitaphes et armoiries qui solloyent estre en ladicte abbaye*, heading in a decorated cartouche: *De l'abbaye de nostre dame de Fontenelles lez Valentiennes, et de son origine et commmchement*; incipit, "On troeuve par anciens papiers et registres que les premiers fondatresses de l'eglise et abbaye nostre dame de Fontenelles furent deulx soeurs beghines filles legitimes de noble homme Hellin d'Aulnoit chevalier

dont l'une avoit nom Jehenne et l'autre Agnez..."; *Mutation de l'abbaye de Fontenelles ou elle a esté jusques a present* (ff. 14-15v); *Copie d'une lettre approuvant la fondation du monastere de Fontenelles* (ff. 15v-16); Aultre copie de lettre approuvans encoire ladicte fondation de nostre dame de fontenelles...Frere Adam abbete Cisteaulx aux aimees soeurs professes de nostre dame de fontenelles les Valenchiennes... (ff. 16v-17v);

ff. 18-20v, On the epitaphs originally found in the Abbey of Fontenelles, heading, *Recueil des epitaphes estans en ladicte abbaye de Fontenelles*, incipit, "Après le trespas de Guillaume premier du nom dit le bon conte, quy advint l'an 1337 sa femme dame Jehenne de Valois..."; Coat-of-arms, colored in wash and tempera of Guillaume, comte de Hainault and Jeanne de Valois, comtesse de Hainault (f. 20v);

ff. 21-24v, Series of coats-of-arms displayed on the tomb of Guillaume, comte de Hainault, colored in wash and tempera, heading, *Sensuivent les armoyries quy estoient autour du tombeau dudit comte Guillaume*; f. 21v: "En teste du tombeau sont cincq armoiries"; f. 22, "Au pied de ladicte tombe sont cincq armoiries"; ff. 22v-23, "Au costé dextre du tombeau dudit comte Guillaume sont dix armoiries"; ff. 23v-24, "Au costé senestre dudit tombeau sont dix armoiries"; text on Guillaume de Hainault and Jeanne de Valois (f. 24v)

ff. 25-36, Description of tombstones and epitaphs, in particular those of Jeanne de Valois, Isabeau de Baviere, Anne, daughter of Louis de Bavière etc., all accompanied with colored coats-of-arms, heading, *L'autre au plus pres de l'autel au dessus est une lame platte gravee a une dame sa robe de drap d'or semee d'armoyries...*; f. 25v, Coat-of-arms for Namur and Hainault; ff. 26-26v, Twelve coats-of-arms displayed around a tombstone: "Autour de ladicte lame estoient douze armoiries", etc.

f. 36v, blank;

ff. 37-56v, Description of the abbesses of Notre Dame de Fontenelle, heading, "Sensuivent les abbesses lesquelles ont estez en l'abaye de Fontenelles depuis la fondation de ladicte abbaye quy fut (selon les annales et cronicques de Haynault (?) l'an mil deux cens douze, jusques a celle quy est pour le jourd'huy vivante, lesquelles ont estez recueillies hors les anchiens escriptz de ladicte abbaye, l'an de grace mil cinq cens quattrevintz six par Damp Gilles Lolivier confesseur et Damp Augustin Dourdier chappelain de ladicte abbaye tous deux religieux de Cambron." The successive abbesses receive a page or more each, text preceded by a coat-of-arms (sometimes left blank), beginning: "La premiere abbesse de l'abbaye de Fontenelles avoit nom Hauwis..." [the coat-of-arms was not supplied] (fol. 37v). Abbess Marie Le Poivre is a contemporary of the authors (the 25<sup>th</sup> Abbess of the Abbey of Fontenelle, died in 1698), and is the dedicatee of this work. She receives a more elaborate treatment that spans over ff. 53-56v: "La vingtcinquiesme et pour ce jourdhuy encorres abbesse a nom Marie Le Poivre...";

f. 57, Coat-of-arms with the motto "Fide inconcussa": Louis de Berlaimont (1575-1667), Archbishop and Duke of Cambrai who consecrated in 1586 the chapel built by Marie Le Poivre in the urban "refuge" of Valenciennes;

f. 57v, blank;

ff. 58-69v, Seventeenth-century additions to the *Recueil de l'origine et fondation de l'abbaye de Fontenelles...* (1587), as continued by successive hands, according to the same pattern, one or more pages for each abbess, treated chronologically, beginning: "Madame Marie Le Poivre apres avoir esté abbesse l'espace de 45 ans s'est volontairement deporté de sa charge en sa place at [sic] esté denommee madame Barbe Blocquel..." (f. 58); in red and Roman capitals: "Cantique sur la devise de vertueuse et devote Dame Madame Caterine Le Moisne Reverende Abbessse de Fontenelles" (f. 60);

ff. 70-76, Eighteenth-century additions to the *Recueil de l'origine et fondation de l'abbaye de Fontenelles...* (1587), beginning, "Dame Madame Agnes Descourouz, 32e abesse de ce monastere..."; ending with the 36<sup>th</sup> and last abbess of Fontenelle: "M...Farez, 36e et derniere abbessse de Fontenelles";

f. 76v, blank;

f. 77, Added note copied by the 19<sup>th</sup> century scholar and one-time owner of this manuscript, Arthur Dinaux (1795-1864): "Conclusion. Dame Farez vit avec douleur les premiers orages de la Révolution française. Elle faillit à la peine, et laissa la direction active à dame Henriette Castillon, prieure de la maison..."; explicit, "[...] Dès lors les dernières religieuses de Fontenelles se séparèrent sans retour. [signed] Arthur Dinaux. Extrait d'une notice complète que nous avons publiée dans les *Archives du Nord de la France et du midi de la Belgique*, vol. 1er de la 2de série, p. 496, 1837, in-8<sup>o</sup>" [on Arthur Dinaux, see Provenance above];

ff. 77v-106v, blank, with numerous pen trials or scribbling.

Remaining untraced since its sale in 1865, this manuscript contains a contemporary account of historical, genealogical, and heraldic matters pertaining to the Abbey of Fontenelle (sometimes written "Fontenelles"), which housed a community of Cistercian nuns. The *Recueil* was composed by two Cistercian monks (Gilles L'Olivier and Augustin Dourdier), otherwise unrecorded authors, from Cambron (Cistercian Abbey founded in 1148 by St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), one of the wealthiest abbeys in Hainaut, eventually suppressed in 1789 by Joseph II). Fontenelle was placed under the protection of the prestigious Abbey of Cambron.

Located in the diocese of Cambrai (arrondissement de Valenciennes), Fontenelle was founded in 1212 by two sisters Agnes and Jeanne, daughters of Hélin, seigneur d'Aulnoy, who initially chose to live as beguines of some sort, and were rapidly admitted within the Cistercian obedience. They founded an abbey near the Escaut river, under the protection of the Counts of Hainaut and were endowed with considerable riches and land. Many noble ladies joined or chose to retire at Fontenelle, which soon became an abbey of great importance in Northern France through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. To quote just a few women of high lineage, Jeanne de Valois (died in 1352), Countess of Hainaut and sister of Philippe VI, King of France, retired at Fontenelle where she was buried; Anna, daughter of Emperor Louis of Bavaria; Marguerite de Hainaut etc. This contributed to the "courtly" atmosphere that reigned at Fontenelle during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

However, the first centuries of relative prosperity and calm were soon replaced by years of war and strife. The Wars of Religion with outbreaks of iconoclasm, looting, and arson struck Fontenelle in

1566-1567: the abbey suffered the action of the “gueux” or “brise-images” who destroyed the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century funerary monuments luckily described at length in our manuscript. To quote this *Recueil*: “[...] l'an XVe .lxvi. [1566] le jour Saint Loys, qui est le XXVe d'aoust, entre deux a trois heures du matin, grande multitude de hugenotz de ce pays vinrent a Fontenelles et rompirent et briserent toutes les images et verrieres de ladicte abbaye meismes firent plusieurs degatz et furent buvants, mangeants et trionfant en icelle l'espace de trois jours routiers [sic]” [In 1566, on the day of the Feast of Saint Louis which is 25 August, between two and three o'clock in the morning, a great number of Huguenots from this country came to Fontenelle and broke and destroyed all the images and glasswork of the abbey and caused much damage, drinking, eating, and being merry during three whole days] (f. 53-53v). Again: “Le jour des Rois ils rompirent le beau monument de madame Jeanne de Valloys ensemble cestuy de sa fille Isabeau, et de sa niepce Anne de Bavière...” [On the Feast of Epiphany, they broke the beautiful funerary monument elevated in memory of Jeanne de Valois, as well as the one made for her daughter Isabeau and her niece Anne of Bavaria] (f. 54). The present work was composed and copied in 1587, some twenty years after the attacks that caused the nuns and their abbess Marie Le Poivre to seek refuge in Valenciennes and Cambrai. For over forty years the nuns were sheltered for the most part in Valenciennes and had their abbey progressively reconstructed, under the impulse of such dynamic abbesses as Louise de Barbaize (1612-1644). This manuscript offers many passages that describe the successive campaigns of reconstruction. War between Spain and France also took its terrible toll. Although the nuns fought painstakingly to rebuild and maintain the Abbey, Fontenelle would eventually be sold in 1792 and its inhabitants dispersed: the stones were quarried and the belongings scattered. Even the ruins have disappeared, and there is no trace left today of the once grand and respected foundation. Archaeological digs took place in the 1970s and 1980s (the “carreaux de Fontenelle” are exhibited at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Valenciennes [see Beaussart, 1981; Beaussart and Maliet, 1983; Maliet and Gabriel, 1985]), revealing some traces of the buildings and funerary monuments described in our *Recueil*.

The successive 36 abbesses and their works are described in more or less detail depending on the importance of their prelature (a complete list of the abbesses of Fontenelle is found in Dimier, DHGE, cols. 955-956). Often the authors provide accounts on the various works and restorations undertaken by the abbesses, such as Louise de Barbaize, 28<sup>th</sup> abbess of Fontenelle, going into great detail, sometimes giving the costs and the material used to rebuild the conventual buildings: “Sy a fait dresser un corps de logis a present nomme le quartier de Madame avec chambres et sales ou presentement mangent les religieux, estangers...Ladicte dame abbesse a fait restaurer la grande eglise laquelle estoit toute ruinee ne restant que la couverture bien caducq...” (f. 61v).

The present *Recueil* is often quoted as a major source for the history of this important Cistercian foundation, for which very few contemporary sources are preserved. For a list of the few period documents preserved concerning the Abbey of Fontenelle, see [Exhibition], 1978, pp. 10 and 33-34. A copy of the *Recueil* was made in the seventeenth century, now in Cambrai, Bibliothèque municipale, MS. 788: “Mémoires pour l'histoire de l'abbaye de Fontenelle, recueillis par D. Gilles L'Olivier et D. Augustin Dourdier, religieux de Cambrai, copiés par Messire A.-A. De Pitpan, seigneur de Montauban” (*Catalogue général des manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques...* [CGM], Cambrai, vol. XVII, p. 287). Because the Cambrai copy was realized in 1676, the entire portion that covers the years after 1676 is most likely original and found only in the present original manuscript (hence our

manuscript, ff. 67-77). About our copy, one reads: "Arthur Dinaux, heureux possesseur d'un important manuscrit retraçant l'histoire de l'abbaye depuis sa fondation, rédigé en 1587 par deux religieux de l'abbaye de Cambron, détachés à Fontenelle et complété jusqu'à la Révolution, devait en publier une excellente étude en 1837...la trace de ce manuscrit (qu'avait connu Simon Le Boucq) est pour le moment perdue, mais une précieuse copie de 1676, due à Alexandre-Antoine de Pitpance repose toujours à la bibliothèque municipale de Cambrai." ([Exhibition]. *L'abbaye cistercienne de Fontenelle* (1978), p. 9).

In sum, this manuscript contributes greatly to the study of the medieval and early modern history of the Cistercian abbey of Fontenelle. In addition it offers contemporary and endearing testimony to the struggles waged by successive abbesses to maintain the community in a region of war and strife. The elegant heraldic and genealogical illustrations, all hand-colored, complement the historical contribution of the text.

## LITERATURE

Beaussart, P. "Fouilles à l'abbaye cistercienne de Fontenelle (Nord)," in *Archéologie médiévale* 11 (1981), p. 284 and ff.

Beaussart, P. and V. Maliet. "Les pavements de l'abbatiale de Maing," in *Revue du Nord* 65 (1983), pp. 123-147.

Dimier, M.-A., "Fontenelles," in *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques*, vol. XVII, Paris, 1971, col. 954-956.

Dinaux, Arthur, "Histoire des monumens. Abbaye de Fontenelles," in *Archives du Nord de la France et du midi de la Belgique*, Nouvelle série, Tome Ier, Valenciennes, 1837.

[Exhibition]. *L'abbaye cistercienne de Fontenelle. Exposition archéologique et iconographique. Église de Maing*, mai-juin 1978 [Paris, BnF, 4-V-35394]

Le Glay, A. *Cameracum christianum, ou histoire ecclésiastique du diocèse de Cambrai*, Lille, 1849, pp. 307-309.

Maliet, V. and M. Gabriel. "Fouilles à l'abbaye de Fontenelle (Maing)," in *Archéologie médiévale* 15 (1985), pp. 242-252.

Prévost, S. "L'abbaye cistercienne de Fontenelle: les débuts de son existence," in *Valentiana* 15 (1995), pp. 27-32.

Trotin, Jean. *Le cartulaire médiéval de l'abbaye de Fontenelle*, Valenciennes, Centre universitaire, 1978.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

On the Abbey of Fontenelle

[http://www.maing-aspm.fr/pages/patrimoine\\_abbaye.htm](http://www.maing-aspm.fr/pages/patrimoine_abbaye.htm)

On Jeanne de Valois

[http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeanne\\_de\\_Valois\\_\(1294-1352\)](http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeanne_de_Valois_(1294-1352))

Cistercians

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cistercians>

<http://www.cistercensi.info/index.asp?lin=en>

Remains of Cambron

<http://www.cistercensi.info/abbazie/abbazie.asp?ab=588&lin=en>

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