

Le Louvre des Antiquaires
2 Place du Palais-Royal
75001 Paris (France)
tel. +33 (0)1 42 60 15 58 • fax. +33 (0)1 40 15 00 25
info@lesenluminures.com

2970 North Lake Shore Drive
Chicago, IL 60657 (USA)
tel. +773 929 5986
fax. +773 528 3976
chicago@lesenluminures.com

PEDRO MEXÍA, *Silva de varia lección*, in its French translation, *Les Diverses leçons de Pierre Messie Gentil-homme de Seville*, by CLAUDE GRUGER
In French, illustrated manuscript on paper
Belgium, Mons, dated 1587-1588

243 pages, (collation i-xv⁸, xv⁴, missing the last leaf) , written on good quality paper (watermark Briquet 1165, "Armoiries, Compas," Troyes, 1578, with variants, nearly all recorded in northern France, until 1588) in brown ink on 30-31 long lines in an attractive cursive italic, lines unruled, horizontal and vertical lines ruled for the text block and running headings (justification 24.5/25.5 mm.), signatures in lower right in Roman capitals, beginning "A1" through to "Q," skipping "J," contemporary pagination in upper right and left corners in Arabic numbers, with some marginal notes written in the same ink and in a Roman script, chapter headings in Roman, 41 chapters in the first part and 6 chapters in the second part, introduced by 47 calligraphic initials drawing in pen and ink and inhabited by satyrs, monkeys, foxes, dragons, eagles, mermaids, and occasionally figures (e.g., the teacher and the student, p.83, king, knight in armor, etc.), usually amidst scrolling floral and foliate Renaissance ornament. Bound in 16th century half vellum over flexible paper boards on four raised cords (vellum spliced in some areas, cover slightly bowed, stained, title page detached, some fraying of the edges of the opening leaves, else in very good intact, original condition). Dimensions 310 x 208 mm.

This is a fine illustrated copy of one of the most popular books of the sixteenth century, a sort of schoolbook of historical, mythological, and practical facts and anecdotes in the genre of the "Attic Nights." Whereas printed copies are common and the work was translated in many languages, manuscripts are virtually unknown. The relationship between the present copy and contemporary imprints remains to be further studied; the imprints appear without the inventive Renaissance illustrations.

PROVENANCE:

1. Written in Mons and dated "A Mons. 1587" and "1588" on the title page and p. 212, the beginning of the second part. The watermarks conform exactly to this location and date, for they show that the paper came from one of the great northern (Troyes) papermaker families in the last decades of the sixteenth century. Claude Denise, whose name appears in the watermark itself, was active from 1578 to 1588. He was followed in business by Edmond, 1584-89, and by Nicolas in 1631, both of whom also used the charge of a compass.

2. In a seventeenth-century hand on the flyleaf: "Livre autenticque des declaration [sic] mis en lumiere du .xxiiii.e[me] de septembre 1643 en memoire de fedelite et [conferences] (?) 1643."

TEXT

p. 1, Chapter 1, "Des diverses decons [sic] de Pierre Messie Gentil-hom de Seville, Partie Premiere. Pourquoi les hommes vivoient iadis plus long temps qu'ilz ne font en ceste age. Chapitre 1";

p. 4, Chapter 2, "Que l'opinion de ceulx qui pensent, les ans du temnps passé avoir este plus courtz ... Quelle fut la premiere ville du monde, & que noz anciens peres ont eu plus d'enfans que ceulx qui sont nommez en la sainte scripture";

p. 9, Chapter 3, "Que le signe de la Croix estoit estime, devant que nostre Sauveur Iesuchrist y fust crucifie;

p. 12, Chapter 4, "De l'excellence du secret, et comme il se doit garder avec aucuns bons exemples";

p. 19, Chapter 5, "Combien est louable le peu parler";

p. 22, Chapter 6, "Lettre notable de Plutarque, a Traian Empereur";

p. 25, Chapter 7, "De l'estrange opinion des Egyptiens touchant le temps de la vie de l'homme la iugeans par la proportion du coeur";

p. 28, Chapter 8, "De l'origine de l'art militaire, qui furent ceux qui premier occuperent les regnes d'autruy, et des inventeurs de plusieurs fortes d'armes, mesmes de l'artillerie";

p. 32, Chapter 9, "De deux femmes, don't l'une en habit d'homme fut faires Pape, l'autre Imperatrice";

p. 35, Chapter 10, Du commencement des Amazones, & de plusieurs choses notables qu'elles ont mises a execution";

p. 44, Chapter 11, "De l'antiquité de Constantinople, & comme elle fut conquise par les Turcz";

p. 51, Chapter 12, "De quelle race, et nation fut Mahomet, et en quell temps sa secte print son origine";

p. 57, Chapter 13, "Le commencement de la seigneurie du Turc, & des princes qui y ont regné;

p. 75, Chapter 14, "Pourquoy l'homme v adroit, pourquoy il poise plus a ieun qu'apres avoir pris son repas: Et la cause pour laquelle il poise plus mort que vif, avec autres belles disputes ...";

p. 79, Chapter 15, "De l'excellence du chef entre les autres members. Qu'il est mauvais d'avoir petite teste ...";

p. 82, Chapter 16, "D'un different qui fut entre le maistre & le disciple, si subtil, que les Iuges ne le peurent decider";

p. 85, Chapter 17, "Que la mort se doit iuger bonne ou mauvaise, selon d'estat auquel on meurt, avec exemple de la mort du plusieurs";

p. 88-89, Chapter 18, "De l'estrange nature de Timon Athemen, enemy de l'humain lignage";

p. 91, Chapter 19, "Combien il y a eu de Papes depuis saint Pierre ...";

p. 95, Chapter 20, "La cause des iours caniculaires ...";

p. 102, Chapter 21, "De l'art admirable de nager d'un home, & l'origine de la fable du poisson Colas ...";

p. 105, Chapter 22, "Des homes marins, & d'aucunes choses notables";

p. 108, Chapter 23, "De quelle sorte on parloit au commencement du monde, & la division des langues";

p. 112, Chapter 24, "La division des aages du mondes ... Et aussi du commencement des regnes";

p. 121, Chapter 25, "De lestrange vie de Diogenes Cinique ...";

p. 26, Chapter 26, "De variable natures des homes outré les naturelles inclinations ...";

p. 133, Chapter 27, "De la grandeur de l'Empire Romain ...";

p. 139-40, Chapter 28, "L'asaut & prinse de la ville de Rome par les Gotz";

p. 152, Chapter 29, "L'excellence & les louenges du travail, &et le dommage qu'engendre oysiueté";

p. 162, Chapter 30, "Pourquoy la Palme est attribuee aux victorieux, & le Laurier signe de victoire";

p. 166, Chapter 31, "Combien est detestable la vice de cruauté ...";

p. 174-75, Chapter 32, "Comme bien souuvent le Roys mauuais & tyrans sont ministres de Dieu ...";

p. 178-79, Chapter 33, "De l'estrange cas avenue a un des fils de Cresus Roy de Lidie ...";

p. 183, Chapter 34, "D'une femme qui fut mariee beaucoup de fois, & d'un home qui auoit eu plusieurs femmes ...";

pp. 184-85, Chapter 35, "D'un grand cas qui auint a deux Princes de Castille";

pp. 186-87, Chapter 36, "Des estranges & diuerses complexios de deux Pilosophes, don't l'un pleuroit & l'autre rioit de l'estat & gouuernance du monde";

pp. 190, Chapter 37, "Daucunes choses notables, qui sont auenues en une mesme sorte ...";

pp. 192-93, Chapter 38, "Que beaucoup d'hommes se sont tellement ressemblez, qui bien souuent l'un a esté pris pour l'autre";

pp. 200-201, Chapter 39, "D'un estrange cas auenu en une mesme sorte & en diuers temps a deux Cheualiers Romains";

pp. 202-03, Chapter 40, "De la distinction de l'aage de l'homme selon la doctrine des Astrologues";

p. 209, Chapter 41, "D'aucunes certaines annees de la vie humaine que les anciens iugerent les plus dangereuses ...";

p. 212, [in Roman capitals] "Second partie des diuerses lecons de Pierre messie ge[n]til-homme de Seville," followed by a cartouche, then the date "1588";

p. 213, Chapter 1, "Par combine de diuers moyens Francois Sforce & Nicolas Pichinin, ont acquis la renommée des plus savans en l'art militaire ...";

p. 215, Chapter 2, "Que le Lyon a peur du Coq, avec maintes autres choses notables de la douceur & bonté du Lyon";

pp. 214-15, Chapter 3, "Que fut le premier qui apprivoisa le Lyon: Et ce que Lisimaque capitaine d'Alexandre le grand fit a vu";

pp. 223-24, Chapter 4, "De l'ordre & cheualerie des Templiers ...";

pp. 231-32, Chapter 5, "Par quel moyen le saint siege Apostolique fut transferé en France, combine il y fut, & comme il retourna dans Rome";

p. 236, Chapter 6, "Quand danger il y a de murmurer contre les princes, avec les loz de leurs clemence ...," explicit, "qu'Archeuesque ... qu'entendu par ...".

This is a French translation of the Spanish work by Pero (or Pedro) [de] Mexía (1496-1551), entitled *Silva de varia lección* ("The Forest of Tales and Anecdotes") and first published in Seville in 1540. Mexía may have taken his inspiration from a classical work such as that of Aulus Gellius (c. 125-180 A.D.), *Noctes Atticae* ("Attic Nights"). Like "Attic Nights" the "Forest" is a compilation of

a vast overview of diverse topics, mundane and worldly, ancient and modern, including discourse on the origin of military art, the ages of man, sailors, certain vices such as cruelty and laziness, swimming, the custom of tipping one's hat as a salutation, the signs of the cross, Constantinople and the greatness of the Roman Empire, including its women, such as the female Pope and female Empress, the Turkish Empire, the divisions of angels, etc. Its seeming disorder evokes the arrangement of certain medieval encyclopedias. Mexía's work consisted only of three parts, whereas later editions and many of the translations include a fourth part (included here).

Pero (or Pedro) Mexía outlines the circumstances of his life in one of his principal works, the *Historia del emperador Carlos V*, considered to be of "exceptional significance to the student of historiography" because of its "breadth of view [and] even a kind of geopolitical attitude" (Schuster, 1960, pp. 4 and 6). He was born in urbane Seville, and he studied there and in Salamanca, acquiring an early familiarity with Livy, Tacitus, Suetonius, and other Roman writers. Friend of Erasmus, also of Vives, he witnessed the rise of Spain's domination of Europe. As a friend of Ferdinand Columbus, the second son of Christopher Columbus, Mexía gained a reputation as mathematician and cosmographer. After writing the "Forest," he went on to complete his most ambitious chronicle *Historia imperial y cesarean*, and he then wrote a collection of *Diálogos o coloquios* (Seville, 1546/47) modeled after a similar work by Erasmus. Soon thereafter, he was named official historian to Charles V, and he began a biographical chronicle of the king-emperor, his patron, which was incomplete at his death in 1551.

Claude Gruget of Paris was responsible for the first French translation published in 1552 in Lyon. The present volume, dated 1587/88 relies on Gruget's translation. The title page specifies that it includes the fourth part "oultre les precedentes impressions" (absent in the previous editions). Gruget was secretary to Louis de Bourbon, Prince de Condé, and translator of many Greek, Spanish, and Italian works, including the Epistles of Phalaris (1550) and the Dialogues of Speroni (1551). He was also the trusted confidant of Margaret of Navarre, whose life's masterpiece, the *Heptameron*, he posthumously in 1559. Gruget enjoys the distinction as being the first author in France to employ the word "humanist" (see Campana, 1946, pp. 64, 70-71). In Ch. 21 of *Les Diverses lecons*, on the legend of Cola Pesce, quoting Pontano, he remarks: "l'un est Pontan grand humaniste, orateur et poete" (our copy, p. 102). Among the six added chapters include a few of decided interest to a French audience, such as the Avignon Papacy, and the Knights Templar. Numerous editions of *Les Diverses lecons* were printed in France in the sixteenth century by Barthelemy Honorat, Etienne Michel, among others (see Brunet, III, 1689). Note that the catalogue of the BnF lists two earlier French editions of 1526, but these dates cannot be reconciled either with the date of the original Spanish text or Gruger's activity, so they must be an error. A second translation was undertaken by Antoine Du Verdier dedicated to Anne d'Urfe, Marquis de Baugé, in the last decades of the sixteenth century (1583? 1592?).

ILLUSTRATION

p. 1, Initial T, calligraphic and foliate;

p. 4, Initial P, with putti and a mermaid;

p. 9, Initial L, foliate with a fox (or squirrel?);

- p. 12, Initial L, foliate and floral with entwined dragons;
- p. 19, Initial L, with a knight in profile, the visor of his helmet open, with a feathered plume, a bird sitting on the helmet, and a bow and arrows below;
- p. 22, Initial P, as on p. 4;
- p. 25, Initial C, foliate, with a satyr-demon plowing on a horn and holding a pitchfork;
- p. 28, Initial C, as on p. 25 (minor differences, not traced);
- p. 32, Initial I, foliate and floral with a winged creature doing a cartwheel;
- p. 35, Initial E, a man with wings, holding a staff in a foliate and floral initial;
- p. 44, Initial E, as on p. 35 (larger, different scale);
- p. 51, Initial I, foliate and floral, with a sun and a moon on either side of the initial;
- p. 58, Initial L, foliate and floral;
- p. 75, Initial L, an eagle standing rampant;
- p. 79, Initial S, floral and foliate, with an ornamental masque;
- p. 83, Initial I, the master (left) and his disciple (right) on either side of the initial;
- p. 85, Initial L, a monkey holding a baby monkey, a rabbit below, in a foliate and floral initial;
- p. 89, Initial T, two naked women riding wild boars;
- p. 91, Initial V, a satyr blowing a long horn in a foliate initial;
- p. 96, Initial I, foliate and floral;
- p. 102, Initial P, a mermaid with a branch growing out of her mouth, two putti on the left and right;
- p. 105, Initial C, an old woman with wings and a bow and arrow...;
- p. 108, Initial L, with a griffon, a snake coming out of his mouth;
- p. 112, Initial C, as on p. 105 (with some minor differences);
- p. 121, Initial I, foliate and floral, with two birds, wings spread, on either side of the initial;

p. 127, Initial L, a king with a scepter on a foliate and floral ground;

p. 133, Initial I, foliate and floral;

p. 140, Initial T, foliate and floral;

p. 153, Initial N, a jester reading a book in a foliate and floral initial;

p. 162, Initial C, as on pp. 25-28;

p. 166, Initial E, foliate and floral;

p. 175, Initial C, foliate and floral;

p. 178, Initial H, foliate and floral;

p. 183, Initial I, foliate and floral;

p. 185, Initial C, foliate and floral;

p. 187, Initial A, two bearded jesters reading books, facing each other, foliate and floral (variant of p. 153);

p. 190, Initial C, a crowned and winged hybrid woman in a foliate and floral initial;

193, Initial L, foliate and floral;

p. 201, Initial L, foliate and floral;

p. 203, Initial P, mostly foliate and floral, head of a beast embedded in the lower section;

p. 209, Initial L, foliate and floral;

p. 213, Initial I, foliate and floral;

p. 215, Initial D, foliate and floral;

p. 222, Initial C, foliate and floral;

p. 224, Initial E, foliate and floral;

p. 232, Initial P, foliate and floral;

p. 236, Initial I, foliate and floral;

Some illustrations relate to the themes of the chapters but most do not. See however, pp. 82-83 on the difference between teacher and student, illustrated by a master and his disciple p. 140-141, on laziness illustrated by a jester; pp. 186-87, on two philosophers Heraclitus and Democritus, illustrated by two jesters reading. Some are reused; however, the changes in size, and subtle differences from one appearance to another show that they are not traced but rather copied freehand in the space available following the models used by the artist

Between 1543 and 2003, 97 editions in all of Pedro Mexía's *Silva de varia lección* were printed in seven languages. Widely read, extensively used in the schools throughout Europe, influential on English drama, including Christopher Marlowe and perhaps even Shakespeare, a source for Montaigne's *Essais*, the *Diverses leçons* was undeniably a "best-seller" of its day. There is a modern critical edition of the Spanish version by Casto (1989), although evidently there is no modern edition of the French translation, only a reprint of the 1604 printed edition of du Verdier (see Mexía, 2009). No extant manuscripts of Gruget's text are recorded. The printed editions evidently are not illustrated. Although the Schoenberg Database records two copies of Mexía's *Historia del emperador Carlos V* and one of the *Historia imperial y cesarean*, it cites none of the "Forest." There is one recorded manuscript copy of the second French translation entitled *Les Diverses leçons* by Du Verdier, dated 1583 and appearing in the 1827 catalogue of Payne and Foss (see Schoenberg Database ID number 81834).

LITERATURE

Aquilon, P. "L'entrée de Charles Quint à Loches," in *Loches au XVIe siècle*, Marseille, 1979, pp. 25, 34ff. and 55ff.

Campana, Augusto. "The Origin of the Word 'Humanist'," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 9 (1946), pp. 60-73.

Messie, Pierre. *Les Diverses leçons de Pierre Messie... mises de castillan en françois par Cl. Gruget... Quatrième édition...*, Tournon, C. Michel and T. Soubron, 1904.

Mexía, Pedro. *Silva de varia lección*, ed. Antonio Castro, Madrid, Catedra, 1989.

Mexía, Pedro. *Les Diverses Leçons D'Antoine Du Verdier: S. de Vaupriuz, Suyuans Celles de Pierre Messie*, Boiesie, ID, Kessinger Publishing Company, 2009.

Michaud, G. L. "The Spanish Sources of Certain Sixteenth Century French Writers," *Modern Language Notes* 43 (1928), pp. 157-163.

Pues, F. "Claude Gruget et ses Diverses leçons de Pierre Messie," *Les Lettres romanes* 13 (1959), pp. 371-83.

Schuster, E. J. "Pedro de Mexía and Spanish Golden Age Historiography," *Renaissance News* 13 (1960), pp. 3-6.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Les Diverses lecons ... Claude Gruget, 1643 (4th edition), digitized version

http://books.google.com/books?id=-nIUAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=diverses+lecons+pierre+messie&hl=en&ei=i4zxS6OwHpOmNort4eAP&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false