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JACQUES LE GRAND (JACOBUS MAGNI), *Le Livre de bonnes meurs* (The Book of Good Morals); Extracts from *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*; Other short texts
In French, illuminated manuscript on paper and parchment
Northern France (Honguemare-Guenouville or Hondouville in the Eure valley), March 4, 1446-October 14, 1446

i + 164 + i folios on paper (flyleaves and the outer leaves of the first quire on parchment), watermark letter 'C', Briquet 8110, Lyon, 1447, original foliation in Roman numerals in red ink (main text only), modern foliation in pencil, 1-164 (cited here), lacking nine leaves (collation i⁴⁴ [seven leaves missing after f. 1, with loss of text] ii¹⁶ [-15, -16, two leaves missing after f. 24, with loss of text] iii-x¹⁶ xi¹⁵), horizontal catchwords with decoration, ruled in lead (justification 135 x 88 mm.), written in brown ink in cursive bookhand on 25 lines, capitals touched in yellow, 1-line initials alternating in red or blue (ff. 145-154v), 74 puzzle initials of varying size (on f. 19 stretching the height of the page), ONE ILLUMINATED INITIAL 12-line, in blue on pink ground, in-filled with a burnished gold ground and ivy vine in colors, some water damage towards the end of the book, minor stains and signs of use, a few significant tears in the leaves, otherwise good condition. In its ORIGINAL BINDING in brown calf over wooden boards and with five raised bands on the spine, both covers blind-tooled with three nested frames using individual rectangular stamps with foliage, panthers and fleurs-de-lys, in very worn condition and with several marks of insect infestation, however, apart from a few loose leaves, the sewing is robust and the volume can be easily consulted. Dimensions 200 x 140 mm.

This is an extraordinary manuscript – a signed and dated copy of a medieval bestseller in French on the art of good living, a text written originally for the Duke of Berry and preserved here in its unrestored original binding. It includes precise details of its origin, copied in 1446 by a master of money changers, Jean Court, for his own use. Peppered with biographical details about Jean and his family, and the family coat of arms, the volume also includes extracts from other secular texts of personal interest. Unlike many manuscripts copied for personal use, this one is flamboyantly and idiosyncratically decorated on nearly half its folios.

PROVENANCE

1. At the end of the text of Le Grand's *Livre de bonnes meurs*, on f. 131, a colophon dates the copy to October 14, 1446, and provides the name of the scribe, Jean Court, a clerk working for Sir Guillaume Garbot and Sir Lanzot in Honguemare-Guenouville or Hondouville in the Eure valley (Normandy): "L'an de grace mil iiij^c et xl vj et le vendredi apres la saint denis le xiiij jour de octobre fut fait et finie ceste presente copie pour moy Jehan Court, clert demourant A Hon[guemare-Guenouville] [or Hondouville] en leurent [en l'Eure], Du Sire guillaume Garbot et du Sire lanzot sitoyent [citoyen] de lion [Lyon] mes maistres, a la utilite de moy et des aultres qui y vouldront Proufitrer et aux queulx je le presteray. Si p[lair]e a tous qui le trouveront qu'il la me rendent. Donne l'an et le Jour dessusdit tesmoing mon seing manuel." According to his colophon, Court copied the manuscript for his own use, and would lend it to anyone who might find it useful. He ended the colophon with a request for the book to be returned to him, in case it was lost. Below the colophon he signed his name twice in Latin "J Curti", and below his name, the initial M, for his wife Margarite.

The colophon following the extracts from *Les Grandes Chroniques* and the verses (f. 160v) indicates that these texts were copied first (although they were bound at the end of the book). Court finished copying them on March 4, 1446, on the birth date of his sister, Amélie (born at midnight): "Si finest le content du cors et de l'ame pour moy Jehan court clert Le iiiij^e jour de mars l'an mil iiiij^c et xl vj. Et celly jour naquit ma suer qui s'apelle amely, le nom de ma dame, a heure de mynuit".

Jean Court is identifiable as the "maître des changeurs" recorded in Lyon in 1452, and his master, Guillaume Garbot, is documented as "maître des notaires" in Lyon in 1433 and 1451 (Monfalcon, 1866, 8, p. 8). Six years before his posting in Lyon, when he wrote our manuscript, he was working for Garbot in Normandy in the Eure valley, as he clearly states in the colophon. The town he abbreviates as "Hon" is either Honguemare-Guenouville or Hondouville. Court's profession as a master of the money changers explains the choice of the extracts from *Les Grandes Chroniques*, concerning the conviction of the Templars. It was the Templars who provided the service of money changing, i.e. loans, for pilgrims to the Holy Land. Perhaps his family even had ancestors who were Templars.

Other personal events were also recorded in the book. Above the colophon on f. 131, was noted the birth of Jean's daughter, Louisa, on 12 November 1472, also naming the godfather, Louis Court, his cousin, and the priest, André Labatssa (?): "L'an de grace mil iiiij^c septante et deux le post lendemain saint martin xii jour de novembre nayst loysa filla de jehan court et fut son parant messir loys court son cosin et messir aurd [André?] vicair Labatssa [?]" . On f. 145 Court added another signed note dated 1472, and on f. 133v he recorded the birth on June 18, 1486 of his son, Lyonart. From this note we also learn that Jean's wife was called Margarine and that it was Laurent Bazo who baptized Lyonart. Either Jean fathered children quite late in his life, or his son, also called Jean, wrote these inscriptions. The names "Jehant" and "IEHANE" appear in the lower margin of f. 38 (late 15th century).

A Jean de la Court is listed as a copyist for Jeanne de Laval (1433-1498), the second wife of Rene Duke of Anjou and Lorraine, titular king of Naples; they were married in 1454 (Bénédictins de Bouveret, 1967, vol. 3, no. 10195, citing Bradley, 1830-1916, vol. 2, p. 135 [sic, actually p. 185]); whether this is our scribe is open to question.

The family coat of arms was drawn in colors on five leaves in the book, incorporated into the decoration around the catchwords and rubrics. These arms appear in two main variations, *d'or chargé de trois étoiles d'azure* on ff. 24, 82v, 130v, and *d'or chargé de trois étoiles de gueules* on ff. 7v, 82v. The variation with three blue stars on gold ground is part of the arms (chef) of the de Court family of Ile-de-France (Rietstap, 1950, vol. I, p. 474). His arms are found on the pages with Le Grand's text, next to the rubrics introducing chapters about chaste life (f. 24, *Comment abstinence est cause de plusieurs biens*; around the arms is penwork that includes the French royal fleur-de-lis) and marriage (f. 82v, *Comment l'on doit gouverner et maintenir en mariage*; here the arms are painted twice, with red and blue stars). The arms are also found next to the catchword "L'omme orgueilleux" about the proud man who, like a rebel, rises higher than he should (f. 7v), and around the

catchword "Il que antoine" in a passage about Marc Antony's love for Cleopatra (f. 69v, in chapter 11 of part two, *Comment les princes doivent estre sobres et chastes*; a single star on yellow ground). The arms were also drawn in the lower margin of the penultimate leaf of this text, in the last chapter discussing how one should think about Judgment Day (f. 130v). Above this last occurrence of the arms are the initials 'M' and 'C' for Margarine Court.

Manicules (pointing hands) are drawn in the margins; for example, one draws attention to the passage about living a chaste life, in which Seneca states that eyes are the messengers of all vices: "Et seneque en son livre des remedes dit que les yeulx son[t] messangiers de tous vices" (f. 27v, chapter 12 in part 1, *Comment on doit vivre chastement*). Another manicule, drawn within a crown, highlights a passage about the importance of humility for a prince (f. 65v, chapter 10 in part 2).

2. Soon thereafter, in the fifteenth century, the manuscript passed to a descendant, Martine Court, who wrote an ownership inscription on the last leaf of the book, f. 164v: "Ce livre est a moy martine curt qui le trouvera le moy Rander je po[...?] y le vin martine cur[t]". She promised to offer wine to anyone who might find and return the manuscript to her, in case it was lost. Below the inscription she drew in the brown ink of the inscription her coat of arms bearing three stars, flanked by her initial and her family name "m curt".

TEXT

ff. 1r-v, incipit, "Cy commence la table du livre intitule de bonnes meurs le quel livre est divisies en deux parties dont le premier parle du Remede qui est contre les sept pechies mortelx, Et la seconde partie parle des trois estas du monde. Et premierement le premier chapitre de la premier partie parle commant orgueil desplaist a dieu."

Table of chapters with the first 16 chapter headings of part one, now ending imperfectly, and lacking seven leaves after f. 1, which contained the rest of the chapter list, and the first chapter (*Comment orgueil desplaist a Dieu*) and the beginning of the second chapter (*Comment orgueil avugle l'entendement*) of the text (see below).

ff. 2-131, incipit, "///en nostre sauveur Ihesu crist le quel pour nous sauver et guerir veult descendre du ciel et petit devenir Et pour tant se tu ne veulx en suyre ton humble serviteur..."; (f. 3) "Comment orgueil [cancelled] humilite fait que l'omme se cognoit et donne a chascun cognoissance De soy mesmes. Humilite donne a homme cognoissance de soy mesmes ..."

Jacques Le Grand, *Le Livre de bonnes meurs*, beginning imperfectly midway through the second chapter of the first part, with chapters 2-16 of the first part (ending on f. 46) and chapters 1-25 of the second part, which is complete. There is a modern edition by Evencio Beltran (1986), based on the presentation copy dated 1410 and offered to Jean de Berry, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 1023.

Two leaves are missing after f. 21, which contained the entire chapter 9 (*Comment nul ne doit estriver ne noises engendrer ou esmouvoir*) and the beginning of chapter 10 (*Comment on doit vivre sobrement*). Chapter 8 ends perfectly at the end of f. 21v. The interrupted text continues on f. 22 from the

passage in the beginning of chapter 10 referring to Lactantius explaining that poets call gluttony bestiality, for men who are gluttons live without reason and rule.

ff. 131v-133v, Christmas verses, incipit, "Noe noe... (f. 131v) / Conditor alme siderum... (f. 133)," also found in Brussels, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, MS 19303 (Jonas database, Online Resources), preceded by two rubrics "Dieu aye l'ame qui la fet..." and "Foulz est stet la droyte voye...";

ff. 134-142v, extracts from *Les Grandes Chroniques de France* introduced by the rubric *Cy apres s'ensuyt autres bons enseignemens* (Here follows other good advice) and preceded by a poem, incipit, "Fons est qui stet la droyte voye..." (which was already announced by the rubric on f. 131v, there spelled with the variant "Fonz"). These extracts include chapters about the conviction of the Templars in 1310, incipit, "En l'an de Nostre Seigneur mil iij^c et X, soysante templiers et plusieurs aultres..." (ch. LXV; H. Champion, ed., *Les Grandes Chroniques* on Gallica, vol. 8, p. 272; Online Resources) and about King Philippe le Long condemning the leper whom he accused of having poisoned fountains and wells in 1321 (Champion, ed., vol. 8, p. 358);

ff. 142v-155, [moral verses giving guidance for life, apparently unique], incipit, "Garde d trois choses chiers divist / C'est du premier dont tu issist ...," *Deo gracias J. Curti*"; f. 143, [verses on the same theme, possibly also unique], incipit, "Apren si duras ...";

ff. 155-160v, moral verses about the body and soul, apparently unique, preceded by a rubric], *Si Apres s'ensuit ung exemple et le contenus Du corps et de l'ame*, incipit, "Seigneur Je vous veil Reconpter / pas vous ebatre et deporter ...".

ff. 161-164, [poem about the Christ and the Judgment, apparently unique], incipit, "A tous ceulx qui cest dit verzont / Et de bon cuer y entendront / Maude salu ..."; [f. 164v, blank];

Final flyleaf, fifteenth-century text (a legal act?) signed by Johannes de Columbelli, who was a lawyer at Joan of Arc's trial (1431).

ILLUSTRATION

Jean Court most probably decorated the manuscript himself. A twelve-line painted initial filled with vine scrolls on a gold field begins the text on f. 1. Each chapter begins with a puzzle initial ornamented with elaborate penwork. The initials beginning the chapters on marriage (f. 83) and mortal sin (f. 109v) in *Le Livre de bonnes meurs* are decorated with oak leaves painted in green, as are the initials beginning the first four articles in the chapter about the trials of the Templars in *Les Grandes Chroniques* (ff. 135v-136). The paragraph marks (pieds-de-mouche) that introduce the chapter headings are also occasionally in red and blue and ornamented with elaborate penwork. The penwork profile faces ornament the chapter initials and the ascenders and descenders of letters on first and last lines of text; certain motifs such as the fish decorating the initial on f. 153v, are typical of manuscripts produced by notarial clerks.

Jacques Le Grand (c. 1360-c. 1415) studied theology in Paris and had become a well-known Augustinian preacher by the time he composed *Le Livre des bonnes meurs* in 1404. It is an adaptation in French of his main work, the *Sophilogium*, and corresponds to the last of its three parts, the knowledge of the three estates that make up society. Four years earlier around 1400, he had made the first part of his Latin work accessible to laymen in a French work entitled *Archilogue*

Sophie. Le Grand composed a second version of *Le Livre des bonnes meurs*, which he dedicated and presented to Jean de Berry (1340-1416) in 1410. The work is an encyclopedic treatise, based on the classics and medieval theology, composed with the purpose of educating laymen and the ruling classes on how to live a morally correct life. Le Grand is among the leading early humanists in France.

Le Livre des bonnes meurs was immensely successful. It survives in eighty manuscripts, as well as twenty printed editions from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (in addition to our manuscript, 79 manuscripts are listed in the Jonas database; Online Resources). Pierre le Rouge first printed the text in 1479, and as early as 1487 William Caxton printed it in English. Two manuscripts at the British Library contain two other medieval translations of Le Grand's text into English (Harley MS 149 and Additional MS 5467). It was also translated into Middle Dutch (Wijsman, p. 5, Online Resources).

Our manuscript begins with the prologue, on f. 1, in which the author announces the division of the work in two parts. The wording corresponds exactly to Le Grand's prologue in the second version of 1410, as found in the copy presented to Jean de Berry, edited by Beltran. Whereas the duke's copy begins with the dedication, immediately preceding the description about the division of the work, it is not found in our copy. It was either omitted intentionally, or the text derives from an earlier version. Nothing is missing in the beginning of the manuscript before the prologue; the verso of the front flyleaf shows off-set of the first page, including the large opening initial for "Cy commence ..." In our manuscript the prologue is followed by the contents list of the first part (as in the duke's copy, with some slight differences in the wording), after which seven leaves are missing (see above, Text). As announced in the prologue, the first part of the work is on remedies against the seven deadly sins, and the second on the three estates of clergy, nobles and commoners. The final part, which was not mentioned in the prologue (nor in the prologue of the duke's copy), is on death and the end of time. This tripartite structure differs from the division into five parts in the four copies at the Vatican (and twelve further copies), studied by R. Straub in 1997. Straub identifies the five-part division as a characteristic of the first redaction of 1404 (Straub, 1997, p. 181), and our manuscript thus contains the second redaction of the text. However, there are several textual variants in the copies belonging to both groups, and this important work would benefit from a study of all the surviving manuscripts in order to establish its textual tradition.

Our manuscript was copied by the clerk Jean Court for his own use, as he states in the manuscript, demonstrating – along with many other surviving copies – that the text was not only owned by the princes, nobility and clergy, but also by the urban elite, and was disseminated widely throughout society.

LITERATURE

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