

LES ENLUMINURES, LTD
2970 North Lake Shore Drive 11B
Chicago, Illinois 60657

tel. 1-773-929-5986
fax. 1-773-528-3976
chicago@lesenluminures.com

LES ENLUMINURES
Le Louvre des Antiquaires
2 place du Palais-Royal
75001 Paris

tél : 33 1 42 60 15 58
fax : 33 1 40 15 00 25
info@lesenluminures.com

**JACOBUS DE CESSOLIS, *Le jeu des eschaz moralisé* [French translation from the Latin by Jean Ferron of the *Liber super ludo scaccorum*]
In French, decorated manuscript on paper
Northern France or Belgium, Hainaut? Namur?, c. 1485-1500**

45 ff., complete (collation i-ii¹⁶, iii¹⁴ [16-2, with the last two leaves of gathering cancelled, likely blank]), on paper (watermark [fol. 4] close to Briquet no. 8733, "Lettre gothique P", Namur, dated 1486), written in brown ink in a bâtarde script ("lettre bourguignonne"), catchwords, rubrics in red, numerous capitals stroked in red, initials in red with ajouré designs (a fish (f. 33v), a phallus (f. 34v)), large opening historiated initial A in red with brown ink, yellow wash and calligraphic penwork in red extending into the margin. Bound in modern dark blue morocco, back sewn on 5 raised bands, gilt roll-tooled turn-ins, red morocco doublures, first and last flyleaves lined in red morocco, binding signed "Lobstein-Laurenchet", binding in optimal condition (Minor wormholes on first folios, never affecting text, some water-staining at the beginning in the upper margin again not affecting legibility, manuscript in good condition). Dimensions 300 x 208 mm.

This is one of only 10 manuscripts of a group A' of the Jean Ferron translation into French of the Latin Cessolis. Although there are around 80 copies total of the various French versions (divided into 3 groups), manuscripts are nevertheless surprisingly rare on the market, the Schoenberg database recording only two in the last three decades and no other copies from this group. The initial alluding to the dedicatee of the Ferron text, Bertrand Aubert de Tarascon, appears to be unique in the illustrated tradition.

PROVENANCE

1. Watermarks, script and decoration suggest a Northern French or French Flanders origin for this manuscript. The right-hand portion of the initial A contains the following arms: "D'or au lion de sable, au chef de gueules chargé de trois couronnes d'argent." Both the arms of the counties of Namur and that of Hainaut in Belgium include the characteristic "d'or au lion de sable armé et lampassé de gueules". Above and below the initial, one reads the following words: "eden de lo ve [or to ve?]." We have yet to identify this name or motto: are the syllables meant to be read together to form a name such as "Edendelove", or separately to form a first name and surname of the type "Eden Delove/Detove." Could this be the name of the scribe, whose arms might not be those of a nobleman, thus difficult to identify (the arms are not recorded in any of the major heraldic repertoires). If it is the scribe or an early patron or owner, neither is recorded in Bénédictins du Bouveret, *Colophons de manuscrits occidentaux*. It seems more probable that the syllables form a motto of some sort.

We could suggest the following, in French, as the manuscript is clearly from a French linguistic region, rather than Flemish: Eden [paradise] and the syllables "de lo ve" for "delove" [deluge] also spelled "deloive" or "deluve" (from the Latin, "diluvium"; see Greimas, *Dictionnaire de l'ancien français. Le Moyen Age*, 1994, p. 155). The motto would read something like "Paradise and Deluge." This is of course a first suggestion. The motto is not found in Chassant and Tausin, *Dictionnaire des devises*.

2. On the verso of the last leaf, one reads in a later cursive hand (17th c. or 18th c.): "Delivré a Mons[ieur] Devalles (?) a 8 s[ols]..." This is perhaps the name of a later owner and the price paid for the volume.

TEXT

The *Jeu des eschaz moralizé* begins with a Prologue (ff. 1-2) and is divided into four sections (History of the Game of Chess; Description of the noble pieces; Description of the pawns; Generalities on chess and the rules of the game), with 27 chapters:

ff. 1-45, Jacques de Cessoles, *Le jeu des eschaz moralizé* [French translation from the Latin by Jean Ferron of the *Liber super ludo scaccorum*], incipit Prologue (ff. 1-2), "A noble homme bertran de terrascon frere jehan ferron de l'ordre des freres prescheurs de paris son petit et humble chappellain salut. La sainte scripture dit que dieu nous a faiz a chascun commandement..." [ed. Collet, 1999, pp. 126-128];

ff. 2-4, [Section 1] History of the Game of Chess (ch. 1-3), rubrics to chapters: f. 2, *Comment l'on congnoist en l'homme les pires signes*; f. 2, *Le nom de celui qui trouva le jeu*; f. 2v, *Pourquoy le jeu trouvé fut* [ed. Collet, 1999, pp. 129-132];

ff. 4-20v, [Section 2] Description of the noble pieces (ch. 4-8), rubrics to chapters: f. 4, *La façon et maniere comment le roy est fait*; f. 8, *La maniere comment les alphins sont faiz*; f. 10v, *La maniere comment le chevalier doit estre fait*; f. 15, *La forme et maniere des rocz*; [ed. Collet, 1999, pp. 133-166];

ff. 20v-36v, [Section 3] Description of the pawns (ch. 9-16), rubrics to chapters: f. 20v, *La forme et maniere des pyons et de leurs noms. Le premier pyon a nom le laboureur*; f. 22v, *Le IIe pyon a nom le feure*; f. 23v, *Le nom du IIIe pion a nom le notaire*; f. 27, *Le IIIe pion a nom le marchand*; f. 29, *Le Ve pyon a nom le phisicien*; f. 31v, *Le nom du VIe pion [le tavernier]*; f. 33, *Le nom du VIIe pyon [la garde]*; f. 34v, *Le nom du VIIIe pyon [le ribaut]* [ed. Collet, 1999, pp. 166-194];

ff. 36v-45, [Section 4] Generalities on chess and the rules of the game, rubrics to chapters: f. 36v, *De la forme et maniere de l'eschiquier*; f. 37v, *La maniere du trait du roy*; f. 38v, *Les traitz des rocz*; f. 41, *La maniere du trait de la royne*; f. 42v, *Comme les alphins sont assis et de leurs traitz*; f. 43, *Les saulx des chevaliers*; f. 43, *Les traitz des pyons*; f. 44, [conclusion or epilogue] "En recordant briefvement ce que dessus est dit..." ; explicit, "[...] car vivre sans vertuz est vie de bestes et non vye d'omme. Or recouvrons a celui donc qui est en vie vertuz et verité et duquel toutes vertuz viennent qu'il nous doint a present grace. Et que nous puissions vivre avec luy pardurablement. Amen" [ed. Collet, 1999, pp. 194-211].

The *Ludus scacchorum* (or *Liber de moribus hominum vel officiis nobelium sive super ludo scacchorum* [Book of the Morals of Men and of the Duties of Noblemen according to the Game of Chess]) is a moralizing allegorical treatise in Latin prose. A thirteenth-century vicar from Lombardy attached to the convent of Saint-Dominic in Genoa, Jacobus de Cessolis composed the work, between 1317 and 1322. He based his composition on his sermons and wrote it at the request of his brethren and secular congregation. The earliest dated manuscript of the Latin version is 1419, but Kaeppli (*Scriptores ordinis praedicatorum medii aevi*, 1975, II, pp. 421-422) concluded that Jacobus actually wrote it around 1300; others have dated it as early as 1275. Kaeppli identified 250 manuscripts of the text, including those in Latin and in the vernacular. The Latin text was popular across Europe (there are some 80 extant manuscripts containing the Latin original), and many translated versions survive in French, English, Italian, German, Catalan, Dutch and Swedish. It is a title commonly found in princely libraries. The first French translation to be printed was that of Jean de Vignay in Paris, A. Vérard, 1504 (see Moreau, 1972, p. 131).

The Dominican Order was a major producer of popular literature, having produced such works as the *Legenda aurea* several decades earlier between 1260 and 1267. The invention of the game of chess was attributed to a philosopher Xerxes, who hoped to use the game to change the ways of the king of Babylonia. Utilizing several treatises of *exempla*, including Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum historiale*, Cessolis's work fits in the genre of exempla literature, including the Mirror of Princes tradition. The game of chess provides a metaphor for working out the correct relationship between a king and his subjects. In mapping out the metaphor, the author provides a detailed introduction to the rules of chess as it was played in the thirteenth century.

The textual tradition of the French translation of the *Ludus scacchorum* is, to say the least, complex. There are four French translations: the so-called anonymous version of Berne, a scarce version by Guillaume de Saint-André (see Literature below ed. Cauneau and Philippe) and two popular versions by Jean de Vignay for John II the Good while he was still Duke of Normandy (some time between 1332 and 1340) and the other by Jean Ferron (dated 1347). In his dedicatory prologue to Bertrand [Aubert] de Tarascon--of which little is known for certain--Jean Ferron identifies himself as a Dominican friar in Paris (the present manuscript erroneously gives the date 1447 for 1347 (see f. 1v)). Jean Ferron's concise rendition is considered closest to the original Latin: "Ferron tranche sur les deux autres [traducteurs] par son intelligence. C'est un esprit racé, qui domine sa matière" (Rychner, 1955, p. 485).

A. Collet has studied the manuscript tradition of the Jean Ferron translation in some detail in his introduction to his edition of the translation (A. Collet, 1999). Collet distinguishes three families of manuscripts. The first is Group A, which contains the "Ferron" manuscripts proper, that have not been contaminated by the Vignay translation (5 manuscripts, including Dijon, BM, 525 retained by Collet as the best manuscript). The second is Group A' which contains essentially the "Ferron" translation with some interpolations from the French Vignay and corrections from the Latin Cessolis (one word to a few lines; there are 9 manuscripts not counting the present manuscript which brings this number to 10). Finally, the third is Group B which contains the "Ferron-Vignay" text with, at the very least, a full chapter of interpolations "contaminating" the original Ferron translation (14 manuscripts). Groups A and A' comprise 15 manuscripts ("Pure Ferron" manuscripts [Group A] and "Ferron manuscripts with some interpolation" [Group A']). The

present copy belongs to group A' (our manuscript is quoted in the census conducted by A. Collet, 1999, pp. 31-32). Collet (ed.) stresses the importance of Group A' manuscripts, which sometimes correct problematic readings found in manuscripts in Group A. Group B includes 14 manuscripts ("Ferron-Vignay interpolated or *composite* manuscripts"). In all, there are 29 manuscripts of the Ferron or the Ferron-Vignay versions, as opposed to 52 manuscripts of the Vignay version.

The Ferron version, even with a few interpolations, remains the best translation of the Latin Cessolis, and testifies to the popularity of the text within French linguistic spheres a century after its original translation in Paris.

ILLUSTRATION

The present manuscript opens with an interesting historiated initial, divided vertically and presenting on the left-hand side Saint Martha and the "tarasque" (water dragon), and on the right-hand side heraldic arms accompanied with the motto or family name "eden /de / lo / ve." According to the Provençal legend, Saint Martha, sister of Mary Magdalene and Lazarus, went aboard a ship with her siblings after the Ascension of Christ, landed at Marseille, and preached Christianity throughout Provence. At Tarascon, she tamed a water dragon (*tarasque*) by pouring holy water over it, and then killed it in Arles. Martha is considered the symbol of active life, whereas her sister Magdalene incarnates the contemplative life. The presence of Saint Martha and the "tarasque" quite certainly reflect the opening words of the dedication: "A noble home Bertrand de Terrascon [Tarascon]...."

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Jacobus Cessolis in Archives de littérature du Moyen Age (Arlima)
http://www.arlima.net/il/iacopo_da_cessolis.html

Jean Ferron in Archives de littérature du Moyen Age (Arlima)
http://www.arlima.net/il/jean_ferron.html