

LES ENLUMINURES

PARIS CHICAGO NEW YORK

www.lesenluminures.com

PIERRE QUEYREL, *In usum astrolabii succincta declaratio* (A succinct declaration on using the astrolabe)

In Latin, illustrated manuscript on parchment

Central France (Limoges?), or South-eastern France (Gap?), mid-sixteenth century

46 folios on paper, watermark with letters (illegible), eighteenth-century foliation in brown ink beginning on the second leaf of manuscript, 1-27, modern foliation in pencil, 1-46, complete (collation i⁴ ii-iii⁸ iv⁸ [-6, lacking one leaf at the end of text after f. 25, without loss of text] v⁸ vi⁵ [irregular quire, difficult to see structure] vii⁶), no catchwords or signatures, ruled in brown ink (justification 116 x 64 mm.), written in brown ink in a very small hybrid book script on 25 lines, ornamental headpiece with an interlacing pattern in the beginning of text (f. 5), one initial in gold (f. 5), ONE DIAGRAM (f. 17), THREE PEN-AND-INK DRAWINGS, two of them highlighted with watercolor, part of the last leaf f. 46 torn out (without loss of original text, but with loss of seventeenth-century additions), some minor stains, but overall very good condition. CONTEMPORARY LIMP VELLUM BINDING, both covers gold-tooled with a single fillet frame around the edges and an oval stamp with interlacing ornament in the center, flat spine gold-tooled with small fleurons and single fillets, edges gilt, gold-tooling mostly worn out, covers with several stains, a pair of holes on both covers where ties were attached (now lost), in overall good condition. Dimensions 150 x 103 mm.

Unpublished practical manual on the astrolabe, including 64 "propositions" for the use of this astronomical instrument. Carefully written in a small, neat script, it is illustrated with a diagram and three drawings, including two showing astrolabes in use. Likely a personal book (the author's autograph?), its blank pages were used from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries to record family history and personal accounts. Every aspect of this volume, from the identity of the author, to the relationship of the text to other treatises on this subject, to the content of the added notes, offers rich potential for further research.

PROVENANCE

1. The manuscript was made in the middle of the sixteenth century by Pierre Queyrel, who gives his name, in the title of the work in the beginning on f. 5: "Petri Queyrelli philosophi in usum astrolabii succincta declaratio." Queyrel very likely illustrated the work himself. On Pierre Queyrel, see the discussion below.
2. From the sixteenth to the early eighteenth centuries members of the Pautheret family (and in the early eighteenth century, related families) wrote their *livre de raison* on the empty leaves of the book, on ff. 1v-2, 36v-46, including the signature "Pautheret" on f. 2. The family can be localized in Vesoul in eastern France, north of Besançon; see the inscription on f. 1v: "La chapelle du college de vesoul fut consacré le 14 janvier 1606 par (...) Suffragan de Besançon...."
3. Other blank leaves and spaces in the book were filled with personal accounts recorded by Jean Mathez at the beginning of the eighteenth century: ff. 1-2, 3-4, 26v-40v; including the signature "Jean Mathez" on f. 2.

4. Private European Collection.

TEXT

Modern foliation in pencil is followed in the description.

[ff. 1-2, originally blank]; f. 2v, [Preliminary poem in five lines, copied by Queyrel in a tiny script], *Diei civilis varia apud varios populos di<?>*, incipit, "Aegyptii diem ... ad mediam noctem/ ..."; f. 3, Illustration; [ff. 3v-4v, originally blank];

ff. 5-25, *Petri Queyrelli philosophi in usum astrolabii succincta declaratio. Propositio I, Quomodo indagandus sit verus solis locus*, incipit, "Verum solis locum indagare est investigare signum et gradum signi in quo sol versatur ... numerus quotus indicabis pro fundicatum. Finis."; [f. 25v, originally blank]; f. 26, Illustration; [ff. 26v-46v, originally blank].

Pierre Queyrel, *In usum astrolabii succincta declaratio* (A short declaration on using the astrolabe); an apparently unpublished and unstudied practical text on using the astrolabe.

Its contents appear to be related in some respects to the comprehensive treatise by Johannes Stöffler, *Elucidatio Fabricae ususque Astrolabii*, one of the most influential books on the subject, first published in 1513, with editions extending into the seventeenth century. Pierre Queyrel provides a similar division of the work into propositions (Stöffler provided 65, Queyrel 64), much the same general definition, as well as how to determine the height of the sun at a given hour, and so forth. The text begins by explaining how to determine the height of the sun on the day of observation: one should adjust the hand of the astrolabe to the month and date outlined at the back of the astrolabe, and the height of the sun appears in the circle of the signs of the zodiac.

ff. 1-2, 3v-4v, 25v, 26v-46v, originally left blank, now with family notes added in the sixteenth-eighteenth century (see Provenance notes 2 and 3, above); in addition, there is a prayer and meditation for the Mass added later in the empty space on f. 25rv, and a 6-line poem, "Sur la tombe de Pierre" added on f. 41.

ILLUSTRATION

One diagram (f. 17, propositio 41, *Qui possint 12 domorum coelestium principia assignari*) and three pen-and-ink drawings, of which two have watercolor highlights (ff. 5, 26):

f. 3, A goddess with a putto, presenting a laurel crown;

f. 5, Man in a landscape is shown using an astrolabe to measure the height of a tower. The landscape has a river, a man on horseback and a fortified town; a diagonal line is drawn from the astrolabe, over the tops of castle towers, to the sun. Next to this scene is the opening initial V, painted in gold against a landscape with a lion;

f. 26, Seated man holding an astrolabe and observing the sun.

An astrolabe is an instrument that allows its user to calculate astronomical positions accurately. Among its several uses, it was employed to identify stars and planets and to determine local

latitude given local time, and vice versa, allowing one to tell time, day or night. When used with planetary tables, it provided the simplest way to draw up an astrological chart. The use of an astrolabe was especially popular in classical antiquity, the Islamic Golden Age, the European Middle Ages (particularly during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries), and the Age of Discovery. In the Islamic world, the astrolabe continued to be used until the nineteenth century.

The author of our manuscript can perhaps be identified as the Pierre Queyrel who is mentioned by Marcel Fournier as a priest from Limoges, studying canon law at the University of Toulouse, and described as "régent ès-arts" in the middle of the sixteenth century (cf. Fournier, 1890, p. 623). Alternatively, a Pierre Queyrel from Gap is mentioned in the archives of Isère, in 1542 with a Charles Queyrel (*Bulletin philologique...* 1925, p. 268), and in 1543-1555 in a list of notaries (Prudhomme, 1898, p. 281), and in 1565 as one of three *procureurs de la communauté de Gap* in the efforts made against the plague (*Annales des Alpes* 1897, p. 89); his will is found in Archives des Hautes-Alpes, B. 7., f. 46 (Guillaume, 1887, p. 16).

More research is required to identify the author and to discover to the fullest the contribution of this text and its relationship to other treatises. The manuscript offers exciting new and unpublished research material for those interested in the history of science and in scientific instruments. The extensive personal and family notes added to the volume contribute another dimension, making this a valuable manuscript for historical research and for the history of the book.

LITERATURE

Annales des Alpes: recueil périodique des archives des Hautes-Alpes, Gap, 1897.

Bennett, J. and D. Bertoloni Meli, *Sphaera Mundi: Astronomy Books in the Whipple Museum 1478-1600*, Cambridge, 1994.

Bulletin philologique et historique jusqu'à 1715 du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, 1925.

Evans, J. *The History and Practice of Ancient Astronomy*, Oxford, 1998.

Guillaume, P. *Inventaire sommaire des archives départementales antérieures à 1790*, vol. 1, Gap, 1887.

Gunella, Alessandro and John Lamprey, tr., *Stoeffler's Elucidatio - The Construction and Use of the Astrolabe*, Classical Science Press, 2007.

King, D. A. "The Origin of the Astrolabe According to the Medieval Islamic Sources," *Journal for the History of Arabic Science* 5 (1981), pp. 43–83.

Laird, E., C. Poster and R. Utz, eds. "Astrolabes and the Construction of Time in the Late Middle Ages," *Constructions of Time in the Late Middle Ages*, Evanston, Illinois, 1997, pp. 51–69.

Laird, E. and R. Fischer, eds. "Critical edition of Pélerin de Prusse on the Astrolabe (translation of *Practique de Astralabe*)," *Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies*, New York, 1995.

Morrison, J. E. *The Astrolabe*, Rehoboth Beach, 2007.

Pouille Emmanuel. "L'astrolabe médiéval d'après les manuscrits de la Bibliothèque nationale," *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes* 112 (1954), pp. 81-103.

Prudhomme, M. A. "Du Commencement de l'année et l'indiction en Dauphiné," *Bulletin historique et philologique du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques* 1-2, 1898, pp. 260-284.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Astrolabe (Wikipedia)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astrolabe>

TM 1273