

***Réceptaire de Jean Pitart* (Medical Recipes Compiled by Jean Pitart)
In French, manuscript on parchment
France, Normandie (Calvados?), c. 1300-1320**

82 folios on parchment, original foliation in red ink in Roman numerals, iii-ciiii (?) (numbering poorly visible toward the end due to the condition of the manuscript, possible errors in the numbering), modern foliation in pencil, 1-82, lacking two at the beginning (?; discussed below) and an additional 22 leaves with loss of text (collation i^s [-1, -2, -4, lacking two leaves before f. 1 and one leaf after f. 1, with loss of text] ii^s [-1, lacking one leaf after f. 5, with loss of text] iii^s iv^s [-4, lacking one leaf after f. 23, with loss of text] v^s vi^s [-1, -3, -4, -5, -6, lacking one leaf after f. 35 and four leaves after f. 36, with loss of text] vii^s viii^s [-3, -6, -8, lacking one leaf after f. 48, one leaf after f. 50 and one leaf after f. 51, with loss of text] ix^s [-6, -7, lacking two leaves after f. 56, with loss of text] x^s [-4, -5, lacking two leaves after f. 60, with loss of text] xi^s [-3, -6, lacking one leaf after f. 65 and one leaves after f. 67, with loss of text] xii^s xiii^s [-1, -3, -7, lacking one leaf after f. 77, one leaf after f. 78 and one leaf after f. 81, with loss of text]), horizontal catchwords, ruled in hardpoint (justification 130 x 92 mm.), written in brown ink in Gothic book script (textualis) in two columns on 30 lines, prickings for hardpoint ruling visible in the outer margins, rubrics in a smaller script underlined in red, 1- to 2-line initials alternating in red and blue, several leaves in a very poor condition due to water damage, especially the first four leaves at the beginning and six leaves at the end, lacking the lower margin of f. 7, large tear on f. 20, loss of ink to some sections of text elsewhere, however the large majority of the manuscript is still intact and text in these parts is legible. In its original limp leather binding, in poor condition with significant holes and lacking parts of both covers. Dimensions 174 x 119 mm.

A fascinating collection of medical recipes, in French, compiled for the King of France, Philippe le Bel (r. 1285-1314), and traditionally associated with the name of his personal surgeon, Jean Pitart. It is known in nineteen other manuscripts (none in the United States), of which eight date from the fourteenth century. This newly discovered manuscript, although fragmentary and in imperfect condition, is one of the earliest copies, and it is more complete than the other copy from the beginning of the fourteenth century. The contents range from how to discover the gender of an unborn child to a diverse collection of medical remedies for anything that might ail you, from head lice to cancer.

PROVENANCE

1. The manuscript was written in the early fourteenth century, in Normandie, probably in the Calvados. The style of the script suggests dating the manuscript in the first two decades of the fourteenth century, contemporary to the composition of the work.
2. There are several ownership inscriptions and drolleries in the margins made over the centuries, including two inscriptions dated in the seventeenth century: "Hic liber spectar ad marinny de bures septembre ... filius Jacobi ex parra' Logiar (paroisse de Loges, in the Calvados) 1618" on f. 56v, and "Le present est a Marin de Bures septembre 1617" on f. 62.
3. Dominique Bures "de Loges hamau de la Forterie" (in the Calvados) is mentioned on

folio f. 62v.

4. Private collection, France (diocese of Bayeux).

TEXT

ff. 1-82v, [beginning imperfectly], incipit, “//desus Et au lever la maladie ou l’oignement aura este Et se faites par .ix. jours ou par .x. sy seres gueris. Item pour ceste maladie faites let [lait] nouiaux [noyau] de pin aussi vous feriez d’allmandes [d’amandes] Et de la gresse de yceluy let que vous cuidres [cueudres = cueillir] par dessus oignies la goutte rose en poy [peu] de temps elle sera guarie cest chose esprouvee ...”; [the first rubric], *pour oster rougeour de chiere [chair]* [to treat the redness of skin], incipit, “Recepte pour oster rougour de chiere par oignement. Prenez avecquez les apotiquaires une semence qui est apelee ... [f. 81], *Item. Recepte pour fere bon chiroygne [ciroine = plâtre de cire] qui est bon pour garir toutes plaies toutes douleurs et reconforter ners et pour toutes casseures ...* [text mainly illegible on the last three pages that follow]”.

Le réceptaire de Jean Pitart, partially edited by Karl Südhoff in 1909; modern edition online by Sylvie Bazin (see Online Resources),

Our manuscript contains the *réceptaire* (a collection of medical remedies) traditionally attributed to Jean Pitart, the royal surgeon of King Philippe le Bel; we are grateful to Marie-Laure Savoye for her help in identifying the work. The *réceptaire* is known in nineteen manuscripts, all in institutional collection and none in the United States (excluding our copy), of which eight are from the fourteenth century; for a list of the manuscripts, see the JONAS database (Online Resources). The work circulated with a number of different titles in the manuscripts, *Recettes enseignées au roy Philippe le Bel*, *Livre du Tresor de Chirurgie*, *Pratique de medecine*, or *Receptaire pour Philippe le Bel*. Our manuscript lacks the beginning of the work, beginning imperfectly in the middle of a remedy for the skin condition rosacea, known at the time as “goutte rose.”

The surviving manuscripts show the existence of two versions of the work: a long version and an abridged version. Our manuscript contains the abridged version. The difference between the versions is visible in the first part of the work, in which the long version has four groups of remedies, including surgical plasters and ophthalmic recipes, whereas the abridged version only describes four different types of surgical plaster (cf. “Une tradition mouvante” by Sylvie Bazin in her edition online). Our manuscript lacks the first part of the text. However, a comparison with the modern edition, which is based on Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 12323, suggests that, if our manuscript once included the long version, about ten leaves would be lacking from the beginning of our manuscript. This would be one full quire of eight leaves and the first two leaves of the quire that currently begins our manuscript. However, the medieval foliation in our manuscript suggests that only two leaves are lacking. The first leaf in our manuscript is foliated “iii” and the foliation in red ink is probably contemporary to the making of the manuscript, because it is also included in the original list of contents on ff. 24-28 (there is a list of contents for the text from f. 28 until the end, referring to the contemporary folio numbers from folio “xxxiii” (modern f. 28) to folio “Ci” (modern f. 80)).

The manuscripts of the *réceptaire de Jean Pitart* date from the beginning of the fourteenth century to the sixteenth century. The most complete copy is BnF, MS fr. 12323, carefully written in the mid-fourteenth century and illuminated with beautiful miniatures (Online Resources). Another

mid-fourteenth-century manuscript of the work, with a layout comparable to our manuscript (two columns of 29 lines) and decoration limited to 2-line initials, is Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 2001, ff. 25-60 (Online Resources; the remedy for "goutte rose" that begins our manuscript is found on f. 39 in this manuscript). Our copy dates from the beginning of the fourteenth century. Another copy dating from the beginning of the fourteenth century, London, British Library, Sloane MS 3126, ff. 11-24v, is very fragmentary, making our manuscript especially important (Sloane MS 3126 also includes a later fragmentary copy of the same work on ff. 80-90).

Jean Pitart, was born between 1230 and 1236 probably in Normandy, and died after 1327/8. He became the royal surgeon of King Philippe le Bel of France in 1298 and maintained this position during the reign of King Charles IV le Bel in 1322-1328. He was also the protégé of Gui de Châtillon, count of Saint-Pol, and of Charles de Valois, brother of Philippe le Bel. Within the vast collection of recipes now attributed to Jean Pitart, his name is explicitly attached to two that discuss canvas bandages and plasters, which are found in the beginning of the first part of the work (the attribution of this collection to Pitart is discussed by Bazin; Online Resources).

The second part of the work, included in our manuscript, provides a multitude of remedies treating the body from head to toe. The recipes for ailments address a wide variety of conditions, including skin conditions (ff. 1-, 23v, 67, "rougeurs," "teigne" (ringworm), "le mal saint leu" (le mal saint Loup, i.e. erysipelas), gout (ff. 3v, 59v-), gravel disease (f. 3v-), colic (f. 4v), epilepsy (f. 4v-, "mal saint Jean"), lost voice (f. 6v, "parole perdue"), good sleep (ff. 8, 41v-), fever (f. 8v-), heart pain and weakness (f. 9-), headache (ff. 12v-, 29v-33), sore or red eyes (ff. 14, 22v-, 34v-), cough (f. 17v), and cold (f. 17v, "rieume"). There are recipes for patients who spit blood (f. 17v), to make the patient vomit (f. 18-), against snake bite (f. 20) or dog bite (f. 20-), or for treating one's hair (ff. 23v, 33v-34). The recipes instruct on the appearance of urine in relation to one's health (f. 28-, e.g. f. 29, "Le urine de fame virge doit estre clere et pure sans corruption") and provide recipes for aches in the ears (f. 36v-), mouth (f. 37v-), nose (f. 38), teeth (f. 38v-), and stomach (ff. 41-, 45-). The text informs how "to know the seven signs of death" (ff. 42v-43), recipes for chest pain (f. 43v-), bleeding skin irritations (f. 47), tumors (f. 49-), *hydropisie* ("ytropie," fluid retention, f. 55v-), head lice and nits (f. 56v-), to make the patient sweat (f. 57v-), wounds (ff. 63-, 75v-, 79-), cancer (f. 68-, "cranque"), as well as for conception and pregnancy (f. 71v-).

One recipe gives a method for finding out the gender of an unborn baby. One should extract milk from the breast of the pregnant woman and place the milk in lukewarm water. If the milk floats on the surface, the baby is a boy, if it sinks, the baby is a girl. See f. 72v in our manuscript: "pour savoir se fame aura fils ou fille. Prenez du let de la memelle a la fame si le metez en eue tiede et se le let flote par dessus elle aura fieulx et se il dessent au fons elle aura fille." In the preceding opening, on ff. 71v-72, the text tells how to conceive a boy and provides prayers for childbirth. Elsewhere in the work, a collection of remedies for headaches instructs one to rub honey or different plant leaves against the temples. Other recipes use roots of different plants. In order to avoid anxiety, one should keep warm with the head well covered in the morning and evening.

A long recipe against the plague was added in the fifteenth century to the blank leaves on ff. 73v-74, followed by a mention, before the concluding prayer "Deo gracias," informing that the

recipe was sent to the King of France by the pope: "Ceste rechte a este envoye au Roy de France de par notre saint pere le pape et extraite par le conseil de tous ses fusiciens" (f. 74). The recipe is a variant of the "Remède contre la peste," identified in seven other manuscripts, all from the fifteenth or early sixteenth centuries; we are grateful to Marie-Laure Savoye for her help in identifying this recipe (cf. "Remède contre la peste" in Online Resources).

LITERATURE

Bazin-Tacchella, S. "Le 'Réceptaire attribué à Jean Pitart' (XIV^e siècle): projet d'une édition et d'un glossaire électroniques, Sciences et langues au Moyen Age," *Wissenschaften und Sprachen im Mittelalter, Studia romanica*, Heidelberg, Winter (2012), pp. 269-286.

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(Partial edition based on MSS Paris, BNF, fr. 12323 and Paris, Bibl. Interuniv. de Pharmacie, Ms. 1.)

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Tovar (de), C. "Contamination, interférences et tentatives de systématisation dans la tradition manuscrite des réceptaires médicaux français: le réceptaire de Jean Sauvage," *Bulletin d'information de l'Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes* 3 (1973), pp. 151-191.

Available online: https://www.persee.fr/doc/rht_0373-6075_1974_num_3_1973_1090

ONLINE RESOURCES

Le réceptaire dit de Jean Pitart in JONAS (IRHT-CNRS)

https://jonas.irht.cnrs.fr/consulter/oeuvre/detail_oeuvre.php?oeuvre=8534

Le réceptaire dit de Jean Pitart in ARLIMA

https://www.arlima.net/qt/receptaire_de_jean_pitart.html

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 2001 (Gallica)

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b90590133>

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 12323 (Gallica)

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b525109667>

Le réceptaire de Jean Pitart, edition by Sylvie Bazin

<http://www.atilf.fr/dmf/JeanPitart>

"Remède contre la peste" in JONAS (IRHT-CNRS)
<https://jonas.irht.cnrs.fr/oeuvre/16618>

Jean Pitard (Wikipedia)
https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Pitard

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