

An In-Depth Analysis of a 15th-Century French Book of Hours

Claudia Haines

Dr. Elizabeth Archibald, Department of History
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INTRODUCTION

The personal possessions of individuals are one of the most valuable resources available to historians, as they reveal details about the lives of the people who personally experienced the past. One such type of possession is the medieval **book of hours**, a genre of religious book often considered medieval Europe's "bestseller" due to its enormous popularity.

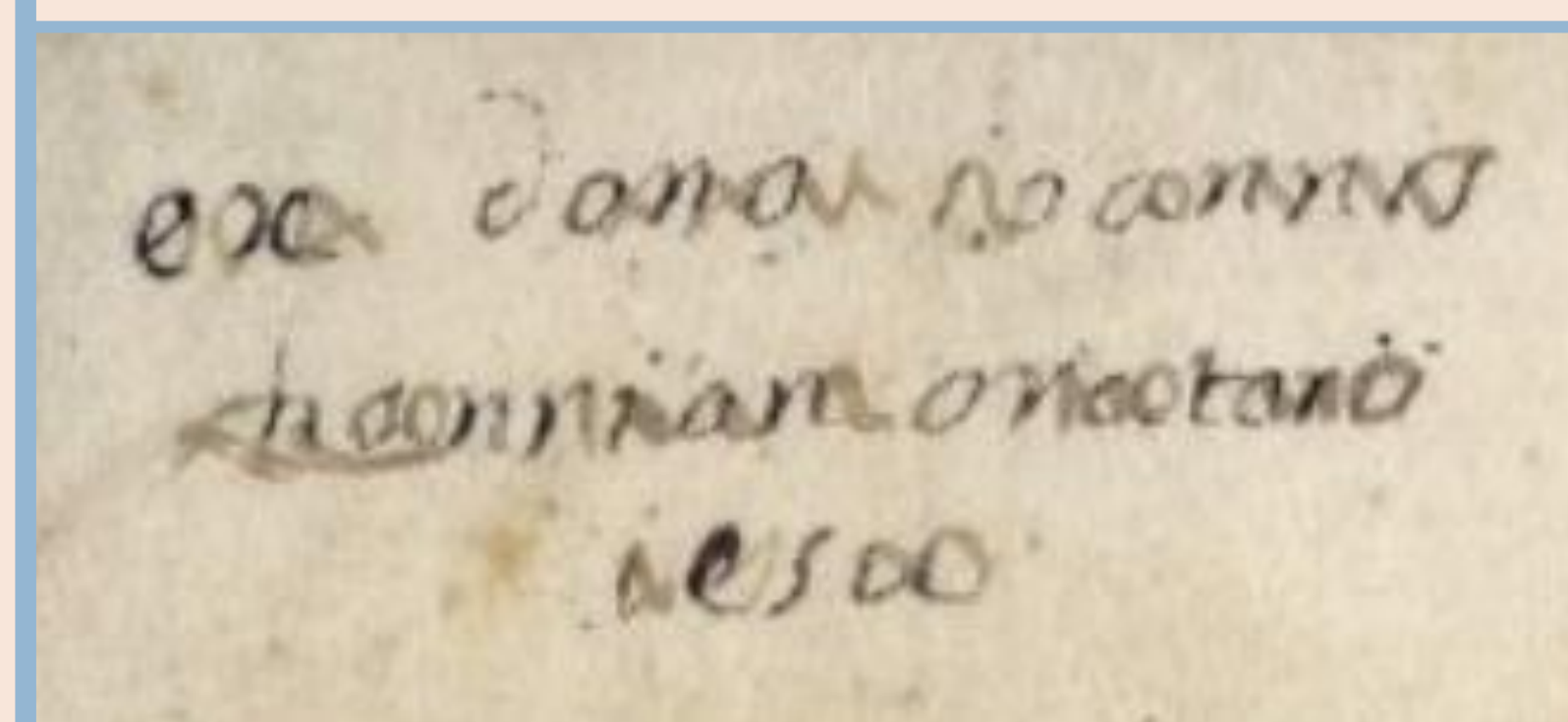
My project this semester sought to investigate a particular French book of hours from about 1490 held in Special Collections, about which very little is known, as well as the medieval manuscript facsimile collection held at the Frick Fine Arts Library.

Above all, I sought to learn more about the book of hours from Special Collections in terms of its devotional contents, its imagery, and its provenance.

PROVENANCE

Master of Jacques de Besançon: ca. 1489-1490

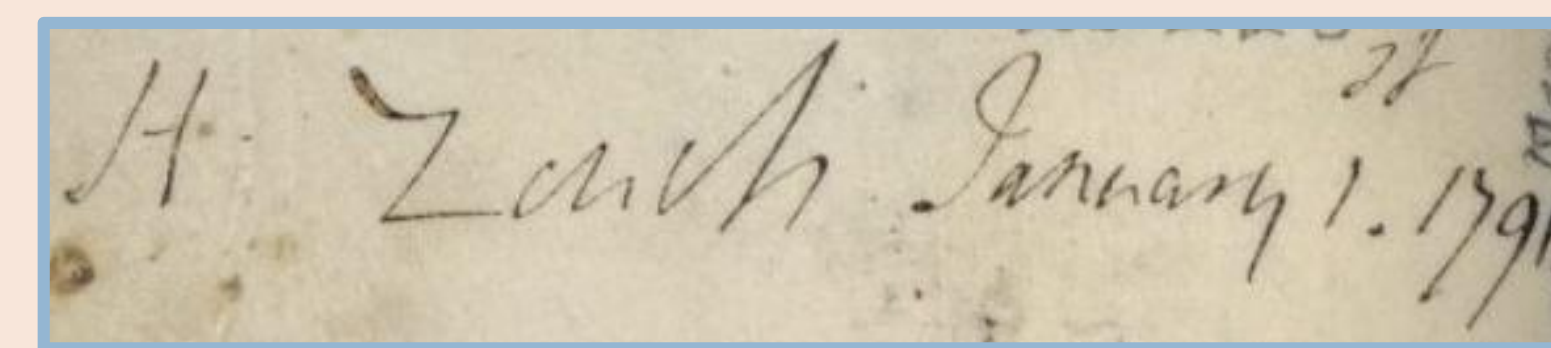
Ioannis Hannion [?]: 17th century



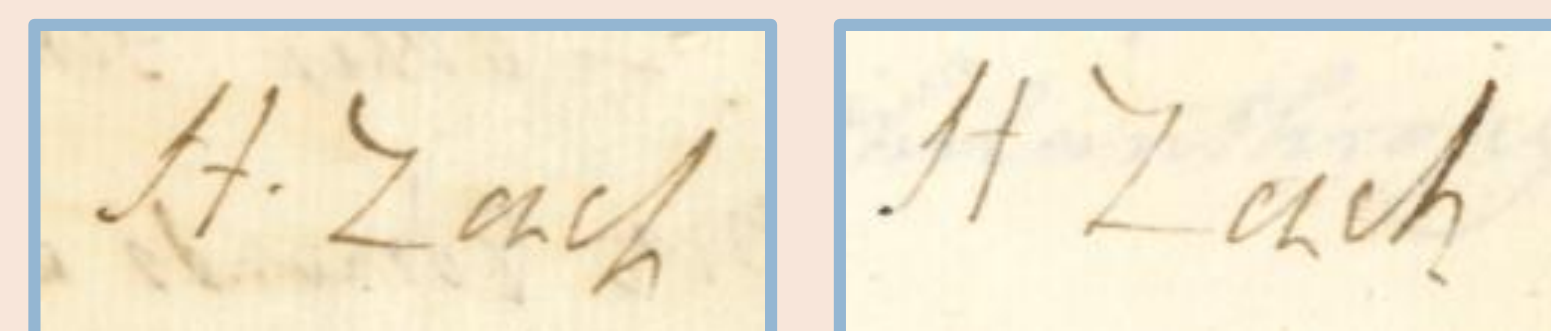
An inscription written on pg. 434 of the book, which may read "ex dono ioannis hannion [?] oratorii iesu"

Henry Zouch: late 18th century

Above: A signature reading "H. Zouch January 1 1791," found on pg. 10 of the book



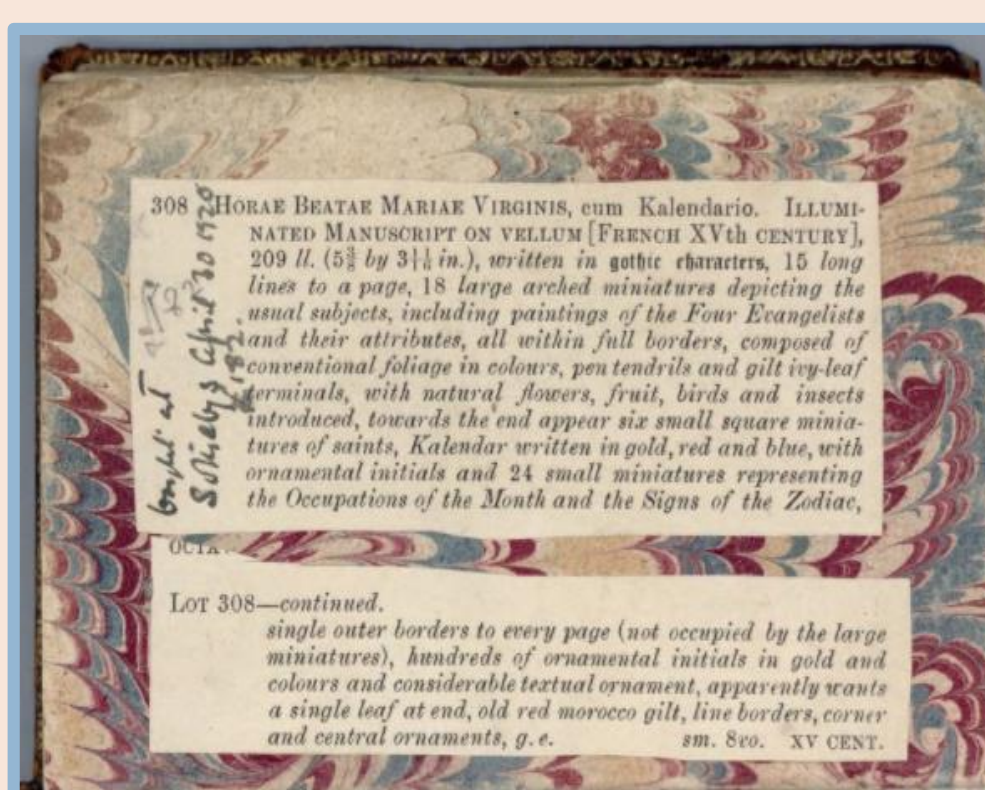
Below: The signatures on two of Zouch's letters, obtained from the Sheffield City Archives



James S. Geikie: ca. 1920-1939



Geikie's bookplate and handwritten note, found on pg. 2 of the book, and the record of the book's sale at Sotheby's in 1920.



Presumably, Geikie purchased the book at Sotheby's, as his handwriting accompanies the auction record.

The University Library System: 1956 - Present



Above: An image taken from the digitized version of the book of hours. These pages contain a miniature depicting the Virgin Mary and Christ following the crucifixion, as well as the first lines of the prayer "O Intemerata."

IMAGERY & SAINTS



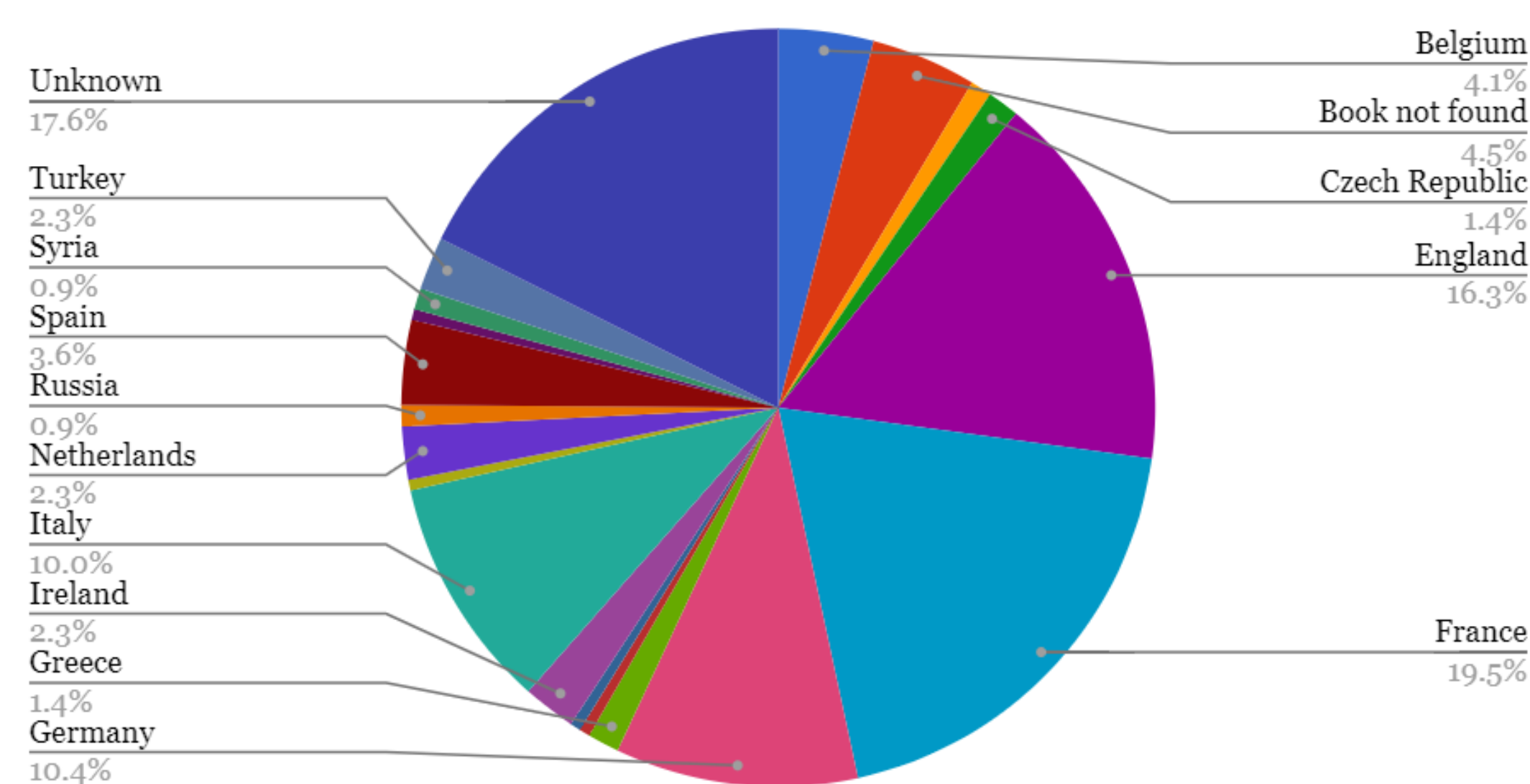
Left: A miniature depicting **St. Michael battling a dragon**, taken from the Suffrages at the end of the book of hours. St. Michael is depicted in this way in countless other medieval books.

Right: Images taken from the book's calendar. The miniature on the left depicts the zodiac sign for January, **Aquarius**, while the miniature on the right depicts the main activity associated with January, **feasting**.



WORK AT THE FINE ARTS LIBRARY

Geographic Origins of the Medieval Manuscript Facsimiles Held at the Frick Fine Arts Library



For five hours each week of this semester, I worked in the Frick Fine Arts Library, helping to organize and determine the geographic origins of each book in their medieval manuscript facsimile collection. The above graph displays the geographic distribution of the books – while the majority originated in Western Europe, some were originally created in places as distant as Syria, Guatemala, and Mexico.