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Breve chronicon Flandriae

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Breve chronicon Flandriae

Shortly after 1356. West Flanders. This short chronicle of Flanders narrates events that occurred between 1333 and 1356, during the reigns of the Flemish counts Louis of Nevers (ca. 1304–1346) and his son Louis of Male (1330–1384). The anonymous author reports on the major confrontations that occurred during the first decades of the Hundred Years’ War, including Cadzand (1337), Sluys (1340) and the battle of Crécy (1346), in which Louis of Nevers was killed. Also covered is the rise and fall of James of Artevelde (ca. 1290–1345) in Flanders, as it relates to the Anglo-French conflict. After the death of Louis of Nevers, the chronicle continues with his son’s efforts to secure control over his father’s county. The report concludes with the surrender of Brussels on 18 August 1356, an important milestone in the Brabant war of succession waged by Margaret of Brabant, Louis’ consort, against her sister Joan over the inheritance of duke John of Brabant (1300–1355), their father.

The *breve chronicon* is important for its description of the arrival of the Black Death in Avignon in 1348. The anonymous chronicler quotes from a copy of a letter dated 27 April 1348, which was sent to the canons of St. Donatian in Bruges by Lodewijk Heylighen (ca. 1304–after 1361), their official representative at the papal court. Heylighen lays out the oriental origins of the epidemic and describes its spread to the Mediterranean, the pathology and mortality rate of the disease, the ensuing terror and the measures taken by religious and secular authorities. Fragments of the same letter were also incorporated into the *Chronica Olivensis* (maybe you could also add a link to this chronicle, it’s in the EMC) composed around 1350 at the Cistercian abbey of Oliwa near Gdansk. The author also quotes from a second letter addressed to the bishop of Cambrai, in which pope Clement VI speaks out against the flagellants, who had made their way to Flanders from the upper parts of Germany and Hungary in 1349.

Not only did the chronicler have access to official correspondence from the papal court at Avignon, but he was also well-informed about local news in Flanders. His report is interspersed with references to exemplary women living in Zeeland (Oostburg) and West Flanders (Mesen), as well as extraordinarily tall or strong men from the same region (Veurne). The anonymous author tells us that he attended at a procession in Dordrecht (Holland) in 1339. The above suggests that the author was a cleric, probably from the western part of Flanders, possibly Bruges, and who had connections with the chapter of St. Donatian.

The *Breve chronicon* appears as further continuation of the *Continuatio Claromariscensis* of *Flandria generosa* A in Brussels, KBR, 18417 (ff. 25^r-37^v). The handwriting seems to suggest that the manuscript was written around 1380. No other extant witnesses are known.

Literature

Text

J.-J. DE SMET, *Corpus chronicorum Flandriae. Tomus Tertius*, 1856, 5-30.

Literature

A. WELKENHUYSEN, “La Peste en Avignon (1348) décrite par un témoin oculaire, Louis Sanctus de Beringen. édition Critique, traduction, éléments de commentaire”, in R. Lievens, E. Van Mingroot, W. Verbeke, *Pascua Mediaevalia. Studies voor Prof. Dr. J.M. De Smet*, 1983, 452-492.

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