

Eng-181 Medieval Heroes and Monsters

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Materiality Analysis

Materiality Analysis of The Crusader Bible

When analyzing a medieval manuscript, it is very important to study its place of origin, ownership and use of materials. Medieval manuscripts have rich history which defines the text as much as the content of the manuscript. In this blog post, I shall explore how the materiality of *The Crusader Bible* affect the purpose and meaning of the text.



Judeo-Persian inscription, *The First Day; The Second Day; The Third Day; The Fourth Day, fol. 1r. The Crusader Bible, The Morgan Library & Museum,*

<http://www.themorgan.org/col-lection/crusader-bible/1#>.

The Crusader Bible is one of the greatest visualization of Old Testament events. The manuscripts consists of 48 folios of vellum, depicting 346 episodes. Each folio measures 39 by 30cm. The book was originally meant to be a picture-book with inscription added in the subsequent years. The picture-book was conceived in the workshops of Paris and owned by King Louis IX (1214-1270). There are pictures of stories and heroes as well as accounts of Jews fighting for Jerusalem. The pictures in the book are very vibrant and depict meticulous and dynamic portrayals of combat. About 40% of the pages depict David's life and other pictures focus on heroes in the history of Israel. The pictures of battle and combat are juxtaposed by scenes of everyday life, love, hate, envy, and adultery in thirteenth-century France. The bible has inscription in three different languages indicating the diversity of the owners of the book. Very few medieval manuscripts can match *The Crusader Bible* in its beauty and extravagance.

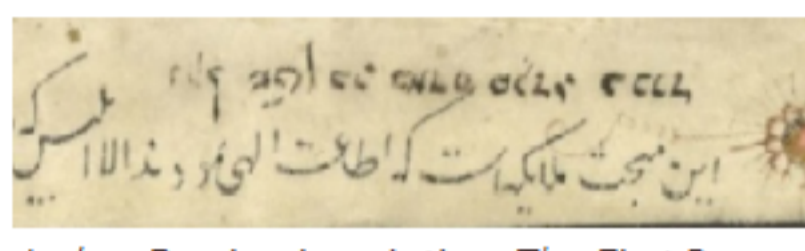


Image of folio 23v under long-wave ultraviolet radiation, *The Crusader Bible, The Morgan Library & Museum.*

<http://www.themorgan.org/blog/technical-analysis-crusader-bible>.

The Crusader Bible consists of 48 folios of vellum with each page measuring 39 by 30cm. The pictures displayed in the book are spectacular and show vivid details of the events from the Old Testament. Many different modern technologies such as X-Ray Fluorescence Spectrometry, Digital imaging, Longwave Ultraviolet Radiation, Infrared Radiation, and False Color Infrared have been used to analyze the composition of the pictures and inscriptions. Different organic compounds such as Red lead, Iron oxide, White Lead were utilized as colors for the various illustrations. The Latin inscription is written in iron-gall ink while the Persian and Judeo-Persian inscriptions are in carbon-based ink. The use of different compounds for inscriptions indicated that artists in different regions used different compounds depending on their expertise and availability of raw materials. These tests concluded that the book has a pronounced use of ultramarine blue. This blue pigment is derived from lapis lazuli, a very rare pigment that needs to be expertly extracted and processed to attain its blue rich color. The abundant use of ultramarine in the book points out the sheer luxury and expense in creating this book. Vellum is made from the skin of calves and large amounts of vellum were utilized to make this book considering the number and size of folios in the book. Through the use of materials, it can be concluded that the book was meant for a large audience as a show of power. *The Crusader Bible* was a symbol of luxury and wealth for King Louis IX, who is the patron of the book.

The Crusader Bible was created in the workshops of Paris. In the 13th century, manuscript production gradually passed from the monastery to several secular shops, each specializing in a particular craft. About seven artists participated in the original manuscript. These artists were experts in different fields with each using their expertise while creating the manuscript. The master artist was responsible for about 40% of the work. In addition to the artists, clerics or librarians actually designed the book for more rational organization. These artists were best in their fields and this book is considered to be their masterpiece. This points out the expense for the creation of the book.



Judeo-Persian inscription, *The First Day; The Second Day; The Third Day; The Fourth Day, fol. 1r. The Crusader Bible, The Morgan Library & Museum,*

<http://www.themorgan.org/collection/crusader-bible/1#>.

The folios in *The Crusader Bible* have inscriptions in their margins in Latin, Persian and Judeo-Persian. These inscriptions were not originally planned for the book, they were added as the owners of the book changed. The book was originally owned by Louis IX (1214-1270). It was passed on to his younger brother, Charles of Anjou (1226-1285). After that the ownership remains unknown until 16th century when it came into possession of Cardinal Bernard Maciejowski (1548-1608), Bishop of Cracow. Between the death of Louis IX and possession of the book by the bishop, the book travelled to Italy where Latin inscriptions were added. The book was then gifted by the pope to Shah Abbas (1571-1629) of Persia in 1608 as a diplomatic gift. The Shah ordered one of the missionaries to translate the Latin inscriptions in Persian so that the local people can understand the pictures. The book was then passed in his lineage till Afghans conquered Persia and the book fell in the hands of a Persian Jew, who then added the Judeo-Persian inscriptions. The book then made its way to a Greek antiquities collector in Cairo, Egypt. He then sold the book to dealers in England, who then sold it to Sir Thomas Philipps (1792-1872). He then passed the book in his family. The family then sold it to Belle Greene, who dedicated the book to Pierpont Morgan. Very few medieval texts have that rich ownership. The diversity in the ownership is owed to the importance and scintillating beauty of the book.



Latin inscription, *Saul Destroys the Amalekites, fol. 24v. The Crusader Bible, The Morgan Library & Museum.*

blog.blantonmuseum.org/category/art-2.

The sheer size of *The Crusader Bible* makes it inconvenient to be used for personal use. The use of very expensive materials and the rich illustrations indicate that this book was meant to be treasured and shown to the general public as a constant reminder that they were part of a very rich kingdom. King Louis IX created this book as a show of extreme wealth and piety. He commanded the largest army and ruled the largest and wealthiest kingdom, a center of arts and intellectual thought of the time. King Louis often regarded himself as the defender of Christianity and the book is a testament to it. It is ironic that his most famous creation, *The Crusader Bible*, came into hands of people he would consider "infidels". The fact that the book came into hands of diverse owners adds to the artistic and intellectual depth of the book. The book was rebounded several times by the owners, pointing towards the value of the book. Inscriptions in different languages add a rich layer of interpretation and is a testament to the active interaction between different religions and cultures throughout the middle-ages. While interpreting the book it is very important to consider the rich history behind this book.

The Crusader Bible is one of the most beautiful medieval manuscript that is thoroughly studied by the medievalists. The marvelous depictions of battles and combats feel unnaturally surreal and unrivalled. The book was very expensive to make and is a testament to the immense wealth and power held by its original owner, King Louis IX. In the subsequent years, the book came into possession of very important people and was modified to their tastes. Through this subtle modifications, we learn about the book's incredible journey from France to Italy, Poland, Persia, Egypt, England, and finally New York. These modifications and the material used in the book play a very important role in illuminating the purpose and meaning of the book.

All information was taken from the following websites:

Links:

<http://wcma.williams.edu/exhibit/morgan-picture-bible/>

<http://www.orientaliststyle.com/blog/the-crusader-bible-aka-the-morgan-picture-bible-the-maciejowski-bible-the-shah-abbas-bible-its-extraordinary-existence-in-france-italy-poland-persia-egypt-england-and-the-us-on-view-at-the-morgan-library-museum-new-york>

<http://www.themorgan.org/collection/crusader-bible/1#overlay-context=collection/crusader-bible/1>

<http://www.themorgan.org/blog/technical-analysis-crusader-bible>

<http://blog.blantonmuseum.org/category/art-2>.

Reflections:

There were no major concerns with the initial materiality analysis. Minor concerns included some redundancies and omission of proper captions for the images. In the revision I focused mainly on two parts. Firstly, I came up with proper captions and proper links to the websites. Secondly, I expanded upon the analysis. This work was more challenging that I thought because it has been quite some time since I did the assignment. To get started, I went through all the websites in the link section to recall the subject of the manuscript. Instead of focusing on new material aspect of the manuscript I decided to expand upon the two aspects I originally had, which are the history behind the book and the process of creating the manuscript. For the history part of the essay, I wrote more about the book's original owner, King Louis IX. I gave more historical background on why he created the book in the first place. I also talked about the added meaning to the book as the book came in hands of its different owners. For the process of creation of the book, I added a paragraph about the artists that made the book. I wrote about the book was designed and different artists who worked on the book. I found this particular revision a bit more challenging than the other revisions, but it was interesting nonetheless.