

## CASE STUDY 7 – First Book Printed in Béarn

The first major book to be printed in Europe (in the 1450s) using movable type was the Gutenberg Bible<sup>i</sup>. The second major such book was the Mainz Psalter which was commissioned in 1457<sup>ii</sup>. One of the notable features of that 1457 book is that music is annotated. Numerous cultures chose to print Psalters first – for instance see Case Study 6 above.

This Case Study shows how watermark research / back lighting can add to understanding of the travels and travails of books, especially books written for religious purposes, notably the Psalms. The book in question is *Los Psalmes de David metvts en rima bernesa*, 1583 from the small embattled Calvinistic community in Béarn, sandwiched between the mighty Catholic nations of France and Spain.

### *Los Psalmes de David metvts en rima bernesa*, 1583<sup>iii</sup>

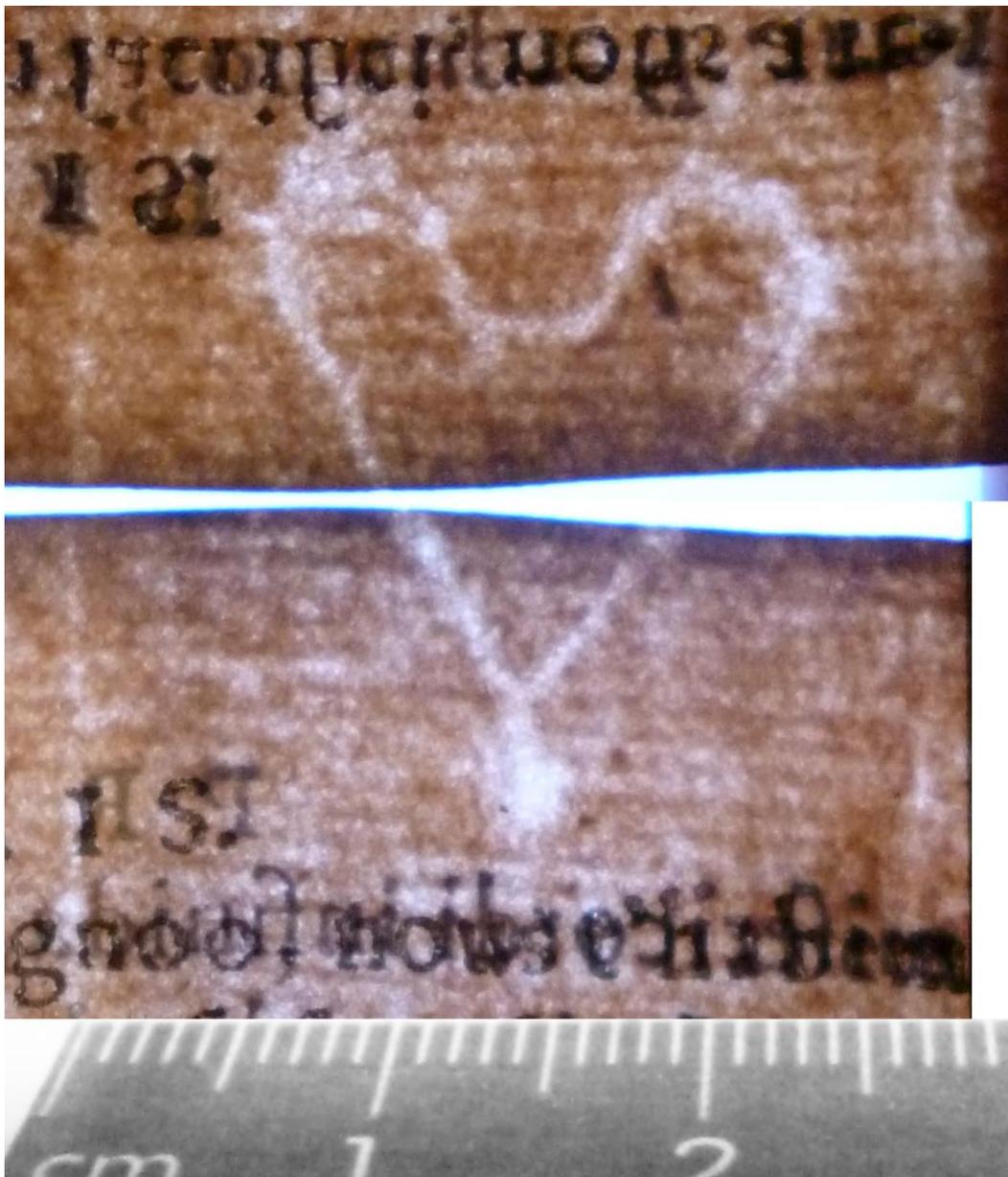
The King of Navarre, who was also the Lord of the Vicomté of Béarn, described his Calvinistic community of the mid sixteenth century as a lousee between the two monkeys of Spain and France<sup>iv</sup>. The historical and religious background to the 1583 appearance of Salette's *Los Psalmes de David metvts en rima bernesa*, which was printed by Louis Rabier<sup>v</sup>, is significant and is briefly summarized now.

The sovereignty of Béarn, which was one part of the geographically scattered house of Bourbon-Navarre, was permanently under threat for political, historical and later for religious reasons. The increasing influence in Béarn of the Geneva based Reform movement can be traced back to Gérard Roussel who was bishop of Oloron from 1536 to 1555. The tipping point was in 1560 when the ruler, Jeanne d'Albret (1528 – 1572), made an open declaration in favour of the Calvinist Reform version of Protestantism. Links to Geneva were

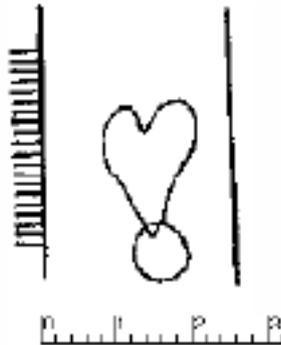
strong<sup>vi</sup>. Béarn remained a reformed principality until its incorporation into France in 1620 under Louis XIII.

The evidence from the watermark in the 1583 *Los Psalmes de David metvts en rima bernesa* and the travels of one of the copies of that book will now be shown to reflect those links with Calvin's Geneva.

The copy of *Los Psalmes de David metvts en rima bernesa* held at the in Genvae in Bibliothèque de Genève was examined and a heart shaped watermark was recorded. The watermark is divided over two pages in gathering Ee. The reconstruction is shown below:-



Use of the on line Bernstein database (search ‘heart’ dates ‘1580-1585’) gives 169 matches. Almost all of them are ‘coat of arms’ but this is due to a software feature, in that ‘Herzschild’ watermarks are included. The heart (Herz) alone, as shown above, is a rarity. Indeed there is only a single citing of the simple heart surmounting a small circle. It is Briquet 4227 as shown below:-

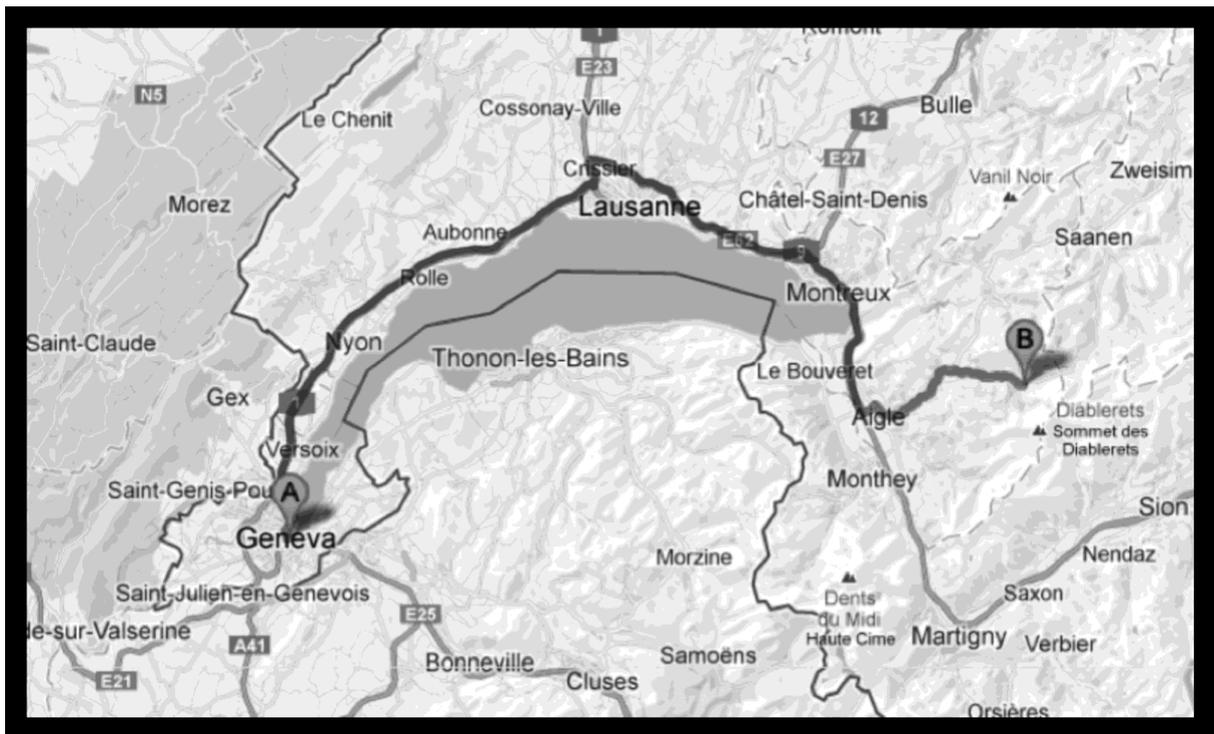
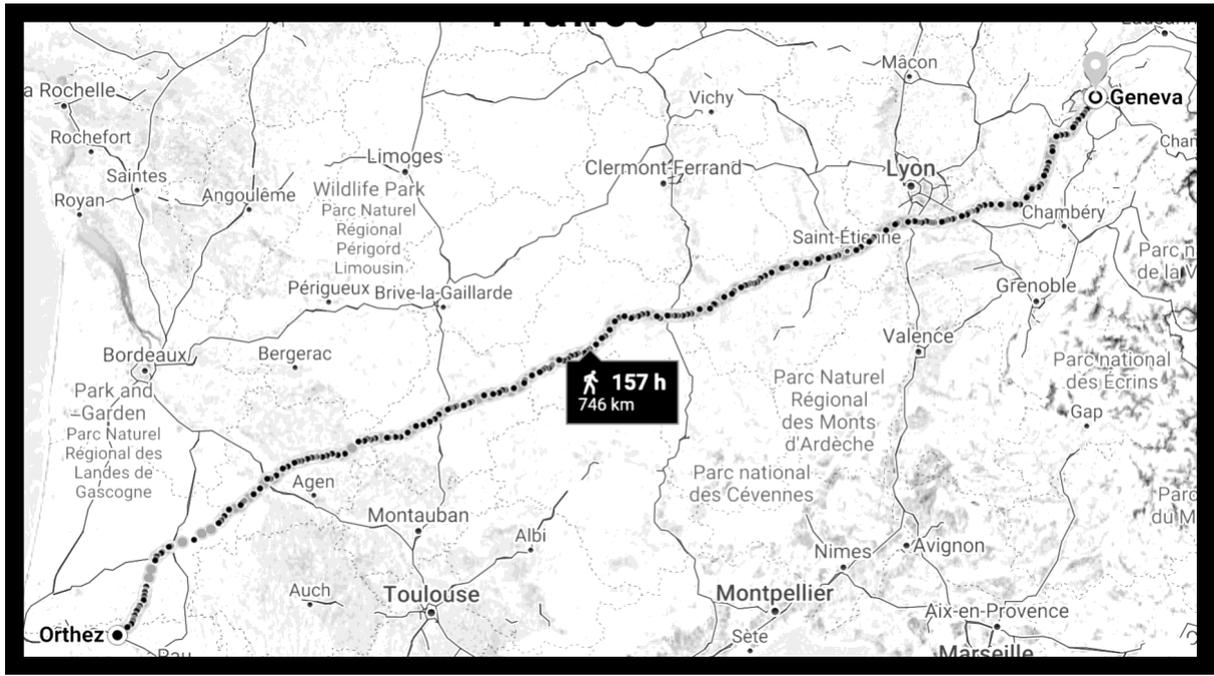


Briquet records that he found the watermark in the Geneva 1582 *Harmoniæ ex evangelistis Mattheo, Marco et Luca* by Jean Calvin<sup>vii</sup>. This matching of a rare watermark truly reflects the close dependence of the Béarn community on Geneva, which is most strikingly shown by the travels of one of the rare copies of *Los Psalmes de David metvts en rima bernesa* which will now be described.

*Los Psalmes de David metvts en rima bernesa* was based on *Les Pseaumes de David, mis en rime francoise* by Clément Marot and Théodore de Bèze<sup>viii</sup>. Dozens of versions of that work of Marot and de Bèze were printed and are widely available<sup>ix</sup>. In stark contrast there are less than twenty extant copies of *Los Psalmes de David metvts en rima bernesa*. Most are in France. One is in the USA in the Boston Public Library which is also the holder of the next book considered the below (*The Bay Psalm Book*). One copy of *Los Psalmes de David metvts en rima bernesa* is in Switzerland in Bibliothèque de Genève<sup>x</sup> (watermark given above) which has an intriguing history, and which will now be summarized.

The Geneva held copy was discovered hidden above a beam in a remote Swiss farm. The following maps show the remarkable journey of that copy from Béarn, across France,

into Switzerland and up into mountains near Sommet des Diablerets. (This copy is called the *Diablerets* copy hereafter).



Whilst researching watermarks, I was able to examine *Diablerets*, which is an octavo. It was discovered that two of the pages are uncut. This indicates that *Diablerets* was never

entirely read despite having been carried so far. Furthermore there is the mystery as to why *Diablerets* had been transported so far and then hidden in such a remote location.

The book contains music annotations. The same font was later used for another Calvinistic book which was printed by Jiří Strejc in Kralice (now in the Czech Republic) in 1587. The 4,000 fonts were recovered from the moat of Kralice Castle in the twentieth century<sup>xi</sup>. The items recovered are identical to those used by Louis Rabier in Orthez. The printed musical notation in the Béarn Psalter is in all regards identical with that in the 1587 Czech Psalter.

The 1587 work of Jiří Strejc in translating the Geneva Catechism of Jean Calvin for the Czechs is recognized as being seminal in exploiting the music of the Psalms in furtherance of Calvinism and for the advancement of the Unity of the Brethren (*Jednota bratrská*).

Watermark research, alongside other research methods such as fontography, contributes to a fuller appreciation of the history and influence of books such as *Los Psalmes de David metvts en rima bernesa*. It also, as a true research resource, not only contributes to answering questions but more significantly generates yet more avenues for research.

---

<sup>i</sup> Excellent on line images of a vellum and of a paper copy at the British Library are at:-

<https://www.bl.uk/treasures/gutenberg/search.asp>

<sup>ii</sup> Excellent on line copy from the National Library of Austria at:-

[http://digital.onb.ac.at/RepViewer/viewer.faces?doc=DTL\\_6471975&order=1&view=SINGL](http://digital.onb.ac.at/RepViewer/viewer.faces?doc=DTL_6471975&order=1&view=SINGL)

[E](#)



---

iii The Boston Public Library copy (M.Cab.1.59) is available at:-

<https://archive.org/details/lospsalmesdedav00sale/page/n7>

iv ‘Un pou entre deux singes’, p. VIII, and ‘pedolh enter dus monards’, p. IX (a louse between two monkeys) in Arnaud de Salette, *Los Psalmes de David metvts en rima bernesa*, (Per Noste, Ortès; Orthez, 1983).

v Louis Rabier arrived in Orthez in 1583. In 1565 he had published the 150 Psalms of David in Orleans in French. He was therefore well suited to the task and used a reduced size version of the Orleans title page. Arnaud de Salette, *Los Psalmes de David metvts en rima bernesa*, (Per Noste, Ortès; Orthez, 1983), p. XXIV (French), p. XXV (Béarn).

vi The Register of the Rector of the *Académie de Genève* contains lists of young men from Béarn who studied theology in Switzerland. One result of appeals to Calvin for pastors was the despatch of Jean Raymond Merlin by the Compagnie des Pasteurs de Genève in 1563. A sign of the gradual accommodation of the need for material in the language of Béarn was the publication, also in 1563, of Calvin’s Catechism with the French in italics in one column facing the Béarn in Roman style in the other column.

vii Jean Calvin, *Harmonia ex evangelistis Mattheo, Marco et Luca* (E. Vignon, 1582). It is a folio sized book. Briquet notes that a similar watermark is to be found in a quarto printed in 1590 in Geneva by J. de Tournes; in that variant the circle is above the heart.

viii Clément Marot and Théodore de Bèze, *Les Pseaumes de David, mis en rime françoise*. (Anvers: De l’Imprimerie de Christofle Plantin, 1564).

1563 version available from:-

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k1086792.image>



Elsie McKee, Princeton Theological Seminary, helpfully comments in her review of *Los Psalmes de David metvts en rima bernesa: Edition critique bilingue par Robert Darrigrand, sur le texte de l'édition publiée en 1583 par Louis Rabier. Arnaud de Salette*. Trans. Robert Darrigrand. Preface by Philippe Chareyre. Paris: Honoré, Champion, 2010 as follows:-

*Salette's work was circumscribed by the need to make his texts fit the Genevan Psalm tunes, while still creating a metrical version in Béarnese. As Darrigrand demonstrates, Salette's source was not always (only) the Psalm texts of the French poets Marot and Beza, although he used them; at times the Béarnese translation is closer to the version of the Psalms in the French Genevan Bible. Darrigrand also analyzes Salette's choice of language, pointing to borrowings from French but also the use of local idioms drawn from peasant occupations and speech. While the words might come from a variety of sources, the syntax of Salette's work is pure Béarnese (41-60). After centuries of neglect, the Psalter found a new audience in the late nineteenth century and is now recognized as the founding text of Béarnese literature.*

<sup>ix</sup> According to Eugénie Droz the equivalent French Psalter by Théodore de Bèze 1562 had 30,000 copies printed in Geneva, Lyon, Paris and Caen.

<sup>x</sup> Bibliothèque de Genève. Arnaud de Salette, *Los Psalmes de David metvts en rima bernesa per Arnaud de Salette. M.* (A Ortes : per Louïs Rabier. 1583). Bb 698.

<sup>xi</sup> Arnaud de Salette, *Los Psalmes de David metvts en rima bernesa: Edition critique bilingue par Robert Darrigrand, sur le texte de l'édition publiée en 1583 par Louis Rabier*, (Paris, Champion, 2010), p. 25 notes that there are no known Béarnese printers before Louis Rabier.

---

Other Béarnese writers had works printed in Toulouse, Limoges and La Rochelle. Rabier (b. ca. 1535 - 1606) in Loiret migrated to Geneva, and then to Orléans where he printed a Psalter in 1565. Later he moved to Montauban, Tulle and Orthez. It is suggested that he started to print *Los Psalmes* in Montauban. Although there was no use of musical annotation in Gascony, it was used in Czech lands in 1587 by Jiří Strejc, Kralice.

Full details are in Arnaud de Salette, *Los Psalmes de David metvts en rima bernesa: Edition critique bilingue par Robert Darrigrand, sur le texte de l'édition publiée en 1583 par Louis Rabier*, Paris, Champion, 2010, p. 28, as follows with my translation:-

*Ils sont d'ailleurs communs à d'autres éditions de psaumes dans différents pays réformés. Nous les retrouvons en particulier dans le Psautier tchèque de 1587 de Jiří Strejc qui sortit des presses de l'Unité des Frères tchèque à Kralice.*

*L'histoire agitée de la Moravie au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle fit que le matériel typographique utilise fut, en 1620, précipité par l'envahisseur autrichien dans les fossés du château de Kralice où était installée l'imprimerie. Les fouilles menées au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle ont permis de retrouver plus de 4,000 caractères typographiques, lettres, figurines, initiales, portées musicales, motifs décoratifs. Cette collection de caractères en plomb a une valeur inestimable car partout ailleurs on refondait les caractères usages. Elle nous permet de reconstituer la technique de composition des psautiers. Les pièces retrouvées sont identiques à celles qu'utilisait Louis Rabier à Orthez. La façon d'imprimer la musique dans le psautier béarnaise de 1583 est en tout point identique à celle du psautier tchèque de 1587.*

---

*They are moreover the same as other editions of the Psalms in other reformed countries. In particular we find this for Jiří Strejc's 1587 Czech Psalter from the Czech press of the Unity of the Brethren (Jednota bratrská).*

*in Kralice. The violent history of Moravia in the seventeenth century led to the invading Austrians throwing the typographical items in 1620 into the moat of the castle at Kralice which housed the press. Excavations in the twentieth century resulted in more than 4,000 typographic items, letters, figures, initials, music staves and decorative items being recovered. That has led to a fuller understanding of the technical process of psalter production. The items recovered are identical to those used by Louis Rabier in Orthez. The printed musical notation in the Béarn Psalter is in all regards identical with that in the 1587 Czech Psalter.*

See also Daniel Urbain. 'La version tchèque (1587) du psautier de Genève', *Revue de littérature comparée*, 3/1988, pp. 367-375.