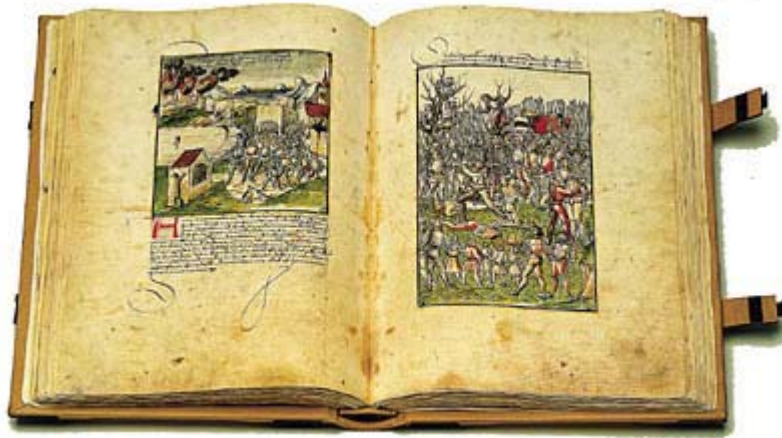


The Swiss Chronicle of Wernher Schodoler



A Classical Work on the History of Switzerland

A Landmark in Swiss Historiography

The Swiss Chronicle of Wernher Schodoler ranks among the most important Swiss Illuminated Chronicles. It is composed of three volumes and, due to its illustrations, is considered an important document of the time preceding the battle of Marignan.

While the great chronicles of the time still continued in the medieval tradition, Schodoler's chronicle paved the way for a new epoch: the Renaissance. For hitherto unknown reasons, each of the three volumes had a completely different destiny. The reproduction in a facsimile edition now unites the three volumes in a single work.

The Annalist Wernher Schodoler

Wernher Schodoler was born in 1490 at Bremgarten on the Reuss in Switzerland, home town of his ancestors for centuries. The annalist and his family ranked among the most prestigious citizens of the town. His grandfather and father had been directing the affairs of the town as mayors.

In the first decade of the 16th century, Schodoler worked as a clerk in the chancellery of Bern where he gained insights into the politics of this capital city of the Swiss Confederation and also into the famous chronicles preserved there. Back in his home town, Schodoler started a successful career. He held the highest positions in Bremgarten up to his tragic death in 1541 when he died from the plague.

We do not know what motivated the busy town clerk, who even participated in several war campaigns, to write such a comprehensive chronicle on his own initiative. The fact that it is the only chronicle from a subdued area makes it an all the more important document.

Based on Old Recounts of an Eventful History

Most of Schodoler's work is based on other contemporary chronicles, among them the Official Chronicle of Berne by Diebold Schilling.

He took a very critical approach to the text, added different comments to certain events, cut out lines or added on to certain passages of the text which did not seem to fit within the overall image he wanted to convey. He had his own opinion on things and the courage to be articulate.

The chronicle also contains some of Schodoler's own texts; some passages have become famous, like the description of the battle of Marignan in which Schodoler had taken part himself. Both picture and text deal with state events and warfare but also with everyday life thus making the chronicle an important and comprehensive source for anyone who is interested in history.

The Three Volumes

The first volume treats the history of the Confederation up until the Council of Constance (1415). The text is written in a Gothic handwriting. Despite initial plans to add illustrations to the text, and for which the copyist had even reserved some space, these were never added. New sections are introduced by colourful initial letters and decorated with rinceaux.

The second volume deals essentially with the old Zurich war. With the exception of some paragraphs written by Schodoler himself, it is based on Etterlin, on Schilling's Bern Chronicle and the Zurich Chronicle.

The volume is decorated with 130 coloured pen drawings as well as with coloured and gold-plated initials. The illustrations apparently go back to three different artists, among them Schodoler himself. The illustrations of this volume fascinate by their very special atmosphere. The medieval vision of the world of other ancient Swiss illuminated chronicles has now made room for a new feeling of life and space. The pictures betray a great delight in observation and quality compositions.

The third volume, equally bound in leather, describes the events of the Mulhousian, Burgundian, Suabe and Italian wars. Also in this case Schodoler's work is based on the Bern Chronicle of Diebold Schilling and on Etterlin. The third volume contains 196 pen drawings in sepia, all from the hand of an anonymous artist. His compositions outdo by far the work of former chronicle illustrators. The landscapes show new perspectives of vastness and depth. The gestures of the depicted human beings betray the feeling of the Renaissance. The pictorial language of Wernher Schodoler's chronicle make it a typical document of the time and a testimony of the then popular type of man which united the fighter and the artist in one person.

The Fine Art Facsimile Edition

Volumes two and three of the chronicle have been reproduced in the format of 39.5 x 29.5 cm. This edition is limited to 980 numbered copies. Both volumes together contain 1048 pages including 325 illustrations. Volume I was not reproduced as despite the reserved space, no illustrations were added. Both volumes are bound in finely executed pigskin covers with blind toolings, brass fittings and clasps.

The headband is stitched by hand and all double leaves have been sewn by hand on cords.

The Commentary Volume

Although vol. I of the chronicle has not been reproduced in a facsimile edition, the commentary contains also this text and the text of the two other volumes, thus enabling us to present a complete edition of the entire work. In addition, the commentary volume comprises both picture and initial pages of vol. I. A team of renowned experts has examined the manuscript in all its aspects to provide an insight into the world of Wernher Schodoler.

On 412 pages, the following experts have contributed to describe the manuscript: Prof. Dr. Pascal Ladner, Dr. Walter Benz, Dr. Eugen Bürgisser, Dr. Cäsar Menz, Dr. Franz Bächtiger, and Prof. Dr. Eduard Studer.

Documentation Kit

A documentation folder containing eight full-sized leaves from the facsimile edition and an illustrated 12-page information brochure is available for trial upon request.