

MUSEUM SPOTLIGHT

"The Azeghio Tapestry: The Arrival of Joan of Arc at Chinon"

Resources for teaching the life of *Joan of Arc – A Female Knight and Saint*

By Teresa Russo



A German Tapestry called Tapestry d'Azeghio or Azeghio Tapestry, depicting the Arrival of Joan of Arc (1410-1431) at Chinon. Located at the Musee Historique et Archeologique, Orleans, France; 15th century art. Photo: Bulloz
Photo Credit: RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY; **Image Reference:** ART148587; **Image size:** 4048 X 3106 px

A tapestry is a type of textile art hung on the wall; it sometimes appears to a viewer as a rug with images that tell a story and attached on the wall like a painting without a frame. It is traditionally woven on a loom by hand as described in Homer's *Odyssey* when Penelope weaves on her loom during the day waiting for her husband Odysseus to return from war. The medieval tapestry is known as a weft-faced textile made of silk threads in which a weaver passes "weft" threads through the "warp" threads on a loom. The warps are the stationary threads, usually placed on the loom horizontally and then a person weaves other threads in diverse colors called wefts through the stationary thread. The weft threads create an image as the weaver selects various colors to depict their story. Thomas P. Campbell of the Metropolitan Museum describes the creation of a weft-faced textile, stating: "By passing the weft back and forth through the two sheds, the weaver inserts weft over one warp and under the next in one direction and then

back in the opposite direction over and under the alternate warps” (metmuseum.org/toah/hd/tapm/hd_tapm.htm). Some of the best-known tapestries were produced in the 1400s in France, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands. The silk was produced in Italy and Spain.

The tapestry above is a German tapestry with the story of Joan of Arc when she arrived at Chinon, France. Joan of Arc set out for the Château de Chinon, a castle on the bank of the Vienne river in the city Chinon on 13 February 1429, leaving Vaucouleurs with a small military escort. She arrived at the Dauphin castle on March 6, 1429 by horse. She wore men’s clothing to disguise herself as she rode through English-controlled routes in France. During this trip, Joan stated that she heard heavenly voices to go to Charles, the Dauphin leader, and that he would grant her an army and supplies to join the soldiers at Orléans. This meeting became the turning point of the Hundred Years’ War (Jeanne-darc.info). According to legend, Joan of Arc, who never met Charles previously, walked into the castle two days after arriving in Chinon and came before Charles, who was hiding in the castle in disguise for protection. She then pledged to defeat the English for him and ensure his coronation at Reims.

The tapestry, created in the late Middle Ages by a German artist, highlights the arrival of Joan of Arc at the castle with a small escort before King Charles. Joan of Arc is dressed in military armor sitting on a horse. The artist places Charles outside, standing in front of the castle with military guard behind him, to demonstrate both the arrival and pledge of Joan of Arc in one frame. The king is wearing a red cloak to signify royalty even though he was not coronated thus far and in hiding during his time in Chinon. In addition to royal red for Charles and his guards, one sees that Joan of Arc’s escorts has royal red as decoration on the horses’ bridles and the people with Joan of Arc also wear the same red clothing as Charles’s people. Further, there is the use of gold thread on this tapestry; gold gilding was used in oil painting for halos or crowns for angels and saints in religious medieval paintings. Just as gold is used for “A Portrait of Joan of Arc” from the 15th c. illuminated manuscript, gold was used in this tapestry for this image of Joan of Arc to indicate in both images her sainthood.



A Portrait of Joan of Arc from an illuminated manuscript dated from the 15th century, the same century of her death, by an anonymous artist/illuminator. The manuscript is located at the Archives Nationales de Paris (the National Archives of Paris, France) (Inv. AEII2490. Photo Bulloz); **Photo Credit:** © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY; **Image Reference:** ART173632; **Original Image size:** 7455 X 10000 px

Two significant banners are depicted in the tapestry. In the squared blue flag, three people are depicted: Jesus is flanked by two angels; they are representative of the people that Joan said was speaking to her during her trip to Chinon. The blue banner or military flag with letters is like the banner in the register of the Paris Parliament (see page 12 of Joan of Arc packet, forthcoming). The letter “ihs” is a contraction for a Greek word that means Jesus, used on the flag as a symbol or monogram to indicate her belief in the Christian religion. This symbol later is misunderstood in the Latin language as signifying “Iesus Hominum Salvator” which means Jesus, Savior of Men. It is reported that Joan of Arc used this flag as her military flag when bringing French soldiers to fight the English soldiers. What other details do you see in the tapestry that reflect the story you read about Joan of Arc? Can you identify the flowers in the tapestry and the decoration on the flags? Do you see how the artist’s idea of water in the painting?

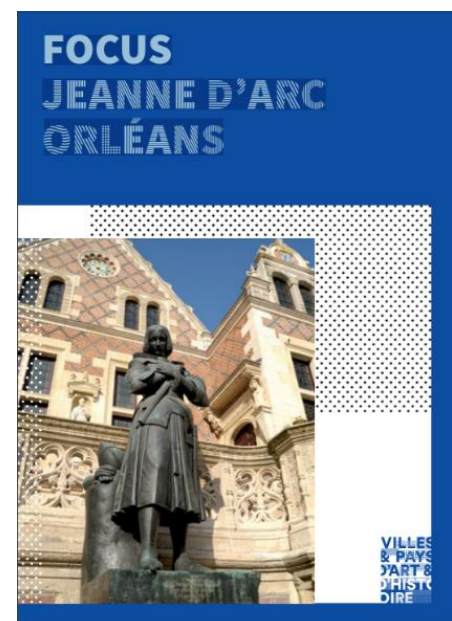


Detail of the flags on the Azghio Tapestry

Visit the website of Musee Historique et Archeologique of Orleans, France to learn more about their Medieval collection and the other art they have about Joan of Arc.

For students of French and French Immersion, here is a pamphlet about Jeanne d’Arc in French from the Musee Historique et Archeologique:

[FOCUS JEANNE D’ARC ORLÉANS](#)



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