

The Simon Le Noir Project

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The Simon Le Noir project, initiated in October 2020, was born out of a desire to shed light on a hitherto ignored historical aspect of the development of early pendulum clocks in France.

Simon Le Noir was a French clockmaker from the seventeenth century about whom almost nothing is known. Tardy's dictionary of French clockmakers reveals a curious anecdote about him:

In 1649, Casimir, the future king of Poland, having heard of the application by Vincenzo Galileo of a long pendulum to a clockwork, wrote in France to some known scholars of a new clock much more accurate than all others. Some of these scholars communicated this news to a clockmaker in Paris named Simon Le Noir, one of the most skilled of his time. He also applied this long pendulum to a clock movement as had been done by Galileo's son. It is thus Simon Le Noir who made, in Paris, these clocks which one still names today '*Pendules à secondes*', because the pendulum which is applied to it marks one second with each of its vibrations.

This anecdote has never been studied in the past because of lack of elements to support or question it.

In October 2020, a clock signed Simon Le Noir was rediscovered. This seemingly primitive mechanism presents many singularities that distinguish it from other known French pendulum clocks, both stylistically and technically. This discovery suggests that the anecdote reported in Tardy's dictionary may not have been invented out of thin air, but rather that Simon Le Noir's work on the application of the pendulum to clocks was indeed a precursor, possibly predating the work of Nicolas Hanet.

The purpose of this project is then to study the anecdote, the mechanism and the history of early pendulum clocks in order to hopefully shed light on this curious affair. The writing of a comprehensive *memorandum* is currently in progress. Meanwhile a first article is to be



published in the journal *Horlogerie Ancienne*. These documents will be made available online at the url <https://agomand.github.io/asln/en>

I would be happy to consider any remark, hypothesis or analysis that anyone could have after reading my study.

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