

Cronica degli pontifici e degli imperatori, an Italian translation and continuation of
MARTINUS POLONUS [MARTIN OF TROPPAU or MARTINUS OPPAVIENSIS],
Chronicon Pontificum et Imperatorum
In Italian, decorated manuscript on paper and parchment
Northeastern Italy, Veneto, Vicenza, dated 1472

i (paper) + i (parchment) + 138 folios on parchment (f. 133) and paper, watermarks similar to Briquet no. 12125, Oiseau, Vicenza, 1459 and Briquet no. 12127, Oiseau, Verona, 1467, pagination of ff. 9-27 in ink, upper outer corners, 1-37, modern foliation in pencil, upper outer rectos, 1-138, complete (collation i⁸ ii-xi¹² xii⁸ [+5 +10; f. 133, a parchment leaf sewn into the center of the quire and f. 138, a paper singleton, pasted in at the end]), some contemporary quire signatures, lower outer corners, for quires viii-xi, vertical catchwords, inner lower versos, for quires ii-vi, viii-xi, parchment reinforcement strips pasted in the inner folds of quires i-v, vii-xi, ruled in plummet with full-length vertical bounding lines (justification 130 x 91-92 mm.), written in two humanist hands on twenty-four long lines: (1) ff. 2v-131v, a compact hand in brown ink, and (2) ff. 131v-133, a more elongated hand in dark brown ink (the same hand has done the rubrication for ff. 130-132v), rubrics in pale red ink, one-line pale red initials in the table of contents, one-line bright red initials set off in the margin to the left of the text, two-line blue initial (f. 10), two-line red initial (f. 96), four-line red initial (f. 12), six-line blue initial at the beginning of the *Chronicon Imperatorum* (f. 81), seven-line red initial at the beginning of the *Chronicon Pontificum* (f. 9), coat of arms painted in blue and gold in the lower margin of f. 9, some corrections by scribe 1, corrections and annotations by at least one late fifteenth- or sixteenth-century hand, modern inscriptions on f. 1 and the rectos of the two flyleaves, nineteenth-century stencilled crest on the recto of the second flyleaf, some foxing of the paper, but overall in very fine condition. Bound in nineteenth-century reddish calf over pasteboards, smooth spine with gilt title, "MARTINI / POLONI / CRONICA," and small paper label, printed "3087," binder's ticket in the upper corner of the front pastedown: "BRETHERTON LIGAVIT, 1847." Dimensions 207 x 149 mm.

A newly unearthed take on a wildly popular medieval chronicle, this unedited, unstudied, and possibly unique Italian expansion of the *Chronicon* of Martinus Polonus is one of only nine known manuscripts preserving Italian translations of the *Chronicon*. It stands apart from the others in its Venetian focus and its greater chronological breadth, charting the rise and early decline of the Venetian Republic. Dated and signed by one of its scribes, perhaps the translator/author himself, the manuscript has since belonged to important collectors, notably Sir Thomas Phillipps.

PROVENANCE

1. Evidence of dialect, script, and watermarks all indicate that this manuscript was produced in the Veneto region. It could not have been completed before 1471, the year in which Sixtus IV (*sedes* 1471-1484) was elected pope, as his is the latest entry included in the *Cronica*. Since nothing is written about the events of his papacy, the entry was probably set down shortly after his election. A scribal colophon corroborates this date and points to the book's probable origins in Vicenza: "Cronicha vulgar schrita per mjdum Lodouigo da cha da fan prior de San Vio de Vicentia del 1472 [vernacular chronicle written by me, Dom Lodovigo da Cha da Fan, prior of San Vito in Vicenza]" (f. 133).

The wording and placement of this colophon may indicate that this Dom Lodovigo da Cha da Fan was the author of this particular translation and continuation. We know the identity of the author of a different Italian translation of Martinus's *Chronicon*, written in the duchy of Milan: one Johanno Antonio de li Bonini of Parma states in a preface that he produced his translation of the *Chronicon* for Ippolita Maria Sforza (1446-1484), whose courtier he was (see Brandileone, 1882). That preface raises questions as to why and for whom the present translation and continuation was produced. Was it written for a noble patron, a distinguished resident of Vicenza or even Venice, or might it have been produced for the use of the monastery of which Dom Lodovigo was prior? The unidentified arms appearing in the lower margin of f. 9 (*azure, a bend or charged with the letter F*) may belong to the recipient of this translation or, indeed, to Dom Lodovigo himself.

The monastery of San Vito in Vicenza, once a Benedictine house, was granted to Camaldolese monks at the beginning of the thirteenth century. In the first half of the fifteenth century, the house's lapse into decadence invited the reforming attentions of Ambrogio Traversari (1386-1439), and it was abandoned in the early sixteenth century when the Republic of Venice ordered the demolition of the old abbey and the Camaldolese moved into the church of Santa Lucia in Vicenza.

2. Annotations in a fifteenth- or sixteenth-century hand reveal preoccupations of an early reader. This reader most frequently noted the monastic or mendicant orders to which different popes belonged (see, for example, ff. 64v-65 and 66), but also observed the chronicle's contents in the margin (eg. the Fall of Constantinople on f. 72v).
3. Belonged to Luigi Celotti (c. 1768-c. 1846), a Venetian abbot who became an art dealer after Napoleon invaded Italy in 1796. Part of Celotti's collection of the residue from the libraries of two well-known collectors: Matteo Luigi Canonici of Venice (1727-1805) and Giovanni Saibanti of Verona (fl. 1732). Given the absence of the marks usually found in Canonici's books (see Mitchell, 1969), this had probably belonged to Saibanti. Included in Celotti's sale at Sotheby's on 26 February 1821; lot 142 in *Saibanti and Canonici Manuscripts. A Catalogue of a Singularly Rare Collection of Manuscripts on Paper and Vellum, in the Oriental, Hebrew, Latin, and Italian Languages ... brought to this country by the Abbé Celotti*, London, 1821 (p. 12 in this catalogue).
4. Sold by London bookseller Richard Priestley in 1823; lot 4630 in *A Catalogue of a Miscellaneous Collection of Books in Every Department of Literature, and in Various Languages, for the Year 1823*, London, 1823 (p. 197 in this catalogue). Traces of this sale on the parchment flyleaf, recto, include a paper label, printed "4630" (with the "4" now nearly invisible) and a penciled inscription, "an old sale N° 4630."
5. Belonged to Sir Thomas Phillipps (1792-1872); his stenciled lion rampant crest surmounting "Sir T. P / Middle Hill" and his number "3087*" appear on the recto of the parchment flyleaf, his number also appears on the front pastedown and on the small label on the spine, and the inscription "Phillips MS 3087*" appears on f. 1. Phillipps was an English antiquary and book collector renowned for having amassed the largest nineteenth-century collection of manuscripts. Fittingly self-described as a "vello-maniac," he collected over 100,000 manuscripts and in doing so nearly bankrupted

himself and his family. Phillipps may have penned the observation "This contains the account of Popess Joan" on f. 1. This note refers to the legend of a cross-dressing female pope, popularized by Martinus's *Chronicon* and contained in this translation (ff. 43-44).

Phillipps purchased the present manuscript from London bookseller Jacob Henry Burn (see Phillipps, 1837, p. 35 and Munby, 1954, p. 150); his name appears on the parchment flyleaf, recto. While in Phillipps's hands, the book was placed in its current binding by George Bretherton, a printer and binder from Gloucester whom Phillipps employed for a few years (Munby, 1956, p. 111); Bretherton's ticket is on the front pastedown. The manuscript was sold in a Sotheby's sale on 6 June 1910; lot 217 in *Bibliotheca Phillippica: Catalogue of a Further Portion of the Classical, Historical, Topographical, Genealogical and Other Manuscripts and Autograph Letters, of the Late Sir Thomas Phillipps, Bart. ...*, London, 1910 (p. 39 in this catalogue).

6. Sold by H. P. Kraus; no. 122 in H. P. Kraus, *List 189: Text Manuscripts from the Middle Ages to the XVIII Century for the Most Part from the Giuseppe Martini Collection...*, New York, [1956?] (pp. 52-53 in this catalogue).

TEXT

[ff. 1-2, blank, but ruled, with later inscriptions]; ff. 2v-6, *Tauola de questa opera deli summi pontifici et de li Imperadori per che nel numerar ordinatamente lo fo errato non uogliendo qui mo se corregie lo error*, incipit, "Pietro i, Lino ii, Cleto iii ... Pio ccxxi, Paulo ccxii [sic], Sixto ccxxiii"; f. 5, *Tauola deli Imperadori secondo lordene deli Summi pontifici, Et prima*, incipit, "Octauiano i, Tiberio ii, Cato Calicula iii ... Sigismundo cix, Alberto cx, Frederico cxi"; [ff. 6v-8v, blank but ruled];

ff. 9-75v, *Commincia la Chronicha de Frate Martino del ordine deli predicatori del stato degli summi pontifici et degli Imperadori. Et prima del modo de la creation de Roma secondo la oppinion de diuersi auctori et scriptori de le cosse antique*, incipit, "COME dice Orosio lo qual scriue al glorioso Augustino Da la creation del mundo perfina a la hedification de Roma el fo anni iiii^m. cccc. lxxxiiij ... SIXTO de nation genouese da Sauona stete papa anni ["12" added in a different hand] mesi ["0" added in a different hand] giorni ["0" added in a different hand]. Costui fo general deli frati minori lo dito fo fato cardenal per papa paulo suo antecessor corendo li anni del signor mⁱ. cccc^o. lxxviiij"; [ff. 76-80v, blank but ruled];

ff. 81-132v, *Hauendo dicto in breuita de lo stato deli summi pontifici hora diro de lo stato deli Imperadori li quali sono choessi in uno medesimo tempo et per che lo stato temporal a fato la cita de roma diro secondo li auctori del suo chommenzamento*, incipit, "EL TEMPO che Roma comenzo fo da poi la creation del mondo anni iiii^m. cccc^o. lxxxiiij e da poi la destruction de Troia anni cccc^o. liiiij ... anchora lo dito prese la isola de negroponte la qual era de la signoria de uenesia 1440";

f. 133, incipit, "Cronicha vulgar schrita per mj dom Lodouigo da cha da fan prior de San Vio de Vicentia del 1472"; [f. 133v, blank; ff. 134-138v, blank but ruled].

This is an Italian translation and continuation of an extremely popular and influential medieval Latin chronicle, the *Chronicon Pontificum et Imperatorum* of Martinus Polonus. Martinus wrote his *Chronicon* between 1265 and 1268 and later issued two updates to the text, the second of which

was in 1277. The Italian *Cronica* here extends Polonus's chronicle by nearly two centuries, to the year 1471.

Containing an apparently unique translation of the *Chronicon* and extending substantially later than any other Italian continuation, this very important manuscript witness has gone unnoticed by scholars studying Italian translations of the *Chronicon*. These scholars have identified at least eight other manuscripts containing various Italian translations (these eight are described in Brandileone, 1882; Ciampi, 1828; Ceruti, 1878; Santini, 1903). There is no complete print edition of any Italian translation, though Ceruti edited the imperial portion of a Venetian *Cronica* copied in 1301 and extending to 1270 (1878). Comparisons of the present text with the Ceruti edition underscore the malleability of the *Chronicon* in the hands of its translators and continuators. While the chronicles in Ceruti's edition and the present manuscript begin by presenting the same information with some variations in wording, they diverge completely by the time they reach the year 1270, both in the events they describe and in the manner in which they organize them. Though they derive from Martinus's *Chronicon*, these Italian chronicles are in many respects distinct from the *Chronicon* and from each other.

The chronicle in the present manuscript follows the structure of Martinus's *Chronicon* in its translation and continuation, but with particular attention to events in northeastern Italy. A local slant is not unusual in Italian translations of the *Chronicon* – several of the manuscripts mentioned by Ciampi (1828), Brandileone (1882), and Santini (1903) show a particularly Florentine character in their contents or dialectal forms, and the manuscript Ceruti edited was written in the Venetian dialect (1878) – but the present manuscript appears to be unique in focusing on events connected to the Veneto region. These events include the sack of Vincenza in 1236 by Frederick II, Holy Roman Emperor (1220-1250), Venice's conquest of Padua in 1405 and Brescia in 1439, and the Battle of Negropont (1470), in which Venice lost the island of Euboea to the Ottoman Empire. Several Venetian doges are mentioned, including Marin Falier (1285-1355), who attempted to assume absolute control of Venice in a failed coup. The entry for Urban VI (*sedit* 1378-1389) notes that he condemned five cardinals to death on charges of conspiracy, but only names one: "Aloise donado nobile de ueniesia [Ludovico Donato, nobleman of Venice]" (f. 69v). Covering as it does a fascinating period in papal, imperial, and Venetian history, this *Cronica*, possibly unique in its Venetian focus, is ripe for further study and for an edition.

In light of its innovative presentation and accessibility as a reference text, it is perhaps not surprising that Martinus Polonus's *Chronicon* should have inspired so many different translations and medieval continuations. In its earlier form, this epitome of world history structured around a parallel treatment of papal and imperial rulers presented year-by-year accounts of what occurred during popes' and Holy Roman Emperors' reigns, with papal history on verso pages and imperial history on rectos. Though this proved a difficult layout to maintain and reproduce, its synchronic nature and its brief, chronologically organized passages would have provided a valuable historical outline for theologians and canon lawyers – as well as for later medieval chroniclers. This manuscript's arrangement follows the later and simpler practice of arranging chronological accounts of papal and imperial reigns separately, with the chronicle of the emperors following that of the popes. Entries, rarely exceeding a paragraph, succinctly list the precise length of each reign and its chief religious or political events, which Martinus drew from a large number of historical sources.

Martinus Polonus (died c. 1278) is best known for his *Chronicon*, which he wrote for Clement IV (reigned 1265-1268) while serving under him as a papal chaplain and penitentiary. Prior to this he had entered the Dominican order in Prague. In 1278 Pope Nicholas III (reigned 1277-1280) appointed him Archbishop of Gniezno and he died in the same year while en route to his seat. In addition to the *Chronicon*, he wrote a popular legal concordance, the *Margarita Decreti et Decretalium* (see TM 642 in our current inventory), and two collections of sermons.

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