

## Notes on Latin Grammar

In Latin (with some Italian), decorated manuscript on paper

Northern Italy, c. 1360-1380

*i* (paper) + 21 + (paper) folios on paper (watermark similar to Briquet no. 7643, Huchet: Genoa, 1357, Florence, 1364-1367, Gex, 1366), ff. 5-16 have contemporary foliation upper center versos, 29-30, 32, 37, 39-40, with intervening foliation possibly lost to cropping, modern foliation in pencil, upper outer rectos, 1-21, incomplete, lacking text at beginning and end and possibly lacking a bifolium between ff. 4-5 and ff. 16-17 and with possible textual lacunae between ff. 14-15, 18-19, 19-20, and 21-22 (collation  $i^{20}$  [+20; f. 20 is a tipped in singleton]), layout varies, I. ff. 1-2v, 7rv, 9rv, 12rv, 14rv, 19-20v, ruled with full-length vertical bounding lines produced from folding the paper (justification 155-172 x 70-96 mm.), written primarily in pale brown ink in a Gothic cursive hand on thirty-one to thirty-two long lines, marginal notes by the primary scribe outlined with fanciful designs, now partially cropped, with additions to ff. 2v, 9, and 12v in a second, looser Gothic cursive hand, paragraphs on f. 2rv lettered in a sequence, l-q, II. ff. 3-6v, 8rv, 13rv, 15rv, 17, ruled faintly with full-length horizontal and vertical bounding line (justification 140-160 x 73-90 mm.), written under the top line in seven hands: (1) ff. 3, 6rv, 15rv, in dark brown ink in a Gothic cursive hand on twenty-eight to thirty long lines, (2) f. 3v, written in a larger, more sprawling Gothic cursive hand on thirty-two long lines, (3) f. 4rv, written in a tight Gothic cursive hand on thirty-six to thirty-nine long lines, (4) f. 5, written in more calligraphic Gothic cursive hand with hybrida characteristics on thirty-three long lines, (5) f. 5v, written in a hasty Gothic cursive hand on thirty long lines, (6) ff. 8rv, 13rv, written in dark brown ink in a Gothic cursive hand on twenty-nine to thirty long lines, with scribal corrections in the margins, now partially cropped, (7) f. 17, written in dark ink in a Gothic cursive hand on thirty long lines, III. ff. 10-11v, ruled in hard point with full-length horizontal and vertical bounding lines (170-180 x 85-110 mm.), written above the top line in a Gothic cursive hand similar to the primary hand of I, IV. f. 16rv, no visible ruling (justification 125-147 x 74-80 mm.), written in band 7 of II on thirty long lines, text block outlined in ink by scribe, V. f. 18rv, ruled in hard point with full-length horizontal and vertical bounding lines (166 x 93-96 mm.), written in two hands: (1) f. 18, band 2 of II and (2) f. 18rv, in a more calligraphic Gothic cursive hand with hybrida characteristics, VI. f. 21rv, ruled faintly in lead with full-length horizontal and vertical bounding lines (138 x 70 mm.), written above top line in dark ink in a more calligraphic Gothic cursive hand with band with hybrida characteristics, capitals throughout highlighted in yellow, guide letters for initials, two- to four-line spaces left for initials, four two-line initials in brown ink on f. 18v, one three-line initial in brown ink on f. 4, one two-line initial drawn in outline (added later?) on f. 20v, some faint spots on paper, f. 1 faded but still legible, otherwise in fine condition. Bound in sixteenth-century limp vellum wallet binding with three parchment manuscript fragments on the outside, the two large fragments on the front and back covers from a single noted liturgical manuscript (possibly an Antiphonary?) copied in a transitional hand from the first half of the thirteenth century, and the smaller fragment on the front cover from a slightly later thirteenth-century manuscript (perhaps a Psalter), binding flap extending from lower cover around the fore-edge to the upper cover, thong clasp on upper cover, smooth spine with remains of two leather bands, additional manuscript fragments reinforcing the quire inside, some rubbing and soiling of parchment. Dimensions 228 x 143-146 mm.

This fascinating manuscript, a text on Latin grammar that is unstudied and quite possibly unique, affords a rare glimpse of an Italian schools in the fourteenth century. Renaissance humanism upheld the tradition that grammar was the foundation of the medieval liberal arts. Here we have a work that brings us right into the fourteenth-century classroom, evoking the very methods of studying and teaching in the Trecento. The informality of the manuscript and how it is composed suggest intriguing hypotheses about its use either as study aid or a master's first draft.

## PROVENANCE

1. Judging from evidence of script, language, and watermarks, this manuscript was produced in Northern Italy in the third quarter of the fourteenth century, c. 1360-1380. Copied in many hands with minimal decoration and marginal corrections and annotations by multiple contemporaries, this was a working text, very likely produced by students or followers of a grammar instructor (see Text, below).

Partial contemporary foliation indicates that this single quire was once part of a longer volume. Assuming no losses within the quire itself, at least twenty-four folios must once have preceded f. 1 in the present manuscript. This text, acephalous here, may once have been much longer, or, perhaps more likely, was bound with other texts.

2. This volume was bound in its present binding early in the sixteenth century, judging from the watermark of the later flyleaves (similar to Briquet no. 469, Ancre: Bologna, 1512, Udine, 1518, Olmütz, 1520, Arnoldstein, 1521). Given the localization of this watermark, it seems possible that the manuscript remained in Northern Italy, perhaps in the vicinity of Bologna.

## TEXT

ff. 1-21v, beginning imperfectly, "[S]Ecundo notandum est quod comparato eque fit propositam ... composita a cano is fatiunt i suppinum in tum ut concino ni contentum. Cano facit cecini cantum. Et habentia//."

A unique assemblage of notes on grammar, chiefly pertaining to Latin (though also addressing similar constructions in the Italian vernacular), this volume was likely copied by students studying grammar at the secondary level. The first of the seven medieval liberal arts, grammar was the basis of all learning in the Middle Ages, "both the origin and the foundation of the liberal arts," according to Isidore of Seville (Murphy, 1981, p. 137). Children thus began their study of grammar early around the age of seven, but continued to study the discipline well beyond grammar school. Indeed, its importance to medieval learning can hardly be overstated. In the words of medieval teacher and grammarian Alexander of Villedieu, "grammar is the gateway of all other sciences, the most apt purgatrix of stammering speech, the helper of logic, the master of rhetoric, the interpreter of theology, the refreshment of medicine, and the most praiseworthy foundation of all the quadrivium [that is, arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy]" (Murphy, 1981, pp. 137-138).

This repository of relatively advanced grammatical learning is an enigma and, as such, an extremely rich object for study. It may be a Trecento textbook. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries saw a marked increase in the production of new grammatical textbooks, some of which circulated in hundreds of manuscripts (see Bursill-Hall, 1977) – Alexander of Villedieu's *Doctrinale* and Eberhard of Béthune's *Graecismus* are two that became particularly popular – but anonymous productions like this one presumably saw a more local circulation. Perhaps more likely, though, in light of the book's production on paper by over ten hands, it may preserve notes taken by relatively advanced students on the lectures of their grammar master.

Without doubt, this book was a collaborative production. Still, regularities of language and form suggest that this volume's linguistic observations come from a common source. Its language (Latin tinged with some fourteenth-century Italian) remains consistent throughout, as does its

wording. Organized in sequences of points to be noted, each point begins with the same language ("Primo notandum est quod ...," "Secundo notandum est quod ...," "Ultimo notandum est quod ...," etc.) and follows a similar progression, whether, for example, declining a noun or participle or conjugating a verb and then noting other words or word endings that decline or conjugate in the same fashion, or providing more general discussions of various parts of speech. References to preceding, related points underscore the coherence of this text.

Furthermore, the text follows a uniform organization throughout, with points grouped in sections of five to seven and numbered first (*primo*), second (*secundo*), etc. through last (*ultimo*) within each group. This organizational approach is not uncommon in legal, ecclesiastical, philosophical, or theological treatises of the period and its consistent use throughout this volume further emphasizes the manuscript's cohesion. It is interesting to note, however, that a variety of subjects are typically discussed within each numbered group. Each numbered group proceeds through a sequence of topics, and these topics seem then to be taken up again in the next sequence using different examples.

A compelling explanation for the linguistic, formal, and organizational coherence present in this collaboratively produced manuscript is that the book was copied by student followers of a specific teacher. While Northern European students were typically taught grammar at the secondary level through the memorization of verse treatises like the *Doctrinale* of Alexander of Villedieu, it was not uncommon in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries for Italian students to possess copies of textbooks, written in prose and organized systematically around Alexander's syllabus (Black, 2004, p. 7). This could be one such textbook or perhaps, given the collaborative production, a preliminary collection of notes assembled in preparation of a textbook. It appears to follow the lectures of a grammar instructor teaching at the secondary level and drawing on extremely influential and foundational sources like the *Institutiones grammaticae* of Priscian (fl. 500 AD) and even the more elementary *Ars grammatica* of Aelius Donatus (4th century AD).

With its interesting and completely unstudied text, this manuscript will make a fascinating object of study alongside these (and other) popular grammars of the Middle Ages and the many grammar textbooks produced in Trecento Italy (Black, 2004). Additional scrutiny will be needed to ascertain how this volume fits into that tradition and whose teachings this manuscript memorializes, but at this point we would like to suggest one possible answer to the latter line of inquiry.

Given this text's probable origin in Trecento Northern Italy, this manuscript's possible connection to Bologna (see Provenance, above), and the text's recurring use of the name "Petrus" in example sentences, the humanist rhetorician Pietro da Moglio (d. 1383) could possibly be the instructor whose teachings are preserved here. A prominent pedagogue of the period, Pietro da Moglio was probably a student of the early Bolognese humanist Giovanni del Virgilio (d. 1326), and taught grammar and rhetoric at the secondary level with a boarding school in Bologna, where one of his prominent pupils was the great Florentine humanist and man of letters Coluccio Salutati (1331-1406). By 1352 he was lecturing on rhetoric at the University of Bologna as well, and he taught as a professor in Bologna until his death, but for a stint at the University of Padua from 1362 to 1368. An important figure in the early development of humanism, Pietro da Moglio is also known to have corresponded with humanist

luminaries like Petrarch and Boccaccio.

## LITERATURE

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## ONLINE RESOURCES

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