

EUTROPIUS, *Breviarium ab urbe condita*, in the version by PAUL THE DEACON,  
*Historia Romana*, Books 1-10

In Latin, decorated manuscript on parchment and paper

Northern Italy or Umbria, c. 1420-40

*i* (paper) + 55 + *i* (paper) folios on parchment, quire one, ff. 1-10v, with the remainder, paper (watermark, dragon or basilisk, possibly same general type as Briquet 2643, Genoa 1443; Briquet 2644, Ferrara, 1450; Piccard 124009, Bologna 1414, etc.), modern foliation in pencil, top outer corner recto (collation, *i-v*<sup>10</sup> *vi*<sup>8</sup> [-6,7, and 8, cancelled with no loss of text]), flourished horizontal catchwords, middle, lower margin, no leaf or quire signatures, ruled with single full-length vertical bounding lines in very faint lead (often indiscernible), and with horizontal rules in brown ink (justification, 157-155 x 95-92 mm.), written above the top ruled line in thirty to twenty-seven long lines by two scribes in a gothico-antiqua or fere-humanistic script; the first scribe copied ff. 1-7v, line nine, the second scribe copied the remainder of the manuscript; three- to two-line alternately red and blue initials, with contrasting pen decoration in violet or red, f. 1, seventeen-line blue initial with decorative void spaces within the initial, infilled and decorated with red pen, stains from water or damp in the upper and lower margins, and some worm holes in the bottom margins, text is legible throughout, parchment quire is cockled. Bound in the sixteenth or seventeenth century in undecorated vellum over pasteboard, smooth spine with "Eutropius" written in ink at the top. Dimensions 238 x 165 mm.

This well-written and annotated humanist manuscript includes the first ten books of Paul the Deacon's revision of the history of Rome by the fourth-century Roman author Eutropius. Popular throughout the Middle Ages, it was especially appreciated in fifteenth-century Italy. Most humanist copies include this version. There are numerous copies of this important historical text in institutional collections, but this text has not often been available for sale in recent years; since 1985, the Schoenberg Database lists only two Latin copies for sale, including this one.

## PROVENANCE

1. Written in Italy, most likely in Northern Italy, but possibly in Umbria, probably c. 1420-40, based on the type of script and the decoration; there are some similarities to the decoration found in Harley MS 2631, Northern Italy, Vicenza (?), 1427-30, and the script of the first scribe resembles that found in New Haven, Yale University, Marston MS 17, copied in Roccacontrada, now Arcevia, province of Ancona, in 1434. Scripts of the type used by the scribes who copied these manuscripts, which were clearly influenced by humanistic script, but which retained some gothic letter forms (known to scholars as fere-humanistic script or gothico-antiqua script), were used in manuscripts throughout Italy, but were especially common in Northern Italy (see Derolez, 179). The watermark of a dragon or basilisk is split between two pages in this manuscript, and it is therefore impossible to reconstruct its original dimensions exactly; it was, however, a type that was widespread in northern Italy from the late fourteenth through the fifteenth century (cf. Briquet, 2617-2682; it was also found elsewhere in Europe).

The manuscript was carefully corrected, see for example, ff. 1, 2, 4v, and 5 (supplying three lines of text), and includes short marginal notes showing use from the fifteenth through the sixteenth century (notes are usually short guides to the content, for example, f. 1v, "David rex iudeorum," f. 2v, "Fundamentum rome," f. 15rv, "augurium," f. 32v, "Julius Caesar," etc.). The hymn added on f. 55 in a contemporary hand is an interesting juxtaposition of a religious text within a humanist, secular, manuscript.

2. Belonged to Iulius de castello de à Lano, signed, f. 54v; perhaps Città di Castello in the province of Perugia in Central Italy;

3. Sold by J. Rosenthal, Catalogue 90, 1928, lot 172 (Schoenberg Database 11648); Joseph Martini Sale, Hoepli, August 27, 1934, lot 39 (Schoenberg Database 34827); sold by Swann, January 24, 1995, lot 149 (Schoenberg Database 3924). Dealers' and owners' notes include, inside front cover, in pencil: "4° 74391," and "L.B.92855"; back flyleaf, f. i v: "2214/93"; inside back cover: "Imp Temp. N° 21 del 3.3.933."

## TEXT

ff. 1-54v, incipit, "Primus in Italia ut quibusdam placet regnavit Ianus ... [f. 2v] Romanum igitur imperium quo neque ab exordio ... que nec tam pretermittimus quam ad maiorem scribendi diligentis reseruamus." *Explicit Eutropius, Amen.* [added in a contemporary hand; *Hic liber est mei iulii de castello de à Lano et amicorum meorum et non aliorum.*]

f. 55, Dies vestros ne perdatis/ Vanas curas deponatis ... Dies scolas frequentate/ Et audita conservarte. Auditorium memores. Finis."

Hymn, also in Strasbourg, BNU, MS 173 (latin 169).

Eutropius was a fourth-century Roman author, who served as secretary to the Emperor Valens (reigned 364-378 A.D.). His history of Rome, the *Breviarium ab urbe condita* (*An Abbreviated History of Rome from Its Beginning*), provided a summary of the simple facts of Roman history from the foundation of the city to the reign of Valens. It was an immediate and lasting success (Reynolds, p. 159). Indeed, during the Middle Ages, as the numerous surviving manuscripts testify, versions of Eutropius's history were the most popular Roman history. It was revised in the eighth century by the Lombard author, Paul the Deacon (c. 720-799), a monk at Monte Cassino, and the author of an important history of the Lombards, as well as a commentary on the *Rule* of St. Benedict. Paul the Deacon's version, known as the *Historia romana*, included a dedicatory letter, a short beginning section detailing the prehistory of Italy before the founding of Rome, a few additions inserted within the original ten books by Eutropius, and six additional books that continued Eutropius's history up to 522 A.D. in the time of Justinian. Paul the Deacon's version was itself expanded around 1000 by Landolfus Sagax, who continued it into the ninth century.

The manuscript described here begins with Paul the Deacon's "prehistory," section, (beginning, "Primus in Italia ut quibusdam placet ..."), followed by Paul's revision of Eutropius's original ten books (beginning "Romanum igitur imperium quo neque ab exordio ..."). This version of Eutropius was the standard version found in fifteenth-century humanist manuscripts, and as Mortensen has postulated, it probably represents a deliberate attempt to return to the original Roman version of the history, without the medieval additions. It was an easy task to recognize Paul the Deacon's added books as "non-authentic"; his opening section was retained since it was

less easy to identify it as an interpolation to the original text by Eutropius (Mortensen, p. 117). The text in this manuscript also includes the interpolations added by Paul the Deacon within Eutropius's original ten books.

Paul the Deacon's text was edited by Crivellucci in 1914 (listed below), and Eutropius's text has been edited and translated numerous times (the most recent edition is Santini 1992). Taken as a whole, the various versions of Eutropius's *Historia breviarium*, usually referred to collectively as the *Historia romana*, survive in an impressive 218 manuscripts; 105 of these date from the fifteenth century, a testimony to the intense interest in Roman history in humanist circles. Paul the Deacon's version of the text, including the shorter version with only ten books, survives in 153 manuscripts (Mortensen, 104-5, and 165-200). The manuscript described here is listed in Mortensen, p. 200, no. 218, as in an unidentified private collection, citing the Rosenthal Sales catalogue, 1928, no. 172.

## LITERATURE

Bird, H. W. "Eutropius: his Life and Career," *Échos du monde classique* 32 (1988), pp. 51-60.

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Müller, F. L. ed. and tr. *Eutropii Breviarium ab urbe condita, Kurze Geschichte Roms seit Gründung*, Stuttgart, F. Steiner Verlag, 1995.

Paul, the Deacon. *Pauli Diaconi Historia romana*, ed. Amedeo Crivellucci, Fonti per la storia d'Italia 51, Rome, Tipografia del Senato, 1914.

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Santini, C., ed. *Eutropii Breviarium ab Urbe condita*, Bibliotheca Teubneriana, 1992.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

Piccard online

<http://www.piccard-online.de/start.php>

Briquet Online (Kommission für Schrift- und Buchwesen des Mittelalters der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften)

[http://www.ksbm.oew.ac.at/\\_scripts/php/briquet.php](http://www.ksbm.oew.ac.at/_scripts/php/briquet.php)

Text in English

[http://www.ccel.org/ccel/pearse/morefathers/files/eutropius\\_breviarium\\_2\\_text.htm](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/pearse/morefathers/files/eutropius_breviarium_2_text.htm)

Eutropius: Breviarium, full Latin text at

<http://www.gmu.edu/departments/fld/CLASSICS/eutropius.html>

Robert Vermaat, "Flavius Eutropius – Historiae romanae breviarium," Vortigern Studies

<http://www.vortigernstudies.org.uk/artsou/eutropius.htm>

Schlager, P. "Paul the Deacon," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11591b.htm>

TM 457