

**PAULUS DIACONUS (PAUL THE DEACON), *Epitome Festi De verborum significatu* [*Epitome of Festus' "On the meaning of words"*]**

In Latin, decorated manuscript on paper  
Northern Italy, perhaps Brescia, dated 1459.

*i* (vellum) + *iii* (paper) + 66 paper + *i* (vellum) folios on paper, watermark, tête de boeuf à yeux, sommée d'une fleur, similar to Briquet 14871 (Brescia 1434-45) and 14872 (Brescia, 1457-70), nineteenth-century foliation in ink, top outer recto, 2-70 (collation: *i*<sup>4</sup> [-1, cancelled stub, no apparent loss of text], *ii-v*<sup>12</sup>, *vi*<sup>16</sup>, *vii*<sup>2</sup>]), the vellum flyleaves and leaves 2-4 and 70 are blank, quires unsigned, catchwords by the scribe on the bottom right margin of the last verso of quires *ii-v*, vellum strips pasted at the fold on the inner and outer bifolios of each quire to strengthen the sewing, blind ruled, with double bounding lines, no visible prickings (justification 153 x 94mm), written above the top line in a single, North Italian gothico-humanistica hand, that of Bartholomeo da Soncino, in twenty-nine long lines, no rubrics, guide letters and five-line capital letters in red introduce each letter of the alphabet, and the first two or three entries under each letter can also have one-line red capitals, but most of the capitals for the lemmata were never inserted and there is no other decoration, guide letters for lemmata supplied only for some entries under the letter A, a worm hole or two on most leaves (rarely within the text block), more worming on last three leaves, some staining especially around the vellum sewing supports, darkened edges throughout. Bound in nineteenth-century vellum over paper boards, red leather spine label with gilt title "FESTUS", binding waste made from a printed missal visible under the pastedowns at beginning and end. Engraved, armorial bookplate pasted to inside of front board (90 x 75 mm: EX LIBRIS PAVLI GVERRINI). Dimensions 215 x 150 mm.

Previously unknown manuscript, dated and signed by the otherwise unrecorded humanist scribe, Bartholomeo da Soncino, of a monumental work of ancient and medieval lexicography of the Latin language. Paul's work is an abridgement of the Lexicon of Pompeius Festus, a second-century grammarian, who, in turn, composed an abridgement of a major work of scholarship from the Augustan Age by Verrius Flaccus. Neither Festus's nor Verrius's text survives intact, so the epitome by Paul the Deacon, an important figure at Charlemagne's court, is our only source for their work.

### PROVENANCE

1. Northern Italy, perhaps Brescia, 1449: "MCCCC 49 die xviii mensis Iulii hoc opus, scilicet Clarissimi festi pompeii transcriptum...fuit a me Bartholomeo de Soncino" (1449, on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of the month of July, this work, namely of the Illustrious Festus Pompeius, was transcribed...by me Bartholomeo de Soncino). Bartholomeo is not otherwise recorded as a scribe (not included in Bénédictins du Bouveret, 1965-1982, Iter italicum, or Manoscritti Datati d'Italia [Online Resources]). The paper of the manuscript, similar to Briquet 14871 (Brescia 1434-45) and 14872 (Brescia, 1457-70), appears to be from Brescia, some 30 kilometers from Soncino.
2. Paulo Guerrini (1880-1960), a Brescian priest, historian, and archivist. His armorial exlibris on the front pastedown ("Ex libris Pauli Guerrini. labora libenter. nec spe nec metu").
3. Italian Private Collection (accompanied by exit papers).

## TEXT

ff. 5-69v, (no title or rubric), incipit, "Augustus locus sanctus ab auium gustu idest quia ab auibus significatus est, sic dictus siue ab auium gustatu...[V]Inciam dicebant continentem. / [V]Erniserames (sic) palia auguria."

Paulus Diaconus, *Épitome Festi De verborum significatu* [*Épitome of Festus' "On the meaning of words"*]; the standard edition is Lindsay (1913), based on a selection of eight of the early manuscripts of Paulus's edition (plus the fragmentary Naples manuscript of Festus and its Renaissance copies). Festus (but not Paulus's edition) is discussed by P.K. Marshall in Reynolds, 1983, pp. 162-164.

Verrius Flaccus (c. 55 BC-AD 20), the tutor to the grandsons of the Emperor Augustus, was one of the greatest scholars of the Latin language and the author of the first major alphabetized dictionary of Latin. His massive work – the entry for the letter A alone required four books – was rich in information on the religion, history, and literature of Republican Rome, but it survives only through later abbreviated editions. The first of these was made in the second century AD by Sextus Pompeius Festus. Reducing Verrius's lexicon to a single book, Festus preserved, at least in part, a vital link to the scholarly tradition of the Augustan Age. Festus's work, however, suffered the same fate as that of Verrius. It only survived the early Middle Ages in a damaged state (only one fragmentary manuscript of Festus is extant today, Naples, Bibl. Naz. IV.A.3, preserving less than half of the text). But fortunately an epitome of Festus was produced towards the close of the eighth century at the court of Charlemagne by one of the greatest scholars of that period, Paul the Deacon (c. 730- c. 799), best known as author of the *Historia Langobardorum* and the *Historia Romana*.

Paul (also known as Paulus Warnefredus) was born in Friuli c. 730 and was educated in Pavia at the court of the Lombard kings. When Charlemagne conquered the Lombards, Paul entered the Abbey of Monte Cassino, where he became a monk. His wide learning attracted the attention of Charlemagne, and Paul collected, edited, and restored Festus's dictionary as a gift to the Emperor. He states in the dedication that his goal was to make a contribution to Charlemagne's library. Paul spent the years from 781-787 at Charlemagne's court, retiring in 787 to Monte Cassino where he spent the remainder of his life and produced the majority of his literary works. Paul's *Épitome Festi*, linking the scholarship of the Carolingian court with that of the Augustan Age, is an important monument in the revival and promotion of ancient literature during the Carolingian Renaissance.

Paul's work, and through it that of Festus and of Verrius, became the subject of intense interest again during the Italian Renaissance after a copy of the work was discovered by Poggio Bracciolini and Bartolomeo da Montepulciano at the Abbey of St. Gall in 1416. Among the Italian humanists who made important contributions to the study of Paul's lexicon were Pomponio Leto, Angelo Politiano, Giovanni Battista Pio (who prepared the *editio princeps* in 1500), Joseph Scaliger, and Fulvio Orsini. More than a dozen manuscripts of Paul's *Épitome* are extant from the High Middle Ages, and there are said to be around one hundred surviving Renaissance codices (a full list has not yet been published). There is no complete critical edition of the work, but an international team of scholars is currently engaged in producing one (see below, Online Resources: The Festus Project).

The present manuscript is one of the few dated manuscripts of the text, and it is an unexamined witness to the rising scholarly interest in this text during the Renaissance. Textual variants, some of them recorded in other manuscripts, some not, are found in many of the entries (including the first and the last). Despite the number of surviving manuscripts, there are no recent sales of this text reported in the Schoenberg Database.

## LITERATURE

Bénédictins du Bouveret. *Colophons de manuscrits occidentaux des origines au XVIe siècle*, Spicilegii friburgensis subsidia 2-7, Fribourg, Suisse, Editions universitaires, 1965-1982.

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Glinister, F. and C. Woods. *Verrius, Festus and Paul: Lexicography, Scholarship and Society*, London, 2007.

Helm, R. "Sextus Pompeius Festus," in *Paulys Real-encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, vol. 21.2 (1952) cols. 2316-19.

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Moscadi, A. *Il Festo farnesiano (Cod. Neapol. IV.A.3)*, Florence, 2001.

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Reynolds, L. *Texts and Transmission*, Oxford, 1983, pp. 162-164.

### ONLINE RESOURCES

Iter Italicum, the electronic version of Paul Oskar Kristeller's *Iter Italicum: a finding list of uncatalogued or incompletely catalogued humanistic manuscripts of the Renaissance in Italian and other libraries*, print ed., 6 vols 1963-92

<http://www.itergateway.org/>

Manoscritti Datati d'Italia (Dated Italian manuscripts)

<http://www.manoscrittidatati.it/>

Festus Lexicon Project

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/history2/research/festus/index.htm>

Lindsay's Edition

<http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008900043>

French Translation

<http://remacle.org/bloodwolf/erudits/Festus/index.htm>

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