

**Q. SERENUS, *Liber medicinalis*; JACOBUS DE CESSOLIS, *Liber de moribus hominum et officii nobilium sive de ludo scaccorum* (excerpt)**

**In Latin, with isolated German inserts, manuscript on paper  
South-East Germany (Bavaria) or Austria, c. 1500**

12 leaves on paper, unfoliated (collation, i<sup>2</sup>), in folio, with a single watermark present in the paper stock, a set of scales being an exact match for Piccard, Waage, type VII 181 (attested in Innsbruck, 1499-1501), part of the set constituted by types VII 181-83, and by Briquet, 1968, types 2560-61, all attested in the period 1492-1501, written in at least three hands: [i] a hybrida currens, responsible for the register in three columns on ff. 2ra-4vc, and in two columns on f. 5ra-b, [ii] an Italianate hybrida libraria, responsible for the text on ff. 5rb-6va, in two columns on around 56-58 lines; [iii] a semihybrida currens, responsible for the texts on ff. 6vb-10rb, in two columns on around 56-58 lines (some entirely cut away), on ff. 11v-12v in one column on 45-46 lines, extending beyond this into the lower margin on f. 12v, and probably for the indices added in a slightly smaller script in three columns on f. 10v and in the first of two projected columns on f. 11ra (f. 11rb left blank), all written right to the edge of the page, with the exception of ff. 11v-12v, (justification 130 x 270 mm.), two- and three-line initials in red and rubrication on ff. 1v-6r, marginalia in red ink and underlining in red ff. 11v-12v, ff. 1r-v are blank, quire sewn, aggressively trimmed, but unbound. Dimensions 297 x 205 mm.

This single quire offers an interesting example of the range of texts that could be brought together at the end of the Middle Ages to provide medical knowledge. It includes a late Roman treatise in Latin hexameters, preserved by the Carolingians as an example of good style, a text rare on the market (only two copies recorded in multiple sales since 1900). Also included is an extract from a thirteenth-century moral-didactic work written as an allegory of the game of chess; and lists of the names of medicinal components and useful herbs, some with their equivalent German names.

## PROVENANCE

1. The medieval provenance of this manuscript is unknown. What was presumably an ownership mark in the lower margin of f. 2r has been torn out, and the page subsequently restored. This is very likely the first quire of what was once a much larger manuscript, given that the first leaf was left entirely blank, and that the quire was aggressively trimmed in preparation for binding, which has caused the significant loss of text, given how close to the margins the text was entered.

In size, script, and content, this manuscript is a typical product of the late medieval abbeys of southern Bavaria and Austria. That regional location is supported by the Austro-Bavarian dialect of the German words entered on ff. 10vb-11ra, and the preponderant attestation of the paper type, which is of Venetian origin, in Austrian archival sources. The presence of three hands, each contributing significant portions of the text in sequence, points towards an origin within a monastic scriptorium, and a southern Bavarian or Austrian origin would account for the presence of a more rounded hand, typical of northern Italy (no. ii above) alongside two hands (nos. i and iii above) more readily associated with the rapid scripts of southern Germany and Austria around the turn of the fifteenth century.

## 2. Private European Collection.

### TEXT

ff. 2ra-10rb, ff. 2ra-5rb, alphabetical register indexing medical and medicinal terms, with references to numbered sections within the text; f. 5rb, *QVINTI. SERENI. MEDICI. LIBER. PROEMIVM.*, incipit, "MEMbrorum series certo deducta tenor[e] Vt stet consimilis medicine defluat or[do] Principio celsa de corporis arte loqua[mur] Phebe salutiferum quod pangimus assere car[men] Inuentumque tuum prompto comitare fauo[re] Tuque potens artus reduces: quod tradere vita[s] Nosti: atque in celum manes reuocare sepult[os]....," *Liber medicinalis quinti sereni finit*;

Q. Serenus (Sammonicus?), *Liber medicinalis*, the "Liber medicinalis," a treatise in around 1200 Latin hexameters, is attributed by the manuscript tradition to a Quintus Serenus, evidently a late Roman author who may, or may not, be identical with the somewhat indistinct figure of that Q. Serenus Sammonicus who was tutor to the sons of the emperor Septimius Severus, author of the (lost) "Res reconditae" in five volumes, and was murdered on the order of the emperor Caracalla at the end of the year 211: for this Serenus, see Champlin, 1981. There is only scanty evidence of the work in late antiquity, and the textual history begins in the ninth century, when a copy was made at the personal request of the emperor Charlemagne. The ninth- and tenth-century manuscript transmission is quite considerable, outweighing that of later centuries, and it would seem that the manuscript was copied so extensively as part of the Carolingian revival of classical literary form. The text attracted renewed interest in the later fifteenth and earlier sixteenth centuries, as a series of manuscripts – of which this is one – and early printed editions attest. For this data on the manuscript transmission, see Rouse, 1983. Aside from its interest as an example of imperial Latin verse style, and of later Roman medical knowledge, the "Liber medicinalis" contains the earliest known instance – and may be the origin – of the magical invocation *abracadabra*.

The standard edition is that of Friedrich Vollmer in 1916, using Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, Cod. C 78, ff. 59r-82v as the principal manuscript, written in the later ninth century at the abbey of St. Gallen from a copy related to one held in Reichenau (see pp. vii-xv). That manuscript, the sole complete representative of family A, does not contain the three lines immediately prior to the 'official' preface found in this manuscript (those beginning "Membrorum series..."; the preface then commences with "Phoebe, salutiferum..."), which are present in a secondary manuscript tradition (family B) similarly documented in the ninth century. The distinctive reading "Vt stet consimilis" in place of "Vt stat, adsimilis" in the second of those three lines locates this manuscript as a representative of that sub-group of family B otherwise represented by Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, Ms. 1220, the Venetian incunable of 1488, and the Leipzig print of 1515 (see critical apparatus to the edition, p. 5). This manuscript lacks the standard set of *capitula* that precede the text even in the earliest manuscripts (edited pp. 3-4), but which have been replaced here by a far more extensive thematic index, allowing easier access to the work as a compendious handbook of medicinal knowledge.

A Latin text based on Vollmer's edition, without critical apparatus but with facing-page translation into Italian, and an introduction with good bibliography, was presented by Ruffato, 1996; for a discussion of further modern editions, see Rouse, 1983, p. 382 n. 2; the older manuscripts are listed by Beccaria, 1956, p. 481 et passim.

The Schoenberg Database lists just two manuscripts of this work that have come up for sale since 1900 (both on multiple occasions), with another eight or so copies that are documented in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sales. The text is not a common one, with two “bursts” of interest in it: one from the 790s through to c. 1050, and then again in the period 1450-1550 or so, and survives in only c. thirty-forty manuscripts in all, about evenly divided between the two periods. There is no modern and thorough conspectus of the surviving manuscripts.

f. 10va-b, [Lists of Medical Terminology], *Materialia medicine hec sunt simplicia*, incipit, “Caro. ossa. sanguis. adeps. [I]ntestina. Semen. nephina. medulle. [s]udores...”; f. 10vb, *Uocabula ex 1 quaestio*, incipit, “Sal fossile. cenecessera (??). pixidicula. Sorriadis (??) prima. species vlcerum oculi. Sagapenum succus ferule...”; *Ex libro 1mo*, “Ampliate. focate. cerebra. manubriolum. Curtum naris. hopsus.”; *Ex octauo*, “Cananiculo. Cibra”;

These lists of medical terminology begin (f. 10va) with a list of the so-called “simplicia,” or fundamental elements from which compounds and medicines proper are composed, and continue with two lists of vocabulary drawn from another, unidentified medical work, not preserved in the present quire. The presence of isolated German terms in these latter lists suggests that the scribe may have been noting unfamiliar terms as a learning tool.

ff. 10vc-11ra, [List of Plants], *Genera herba[rum ---]*, incipit, “Ladanum genus gumi. Hyoscianum Insperanum (??) bilsen samen. Salbanum succus ferule. Porrum lauch. Acorus gelb lagen. Marubium marobl. Iris Wilwurtz. Enula alantwurtz...”;

This list of plants with medicinal uses, similar to the preceding lists, appears to be a learning tool, compiled on the basis of a work not preserved in the present manuscript. The name of the plant is followed either by a brief definition in Latin, or by a translation into German. The list is not altogether coherent; whilst the fourth item is the inoffensive *porrum*, the humble leek, the second is the altogether more unpleasant *hyoscyamus*, the black henbane.

ff. 11v-12v, *De medicis et pigmentarijs*, incipit, “Collocantur ante reginam in hac forma Nam in cathedra magistrali collocatus est homo habens librum in manu dextera vrceolum pigmentary in sinistra in corrigia siue in cingulo habens ferramenta vulneris et vlceris per hos intelliguntur phisici Geometri Arsinitrici [sic! recte: arismetici] / musici et astrologi loyci rethorici... et hec dicta de medicis et pigmentarys nunc sufficient.”

Jacobus de Cessolis, *Liber de moribus hominum et officiis nobilium sive de ludo scaccorum* (excerpt); The “Book on the Game of Chess,” written by the Genoese Dominican Jacobus de Cessolis (fl. 1317-22) at some point in the early fourteenth century, is a moral-didactic allegory of the estates of mankind structured around the game of chess. The third of its four books presents allegorical interpretations of each of the eight pawns, understood as eight professions and/or crafts. The chapter excerpted here is that for the fifth pawn, on doctors and apothecaries (*medici* and *pigmentarii*). It begins with a careful description of the symbolic figure of the doctor and/or apothecary, a mental picture closely connected to the illuminations found in many manuscripts of the work. This is followed by a presentation of the virtues especially associated with the profession in question, augmented with pertinent exempla and dicta. For all this, see Plessow, 2007, pp. 46-60. The “Liber de ludo scaccorum” has been excerpted into this manuscript evidently, and unusually, for its presentation of medical and medicinal knowledge. It enjoyed an extensive manuscript circulation, and was especially widespread in the Benedictine abbeys and Augustinian canonries of south-east Germany and Austria: see Plessow, 2007, pp. 110-12, 116-19 and 121-22. There is no satisfactory edition. The most easily accessible edition is that

presented in the critical apparatus to Ferdinand Vetter's edition of the German versification by Konrad von Ammenhausen: for this excerpt, see Vetter, ed., 1892, apparatus to cols 589-614.

## LITERATURE

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Vollmer, Friedrich, ed. *Quinti Sereni Liber medicinalis*, Corpus medicorum latinorum 2/3, Leipzig and Berlin, 1916.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke: Incunable Editions of Jacobus de Cessolis  
<http://www.gesamtkatalogderwiegendrucke.de/docs/CESSJAC.htm#GW06535>

PHI Latin Texts: Q. Serenus, "Liber medicinalis"  
<http://latin.packhum.org/loc/1515/1/0#0>

Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, C 78  
<http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/de/list/one/zbz/C0078>

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