

Doctoral Diploma in Canon and Civil Law from the University of Pisa
Illuminated Latin manuscript on parchment
Italy (Pisa), May 8, 1608

iii + 4 + iii folios in parchment with paper flyleaves, modern foliation in pencil in upper recto corners, complete in one gathering (collation i⁴), catch-letters below the last lines of ff. 1v, 2, 2v, and 3v, blind ruling set within double-line frame in dark brown ink (justification 190 x 126 mm.), written in a Humanist bookhand by a single scribe in 28 long lines in brown ink, majuscules and names in gold throughout, text begins with gold capitals and a 2-line gold initial, an illuminated heraldic coat of arms in shades of brown (oxidized red), blue, and green, and a small 7-line MINIATURE OF THE CITY OF PISA, framed in gold, with a gold 'S' inserted into the miniature, minor damp staining at lower outer corners especially on final folio causing very limited text damage, occasional flecking, some worming damaging text on a few lines throughout, slight abrading in small area of frontispiece, quires separating from binding but intact, overall good condition. ORIGINAL ITALIAN BINDING of dark red-brown goatskin, intricate gilt tooling on both front and back with grape leaf and vine motif, floral corner-pieces, and the name "Nicolai Falconii Florentini I.V.D." around a double-lined lozenge with roses at corners, mythical creatures with delicate human and bird features and a coat of arms at center, ORIGINAL SEAL and blue silk ties detached, gold cords remaining at tail of back cover and spine, some abrasion of leather and gilt, particularly on front cover. Dimensions 215 x 150 mm.

University diplomas constitute a rich mine of resources as historical documents and as artifacts. Founded in the Middle Ages, the University of Pisa has received little attention, compared to Bologna and Padua, although it was important for its connections with the Medici during the Renaissance. The present example of a Pisan law diploma is especially notable not only for the quality of its decoration and its lavish gold-tooled binding, with original seal and silk ties, but for its illumination of the walled city of Pisa, complete with leaning tower.

PROVENANCE

1. Written, illustrated, and bound in Pisa, Italy, by professional artisans. This diploma was bestowed on Nicolaus Falconius of Florence on May 8, 1608 in confirmation of his doctoral degree in Canon and Civil Law. Although Falconius is presently unidentified, the quality of his diploma, which includes his coat of arms at the beginning and on the binding, suggests he was from an important family.
2. Traces of several bookplates on the inside of the front cover indicate the manuscript's prior ownership in several private collections. A few modern numbers in faint pencil, perhaps former shelfmarks or prices, also remain, and there appear to be two (or more) names that, while visible, are no longer legible.

TEXT

ff. 1-4, incipit, "IN DEI NOMINE AMEN. SALUSTIUS Taurusius, Dei & Apostolicae Sedis gratia electus Archiepiscopus Pisanus ... [f. 1v] DOMINUS NICOLAUS Falconius Florentius ... [f. 2] Promotores suos in eodem Pisano Gymnasio publice legentes Iura examinandus, & approbandus in Iure Canonico, & Civili ... [f. 2v] Ego Nicolaus Falconius firma fide credo ... [f. 3v] Dominum Nicolaum Falconium pronunciantes, affirmantes, & declarantes I.V. Excellentissimum esse Doctorem ... [f. 4] ... Anno ab Incarnatione Domini nostri Iesu Christi ... M.D.CVIII et die viii mensis maii ... [signature] Andreas Fellonius Notarium et Cancellarius de [concluding with a quickly written scrawl, presumably the date or a notary mark].

This diploma, dated May 8, 1608, was granted by the University of Pisa to Nicolaus Falconius of Florence, for a doctorate in Canon and Civil Law. It follows the formula also witnessed in a Pisan diploma from 1663 issued for a doctorate in Natural Philosophy and Medicine ("Pisa Renaissance Diploma"; Online Resources). It opens by naming the Archbishop of Pisa, Salustius Taurusius. After explaining the merits of those men who achieve a doctorate, Falconius is introduced, followed by a list of his twenty-two promoters and examiners. The first among them is Phillipus Bonaventurius of Florence, who was a docent of Civil Law at the University of Pisa from 1582 to 1586, a master of Metaphysics from 1586 to 1592, and finally a master of Civil Law from 1592 to 1610 (Fabronio, 1792, pp. 149, 465-67). The diploma then describes the doctoral defense as a public lecture followed by an "arduous and rigorous" private examination. As his doctorate was legitimized by ecclesiastical authority, the full Creed is included, with Falconius as the first-person speaker. Thereafter he is declared a doctor and awarded the insignia "I.U.D.": "Iuris Utriusque Doctor," Doctor of Both Laws (Civil and Canon). Finally, the date is given, and current dignitaries, Pope Paul V, Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II, and Grand Duke of Tuscany Ferdinando d'Medici are acknowledged. As the official legal witness, the notary signed his name at the end.

ILLUSTRATION

The diploma begins with a coat of arms, presumably of its recipient, Nicolaus Falconius (modern Italian: Falcone or Falconi). The shield is divided into two: on the left is an emblem of a lion's foreleg, extended upwards, in gold with a diagonal banner across it in white, on a red (now oxidized to brown) field; on the right is a white banner in the upper quadrant reading "LIBERTAS" on a red (now oxidized) field with four golden bands spaced evenly below it. On top is a helmet, on which rests a small brown falcon with outspread wings.

Below this is a landscape miniature of Pisa depicted as a walled city of white stone; one tower leans, signaling the famous tower. Running alongside the city from right to left is a river representing the Arno. A small building complex in the bottom right corner of the miniature across the river from the city may represent the Church of San Michele degli Scalzi. Birds fly in the blue sky above, and swimming in the river is a tiny ichthyocentaur (a creature with a human head and torso, forelegs of a horse, and tail of a fish).

In the early seventeenth century, the University of Pisa was foremost among the universities supported by the Medici family in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. The Medici dukes pressured Tuscans to attend local universities; consequently, over half of Pisa's students were from the Duchy, and many of Florence's elite held a Pisan degree. Although its most renowned early modern student was Galileo, who went on to become Chair of Mathematics before leaving for Padua, the Law faculty to which Falconius belonged was substantially larger than those of Arts or Theology (Schmitt, 1974, p. 5).

Doctoral diplomas from early modern Italy, which survive in both private and institutional collections, have gained scholarly attention in recent decades. Studies have focused on a broad range of topics, from their value as historical and institutional sources, to their interest as artifacts, studied for their script, illumination, and binding. Those of the University of Padua (see, for example, Baldissin Molli, et al., ed., 1998) and the University of Bologna (*Diplomi di laurea*, 2016) have garnered the most research. While most diplomas were written on flat sheets,

as they appear today, diplomas in quarto format, usually illuminated and elaborately bound, appear c. 1580-90 in Northern Italian universities and maintained this presentation into the nineteenth century.

LITERATURE

Artusi, Luciano. *Firenze araldica: il linguaggio dei simboli convenzionali che blasonarono gli stemmi civici*, Florence, 2006.

Baldissin Molli, Giovanna, Luciana Sitran Rea, and Emilia Veronese Ceseracciu, eds. *Diplomi di Laurea all'Università di Padova (1504-1806)*, Padua, 1998.

Fabronio, Angelo. *Historiae Academiae Pisanae*, Vol. 2, Pisa, 1792.

Honor et meritis: diplomi di laurea dal XV al XX secolo. Mostra documentaria realizzata in occasione del 500 anniversario della fondazione dell'Università degli studi di Urbino, Ferruccio Farina and Stefano Pivato, eds., Rimini, 2005.

Maggiulli, ed., Ilaria, ed. *Diplomi di laurea. Conservati nell'Archivio storico dell'università di Bologna*, Rimini, 2016.

Mariani Canova, Giordana, Giovanna Baldissin Molli and Federica Toniolo, *La Miniatura a Padova dal Medioevo al Settecento*. Modena, Franco Cosimo Panini, 1999, pp. 423-428, cat. nos. 80-185 and pp. 533-543, Giovanna Baldissin Molli. "La tarda miniature."

Schmitt, C. B. "The University of Pisa in the Renaissance," *History of Education* 3 (1974), pp. 3-17.

ONLINE RESOURCES

"Diplomi," Archivio Storico, University of Bologna

<http://www.archivistorico.unibo.it/it/struttura-organizzativa/centro-di-documentazione-delle-culture-e-tradizioni-studentesche-/diplomi/?IDFolder=468&LN=IT>

Honor et meritis: Diplomi di laurea dal XV al XX secolo. Urbino, Palazzo Ducale, Sala del Castellare. 14 Gennaio-31 Marzo 2006

<https://www.kaleidon.it/2006/02/honor-et-meritus/>

"Pisa Renaissance Diploma," Private Collection

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/36735978@N05/albums/72157628909025467>

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