

## PALLADIUS RUTILIUS TAURUS AEMILIANUS, *Opus agriculturae* (Treatise on Agriculture)

In Italian, manuscript on paper

Central Italy, c. 1450-1460

i (parchment) + 48 + i (parchment) folios on paper with two watermarks, a tulip-like flower, quire i only, resembling Briquet 6654 (Rome 1452-1453) or 6655 (Palermo 1462, Pisa 1464-1469, Perugia 1456-1458) and scissors, quires ii-iv, very like or identical to Briquet 3668 (Rome 1454, variants, Rome 1456-1460, Naples 1459, Perugia 1458), paper leaves foliated in black ink 1-46 center upper margins on rectos plus 2 unnumbered blank leaves at end, complete (collation i-ii<sup>16</sup> iii<sup>12</sup> iv<sup>4</sup>), horizontal catchwords center lower margin last versos, lines unruled, 4 full-length vertical and 2 full-width horizontal bounding lines lightly ruled in lead (justification 210-220 x 155-166 mm), written by a single hand in Italian cursive script in two columns of 45-55 lines, book and chapter titles in red, two-line initial space at beginning of each chapter not filled in, guide letters in margins, old waterstains to margins and occasionally in text which usually remains legible, margins frayed, with loss to some upper and lower corners, several upper corners with old mends obscuring several words at the ends of up to 6 lines especially in first quire, f. 1 partially detached. Text block and endleaves sewn on three alum tawed thongs, the two conjugate parchment manuscript leaves serving as a wrapper, the parchment bifolium and the first paper quire once sewn on three tackets, parchment somewhat rubbed and stained but text still legible, text block lacks boards or any further evidence of the now-lost binding, in a modern cloth case, leaf from a Davis & Orioli catalogue laid in. Dimensions 295 x 220 mm.

Unstudied and little-known, this manuscript offers an extraordinary opportunity for study. Organized according to the calendar, this influential text was a practical guide, in simple language, to the agricultural tasks to be performed in each season of the year. As a representative of the first of three approximately contemporary Italian versions of Palladius, none of them yet studied in detail, this manuscript will reward examination of its approach to translation and to the dialect employed. Manuscripts of Palladius are extremely rare on the market, with only four sales of the Latin text recorded since 1898, and no sales of any translation.

### PROVENANCE

1. Copied in Italy c.1450-1460, to judge from the watermarks. The manuscript bifolium that now serves as a wrapper was at the center of the quire in its parent manuscript. Its text, in Latin, which begins and ends incompletely, presents chapters 23-39 of the statutes of the town of San Leonino, located between Florence and Siena, suggesting that the manuscript may have been created or used in this area. An analysis of its vocabulary and spelling it promises to yield evidence for identification of the dialect employed by the copyist, possibly leading to more specific dating and localization.
2. Earlier descriptions note these sales: Davis and Orioli, booksellers of Florence from 1910, and then in London from 1913; this manuscript their cat. 32 (1922), no. 5; reappearing in cat. 39 (1924), no. 8; cat. 45 (1927), no. 6; and then presumably

appearing as no. 33 in a subsequent catalogue of theirs (leaf from this last catalogue loose in our manuscript, similar in format to other Davis and Orioli catalogues, but we have not identified the precise catalogue).

3. Library of the Rothamsted Experimental Station (previously Rothamsted Agricultural Station, now Rothamsted Research), Harpenden, Hertfordshire, England, acquired by them in 1937 from the booksellers Davis and Orioli. The origins of this library go back to the early days of the institute founded by Sir John Bennet Lawes and Sir J. Henry Gilbert (Grey 1911, Founders 1901). There appears, however, to be little information regarding the formation of the collection, which was dispersed at sale in 2018 (See Online Resources).
4. Sold, London, Forum Auctions, July 10, 2018, lot 3.

## TEXT

ff. 1-45v, *Qui chomincia illibro de palladio rutilio tauro Emiliano homo savissimo dogni lavorio di terra. Chapitolo sopra generale amaestramento della terra e daltri generali amaestramenti cioe della prima parte i questo libro*, incipit, "De amaestramenti in genero dellavorio della terra echome non con tropa sotigheza di parole side informare illavoratore ..." [capitula for Book 1; f. 1v blank], [f. 2] *Degli amaestramenti in genero dellavorio della terra echome non con troppa sotilitade di parole side informare illavoratore. Chapitolo primo*, incipit, "Parte di prudentia e di sавere estimare chie la persona di cholui tu parli epero cholui che amaestra illavoratore di terra non side ingegnare di parlare pulito per arte di rettoricha sicome feceno molti liquali parlando pulitamente e artifitiosamente avillani esserne seguito chella loro dottrina ne da quelli che sono savissimi sipuo te intendere ... hora quarta e settima piedi x hora sesta piedi viiii<sup>o</sup>." *Explicit trattatum palladii de agricholatura. Amen.*

Palladius Rutilius Taurus Aemilianus, *Opus agriculturae*, in Italian translation, Books I-XIII, edited by Zanotti, 1810, pp. 1-296, primarily on the basis of the manuscript Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, 2238 (Marchesi, 1907, pp. 215; Nieri, 2013, p. 342).

Two more texts ascribed to Palladius, discovered in the twentieth century, are sometimes treated as Books XIV and XV of his *Opus agriculturae*: a treatise on veterinary medicine, *De veterinaria medicina* (Sabbadini 1903; Sabbadini 1905; Svennung 1926; Svennung 1935, pp. 24-45; Rodgers Teubner 1975, pp. 242-291; Rodgers *Introduction* 1975, pp. 45-58), and a poem in elegiac couplets on the grafting of trees, *De insitione* (Sabbadini 1903; Svennung 1935, pp. 46-93; Rodgers Teubner 1975, pp. 293-301; Rodgers *Introduction* 1975, pp. 59-65). These two texts are found together with the larger work in only one manuscript, Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, C 212 inf., from the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century and apparently deriving from an older archetype; otherwise the two additional treatises have textual traditions separate from Books I-XIII in most manuscripts and were not included in the present one.

ff. 45v-46, *Expositioni de vocaboli di palladio*, incipit, "Ablaqueare cioe aprire la terra dintorno alla radice della vite ... Sparteas e quel vime overo erbe di che sifanno lesporte."

Brief definitions of agricultural and technical terms used by Palladius, printed by Zanotti, 1810, an addition that has been recorded in only six other manuscripts (Marchesi, 1907). The present manuscript combines a short list of agricultural terms (ablaqueare – sparteas) with a longer list of terms referring to measurement, lists printed separately by Zanotti (Zanotti, 1810, pp. 297-299).

f. 46, *Sonetto*, incipit, "Io sono palladio della agricholtura ... Per chio non posso te ilibro per segno." [f. 46v blank]

This sonnet, edited by Marchesi, is found in only three other manuscripts (Marchesi, 1907, pp. 218-219). It is sometimes attributed to Domenico di Giovanni, called Il Burchiello (Florence, Siena and Rome, 1404-1449), but is not included in modern editions of his work (Lanza, 2010; Zaccarello, 2004; mentioned by Zaccarello, 2000, p. 277). Biscioni, 1757, p. 190, prints a version with a variant ending.

Palladius Rutilius Taurus Aemilianus is thought to have written his *Opus Agriculturae* in the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E. His precise life dates are not known, and the approximate dating of his work relies on reference to external events or circumstances. To judge from his name, he was connected with the aristocracy in Gaul; possibly he was the youthful Palladius who accompanied Rutilius Claudius Namatianus on a journey to Rome, presumably in 417 (Mathisen 1993; Bartoldus 2012). From references in his treatise it is known that he had estates in Sardinia, near Rome, and possibly elsewhere, and that he had a practical knowledge of farming and estate management.

In compiling his work Palladius drew, directly or indirectly, on a variety of earlier writings. His principal source was the Roman writer Columella, whose *De re rustica* was written ca. 60-65 C.E., but he also refers to a number of other authorities, both Latin and Greek. (Svennung, 1927 provides a detailed analysis of his sources, usefully updated and summarized by Bartoldus 2012, pp. 53-58.)

Palladius's great contribution was to organize his work according to the calendar, and thus to offer a practical guide, in simple language, to the agricultural tasks to be performed in each season of the year. Book I, functioning as an introduction, offers general observations on farming, including advice on agricultural buildings and equipment, and drawing in part on information derived from Vitruvius's work on architecture by way of the epitome by Faventinus. Books II-XIII are devoted each to one month of the year, January-December, and describe the agricultural work appropriate to each (Bartoldus, 2012, p. 39). In many of the manuscripts of the work, as in the present codex, each book is preceded by a list of capitula, or chapter titles, that enhance the usefulness of the text as a reference work.

It was through Palladius's treatise that knowledge of Roman agricultural practices and the agronomy of the Later Roman Empire were transmitted to medieval Europe and beyond. He is cited by name (as Aemilianus) both by Cassiodorus in his *Institutiones* (mid sixth century) and by Isidore in his *Etymologiae* (early seventh century), both works that were greatly influential during the Middle Ages. In the thirteenth century Palladius was cited by Albertus Magnus and Vincent of Beauvais, and his work was a major source for the popular *Ruralium commodorum libri XII* of Petrus de Crescentiis (1304-1309). The *Opus agriculturae* was also known both to Petrarch and to Erasmus on the evidence of annotations in manuscripts that belonged to them. (Bartholdus, 2012, pp. 43-45; Rodgers *Introduction*, 1975). Over 100 manuscripts of the Latin text are known, dating from the ninth century to the sixteenth (Rodgers *Introduction*, 1975, pp. 155-171). The Latin text was first printed in 1472 by Nicolaus Jenson in Venice, in a volume now known as *Scriptores rei rusticae*. This and the several subsequent editions based on it included the works of Cato the Elder, Varro, Columella, and Palladius, and had the effect of canonizing these authors as the four most important Roman writers on agriculture (See Online Resources).

Responding to continuing interest in Palladio, a growth in literate readership, and an increasing demand for vernacular texts, the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries saw the production of a number of translations of the *Opus agriculturae*: into Catalan, Castilian, English, French, German, and especially Italian (Rodgers CTC, 1976; Fitch 2013). In particular, Central Italy saw the appearance of three different Italian versions, all dating from the fourteenth century. These have been described, and the known manuscripts of each listed, but they have never been studied in detail, nor have the texts of each version collated against one another (Marchesi, 1907; Nieri, 2013). The present manuscript, listed in *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries* (Ker, 2002), is a recent and welcome addition to the witnesses of the first and oldest of these versions, which presents a free rendition of the Latin text. Thirteen manuscripts of this version are now known: the present one, eight manuscripts in libraries of Florence, one each in Naples, Venice, and Siena, and one in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (Nieri, 2013).

Biblioteca Riccardiana MS 2238, now tentatively dated to 1330-1340, the oldest manuscript of this group, is the one that Zanotti published in 1810 in an edition that is still the standard source for this text. He accepted some readings from other Florentine manuscripts, and subsequent linguistic analysis has shown that although the base manuscript was copied in Siena or by a native of that city, Zanotti often "corrected" the published readings to Florentine forms (Frosini, 1993, pp. 48-49 and notes).

The second translation, known in five manuscripts, is much closer to the vocabulary and syntax of the original Latin. One manuscript of this version, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Plut. 43.13, from the mid-fourteenth century, is signed with the initials "A.L.," giving rise to the supposition that this translation may have been made by Andrea Lancia, known for his translations from the Latin, but this theory is no longer considered plausible (Marchesi, 1907, pp. 221-236; Frosini, 1993, p. 49 and note; Nieri 2013). The third translation, known from two manuscripts, is considered on the basis of linguistic analysis to have been copied in the region of Pisa and Lucca (Nieri, 2013). Such observations suggest that submitting the present manuscript to a detailed linguistic investigation could lead to a firmer dating and localization, as well as contributing to an understanding of how the different Italian translators approached their work. Manuscripts of Palladius's work are extremely rare in the market; previous descriptions note only four sales of the Latin version since 1898. One of these is now at Harvard University, Houghton Library, MS Typ 447 (See Online Resources). The manuscripts of the Italian version of Palladius's *Opus agriculturae* are found primarily in Italian libraries.

## LITERATURE

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## ONLINE RESOURCES

Rupert Powell, "July 10 & 11 at Forum Auctions: The Rothamsted Collection: Rarities from the Lawes Agricultural Library," Rare Book Hub, July 2018  
<https://www.rarebookhub.com/articles/2450?id=2450>

Houghton Library, MS Typ 447

<https://id.lib.harvard.edu/alma/990098211470203941/catalog>

ISTC (Incunabula Short Title Catalogue)  
<https://data.cerl.org/istc/is00346000>

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