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PUBLIUS PAPINIUS STATIUS, *Achilleid*, with extensive marginal commentary; ANONYMOUS (perhaps COLUCCIO SALUTATI), *Carmina continentia effectum totius libri*; ANONYMOUS, *Argumenta hexasticha*; GUIDO DELLE COLONNE, *Epithatium Achyllis*
In Latin, decorated manuscript on paper
Italy (Northern?), c. 1390-1420

i + 34 folios on paper, no visible chain lines, one watermark: 8-petalled blossom, without stipe, with pistil, 38 mm. tall, similar to Briquet no. 6588 (Milano, 1394), no. 6592 (Bergamo, 1430), no. 6595 (Milano, 1448), modern foliation [cited in this description] in pencil in Arabic numerals, with Latin minuscule 'a' for flyleaf, upper fore-edge recto, (collation, i-ii¹² iii¹⁰), vertical catchwords at gutter-side verso of last leaf of each quire, blind ruled, lineated in light brown ink (justification c. 162 × c. 92 mm.), copied in an early humanistic minuscule with some Gothic features in dark brown ink in 19 long lines, with headings added in an enlarged Rotunda, extensive marginal and interlinear annotation and glosses added in a smaller cursive gothic script, twenty-one enlarged decorative majuscules added in dark brown ink, with faces on ff. 21v, 22v, 26v, space left for an initial at 16v, "Liber" and "Primus" added in another hand in dark pink ink on f. 1v and f. 2, some water staining at gutter, wormholes, and some buckling, overall in good condition, with numerous inscriptions, pen-tests, etc. on ff. a, 33v, 34v, and right inner board. UNRESTORED EARLY BINDING, 15TH OR 16TH CENTURY, in brown leather over wooden boards with three raised bands, lack of pasted end-papers revealing leather turn-ins and rusted heads of nails affixing tawed thongs to boards, traces of metal hardware at center fore-edge of left board, at right board a fleur-de-lis shaped metal clasp depicting a lamb holding a banner, early annotation "STATIVS ACHIL" in ink faintly visible on outer right board, trace of inverted "Statius A[ch]" blind-stamped(?) on same board, with some wormholes and damage to top and bottom of spine revealing areas of binding structure, in a custom clamshell tray. Dimensions 280 × 205 mm.

Clearly the copy of an early Renaissance schoolboy, this manuscript contains the classical epic retelling of the life of Achilles so popular throughout the Middle Ages, influencing Boccaccio, Dante, and Chaucer. Now rare on the market (only four manuscripts listed for sale in Schoenberg database since 1965), the text was a widely taught staple of European pedagogy. This copy includes numerous marginal and interlinear glosses unattested in other copies and not discussed in the scholarly literature. Preserved in an early binding, with inscriptions placing it in the hands of powerful Genoese families in the 15th-17th centuries, this manuscript will be of value to scholars of classical reception, the history of education, and book collecting in early Renaissance Italy.

PROVENANCE

1. Copied in Italy, most likely in northern Italy, at the end of the fourteenth or early in the fifteenth century, c. 1390-1420, based on the evidence of the script and watermark.
2. 15th-century inscription of Andreolo D'Oria, "Nobili Domino Andriolo de Auria" (f. a), perhaps the Consignore of Oneglia of that name (1466-1560).
3. 16th-century inscription of Niccolò Spinola, "Nicolaus Spinula me possidet" (f. a).

4. 16th-century inscription of "Gio: Batt[ist]a Grimaldo" (f. 33v), likely the bibliophile Giovanni Battista Grimaldi (c. 1524-c. 1612) (see discussion below).
5. 16th- or 17th century inscriptions, "Alexandro" and "Guicciardino" (f. 34v).
6. Libreria Antiquaria and Libreria Antiquaria Pregliasco, *A SINGOLAR TENZONE: The Battle of the Books, Philobiblon*, 2007, no. 8 (Schoenberg Database 235987; see also 92390).
7. Sold, Forum Auctions, November 15, 2016, lot 14.
8. Private collection.

TEXT

ff. 1-31, *Stacij achilleidos liber primus incipit*, incipit, "MAGnanimum Eacidem formidatamque tonanti Progeniem et patrio uetitam succedere celo... Hactenus annorum comites elementa meorum Et memiru et memisse [sic] iuuat. scit cetera mater. Aura silet pup[p]is currens ad littora uenit. finis";

Commentary, f. 1, incipit, "*Magnanimum*. Ad euidentiam huius libri primum uidendum [sic] est que fuerit causa huius conficiendi ... prima ibi *Soluerat oebalio*. secunda ibi. *Ac thetis undi sonis*. tertia ibi *Interea meritos*. quarta ibi. *Iamque per egeos*. quinta ibi *Exuit Implicitum*; ...";

Publius Papinius Statius, *Achilleid*, 1.1.1-2.3.168, concluding with the spurious verse 168; accompanied by an extensive commentary and glosses to the text in the margins and between the lines (discussed below). Edited and tr., Shackleton-Bailey, 2003, pp. 311-397; and now Hall, Richie, and Edwards, ed. and tr., 2007-2008.

f. 31, *Epigramata huius libri*, incipit, "Primus femiferi [sic] matrem deducit ad antra ... Eacidem quintus narrantem tradit achiuis."

Brief general synopsis in verse; anonymous, but sometimes attributed to Coluccio Salutati; see "Carmina continentia effectum totius libri set aliter uel alio modo et per alium" in Jeudy and Riou, 1975), p. 171.

ff. 31-32, *Epigramata primi libri*, incipit, "Raptor alexander thalamum [sic.] bellumque reportat ... Atque super cenam docta testudine cantat"; [f. 31v], *Epigramata secundi libri*, incipit, "Eligit imbellem licomedis nereis aulam ... Femina ficta datur leto pro munere regi"; [f. 31v], *Epigramata tertij libri*, incipit, "Aulide coniurat reges pro coniuge rapta ... Virgine ui potitur dilecta pulc[h]er achilles"; [ff. 31v-32], *Epigramata quarti libri*, incipit, "Iamque duces gray schyronque urbemque tenebant ... Arma. senem placat hymeney federa iungens"; [f. 32], *Epigramata quinti libri*, incipit, "Mox iubare exorto care complexibus exit ... Pellidesque sue narrat primordia uite. Deo laus."

Brief anonymous six-line summaries to each book; see "Argumenta hexasticha," in Jeudy and Riou, 1975, pp. 173-174.

f. 32, *Epythaphium Achillis*, incipit, "Pellides ego sum Thetidis notissima proles ... [Cum pressi] hostilem fraude peremptus humum"; [f. 32v, blank].

Guido delle Colonne, "Epithatium Achyllis," ed. Griffin, 1936, p. 275.

Despite his popularity in his own lifetime, we know little of the life of the Greco-Roman poet Publius Papinius Statius (c. 45-c. 96) (Anderson, 2009, vol. 1, pp. 10-11). His *Achilleid*, likely composed during the final two years of the poet's life, remained incomplete at his death. Running to 1127 dactylic hexameters and intended to recount the entire life of Achilles, the work covers only the Greek warrior's childhood and adolescence prior to Trojan expedition. Regarded as an "attempt to revitalize and enlarge the epic tradition," this unfinished 'Ovidian' epic poem nonetheless acted as an important model for Latin poets of the later Roman empire (Coleman, 2003, pp. 26, 28-29) and – as reflected in the over 220 surviving manuscript witnesses (*Digital Statius*, s.v. "The Manuscripts") – remained immensely popular into the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375) and Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1340s-1400) drew inspiration from the *Achilleid* (Wetherbee, 2016, p. 227). Aimeric's 1086 *Ars lectoria* named Statius one of the 'golden' authors and, among all the ancient pagan *auctores*, only Statius was "singled out for Christian redemption" by Dante Alighieri (c. 1265-1321) (Copeland, 2016, pp. 24, 8).

In our manuscript, the *Achilleid* (ff. 1-31) ends with the spurious verse 168, "Aura silet puppis currens ad littora uenit" – which entered witnesses in the medieval era (Anderson, 2009, vol. 1, p. XIII) – and is graced with a copious apparatus (see below). Immediately following the poem are two short works which often travel with it from the fourteenth century onwards (Anderson, 2009, vol. 1, p. XXII). First, we find the "Carmina continentia effectum totius libri set aliter uel alio modo et per alium" (f. 31): a brief general verse synopsis of the *Achilleid*, attributed in some medieval copies to Coluccio Salutati (1331-1406) (Jeudy and Riou, 1975, p. 171). Thereafter, our scribe added the anonymous, undated "Argumenta hexasticha" (ff. 31-32): a quintet of six-line poems, one summarizing each of the five books into which the *Achilleid* was traditionally divided (Anderson, 2009, vol. 1, pp. XII, XXIII). Sometimes located at the beginning of each book, but more often integrated into the *Achilleid* and occasionally commented upon within the manuscript, the five "Argumenta" are here appended to the poem (Jeudy and Riou, 1975, p. 169). Finally, the codex closes with a copy of "Epithatium Achyllis" (f. 32) from *Historia destructionis Troiae*, a Latin prose account of the Trojan War composed in 1287 by Italian jurist and Sicilian School poet, Guido delle Colonne (c. 1210?-c. 1290?).

The apparatus accompanying the text of the *Achilleid* in our manuscript is one of its most interesting features; this was clearly a school-boy's copy (Woods, 2019, pp. 50-52; Clogon, 1968, pp. 7-9). Our manuscript begins with a prose *accessus*, that is a scholarly introduction to the work, which fill the margins on the first page (Anderson, 2009, vol. 1, pp. XXI-XXII; vol. 3, pp. I-VI). Generous commentary notes in the margins, along with extensive interlinear Latin glosses, mainly clarifying characters and locations, providing assistance with grammar and vocabulary, and identifying the text's rhetorical elements, are found throughout the manuscript. In the Middle Ages at least three main *Achilleid* commentaries circulated, along with variations (Anderson, 2009, vol. 1, pp. XXVII; vol. 3, pp. 14-30, 50-65, 84-102; idem, 2020, pp. 253-302). The version in our manuscript does not seem to be previously attested and will repay further study.

Embraced by masters and pupils for its “manifestly playful and irreverent” (Coleman, 2003, pp. 28) engagement with the hero’s boyhood and adolescence (Copeland, 2016, p. 8), the *Achilleid* was a widely taught staple of medieval European pedagogy, appearing in nearly every medieval student reading list and collection of school texts including, from the thirteenth century, the *Liber Catonianus*, a schoolroom “set text” consisting of selections from Classical authors (Reeve, 1983, p. 396; Woods, 2019, p. 54; in general see Jeudy and Riou, 1974, Clogan, 1968). Despite this wide reach and influence, as well as clear continuing relevance to twenty-first century scholars – see, for instance, Heslin’s widely-praised 2005 monograph *The Transvestite Achilles* – the *Achilleid* remains the least understood of Statius’ works with its sizeable manuscript corpus strangely understudied despite its rich potential (Anderson, 2009, vol. 1, p. xiii-xv at p. xv).

Inscriptions from the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries place our manuscript in the hands of several prominent and wealthy Genoese families, including the D’Oria, Grimaldi, Guicciardini, and Spinola. Of especial note is the inscription on f. 33v: “Gio: Batt[ist]a Grimaldo.” Heir to a sizeable fortune, Giovanni Battista Grimaldi (c. 1524-c. 1612) was well-known for the impressive library he assembled under the guidance of humanist scholar and Accademia della Virtù founder, Claudio Tolomei (1492-1556) (Hobson, 1975). Giovanni also owned a Dante manuscript, now Harvard University, Houghton Library, MS Dn.1.1. The inscription of Grimaldi’s friend, Niccolò Spinola (f. a), points to possible exchange of books between these two Genovese noblemen.

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Briquet Online

<https://briquet-online.at/>

Digital Status of the Achilleid, Université de Latin, Université de Genève

<https://achilleid.unige.ch/collection>

Schoenberg Database of Manuscripts

<https://sdbm.library.upenn.edu/>

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