

THE RENAISSANCE EDITIONS OF FESTUS: IDENTIFYING *PAULUS DIACONUS*

Abstract: Only through a protracted and challenging process at the end of the nineteenth-century was Paul the Deacon (*Paulus Diaconus*) correctly identified as the author of the abridged version of Festus's *De verborum significatione* that was in circulation in medieval times. However, a group of French scholars had already reached this conclusion during the Renaissance. The purpose of this study is to reconstruct the cultural path followed by the antiquarians and philologists who were able to make this important discovery *ante litteram*: by examining the many Renaissance editions of Festus, the perception of Paul's authorship emerges, revealing how scholars realised that the unidentified *Paulus* was in fact the *Diaconus* historian of the Goths and Lombards.

Keywords: *Festus, Paulus Diaconus, Pierre Pithou, Authorship, Renaissance Antiquarianism*

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INTRODUCTION

It is currently taken for granted that *De verborum significatione* of Sextus Pompeius Festus, which was in circulation in medieval times, was an abridged and re-invented version written by *Paulus Warnefridus*, generally known as Paul the Deacon, a Benedictine monk of Lombard origins who lived during the time of Charlemagne, between the eighth and ninth centuries.¹ However, it proved to be a protracted and challenging process to discover who this figure was. In fact, the manuscript tradition of this text provides no direct proof of his authorship, nor in the dedicatory letter addressed to Charlemagne is it possible to find data which allows the author to be identified – here the epitomist referred to himself as *Paulus ultimus servulus* (Paul, the last of the servants), without specifying his full name, place of origin or profession.²

It was only after the rediscovery of the *Codex Farnesianus* around the mid-fifteenth century that some Renaissance philologists began to cast doubts on which *Paulus* had abridged Festus's original, having noticed substantial differences between the medieval text and the surviving *Codex*.³

The epitomist was first believed to be Paul the Deacon in French erudite circles around the 1570s. It is likely that the antiquarian studies conducted in late-sixteenth century France on Charlemagne and the origin of the French monarchy made this connection possible.⁴

However, final confirmation of this emerged only centuries later,

¹ ZECCHINI 2011; MUNK OLSEN 2009, 237-38; AMMIRATI 2007, 17-22; CHIESA 2000; LENDINARA 2000, 237-50; DIONISOTTI 1994; VILLA 1984; CERVANI 1978.

² MUELLER 1880.

³ ACCIARINO 2016; LA REGINA 2010, 216; GLINISTER 2007; MANCINI 2007, 137-58; AMMIRATI 2007, 22-27; MOSCADI 2001, XIV-XVI; RIZZO 1997; BRACKE 1995, 190-95; GRAFTON 1983; LINDSAY 1913, *praef.*

⁴ COOPER 2013.

precisely when the medieval Festus was discovered to have strong textual links with the works of a Lombard monk and historian named *Paulus*. In fact, it was only during the nineteenth century that the studies of Georg Waitz (1878) and Karl Neff (1891) established that *Paulus* the epitomist was also *Paulus* the historian (known as *Paulus Diaconus*), who not only lived under the reign of Charlemagne, but also played an active role in the Carolingian Renaissance and was the author of *Historia Romana*, *Gesta episcoporum Mettensium*, *Vita Gregorii Magni* and *Historia Langobardorum*. Neff in particular devoted special attention to analysing the grammar, syntax and phrase structure of all these works, comparing his results with Paul's *De verborum significatione* and confirming beyond doubt the affinity between them. Previously, scholars such as Ludwig Bethmann (1839), Otfried Müller (1839) and Theodor Mommsen (1864) had rejected this identification, stating that *Paulus* was never mentioned as a *diaconus* (deacon) in the manuscript tradition of *De verborum significatione*, and only sporadically as a *pontifex* (pontiff) or *sacerdos* (priest).⁵ Furthermore, Müller's edition accepted the denomination *Paulus Pontifex*, which precluded any possible identification of the Lombard monk Paul with the historian (*qui ille homo fuerit, non quaerimus: nisi quod id certum et testatum habemus, fuisse eum Christianae ecclesiae sacerdotem non infimi gradus*).⁶

The purpose of this study is to understand the reasons behind and the dynamics of the Renaissance identification of Paul the Deacon as the author of the abridgement of Festus's *De verborum significatione*, following the cultural path carried out by the antiquarians and philologists who were able to achieve this important discovery *ante litteram* and reveal its impact on the late Renaissance scholarship.

AUTHORSHIP OF THE MEDIEVAL EPITOME

Paul the Deacon was a well-known author during the Renaissance, as demonstrated by the many publications of his historical and religious writings and by his biography in the *Enneades sive Rhapsodia Historiarum* (1498–1502), in which Marco Antonio Sabellico (1436–1506) briefly described him as a historian, but never as a commentator on or epitomist of classical texts. The first known allusion to Paul as an epitomist can be found in the introduction of the *De origine et gestis Regum Langobardorum* (1514), edited by Josse Bade and Jean Petit, who both stated that some of the texts he composed were similar to the originals (*Traduntur et alia in simili figura ab eo edita*), perhaps referring to his abridgements and commentaries.⁷

However, in general, the first Renaissance editions of the *De verborum significatione* refused to accept that Paul was the author of Festus's epitome. In the early incunabula of this work (1471, 1472, 1474, 1475, 1477, 1478), Festus was acknowledged to be the only author, even when the text of the *Codex Farnesianus* was not included in the publications.⁸ Therefore, Festus automatically replaced Paul in the imagery of fifteenth-century humanists.

The first to give an articulated opinion on the still

unidentified epitomist was *Manilius Romanus*.⁹ In his prefatory letter for the medieval *De verborum significatione* (1475), dedicated to Pomponio Leto, Manilius did not refer to the author's name, instead alluding to him only as the person responsible for irreparably damaging the original.¹⁰ Here, he described Paul as a person (*quidem*) of no value (*nullius momenti*), with no name or culture (*sine nomine sine litteris*), who had transformed the extensive and rich volume of Festus into a sterile compendium (*volumen diffusum et copiosum in sterile compendium redegit*). He added that the discovery of the *Farnesianus* made it possible to grasp several aspects which had been lost during the abridgement of the text (*et credibile est reliquisse quae magis necessaria erant*) which were fundamental in order to understand classical antiquity, and stated that Renaissance scholars somehow had to manage the disparities with the original created by this epitome.

A similar position was also taken by Angelo Poliziano, who declared in the first book of his *Miscellanea* (1489) that Festus had been abridged and damaged by a despicable and ignorant interpreter (*ab ignobili, et indocto quodam*), whose name was not worthy of mention (*nec isto quoque nomine satis bene de literis merito*).¹¹ Furthermore, neither the *editio princeps* of Festus, published by Giovan Battista Pio (1500), nor the subsequent editions (1502, 1510, 1513, 1519), among which the one by Aldo Manuzio, made any direct or indirect reference to Paul.¹² In these cases, the work appears to have been again attributed entirely to Festus (even the parts belonging to the epitome), perhaps because the philologists of the time had sought to diminish the value of the medieval tradition and to increase the importance of the ancient manuscript, in order to strengthen the link between *De verborum significatione* and the ancient world.

In the preface of his editions (1559), the Spanish archbishop and scholar Antonio Agustín was the first to make direct reference to Paul's name, but still referred to him generically as an unspecified figure (*Paulus nescio quis*), perhaps somewhat reproachfully.¹³ As declared in a letter to Fulvio Orsini dated 24 January 1559, Agustín was unable to uncover the identity of Paul the epitomist, especially after his studies on the manuscript tradition of the abridgement, in which Paul was generally addressed with no title, or only sometimes referred to as "the pontiff" (*non bisogna chiamarlo Pontefice perché non si trova in molti libri scritti, quel titolo*).¹⁴

However, Agustín was the first to consider this epitome from a historical perspective. In fact, he stated that Paul's intention when abridging Festus was to create a more successful epitome of the original (*operaepretium fore ratus est, si epitomen quandam efficeret eorum, quae ipsi magis placuerunt*), adding that the general success of

⁹ Often identified as the Greek scholar *Manilius Rhallus*, but is now more likely to be Sebastiano Manlio; see also LAMERS 2014.

¹⁰ LINDSAY 1913, 11; FESTUS 1475.

¹¹ POLIZIANO 1489, LXXIII.

¹² PIO1500; MANUZIO 1513.

¹³ AGUSTÍN 1559.

¹⁴ CARBONELL 1991, 301. Soon after, Agustín rejected the identification of Paulus the pontiff with Pope Paulus II, denying any possible identification between the epitomist of Festus and the Roman Pope (*et in vero penso che più presto sia detto così, volendo dir altro cognome, ovvero nome di patria, perché non so qual vescovo christiano si chiama pontefice, se non il Romano, et Paolo II fu posteriore assai, et non badava a questo*).

⁵ WAITZ 1878, 10–11; NEFF 1891.

⁶ MUELLER 1880, 32.

⁷ BADE – PETIT 1514.

⁸ FESTUS 1471; FESTUS 1471–1472; FESTUS 1474; FESTUS 1478.

the abridgement had gradually led to Festus's work being replaced with a more simplified version, since the public was no longer able to accept or even understand the original form (*Is liber indoctis viris adeo placuit, ut pro Festo in omnibus bibliothecis substitueretur*).¹⁵ Therefore, the transformation and consequent deterioration of the original Festus was not only caused by the actions of one single person, but instead converged with the cultural spirit of the period, generating unexpected consequences as a result.

This situation changed only with the 1575 edition of the French philologist, Joseph Justus Scaliger. In his preface, he referred to Paul as a Deacon and a Lombard for the first time (*inter eos pono Paulum Diaconum Longobardum*), broadening the historical context in which he lived. Scaliger set Paul the epitomist in the reign of Charlemagne and stated that, after the fall of Desiderius – the last of the Lombard kings (*Desiderio, qui ultimus Longobardorum rex fuit*) – he attempted to win the approval of the new king (*magnam et a victore, et a posteritate se initurum gratiam putavit*) by offering him an abridged text of Festus (*si Sex. Pomp. Festum, quo scriptorem utiliore lingua Latina non habet, mutilaret*), which resulted in irreparable damage being caused to posterity (*et tanto posteritatis damno se a victore redimeret*).¹⁶

It is still unclear how Scaliger identified Paul the Deacon as the author of Festus's epitome. However, in his *Adversariorum subsecivorum libri II* of 1565, the French scholar Pierre Pithou referred to a *Paulus monachus* (monk) as the author of both the *De gestis Langobardorum* and the *De verborum significatione*.¹⁷ Regarding the latter, Pithou did not directly refer to the title as proof of this identification, but instead alluded to the word *burrum* (red vest), which among all of Paul's works can be found only in Festus's abridgement.¹⁸ In 1569 Pithou edited the *Historiae miscellae*, a historiographic dissertation begun by Paul the Deacon (*a Paulo Aquilegensi diacono primum collectae*) and completed by Landulfus Sagax; he also worked on French medieval history, focusing on the reign of Charlemagne and on legislation (the works he published included the volumes of *Annales et historiae Francorum* in 1588 and *Historiae Francorum* in 1596, in which he collected primary sources on the matter).¹⁹ This implies that he was well acquainted with many of Paul's works, and that he may have been aware of all the complex weaves of parallel occurrences within the epitome of Festus and consequently verified their common authorship. It is likely that this information from Pithou passed on to Scaliger due to the cultural environment shared by the two scholars.

Unfortunately, this hypothesis is not yet supported by any concrete evidence. However, it is clear that, after Scaliger's edition, Renaissance scholars attributed the *De verborum significatione* to the Lombard monk. For example, only one year later (1576), the Flemish philologist Louis Carrion, in his *Antiquarum Lectionum commentarii III*, assigned to the epitomist of Festus the extended name of

Paul the Deacon (*neque ea quam vel Festus habet, vel eius depravator Diaconus and Scribit Festus ex Verrio seu potius ex Festo Paulus Diaconus*).²⁰

This acknowledgement was also accepted by the French printer, Arnault Sittart, who published an edition of Festus in 1584, amalgamating the three versions of Agustín, Scaliger and Fulvio Orsini.²¹ Paulus was identified as the historian of the Goths and Lombards (*historias antiquiores rerum Gothicarum et Longobardicarum narrationis accessione augetur*) and as a scholar who had commented on many ancient authors, aiding comprehension of their works but at the same time creating a series of interpolations (*et scriptores alios partim interpolaret, partim pro suo sui que seculi captu tamquam meliores et ad intelligendum faciliores faceret*).

CONCLUSIONS

The rediscovery of the *Codex Farnesianus* changed the perception of the authorship of the *De verborum significatione* among the Renaissance antiquarian scholarship. The new editions were initially ascribed to Festus, marginalising the Lombard monk as a result. It is in fact evident from the first opinions on *Paulus* that his role, which was strongly criticized, diminished the interest of scholars in discovering his real identity. This was the case not only for the editions that included the *Farnesianus*, but also for those which reproduced only the epitome.

It is likely that this situation began to change when Antonio Agustín combined the works of the two authors in his editorial layout, clearly marking each definition with the name of each author in the margins.²² The Spaniard was the first scholar to question the identity of the epitomist of Festus, but was unable to find an answer. Nevertheless, along with the studies carried out on the historical works of the Lombard monk, this new perception may have caused Pierre Pithou to realise that the epitomist of Festus was Paul the Deacon. This is similar to how Joseph Scaliger is likely to have connected *Paulus* to Festus from the information passed on to him from Pithou, due to the cultural environment that the two scholars shared, which was repeated in later editions.²³

The perception of the authorship changed as the decades passed, and Renaissance scholars eventually understood that the *Farnesianus* was the sole instrument to comprehend antiquity; however, the bond between Festus and the Lombard monk remained pivotal throughout in order to reconstruct the text and achieve a more complete idea of the original.

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- ²⁰ CARRION 1576, 16–17.
²¹ SITTART 1584, *ad lect.*; ACCIARINO 2016.
²² GRAFTON 1983.
²³ SITTART 1584; DACER 1681.

¹⁵ AGUSTÍN 1559, *praef.*

¹⁶ SCALIGER 1574, *praef.*

¹⁷ PITHOU 1565, *ad ind.*

¹⁸ PITHOU 1565, 26 a.

¹⁹ PITHOU 1569. In the preface of this work Pithou says: [...] *Paulus Longobardus (quem Eghinardus Pisanum Diaconem, plures Aquilegensensem vocant) [...]; see also PITHOU 1609, 700: Praefatio in Paulum Diaconum. PITHOU 1588; PITHOU 1596.*

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