

Giovio, Paolo

Como 1483 – 1552 Florence

De romanis piscibus libellus ad Ludovicum Borbonium Cardinalem amplissimum.**Rome, Francesco Minuzio Calvo, 1524 (August)**

FOLIO (272 × 210 mm), (54)ff. signed A–L⁴ M⁶ a⁴ (blank M6), not foliated or paginated. Title enclosed by woodcut compartment.¹

PROVENANCE inscription on blank verso of the title-page: *Anno Domini MDXXX mense Maio | Venetijs | Mancipium spinulae sum ludo, parcite, uicj | O uos qui à furcio nomina contrahitis* — illegible seventeenth-century Italian oval black ink stamp on title-page — Sotheby's, 'Continental books and manuscripts', London, 3 December 1998, lot 49

Occasional dampstaining, otherwise a delightfully fresh copy.

BINDING contemporary flexible vellum.

FIRST EDITION of the papal physician Paolo Giovio's first published work, 'Of Roman fish', conceived at a banquet Clement VII gave for François Louis, cardinal of Bourbon, during which the nomenclature of fish and seafood available in Roman markets had been disputed, and Giovio encouraged to compose his treatise. Proceeding chapter by chapter through about forty different kinds of fish, Giovio correlated ancient and modern names, commented on medical and nutritional properties, offered suggestions for cooking, and recounted anecdotes about Roman banquets – such as the occasions when Tito Tamisi travelled across Rome in order to dine on a black umber, and when Leo X served his buf-foon, Frate Mariano, a piece of rope cooked in a sauce as though it were a lamprey.² In the chapter on sturgeon, Giovio refers to Portuguese and Spanish voyages.³

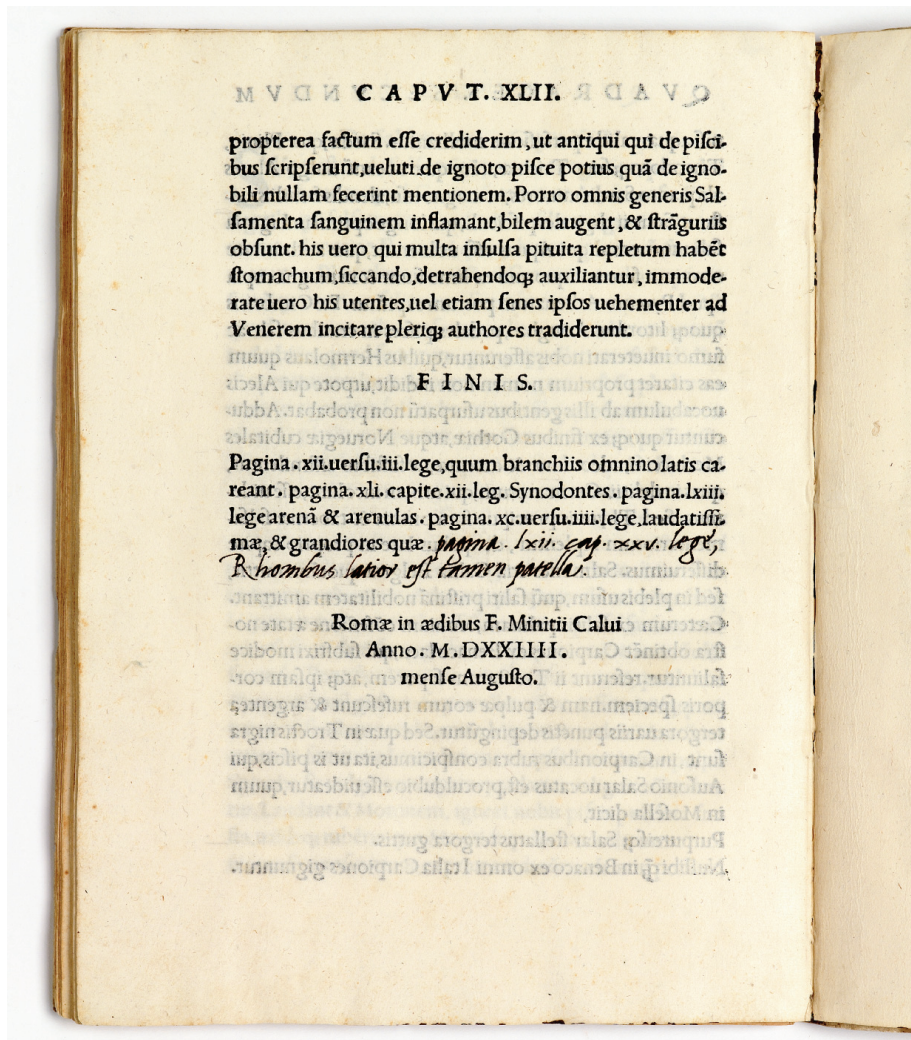
¹ Max Sander, *Le Livre a figures italien, depuis 1467 jusqu'à 1530* (reprint Nendeln 1969), no. 3168 and pl. 806.

² T.C. Price Zimmermann, 'Renaissance symposia' in *Essays presented to Myron P. Gilmore* (Florence 1978), 1, pp.368–369; Franco Minonzio, 'Appunti sul "De Romanis Piscibus" di Paolo Giovio' in *Studi gioviani. Scienza, filosofia e letteratura nell'opera di Paolo Giovio* (Como 2002), 1, pp.33–70.

³ John Alden, *European Americana 1493–1600* (New York 1980), no. 524/11.



Height of binding 272 mm



Identical emendations occur in the copies in the British Library and Biblioteca Civica di Como. Height of binding 272 mm.

‘Giovio carefully distinguished between the properties attributed to fish by the standard medical authors and his own empirical observations, which were generally pragmatic and astute. For example, while citing Athenaios and Pliny on the beneficent properties of cuttlefish, Giovio observed that all soft fish “are digested with the greatest difficulty by the stomachs of scholars and other physically inactive persons”, recalling his frequent but unheeded admonitions to Clement VII, “an avid diner on dishes made from these kinds of fish”. Giovio’s constant invocation of the Hippocratic canon of naturalness to exclude exotic remedies and fanciful lore betrayed the influence of the Greek revival in medicine’.⁴

The printer Francesco Minuzio Calvo issued his first dated book 14 September 1523 and in 1524 succeeded Silber as printer to the Holy See. His first book in folio format was printed in February 1524; the present volume is the second (of only four) folios from Calvo’s press, and features on its title-page the large version of his woodcut border incorporating figures of Minerva, Mars, the goddess Roma, and river god of the Tiber.

A second edition of *De piscibus romanis* (in quarto format and without the appended ‘Antiqua et recentiora nomina piscium marinarum lacustrium et fluuiatilium quae Iovii Commentariis continentur’) was printed by Calvo in April 1527; reprints followed at Antwerp in 1528;⁵ at Basel in 1531, 1535, and 1545; and (together with the text of Oppianus) at Strasbourg in 1534. An Italian translation by Carlo Zancaruolo appeared at Venice in 1560.

The list of errata in our copy is emended ‘pagina LXII cap. XXV lege, Rhombus latior est tamen patella’, as in the British Library copy (shelfmark C.75.d.3/2), and also in a copy in the Biblioteca Civica di Como (shelfmark 86–3–3).⁶

REFERENCES H.M. Adams, *Catalogue of books printed on the continent of Europe, 1501–1600, in Cambridge libraries* (Cambridge 1967), G–634; Adriano Ceresoli, *Bibliografia delle opere italiane latine e greche su la caccia, la pesca e la cinologia* (Bologna 1969), p.287; Fernanda Ascarelli, *Le Cinquecentine romane: ‘Censimento delle edizioni romane del XVI secolo possedute dalle biblioteche di Roma’* (Milan 1972), p.117

⁴ T.C. Price Zimmermann, *Paolo Giovio* (Princeton 1995), pp.16, 64.

⁵ *Et Coquatur ponendo: cultura della cucina e della tavola in Europa tra medioevo ed età moderna*, catalogue of an exhibition, Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica ‘F. Datini’ (Prato 1996), pp.158–159.

⁶ Described in *Pauli Iovii Opera*, edited by Ernesto Travi and Mariagrazia Penco (Rome 1984), IX, pp.6–7.