

ARS AMBIANENSIS

The *Ars Ambianensis* exemplifies the genre of the “elementary grammar”, taking as its starting point the Christianized version of the *Ars minor* of Donatus, and expanding it with examples and paradigms of the inflected parts of speech, thus providing material necessary for students who were native speakers of a Celtic or Germanic language¹. Several classes of evidence indicate that the author of the *Ars Ambianensis* was an Irish scholar, working in the British Isles, in the late seventh or early eighth century².

The *Ars Ambianensis* survives in four recensions³, transmitted by six manuscripts⁴.

- A Amiens, Bibliothèque Centrale Louis Aragon 426, ff. 48r-71v (s. IX¹ or IX *med.*; Corbie or northeast Francia). This codex transmits the sections of the *Ars Ambianensis* that cover noun declensions, pronouns, and verbs.
- G Sankt Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek 877, pp. 290-454 (s. IX *in.*; Switzerland, but not St. Gall)⁵. This codex transmits the sections of the *Ars Ambianensis* that treat noun declensions, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, and (incompletely) participles⁶.

1. For the sources and structure of the *Ars Ambianensis*, cfr. V. Law, *Insular Latin Grammarians*, Woodbridge 1982, pp. 68-71. Law treats the genre of the elementary grammar and its distinctive features in *Insular Latin Grammarians* cit., pp. 5-6 and 109-111; and in V. Law, *Grammar and Grammarians in the Early Middle Ages*, London-New York 1997, pp. 132-4.

2. L. Holtz, *Donat et la tradition de l'enseignement grammatical: Étude sur l'«Ars Donati» et sa diffusion (IV^e-IX^e siècle) et édition critique*, Paris 1981, pp. 434 and 437-8; Law, *Insular Latin Grammarians* cit., pp. 68 and 74; M. Lapidge - R. Sharpe, with foreword by P. Mac Cana, *A Bibliography of Celtic-Latin Literature 400-1200*, Dublin 1985, no. 1236, pp. 327-8; C. Giammona (ed.), «*Ars Ambianensis*»: *Le tre redazioni delle «Declinationes nominum»*, Hildesheim 2016, pp. LX-LXVI. For a skeptical response to earlier unsubstantiated attributions of grammatical texts to Irish authors and early dates, cfr. V. Law, *Malsachanus Reconsidered: A Fresh Look at a Hiberno-Latin Grammarian*, «Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies», 1 (1981), pp. 83-93; and V. Law, *Notes on the Dating and Attribution of Anonymous Latin Grammars of the Early Middle Ages*, «Peritia», 1 (1982), pp. 250-67.

3. Copyists of early medieval elementary grammars revised their texts freely and frequently, and scholars' criteria for determining what qualifies as a distinct recension are highly subjective, as Law acknowledges (*Insular Latin Grammarians* cit., p. 71). Law identifies three recensions (*Insular Latin Grammarians* cit., pp. 67-71; *Grammar and Grammarians* cit., p. 111), while Giammona identifies four: cfr. C. Giammona, *Ricezione ed evoluzione di un trattato elementare: le «Declinationes» e le redazioni dell'«Ars Ambianensis»*, in *Signes dans les textes, textes sur les signes: Érudition, lecture et écriture dans le monde gréco-romain*, curr. G. Nocchi Macedo - M. C. Scappaticcio, Liège 2017, pp. 275-84, at 276.

4. The following list of manuscripts combines data from Law, *Insular Latin Grammarians* cit., p. 67; and Giammona (ed.), pp. XXXV-XLVIII.

5. In the manuscript, these leaves are incorrectly paginated as 190-354; cfr. Giammona (ed.), p. XLII. On the codicological features of G, which is of higher quality than the typical grammatical compilation, cfr. Giammona, *Ricezione ed evoluzione* cit., p. 279.

6. For a more detailed account of the contents of this version of the *Ars*, cfr. Giammona (ed.), p. XLII.

- M** München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14737, ff. 208r-226r (s. IX²; Lake Constance region). This manuscript preserves the section of the *Ars Ambianensis* that treats noun declensions⁷.
- O** Oxford, Bodleian Library, Add. C 144 (S.C. 28188), ff. 95v-100v (s. XI *in.*; central or south-central Italy). This copy contains the section of the *Ars Ambianensis* that covers noun declensions.
- W** Sankt Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek 878, pp. 18-32 (s. IX^{2/4}; southern Germany)⁸. This codex transmits the section of the *Ars Ambianensis* that treats noun declensions.
- Mals.** Napoli, Biblioteca Nazionale «Vittorio Emanuele III» IV.A.34, ff. 235v-241v (s. IX¹; Luxeuil). This manuscript transmits a heavily revised version of the sections of the *Ars Ambianensis* that treat the noun and pronoun⁹.

Manuscripts **MOW** preserve the recension that is closest to the original shared source of all the recensions, but the value of these three witnesses for understanding that shared source is diminished somewhat «by their substitution of an abridgement of Priscian's *Institutiones grammaticae* for the original discussion of the third declension»¹⁰. The recension transmitted by **A** «also stands fairly close to the original» shared source¹¹. The longest of the recensions is preserved in **G**, which incorporates more numerous and more complete paradigms as well as sections that treat adverbs and participles, though the section on participles is incomplete¹². Vivien Law understood these three recensions (**MOW**, **A**, and **G**) to be roughly equidistant from their original shared source, and for this reason she recommended that all three recensions be ascribed equal importance in future editions¹³.

7. **M** includes two separate treatments of third-declension nouns. The first, which is shared with **A** and **G**, was derived from the original *Ars* from which all the recensions descend; the second, which is shared with **OW**, is adapted from Priscian's *Institutiones grammaticae*. Cfr. Giammona (ed.), pp. XLIV, LVIII, and pp. 113-6.

8. The scribe responsible for copying most of this manuscript was Walahfrid Strabo, according to B. Bischoff, *Eine Sammelhandschrift Walahfrid Strabos (Cod. Sangall. 878)*, in *Mittelalterliche Studien. Ausgewählte Aufsätze zur Schriftkunde und Literaturgeschichte*, II, Stuttgart 1967, pp. 34-51; cfr. also Giammona (ed.), p. XLVIII.

9. Cfr. below for further discussion; additional description of the Naples codex is provided by B. Löfstedt (ed.), *Der hibernolatinische Grammatiker Malsachanus*, Uppsala 1965, pp. 30-1.

10. Law, *Insular Latin Grammarians* cit., p. 69.

11. *Ibidem*, p. 69: «**A** also stands fairly close to the original in its noun-section, although it adds to or replaces a few of the original lists, and in the verb-section, where it agrees closely with **G**». For further details, cfr. p. 69, notes 72 and 73.

12. Law, *Insular Latin Grammarians* cit., p. 69, with note 74; Giammona, *Ricezione ed evoluzione* cit., p. 278.

13. Law, *Insular Latin Grammarians* cit., pp. 67-8.

The fourth recension of the noun-and-pronoun sections of *Ars Ambianensis* was formerly identified as part of a separate treatise known as the *Congregatio Salcani filii de uerbo*¹⁴; hence Bengt Löfstedt incorporated this fourth recension into his edition of the *Congregatio* and attributed it to Malsachanus¹⁵. Law has now demonstrated that this recension, which is considerably reworked and thus further distanced from the common source of the other three recensions, was neither authored nor revised by Malsachanus. Rather, the *Congregatio* was a stand-alone treatise on the verb, to which a compiler joined the fourth version of the noun-and-pronoun sections of the *Ars Ambianensis*, with the goal of synthesizing a treatise that covers all the inflected parts of speech¹⁶. Although Claudio Giammona has assigned the Naples manuscript the siglum **Mals.**, he does accept Law's argument that the authorship and revision of this fourth recension has nothing to do with the author Malsachanus¹⁷. Law maintains that the work (called "noun-pronoun tract" on the stemma below) which served as an intermediary between the putative common source and **Mals.** predates the other three recensions¹⁸. Based on the textual similarities of **Mals.** with **A** and **G** respectively, Law concludes that **Mals.** «implies the existence of a mixed version – probably earlier than either **A** or **G** and possibly their mutual ancestor»¹⁹.

One work is known to bear indirect witness to the *Ars Ambianensis*. A grammar doubtfully ascribed to Clemens Scottus, a ninth-century Irishman, borrows material on nouns, pronouns, and verbs from a lost version of the *Ars Ambianensis* which sometimes preserved features of the **MOW** recension and elsewhere hewed closer to the **A** and **G** recensions²⁰.

14. In the Naples codex, this noun-and-pronoun treatise appears adjacent to a treatise on the verb, which another manuscript (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 13026, ff. 161r-181v [s. IX in.; Paris region]) transmits under the title *Congregatio Salcani filii de verbo*. For his reasoning, cfr. Löfstedt, *Der hibernolatinische Grammatiker Malsachanus* cit., pp. 27-9. Law rejected Löfstedt's argument for Malsachanus's authorship of the noun-and-pronoun treatise; cfr. her *Malsachanus Reconsidered* cit., pp. 89-92; and *Insular Latin Grammarians* cit., pp. 90-2.

15. Löfstedt, *Der hibernolatinische Grammatiker Malsachanus* cit.

16. Law, *Malsachanus Reconsidered* cit.; and Law, *Insular Latin Grammarians* cit., pp. 90-2.

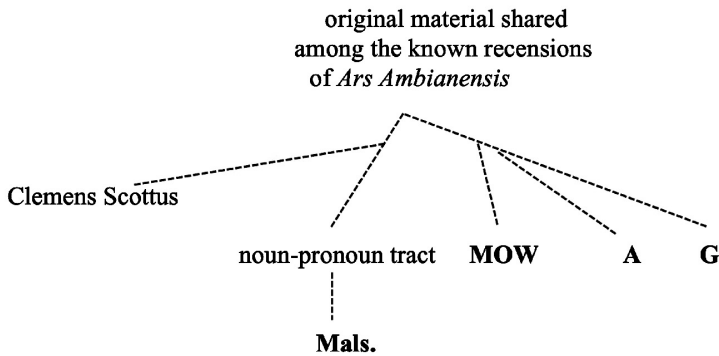
17. Giammona, *Ricezione ed evoluzione* cit., p. 278.

18. Law, *Insular Latin Grammarians* cit., pp. 67-8.

19. Law, *Insular Latin Grammarians* cit., pp. 73-4; for parallels between **Mals.** and **A**, cfr. Löfstedt, *Der hibernolatinische Grammatiker Malsachanus* cit., pp. 62-3; and for the relationship between **Mals.** and **G**, cfr. Giammona, *Ricezione ed evoluzione* cit., p. 278.

20. For further details of Clemens's borrowings, cfr. Law, *Insular Latin Grammarians* cit., p. 71; and Law, *Malsachanus Reconsidered* cit., pp. 87-9. Clemens's grammar is edited by J. Tolkiehn, *Clementis Ars grammatica*, Leipzig 1928; cfr. further Law, *Insular Latin Grammarians* cit., pp. 102-3; and Lapidge-Sharpe, *Bibliography of Celtic-Latin Literature* cit., no. 665, p. 175.

The *stemma codicum* that appears below is based on the work of Law, but **MOW** do not appear in her stemma. I have added **MOW** at the position implied by Law's discussion of the recensions²¹.



Giammona divides the four recensions into two groups. The first group includes **MOW** **Mals.**, which do not treat verbs, while the second group includes **A** and **G**, which both include material on verbs. Law refers to codices **M**, **O**, and **W** as «sister-manuscripts»²². Giammona, however, complicates the relationship among those three codices, as well as the relationship between the **MOW** recension and the original shared source. The fact that **MOW** all replace the *Ars Ambianensis*'s original treatment of the third declension with a reworked borrowing from Priscian's *Institutiones grammaticales* (as discussed above) suggests to Giammona that **MOW** may have a vertical relationship to one another, or alternatively, that the Priscianic revision was introduced upstream of **MOW**, which thus stands at a greater remove from the original *Ars Ambianensis* than Law's studies indicate²³.

21. Law's *stemma* appears in *Malsachanus Reconsidered* cit., p. 93; on **MOW**, cfr. Law, *Insular Latin Grammarians* cit., pp. 68-9. Law reasons that «although the anonymous noun-pronoun tract associated with it [*scil.* the *Congregatio*] in the Naples manuscript may have reached its present form only shortly before being copied early in the ninth century, it represents a version of the *Ars Ambianensis* quite different from the two extant and probably significantly earlier than either» (*Malsachanus Reconsidered* cit., p. 92). Giammona (ed.) catalogues the sections of the *Ars* that he maintains were present in the common source underlying all four known redactions (p. LVII).

22. Law, *Insular Latin Grammarians* cit., pp. 68-9. In his review of Giammona's edition, T. Mari adduces, by way of stimulating further investigation, «a few cases when two manuscripts [among **MOW**] share a potentially conjunctive error»: cfr. Mari, review of C. Giammona, «*Ars Ambianensis*»: *Le tre redazioni delle «declinationes nominum»*, «*Plekos*», 19 (2017), pp. 205-14, at 213.

23. Giammona, *Ricezione ed evoluzione* cit., p. 277.

Giammona further argues that, because of errors and interpolated glosses, **A** cannot be considered the direct textual antecedent of any of the other codices; in fact, none of the surviving codices can be considered the direct antecedent of any of the others. Nonetheless, among the surviving witnesses to the *Ars Ambianensis*, **A** is likely to be closest to the original *corpus* of material that is now shared among the known recensions²⁴. Giammona strives to pin down a more precise relationship among the surviving codices, but none of his genealogical theories can fully account for the different combinations of material shared across the four recensions²⁵.

The *Ars Ambianensis* has not yet been edited in full. Law has recommended that, since the three recensions **MOW**, **A**, and **G** appear to be roughly equidistant from their common source, each recension should be given equal weight by an editor²⁶. Following Law's recommendation, Giammona edits each of these three recensions sequentially, but he includes only that portion of the *Ars* that treats noun declensions, on the grounds that the pronoun and verb material demands a different editorial treatment²⁷. Löfstedt has printed the portions of the *Ars* that deal with nouns and pronouns, based solely on **Mals**²⁸. The pronoun material transmitted in **A** and **G** has not been edited, and the segments of the *Ars Ambianensis* dedicated to verbs, adverbs, and participles have not been printed at all.

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24. Giammona (ed.), pp. xxxvii-xxxviii; and Giammona, *Ricezione ed evoluzione* cit., pp. 279-81. In both studies, Giammona also seeks a rationale for the unusual *mise-en-page* of the *Ars Ambianensis* in **A**. On Giammona's reasoning about the relationship between **A** and the original work, cfr. further Mari, review of Giammona, «*Ars Ambianensis*» cit., pp. 206-7.

25. Giammona, *Ricezione ed evoluzione* cit., pp. 281-3.

26. Law, *Insular Latin Grammarians* cit., pp. 67-8.

27. Giammona (ed.), p. v; for the editions of each recension, cfr. pp. 3-32 (**A**), 33-79 (**G**), and 81-116 (**MOW**).

28. Löfstedt, *Der hibernolatinische Grammatiker Malsachanus* cit., pp. 173-94.