

“Quod Exemplaria vera habeant et correcta”: Concerning the Distribution and Purpose of the *Pecia* System

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At the European universities of the thirteenth century the reproduction of manuscripts was fundamentally reorganised. A *pecia* system was developed to allow for the commercial and efficient copying of books. This facilitated ‘publishing’ in a previously unknown sense. As soon as a text was available in *peciae* it could be circulated to doctors, masters and students within weeks. We even know of one case in which Gerard of Abbeville rebutted the beginning of a work by St. Thomas Aquinas which, although not even finished at that point, was already partially in circulation.

This paper deals with the distribution and the purpose of the *pecia* system: was it developed primarily to provide a sufficient supply of manuscripts for the specialised book market of the university or to facilitate the surveillance of text quality? In order to answer this question, the origin, distribution and disappearance of the *pecia* system in Europe are examined.

The *Pecia* System

European universities underwent fundamental changes around 1200. The loosely organised and unrecorded *studii* of the twelfth century developed into *universitates scolarium* which were transformed into hierarchically structured institutions with written statutes as a consequence of their struggles for recognition and funding with popes, cities and kings. The universities grew considerably. As a consequence, in addition to student accommodation, discipline and catering, the provision of texts for the purposes of teaching was a pressing issue and concern. Teachers at the abbey and monastery schools could resort to their libraries and *scriptoria* to cover their needs. Furthermore, the demand for multiple copies of the same texts would never have reached university levels there. A major drawback of the conventional method of copying one book directly from another was that the template was not available for teaching and studying during the time it was being copied. Another problem was the fact that copying a manuscript could take up to a year or longer

depending on its length. At some universities a system was established by means of which many copies could be produced from one homogeneous template. Thereto, the respective texts were initially transferred onto loose quires of standardised length of mostly eight pages. These quires, namely *peciae*, could be rented from stationers and copied. Thus, technically as many writers could work simultaneously on a single template – called *exemplar* – as the number of quires it consisted of. As the quires had the same length, they did not necessarily have to be copied in the chronological order of the text. In the case where a desired quire was not available, the following one could be borrowed and copied. The space needed for the omitted *pecia* could be calculated on the basis of the space required for copying other *peciae*.

Italy

There is a consensus that the origins of the *pecia* system lie in Bologna. An exact date, however, cannot be identified as the *pecia* system must have existed before the Bolognese statutes were established. The earliest indication of *peciae* in Bologna is of an indirect nature: in 1222 some professors and their students moved from Bologna to Padua and established a new *studium* there, the nucleus of the future University of Padua. Later on, in 1228, the city of Vercelli persuaded some of those students to establish a new *studium*. The terms of this foundation as well as the privileges awarded to the *studium* are regulated in the contract of Vercelli. The following passage can be found there, among others:

Item habebit commune Vercellarum duos exemplatores, quibus taliter providebit, quod eos scolares habere possint, qui habeant, exemplancia [leg. Exemplaria] in utroque iure et in theologia, competencia et correctata in textu quam in gloxa. Ita quod solucio fiat a scolaribus pro exemplis secundum quod convenit ad taxacionem rectorum.¹

The chancellors of the newly founded community required the city to guarantee the operation of the *pecia* system. The terms *exemplator* and *exemplaria* are used without further explanation which implies that their meaning is generally known. The *pecia* system surely was established in Bologna before 1228, probably even before 1222. It is out of the question to date this innovation back to the fairly young University of Padua, or even the newly founded University of Vercelli, as the system is too complex for such small institutions.

¹ Freiherr Carl von Savigny, *Geschichte des römischen Rechts im Mittelalter*, (Heidelberg, Mohr, 1834), vol. 3, p. 669.

Soetermeer cites one particular reason for the emergence of *peciae* in Bologna and not Paris: the existence of professional writers in the vicinity of law schools.² Theological, medical and also texts concerning canon law were plentiful in monastery *scriptoria*. Manuscripts concerning secular law were needed and copied almost exclusively at the law schools, amongst which Bologna was the most important. The fact that there is no earlier evidence from Bologna can be explained by the university's history. In the early beginnings of the University of Bologna, studies were pursued in a number of small autonomous *comitives*. A *comitive* consisted of a teacher and his students. These *comitives* were not connected as far as organisation was concerned; they only shared a common location. An interdisciplinary university administration did not exist, hence there was no occasion nor were there funds to control the book trade. It was only at the end of the twelfth century that universities began to get organised and elect rectors to which all the other members were bound by oath. Nations and faculties were soon established within the university, a development which preceded the emergence of a central university organisation.³ The faculties of theology, law, medicine and arts were responsible for the organisation of day-to-day study and were managed by the elected deans, who exercised supervisory authority over the texts of their respective disciplines and were in charge of inspecting the *peciae*.

Apart from control over students, masters and doctors, the university sought influence over important professional groups. Apart from barbers and chemists, who were close to the medical faculty, these mainly included writers and stationers. The most important sanction, which was also used to govern the book trade, was the *privatio*: the ejection from university and the cancellation of all associated privileges. In the beginning, booksellers were not citizens of the university and could not be ejected. However, the chancellors could threaten those who conducted business with disgraced booksellers with the *privatio*.

Through filiations of the University of Bologna the system spread all over northern Italy. In Padua (founded 1222), Vercelli (1228), Piacenza (1248), Perugia (1308), Treviso (1318), Pisa (1343), Florence (1349) and Pavia (1361) similar or *verbatim* copies of the regulation, established in the contract of Vercelli quoted above, can be found. In Modena the office of the stationer was newly endowed in 1329.⁴

2 Frank Soetermeer, *Utrumque ius in peciis. Die Produktion juristischer Bücher an italienischen und französischen Universitäten des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt, Klostermann, 2002), p. 41.

3 Jaques Verger, *Les Universités au Moyen Âge* (2nd ed., Paris, PUF, 2007), p. 50.

4 Murano, *Opere*, p. 161.

It is difficult to verify whether these regulations were really implemented, *peciae* loaned and then copied, as the statutes of Bologna were often adopted without alteration and *pecia* manuscripts have no specific indicators to allow for the identification of a city of origin. In general, *pecia* manuscripts can easily be located and dated as they can be attributed to *pecia*-lists by the number of *peciae* they consist of. *Pecia*-lists are registers of texts that were available at a university or from a stationer as *peciae*. These are mostly dated or can be dated indirectly via the titles listed. *Pecia*-lists for Italy, apart from Bologna, are only known for Padua (1331), Florence (1388) and Perugia (1457[!]). Shortly after the renewal of the statutes in 1457, which still contains a *pecia*-list, Perugia removed the office of the *Pecarius* as *peciae* supposedly had not existed for a long time.⁵ Consequently, the *pecia*-list in the statutes of 1457 must be considerably older. The *studium curiae* in Rome and the state university of Naples had no relation to Bologna and seem to have managed without *peciae*.⁶

The assignment of manuscripts to *pecia*-lists has proven to be difficult for Italy. Many writings possess a standardised *pecia* segmentation which is identical at all universities, the reason being that not only were the regulations about the *pecia* system adopted from Bologna but very often also the exemplars.

Apart from the contract of Vercelli, there are no other sources about the *pecia* system in its early stages. The statutes of the University of Bologna concerning the *pecia* system can be traced back to the second half of the thirteenth century – the earliest can be found in a manuscript from the Olomouc city archive containing a *pecia*-list as well as regulations regarding the *pecia* system.⁷

According to Soetermeer the number of *peciae* mentioned on the list for the *apparatus decretalium* allows it to be dated to a few years shortly after 1252. Whether the dating of the *pecia*-list can be transferred to the statutes depends on the extent to which the two texts can be connected palaeographically. Boháček, who edited the list, does not comment on this.⁸

The regulations of the Olomouc manuscript determine that stationers are not permitted to deal in books on their own account and exemplars have to be corrected as a matter of principle.⁹ A passage of this kind can be found in

5 Guido Padelletti, *Documenti inediti per servire alla storia delle università italiane* (Perugia, 1872), p. 71.

6 Walter Rüegg, *Geschichte der Universität in Europa, Mittelalter* (Munich, C.H. Beck, 1993), p. 63.

7 Olomouc, Statni Archiv, C.O.209, fol. 163v.

8 Miroslav Boháček, 'Zur Geschichte der Stationarii von Bologna', *Eos*, 48/2 (1957), p. 248.

9 Murano, *Opere*, p. 70.

nearly every regulation on the book trade at a university. The obligation to have copies corrected before their circulation served qualitative rather than pecuniary reasons. A mistake in the template would be repeated in every copy. As the template would have come from the university system, the mistake might have been regarded as correct in comparison to an accurate manuscript. By prohibiting the trade of antiquarian books for profit, university members were guaranteed quite favourable conditions when purchasing books. The fee granted to the stationer when brokering a book sale ranges from 3.3% for a book priced at three pounds to 0.6% for a manuscript sold at 40 pounds. The stationer is allowed to accept up to ten pounds only when the price exceeds 60 pounds and if the customer so wishes.¹⁰ Any payment beyond this is prohibited.¹¹ However, an exception is made for the *bedellus generalis* who, appointed by the chancellors, runs the *statio* at the university and supervises the *pecia* system.¹²

Stationers are deemed to commit a punishable offence if they change exemplars without the consent of the chancellors. In the case of such a violation, the indirect *privatio* can be put into use. Following the imposition of the *privatio*, every scholar would be prohibited from accepting *peciae* from that offending stationer. However, no such cases have been recorded. Finally, a kind of imprimatur *avant la lettre* is regulated for.¹³ Stationers are only allowed to circulate writings of doctors as *peciae* where the former have explicitly sanctioned this and, furthermore, have authorised a text. This indicates that the use of *peciae* was a putting-out-system in which texts could no longer be revised once in circulation.

In 1264, only a few years after the regulations of Bologna were passed, the University of Padua specified that the salary of the stationer Floriano should be 60 Pounds a year, plus any income he might generate from running the *statio*.¹⁴ The latter cannot be found in the statutes. Although the modalities of payment for *peciae* and used manuscripts take up a lot of space in all recorded statutes, it cannot be assumed that these earnings accrue to the university. Furthermore, the fact that the stationer earns a salary indicates that the *pecia* system could not solely rely on earnings.

The regulations quoted so far referred to the university in general, yet their impact was chiefly on the distribution of legal texts. It is only in 1405, when

10 For comparison: the annual salary of the Paduan exemplator is 60 Pounds. Murano, *Opere*, p. 71.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 70.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 92.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 70.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 71.

peciae could no longer be found at any other university, that a regulation turns up in the statutes of the university of Bologna addressing the needs of the medical faculty. It determines the titles supposed to be available as exemplars. These comprise 22 medical texts ranging from Avicenna to Galen.¹⁵

Furthermore, it sheds some light on the *status quo* in Bologna at the turn of the fifteenth century. *Peciae* must under penalty be publically listed, kept orderly, illuminated and well corrected. The rule that *peciae* have to be kept flawless is a recurrent element in all regulations. It is, however, a rather unique requirement that *peciae* should be illuminated. This demand seems rather rational when it comes to medical works which usually include anatomical and schematic illustrations. One of the last paragraphs indicates that the tone of exchanges between stationers and scholars could be quite harsh as it explicitly forbids stationers from insulting scholars.¹⁶

In Bologna numerous contracts on the copying of books were conducted in the presence of a notary. Many of these are documented in the university's cartulary *Chartularium Studii Bononiensis*.¹⁷ The 254 contracts, which were negotiated between 1265 and 1330, mainly concern legal manuscripts.¹⁸ Decretals (67) and digests (59) were commissioned most frequently.¹⁹ However, apart from a manuscript of Galen and another of Avicenna, no medical works are listed. Even theological works are rarely recorded in comparison to legal works: only 14 manuscripts of the bible were commissioned. One antiphonal and one missal indicate that the book trade in Bologna did not only supply the university. The setup of the contracts is standardised: in every case, the names of the contracting parties, the commissioned work, the fixed price, the names of the witnesses and the notary are listed as well as the date. In several cases, a time frame and the quality of the manuscript are also recorded.²⁰ The quality is usually described by referring to another work of the scribe, although it cannot be inferred from most contracts as to whether they refer to conventionally copied manuscripts or manuscripts from *peciae*.²¹ If one assumes that all parties are members of the university, then one also suggests that the

15 Ibid., pp. 159–160.

16 Ibid., p. 160.

17 Guido Zaccagnini, *Chartularium Studii Bononiensis* (Bologna 1927), vol. 8.

18 Luciana Devoti, 'Aspetti della Produzione del Libro a Bologna: Il Prezzo di Copia del Manoscritto Giuridico tra XIII e XIV Secolo', in Caterina Tristano & Francesca Cenni (eds.), *Liber–Libra. Il mercato del libro manoscritto del medioevo italiano* (Rome, Jouvence, 2005), p. 113.

19 Devoti, 'Produzione del Libro', p. 137.

20 Zaccagnini, *Chartularium*, p. DXCVI.

21 Ibid., p. VII.

templates are *peciae*, as long as the texts concerned are recorded on lists of taxation. In some of the contracts the fee is calculated per *quaternus*.²² A *quaternus* is a quire of four *folii*, but in the case of the statutes of Bologna, *pecia* and *quaternus* are used as interchangeable units of measurement. A *quaternus* is equivalent to two *peciae*. It is likely that payment per double *pecia* was agreed upon and not per physical quire of four pages.

In order to assess which works were copied by means of *pecia*, the *pecia*-lists, which are fairly reliable and accessible sources, can be consulted. These lists had been used as maculation or were added to the statutes of the university as part of an official evaluation of the exemplars. By far not all *pecia*-lists have survived and not all of those are complete in terms of the information they provide, yet nonetheless they give an insight on the nature of the texts which were copied by applying the *pecia* system. The oldest recorded list of Italian *peciae* is probably the one retained in Olomouc from shortly after 1252.²³ It has the same structure that was applied to almost all such lists. An entry includes an often radically abbreviated title, the number of *peciae* and the fee one had to pay for borrowing a text. The Olomouc list includes 48 titles (most of them legal works, although 15 of them were on canon law). This supports Soetermeer's assumption that Bologna was the origin of the *pecia* system because of its legal focus. Boháček argues that the list could have been compiled by a stationer who had specialised in law.²⁴ If the list of *peciae* and the Bolognese statutes actually do form the pair that we assume they do, then it is an official taxation list which registers all available *peciae* and not only those of a specialised stationer.

No other Italian *pecia*-list pre-dating the table mentioned has survived. It is only from the fourteenth century that a number of taxation lists are extant. The oldest is the one that was in use from 1317 to 1347 almost without change, containing 121 titles and thereby doubling the extent of the list from 1252. It still, however, contains only legal works.

The assumption in Italy that almost only legal works were copied by means of *pecia* is supported by the *pecia*-list from Padua in 1331.²⁵ This list includes 115 exclusively juridical titles. The same is the case with the *pecia*-list of Florence from 1388 which included 106 titles.²⁶ The Perugian *pecia*-list from 1457, which

22 Ibid., p. CCLIV.

23 Olomouc, Statni Archiv, C.O.209, fol. 163v.

24 Boháček: 'Stationarii', p. 320.

25 Murano, *Opere*, pp. 136–139.

26 Ibid., pp. 151–153.

it can be sagely assumed was created earlier, also contains 113 titles of both laws, but not a single medical or theological work.²⁷

The only list without any reference to legal works is the aforementioned register which indentifies the medical books that have to be kept in storage as exemplars. However, there are philosophical and theological *pecia*-manuscripts of Italian provenance, even though the majority of the surviving manuscripts comprise legal works. It can only be assumed that taxation lists were also kept for philosophical and theological *peciae* but that these have not been passed down.

France

The majority of the identified *pecia* manuscripts are of French origin, partially because the seminal figure of *pecia*-research, Jean Destrez, focused his studies on France and especially on Paris.²⁸ While his (and thus our) image may be rather distorted by that, Paris still was one of the major centres of book production in late medieval Europe.²⁹

It remains unclear as to when a *pecia* system was established in Paris. Destrez claims to have found the first record of a *pecia* system when reading Roger Bacon. In his *Opus minus* from 1266/7 Bacon decries the state of the Parisian book trade, during his time in Paris *circa* 40 years previously: “illiterati et uxorati” stationers offering bad exemplars and thereby corrupting the tradition of the text.³⁰ When dating Bacon’s complaint, Destrez reconstructs the years 1226/27 as a point in time when the *pecia* system was introduced.³¹ Light objects, with good reason, that Bacon’s statement cannot be taken literally as he calculates in round decades.³² When taking that into account, Bacon’s comment could refer to the period from 1220 to 1230. Only in 1275 does an entry appear in the university cartulary. This specific record focuses on the book trade at the university. It regulates the details of the *pecia* system and which sanctions to impose in case of non-observance.³³ A time lag between the initial establishment of a *pecia* system and the origin of the corresponding university statutes is possible, but it is unlikely to span 50 years.

27 Ibid., pp. 162–165.

28 Guy Fink-Errera, ‘Jean Destrez et son œuvre’, *Scriptorium*, 11 (1957), pp. 264.

29 Destrez, *Pecia*, p. 25.

30 Roger Bacon, *Opus Minus*, ed. J.S. Brewer (London, Longman, 1859), p. 333.

31 Destrez, *Pecia*, p. 26.

32 Light Laura, ‘Roger Bacon and the origin of the Paris Bible’, *Revue Bénédictine*, 111/3–4 (2001), pp. 483–507.

33 Denifle, *Chartularium*, nr. 462.

The general question arises as to whether Bacon is actually referring to the *pecia* system. This depends on his definition of *exemplar*, as the term is not a set phrase which can only be applied to *peciae*, but can also refer to ‘template’ in general. Bacon’s preferred meaning cannot be extrapolated from the text. Consequently this means that his works cannot be relied on when trying to determine the exact time frame for the *pecia* system. Although the existence of the *illiterati et uxorati*, i.e. married lay scribes, can be documented earlier, they seem to have gained enough influence in the 1220s to draw the ire of Roger Bacon. Yet, the existence of commercial book sellers does not prove the use of *peciae*. Even though Destrez and the Rouses were aware of this fact, they still assume that Bacon refers to *peciae*.³⁴ One reason for this assumption may be that Destrez claims to know a sound proof for the existence of an extensive *pecia* system in Paris in the middle of the century: the so called ‘Parisian *pecia*-list of 1248’. This list can be found on the last page of the manuscript University Library Uppsala C 134 (see Fig. 16.1.). Destrez based his age determination – a fact which has been accepted without discussion – on the provenance note at the top of the page: “Liber fratrum predicatorum Sictonie quem contulit eis felicitis recordacionis dominus thomas episcopus finlandensis”.³⁵ Destrez deduces that everything which had been written on this page can be dated back to the lifetime of Bishop Thomas of Finland. Thomas died in 1248, three years after he had resigned as bishop. He bequeathed his books to the recently founded Dominican convent of Sigtuna.

This record of property names Thomas Bishop of Finland and can thereby be safely dated to a time frame before 1248. It was written by a hand that cannot be found again on this page. The same hand wrote an almost identical record of property on the front endpaper of the manuscript, extended by an *anathema*. There is no proof that Thomas wore the *pallium*, but he probably was the first bishop of Finland, making him archbishop in the literal sense of the word. A list of the 12 prophets was added by a different hand with a light ink in the middle of the page. The *pecia*-list can be found at the bottom of the page. It starts with a financial statement which cannot be assigned to a specific title. The list can however be localised by the currency unit, the Parisian pound. 18 titles, including information on the number of *peciae* follow in consecutive order, some of them indicating their price. Whether a number indicates the price or the number of *peciae* cannot be determined from the context in all

34 Richard Rouse & Mary Rouse, *Manuscripts and their makers. Commercial book producers in medieval Paris 1200–1500, illiterati et uxorati* (Turnhout, Harvey Miller, 2000), pp. 32–33.

35 Destrez, *La Pecia*, p. 24.

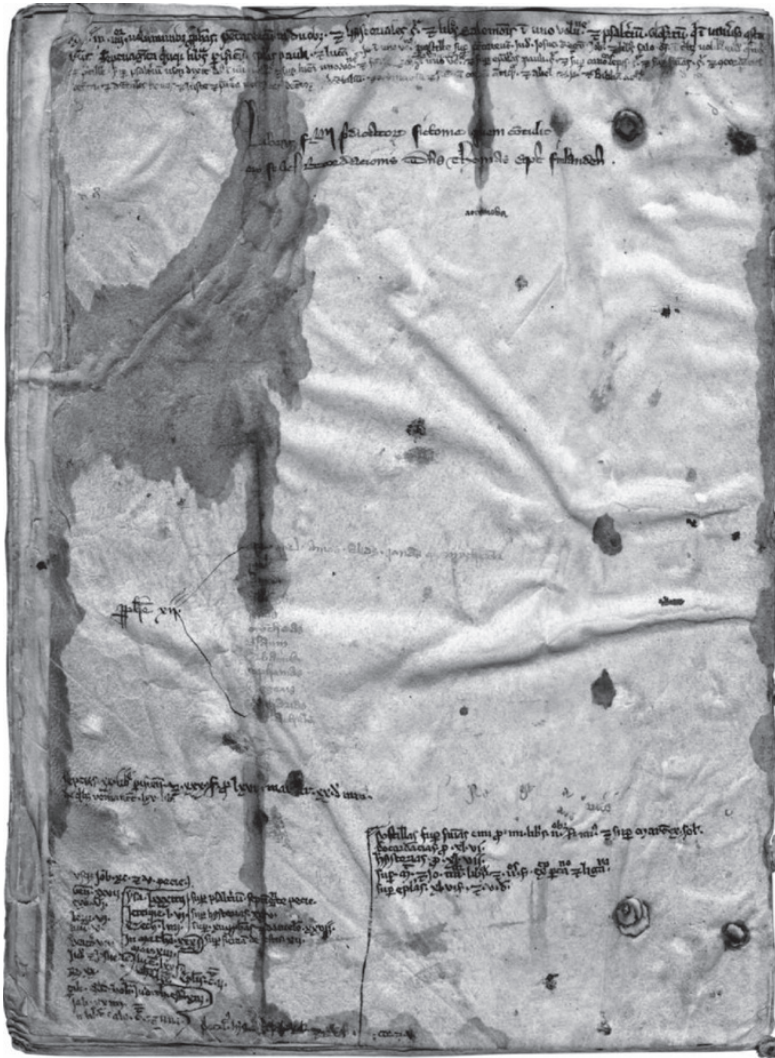


FIGURE 16.1 'Parisian pecia-list of 1248'

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY UPPSALA C 134, FOL 161V

cases. The fact that the list exclusively contains books of the bible and theological works suggests that it is the receipt of a theologian.

Destrez assumes Thomas to be that theologian. The fact that this book was bequeathed to the library of the Dominicans in Sigtuna by Thomas and was forwarded to the university library of Uppsala does support his hypothesis. In some cases, however, books were borrowed from the monastic library for university studies and then returned to the library. It is not unlikely that a monk took the manuscript with him when studying at the Sorbonne. The list would then have been a record of his purchases for the convent. This can be deduced from the financial statement at the beginning of the document and from the sums of money which are recorded on the list. This argument is supported by the text of the manuscript, Hugos of St. Cher's *In Historiam Scholasticam*, a standard text for the medieval student. The 20 manuscripts, which can actually be ascribed to Sigtuna, record three monks from Sigtuna who studied in Paris: Laurentius, who stayed in Paris in the 1280s as well as Carolus and Israel Erlandi who, according to the list, both left books purchased before 1294 and 1296 to the monastery.³⁶ Monks from Sigtuna studying in Paris do not seem to be unusual. Unfortunately, none of the titles on the inventory list can be verified as belonging to Sigtuna.

The contents of the list give us a *terminus post quem*: the entry “decretales novas” above the record of property in line four refers to the editorial work of the decretal collection of Gregor IX dated to 1234.³⁷ A *terminus ante quem* is not listed, thus this document is only of limited value when dating the *pecia* system of Paris.

Pollard refers to a manuscript of French origin, retained in Durham, which has gained importance considering the problematic age determination of Uppsala C 134.³⁸ From a palaeographic point of view, Durham Cathedral and Chapter Library Ms. A.I. 16 is likely to be a manuscript of French origin. It includes a comment by Hugo of St. Cher on Paul's Epistles and shows regular *pecia* marks. Prior Betram of Middleton, who died in 1258, bequeathed this manuscript to the cathedral of Durham, so it is possible to determine the existence of a *pecia*-system in Paris before 1258.

The act of the *Universitas magistrorum et scholarium*, dating back to 8 December 1275, is the first source that gives insight into the workings of

³⁶ UB Uppsala C 18, fol. 198v.

³⁷ Murano, *Opere*, p. 57.

³⁸ Graham Pollard, ‘The *pecia* system in the medieval universities’, in M.B. Parkes & A.G. Watson (eds.), *Medieval scribes, manuscripts, and libraries. Essays presented to Neil Ripley Ker* (London, Scolar Press, 1978), pp. 145–161.

a *pecia* system in Paris. It was passed by a full meeting of the university held at the chapter house at the Dominican Abbey of St. Victor.³⁹ After a complaint about the damage the booksellers inflicted on the university due to their pursuit of profit, book traders were to take a biennial oath, pledging not to commit fraud and/or sell books for their own profit, but to sell books on commission and to bill the vendor “bona fide”. Their commission was not supposed to be higher than 1.7% of the price. The commission was to be paid only to the vendor. Stationers had to offer their “vera et correcta” exemplars at fair and reasonable prices. The price range was set by the university. This procedure indicates that the university did not exactly trust the stationers’ sense of justice.

In contrast to Bologna, acceptance of all regulations was part of an oath of allegiance in Paris and the breaking of this oath was punishable with privation on principle. It is not clear whether the stationers renewed their oath every two years as the university demanded in 1275. The oath is not recorded in the cartularies until 1302, when there were additions to it: namely if the vendor of a book is not a member of the university, the stationer’s commission may be 2.5%. Additionally, every stationer was obliged to post a list containing all exemplars available at his shop, the number of *peciae* they consisted of and their price. Those lists were not meant for the information of the customers, but to allow for public documentation of the official prices that could be controlled by the university.

An uneasy relationship between the two parties can in general be drawn from the wording of the oaths. *Stationarii* are called “criminals” and repeatedly reminded to conduct business “sine fraude”.⁴⁰ The stationers were members of the university and thus subject to its jurisdiction and taxing authority which was an advantage as the university taxed less than the city of Paris. It could also grant other privileges. In 1368 the Sorbonne managed to have 55 of its *serviteurs* relieved from guard duty for King Charles V. The beneficiaries were listed by name and professions. All of them worked in the book trade: “libraires, escrivains, enlumineurs, relieurs de livres” and “parcheminiers”.⁴¹ The privileges granted to the servants also reinforced the threat of *privatio* made by the university.

Still, Paris is the only university for which an open conflict with the stationers has been recorded. At the beginning of June 1316, a group of 22 stationers refused to swear a new oath to the university, the exact wording of which

39 Archive Nationale de France, M. 68. No. 1.

40 Denifle, *Chartularium*, nr. 462.

41 Paul Delalain, *Étude sur le libraire parisien du XIIIe au XVe siècle* (Paris, Delalain, 1891), p. 213.

we do not know. The university did not hesitate and expelled the 22 recorded stationers on 12 June.⁴² The oath which the stationers had to take to be readmitted to the university in September of the same year has been recorded.⁴³ There is a rather significant difference to be noticed when comparing the oaths, despite the hints that the university readmitted the disloyal "libraires" out of sheer generosity. From the beginning of September 1316, the assessment of *peciae*, which specify the charges made by a stationer, was not to be made by delegates of the rector but by a panel of four stationers – the so-called "peciarri". The taxation lists – passed down in French from that point in time – designate these as "libraires principaux". This kind of administration is remarkable. The stationers now resembled a guild.

All works listed in the Parisian records of *peciae* are the foundation of university teaching. Three major groups can be found on the *pecia*-lists: theological, philosophical and legal texts. It is particularly noticeable that the lists do not include even a single medical work.

The scholarly focus of the University of Paris was on theology. The oldest Parisian List, commonly referred to as the one "from 1248", records 27 exclusively theological works.⁴⁴ The next list from 1275, passed down in the statutes of the university, shows an increasing volume of works available as *peciae*, now 138, but also a contentual expansion.⁴⁵ It lists 25 legal manuscripts.⁴⁶

The list of 1304, which describes the stock of stationer André de Sens, itemises the individual areas.⁴⁷ The list, which records 156 titles, starts with a general section including commentaries on the bible, textbooks and polemical papers, succeeded by a section on theological works, which is then followed by one on canon law and philosophy. Once again medical works are not recorded in this list. Only 18 legal works are registered, which are, however, more extensive than the philosophical and theological works. The fact that only canon law was taught in Paris may have contributed to the smaller percentage of legal texts.⁴⁸

The *pecia* system in its Parisian variety spread all over France with the foundation of new branches of the University of Paris in Angers, Toulouse and Cahors. The statutes of these institutions copy those of the Sorbonne in all

42 Denifle, *Chartularium*, nr. 724.

43 Ibid., nr. 733.

44 UB Uppsala C134, fol. 161v.

45 Denifle, *Chartularium*, nr. 530.

46 After the Papal damnation of 1219 only canon law was taught at the Sorbonne.

47 Denifle, *Chartularium*, nr. 642.

48 Verger, *Les Universités*.

cases. There is no direct evidence as to whether and to what extent they were in fact implemented. One issue is the fact that there is no palaeographic difference between a manuscript from Paris and one from Cahors. Even though *pecia*-manuscripts from Parisian filiations do exist, they are not recognisable as such if they do not show direct evidence of their provenance. If ascribing a manuscript to the *studium parisiense* solely on the basis of palaeography, then the adjoining universities in northern France have to be taken into account.

Both the University of Montpellier and the *studium curiae* in Avignon are special cases. Montpellier was already a famous medical school in the twelfth century. The medical faculty kept its dominating role – its statutes determined the entire university organisation – even after the university was granted the rank of a *studium generale* by Pope Nicholas IV in 1289. Apparently, Montpellier never used a *pecia* system, nor did the *studium curiae* in Avignon. Orleans, which was considered an important academic centre in the early years of the Sorbonne, also did not use a *pecia* system. This fact is even more remarkable when one considers the fact that Orleans was the most important school of law in northern France and that the Bolognese *pecia* system originated from its law school.⁴⁹

England

The only evidence of a *pecia* system in England can be found at Oxford University, where there are contradictory sources. On the one hand, Pollard verifies seven carriers of the occupational title “exemplarius” between before 1238 and 1341/44 in the almost completely recorded cadastres, on the other hand *peciae* are only mentioned once in the statutes of the university.⁵⁰

Pollard justifies his date determination of 1238 with reference to the fact that the parchment manufacturer Adam de Walton undertook a deal registered in the cadastre of 1258 concerning a boundary wall of his property located in Cat Street. In this record, Adam de Walton's property is described as the one which formerly used to be in the possession of the Exemplator Galfridus. He, however, is already mentioned in 1238 in an investigation file as the parchment manufacturer from Cat Street. This fact prompts Pollard to draw the conclusion that Galfridus, who is not mentioned elsewhere, was Exemplator before 1238. Those involved in the book trade often settled in communities close to their customers. In Oxford, these communities were located in the area of High Street, North

49 Orleans taught civil law after 1235, Paris was banned from this in 1219. Verger, *Les Universités*.

50 Graham Pollard, ‘The university and the booktrade in medieval Oxford’, in Paul Wilpert (ed.), *Beiträge zum Berufsbewusstsein des mittelalterlichen Menschen* (Berlin, de Gruyter, 1964), p. 338.

Side and Cat Street West Side. There is a possibility that Adam de Walton lived on Cat Street in 1238 without living on the estate he would own 20 years later.

The existence of the exemplators Willelmus and Rogerius has been documented since 1240 and 1242 respectively. Even before his acquisition of land in 1246, Rogerius can be identified as a debtor of the Jew, Isaac le Frauncey, in 1242.⁵¹ One can therefore safely assume that exemplators were in existence in Oxford from the 1240s until 1341. That means that Oxford University had an employee during that time, who was in charge of supervising the quality of templates, and who possibly produced copies. The Oxford exemplators had other functions apart from the book trade, for instance as pawnbrokers.⁵² Their official title, however, only leads to the conclusion that originally they primarily produced exemplars.

A record in the university statutes regulating the obligations of an *Exemplarius* and giving an indication of how the *pecia* system was organised in Oxford cannot be found until 1339. The following entry is the first to have survived:

Item quod Stationerii et alii quicumque, qui Exemplaria librorum locant, teneantur, sub pena amissionis eorundem aut sub pena graviore per universitatem taxanda, integra, completa, correcta, ac fidelia exhibere.⁵³

This regulation is closely related to those of Paris (1275) and Bologna (1288) although it is not a literal copy. It cannot be assumed that this would be the first such regulation in Oxford. The book trade must have been regulated within the 100 years between the first proven appointment of an exemplator and the record in the statutes. As the statutes of Oxford University have only survived fragmentarily, it can be assumed that those regulations are simply lost.

Just as it is the case with the first relevant statute, evidence of a *Cista Exemplarium* administered by the proctors of the university stems only from the fourteenth century. The first proof is the reference in a report about a handing-over of office in 1338 in which it is mentioned alongside references to the university seal, money and objects of value. The *Cista Exemplarium* is mentioned for a second time in 1347, when it was assigned a new use – three years after the death of the last known exemplator.⁵⁴ What exactly did this

51 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Twyne Ms. xxiii, S. 223.

52 Pollard, ‘The university’, p. 338.

53 Strickland Gibson (ed.), *Statuta antiqua universitatis Oxoniensis* (Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1931), p. 186.

54 Gibson, *Statuta*, p. 149.

chest contain? Probably not exemplars in the sense of sets of circulatory *peciae*. The renting of *peciae* from a chest by a proctor seems unlikely. It can be assumed that, in this case, the templates for the production and correction of the *peciae* were retained by exemplators.

Thomas Arundel, archbishop of Canterbury and adversary of the Lollards, writes in 1409, in the course of his measures to fight the ideas of John Wycliffe at the university, that the stationers shall produce copies of the official version of texts contained in the “Cista exemplariorum” and sell these.⁵⁵ The supervisory authority of the *Cista Exemplariorum* had survived and been transformed from a device for the protection of text quality to one for censorship.

Pecia-lists from Oxford have not been recorded. Pollard counts 11 manuscripts with *peciae* marks from the stocks of the English libraries. Among them not a single manuscript can be found which could be assigned to Oxford. The only manuscript Pollard assumes he can localise in Oxford is Durham Cathedral Library A.I.16.

Without the *pecia*-lists, little can be said about the texts reproduced by the Oxford *pecia* system. Pollard assumed that primarily theological and legal writings were copied by means of *pecia*.⁵⁶ Oxford's medical faculty was small and could not have sustained the efforts associated with a *pecia* system. There were numerous students of the arts, yet they were not obliged to own their books. Furthermore, the lectures of the arts faculty in Oxford were based on dictations with the result that texts could be noted down during lectures.⁵⁷ In contrast to the arts students, the law students had to swear upon matriculation that they owned copies of the *Digestum novus*, the *Infortiatum* and the *Libellus Institutionum*.⁵⁸ Here a demand for the stipulated texts would have to be expected which might have been met by a *pecia* system. It has not been recorded that Oxford students of theology were to own specific works.

Spain

During the reign of Alfonso the Wise the first collection of civil Spanish law, known today as *Siete Partidas*, was established between 1255 and 1265.⁵⁹ The *Partida Segunda* contains laws on the organisation of universities, including a statute about *peciae*. It is the only state law dealing with *peciae* and is not limited to one university but refers to Spanish universities in general.

55 Ibid., p. 212.

56 Pollard, ‘The university’, p. 344.

57 Pollard, ‘The university’, p. 343.

58 Gibson, *Statuta*, nr. 43.

59 José Sánchez-Arcilla Bernal (ed.), *Las Siete Partidas* (Madrid, Reus, 2004), p. XV.

This law allows for the assumption that the Spanish *pecia* system existed simultaneously alongside the French and Italian systems. According to Murano the Spanish national library accommodates 11 and the university library of Salamanca six *pecia* manuscripts.⁶⁰ Some of them are covered by Destrez and are of French origin. Yet, as the *pecia* system in Spain has hardly been researched, it is indeed imaginable that Spanish libraries hold further *pecia* manuscripts which have not to date been identified. The only available sources are the regulations and the corresponding law from *Siete Partidas*. The *studia generalia* hence were supposed to employ stationers who would be able to produce legible and well-written exemplars. These exemplars were then to serve in the production of new manuscripts as well as in the correction of others. The chancellor or his commissioner was to test the exemplars for legibility and accuracy before they were to be used and to ensure that faulty exemplars were corrected. Moreover, the chancellor was obliged to fix the prices which a stationer was to charge for lending out a *pecia* for the purposes of having it copied or corrected. Furthermore, the chancellor was obliged to appoint bailsmen who were to guarantee that stationers did not betray him during the trade in books.⁶¹

Given its date of institution, the law can only refer to the universities of Salamanca (founded in 1218), Valladolid (before 1241) and Valencia (1245).⁶² In 1254 Alfonso the Wise created the position of a stationer as part of the conferment of privileges to the university of Salamanca, among others the *licentia ubique docendi*: "Otrorsi mando e tengo por bien que ayan un estacionario e yo que le dé dosientos maravedis cada año e él que tenga todos los Exemplarios buenos e correttos".⁶³ The elaboration of the duties of the stationers is brief and is similar to the passage in the *Siete Partidas*. The statutes of the University of Salamanca do not offer any further regulations on how the stationer has to conduct his business, probably because this was already regulated in the *Siete Partidas*.⁶⁴

With regard to newly established universities, Christ refers to the University of Lérida founded in 1300.⁶⁵ This university had a general stationer corresponding to the Italian exemplator. He was remunerated by the university and

60 Murano, *Opere*.

61 Sanchez-Arcilla Bernal, *Siete Partidas*, p. 367.

62 Verger, *Les universités*, p. 114.

63 Murano, *Opere*, p. 67.

64 Vicente de Beltrán Heredia (ed.), *Cartulario de la Universidad de Salamanca* (Salamanca, Secretariado de Publicaciones de la Universidad, 1885).

65 Karl Christ, 'Petia, Ein Kapitel mittelalterlicher Buchgeschichte', *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen*, 55 (1938), p. 32.

commissioned to supervise the other stationers. Apart from monitoring the quality of *peciae* and the compliance with the prescribed prices, the trade in used books, for which stationers received a mere commission, were his responsibility. Stationers were not allowed any trade for their own profit. Every three years the chancellor charged four legal experts with the inspection of the legal *peciae*.⁶⁶ It is noticeable that non-legal *peciae* were exempted from inspection. The chancellor imposed a fine in the event of an infringement of these terms. It can be assumed that privation, which was often threatened at other universities, was also possible in Lérida, although it is not mentioned in relation to the book trade. Admittedly, having to pay 20 solidi in cases of inordinate pricing was not a negligible punishment. As is the case with all Spanish universities, in Lérida statutes for the *pecia* system are extant but no corresponding manuscripts are known of. It cannot be ruled out that the statutes were adopted blindly in this case without actually putting the regulations into use.

The University of Perpignan (founded in 1350) is a filiation of Lérida and adopted its statutes along with the regulation of the *pecia* system. There is evidence to show that in Perpignan copies were actually made according to *peciae*: in the marginal note of the statutes, ten exemplars of the works of canon law have been taxed. Fournier dates these texts to the years between 1380 and 1390.⁶⁷

Comparison

Bologna is the origin of the *pecia* system and the Bolognese statutes can be found all over Europe. At the *studium parisiense*, *peciae* were also in use, yet the Parisian statutes stand alone. The French interpretation of the *pecia* system differed from the Italian mainly due to the fact that the stationers were not remunerated by the university but worked on their own account. Hence, a relatively free book trade was created which in turn was bound to the university by strictly formulated oaths of allegiance. The sources suggest that the *pecia* systems in Italy and Spain were established and organised by the university, whereas the system in Paris was established without the initial participation of the university. It is apparent that the subject-specific focus of the universities found expression in the exemplars available. In France, primarily works of theology and philosophy were provided by means of *peciae* to university members and students. In Italy, however, mainly works of law and later medicine were provided.

66 J. Villanueva, *Viage literario a las iglesias de España* (Madrid, 1951), p. 225.

67 Marcel Fournier (ed.), *Les statuts et privilèges des Universités françaises depuis leur fondation jusqu'en 1789* (Paris, Larose et Forcel, 1890), nr. 672.

The Spanish statutes concerning *peciae* are copied word-for-word from Italian statutes. An explanation of this phenomenon could be that the *Siete Partidas* were probably composed by a group of legal experts in the service of Alfonso the Wise.⁶⁸ As Bologna was the most important legal school of the Middle Ages, it can be assumed that at least one Bolognese graduate who was acquainted with the system also participated in the composition of the laws.

The Oxford *pecia* system is still a riddle. There seems to have been a succession of *exemplatores* for more than a century yet we hardly know of any manuscripts produced by the Oxford *pecia* system.

The Disappearance of the *Pecia* System

Towards the end of the fourteenth century the *pecia* system disappeared. Yet it was not officially abolished by any university or substituted with something different. However, there are no new regulations and no manuscripts with *pecia* marks which can be dated with certainty to the period after 1370. Rouse and Rouse depict the dissolution of the social structures in the middle of the century in their survey of the Parisian book sellers.⁶⁹ They argue that the beginning of the Hundred Years' War in 1337 and the consequent loss of the English students as customers, as well as the plague, which decimated the population of Paris by a third, were responsible. The consequential decrease of the market supposedly induced the fact that prior to the emergence of the printing press the demand for new manuscripts in Paris also decreased from 1350 to 1470.

It is yet unclear why the *pecia* system did not recover from the plague as was the case with other industries and how the university could still be supplied with texts taking into account the fact that student numbers did not decrease at all. Even the Hundred Years' War seems insufficient reason for the disappearance of the *pecia* system all over Europe.

A different explanation is based on the rise of student numbers in the fourteenth century. In order to sustain itself, the *pecia* system, being a professional and structured principle of production, required that writing skills were a rare occurrence. With large numbers of students, who were in competition with professional scribes to finance their university studies, this was no longer the case. Given this increase in the number of scribes, it may have become

68 Paloma Cuenca Muñoz, 'El libro en el Siglo XIII: La Pecia', in A. Riesco Terrero (ed.), *I Jornadas sobre Documentación jurídico-administrativa, económico-financiera y judicial del reino castellanoleonés* (Madrid, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2002), pp. 231–245.

69 Richard & Mary Rouse, *Manuscripts and their makers*, p. 96.

impossible to use the *pecia* system because the new scribes were not craftsmen approved by the university and consequently were not permitted to take part in the *pecia* system. Without the organisational core of the university, the *pecia* system did not seem to be in a position to succeed.

Conclusion: The Purpose of *Pecia* Systems

A *pecia* system would certainly not have been necessary solely for the quick reproduction of texts. The so-called *pronuntiatio*, an organised form of dictation, practiced at German universities fulfilled this assignment just as well and with a lower financial and administrative burden. Although a correct template was also needed for the *pronuntiatio*, it did not require a special layout. An advantage of the *pecia* system is the fact that the writer had an officially certified text physically in front of him and was thus able to synchronise his copy with the text, which obviously was not possible with a dictation. This indicates that it was the purpose of the *pecia* system to circulate the textual version approved by the university. This supervision of the quality of text is not to be understood as censorship. An obvious occasion for an intervention of the university regarding the book trade would have been the Conviction of 1277 which prohibited a vast number of theorems for the Parisian university in order to prevent the intrusion of Aristotelianism.⁷⁰ In comparison with the list of 1275, the one of 1304 indicates that no Aristotelian works were withdrawn.

While one can see some characteristics of commercial publishing in the *pecia* system, chiefly the efficient division of labour and the availability of 'published' texts to an albeit limited public, it cannot be described as a commercially viable system as it apparently had to be subsidised by the universities. One can consequently assume that neither censorship nor profit but the distribution of correct texts was the main purpose of the *pecia* system.

⁷⁰ Peter Grabher, *Die Pariser Verurteilung von 1277* (Wien, Universität Wien, 2005).