

La Sfera Challenge

Team Spencer



Team Spencer will transcribe the version found in Lawrence, University of Kansas, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, Pryce MS P4.

TEAM DOCUMENTS

[Transcription Portal](#)

[Project Log](#)

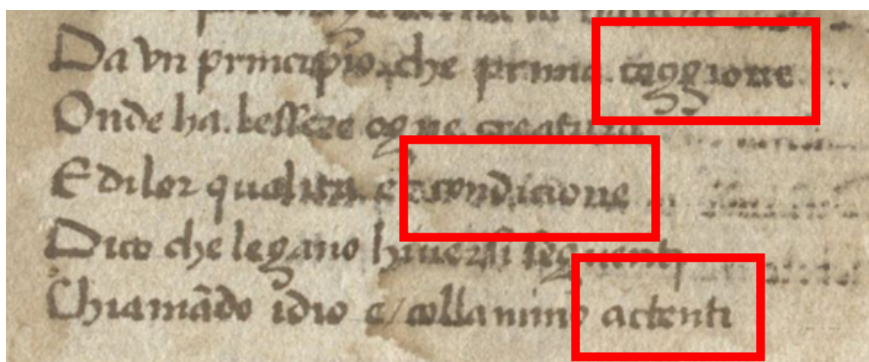
[Rules and Guidelines](#)

TEAM UPDATES:

August 3: The challenge is over and the judges are evaluating our work, but Team Spencer has not finished reflecting on what we learned and enjoyed about our time spent together with Pryce MS P4. In a [SJSU Special Collections & Archives blog post](#), team member Monica Keane has shared her thoughts on #LaSferaChallenge2 **as a successful model for creating academic engagement** through social media. “This is exactly the kind of thing that everyone hoped the Internet would let us do,” a friend told her.

July 30: Medieval Italian scripts are beautifully chaotic and defy standardization. Our co-captain Laura Ingallinella’s overview of **the language and scribal behavior of Pryce MS P4** reveals several traits and variations that are typical of late medieval Italian scripts, whose graphic choices and linguistic traits were not yet standardized and were thus subject to a high degree of variation depending on dating, geographic location, and personal choices. Here, we will discuss **ten traits** that can serve as a **case study for the level of variation** that #TeamSpencer encountered during their transcription.

Some traits shown by our script, which we have consistently maintained in our transcription, were quite common in late medieval Italian. Here’s a few examples: **(1) c** with cedilla **ç** often stands **for affricate consonants /ts/ and /dz/**, which in modern Italian are all written **z**: for example, *grandeçça* (fol. 2v), mod. It. *grandezza*; *çone*, mod. It. *zone* (fol. 3r); **(2) speaking of /ts/**, our scribe also always writes **-ci- for -zi-**: for example, see *gracia* on fol. 2r, mod. It. *grazia*; this is particularly evident in all the nouns that normally end in **-zione**, which in Pryce MS P4 is always spelled **-cione**: see, for example, *consolacione* on fol. 2r (mod. It. *consolazione*); **(3) i after palato-alveolar sibilant affricate consonants**, voiceless such as in *acciede* on fol. 2v (mod. It. *accende*) or voiced such as in *giente* on fol. 4v (mod. It. *gente*); **(4) superfluous h after velar consonants /k/ and /g/ and before a, o, u** (e.g., fol. 3r *boccha*, mod. It. *bocca*). Some of these notable forms can co-occur with those that conform to standardized modern Italian. For example, we find that **(5) the palatal nasal -gn-** can be rendered in many ways: the “standard” **-gn-**, for example *ogne* on fol. 2r; **-gni-** in *signiore* on fol. 8r (mod. It. *signore*); and even **-ngi-** with a swap between *n* and *g*, for example, in *singiore* on fol. 2r, or **-ngn-** in *giungni* fol. 24v (mod. It. *giungi*). The exact same phenomenon can be observed with **(6) the palatal lateral approximant -gl-** (e.g., *figlo* on fol. 2r, mod. It. *figlio*). We have also noted a persistent **(7) alternation between simple and geminate consonants** (e.g., fol. 2r *labra* for *labbra* “lips” ; vice versa, fol. 2r *caggione* for *cagione* “cause”, fol. 3v *posscia* for *poscia* “afterwards”).



Di tutu quei crientendon tai constructo
 [Rubric: . Proemio .]
 AD ogne cuor gentile et mente pura
 che disidera intenderla ragione
 Con la quale se governa la natura
 Da un principio che prima caggione
 Onde ha lessere ogne creatura
 E dilor qualita et condicione
 Dico che legano hi versi seguenti
 Chiamando idio e/ collanimo actenti

Pryce MS P4 fol. 2r, with some of the traits we discussed: *caggione* (no. 7); *condicione* (no. 2); *actenti* (no. 8)

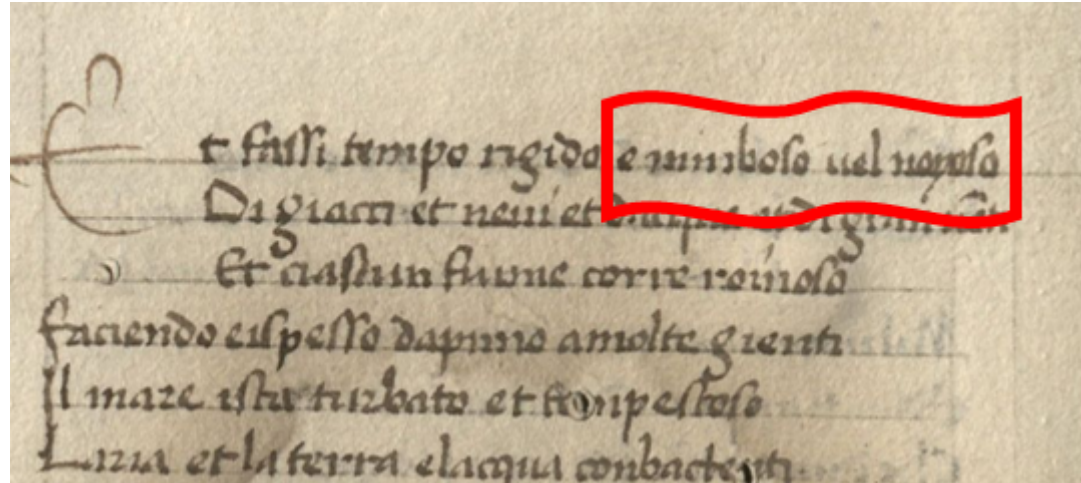
Pryce MS P4 is peppered with **(8) Latinate scripts**, such as **–ct– for –tt–** (fol. 2r *fructo*, mod. It. *frutto*), sometimes leading to cases of “hypercorrection,” that is, using a Latinate *–ct–* even when that is not etymologically justified, as it happens with *actenti* on fol. 2r (mod. It. *attenti*, which derives from the Latin *attendĕre*) or *cictà* on fol. 24r (mod. It. *città*, Latin *civitas*); **–pt– for –tt–** in *septe* on fol. 24r (mod. It. *sette*); **–mn– for –nn–** (fol. 2v *omnipotente*, mod. It. *onnipotente*), which occurs together with *–nn–*. This set of behaviors is particularly consistent with Pryce MS P4’s tendency to use abbreviations that are typical of Latin manuscripts, as co-captain N. Kivilcim Yavuz has documented [in this blog post](#).

Some of these features are not merely graphic, but reflect specific phonetic traits of our scribe’s language: for example, shifts involving vowels, such as **(9)** the article *el* instead of *il* (*el suo nome*, fol. 2r), which was common in late medieval and early modern Tuscan scripts, *ogne* for *ogni* (fol. 2r), or *nobeles* for *nobili* (fol. 2v); **(10)** and the insertion of additional sounds such as the **prosthetic i–** in *isplendore* for *splendore* (fol. 2v).

All in all, these traits match the hypothesis that this manuscript was compiled **in a quattrocento school environment, by a hand that was definitely used to reading and copying manuscripts in Latin**, whose characteristics are imitated from both a graphic and a paleographical point of view.


July 28: Our co-captain Laura Ingallinella noticed that the Pryce MS P4 scribe may have left us a hint that he worked on more than one exemplar of *La Sfera*. Here, on fol. 12r, the scribe writes “Et fassi tempo rigido e *nimboso vel noyoso*.” Resulting in a departure from the normal hendecasyllable structure of the poem, our scribe here records **two possible readings** separated by the Latin word *vel* (“or”) for the end of this line: the first one describing typical winter weather as *nimboso* (“cloudy”), the second as *noioso* (“unpleasant”). The presence of such recorded variants normally points to **a case of contamination**, meaning that the Pryce MS

P4 scribe was copying from **more than one manuscript of *La Sfera*** and collated them. Now, *nimboso* is a much more sophisticated and appropriate word for the context, what philologists call a *lectio difficilior*. The **Galletti edition**, however, records *noioso*. Only an extensive investigation of *La Sfera* manuscripts will be able to clarify which variant is correct.




Pryce MS P4, fol. 12r

July 26: #TeamSpencer completed transcribing Pryce MS P4, with only 30% of transcriptions left to review.



Dr N. Kivilcim Yavuz
@nkivilcimyavuz



We're almost there #TeamSpencer! All leaves transcribed and only 30% needs review! Great job!!
#LaSferaChallenge2



July 24: Our co-captain Kivilcim Yavuz confirmed that there are missing stanzas in our copy as Agnieszka Rec suspected! In Pryce MS P4, Book IV begins on fol. 20r, which contains stanzas one to three, and then on fol. 20v it continues with the seventh stanza, while skipping the fourth, fifth and sixth stanzas. Since the text continues from one side of the leaf to the next, this cannot be due to a lost leaf.

July 22: Sunny Harrison found a guide letter hiding inside the supplied initial on fol. 6v.





July 20: #TeamSpencer decided that co-captain Karen Severud Cook will review all the image descriptions while Laura Ingallinella and Kivılcım Yavuz will review the transcription of the main text for the final sign off.

July 19: A “guest user” unbeknownst to us began transcribing fol. 4v, a leaf Monica Keane was to transcribe on **FromthePage!** We were puzzled (and thankful for the enthusiasm), and after a quick intervention we closed the transcription to outsiders so that this didn’t happen again.

July 18: After Laura Ingallinella was ready to go at 12 PM GMT (8 AM her time) on July 17, and was practically done transcribing by the time we had our team meeting, Liz Hebbard finished transcribing all of her five folios in one go and sent us into a rabbit hole with her question, “How should we transcribe guide letters?”

July 17: As the Challenge takes off, we had our first virtual #TeamSpencer meeting! Is this a winning team or what?!



July 14: #TeamSpencer co-captains had their first virtual meeting, and our co-captain Laura Ingallinella started drafting our transcription guidelines. And we have other good news: our co-captain Karen Severud Cook joined Twitter as she didn't want to miss out on the fun and everyone cheering for #TeamSpencer!

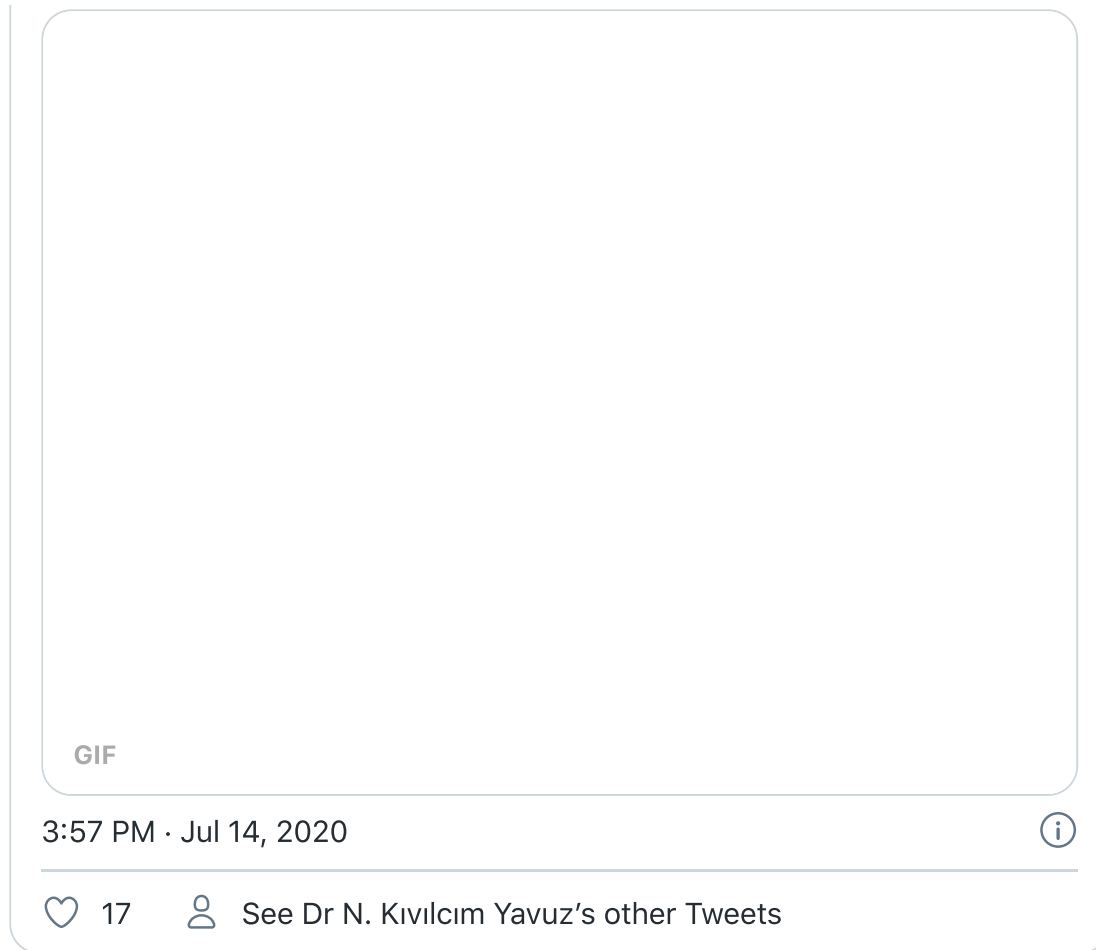


Dr N. Kivilcim Yavuz
@nkivilcimyavuz

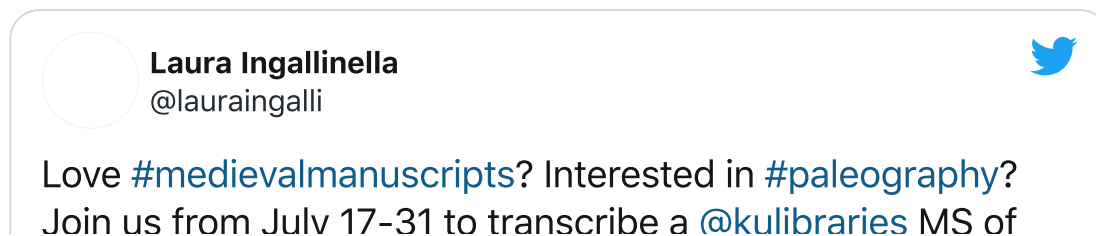


Our co-captain for [#TeamSpencer](#), special collections librarian extraordinaire, [@CookSeverud](#) joined [@Twitter](#) for [#LaSferaChallenge2!](#) Give her a warm welcome!

w/ [@lauraingalli](#)



July 9: In less than one day, TEAM SPENCER completed recruiting and is ready for challenge! We have team members spanning GMT-5 to GMT+2.





TEAM SPENCER members are:

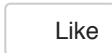
- Isabella Bolognese, Independent Scholar, Strasbourg ([@Space_Hermit42](#))
- Marguerite Bordry, Université Sorbonne ([@m_bordry](#))
- Karen Severud Cook (Co-Captain), Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas ([@CookSeverud](#))
- Alyssa Granacki, Duke University ([@aly_gran](#))

- Sunny Harrison, Institute for Medieval Studies, University of Leeds ([@Sunny_Harrison1](#))
 - Liz Hebbard, Indiana University, Bloomington ([@EK_Hebbard](#))
 - Laura Ingallinella (Co-Captain), Wellesley College ([@lauraingalli](#))
 - Monica Keane, Archives and Special Collections, San José State University ([@monica_keane](#))
 - Agnieszka Rec, Massachusetts Historical Society ([@UnassumingBooks](#))
 - N. Kivilcim Yavuz (Co-Captain), Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas ([@nkivilcimyavuz](#))
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