Language Variation in Fifteenth-Century Milan: Evidence of Koineization in the Letters (1397–1402) of the Milanese Merchant Giovanni da Pessano

Joshua Brown

The main tendency characterizing the evolution of the vernacular in Lombardy during the late Middle Ages is the formation of a koinè. At the same time, histories of the vernacular in Lombardy have identified texts that have maintained a strong adherence to local forms of language whilst koineization was in progress. This paper considers the northern linguistic elements in the letters (1397–1402) of the Milanese merchant Giovanni da Pessano and argues that these items are best characterized by koineization. To this end, I compare Giovanni's letters with twenty-five 'dialectal' phenomena of medieval Milanese identified by Vitale (1983), and with attested phenomena of the later chancery koinè from the 1400s, to verify their presence or absence in Giovanni's letters. I suggest that the northern elements in Giovanni's letters are evidence for a more nuanced understanding of language variation in late medieval Milan than what is currently available in histories of the vernacular in Lombardy.[1]

KEYWORDS Milanese, Margherita Lambertenghi, Giovanni da Pessano, Francesco Datini, koineization, language variation

Introduction

The main tendency characterizing the evolution of the vernacular in Lombardy during the late middle ages is the formation of a koinè. At the same time, histories of the vernacular in Lombardy have identified texts that have maintained a strong adherence

to local forms of language whilst koineization was in progress. Scholars have pointed to the 'learnèd' nature of the Lombard koinè, which found its most elaborate expression in the chanceries and the courts. Bongrani and Morgana, for example, describe it as being a 'refined product' and a 'linguistic end-point which was not immediately accessible' to writers. On the other hand, they refer to the case of *maestro Galcerando*, a doctor who, in a letter from 1483, asks forgiveness since he was not 'uso scriver ala cortezana'.[2]

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the social stratification of the Lombard vernacular during the late Trecento and early Quattrocento. I consider the twenty-five phenomena identified by Vitale as 'dialectal' in the letters of a nun written during the early Quattrocento, *suor Margherita Lambertenghi* (*c.* 1460) in order to verify the presence or absence of these items in a corpus of letters written by Giovanni da Pessano, a merchant from Milan.[3] Despite their informal nature and low register, the letters (1397–1402) of the Milanese merchant Giovanni da Pessano appear best characterized by the emerging koinè. I argue that the Lombard items in the writing of Margherita Lambertenghi and Giovanni da Pessano are fundamentally different and are therefore evidence for a more nuanced understanding of language variation in late medieval Milan.

First, I give a brief description of the main tendencies characterizing language in Lombardy during the Tre- and Quattrocento and consider the previous evidence of language variation before moving to Giovanni da Pessano. The final part of this paper looks at each of the twenty-five 'dialectal' phenomena from Lambertenghi's letters and considers their presence or absence in the letters of Giovanni da Pessano.

From *scriptae* to koinè: formation of the Pan-Lombard koinè in the Tre- and Quattrocento[4]

The linguistic make-up of Lombardy at the beginning of the fourteenth century was a picture of fragmentation with every city-state having its own local, municipal vernacular. Vernaculars of city-states showed much variety.[5] During the 1300s and 1400s, increased mobility and contact between people of the northern city-states and the rapid expansion of certain centres of power with new political structures, such as courts and chanceries, led to the formation of a pan-Lombard, supra-regional koinè.[6] Increased contact between the vernaculars of individual city-states led to a process

[2]   Paolo Bongrani and Silvia Morgana, 'La Lombardia', in *L'italiano nelle regioni. I. Lingua nazionale e identità regionali*, ed. by Francesco Bruni (Turin: UTET, 1992), pp. 84–142 (p. 101).

[3]   See Maurizio Vitale, 'La lingua volgare della cancelleria sforzesca nell'età di Ludovico il Moro', in *Milano nell'età di Ludovico il Moro*, ed. by Giulia Bologna, 2 vols (Milan: Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, 1983), II, 353–86 (p. 371, n. 134); republished in *La veneranda favella. Studi di storia della lingua italiana*, ed. by Maurizio Vitale (Naples: Morano, 1988), pp. 169–239.

[4]   For a recent survey of studies on old northern vernaculars, see Lorenzo Tomasin, 'Gli studi sugli antichi volgari settentrionali', *Bollettino di italianistica*, n. s. 4.2 (2007), 71–85.

[5]   On the question of the socio-linguistic composition of medieval Italy between the years 1000–1300, with a focus on syntax, see the contribution by Nigel Vincent, 'Languages in Contact in Medieval Italy', in *Rethinking Languages in Contact: The Case of Italian*, ed. by Anna Laura Lepschy and Arturo Tosi (London: Legenda, 2006), pp. 12–27.

[6]   On the question of the northern vernacular before Dante, see Gaetano Persico, 'Il volgare illustre predantesco nell'Italia Settentrionale', *Saggi di umanesimo cristiano*, 4.4, (1949), 55–71.

in which the most local linguistic features of these vernaculars were abandoned in favour of a process of demunicipalization.

The process which led to the formation of the koinè began to be evident in the late fourteenth century.[7] Before this time, it is possible to specify the provenance of a text based on its language alone. This identification becomes increasingly more difficult from the late 1300s onwards, as texts show fewer and fewer of the most local traits which allow us to identify where they were written. Writers tend to eliminate the most salient characteristics from their local vernacular, incorporating linguistic forms common to north Italy and courts, as well as features from Latin and also Provencal.

For literature produced in the courts, all Lombard areas continued to look towards France for direction, or towards the Franco-Veneto literature coming from the east, as seen in the catalogues from both the Visconti and Gonzaga libraries which included copious material 'in lingua francigena'. The language of the 'passio S. Luciae', composed during the Trecento but taken from a Quattrocento manuscript, has been described by Rho as 'not far removed from the language of Bonvesin dra Riva'.[8] As with Bonvesin, the text does not present us with 'genuine Milanese dialect', but a 'literary dialectal form, allowing us to fix the date of the composition to the first half of the Trecento'. The way in which *la parlata milanese* is reported in this fragment reveals, at first sight, 'uno sforzo di nobilitare il rude dialetto, di farne, insomma, una specie di lingua aulica [...] così da dare un aspetto letterario, riprendendo forme latineggianti o dando terminazioni, normali nell'italiano, ma sconosciute al dialetto' (p. 78).

A translation (*volgarizzamento*) of the 'encyclopaedia' *De proprietatibus rerum* made by the notary Vivaldo Belcalzer (writing from Mantua sometime before 1309)[9] shows a strong adherence to local forms. In the prologue, Belcalzer declares his intention to write in the 'plan volgar', and then later describes his own language as 'nostr volgar mantoan', demonstrating the cultural, municipal but also linguistic individuality of a city-state in the panorama of late medieval Italy.[10] Ghinassi describes Belcalzer's prose as homogeneous and regular, without any notable uncertainties or oscillations.[11]

Some of the earliest features of the pan-Lombard koinè can be seen in a series of edicts (the *gride gonzaghesche*) from Mantua, written during the *signoria* of Ludovico I Gonzaga (1369–82) and then, in greater number, during the rule of his successor, Francesco I. In comparing the language of these edicts to the language of Vivaldo Belcalzer, Bongrani and Morgana identify certain elements as typical traits of the

---

[7] With regard to the duration of the koinè, Paola Benincà fixes its time limit between the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries in Paola Benincà, 'Qualcosa ancora sulla 'koinè' medievale alto-italiana', in *Koinè in Italia. Dalle origini al Cinquecento*, ed. by Glauco Sanga (Bergamo: Lubrina, 1991), pp. 313–29 (p. 321). On the complex question of when the koinè can be said to have started, see Maria Antonietta Grignani, 'Koinè nell'Italia settentrionale. Note sui volgari scritti settentrionali' in *Koinè in Italia*, pp. 35–53 (especially p. 38).

[8] Edmondo Rho, 'Testi in volgare lombardo del Trecento', *Archivio storico lombardo*, n. s. 2 (1937), 67–118.

[9] See Bruno Migliorini, *Storia della lingua italiana* (Florence: Sansoni, 1960), p. 219.

[10] Bongrani and Morgana, 'La Lombardia', pp. 94–95.

[11] Ghino Ghinassi, 'Nuovi studi sul volgare mantovano di Vivaldo Belcalzer', *Studi di filologia italiana*, 23 (1965), 19–172 (p. 75); *Dal Belcalzer al Castiglione: studi sull'antico volgare di Mantova e sul 'Cortegiano'*, ed. by Ghino Ghinassi (Florence: Olschki, 2006).

evolving koinè language in the *gride*. These include the restoration of word-final vowels, the use of the masculine plural definite article *'li'*, the use of *'li'* for the feminine plural definite article and the use of *–i* as a desinence for feminine plural nouns (alternating with *–e*). In describing this 'official language', they note that, when compared to Belcalzer's prose, the most obvious dialectal features, such as the drastic reduction of word-final vowels subject to apocope, are, in general, not present in the edicts.[12] A similar characterisation is given of the letters of Filippo della Molza (late fourteenth century), described as 'a form of educated Mantuan', strongly 'detached' from the spoken dialect.[13] While most studies stress that inherent variety and lack of cohesion are primary features of the koinè for the entire north, Maraschio's results from a heterogeneous corpus of diaries and letters from astrologers, doctors and engineers of the Duke of Mantua as well as armourers and embroiderers present a significant degree of homogeneity of forms.[14]

It should be noted that the koinè was not necessarily devoid of dialectal items. Rather, this 'common language' was becoming used over an increasingly wide territory and was becoming purged of its most locally characteristic linguistic elements. Lurati, for example, describes the geographical domain over which the koinè was used as a 'regno della variazione libera'.[15] Nevertheless, when these local phenomena do appear in documents best characterized by a koinè language, they are only rarely present.

Tuscan linguistic forms were also entering texts at an increasing rate. This is true for both literary and non-literary texts — the latter having more locally marked features than the former. The spread of Tuscan has, however, been re-evaluated in recent years in the light of the publication of a number of non-literary texts from Milan and Mantua which do not appear to be affected by Tuscan, nor by the koinè language and are, in fact, quite dialectal. Given the dialectal nature of these non-literary texts, they have been used as evidence for the social variation of the vernacular in medieval Lombardy. Bongrani and Morgana, for example, note that the existence of texts from both Milan and Mantua with a stronger presence of local forms than the language of the chancery has implications for the history of language in Lombardy. They maintain that the conservative language of these texts implies that a re-evaluation of the 'weight and vitality of local writing traditions must take place' and that 'the previously acknowledged "victory" of the presence of Tuscan outside a literary context' must be reconsidered.[16]

A distinction can be made between, on the one hand, non-literary texts which are characterized by their dialectal nature and, on the other, higher register texts which are more indicative of a koinè language.

[12] Paolo Bongrani and Silvia Morgana, 'La Lombardia', in *L'italiano nelle regioni. II. Testi e documenti*, ed. by Francesco Bruni (Turin: UTET, 1994), pp. 101–70 (pp. 117–18).

[13] Giovanni Battista Borgogno, 'La lingua dei dispacci di Filippo della Molza diplomatico mantovano della 2a metà del sec. XIV', *Studi di grammatica italiana*, 9 (1980), 19–171 (p. 157).

[14] Nicoletta Maraschio, 'Lingua, società e corte di una signoria padana fra Quattro e Cinquecento' in *Ludovico Ariosto: lingua, stile e tradizione*, ed. by Cesare Segre (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1976), pp. 29–38.

[15] Ottavio Lurati, 'Aree linguistiche, III. Lombardia e Ticino' in *Lexikon der romanistischen Linguistik*, ed. by Günter Holtus, Michael Metzeltin, and Christian Schmitt (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1988), IV, 485–516 (p. 509).

[16] Bongrani and Morgana, 'La Lombardia' in *L'italiano nelle regioni, I*, 101–02.

Evidence of language variation in late medieval Lombardy

It will be instructive to look at those texts identified as having 'a more familial, private vernacular' where the 'weight of idiomatic municipal forms was stronger'.[17] This will allow an insight into similar forms of language that were evolving at the same time that the letters (1397–1402) of the Milanese merchant Giovanni da Pessano were written and provide a context for an analysis of his language.

The first of these texts is a series of letters (*memorie*) written by a nun, *suor Margherita Lambertenghi*.[18] There is little biographical information available about her. Lambertenghi was originally from the convent of San Marco in Como but moved to Milan in order to join the convent of Santa Marta where she subsequently became the first prioress of an order of Augustinians. In 1345 a certain *Simona da Casale* had gathered a group of women together in Milan who were seeking a regulated spiritual life.[19] This private community took up the Augustinian rule only after the arrival of Margherita Lambertenghi and on her initiative. She died possibly after 1460. The surviving correspondence from her includes her *memorie* as well as copies of letters exchanged with the Mother Superior of the Sant'Annunciata convent in Pavia.[20]

The language of Margherita Lambertenghi's letters has been described as 'notably dialectal' with 'un tasso di idiomaticità municipale assai consistente'.[21] Some of these 'dialectal' traits are mentioned by Bongrani after having verified their absence (or rare appearance) in the language of chancery documents before the rule of Ludovico 'il Moro' Sforza (1494–1500) and, furthermore, after having verified the presence of these traits in the old Milanese *scripta*.[22] Pedralli writes that Lambertenghi's letters are 'written in a low level of language, one that is inferior with respect to the

---

[17] Ghino Ghinassi, 'Il volgare mantovano tra Medioevo e Rinascimento' in *Ludovico Ariosto*, ed. Segre, pp. 7–28 (p. 20).

[18] The earliest dating for the surname *Lambertenghi* that I have found is from the early fourteenth century. In describing an altar near which Saints Liberata and Faustina are buried in the Cathedral of Como, Rovelli mentions that a certain *Fra Leone de' Lambertenghi* discovered their bodies there on 18 January 1317. See Giuseppe Rovelli, *Storia di Como* (Como: Carl'Antonio Ostinelli, 1789), p. 369.

[19] For details on Simona da Casale and on the foundation of the monastery, see Maria Teresa Bellenzier, 'Simona da Casale', in *Dizionario biografico delle donne lombarde: 568–1968*, ed. by Rachele Farina (Milan: Baldini & Castoldi, 1995) p. 1021; further details in Enrico Cattaneo, 'Istituzioni ecclesiastiche milanesi: conventi e monasteri', in *Storia di Milano* (Milan: Fondazione Treccani, 1961), pp. 574–662 (see p. 635 which mentions Lambertenghi).

[20] This correspondence is kept in the Archivio di Stato di Milano, Fondo di religione P. A. [= parte antica] n. 2146 (see Vitale, 'La lingua', p. 371, n. 134).

[21] Paolo Bongrani, 'Il volgare a Milano tra Quattro e Cinquecento', in *Lingua e letteratura a Milano nell'età sforzesca. Una raccolta di studi* (Parma: Università di Parma, Istituto di Filologia moderna, 1986), pp. 1–36 (pp. 4–5). In footnote 16 of p. 5, Bongrani notes that 'un livello linguistico ancora più basso e pressochè coincidente col parlato ci è testimoniato, ma per via letteraria e riflessa, dai sonetti dialettali di Lancino Curti'.

[22] Bongrani, 'Il volgare a Milano', p. 4. In footnote 7 on the same page, Bongrani specifies that his two sources for checking the presence or absence of these phenomena in the *antica scripta milanese* are Adolfo Mussafia, 'Darstellung der altmailändischen Mundart nach Bonvesin's Schriften', *Wiener Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 59 (1868), 5–40; reprinted in *Scritti di filologia e linguistica*, ed. by Antonio Daniele and Lorenzo Renzi (Padua: Antenore, 1983), pp. 247–84. See also Carlo Salvioni, 'Annotazioni sistematiche alla "Antica parafrasi lombarda del *Neminem laedi nisi a se ipso* di S. Giovanni Grisostomo" e alle "Antiche scritture lombarde"', *Archivio glottologico italiano*, 12 (1896–98), 375–440 [continued in vol. 14, pp. 201–68 (1896–98)].

vernacular used, for example, in the chancery of the duke [of Milan]'.[23] Morgana notes that the letters can be described as *scritture semicolte*, with 'una spessa dose di idiomaticità locale'.[24] Stella remarks that the local items identifiable in her letters 'risalgono verso l'alto da una base appoggiata a nitidi esiti dialettali'.[25] Comparing Lambertenghi's language to the language of chancery documents from Ludovico Sforza's rule, Vitale comments that there is 'a more widespread and lively adherence to contemporary local elements'.[26] Bongrani and Morgana also mention the language of Margherita Lambertenghi, in passing, to show that a 'multiplicity of levels' can be documented in Milan.[27]

A later document, nearly a century later, is the *Cronica milanese*, narrating the history of events in Milan from 1500 to 1544, written by the 'merzaro' (merchant)[28] Gian Marco Burigozzo (d. 1544).[29] The language of the *Cronica* has been described as having a 'strong dialectal nature'.[30] Bongrani notes that 'within the Milanese written vernacular, we see differentiation on a synchronic plane and a persistence of more conservative *scriptae* than the chancery *koinè*, similar to those that have been recorded in the 15th century'.[31] If we compare his writing to the non-literary documents studied by Morgana,[32] the conservative nature of Burigozzo's language becomes much clearer.[33]

After comparing certain linguistic items from the language of the chancery with some items from Burigozzo, Bongrani concludes that:

> sarebbe stato altrettanto interessante analizzare i fenomeni in prospettiva storica e osservare così come nella cronaca [di Schivenoglia], e dunque in pieno Cinquecento, resistano ancora molti tratti dell'antica *scripta*, quegli stessi che abbiamo visto caratterizzare (ma più di mezzo secolo prima) le scritture di suor Margherita Lambertenghi.[34]

[23]   Monica Pedralli, *Novo, grande, coverto e ferrato: gli inventari di biblioteca e la cultura a Milano nel Quattrocento* (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 2002), p. 107.

[24]   Silvia Morgana, *Storia linguistica di Milano* (Rome: Carocci, 2012), p. 45.

[25]   Angelo Stella, 'Lombardia', in *Storia della lingua italiana*. III. *Le altre lingue*, ed. by Luca Serianni and Paolo Trifone (Turin: Einaudi, 1994), pp. 153–212 (p. 199). For other northern areas see the various chapters in the same volume: Angelo Stella, 'Piemonte', pp. 75–105; idem, 'Liguria', pp. 105–53; Piera Tomasoni, 'Veneto', pp. 212–40; Rienzo Pellegrini, 'Friuli', pp. 240–60; Angelo Stella, 'Emilia-Romagna', pp. 260–94.

[26]   Vitale, 'La lingua', p. 371.

[27]   Bongrani and Morgana, 'La Lombardia', in *L'italiano nelle regioni*, I, 101.

[28]   Burigozzo's self-defining term *merzaro* is a regional variant of 'merciaio' (see *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana,* X, *s. v.*, 'merciaio', p. 146).

[29]   The letters of Burigozzo have been published in *Archivio storico italiano*, 3, (1842), 419–552. This edition is based on the Mazzuchelli manuscript held in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan. For information about other manuscripts, see Bongrani, 'Il volgare a Milano', p. 30, n. 79.

[30]   Silvia Scotti Morgana, 'Materiali per la storia della lingua non letteraria: gride e documenti dell'ultima età sforzesca', in *Studi di lingua e letteratura lombarda offerti a Maurizio Vitale*, 2 vols (Pisa: Giardini editori e stampatori, 1983), I, 317–61 (p. 318).

[31]   Paolo Bongrani, 'Il volgare a Milano', p. 29.

[32]   Silvia Morgana, 'Processi di standardizzazione nei documenti dell'Archivio del Duomo di Milano (sec. XVI–XVII–XVIII)' in *Linguistica storica e cambiamento linguistico* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1985), pp. 251–62.

[33]   See Bongrani, 'Il volgare a Milano', pp. 29–36; Bongrani and Morgana, 'La Lombardia' in *L'italiano nelle regioni*, I, 101. Further information and bibliography on Burigozzo can be found in Gaspare De Charo 'Burigozzo, Giovan Marco', in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* ed. by Alberto M. Ghisalberti (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1960–), XV, 429–31.

[34]   Bongrani, 'Il volgare a Milano', p. 34.

Referring to Vitale's comparison of the twenty-five linguistic items identified as being 'dialectal', Bongrani maintains that the vernacular in Milan in the late 1400s shows 'una varietà di livelli sin qui inedita, uno spessore sociolinguistico forse paragonabile a quello che è stato acutamente individuato e descritto da Ghino Ghinassi all'interno del volgare mantovano e di altri volgari contemporanei'.[35]

Outside of Milan, the language of certain texts in Mantua shows a similar phenomenon, in the sense that most documents appear to show the development of a koinè language, but others show a strong adherence to local forms.

A corpus of twenty-three letters, all from 1430, from Mantuan citizens of different social backgrounds (notaries, state functionaries, merchants), provides an interesting synchronic sociolinguistic cross-section.[36] Stella describes this corpus as showing 'una situazione felicemente plurivoca e interdiscorsiva'.[37] Giovanardi acknowledges the language of these letters as having 'a more or less lively presence of local traits', but maintains that the reference model and model of dialectal purgation is Latin and not Tuscan.[38]

In addition to these texts, the language of the *Chronicle* of Andrea Schivenoglia, written between 1467 and 1481, has a stronger dialectal 'linguistic colouring' than the language of contemporary courts.[39] This judgment was confirmed by Borgogno who noted that possible reasons for this somewhat stronger adherence to local forms may be due to the fact that Schivenoglia lived in the countryside and was not in contact with the Gonzaga court. The language of the *Chronicle* is 'not strictly dialect' but a 'semi-dialectal form' with 'notable autonomy and freedom of choice'.[40]

In sum, Ghinassi has noted that there are 'alcuni testi in cui compare un volgare mantovano più familiare, più privato, legato, se non direttamente al dialetto locale, almeno a *scriptae* più antiche, nelle quali il peso delle particolarità idiomatiche municipali era più rilevante'.[41]

Given the strong presence of local linguistic items in the non-literary texts discussed above, one would expect that letters from a merchant from the late fourteenth century to be more dialectal given their non-literary nature. We will see, however, that the northern elements found in the letters of Giovanni da Pessano are characterized more by the northern koinè and cannot be identified with the vernacular from any one city-state. Let us now turn briefly to Giovanni da Pessano before considering the linguistic nature of the Lombard koinè in his writing.

Giovanni da Pessano

There are few biographical details available on Giovanni da Pessano. He may in fact be the same person identified by Barbieri as Giovanni *Pessina*, but little proof has

[35] Bongrani, 'Il volgare a Milano', p. 6.

[36] See *Mantova 1430. Pareri a Gian Francesco Gonzaga per il governo*, ed. by Maria Antonietta Grignani and others (Mantua: Arcari, 1990).

[37] Stella, 'Lombardia', p. 189.

[38] Claudio Giovanardi, 'Le lingue regionali nell'Italia settentrionale', in *Storia generale della letteratura italiana* (Milan: F. Motta, 1999), pp. 312–26 (p. 319).

[39] Ghinassi, 'Il volgare mantovano', pp. 20–22.

[40] Giovanni Battista Borgogno, 'La lingua di Andrea Schivenoglia, cronista mantovano del sec. XV', *Civiltà mantovana*, 6 (1985), 1–10 (p. 2). See also Giorgio Schizzerotto, *Sette secoli di volgare e di dialetto mantovano* (Mantua: Publi-Paolini, 1985), pp. 110–21.

[41] Ghinassi, 'Il volgare mantovano', p. 20.

amounted to support this claim.[42] Scholars are divided over where he was from. The index in Melis, for example, quotes his name as *Giovanni da Pessano (Giovanni da Pescina)*, giving both variants.[43] If Barbieri is correct in ascribing him to the Pessina family, then we are able to trace back Giovanni's family origins in Milan to at least the twelfth century. On the other hand, Frangioni is uncertain about his provenance.[44] She quotes from one of Giovanni's letters where he deals with trafficking in some fustians which, he says, although made in his shop, are not from Milan:

Letter 682 in Frangioni (1994, I, 73)
In cassa mia fu fatto fustani molti boni di ghuado, in sì boni chome fussa fatti in Millano

On the basis of this comment, Frangioni, has described Giovanni as being 'not strictly from Milan'. Nevertheless, his Milanese origins seem to be confirmed in a later letter in which he writes:

Letter 774 in Frangioni (1994, II, 540–41)
Similli i' ò avixatto al ditto Bindo chomo dè essere una mia prochura in caxa di Zanobio di Tadeo chomo sono melanexe (. . .) E che, anchora, è in Vinegia più merchadanti milanexe che me cognosono: se serà di bisognio dirano chomo sono milanexe.

This information seems to confirm his origins as Milanese.

Giovanni's letters were written between 30 August 1397 and 17 December 1402 and all were sent from Milan. These letters are held in the Archivio di Stato di Prato in the Datini Archive and have been previously published by Frangioni.[45] The analysis which follows is based on a sample of 68 letters by Giovanni out of the 72 letters included in Frangioni's corpus. In aiming to create the most homogeneous corpus possible, I have excluded four items from the analysis below. These are two items which are *estratti conto*[46] and two items which are not in Giovanni's hand.[47]

---

[42] See Gino Barbieri, *Origini del capitalismo lombardo. Studi e documenti sull'economia milanese del periodo ducale* (Milan: Giuffrè, 1961), pp. 53–62.

[43] Federico Melis, *I mercanti italiani dell'Europa medievale e rinascimentale* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1990). The online database of the Archivio di Stato di Prato records his name as *Giovanni da Pessano*, which is the variant I have followed here. The database can be accessed at: <http://datini.archiviodistato.prato.it/www/queryLetters.html.>.

[44] *Milano fine Trecento. Il carteggio milanese dell'Archivio Datini di Prato*, ed. by Luciana Frangioni, 2 vols (Florence: Opus Libri, 1994), I, 73.

[45] Since the letters have been catalogued according to place of arrival (and not where they were sent from), they are found in different files (*carteggi*). In alphabetical order, the letters from Milan to Avignon are in *carteggio* 184, to Barcelona in *carteggio* 893, to Bologna in *carteggio* 720, to Florence in *carteggio* 669, to Genova in *carteggio* 780, to Majorca in *carteggio* 1072, to Pisa in *carteggio* 531, to Prato in *carteggio* 341, to Rome in *carteggio* 1116 and to Valencia in *carteggio* 999.

[46] These are letters 755 (pp. 529–30) and 805 (p. 572) in Frangioni's corpus.

[47] The two items not in Giovanni's hand but which appear in Frangioni's corpus are letter 697 (pp. 500–01) and letter 758 (p. 531). Letter 697 is written by one of Giovanni's cousins. Letter 758 is a 'letter non firmata di mano di Giovanni da Pessano'.

Methodology

The question of how to evaluate the northern elements in Giovanni's letters is one with which we are immediately confronted.

Vitale identified twenty-five linguistic items in the letters of Margherita Lambertenghi as being 'non o debolissimamente riscontrati nella lingua cancelleresca'.[48] The analysis that follows considers these twenty-five forms, cross-checking their presence or absence in the letters of Giovanni da Pessano. This will allow a clearer identification of which linguistic items were used in chancery writing and which were not, therefore making the picture of language variation that characterises Lombard writing during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries more obvious. In other words, the question of whether the northern linguistic items in Giovanni's letters should be attributed to a local variety of Lombard or to the Lombard koinè will emerge more clearly by a comparison of forms. If the form in Giovanni's letters is more similar to the form in Lambertenghi's letters, then I have taken this as evidence of a strictly local, municipal variety of language. Viceversa, if the form is more similar to contemporary koinè forms, I have taken this as evidence that he is writing in the Lombard koinè.

In addition, I quote examples from contemporary northern Italian texts to show the penetration of similar linguistic elements in other writing. Comparing the twenty-five linguistic items in the letters of Margherita Lambertenghi to contemporary Lombard forms is made more difficult since there is an extreme lack of documents from Milan during the late Tre- and early Quattrocento. Bongrani and Morgana highlight the difficulty in tracing the histories of particular centres, but nevertheless canvass the evidence that is available from Mantua, Milan, and Cremona.[49] Stella surveys the available documents from major Lombard cities such as Cremona, Mantua, Milan, Brescia, Bergamo, and Pavia.[50] Migliorini and Folena include only one text from Milan in their *Testi non toscani del Trecento* (number 32: extracts from the *Statuti viscontei delle strade e delle acque* of 1352).[51] Bongrani and Morgana mention that the *volgarizzamenti* from the Borri *miscellanea* are perhaps from the Trecento, as is the *Storia della Passione di Cristo* published by Piazza,[52] but that, even with these additions, it nevertheless remains difficult to write an articulated history.[53] Similar comments are made by Sgrilli when she writes 'la carenza di fonti documentarie coinvolge tutti i centri lombardi produttivi nel '300' and, then in footnote 99, 'eccepisce Mantova, per la quale disponiamo dei solidi materiali dell'Archivio Gonzaga'.[54]

---

[48] Vitale, 'La lingua', p. 371, n. 134.

[49] Bongrani and Morgana, 'La Lombardia', in *L'italiano nelle regioni, I*, 84–142.

[50] Stella, 'Lombardia', pp. 153–212.

[51] Bruno Migliorini and Gianfranco Folena, *Testi non toscani del Trecento* (Modena: Società Tipografica Modena, 1952).

[52] G. M. Piazza, 'Un testo lombardo del Trecento', *Libri & Documenti*, fasc. 2, pp. 30–35 [continued in fasc. 3, pp. 32–38].

[53] Bongrani and Morgana, 'La Lombardia', in *L'italiano nelle regioni, I*, p. 96.

[54] Paola Sgrilli, 'L'espansione del toscano nel Trecento', in *La Toscana nel secolo XIV: Caratteri di una civiltà regionale* (Pisa: Centro di studi sulla civiltà del tardo medioevo, 1988), pp. 425–64 (p. 451). Colombo points out that there is still a lack of studies of non-literary documents: 'scarseggiano lavori su testi non letterari (o paraletterari) per i secoli precedenti il XV' in Michele Colombo, 'Una *confessio* in volgare milanese del 1311', *Studi linguistici italiani*, 36.1 (2010), 3–26 (p. 8, n. 16).

For each of the twenty-five phenomena taken from Lambertenghi listed below, I first note the presence or absence of the item in Giovanni's writing, and then make comparisons with contemporary forms of language. When citing a lexeme from Giovanni's letters, I give the number of the letter and line in which it appears in the Appendix to my PhD thesis.[55] For example, *nere* (LX: 7, 9) means that the word 'nere' appears twice in letter LX, in lines 7 and 9, *recto*. Instances where I have quoted from the *verso* side of the manuscript are indicated by a superscript 'v', as in LX[v].

Let us now consider the twenty-five dialectal items in the letters of Margherita Lambertenghi, making comparisons with contemporary variants as well as the sixty-eight letters of Giovanni da Pessano. I present these items in the same order in which they appear in Vitale.[56]

Evidence of the Lombard koinè in the letters of Giovanni da Pessano

Metaphony

In the letters of Lambertenghi, Vitale notes that there is 'grande estensione della metafonia'.[57] The only examples quoted are: *quisto, quillo, villi* 'velli', *misi*. For chancery language, on the other hand, Vitale notes that 'metaphony of stressed *o* and *e* caused by word-final *i* is not frequent nor constant'.[58]

In the letters of Giovanni da Pessano, metaphony of 'e' occurs only in some verb forms and demonstratives. In general, there appears to be much more competition between forms with and without metaphony compared to the letters of Margherita Lambertenghi. Examples are: *missi* 'mesi' (LX: 13) (LXIV: 25, 39) (LXV: 32) (LXVI: 20) (LXVII: 12, 19); *missy* 'mesi' (LVI: 19); *prixy* (I: 14); *spissy* 'spesi' (XLIII: 23) as well as almost always in plural demonstratives: *quilli* (XI: 7, 12, 23, 30, 31) (XII: 12, 12) etc.; *quisti* (IV: 8) (VI: 9 and VI[v]: 4) (VII: 26) (VIII: 19) (IX: 19) (XI: 21, 22) etc. The only cases without metaphony are: *quelli* (XXX: 17) (LXIII: 25) (LXVIII: 14); *questi* (XII: 4) (XXI: 2) (XLV: 2) (XLVIII: 13) (LIV: 16) (LXIII[v]: 16) (LXV: 40).

Vowel dissimilation and the dropping of the voiced consonant in serò 'sorella'

The case of serò 'sorella' is the only instance which Vitale quotes in Margherita's letters. For old Milanese, Rohlfs quotes seror and fenì 'finire'.[59] There are no cases of vowel dissimilation in the letters of Giovanni da Pessano.

Strong outcome of the semiconsonant -j-

For the -LI- cluster in Latin, Vitale found that, in chancery language, 'the dominant outcome is literary -*l*- and was sometimes extended to cases where Italian did not

---

[55] This Appendix contains a critical edition of all letters that formed the corpus for my PhD thesis. See Joshua Brown, 'Early Evidence for Tuscanisation in the Letters of Milanese Merchants in the Datini Archive, Prato, 1396–1402' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Western Australia, 2011), vol. II.

[56] Vitale, 'La lingua', p. 371, n. 134.

[57] Vitale, 'La lingua', p. 371, n. 134, point 1.

[58] Maurizio Vitale, *La lingua volgare della cancelleria visconteo-sforzesca nel Quattrocento* (Varese-Milan: Istituto Editoriale Cisalpino, 1953), p. 64.

[59] Gerhard Rohlfs, *Grammatica storica della lingua italiana e dei suoi dialetti*, 3 vols (Turin: Einaudi, 1966), §330.

have it'.[60] The most frequent grapheme used was *gli* but there were also cases of *lj, ll, lgl, gl* (even before an oral vowel). Vitale also notes that 'viva è anche la risoluzione dialettale *j*', especially in some words such as *fiolo, brie* 'briglie', *bia* 'biglia', *bolzonaia* 'bolzonaglia' etc. Degli Innocenti notes that, for the grapheme *-l(l)i-*, 'non si può escludere possa essere latinismo grafico'.[61]

In the letters of Giovanni da Pessano, there is no occurrence of dialectal *-j-*. The dominant form is *-li-* which, as Scotti Morgana, has noted, is probably only a grapheme.[62] She notes that there is 'oscillazione tra la più frequente soluzione letteraria e la conservazione latineggiante, probabilmente solo grafica' and notes that the dialectal outcome *-j-* is 'decisamente espunta', despite being present in fifteenth-century texts and in '*scriptae* di tono più basso'.

Examples from Giovanni include: -LI- in *chonseliare* (LXV: 23); *chonseliaremo* (LXVIII: 10); *chonselio* (LXVI: 25); *conselio* (LXVIII: 31); *coliarebe* 'coglierebbe' (XII: 19); *consiliare* (XXII: 15); *filiollo* (LXV: 8); *mareveliati* (IX: 12) (LIV: 5); *mareveliatti* (XLIII: 4) (LXIII: 30) (LXV: 11) (LXVI: 7); *melio* (IV: 8) (VI^v: 4) (VII: 26) (VIII: 19) (X: 28) (XXXIX: 9) (XLVII: 15) (LV: 24) etc.; *meliori* (IX: 19); *meliory* (LXIV^v: 7); *miliore* (XXXIX: 12); *toliando* (LXIV^v: 1); *toliarebe* (LIV: 25); *tolitti* (LI: 9); *valiano* (VII: 5) (XVII: 26); *volia* (LV: 33) (LVII: 7); *volio* (I: 20) (XXXIX: 10) (LXI: 15, 15); *voliati* (I: 29) (III: 2) (VI: 21, 26, 27, 32 and VI^v: 1) (VII: 13, 14, 31) etc.; *voliatti* (I: 28) (XI: 14); *voliti* (LVI: 17) and all forms of 'volere' apart from *volono* (X: 15) (LVI: 15) (LVII: 35, 38) and *vollono* (LVII: 36). Occurrences of -GL- are found in *Baglioni* (XLII: 4); *luglio* (XXIII: 1) (XXXV: 1) (XXXVI: 1); *maglia* (LXI: 35) but *malia* (LXIX: 40); *meglio* (LX: 9) (LXIII: 28) (LXVI: 17); *migliaio* (LXXI: 31). There is also one instance of -LGL- in *lulglo* (XXIV: 2).

Passing to a palatal consonant of the combination *-NCTI-: pungi 'punti'*

This is the only case that Vitale quotes in Margherita's letters. Rohlfs explains that this phenomenon is 'molto diffuso' in old Lombard, quoting examples from Bonvesin dra Riva such as *tangi* (plural of *tant*); *tingi* (pl. of *dent*); *fangi* 'fanti', *tugi* 'tutti' and *grangi* 'grandi'.[63] Bongrani notes that this phenomenon is 'generalmente espunto dai documenti cancellereschi' but that, at the end of the Quattrocento, it is 'ampiamente attestato nei famosi sonetti milanesi di Lancino Curti'.[64] I have found no cases of this phenomenon in Giovanni's letters.

Palatalization of the nasal in *agni 'anni', pagni 'panni', tegneva 'teneva'.*

Bongrani and Morgana record *vegnerà*, showing palatalization of the verb root, in a *grida gonzaghesca* from 1374.[65] For the chancery, Vitale notes that, for the Latin combination -NJ-, 'la risoluzione dominante è quella in palatale *ñ* estesa spesso ad

[60] Vitale, *La lingua volgare*, p. 69–70.
[61] *L'Elucidario. Volgarizzamento in antico milanese dell''Elucidarium' di Onorio Augustodunense*, ed. by Mario Degli innocenti (Padua: Antenore, 1984), p. 37.
[62] Scotti Morgana, 'Materiali', p. 340.
[63] Rohlfs, *Grammatica storica*, §295.
[64] Bongrani, 'Il volgare a Milano', p. 4.
[65] Bongrani and Morgana, 'La Lombardia', in *L'italiano nelle regioni, II*, 199, n. 15.

esemplari che normalmente in italiano non l'hanno'.[66] Rohlfs quotes *pañi* for old Venetian.[67]

I note here the few cases of palatalization of verb stems and of some lexemes in the letters of Giovanni da Pessano. Occurrences are *cognosono* (LV: 18); *ghuadangnia* (LXXI[v]: 16); *magniera* (LXV[v]: 10); *vegnia* (LXVIII[v]: 13); *Vingnioni* (XXIV: 27).

Palatalization of the dental fricative in sciendo 'sendo, essendo'

This is the only case that Vitale quotes in Margherita's letters. There are no cases of this phenomenon in Giovanni's letters.[68]

Voicing of intervocalic dentals: partidi, demetude, to the point of disappearance: Brunà 'Brunate'

With regard to -T-, this consonant is kept intact in Giovanni's letters, apart from only a few cases of lenition. The unvoiced consonant is clearly the dominant form. One finds instances of lenition, represented graphically by -D-, mainly in past participles. Conspicuous for their absence are the northern graphemes -DH- and -TH-. In the *Elucidario* from the early 1400s, Degli Innocenti notes that the consonant is 'sempre digradato o dileguato' and that the presence of the unvoiced variant is 'rarissima'.[69] Vitale found that lenition was very present, both in pretonic and post-tonic position, and describes voicing of this consonant as 'propria del dialetto lombardo'. Lenition to the point that the consonant disappears is rare in his corpus. The unvoiced variant is still dominant, especially due to the influence of Latin and often due to the literary language. Interestingly, he makes a diachronic distinction when remarking that 'restringe l'ambito primitivo della sonora sempre più vivamente di anno in anno'.[70]

In Giovanni's letters, the dominant form is -T-: *bontate* (XVII: 12); *botìa* (XXIV: 28, 29) (XXVI: 20) (XL: 14) (LIII: 5); *capitarà* (LXI[v]: 5); *capitare* (LXIII: 18); *chapitolo* (LXXI[v]: 16); *creditore* (LIII: 16, 29) (LIV: 7, 14); *debate* (VIII: 15); *debitore* (LIII: 18, 31) (LIV: 4, 9, 10) (LXVIII: 23) (LXXI[v]: 1); *debituri* (LIII: 10, 19); *dreto* (XXVIII: 13) (LXXI: 7); *dubitare* (LVII: 31); *ducati* (VII: 27) (VIII: 19) (LVIII: 4); *duchati* (IX: 20) (X: 28) (XI: 20) (XII: 23) etc.; *faticha* (XLIII: 17) (LX: 2); *frati* (XXV: 14); *giornata* (LXV[v]: 11); *indreto* (XI: 8, 12); *latino* (XXIV: 36); *merchato* (I: 25) (LXI: 39) (LXIII: 20) (LXVII: 18, 19); *mitate* (XIX: 9, 11, 12); *moneta* (XXXVIII: 7, 7) (XXXIX: 8) (XLIII: 18, 23, 24) etc.; *portatore* (X: 22) (XIX: 8) (XXII: 4) (XXIV: 4, 14); *poterò* (XXIV: 17); *potite* (IX: 13) (XI: 15) (XII: 12); *potiti* (V: 5) (VI: 22, 32 and VI[v]: 2) (VIII: 7) etc. and all forms of 'potere'; *Prato* (XXIV: 5 and XXIV[v]: 1) (XLVII: 7) (LVIII[v]: 1); *procuratori* (XXIV: 12); *saluti* (II: 7) (III: 5) (IV: 9) (V: 6) (VII: 29); *sanità* (LXIX[v]: 7); *satura* (XVI: 6); *servitore* (XXIV: 30) (LXI: 15); *seta* (XLVII: 17) (LIX: 29) (LX: 7) (LXV: 20, 20) (LXVI: 22) (LXVIII: 31) (LXX: 21, 23); *solicitarò* (LXVIII[v]: 8); *solicito* (LVII[v]: 5) (LXI: 17) (LXIV: 28); *venditore* (LXVII: 22).

---

[66] Vitale, *La lingua volgare*, p. 70.

[67] Rohlfs, *Grammatica storica*, §295.

[68] Rohlfs (§165) cites the following examples for 'l'Italia settentrionale': *scerpa* 'serpe'; *sjor* 'signore'; *sindik* 'sindaco'. See also Carlo Salvioni, *Fonetica del dialetto moderno della città di Milano* (Turin: Loescher, 1884), §292.

[69] Degli Innocenti, *L'Elucidario*, p. 59.

[70] Vitale, *La lingua volgare*, p. 80.

Cases of lenition are *merchadante* (XIX: 6); *merchadanti* (XXIV: 23) (LV: 10, 18) (LVII: 30) (LXIV: 4); *marchadantia* (XIX: 8, 11, 12, 13); *merchedanti* (LVII: 29); *montado* (LXXI: 30); *mostradi* (XXXVIII: 8); *nomerado* (XI: 7); *perdida* 'perdita' (LXIII: 23) (LXXI: 21); *piacudo* (XVIII: 6).

Voicing to the point of disappearance of the intervocalic unvoiced bilabial: vescho 'vescovo'

In addition to *vescho* 'vescovo' in Margherita's letters, Vitale notes the presence of *el vesco* in Burigozzo's writing. There are no cases of lenition in Giovanni's writing. The dominant form is –P-: *aperto* (XXV: 5); *capitarà* (LXI*: 5); *capitare* (LXIII: 18); *chapitolo* (LXXI*: 16); *Iacopo* (XVII: 3, 9); *reputo* (XXIV: 33) (LXI: 16); *sapere* (LXI: 13); *sapia* (XXVI: 19); *sapiati* (II: 4); *sapiatti* (I: 6, 8) (VI: 6, 30) (VIII: 5) (XI: 28) and all forms of 'sapere'; *zuponi* (XVI: 8).

Epenthesis of nasals, i.e. lingero 'leggero'

There are only two cases where epenthesis of 'n' appears in Giovanni's letters. These are *intensso* (XVII: 4, 6) 'i' ò intensso' and *intenso* 'i' ò intenso' (XXV: 3).

In the *Elucidario*, Degli Innocenti records some cases of epenthetic 'n', e.g., *minga, contante (=cotante), tron, devranveno* etc.[71] For fifteenth-century chancery language, Vitale records *Insabella* 'Isabella'.[72] For the sixteenth century, Scotti Morgana records *donzena*.[73]

Epenthesis of labiodental fricative in sova 'sua'

In Giovanni's letters: *sova* 'sua' appears (I: 29) (XVII: 11) (XXII: 20) (XXIV: 21) (LXV*: 6) as well as in *profichuvo* (LXX: 21); *proficuvo* (XII: 20).

In the *Elucidario*, cases of *sova, sove* appear alongside *adeguave* (= *adeguae*)*, spiritovale* (=*spirituale*) etc.[74] For chancery language, 'v' is not recorded as an epenthetic consonant (p. 83), but *suva* is listed once as a 3sg. possessive pronoun.[75] For the 1500s, Morgana records *continuvo, suve, suva*.[76]

The forms of the articulated prepositions in t'el and in de li

These forms do not appear in Giovanni's letters. Rohlfs notes that old Milanese had the forms *int'el co* 'nel capo' and *int'i paròl* 'nelle parole' and that modern Milanese has only *ind*, quoting *ind'i cà* 'nelle case' and *ind'un di*.[77] In Giovanni's writing, I note here the northern, uncontracted forms *in li* (4), *in le* (1), *in la* (10), *in lo* (1), *in l'* (1) as well as *su lo* (5), *su le* (1), *su li* (1).[78]

[71] Degli Innocenti, *L'Elucidario*, p. 62.

[72] Vitale, *La lingua volgare*, p. 83.

[73] Scotti Morgana, 'Materiali', p. 59.

[74] Degli Innocenti, *L'Elucidario*, p. 61.

[75] Vitale, *La lingua volgare*, p. 89.

[76] Silvia Morgana, 'Lingua e dialetto nelle scritture di semicolti milanesi del '600', *Filologia moderna*, 9 (1987), 209–64 (p. 235).

[77] Rohlfs, *Grammatica storica*, §859.

[78] Bongrani and Morgana note that 'nelle gride [gonzagesche] la preposizione *in* e l'articolo seguente (una forma di preposizione articolata non contratta che caratterizzerà a lungo le scritture settentrionali) restano sempre distinti e separati, senza quei processi di assimilazione e di fusione che avvenivano nel Belcalzer', in 'La Lombardia', in *L'italiano nelle regioni*, II, 118, n. 7.

The personal pronoun i 'essi'

This pronoun is not present in Giovanni's letters. The only forms are the subject pronouns *loro* (2) and *esi* (1). For the koinè, Vitale notes that in chancery language there is oscillation between *eli* (sometimes contracted, e.g., *chelli*) but that *loro* and *essi* are more numerous.[79]

Very frequent metaplasms of conjugation: tenire, mantenire, retenire, parire

Verb metaplasms in Giovanni's letters are few. The only cases are:

> *esare* (LXV: 25); *tomere* (= *tomare* ?) (LXV[v]: 9); *remetare* 'rimettere' (XVII: 14). Surprisingly rare is the verb *tenere*, but always in the 2nd conjug.: *sustenere* (LXVIII: 11); *tenere* (XIX: 13).

The form amo 'abbiamo' of the present indicative

This form is not found in Giovanni's writing: only *abiano* (1) is present. The form is not present in contemporary chancery language and Bongrani makes the point that it is 'assente anche nei testi cancellereschi del periodo più antico'.[80] Domokos notes the variant *am* in Bonvesin's writing (as well as the forms *avem; avemo; havem; hamo; hablemo; habiemo*).[81]

2pl. present indicative forms avì 'avete'; savì 'sapete'

The earliest occurrence of *avì* in writing from Milan is in Bonvesin da la Riva.[82] Rohlfs quotes *aví* for both old Lombard and old Romagnolo.[83] Elsewhere, he mentions that old Milanese had both *aví* and the 'reduced' form *i*, for example, *i vedü* 'avete veduto.[84] Apart from the presence of *avì* used by Giovanni, the next time this verb form appears in a text from Milan is the example from Lambertenghi during the 1400s. Elsewhere, it is found in Borgogno's corpus from Mantua.[85] Variants of

---

[79]   Vitale, *La lingua volgare*, p. 88. See Rohlfs, *Grammatica storica*, §448 who quotes *ai* and *i* for old Lombard (but not *essi*). For the use of subject pronouns in northern Italian dialects, including aspects of their historical development with numerous examples, see Laura Vanelli, 'I pronomi soggetto nei dialetti italiani settentrionali dal Medio Evo ad oggi', *Medioevo romanzo*, 12 (1987), 173–211. Sanga points out that a feature of 'common Lombard' is the use of compulsory subject clitic verb forms in Glauco Sanga, 'Lombardy', in *The Dialects of Italy*, ed. by Martin Maiden and Mair M. Parry (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 253–59 (p. 254, n. 18). Vanelli and Renzi note that, whilst Piedmontese has subject clitics for all persons, Milanese only has them for the 2sg. and 3sg. pers. in 'Personal pronouns and demonstratives', in *The Dialects of Italy*, pp. 106–15 (p. 109); see also Laura Vanelli, Lorenzo Renzi and Paola Benincà, 'Typologie des pronoms sujets dans les langues romanes', in *La variazione sintattica*, ed. by Paola Benincà (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1985), pp. 195–211.

[80]   Bongrani, 'Il volgare a Milano', p. 5. Vitale records the forms *havemo; havimo; habiemo; habiamo* in Vitale, *La lingua volgare*, p. 93.

[81]   Gyorgy Domokos, 'La morfologia verbale del milanese antico di Bonvesin dra Riva', *Verbum*, 9 (2007), 261–77 (p. 263). An anonymous reviewer has pointed out that the database of the *Opera del vocabolario italiano* (OVI) gives, in addition to Bonvesin's *am*, one occurrence of *amo* in Pietro da Bescapè's *Sermone* (Parte non numerata, I, 54): *Et unca da ti no s'amo partire*; and one occurrence in the *Disputatio roxe et viole* (Parte non numerata, I, 104): *quelle cosse che in vilissime uncha no metano cura, onde voliano esse sì siano uncha no n'amo ranchura*. The OVI database can be accessed at: <http://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/content/ovi.>.

[82]   Domokos, 'La morfologia verbale', p. 263.

[83]   Rohlfs, *Grammatica storica*, §531.

[84]   Rohfls, *Grammatica storica*, §541.

[85]   Giovanni Battista Borgogno, 'Note sistematiche sulla lingua di documenti mantovani dei secoli XV e XVI', *Atti e memorie dell'Accademia Virgiliana di Mantova*, 46 (1978), 33–133 (p. 59).

the 2pl. present of *avere* I have found in later texts are *haviti, habiati*[86] and *haveti, havete*[87]. For chancery language, Vitale notes that, for the 2pl., 'the endings are almost always *-ati, -eti, -iti*, even if protected by an enclitic pronoun'.[88]

In the letters of Giovanni da Pessano, *avì* only occurs once and *savì* not at all. Again, Giovanni prefers forms common to the koinè: *avitti* (21), *avitto* (10), *aviti* (5), *avì* (1), *aveti* (1), *viti* (1) and *aveatti* (1). For *savere*, the only occurrence in 2pl. presents the koinè *sapitti* (1).

With regard to *savì*, much of what has been said above concerning the *-ì* ending is valid. I note here only the other forms I have found: *savì*[89]; *sovì*[90] and, in a text from Modena, *savé*.[91]

Certain imperfect indicative forms

Apart from *feva* 'facevo', no other form listed here is present in Giovanni's writing. Bongrani notes that *deva, steva, feva* (1st and 3rd pers.) are present in Bonvesin, but not *eva*.[92]

> *feva* 'facevo':
> In Giovanni's writing, *feva* (2) is the only form present. This form is also present in Bonvesin's writing.[93] *Faceva* is quoted by Morgana.[94]

> *deva* 'dovevo':
> The only form present in Giovanni's writing is *doveva* (3). Contemporary forms include *dovea*[95] and *doveva*[96].

> *steva* 'stavo':
> This form is not present in Giovanni's writing.

> *eva* 'aveva':
> The only form present is *aveva* (11).

> *evano* 'avevano':
> The only form present is *avevano* (5).

---

[86] Vitale, *La lingua volgare*, p. 93.

[87] Morgana also notes that, for the 2pl., 'on the whole, the koinè type is more dominant', in 'Materiali', p. 353.

[88] Vitale, *La lingua volgare*, p. 92. An anonymous reviewer has highlighted that, for Piedmontese past participles, enclitic pronouns are *more likely* to occur with regular rather than strong (accented) endings. See also E. F. Tuttle, 'Del pronome d'oggetto suffisso al sintagma verbale. In calce ad una nota salvioniana del 1903', *Italia dialettale*, 55 (1992), 13–63.

[89] Domokos, 'La morfologia verbale', p. 264.

[90] Rohlfs, *Grammatica storica*, §532.

[91] Nello Bertoletti, 'Una lettera in volgare del Trecento dal carcere di Modena', *Studi linguistici italiani*, 27 (2000), 233–47 (p. 244).

[92] Bongrani, 'Il volgare a Milano', p. 5, n. 13.

[93] Domokos, 'La morfologia verbale', p. 265.

[94] Morgana, 'Lingua e dialetto', p. 248.

[95] Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo, *La lingua del Boiardo lirico* (Florence: Olschki, 1963), p. 123.

[96] Morgana, 'Lingua e dialetto', p. 248. An anonymous reviewer has pointed out that *deva* is also 1sg. imperfect of *dare*. See, for example, Bonvesin da la Riva, *Le opere volgari* (De scriptura aurea, I, 153): *L'aver k'eo deva ai poveri il tempo strapassao*. Furthermore, *deva* can also be 3sg. imperfect. See Bonvesin da la Riva, *Le opere volgari* (Vulgare de elymosinis, I, 249): *De lu sí fi lezudho ke la maior partia De quel ghuadhagn k'el feva per De el deva via, Perzò Dominodé l'amava a tuta via*.

For the 1sg. in the first conjugation, the only form quoted in Bonvesin's writing by Domokos is *-ava*[97]; but Rohlfs has *-eva*.[98] In later writing: *-avi*[99]; *-ia*[100] and *-avo*.[101]

1sg. ending for 1ˢᵗ conjugation verbs of the perfect indicative in *-é*

Examples quoted for Lambertenghi are *mi mandé* 'io mandai' and *mi andé*. Domokos records *-è* in Bonvesin's writing.[102] Bongrani notes the absence of this phenomenon in chancery writing.[103]

In Giovanni's letters, this is the only form present for 1sg., 1ˢᵗ conjug. verbs, with five occurrences. These are: *ve mandé* (XI: 5); *mandé a pagare* (LIII: 13); *paghé certe spesse* (LV: 34); *le mandé* (LVII: 19); *li vendé* (LXXI: 19).

1sg. ending for 3ʳᵈ conjugation verbs of the perfect indicative in *-ì*

Examples quoted for Lambertenghi are *mi odì* 'io udii', *mi partì* 'io partii'. The *-ì* ending is also found in Boiardo's writing[104] and in old Lombard.[105] Morgana found the endings *-ai, -ii*[106]. Additional endings include *–ì*[107] and *-io*.[108] There are only two cases of the 1sg., 3rd conjugation in Giovanni's letters which present the *-ì* ending.

Weak perfects of the type vestette, tegnette

The *-ette* ending continues to be present up until at least Vitale's corpus and is present in the writing of Boiardo.[109] Further, Vitale notes that 'talora il perfetto debole si ha anche in verbi che in italiano hanno il perfetto forte: *conosette* 'conobbe'; *statesse, rechiedè*' and that, in some cases, 'forme particolari' of the 3sg. are present, for example, *dette, diede, volse* 'volle', *comisse* 'commise'.[110] In a later work, Vitale notes that the following forms are present in Burigozzo's writing for the 3sg.: *moritte, sapette, despiasette, accadette, piovette, venitte, fugitte*; for the 3pl.: *moritteno, crescetteno, rendetteno, uscitterno*.[111]

In Giovanni's letters, there are no forms with the *-ette* ending. For the 3rd conjugation, the only cases present four occurrences of the koinè *-ì* ending. Irregular forms are: *disse* (1), *fece* (2), *intesse* (1), *parsse* (1), *scrisse* (1), *varè* 'valse' (1) and *vene* (1).

[97] Domokos, 'La morfologia verbale', p. 265.
[98] Rohlfs, *Grammatica storica*, §551.
[99] Morgana, 'Lingua e dialetto', p. 237; Rohlfs, *Grammatica storica*, §551.
[100] Mengaldo, *La lingua*, p. 123.
[101] Mengaldo, *La lingua*, p. 123; Morgana, 'Lingua e dialetto', p. 248.
[102] Domokos, 'La morfologia verbale', p. 266.
[103] Bongrani, 'Il volgare a Milano', p. 5.
[104] Mengaldo, *La lingua*, p. 125.
[105] Rohlfs, *Grammatica storica*, §572.
[106] Morgana, 'Lingua e dialetto', p. 248.
[107] Mengaldo, *La lingua*, p. 125; Rohlfs, *Grammatica storica*, §572.
[108] Mengaldo, *La lingua*, p. 125.
[109] Mengaldo, *La lingua*, p. 125.
[110] Vitale, *La lingua volgare*, p. 94.
[111] Maurizio Vitale, *La lingua volgare*, p. 371, n. 134, point 19.

Past definites of avere: eve - ave 'ebbe'; aveno 'ebbero'

Contemporary Lombard forms are 3sg. *ave*[112]; and 3pl. *aven*[113]; *aveno*[114]; *haven*[115]; *hebbeno*[116]; *ebbeno*[117]. Contini quotes the forms '*(h)avi*; *have*' in a series of texts from Ferrara.[118]

I have found no cases of these forms in Giovanni's letters. The only forms are 1sg. *ebe* (13 occurrences) and one case of the 3sg. used for the 3pl. *ebe* (1).

Certain forms in the conditional

1sg. *avreve, fareve, serave, mandarave, prometereve* etc.

In Giovanni's letters, 1sg. in 1st conjug. has -*ebe* (10) and only one case of northern -*eve*. The 2nd conjug. only has -*ebe* (3) and there are no forms for the 3rd conjug. Irregulars show a variety of forms: *derisavo* 'dovrei' (1), *farebe* (2), *poterebe* (2) but *potisavo* (1) and *poterisavo* (2), *saperebe* (1), *togliarebe* (1). There are no plural forms.

1pl. *voravemo*

There are no plural forms in the letters of Giovanni da Pessano to allow verification.

3pl. *voraveno, daraveno*

For the 3pl., the 1st conjugation has northern -*isene* (1) and the 2nd conjug. has -*ebeno* (6) as well as two cases of the singular -*ebe* used for the plural. The only irregulars are *derebeno* (1) and *derebene* (1).

The past participle creto 'creduto'

This form is not present in Giovanni's letters.[119] Vitale records the form *creso* 'creduto' in his corpus. Furthermore, he notes that, for verbs in the 2nd conjugation, 'the weak ending –*uto* is very present which sometimes passes into strong verbs and even into verbs of the 3rd conjugation'.[120]

The ending of the gerund in staghendo

For the ending of the gerund in the verb 'stare', Lambertenghi writes *staghendo*. For chancery language, Vitale found the gerund of 'many verbs of the 1st conjugation with the 2nd conjugation –*endo* desinence', such as *stasendo*, *staghendo* and also *parlendo*, *cordendo*.[121] Rohlfs notes that the generalization of –*ando* to other conjugations is 'caratteristica del Settentrione', quoting the forms *digando*, *veniando*,

---

[112] Degli Innocenti, *L'Elucidario*, p. 78; Domokos, 'La morfologia verbale', p. 266; Mengaldo, *La lingua*, p. 127–28; Rohlfs, *Grammatica storica*, §584.

[113] Domokos, 'La morfologia verbale', p. 266.

[114] Degli Innocenti, *L'Elucidario*, p. 78; Domokos, 'La morfologia verbale', p. 266.

[115] Domokos, 'La morfologia verbale', p. 266; Rohlfs, *Grammatica storica*, §584.

[116] Vitale, *La lingua volgare*, p. 95.

[117] Mengaldo, *La lingua*, p. 126.

[118] Gianfranco Contini, 'Un manoscritto ferrarese quattrocentesco di scritture popolareggianti', *Archivum Romanicum*, 22 (1938), 283–319 (p. 316, n. 51).

[119] The form *creto* (< creditum) is recorded for 'antico veneto' in Rohlfs, *Grammatica storica*, §626, cf. the variant *credesto* in 'early Venetian', for which see Ronnie Ferguson, *A Linguistic History of Venice* (Florence: Olschki, 2007), p. 154.

[120] Vitale, *La lingua volgare*, p. 98.

[121] Vitale, *La lingua volgare*, p. 98.

riando, *bevando*, *vojando* for 'antico milanese'.[122] In Giovanni's letters, there is one case of *staghando*, one of *stando* and one of *stiando*. Regular verbs of the 2nd conjugation show northern *–ando* (10) and *–iando* (3).

The adverb of place inlò 'là'

This form is not present in Giovanni's letters.[123] He does not appear to use any other adverb for the same meaning, and nor does he refer to this concept throughout his letters.[124]

Frequent use of 3sg. verbs for the 3pl.

Vitale quotes the examples '*fu alcuni frati*'; '*gh'era alcune sorelle*' and '*ge era molte persone*' in Lambertenghi's letters. In a study of Boiardo's poetry (mid Quattrocento), Mengaldo notes that 'one of the morphological characteristics that differentiates most clearly northern dialects from those of Tuscany and from the rest of Italy is the lack of a distinct morpheme for the 3pl., which is the same as the 3sg.'.[125]

Cases of 3sg. verbs for the 3pl. are rare in Giovanni's letters. I quote here only some cases of *avere* which appears as *à* (2), but with a 3pl. subject: *sapiatti che quilli da Vignioni m'à scritto* (XXIX: 2–3); *fustani non à pregio* (XXXIX: 17).

Conclusion

I present here a table with the twenty-five phenomena from Lambertenghi and their presence or absence in the letters of Giovanni da Pessano.

'Dialectal' phenomena from Lambertenghi's letters, rarely present in chancery koinè	Present in Giovanni da Pessano?
1) a wide extension of metaphony	No
2) vowel dissimilation and the drop of the voiced consonant in *serò* 'sorella'	No
3) intense passing to a semiconsonant of the link -LI-: *fiola, toiere, piare*	No
4) passing to a palatal consonant of the cluster -NCTI-: *pungi* 'punti'	No

---

[122] Rohlfs, *Grammatica storica*, §618.

[123] On this pronoun, see Rohlfs, *Grammatica storica*, §909.

[124] An anonymous reviewer has pointed out that the avoidance of the dialectal variant *inlò* tells us little, since Giovanni is not deliberately using another form with a similar meaning.

[125] Mengaldo, *La lingua*, p. 117. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for highlighting the importance of distinguishing between 3sg. verbs with postverbal subjects and their use with preverbal subjects, where the former is also characteristic of Tuscan, but the latter is not. Rohlfs notes that, in the north, the final *–n* of 3pl. verbs was dropped, e.g. *cantan > canta*, thus becoming identical to the 3sg. This phenomenon, he maintains, led to the 'purely mechanical' substitution of *sono* with *è*, found in old Lombard, as in *quili que è la dentro* (Uguccione da Lodi) (see Rohlfs §532: *la terza persona plurale*). Pellegrini quotes the examples *vi dice cusì li testi; le putane jostra* in texts from the fifteenth century, written in the 'koinè veneta toscaneggiante'; see Silvio Pellegrini, 'Due testi quattrocenteschi in koinè veneta toscaneggiante e Giorgio Sommariva', *Studi mediolatini e volgari*, 18 (1970), 80–111 (p. 85). On the lack of subject-verb agreement in Tuscan, when subjects are postverbal, see Giampaolo Salvi, 'L'accordo', in *Grammatica dell'italiano antico*, ed. by Giampaolo Salvi and Lorenzo Renzi (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2010), pp. 547–68 (pp. 557–58); Luciana Brandi and Luciano Giannelli, 'L'accordo nome-verbo nelle strutture VS e nelle frasi dipendenti in area toscana', *Quaderni del Dipartimento di Linguistica — Università di Firenze*, 11 (2001), 1–12.

'Dialectal' phenomena from Lambertenghi's letters, rarely present in chancery koinè	Present in Giovanni da Pessano?
5) palatalization of the nasal in *agni* 'anni'; *pagni* 'panni'	Yes
6) Palatalization of the dental fricative in *sciendo* 'sendo, essendo'	No
7) voicing of intervocalic dentals: *partidi, demetude*, to the point of disappearance: *Brunà* 'Brunate'	Yes (rare)
8) voicing to the point of disappearance of the intervocalic unvoiced bilabial: *vescho* 'vescovo'	No
9) epenthesis of nasals in *lingero* 'leggero'	No
10) epenthesis of labiodental fricative in *sova* 'sua'	Yes
11) the form of the articulated prepositions *in t'el* and *in de li*	No
12) the weak personal pronoun *i* 'essi'	No
13) very frequent metaplasms of conjugation	Some cases
14) the form *amo* 'abbiamo' of the present indicative	No
15) the forms *avì* 'avete'; *savì* 'sapete' for the 2nd person plural present indicative	Yes: *avì* (once)
16) certain verbs in the Imperfect indicative: • *feva* 'facevo' • *deva* 'dovevo' • *steva* 'stavo' • *eva* 'aveva' • *evano* 'avevano'	 Yes No No No No
17) ending of the 1st pers. sing. of the perfect indicative, 1st conjug., in *-e*: *mi mandé* 'io mandai'	Yes
18) ending of the 1st pers. sing. of the perfect indicative, 3rd conjug., in *-ì*: *mi odì* 'io udii', *mi partì*	Yes
19) weak perfects of the type *vestette, tegnette*	No
20) perfects of *avere*: *eve – ave* 'ebbe'	No
21) conditional, • 1sg.: *avreve, fareve* • 3pl.: *voraveno, daraveno*	 Yes (once) No
22) past participle *creto* 'creduto'	No
23) ending of the gerund in *staghendo*	No
24) form of local adverb *inlò* 'là'	No
25) frequent use of 3sg. for 3pl.: *fu alcuni frati*	Rarely

From this analysis, it seems that the northern elements in Giovanni's writing are more similar to forms of the Lombard koinè than to the strictly local 'Milanese' variants found in Lambertenghi's writing. Histories of the vernacular in Lombardy have pointed to the 'learnèd' nature of the Lombard koinè which found its most elaborate expression in the chanceries and the courts. Based on this analysis of a small corpus of religious and merchant contexts, it would seem that the Lombard koinè was also being used in writing by merchants and was not just confined to high-register writing such as that of the chancery.

Cross-referencing the twenty-five 'dialectal' phenomena in Lambertenghi with similar forms from the Lombard koinè, and with forms in Giovanni's letters, shows these local phenomena to be present in only a minimal way. Out of the thirteen phenomena identified by Vitale in Lambertenghi's writing as being 'non o debolissimamente

riscontrati nella lingua cancelleresca', only five are found in Giovanni's letters. When they are present, these variants are only rarely found, with koinè forms considerably more present. The composite nature of Giovanni's language is best seen by a letter itself:

> Al nuomen di Dio, amen. Fatta a dì XIII setembre 1397. /
> A dì xxx d'agosto ve scripsi mia lettera per la quale fece mentione che aveva / receuto una lete(ra) seconda di chambi e che avevano resposso di fare con / pagam(en)to. Hora sapiati che i'ò r(ece)uto li dinari de la ditta lett(era) di / chambi se li ò metuto al / chunto di Vignioni [Avignon].
> Altro p(er) questa no ve dicho.
> Idio vi ghuarda.
> Giovanni da Pessano, saluti da Millano.[126]

The language of this letter, and all of Giovanni's writing, is heterogeneous, with Latin, Tuscan and Lombard elements distributed in an uneven way. With regard to the Lombard items, it is clear that Giovanni has a range of forms from which to choose. There exists, so to speak, a continuum between the low-register forms found in Lambertenghi's writing and the high-register forms of the chancery. Giovanni appears to be using linguistic items heavily slanted towards the latter and is avoiding the most local forms of the vernacular from Milan in favour of the Lombard koinè. The koinè was not solely confined to high-register writing but was also being used in low-register texts such as letters sent by merchant writers.

In discussing the language of the thirteenth-century merchant from Mantua, Boccalata de' Bovi, Bongrani and Morgana make the point that his writing is motivated, among other things, by the need to be understood outside his own city. He therefore adopts a vernacular which is marked only slightly in a local sense and which 'la practica degli scambi tendeva a semplificare e a omologare'.[127] In the present corpus, the need for Giovanni to communicate with his Tuscan interlocutors, sometimes as far away as Rome and Barcelona, is motivated by his trade relationship to Datini and his correspondents, seeking, above all, clarity of economic information. This motivation appears to impact on which linguistic items he selects in his letters. In other words, this trade relationship appears to play a role in selecting forms of language which, as in the case of Boccalata, show only a slight local marking. In so doing, Giovanni increases his chances for a high degree of mutual comprehensibility and thus hedges his bets against the risk of misunderstandings. As Tavoni says, 'la corrispondenza mercantile è percorsa da una tendenza al conguaglio non dominata da modelli retorici, ma da un istinto di avvicinamento alla lingua dell'interlocutore quale che essa sia'.[128]

Giovanni's decision to mark his linguistic forms in only a slightly local way also opens up the question of language choice. In this regard, the findings presented here appear to support Stussi's comments that mercantile letters 'are open to linguistic contagion by the correspondent' and that the lexical contagion allows for Tuscan

---

[126] Brown, 'Early evidence', II, 60.
[127] Bongrani and Morgana, 'La Lombardia', p. 95.
[128] Mirko Tavoni, *Il Quattrocento* (Milan: Il Mulino, 1992), p. 24.

loanwords and terminological expansion into non-Tuscan vernaculars.[129] One must always keep in mind the economic and political prestige that Tuscany had in all parts of Italy. As a consequence, Giovanni wrote or attempted to write in Tuscan, reducing the local nature of the Lombard forms he did use, and thus adopting the language of his economic superiors. In the present corpus, the role of the addressee appears to have been a major factor in the question of language choice for Giovanni.

---

[129] Alfredo Stussi, 'Il mercante medievale e la storia della lingua italiana', in *Studi e documenti di storia della lingua e dei dialetti italiani*, ed. by Alfredo Stussi (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1982), pp. 69–72 (p. 71).