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[Accueil](#) > Looking for manuscripts of John the Deacon's "Life of St Nicholas" (BHL 6104 etc)

LOOKING FOR MANUSCRIPTS OF JOHN THE DEACON'S "LIFE OF ST NICHOLAS" (BHL 6104 ETC)

When using Google, it really helps if you have the BHL (*Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina*) number for the text that you are interested in. You can find interesting things!

My next project is to translate the "Life" of St. Nicholas, written in Latin by John the Deacon. I shall use the Falconius text of 1751, which appears to be the most recent.

While working on the start of this, I saw that Falconius identified two manuscripts as the basis for his edition (as well as the older Mombritius edition). One was from Naples, and basically unidentifiable. But the other was one of the Queen of Sweden's manuscripts in the Vatican, which he identified as Ms. Vaticanus latinus 5696. He also commented about a heading in that manuscript. So I thought that it might be fun to go and see if it was online.

There's no trouble in finding the manuscript - it's [here](#). Unfortunately it's 300+ pages, and in a low-quality microfilm scan. I couldn't even find the right portion of the manuscript. But I wondered whether perhaps Google might help, might give me the page, or rather folio number.

To my surprise, I found something like a Vatican manuscript catalogue online. My first hit was for another manuscript, Vat. lat. 1197, [here](#). Clicking on the book icon leads you to the manuscript; but clicking on the "Autore" link for "Iohannes Diaconus Neapolitanus, sec. X-XI" led me to a remarkable list of manuscripts and folio numbers! (The link is [here](#), but hardly looks very permanent.)

The page lists 8 manuscripts, 5 of them online.

- [Reg.lat.477 - 1\) 9v-23v: Iohannes Diaconus Neapolitanus, sec. X-XI Vita s. Nicolai ep. Myrensis, Partes 1-3 sec. XII](#)
- [Reg.lat.477 - 2\) 27v \(l. 11\)-28r: Iohannes Diaconus Neapolitanus, sec. X-XI Vita s. Nicolai ep. Myrensis, Pars 5 sec. XII](#)
- [Reg.lat.496 - 1\) 18r-v: Iohannes Diaconus Neapolitanus, sec. X-XI Vita s. Nicolai ep. Myrensis, Prologus sec. XI](#)
- [Reg.lat.496 - 2\) 89v-114r: Iohannes Diaconus Neapolitanus, sec. X-XI Vita s. Nicolai ep. Myrensis, Partes 1-3 sec. XI](#)
- [Vat.lat.1194 - 9v-22r: Iohannes Diaconus Neapolitanus, sec. X-XI Vita s. Nicolai ep. Mirensis sec. XII](#)
- [Vat.lat.1197 - 13v-22v: Iohannes Diaconus Neapolitanus, sec. X-XI Vita s. Nicolai ep. Mirensis sec. XII](#)
- [Vat.lat.1269 - 8r-11v: Iohannes Diaconus Neapolitanus, sec. X-XI Vita s. Nicolai ep. Myrensis, pars 2 et 3 sec. XIV](#)
- [Vat.lat.1271 - 163v-167v: Iohannes Diaconus Neapolitanus, sec. X-XI Vita s.](#)

Nicolai ep. Myrensis sec. XII

- **Vat.lat.5696 – 108v-115v: Iohannes Diaconus Neapolitanus, sec. X-XI *Vita s. Nicolai ep. Myrensis, Pars media* sec. XII**
- **Vat.lat.6076 – 122r-128r: Iohannes Diaconus Neapolitanus, sec. X-XI *Vita s. Nicolai ep. Mirensis* sec. XVII**

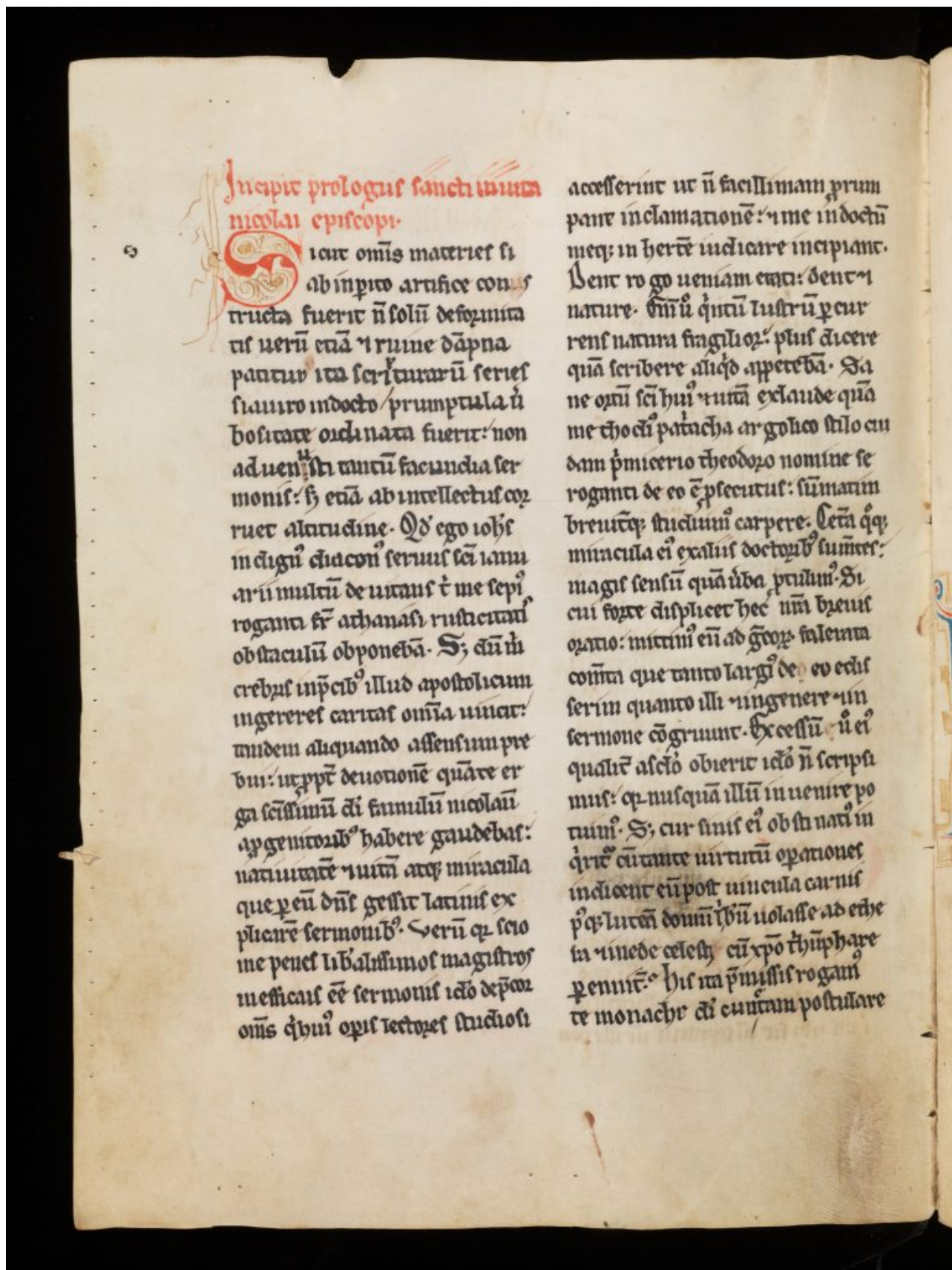
The “Life” is divided into several parts by the BHL, and seems to be transmitted in sections. I would imagine that this is because portions of it formed readings in church on the saint’s day, December 6th.

So from this I could find the start of the work. Here are a couple of pages from Vat. lat. 1197, folios 13v and 14r, facing pages. The individual pages are downloadable, so here are the first two (click for larger versions):

medias illius exanaguo esse estipes.
Et ab inimicis tuos fete hantem.
Ephraim plorat.
YCOLAV
latoq; de illis
placitae omni
cuius fuit per
esse utris. que
unor de nobilis
simis hie pun
tis cum amib;
carnato quondam firmosissima huplar
batt. quancumq; & populofo ftegnare
battus accessu. **M**odo ptecatns de
genas; parvissimi lantat pedecare
oppidi. tato in colatns habiatante.
De qua quae se occasio ptiat. hie
Ingeordio uideam fteffe digressione.
atm quae mulas pteor illud ptiatu
tum. Sicut ptecessione ftehem for
mor usq; ad nos mactatuat. ad possib
atensimiatate eulamus. **E**st em
prens utrem eandem quidem locus
capitib; qui late atocis epleb; mis
sicut utrus scindat indumari.
Et echi ulcus mactas; pteem fiamum
amantat acutissimum. pteocam uiso
quasi fteffat fteffat legnuemam
uapostat flammam. **C**uli nactat
dicat ee. uat siquis hie epleb; mact
causa macti ptiat adhibeat. atote
quidem fteffat. sed nullam pteffat
ad uisorem. **M**iste dm ptiat. mi
he elamga. qui cum sit ciss. cui nemo
audet dicere. eis hie fteffat. si hie
felleffat pteffat. atte pteffat hie.

latoq; de illis
pſcepit oſtend
Eius fuerit per
aſſe uſbis. que
unox de nobilib
ſimis hſe pūn
ſe cūm aſſib;

annat quondam firmosissimi iuglar
bati. quamatum & populosi frequent
bantur excessu. **M**odo preceps de
genas; parvissimi instat pedecare
oppidi. iusto in colat; habitatione.
De qua quae se occasio pbiat. lxx
insecutio uidetur facere distensionem
atque quae mulas pfor illud pfluat
tum. Sicut pfluessionis pbiat fer
mor usq; ad nos maneat. ad possib
atensimacate eustamus. **E**st em
pbiat ubi emendat quidem locus
capituli. qui late atque pbiat mis
sicut ubi scindit indumant.
& pbiat ulas mactat; pbiat sumum
emendat atque mactat. pbiat ubi
quasi pbiat pbiat lignuomem
uapostat flammam. **C**uli nactat
dicit ee. uat siquis pbiat pbiat
causa manu pbiat adhibeat. atque
emendat pbiat. sed nullam pbiat
ad ubi emendat. **M**itit dñi pbiat mi
te elingat. qui cum sit pbiat. cui nemo
quidē dicit. cui late pbiat. uat pbiat
pbiat pbiat. atque pbiat pbiat.



Freiburg L. 5, Fol. 53v.

This also told me about an article: "Pasquale Corsi, «La "Vita" di san Nicola e un codice della versione di Giovanni diacono», dans: *Nicolaus. Rivista di teologia ecumenico-patristica* 7 (1979), p. 361-380 (seulement BHL 6104-6106)."

A catalogue [page](#) informed me of Durham Cathedral Library Ms. B.IV.14, (early 12th c.) but there was no link to the online manuscript. I had to google to find the online book itself, [here](#). This contains three items of interest:

(h) f.170-181 - Vita S. Nicholai,

Author: John, the Deacon of Rome, approximately 824-approximately 882

Edited: BHL 6104, 6105, 6106

(i) f.181-189 - Miracula S. Nicholai

Edited: BHL 6150, 6151, 6152, 6153, 6154, 6160, 6161, 6164, 6167, 6172

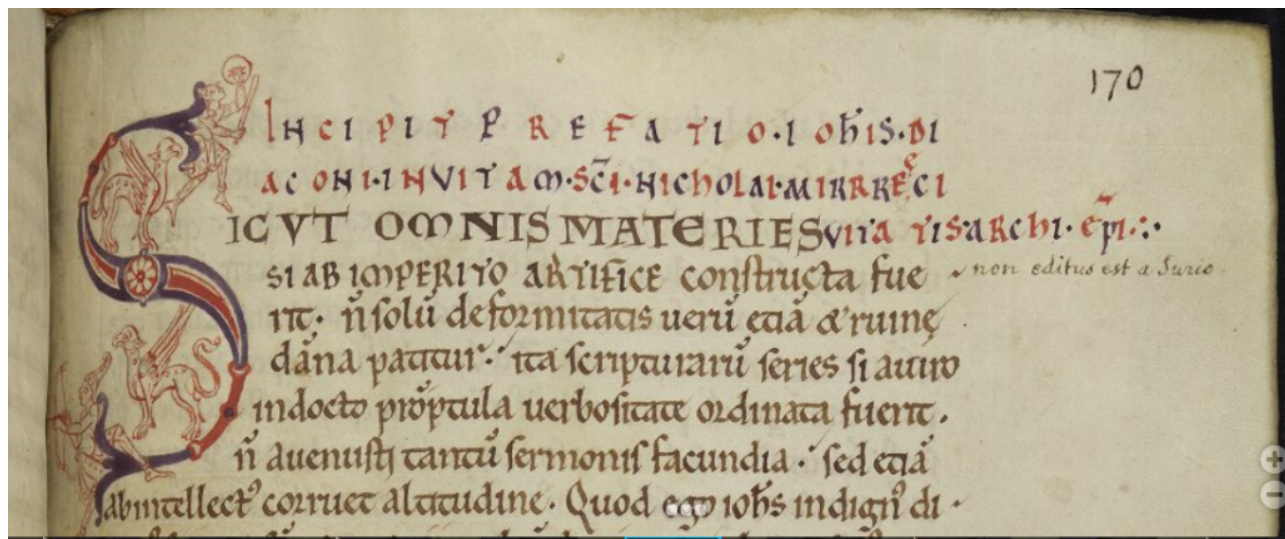
(j) f.190-200v - Translatio S. Nicholai Barium A.D. 1087, cum miraculis,

Author: Johannes Barenensis

"Post beati Nicholai gloriosum ab hac vita" (incl. verses "Tempore quid miseris", quoted Ordericus Vitalis, Historia Ecclesiastica 3,VII,ix

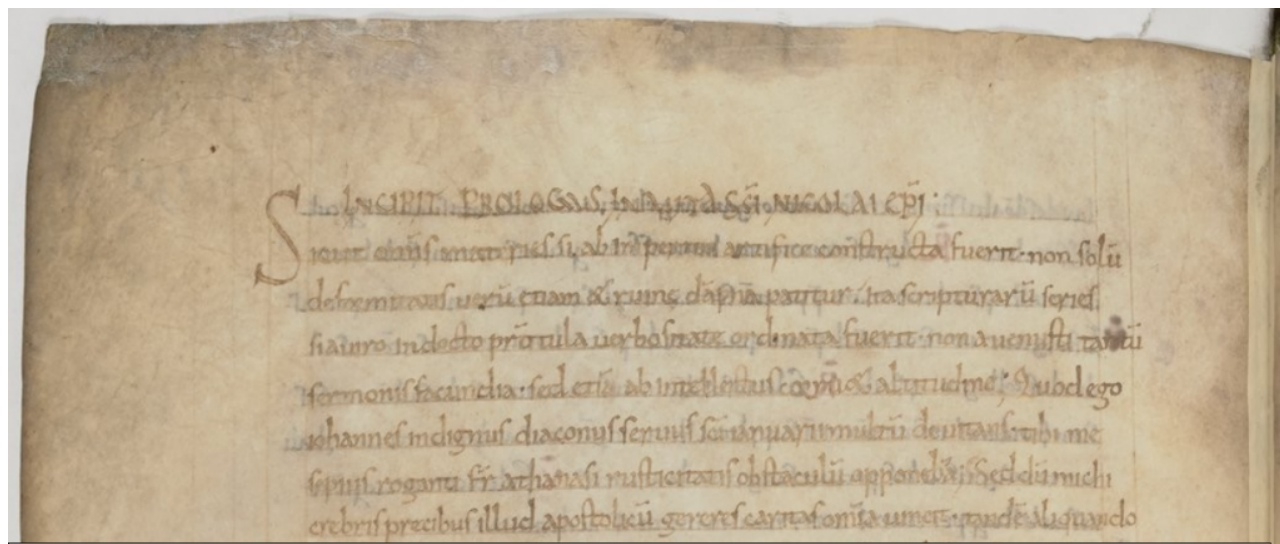
Edited: BHL 6104, 6105, 6106

Here the page could not be downloaded, only viewed through the rubbishy viewer:



Durham Ms. B.IV.14, fol. 170r.

Another manuscript, Paris lat. 17625, is online [here](#) as a dreadful microfilm, but properly online bound in two volumes [here](#) and [here](#). It was written before 968 AD, but all it has is a few pages at the end, on f. 258v-261v.



BNF lat. 17625 f. 258v

Another, Paris. lat. 18303, written between 1076-1100, is [here](#), again as a microfilm, but **also as a properly digitised ms**, f.3r-59r, BHL 6104, 6105 and 6106. The whole ms can be downloaded as PDF, which is really useful. Here's the first page of our work:



constructa fuerit non solum de forma
 tis uerum etiam & ruine dampna patitur.
 ita scripturarum series si auro indocto
 promptula uerbositate ordinata fue
 rit. non auenisti tantum sermonis
 facundia. sed etiam ab intellectu



BNF Latin 18303, f.3r

Nor was it just online manuscripts. Another [page at the IRHT](#) informed us that "Johannes Neapolitanus diaconus (0860?-0910?)" was responsible for BHL 6104-6113, and that:

Dated between : 875-885

Number of Manuscripts According to Bibliography : 608

Bibliography:

- BHL 6104 : Prologue de la Vita sancti Nicolai, plus de 120 mss
- BHL 6105 : plus de 150 mss.
- BHL 6107 : plus de 70 mss
- BHL 6108 : plus de 170 mss
- BHL 6110 : 2 mss.
- *Clavis Scriptorum Latinorum Medii Aevi, Auctores Italiae*, 700-1000, 157-158.

All of which is jolly useful. (I don't have access to that Clavis, but clearly I need to do so!)

But note the developing confusion about John the Deacon, and the various dates assigned to him. Durham indeed thinks he comes from Rome – the prologue to the Vita says that he actually is a “servant of St. Januarius” in Naples – and links to a [John Hymmonides \(825-882?\)](#), who is clearly who they have in mind, but is not the same person. I shall have to look further into who this John may be. Surely there is a list somewhere?

This brief search, undertaken at work during lunchtime, is not likely to be all that is available. Yet it is already far more than Falconius had at his disposal to edit the text!

We are indeed very fortunate to live in such times.
