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Centre d'Études et de Recherche sur l'Antiquité, Université de Caen  
CNRS : GDR 734 : «Textes scientifiques et techniques latins»

La typographie de l'ouvrage a été réalisée par M. Th. Bourdon  
avec les moyens informatiques du C.E.R.L.A.

Maquette : R. Tien

Die deutsche Bibliothek - CIP-Einheitsaufnahme

Latin vulgaire - latin tardif IV : actes du 4<sup>e</sup> Colloque  
International sur le Latin Vulgaire et Tardif. Caen, 2-5  
septembre 1994 / éd. par Louis Callebat. - Hildesheim ;  
Zürich ; New York : Olms-Weidmann, 1995  
ISBN 3-487-10045-2

NE: Callebat, Louis [Hrsg.]; Colloque International sur le  
Latin Vulgaire et Tardif <4, 1994, Caen >

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Printed in Germany

Gedruckt auf säurefreiem und alterungsbeständigem Papier

Herstellung: WS Druck GmbH, Bodenheim

ISBN 3-487-10045-2

WORD ORDER IN THE LATE LATIN  
*GESTA CONLATIONIS CARTHAGINIENSIS*

Harm PINKSTER

Amsterdam

1. Introduction : the oral character of the text

In the introductory volume to his beautiful edition of the *Actes de la conférence de Carthage en 411* Lancel has made a number of observations on the language of this important document. From these observations it becomes clear that the importance of the document derives both from its content and from its linguistic form, especially since it contains the authorized transcripts of discussions between the catholic and donatist bishops of Africa under the supervision of Flavius Marcellinus. We may therefore expect traces of orality and some of these have been noted and discussed by Lancel (I. 309-316). He points, among other things, to the very limited vocabulary of the speakers, especially in the plenary session with all bishops present on the first day of the conference, and to other "négligences oratoires"<sup>1</sup>. In this paper I will discuss certain word order phenomena in a particular piece of the first session of the conference and in the margin make a few observations on other linguistic matters. In fact, the expressions I will deal with are part of the aforementioned plenary session, characterized, as Lancel formulates it, by "la minceur du matériel verbal".

Great care was taken to make an accurate report of the conference. This follows both from the instructions given by Marcellinus in his Edict (Lancel : I.337ff. ; Teitler 1983 : 6ff.) and from the text itself, which contains a number of indications that it faithfully reflects the actual wording of the participants. In the first place the clerks take care to explicitly assign the words to their speakers, by using expressions like *idem* in (1) or *suprascriptus* in (2) :

(1) [*Honoratus exceptor recitavit :*] *Numidius episcopus ecclesiae catholicae Maxulitanae [Idem dixit :] Praesto sum (1.112.2-3)*<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> However, there are also parts which give the impression of careful planning as is common in written language, with some bombastic overtones. See for example the expression *commotus est corporis infirmitate* in 1.128.54, as noted by LANCEL, and by the frequent use of the passive, for example *dictum sit* in 1.124.2.

<sup>2</sup> I follow LANCEL's paragraph and line numbering.

- (2) *Sallustius, episcopus partis Donati ciuitatis suprascriptae, dixit : "agnosco illum."* (1.116.7-9)

This kind of precise identification is well-known from legal documents (Raible 1985).

Secondly, the - more than ritual - interventions are checked by their authors and explicitly confirmed, usually with the expression *recognoui*<sup>3</sup>.

Thirdly, there is nothing to suggest that the clerks put more or less stereotyped words in the participants' mouth, which have to be regarded as (correct) paraphrases of their actual wording. This can nicely be illustrated with the following example :

- (3) *scriptum sit me non habere contrarium* (1.163.10)<sup>4</sup>

The clerks might have changed the wording into :

- (4) *non habeo contrarium* (cf. 1.163.18 *habeo contrarium*)<sup>5</sup>

We do find variation in the way the clerks describe the non-verbal behaviour of the participants and the way they introduce them. We find, for example, variations like : *et recitauit* and *item recitauit* ; *quo recitato* and *cum recitasset* ; and, more interesting :

- (5) *et, accedente Donato Cillitano episcopo, idem dixit* (1.133.159)<sup>6</sup>

(where *idem* is Donatus) and its classical form :

- (6) *item recitauit : "Pelagius episcopus Vanarionensis." cumque accessisset, idem dixit* : (1.187.51).

These expressions are the responsibility of the clerks themselves.

## 2. Identification formulas

The conference proper starts with rather unpleasant and often emotional litigations between the two parties about the identity of persons, the legitimacy of their presence and of their title and position as a bishop in general. These litigations go in two rounds. The first one (1.112-143) concerns the identification of the catholic bishops, who had given a mandate to their spokesmen, by their donatist counterparts. In the second round, which starts in

<sup>3</sup> More explicit as in 1.26.5 *Emeritus episcopus recognoui* ; less explicit : *ut suprascriptum* (1.110.3).

<sup>4</sup> There are three more examples : 1.157.4 ; 1.181.2 ; 1.204.4.

<sup>5</sup> For a full discussion of the composition of the document see LANCEL ( :1.337ff.)

<sup>6</sup> For such ablative absolute expressions see Helttula (1987 : 16), with references to modern literature, and Müller-Lancé (1994 :149f., 188f.), speaking about "Kontaktphänomene".

1.157, the donatist bishops each confirm their mandate to their spokesmen. They sometimes add information concerning their counterpart.

In the first round, if there are no problems, the identification of the catholic bishop by the donatist often runs as follows :

- (7) [*Honoratus exceptor recitauit* :] *Numidius episcopus ecclesiae catholicae Maxulitanae* [*Idem dixit* :] *Praesto sum*. [*Felix episcopus dixit* :] *Agnosco illum*. [*Marcellinus, uir clarissimus, tribunus et notarius, dixit* :] *Constat utrumque esse praesentem*. (1.112.2-4)

However, all sorts of complications may, and in fact do, arise : The person may not be present. Someone may be present, but his identity may be disputed or his claims to the bishop seat. There may be no one to recognize a person, which the person summoned to make himself known may indicate himself. A person may also state, rightly or not, that he has no counterpart. This of course may again be a reason for dispute. And so on, and so forth. Therefore, although I agree with Lancel that the document at this point is quite monotonous, there is some variation and even an occasional creative formulation as in (8) :

- (8) *nomen si illic auditum fuerit donatistarum, lapidatur* (1.133.84-85)

All deviations from the simple situation illustrated in (1) are marked in terms of pragmatics. In the classical period this would be reflected in the linguistic expression in these components of the language which are most sensitive to pragmatics, such as subject pronouns and word order. We will see to what extent this is the case in this document as well.

Let us return to the simple example (7). In all but one<sup>7</sup> instance the presence is confirmed with *praesto sum*. The reverse order does, of course, not occur. The common reaction is *agnosco illum*. The reverse order does not occur, and, again, this is what one expects. The whole action is undertaken to have the catholic bishops recognized by their donatist counterparts, which means that by physically presenting themselves the catholic bishops make an explicit question by the chairman 'Do you recognize that person (*illum*)' - or 'this person' (*hunc*), since the donatists are said to approach - superfluous. The answer that we find is the correct answer against the background of the presuppositions indicated, and the order is the normal one. Interestingly, there is one exception to the answer just discussed, where we find *eum* instead of *illum*. In order to appreciate why it is normally *illum* and why in this exceptional case it is *eum* I quote the passage in full :

<sup>7</sup> The exception is *hic sum* in 1.201.37.

- (9) *et recitavit : "Deuterius, episcopus Caesariensis, Carthagini constitutus, praesente uiro clarissimo tribuno et notario Marcellino, suprascripta mandauit <et subscripsi>." quo recitato, Fortunatianus, episcopus ecclesiae catholicae, dixit : "custos est tabularum." Valentinianus, diaconus episcopi Primiani, dixit : "Emeritus est illic." et accedente Emerito <episcopo>, idem dixit : "agnosco eum." (1.143.36-43)*

Deuterius, while acting as *custos tabularum*, was busy in one of the *scrinia* outside the meeting hall (Lancel, I.346-7). With Fortunatianus' statement he is 'textualized'. Once textualized he can be referred to with the anaphoric pronoun *is*. In all the other instances 'that person over there' is in the room, which makes the demonstrative pronoun highly appropriate<sup>8</sup>. The order *agnosco eum* is still correct, since the focus of the statement is in *agnosco*<sup>9</sup>. There is one creative alternative for the answer discussed so far :

- (10) *Nouatus ... dixit : "e diuerso habeo Marcianum." et accedente Marciano episcopo, idem dixit : "agnosco persecutorem meum."*

Even though the expression *persecutorem meum* is quite aggressive and might lend itself for initial position the statement is still the answer to the question 'Do you recognize that person?' and *agnosco* has to come first.

What I have done so far is try to reconstruct the communicative setting of the utterances and see whether the order of the constituents is in accordance with the pragmatic relations between them. The rules determining word order are in the instances discussed so far the same as we know from the classical period. It is now time to turn to more complex situations.

### 3. Having or not having a bishop from the other party

The first type of expressions I want to discuss are expressions in which it is either denied, or - less frequently - confirmed, that there is a bishop from the other side, or stated that there is no bishop from the other side. In the majority of these we find the verb *habere* with an object constituent denoting a human being (or with an object understood)<sup>10</sup>, but there are also various expressions with the verb *est* with a subject constituent as well as less direct

<sup>8</sup> I am not suggesting that *ille* cannot be used anaphorically. A clear example of this is 1.187.115-7 *aduersarium non habeo # episcopum illic habuimus. occidistis illum et inuasistis.*

<sup>9</sup> The situation is different in the case of two other *custodes* (1.139.25 and 143.48).

<sup>10</sup> For example : *sed non contra me habeo* (1.121.34) and, in a reaction *non ibi habemus* (1.126.141)

expressions. Such statements may be made either by a bishop reporting about his own counterpart or by another participant. I will start with the *habere* + object type.

If we just count the instances of *habere* + object and object + *habere* we find 48 with the first order and 61 with the reverse. We could leave it at that and either state that the putative classical wordorder rules still hold (or are imitated) (Object Verb being in the majority) or that the so-called Romance order (Verb Object) is gaining ground, or even that at the time of the conference any order was fine. However, as soon as we go into more detail such a purely quantitative approach turns out to be unsatisfactory and more interesting, though difficult, observations can be made, such as the following :

- Donatists seem to be more OV than catholics.
- *Episcopus* is normally postposed, but *aduersarius* is much more often preposed (by the way : the catholics prefer *episcopus*, the donatists other expressions like *aduersarius*).
- Proper names are usually postposed.

Obviously, there is no syntactic rule saying that objects have to go this or that way. It clearly depends.

On what? In order to start answering this question I give more detailed figures :

**Table 1 :** the order of forms of *habere* and its objects denoting a person or persons (finite clauses)

	<i>habeo X</i>	<i>X habeo</i>
<i>Proper Name</i>	13	2
<i>episcopum</i>	18	5
<i>donatistas</i>	1	0
<i>neminem</i>	4	3
<i>alium</i>	3 <sup>11</sup>	3
<i>contrarium</i>	1	0
<i>aduersarium</i>	6	26
<i>aemulum</i>	0	1
<i>traditorem/s</i>	0	10
<i>duos</i>	0	1
<i>diaconos</i>	0	1
<i>presbyterum/os</i>	2	9
total	48	61

N.B. There may be intervening words between *habere* and its object.

These lexical items can be subdivided into four (or five) groups :

(a) Proper names

<sup>11</sup> Including the "heavy" object *nec habeo alium nec haereticos* in 1.126.39. Not including Lancel's emendation in 1.133.350 <*habeo alium contra me*>. As appears from the following intervention by Valentinianus *Felix dicitur. Hic est, sed male habet* an insertion is needed, but I am not certain about *alium* in Lancel's proposal. All other instances of *alium* occur in negated sentences.

- (b) more or less objective denotations (*episcopum, donatistas, neminem*)
- (c) contrastive items of various degrees (*alium, contrarium, aduersarium, aemulum*) and conceited qualifications (*traditorem/s*)
- (d) lexical opposites of (one single) *episcopus* (*duos, diaconos, presbyterum/os*).

It is the items in groups (c) and (d) which favour the initial position of the sentence as contrastive focus-constituents - as they would do in Classical Latin (Jones 1992, Pinkster 1990 : 176) - and hence are responsible for the seemingly classical Object Verb order. Group (c) is typical of the donatists, who seem to be much more aggressive than the catholics, who, in turn, use the objective denotation *episcopum*. The items in groups (a) and (b) usually follow the verb. Why this is so we will see in a moment. In what follows I cannot discuss all lexical items and certainly not all instances. The items not discussed do not differ from the general picture to be given below.

### 3.1. Proper names

The normal way of mentioning one's counterpart's name is exemplified by (10) above and by (11) :

(11) *habeo Felicem e diuerso ... # Felix dicitur. Litteras misit excusationis senectutis causa* (1.133.112)

There are two exceptions (1.143.13 and 1.143.25), the first of which I quote as (12) :

(12) *e diuerso Ianuarianum habeo # agnosco illum* (1.143.13)

The element *e diuerso* may be lacking (1.143.54) and we once find *contra me* (1.121.82-83). Such a specification is absent when the identity of a counterpart is revealed by someone else, as in (13) :

(13) *habet Felicem, sed absens est* (1.126.44)

or in a protesting context as (14) :

(14) *unitas est. # habuimus Rusticianum ; modo exiuit de corpore* (1.133.312).

It is interesting to note, but maybe not significant, that where the identified person is absent (as in [11] and [13], six instances in all<sup>12</sup>), the form of *habere* is in clause initial position. This suggests that these sentences do not

<sup>12</sup> More accurately, in 1.121.82-83 the first of two counterparts is absent and the object of extensive debate.

serve as introductions of unidentified persons, but as confirmations of having an opponent. The message might be something like 'I do have an opponent, and his name is X'. We will meet similar contexts with *episcopum*, as in (15):

- (15) *catholica est. Vnitatem habeo # habet episcopum, sed male habet*  
(The community does have a bishop, but he is ill, and therefore absent). (1.133.267-269)

There are two instances with clause initial *habeo* where the persons referred to are present<sup>13</sup>. It may be pushing the argument too far by suggesting that in the crowd they may have escaped attention.

I cannot find an explanation for the different ordering *e diuerso habeo X* (five instances) and *e diuerso X habeo* as in ex. (12)<sup>14</sup>. The former ordering is the one I would expect (introduction of someone) and it corresponds closely to the most frequent presentative expression type with *esse*, where we find the following orderings:

- (16) *e diuerso mihi est Victorianus* (1.133.118)  
(17) *e diuerso est mihi Donatus Cillitanus* (1.133.158)  
(18) *e diuerso est Argutus* (1.133.262)

This pattern, with the proper name in final position occurs 21 times, whereas there are only four with the proper name preceding *est*<sup>15</sup>. Just as with the two *habere* cases it is difficult to find an explanation. There may have been certain situational factors that simply cannot be reconstructed on the basis of this text. It is remarkable, however, that (10) provokes the unique answer it does.

### 3.2. *episcopum* and *neminem*

Before discussing this item it may be useful to briefly describe the procedure followed in the identification of the catholics by the donatists. The normal situation has been exemplified by ex. (7): The clerk reads the name of a catholic bishop. The donatist bishop from the same community comes for-

<sup>13</sup> These instances are: *habeo Optatum e diuerso # ipse est* (1.135.84-85) and *habeo Felicem # agnosco illum* (1.143.54-55).

<sup>14</sup> Lancel has inserted several times such identifying sentences, when the following text requires it. He has three times *habeo X contra me # agnosco illum*, where *e diuerso habeo X* would be more in accordance with my observations in the text. (1.133.25; 40; 46). The insertion <*e diuerso habeo Cartherium*> in 1.133.322 is not justified, since it is followed by a statement that he is absent. The insertion with Macrobius in 1.138.4 is all right.

<sup>15</sup> The instances are: 1.133.147; 152; 1.135.27; 1.143.19.

ward and identifies his opponent, without being invited explicitly to come forward. In fact, this happens only once in the beginning:

- (19) *Marcellinus ... dixit "alius eiusdem ciuitatis episcopus ueniat e parte diuersa"* (1.116.6-7)

The presupposition of the communicative interaction is that each catholic has a donatist counterpart. This means that a positive sentence meaning 'I have a bishop' is extremely unlikely to occur, unless there is something special about this bishop. It might occur, but does not, if that bishop is absent (compare ex. (15)). It does occur with a perfect tense *habui*, where the bishop has died:

- (20) *habui contra me episcopum. Exiuit de corpore* (1.121.17)

Most sentences containing *habere* and *episcopum* therefore are denials of the existence of a donatist bishop, which explains the relative position of *non habeo* and *episcopum*<sup>16</sup>. *Non habeo* alone would be sufficient (it occurs once in 1.135.89). *Episcopum* occurs five times in initial position, where from the reactions or from what precedes in all but one instance it can be inferred that the statement is meant to say: 'We have some person(s) there but not with the position of a bishop'<sup>17</sup>. This is again what we would expect on the basis of the classical rules. In fact, the explanation is the same as for the contrastive items to be discussed later.

The four instances of postverbal *neminem* are all in sentences with a double negation, like (21):

- (21) *non habeo neminem e diuerso* (1.133.169)<sup>18</sup>

This phenomenon of double negation also occurs elsewhere<sup>19</sup>. Of the three preverbal ones one (1.116.15) is in a violent reaction and has its expect clause initial position<sup>20</sup>. Not much more can be said about it, given the lack of sufficient instances.

<sup>16</sup> *Non habeo* may be separated by *contra me*.

<sup>17</sup> Contextual evidence of contrast is available in 1.126.52; 159; 128.121; 187.116. The deviant example is *praesto sum. Episcopum contra me non habeo ibi* (1.126.143). Why did he add *ibi* at the end of the sentence?

<sup>18</sup> The other three examples are 1.133.30; 196; 213. LANCEL'S insertion in 1.133.190 with postverbal *neminem* and clause initial *habeo* cannot be the correct guess.

<sup>19</sup> *praesto sum. Non habeo nec episcopum, nec haereticos. Vnitatem habeo* (1.126.49-50). Double negation is rejected as a grecism by Augustinus, present at this conference, in *Loc.Hept.* 1.141; 2.53. Cf. MOLINELLI (1988: 37).

<sup>20</sup> LANCEL'S insertion in 1.135.111 with *neminem* in clause initial position is less felicitous.

3.3. *aduersarium*

Words with a contrastive meaning are likely to be placed in a clause initial position. This is certainly the case in the aggressive atmosphere in which the conference proceeded. The word *aduersarius* is the favourite expression of the donatists and is used only once by a catholic bishop :

(22) *praesto sum, sed aduersarium non habeo* (1.120.25-6)

In this case there is a clear contextual contrast, also expressed by *sed*.

The postverbal instances of *aduersarium* can be explained in the now familiar way. Illuminating is the passage 1.187.84-89, which I quote in full :

(23) *item recitauit : "Gaudentius episcopus Zertensis." cumque accessisset, idem dixit : "mandauit et subscripsi ; aduersarium non habeo." Aurelius, episcopus ecclesiae catholicae Macomaziensis, dixit : "est ibi presbyter catholicorum." Gaudentius episcopus dixit : "non habeo aduersarium in plebe mea." (1.187.84-89)*

The second occurrence of *aduersarium*, after the verb, can be explained because of the fact that the strong denial *non habeo* is in clause initial position. The same explanation holds for (24).

(24) *nec habui aduersarium, nec habeo aduersarium, nec habebo permittente Deo* (1.187.19)

In 1.182.10 there is another example of *non habeo aduersarium*. The donatist bishop probably expected the protest following his statement, quoted below as (25), with initial *habeo*. Notice the order in the final clause of the quotation :

(25) *habeo presbyterum in ecclesia Florentinum. Episcopi fuerunt tres catholici. Iam decesserunt. Non potuimus adhuc ordinare. Presbyterum illic habemus Florentinum* (1.182.11-14)

There are two other instances in which it can be maintained that the postponement of the object follows from contrastive preposing of *habere*<sup>21</sup>. I have no explanation for (26) :

(26) *non illic habeo aduersarium* (1.163.21).

<sup>21</sup> In 1.187.93-95 *nullum habeo aduersarium in plebe nisi solum Abessalonem*, followed by a catholic correction, has emphatic hyperbaton of *nullum* instead of *non*. In 188.13-14 *mandauit et subscripsi et non habeo aduersarium* the use of the second *et* is remarkable. Apart from one other instance the donatist say : *Aduersarium non habeo*. It may be that by coordinating the *non habeo* this is presented as a statement of 'not having'. The other instance of coordination is in 1.187.75 *mandauit et subscripsi et aduersarium non habeo, quia illic est domnus Marcus ...* (a famous donatist), where the *quia*- clause explains why there cannot be aduersaries. Lancel makes a difference in punctuation, perhaps rightly so.

3.4 *presbyterum*

In group (d) we find names of religious functions that can be seen as replacing the item *bishop*. I only deal with *presbyterum* of which there are sufficient instances. In table 1 I have not taken into account those clauses in which we find both a proper name and *presbyterum* (eight instances, as in ex. (25)), where *presbyterum* can be regarded as an object complement. The preposed instances where *presbyterum* undoubtedly is the object occur in a context like 'OK, there is no bishop, but there is a priest', as explicitly in (27) and (28) and by implication in (29) :

(27) *praesto sum. Non contra me habeo episcopum. Presbyterum illic habeo* (1.126.121-122)

(28) *unitatem habeo # Non habemus episcopum. Presbyterum habemus* (1.133.80)

(29) *unitas est # Presbyterum habet* (1.133.97)

This ordering is the normal one in the classical period as well. One of the 'deviant' examples is (30), where the interpretation clearly is : 'We do have someone, be it not a bishop at this moment, but a priest'. *Habemus* is in the expected position. In (31), an emotional confrontation, we have a 'heavy' object in its expected final position.

(30) *et traditorem in plebe mea non habeo ... # Habemus ibi presbyterum. Nam et episcopus ibi fuit ...* (1.198.77-79)

(31) *aemulum non habeo # habet contra se catholicum presbyterum, clericos abundantes et populos ex coetu donatarum* (1.188.32-189.4)

We see that there are pragmatic motivations both in the case of the preposed as in the case of the postposed *presbyterum* instances. These motivations are the same that hold for Classical Latin.

## 4. Absence of donatists in general

There is one other way, in fact the most popular way, for the catholic bishops to indicate that there is no counterpart or no donatist congregation at all in their community. That way is by stressing the unity or catholicity of the community. There are three types of expression :

- (32) *praesto sum. Vnitas est catholica. Non contra me habeo episcopum in ciuitate mea* (1.126.76-77)  
 (33) *praesto sum. Vnitatem habeo* (1.126.7)  
 (34) *praesto sum. Catholica est ab origine* (1.128.14-15)

In all these expressions the order is as exemplified by the examples (32) (16 instances), (33) (13 instances), and (34) (26 examples). These examples illustrate the same principle we have seen above : In the communicative setting of the conference these are highly contrastive elements, which are placed in initial position, as they would have been in Classical Latin.

### 5. Conclusion

Although we will never know for certain whether the bishops at the conference used the pragmatic rules of their own contemporary form of Latin or demonstrated their skill in the pragmatic rules of Classical Latin, the actual utterances in the proceedings of the conference clearly reflect communicative interaction. In view of the fact that pragmatic rules underlie word order in Italian, Spanish, Old French and other Romance languages I take it that the bishops as far as word order is concerned just used their everyday rules. The utterances are monotonous, but no more than we would expect in this form of procedural discussions. Their monotony is, moreover, rule governed and that fact makes them interesting for linguists.

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