

# Variations in Spelling

One of the challenges in reading and understanding old documents is to correctly identify words that are spelled differently than they are today. Sometimes the variations in spelling are slight; other times they can result in an almost unidentifiable word. Fortunately, however, there is usually a pattern to such variations. Once you become familiar with those patterns, the problems caused by spelling become minimal.

## The Letter H

The letter *h* is seldom pronounced in current Portuguese and therefore is no longer used in many words that used it historically. For instance, the words *um* and *uma* used to be spelled *hum* and *huma*. The names *Catarina* and *Tomazia* were both formerly spelled with an *h* (see practice text 1, lines 3, 6, and 7).

*Catherina*  
*Cather*

*Tomazia*

There are, of course, some words, *homem* for instance, in which the *h* is still used today, although it is not pronounced.

## U and V

The early Latin alphabet did not include the letter *u*. The letter *v* was used in all words where either a *u* or *v* would be used today. Refer to the words *nove*, *huã* (*uma*), *vinho*, *duas*, and *verdade* in practice text 3, lines 1, 4, 6, 7, and 8, respectively. Notice in the examples below that all five words are spelled using what appears to be either a *v* or a *u*:

*nove*   *huã*   *vinho*  
*duas*   *verdade*

This use of the *v* and *u* was very common in early Portuguese records and can be found in some eighteenth and nineteenth century texts.

## I and Y

The letters *i* and *y* were used interchangeably in Portuguese records from early times until the nineteenth century. Notice the words *estreito*, *deixou*, *licois*, *peixes*, *asi*, and *asinei* in lines 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 of practice text 3. In these examples the letters *i* and *y* are both used where only *i* would be used in modern Portuguese. Note that in this text both the *i* and the *y* are dotted.

*estreito*   *deixou*  
*licois*  
*peixes*, *asi*   *asinei*

## I and J; S and Z

In ancient Portuguese, the letters *i* and *j* were often used interchangeably, as were the letters *s* and *z*. Even after their usage was well defined, many scribes did not distinguish between them. From practice text 1, line 2, we have taken the name *Izabel de Jezus*:

*Izabel de Jezus*

Notice that the *I* in *Izabel* and the *J* in *Jezus* are identical and that the *z* and the *s* in *Jezus* are nearly the same.

## K, W, and Y

These letters are not considered part of the modern Portuguese alphabet. The *y*, of course, was used until recently and appears often in ancient records; however, the *k* and *w* have never been a part of the language and are used only in foreign words or names.

## Double Letters

Double letters are very common in early Portuguese records. The examples below from lines 3 and 5 of practice text 2 and lines 5 and 7 of practice text 3 indicate four variations of double letters:

annos      nella  
 offertado      missas

The double n, the double l, and the double f in anos, nela, and ofertado are now archaic. However,

the double s in missas is still in use today. You will encounter many other cases of double letters while doing research in early Portuguese records. Most of these are no longer used; nevertheless, a few, such as the double s and the double r, are still in use.

As you study the following practice texts, note the examples that were pointed out in the preceding paragraphs. The correct transcription is given with each text. Study each text, referring to the transcription only when necessary, until you can read each text without the help of the transcription.

## Practice Text 1

This text is part of an index to the baptisms performed in the Arco da Calheta parish on the island of Madeira, Portugal, during the years 1737-1747.

The film is available at the Genealogical Department Library, film number 1,103,741, item 1, page 8.

1.	Mel. Gliz. Nonth.	3	M. de Jezus	—
2.	Mel. de Anst.	3	Isabel de Jezus	—
3.	Comede Souza	3	Catherina de Sena	—
4.	Mel. Gliz	3	Anna dos Santos	—
5.	Mel. Jr.	3	M. da Conceição	—
6.	Mel. de Souza	3	Catherina de Jezus	—
7.	João Cabral	3	Romaria M.	—
8.	An. Dey Xingre	3	M. de Honora	—
9.	João Gliz	3	Dom. de Jezus	—
10.	João Gliz	3	M. Josepha	—
11.	João Gliz. Leyp.	3	M. da Paçoão	—
12.	Joze Peitz	3	Quinta Maria	—

TRANSCRIPTION OF PRACTICE TEXT 1

1. M. <sup>l</sup> Gliž. Montr. <sup>o</sup>	M. <sup>o</sup> de Jezus	7. João Cabral	Thomazia M. <sup>o</sup>
2. M. <sup>l</sup> de Andr. <sup>o</sup>	Izabel de Jezus	8. An. <sup>o</sup> Dias Xingre	M. <sup>o</sup> de Florença
3. Cosme de Souza	Cather. <sup>o</sup> de Sena	9. Fran. <sup>o</sup> Gliž.	Dom. <sup>o</sup> de Jezus
4. M. <sup>l</sup> Gliž	Anna dos Santos	10. João Gliž.	M. <sup>o</sup> Jozepha
5. M. <sup>l</sup> Frr. <sup>o</sup>	M. <sup>o</sup> da Conceyção	11. João Gliž Teyxr. <sup>o</sup>	M. <sup>o</sup> da Payxão
6. M. <sup>l</sup> de Souza	Cather. <sup>o</sup> de Jezus	12. Joze Roiz	Quitr. <sup>o</sup> Maria

Practice Text 2

Practice text 2 is from the parish register of baptisms, volume B-4, page 91, Nossa Senhora da Natividade Parish, Faial, Santana, District of Funchal,

Portugal. This book is on film at the Genealogical Department Library, film number 1,104,546, item 1.

1. Em vinte e cinco do mes de Junho de  
 2. 1754 a meia e sete horas, e quarenta  
 3. e cinco annos, eu Antonio de Jesus  
 4. Freyre Vigario nesta Paroquia de  
 5. Nossa Senhora da Payxão, nella baptizay  
 6. e purificay em Paroquia de S. Antonio  
 7. de Matos em vinte e um do mes de  
 8. Junho de mil e setecentos e cinquenta e  
 9. e quatro de uma filha, e de sua ma-  
 10. dre a Thoma Maria de Souza de S. Pedro  
 11. em idade de tres annos, e de sua madre  
 12. Maria Goncalves, e de sua madre Fran-  
 13. cisca de Matos de S. Pedro de Paula  
 14. e de sua madre Manoel de S. Pedro  
 15. e de sua madre Ignacia de Souza de  
 16. S. Pedro, e de sua madre Antonio  
 17. de S. Pedro, e de sua madre e de sua  
 18. madre, e de sua madre, e de sua madre  
 19. e de sua madre  
 20. e de sua madre  
 21. e de sua madre

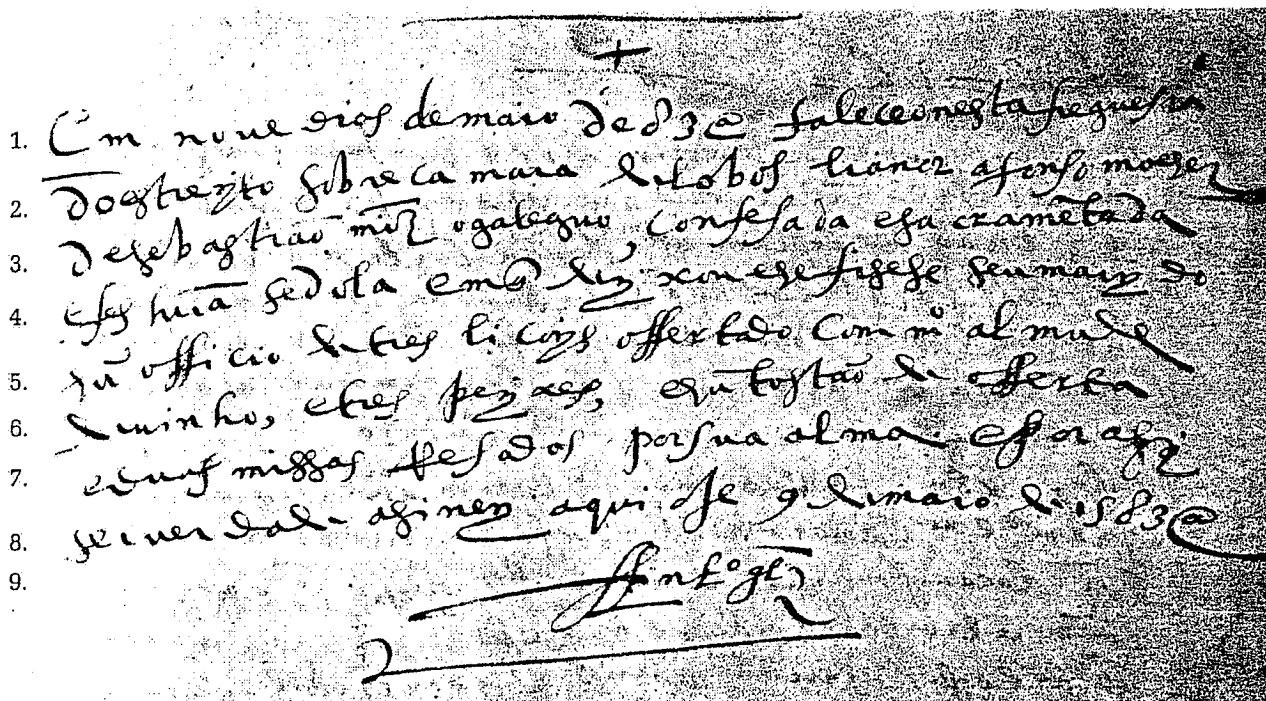
TRANSCRIPTION OF PRACTICE TEXT 2

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Em os vinte, e outo dias do mes de                 | 12. Manoel Gonçalves, e de sua mulher Fran-                         |
| 2. Fevreyro de mil, e sete centos, e quaren-          | 13. cisca Gomes da dita freg. <sup>a</sup> de Santa                 |
| 3. ta e sinco annos eu Antonio da Sylva               | 14. Luzia, e materna de Manoel de Freytas,                          |
| 4. Vieyra Vigario nesta Parochial Igr. <sup>a</sup>   | 15. e de sua mulher Ignacia de Souza des-                           |
| 5. de Nossa Senhora do Fayal, nella Bap-              | 16. ta freg. <sup>a</sup> , forão padrinhos Antonio                 |
| 6. tizey, e pus os Santos oleos, a Antonia            | 17. Ferreyra, q comigo assignou, e Luzia                            |
| 7. q nasceo em vinte, e hum do dito                   | 18. de Souza, de q fiz este termo: era ut                           |
| 8. mes filha de Sylvestre de Jesus da-                | 19. supra   |
| 9. freguezia de Santa Luzia, e de sua mu-             | 20. D. Vig. <sup>o</sup> An. <sup>o</sup> da Sylva Vr. <sup>a</sup> |
| 10. lher Anna Maria de Souza desta freg. <sup>a</sup> | 21. De padr. <sup>o</sup> An. <sup>o</sup> + Frr. <sup>a</sup>      |
| 11. e moradores nas Covas, neta paterna de            |   |

Practice Text 3

Practice text 3 is from the parish register of baptisms, marriages, and deaths, volume M-1, page 103, Nossa Senhora da Graça parish, Estreito de Camara

de Lobos, Camara de Lobos, District of Funchal, Portugal. This book is on film at the Genealogical Department Library, film number 1,102,727, item 1.



TRANSCRIPTION OF PRACTICE TEXT 3

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Em nove dias de maio de 83@ faleceo nesta freguesia    | 5. hu officio de tres licoys offertado com m <sup>o</sup> almude |
| 2. do estreyto sobre camara de lobos lionor afonso molher | 6. de vinho, e tres peyxes, e hu tostão de offerta               |
| 3. de sebastião miz o galeguo, confesada e sacrametada    | 7. e duas missas resadas por sua alma. e por asy                 |
| 4. e fez huã sedula em q deyxou e se fisesse seu marrydo  | 8. ser verdade asiney aqui ese 9 de maio de 1583@                |
|   | 9. Ant <sup>o</sup> glz  |

# Unfamiliar and Latin Terms

---

There is little value to transcribing Portuguese records if you don't know the meaning of the words. The definitions of words you are likely to encounter

in your research are listed below. The list also includes Latin terms. Whenever you come across a word that is unfamiliar to you, add it to this list.

a(s) . . . . .	the	desobriga . . . . .	exemption (usually refers to an ecclesiastical census that was taken for the purpose of releasing the members of the parish from the obligations of confession)
ambos . . . . .	both	dia(s) . . . . .	day(s)
ano(s) . . . . .	year(s)	digo . . . . .	I mean (often used when an error has been made in recording)
anterior . . . . .	before	dito . . . . .	said (above said)
auto de fé . . . . .	trial of faith (a public process in which those accused by the Inquisition were sentenced)	dom . . . . .	sir
Avô . . . . .	grandfather	dona . . . . .	madame
Avó . . . . .	grandmother	em . . . . .	in
banhos . . . . .	banns (the published intent to marry required of all couples)	esposa . . . . .	wife
batismo . . . . .	baptism	esposo . . . . .	husband
batizar . . . . .	to baptize	eu . . . . .	I
batizei . . . . .	I baptized	ex licentia parochi . . . . .	a Latin term meaning "by license of the parish priest"
casado(s) . . . . .	married	expôsto . . . . .	abandoned infant
casamento . . . . .	marriage	faleceu . . . . .	died
casar . . . . .	to marry	filha . . . . .	daughter
casaram . . . . .	were married	filho . . . . .	son
casei . . . . .	I married	fogo . . . . .	home or household
cidade . . . . .	city	foi, foram . . . . .	was, were
circa . . . . .	a Latin term meaning "approximately"	freguesia . . . . .	parish
cofradia . . . . .	usually miscellaneous church records of the lay religious brotherhoods	gêmias . . . . .	twin girls
conhecido(s) . . . . .	known	gémios . . . . .	twin boys
cônjuge . . . . .	spouse	genro . . . . .	son-in-law
consanguinidade . . . . .	closely related	hoje . . . . .	today
corrente . . . . .	present	igreja . . . . .	church
cova . . . . .	grave	in facie ecclesia . . . . .	a Latin term meaning "in the church"
crisma . . . . .	confirmation	inquirição . . . . .	an inquest or examination
cristão novo . . . . .	a new Christian (usually referred to Jews who had accepted baptism into the Catholic church)	inquisição . . . . .	inquisition
cunhada . . . . .	sister-in-law	irmã . . . . .	sister
cunhado . . . . .	brother-in-law	irmão . . . . .	brother
cúria . . . . .	a religious court	legítima . . . . .	legitimate (female)
defunto(s) . . . . .	deceased	legítimo . . . . .	legitimate (male)
		lugar . . . . .	place

madrinha . . . . .	godmother	santa . . . . .	female saint
mãe . . . . .	mother	santo . . . . .	male saint
marido . . . . .	husband	sepultou . . . . .	buried
marrano . . . . .	a slang word used in a derogatory sense for <i>Jew</i>	sepultura . . . . .	grave
matrimônio . . . . .	marriage	seu . . . . .	his, her, their
mes . . . . .	month	sítio . . . . .	place
mesmo . . . . .	same	sobrinha . . . . .	niece
morador . . . . .	resident (of)	sobrinho . . . . .	nephew
moradora . . . . .	resident (of)	sogra . . . . .	mother-in-law
mulato . . . . .	mulatto, someone who is half white and half black	sogro . . . . .	father-in-law
mulher . . . . .	woman, wife	sua . . . . .	his, her, their
na . . . . .	in the	testamento . . . . .	will
não . . . . .	no, not	testemunha(s) . . . . .	witness(es)
nasceu . . . . .	was born	tia . . . . .	aunt
nascimento . . . . .	birth	tio . . . . .	uncle
natural . . . . .	native of, place of birth	tutela . . . . .	guardianship
netá . . . . .	granddaughter	ut supra . . . . .	Latin for <i>above</i>
neto . . . . .	grandson	vigário . . . . .	vicar
no . . . . .	in the	visitação . . . . .	an ecclesiastical record of visits by the parish priest to the homes of the members of the parish
nora . . . . .	daughter-in-law	viuva . . . . .	widow
notário . . . . .	notary	viuvo . . . . .	widower
o(s) . . . . .	the	dias da semana . . . . .	days of the week
ontem . . . . .	yesterday	segunda-feira . . . . .	Monday
padre . . . . .	priest	terça-feira . . . . .	Tuesday
padrinho . . . . .	godfather	quarta-feira . . . . .	Wednesday
pai . . . . .	father	quinta-feira . . . . .	Thursday
pais . . . . .	parents	sexta-feira . . . . .	Friday
pais adultos . . . . .	adult parents	sábado . . . . .	Saturday
pais incógnitos . . . . .	unknown parents	domingo . . . . .	Sunday
pais não conhecidos . . . . .	unknown parents	meses do ano . . . . .	months of the year
paróquia . . . . .	parish	janeiro . . . . .	January
párvulo . . . . .	child	fevereiro . . . . .	February
passado . . . . .	past	março . . . . .	March
povoado . . . . .	small town	abril . . . . .	April
prazo . . . . .	term, appointed time	maio . . . . .	May
presente . . . . .	present	junho . . . . .	June
pretérito . . . . .	past	julho . . . . .	July
prima . . . . .	female cousin	agosto . . . . .	August
primo . . . . .	male cousin	setembro . . . . .	September
próximo . . . . .	next	outubro . . . . .	October
que . . . . .	that, which	novembro . . . . .	November
re . . . . .	female defendant or criminal	dezembro . . . . .	December
reo . . . . .	male defendant or criminal		

números ordinais . ordinal numbers

primeiro . . . . . first  
segundo . . . . . second  
terceiro . . . . . third  
quarto . . . . . fourth  
quinto . . . . . fifth  
sexto . . . . . sixth  
sétimo . . . . . seventh  
oitavo . . . . . eighth  
nono . . . . . ninth  
décimo . . . . . tenth  
vigésimo . . . . . twentieth  
trigésimo . . . . . thirtieth

números cardinais cardinal numbers

zero . . . . . zero  
um, uma . . . . . one  
dois, duas . . . . . two  
tres . . . . . three  
quatro . . . . . four  
cinco . . . . . five  
seis . . . . . six  
sete . . . . . seven  
oito . . . . . eight  
nove . . . . . nine

dez . . . . . ten  
onze . . . . . eleven  
doze . . . . . twelve  
treze . . . . . thirteen  
catorze . . . . . fourteen  
quinze . . . . . fifteen  
dezesesseis . . . . . sixteen  
dezessete . . . . . seventeen  
dezoito . . . . . eighteen  
dezenove . . . . . nineteen  
vinte . . . . . twenty  
trinta . . . . . thirty  
quarenta . . . . . forty  
cincuenta . . . . . fifty  
sessenta . . . . . sixty  
setenta . . . . . seventy  
oitenta . . . . . eighty  
noventa . . . . . ninety  
cem (cento) . . . . . one hundred  
duzentos . . . . . two hundred  
trezentos . . . . . three hundred  
quatrocentos . . . . . four hundred  
quinhentos . . . . . five hundred  
mil . . . . . one thousand

# Special Concerns

---

## Spelling

Spelling in early Portuguese records was often erratic. This was due in part to the lack of formalized standards and in part to the lack of education among those who wrote the records. One of the most frequent problems is variant spellings of the same name. It can be very confusing to find the same name spelled a variety of ways, often within the same document. This situation improves with the more recent records.

Misspellings or varied spellings may occur anywhere in a text. Although they are generally not critical with words other than names, you should be alert and able to recognize misspelled words whenever they occur.

## Punctuation

Poor or inconsistent punctuation is often a problem that can easily obscure the meaning in early Portuguese records.

## Errors in the Original Text

Early Portuguese record keepers were just as capable of making errors as we are today. Errors were sometimes made in recording names, dates, ages, places of residence, and other information. It is important to remember that although the information given is probably correct, it may be in error. Unfortunately, these errors can often cause great problems when doing genealogical research.

## Separated or Joined Words

Another problem in deciphering old Portuguese texts is the inaccurate separation or joining of words. Often when a word seems difficult, it is either improperly joined with another word or it should have been joined and was not.

## Roman Numerals

Occasionally in old Portuguese texts roman numerals were used as part of a date or wherever else numbers were used. Roman numerals can be difficult unless you understand their Arabic equivalents. You should become familiar with the following roman numerals:

ROMAN NUMERAL	ARABIC EQUIVALENT
I	1
II	2
III	3
IIII, IV	4
V	5
VI	6
VII	7
VIII	8
VIII, IX	9
X	10
XX	20
XXX	30
XXXX, XL	40
L	50
LX	60
LXX	70
LXXX, XXC	80
LXXXX, XC	90
C	100
CC	200
CCC	300
CCCC, CD	400
D	500
DC	600
DCC	700
DCCC	800
DCCCC, CM	900
M	1000
MD	1500
MDC	1600
MDCC	1700
MDCCC	1800
MCM	1900
MM	2000

Read through the following practice text, referring to the transcription when necessary. Following the transcription is an analysis of the text, which points out some of the obvious problems. These problems are typical of what you can expect in most early Portuguese records.



Practice Text 4

Practice text 4 is a copy of a marriage record from the parish of Calheta, Funchal, Portugal. It was taken from volume C6, 1774-1787, page 1, which is on film

at the Genealogical Department Library, film number 1,103,853, item 1.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.
- 16.
- 17.
- 18.
- 19.
- 20.
- 21.
- 22.
- 23.
- 24.
- 25.
- 26.
- 27.
- 28.

A

Em nome de Deus Nosso Senhor Jesus Christo  
 deus e senhor de todos os bens e de todos os  
 honras, eu Manuel Jose Pereira  
 vigario real e legado da Igreja  
 parochial de Calheta, sendo por  
 meus Cordeiros de banco, na sede  
 ma do sagrado Concilio Tridentino  
 e constituições do Synodo, evado  
 vendo impedimento algum a  
 debi as - matrimonio, que in  
 face Ecclesiae inter se contraherem  
 Antonio Gomey Preto, filho legitimo  
 do Sr. Manuel Gomey Preto, e de sua  
 mulher Antonia da Silva do Cr  
 pizido Santo, Com - Antonia Ma  
 ria da Cruz, veuva do Sr. Manuel  
 Alvares, filha legitima de Bran  
 cisco Goncalves e Maria tempo, e de  
 sua mulher Isabel Rodriguez pe  
 dy nabusay Pedro frequentador e  
 morador e de seu filho do Sr. Jo  
 til, cella no do Salam, e foram  
 de diuina, item de nullitas que  
 celebrasam de Sr. Antonio de Anjos  
 e Manuel Fernandes, que em  
 nico a tornas evado supra.

João de Deus Pereira

TRANSCRIPTION OF PRACTICE TEXT 4

1. Em—os Sette dias do mes de Maio
2. de mil Sette Centos Setenta e quatro
3. Annos; eu Manoel Jose Pereira
4. vigario nesta Colegiada da Igr.<sup>a</sup>
5. da villa da Calhetta, Sendo pri
6. meiro corridos os—banhos na for-
7. ma do Sagrado Concilio Tridentino,
8. e Constituicao do Bispado, e não ha-
9. vendo impedimento algúm, a
10. sesti ao—matrimonio, que in-
11. facie Ecclesia inter se contrahirão
12. Antonio Gomes Pretto, filho legitimo
13. de Manoel Gomes Pretto, e de sua
14. mulher Antonia da Sylva do Es-
15. pírito Santo, Com—Antonia Ma
16. ria de Jesus, veuva de Manoel
17. Alvarez, filha legitima de Fran-
18. cisco Consalves Maotempo, e de
19. sua mulher Izabel Rodriguez to
20. dos naturais desta freguesia e
21. moradores elle no Lombo do Bra
22. zil, e ella no—do Salam; e foram
23. Testimunhas, além de muitos que
24. asestirão, Joam Antonio de Canha,
25. e Manoel Fernandes; que co-
26. migo asinarão era ut supra:
27. O Vig.<sup>o</sup> M.<sup>cl</sup> Jose \_\_\_\_\_
28. joam An.<sup>o</sup> de Canhas

ANALYSIS OF PRACTICE TEXT 4

One problem with this text is that it is all written as one sentence. Although the entry is often broken with commas, semicolons, and dashes, there are no periods. There were few, if any, formal rules of punctuation when this text was written; however, with the exception of the dashes, the punctuation marks usually do occur where a natural pause exists in the sentence. There seems to be no reason for the record keeper's use of the dashes. He used dashes to break a word at the end of the line, and he has also used them where they serve no apparent function. Fortunately the meaning of the text is fairly clear despite the punctuation.

Another problem in this text is caused by the joining of words. For instance, as you read practice text 4, the following two words from lines 4 and 5 may have been difficult for you:

*noal Dal*

They are difficult until you realize that the final letter in each word is actually a capital C which belongs to the next word:

*noal Colegiada*

*Dal Pretto*