

PACIFICO BURLAMACCHI [PSEUDO-BURLAMACCHI] *Vita di Fra Girolamo Savonarola* [as readapted by Fra Timoteo Bottonio da Perugia]; [ANONYMOUS], *Elegy of Girolamo Savonarola*  
In Italian, manuscript on paper  
Northern Italy, Tuscany?, c. 1600 (after 1566).

[V] ff. + 171 ff., followed by 13 blank paper leaves, on paper (two distinct watermarks of the type (1) Briquet, "échelle", no. 5904 (Florence, 1450s) or no. 5908 (Florence, 1462); (2) Briquet, "demi-licorne", of the type no. 9929 but this paper is far more early (Siena, Lucca, 14<sup>th</sup> c.) than the present manuscript), complete (collation impracticable, but clearly complete), written in a cursive script in brown ink, on up to 26 lines per page, a few contemporary corrections to text. Bound in a contemporary full limp vellum binding, traces of ties (now wanting), inscription on upper cover reads: "All Sig[nore] Bartolomeo Pell[...] speciale al Ponte alla..." Dimensions 205 x 140 mm.

Copied a century after Savonarola's death, this manuscript of his *Vita* attests to his enduring cult in Northern Italy. Based on a Latin *Vita*, the Italian vernacular tradition is quite complex. Attributed to Pacifico Burlamacchi (d. 1518), it was continued and expanded throughout the sixteenth century to include additional miracles attributed to the reformist friar and was not printed in its entirety until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. No actual precise census exists to this day. The present rediscovered codex with its terminus post quem date of 1566 is a welcome addition.

## PROVENANCE

1. Copied in Italy c. 1600 as suggested by the style of the script, even though the watermarks suggest earlier paper supplies (later watermarks are poorly studied). It would of interest to study all the extant manuscripts of the Pseudo-Burlamacchi text to be able to properly offer dating and textual variants. P. O. Kristeller lists some, but there are most likely others to be discovered.

It remains to be determined in which environment this codex was copied. Watermarks would suggest a Tuscan origin for the paper, but one should be careful because the comparisons found in Briquet (*Les filigranes...*) suggest much earlier paper stocks. Nonetheless, it is certain that the cult of Savonarola was very fervent in and around Florence (the Convent of San Marco in Florence remained a bastion of pro-Savonarolan thought).

2. Unidentified bookplate (20<sup>th</sup> c.) on the upper pastedown, with monogram ELLK and TM.
3. European Private Collection.

## TEXT

f. I, Title, *Vita di Fra Girolamo Savonarola*,

f. I v, blank;

ff. II-IV verso, Table of chapters, including last chapter as follows: "Elogio del Padre fra Girolamo da Nonarola ferraresi dell'Ordine de predicatori. Vergine, Profeta e Martire Glorioso a carte 169";

ff. V-V verso, blank;

ff. 1-169, Pseudo-Burlamacchi, Vita del reverendo padre Fra Girolamo Savonarola [Life of Girolamo Savonarola], heading, *Vita del reverendo padre Fra Girolamo Savonarola dell'Ordine Domenicano. Capitulo primo*; incipit, "Fu fra Girolamo Savonarola per natione e patria ferraresi, benchi i parenti suoi havevero origini da Padova."; explicit, "[...] Et io Fra Vincenzo di Bernardo ho havuto il medesimo da madonna Caterina del Chiaro laquale il tutti in tese da santa Madonna Lizabetta. Laus Deo" (published first in *Stepani Baluzii Tutelensis Miscellanea... Tomus primus*, Lucca, 1761, pp. 530-583);

ff. 169-171, Elegy of Girolamo Savonarola, heading, *Elogio del padre fra Girolamo Savonarola da Ferrarensi dell'Ordine de Predicatori Vergine Profeta et Martire Glorioso*; incipit, "Questo huomo della grazia divina."; explicit, "[...] Ed poi l'hai condotti al cielo. Perdona per i meriti suoi a noi altri miseri peccatori. Laus Deo Deipareque Virgini Marie." (apparently unpublished).

This manuscript contains an Italian vernacular *Vita* of Giovanni Savonarola (1452-1498), famous Ferrarese preacher and martyr. It is the version of Brother Timoteo Bottonio from Perugia – enlarged with the addition of miracles that occurred until 1566 – of the vernacular *Vita* of Girolamo Savonarola attributed erroneously to the Dominican friar Pacifico Burlamacchi (1465-1518). Burlamacchi was born in Lucca and died (nearly a saint) after having discovered and foiled in 1518 a conspiracy against the Florentine church of San Marco, where the followers of Savonarola were gathered.

From the sixteenth century onwards, there circulated a number of versions of lives of Giovanni Savonarola, and often readers of such lives were in danger given the sulfurous reputation of Savonarola, hanged and burnt at the stake in 1498. Amongst the other known lives, one should cite the *Vita Hieronymi Savonarolae Ferrariensis* of Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, whose first redaction was composed circa 1520 (see Castagnola, 1996, p. 261. with a list of 28 codices containing the Italian translation of Pico's *Vita*; see also Castagnola, edition of the anonymous Italian translation of Pico's *Vita*, 1998).

The present *Vita di Fra Girolamo Savonarola* has now been identified as a vernacular translation of the text referred to as a "Vita latina" of Girolamo Savonarola, composed by a monk of San Marco, circa 1528-1529 (see L. Polizzotto, 1994, p. 300, no. 1; Ridolfi, 1997, p. 261), as found in Florence, BN, Conventi soppressi, J. VII. 28: "Vita beati Ieronymi, martiris, doctoris, virginis ac prophetae eximii." The vernacular translation of this Latin *Vita* was attributed to Pacifico Burlamacchi by Timoteo Bottonio da Perugia, who himself re-adapted the Italian translation and added a number of miracles attributed to Savonarola. The Pseudo-Burlamacchi/Timoteo Bottonio vernacular translation enjoyed a very widespread diffusion and was immensely popular. There were many manuscripts copies made, found in multiple monastic libraries in Italy and elsewhere in Europe. Kristeller provides the references to some (not all) of these codices, but a revised list is necessary (Kristeller, *Iter italicum*, lists 7 manuscripts of the Life of the Pseudo-Burlamacchi, 4 from the 16<sup>th</sup> c. including the important 16<sup>th</sup> c. codex, Rome, Archivio del Convento di S. Maria sopra Minerva, A. p. 3; see also Lawrence, University of Kansas Library, MS E 233 (former Phillipps 4562); 2 from the 17<sup>th</sup> c. and one datable in the 18<sup>th</sup> c.: these are ).

There is a possibility the author, now called Pseudo-Burlamacchi for want of an actual identification, was a monk in the Dominican convent of Prato, a convent he often quotes in his account. The present manuscript contains 94 chapters with the addition of a "Praise" of Savonarola. It would be important to verify whether this "Elegy" or "Praise" is found in the other codices. It certainly was not published in 1761, nor in the more recent 1937 edition (see Literature below). Timoteo says he personally was the witness of a miraculous event that took place in the monastery of San Vincenzo in Prato where happened the incredible recovery of a monk through the intercession of Girolamo Savonarola, 68 years after his death: "Io fra Timoteo da Perugia il quale di mia propria mano ho scritto il sopradetto miraculo, insieme con l'altre memorie del padre Fra Girolamo, che in questo libro si contengono...di aprile di questo'anno 1566 andando al capello di Pistoia e passando da Prato" [I, Timoteo from Perugia who by my own hand wrote the above-mentioned miracle, with the other memories of father Girolamo, contained in this book, I confirm that on April 29 of this year 1566, going to the Chapter of Pistoia and passing Prato, I went to the monastery of San Vincenzo to inform about the truth of this miracle] (f. 165).

The version of the Pseudo-Burlamacchi/Timoteo Bottonio translation was first published in 1761 (and again in Lucca, 1764), edited by G. Mansi, but large extracts were actually already published in the seventeenth century as an addition to the *Vita* attributed to Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (see *Vita R.P. Fr. Hieronymi Savonarolae Ferrariensis, Ord. Praedicatorum authore Ill. D. Ioan. Franc. Pico...*, Paris, 1674). The Pseudo-Burlamacchi text was adapted by Fra Timoteo Bottonio da Perugia and it is this version that was published in 1761 in the *Miscellanea Stefano Baluzii* by Giovanni Mansi. However, other versions of the Pseudo-Burlamacchi *Vita* are found and it is another altogether that is preferred in 1937 (see ed. Ginori Conti and R. Ridolfi, 1937), based on two codices: Codice Moreniano 219, 16<sup>th</sup> century; Codice della Collezione Ginori Conti, second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Girolamo Savonarola's life is well known and documented, from his youthful renunciation of the world and entry into the Dominican order, early failure in the pulpit, sudden prophetic illumination, apocalyptic preaching, anti-Medicean reform, struggle to build the new, populist Jerusalem in Florence, to his downfall and death on the scaffold. The figure of Savonarola was immensely popular, and in the 1520s (nearly thirty years after his death), manuscripts containing his biography were widespread, especially with the flight of the Medici from Florence, an event which awoke in the population republican sentiments of equality and reform championed by Savonarola. The biographies, never published in the sixteenth century because of the opposition of the ecclesiastical and political authorities, addressed the contested prophetic ability of Savonarola and insisted on comparison with the life and martyrdom of Christ. These *Vitae*, which circulated clandestinely, were read by supporters of the causes dear to Savonarola and contributed to the cult of the "three martyrs" that tended to venerate Savonarola as a saint. The Savonarola *Vitae* were of course all on the black-list of the reigning Florentine Medici.

## LITERATURE

Mansi, G. D. ed. *Stephani Baluzii Tutelensis Miscellanea...opera ac studio Io. Dominici Mansi...Tomus primus...*, Lucca, 1761 [first edition of *Vita* attributed to Pacifico Burlamacchi].

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Verde, A. F. "Codici Savonaroliani. Schede," in *Memorie Domenicane* 25 (1994), pp. 304-330.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

Edition of Lucca, 1761:

<http://books.google.fr/books?id=bCATAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=inauthor:%22Pacifico+Burlamacchi%22&hl=fr&sa=X&ei=IPfwUda1G5CT0AW29IDYBA&ved=0CEMQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Edition of Lucca, 1764:

<http://books.google.fr/books?id=5yZRAAAAcAAJ&pg=PA523&dq=savonarola+mansi&hl=fr&sa=X&ei=0fLwUdDyAqSW0QWCmYGQDA&ved=0CEIQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=burlamacchi&f=false>

On Girolamo Savonarola:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Girolamo\\_Savonarola](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Girolamo_Savonarola)

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