An Unknown Incunabulum from Teleki-Bolyai Library of Târgu-Mureș

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Collection of incunabula belonging to Teleki-Bolyai Library from Târgu-Mureș includes 69 copies, out of which the audience knows 68 copies. On initiating their classification to the National Cultural Heritage it was discovered, in the colligation containing works of Florentine preacher Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498) printed in the incunabular period, a text of 8 pages representing the work entitled *Exposizione sopra el psalmo Verba mea* [Florence, 1498], a unique copy in the Romanian area.

The theological work, *Exposizione sopra el psalmo Verba mea* [Florence, 1498], was attributed to Simone Cinozzi or Placido Cinozzi, because its printing was realised after the death of Savonarola, from 1498.

By the 8 pages, part of the colligation from Târgu-Mureș, we assume that the copy is complete; within our approach of identification relevant was also information obtained from specialists from Cambridge University Library, Bibliothèque Nationale de France or Württembergische Landesbibliothek Stuttgart.

This study is a contribution to knowing the fund of incunabula existent in Romania, the copy being new, unpublished, but also at global level, only other 18 copies being known.

Keywords: Teleki-Bolyai Library Târgu-Mureș, incunabulum, Savonarola, Florence, XVth century

European Humanism and Renaissance of the XVth century encompassed the need to return to values of Greek-Roman antiquity, social and cultural renewal, emphasis being laid on the individual. Renewal not only dominated social and cultural life but also political and European ecclesiastic life, fully benefiting of the support offered by the greatest technological discovery of the period, movable type printing.

End of XVth century and beginning of the XVIth century was dominated by the reproach addressed by the church men, such as the Italian Girolamo Savonarola or German Martin Luther, to the clergy not necessarily related to their life of luxury, but more to their lack of faith1.

What interests us mostly especially in this study is the Italian area, and the most famous Italian preachers of the XVth century were Bernardino da Siena (1380-1444) and Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498)2. The latter was born in Ferrara in 1452, remarking himself through the virulent tone and daring assertions3. When he was only 20 his first work appeared, *De ruina mundi* (On the downfall of the world), and three years later he wrote *De ruina Ecclesiae* (On the downfall of the church)4.

Subsequent development of Savonarola was marked by his joining the Dominicans, religious order founded by Dominic de Guzman, in Toulouse, in 1214 and acknowledged by pope Honorius III two years later, whose members addressed the popular masses by some well documented sermons cultivating virtues such as obedience, commitment, poverty and chastity5.

Through his imaginative sermons, Savonarola revives the symbolic themes of the Middle Ages6;
adversity against corruption that embraced the church results also from a sermon held in 1493. While in the primitive church chalices were made of wood and prelates of gold, nowadays the church holds golden chalices and prelates of wood.

Disgust with clergy’s corruption, specific to Renaissance inspires Savonarola to undertake projects on moral, religious and political reform, therefore involving in the conflict with Medici family Medici. Italy’s invasion by the French army of Carol VIII and proclamation of the republic in Florence allowed Savonarola doing a project of constitution which was based on old communal Florentine and Venetian institutions, which swung over to an “universal” government”. Thus, from September 1494 to May 1498, Girolamo Savonarola implemented in Florence “total reform”, Florentines living “in an environment of collective exhilaration”. If through philosophical or doctrinal works Savonarola creates the image of a compiler, through extremism and vitality he succeeded to fascinate the intellectuals. Amongst his followers we find many scholars such as Giovanni Pico della Mirandola or his nephew, Gian Francesco who firstly was apprentice and then biographer of Savonarola, the Florentine physician Antonio Benivieni, Giovanni della Robbia or painter Sandro Botticelli; in Botticelli’s case it is remarked, following 1500 (death of Savonarola happened in 1498), a return to the situation from before reformist movement initiated by Savonarola.

Withdrawal from Italy of the French armies had left the Florentine republic, implicitly Savonarola, without protection in front of the supporters of the Medici family. Ardent opponent of papal corruption, leader of dei piagnoni (Weepers) political party, Savonarola preached religious life, giving up to joy of senses, his works forming a supreme law, obsessive, dominated by Catholic moral, that was compared with that of Dante. If he was good, we have seen a great prophet in our time; if he was bad, we have seen a great man. For, apart from his erudition, we must admit that if he was able to fool the public for so many years on so important a matter without ever being caught in a lie, he must have had great judgment, talent and power of invention.

The attribute of Girolamo Savonarola of church reformer, but also political man that influenced the end of XVth century and beginning of XVIth century made that his works to be in great demand. Although to their great majority these are theological works, they have found place not only in the libraries of some monasteries but also in those of some private persons. For the Romanian area relevant is the presence, according to the Collective catalogue of incunabula from Romania of some of his works, incunabular editions, in libraries such as “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library from Cluj-Napoca (8 copies), “Mihai Eminescu” Central University Library from Iaşi (1 copy) and Mureş County Library – Special Collections Department. Teleki-Bolyai Library (16 copies).

Our attention is directed to copies that are in Târgu-Mureş, in Mureş County Library – Special collections department, Teleki-Bolyai Library. All works of Savonarola held by the Library from Mureş are in a colligation encompassing 23 titles, printed in quarto. In the remembered catalogue, as well as in the catalogue of incunabula from Târgu-Mureş or in other works that deal with this subject are recorded 15 editions in 16 copies, attributed to Girolamo Savonarola.

The binding of the volume is made of pressboard over which was applied marbled paper in tones of red, yellow, orange and blue; the spine is made of leather. Inside the front cover it is stuck the ex libris of count Samuel Teleki. The binding is dated to XVIIIth century. A handwritten list of some works whose author is Girolamo Savonarola is on the front flyleaves, yet in the volume only a few of them are found.

On initiating classification of these copies to the National Cultural Heritage of Romania, 10th colligation drew our attention: Exposizione sopra el psalmo Verba mea. Usually, the work is dated after 1500 (nonetheless it wasn’t totally excluded that the work to have been published earlier, year 1499 being recorded), so outside the time line by which it would have been part of the incunabular period of printing. Similarly, attribution of the work to Girolamo Savonarola is questionable, he being executed, as we stated before, on 22 May 1498.
According to more recent biography, the work is certainly dated to 1499, within the religious order of the Dominicans an investigation being launched on 24 May 1499 as for the author of the manifest. The forwarded name is that of Simone Cinozzi, disciple of Savonarola, and as date of publication was mentioned the day of 15 May 1499.

For an accurate identification, after whole photographing of the 8 page work, were contacted several of the institutions which officially hold this work: Württenbergische Landesbibliothek Stuttgart, Bibliothèque nationale de France Paris, British Library London and Cambridge University Library. Response of the specialists from the mentioned institutions, whom we thank on this occasion, was that the copy held by the Library from Tîrgu-Mureş is identical to copies found in the remembered collections. Otherwise, at global level, are known only 18 copies, found in the following institutions: London, British Library; Cambridge UL; Paris BN; Berlin SB; Stuttgart WLB; Ferrara C; Lucca G; Roma Cas; Roma Cors; Vaticano BAV Stamp. Ross.; Cambridge MA; Harvard College Library, Houghton Library; Dallas TX, Southern Methodist Univ, Bridwell Library; San Marino CA, The Huntington Library; Urbana IL, Univ. of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library; Washington DC, Library of Congress, Rare Book Division; Dubrovnik D; Lugano BCant.

Technically the work has 8 unnumbered pages, in quarto, on pages 1, 2, 3 there are signatures ai, aii, aiii. A handwritten list, with 54 titles of some works published by Girolamo Savonarola, is on the two flyleaves from the beginning of the volume:

_Vatte lopere di fratre Jeronimo da Ferrara: Prediche fatte l’anno 1494 sopra […] si psalmi infra l’animo, Prediche fatto [sic] l’anno 1495 sopra Amos profeta, Prediche fatto nel 1496 sopra le esodo, Prediche 25 sopra que bonno […] deus della providentia humana […?], Prediche 3 sopra Job nella figura di padrone, Compendio dello revelationi, Libro delle venta de […] fede […] el […] noso della […] Christi, Dialogo delle venta prophetika, Dialogo intitolato sollatio del mio maggo, Trattato o vero expositione sopra el psalmo […] Expositione sopra el psalmo Miserere mei Deus, Expositione quattro sopra el pater noster, Trattato del humilta, Tractato del oratione, Tractato del oratione mentale, Epistola del discreto modo di orare, Epistola a fratri di sacro […] del modo di operare in santa speranza divine disposizione, Supra uno capitolo de fere […] fratre Jeronimo in sancto mando del […] divine nella religione, Epistola al convento da Fiesole de fratri […] Epistola a fratri di S. Matris […] De sette gradi di salire alla sacra mota della vita spirituale a instatia […] examenitione malischotto […] Trattato
alla more di Jesu, Del misterio della Croce, De misterio della messa, Sermone fatto a sui fratri nella vigilia di natale sopra la [...], Trattato exortatorio a tutti gli elect. et figli del padre eterno, Trattato exortatorio a certe persone [...], perseguitate per la verità da lui predichata, Regole da observare nel tempo delle tribulationi, Rimedij spirituali contro la peste, Del modo di vivere in monasterio alla Cortessa della Mirandola, Trattato della vita viduale, Trattato sopra dieci commandamenti alla murate, Epistola alle monache darnalena [...], Expositione sopra la Avemaria, Epistola a uno suo familiare commissia magnifacem [...], nos siamo nel sesto anno, Epistola contra la sententia della excommunicatione contra di lui data, Epistola contra la excomunica subre [...], fatta, Modern attributions on paternity over the text refer, as we have already mentioned, to The last two titles are written by another hand, subsequently. It is not about the table of contents of the colligation, because works within it come from different volumes, or were bounded together subsequently, there being noticeable evidence of adding paper on the edge of some works or even page numberings made by hand but which lack continuity. Coming back to the title that interests us in this study, penultimate in the list from the beginning of the volume, within the 8 pages of the work is presented in a specific form to Savonarola or his disciples Psalm 5, seen by the Holy Fathers as prayer for salvation, addressed to God by the Church or believer. The text is in Italian language, having some quotations in Latin. The one that wrote the text drew a parallel between the generation that lived in Italy from the end of XV th century with that biblical of Noah's. Comparisons go even further, it is mentioned the controversial period of Alexander's VI th shepherding and Florence and Rome were confronted on the one hand, with Sodom and Gomorrah on the other hand. That fact that the text is wrongly attributed to Savonarola results also from some assertions made in the text, on pages 4v-5, related to death of Florentine preacher: La morte del frate sia causa di verificare le cose predette [...], El signore torra via e punira te Firenze che hai pollute le mani tue del sangue iusto [...], Ancora el signore punira te Roma. Modern attributions on paternity over the text refer, as we have already mentioned, to
Simone Cinozzi, known for his Epistle, from 1501-1503, a first attempt of making a biography of Girolamo Savonarola. Furthermore, a manuscript held by Houghton Library, Harvard University[^30], call number MS Ital 102, entitled Girolamo Savonarola compositions drawn up in Italian and dated between 1498-1499[^11], has the following table of contents:

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**Savonarola, Girolamo, 1452-1498.** Più opere di fra girolamo di ferara, MS. (unidentified hand); [n.p.] 1498-1499. 97f. (188p.)

*Questa gli la esposizione del misere...;* ff. 1v-21.

*Expositione sopra il salmo Verba mea.*

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According to the table of contents, the text that we are focusing on was definitely written by Simone Cinozzi. We propose modification of the information known until nowadays, completing the name of the author with the one mentioned above, also because mentioning of his name is likely to occur in Florence. Only the name of the typographer would be entered into discussion, and usually works of Girolamo Savonarola were printed by Lorenzo Morgiani or only by this last one alone.

This study is a contribution to knowing the fund of incunabula existent in Romania, but also at global level, given that more of the repository libraries from Europe and not only have adopted international indexing, information offered for each title relating to all copies known at global level, from here resulting also importance of the presence of the title *Expositione sopra il salmo Verba mea* within funds of Mureș County Library-Special Collections Department. Teleki-Bolyai Library.

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Note:

21. Call number T. q – 154 b/3

[^30]: Call number T. q – 154 b/3

http://istc.bl.uk/search/search.html?operation=record&rsid=741306&q=2 consulted on 27 November 2013


27. Dr. theol. Christian Hermann (Würtenbergische Landesbibliothek Stuttgart), Nicolas Petit (Réserve des livres rares, Bibliothèque nationale de France), Liam Sims (Rare books Department, Cambridge University Library).

28. Information is taken over from British Library Incunabula Short Title Catalogue (ISTC) and is available online to the address: http://istc.bl.uk/search/search.html?operation=record&rsid=741306&q=2; we consulted it on 27 November 2013.

29. We thank our colleague Dr. Andreea Mârza for the support offered in reading this note!