

MICHAŁ SPANDOWSKI

A TRACE OF SAVONAROLA IN THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF POLAND

Girolamo Casanate (1620-1700), a Roman cardinal, donated his magnificent library for public use. A year after his death, a library housing his collection opened in a specially constructed building, and ever since it has been in operation under the name of Biblioteca Casanatense. Both the representative *salone monumentale* as well as the remaining stacks were then furnished with bookcases, where the arrangement of books has not changed to this day.

This kind of a situation, quite common among the historical libraries of Western Europe, was absolutely rare in our part of the continent, especially in Poland where the history of libraries was usually stormy and often tragic. This first case is best illustrated by one of the incunabula, held at present at the National Library, the history of which we shall present below. It is the *Summa Theologica. Pars secunda secundae*, by St. Thomas Aquinas, published in 1479 in Venice by Leonard Wild in *folio* (H^C2^r 1463, IBP³ 5315), its current call number being Inc. F. 1213.

St. Thomas Aquinas was one of the most frequently printed authors in the 15th century – the working GW⁴ card-file lists around 330 editions of his works (or works ascribed to him). Of all the texts he authored, the *Summa Theologica*, published either in its entirety or in parts, comes to the fore. In Poland we have 29 editions of the *Summa* (3 editions of Parts I-III as a whole,; of individual parts published separately: 7 editions of Part I ; 5 editions of

-
- 1 L. Hain, *Repertorium bibliographicum, in quo libri omnes ab arte typographica inventa usque ad annum MD typis expressi ordine alphabetico vel simpliciter enumerantur vel adcuratius recensentur*, Vol. 1-2. Stuttgartiae – Lutetiae Parisiorum 1826-1838.
 - 2 W. A. Copinger, *Supplement to Hain's Repertorium bibliographicum*. P. 1-2. London 1895-1902. Repr.: Berlin 1926.
 - 3 *Incunabula quae in bibliothecis Poloniae asservantur*, Vol. 1. moderante Alodia Kawecka-Gryczowa composuerunt Maria Bohonos et Elisa Szandorowska, Wratislaviae 1970; Vol. 2: Addenda. Indices, moderante Alodia Kawecka-Gryczowa composuerunt Maria Bohonos, Michael Spandowski et Elisa Szandorowska, Wratislaviae 1993.
 - 4 *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke*. Herausgegeben von der Kommission für den Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke. Bd. 1-7, Leipzig 1925-1938. Bd. 8-11, Berlin – Stuttgart – New York 1978-2008 (repr.: Vol. 1-7, Stuttgart – New York 1968).

Part II, 1; 10 editions of Part II, 2; and 4 editions of Part III), most of which (17 in all) came out in Venice. The popularity of the separately published parts of this monumental work stems from its volume, for example the entire *Summa* published in 1496 by Anton Koberger in Nürnberg⁵ numbers 832 folios in all.

The copy under scrutiny arrived at the National Library shortly after World War II, when in 1946 the Greek Catholic Orthodox Church was suppressed in Poland and the state treasury took over its property, including the book collection of the Greek Catholic chapter in Przemyśl. The preserved bookplate indicates the original owner of the incunable (il. 1).

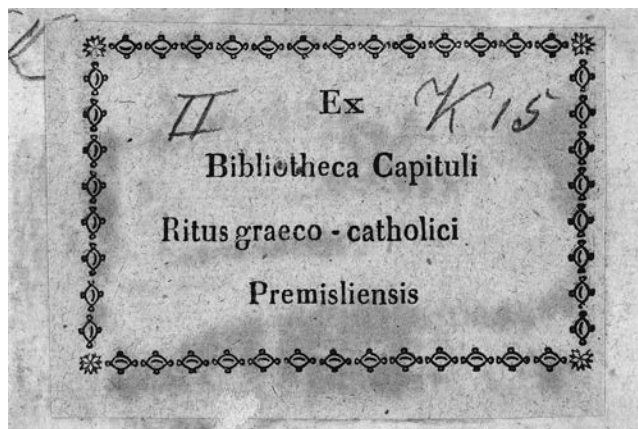


Fig. 1. Bookplate from the Library of the Greek Catholic Chapter in Przemyśl

The nucleus of that library was formed by a collection numbering several hundred volumes held in the Greek Catholic cathedral in Przemyśl, gradually extended by gifts donated by, among others, bishops Maksymilian Ryłło (in 1792) and Jan Śnigurski (ca. 1833). A Przemyśl canon, Jan Ławrowski, is considered the proper founder of the Library of the Greek Catholic Chapter in Przemyśl. In 1835, he donated a substantial part of his own holdings – 7,727 works in 11,869 volumes – to the Chapter library which was then begun. As time went by, the size of the library continued to grow, chiefly owing to gifts, and by the summer of 1939 it had reached nearly 35,000 volumes. After the library's holdings were taken over by the state in 1946, they were divided and underwent partial dispersion. The main core of these holdings found shelter at the National Library, around five thousand volumes at the Catholic University of Lublin, and a small part of the collection remained on site in Przemyśl – at the National Museum, the State

5 HC 1436, IBP 5297.

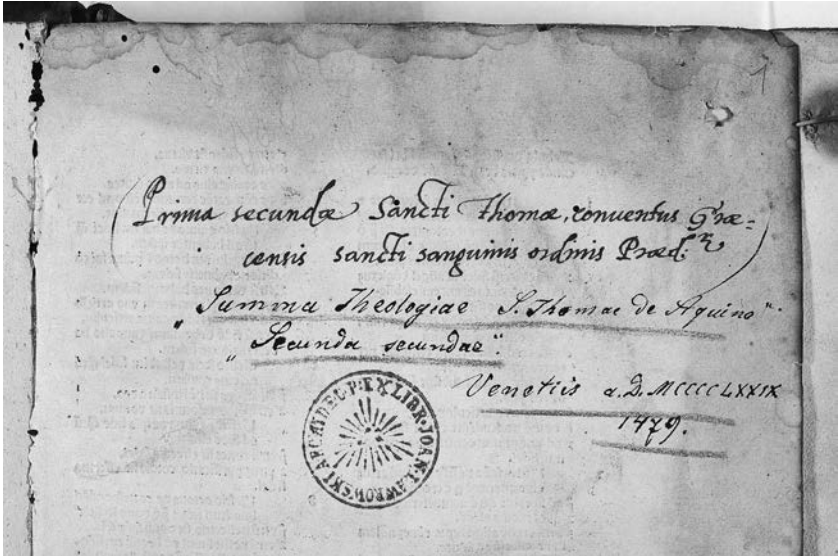


Fig. 2. Inscription of ownership of the Dominican monastery in Graz (top) and the stamp of Jan Lawrowski (bottom).

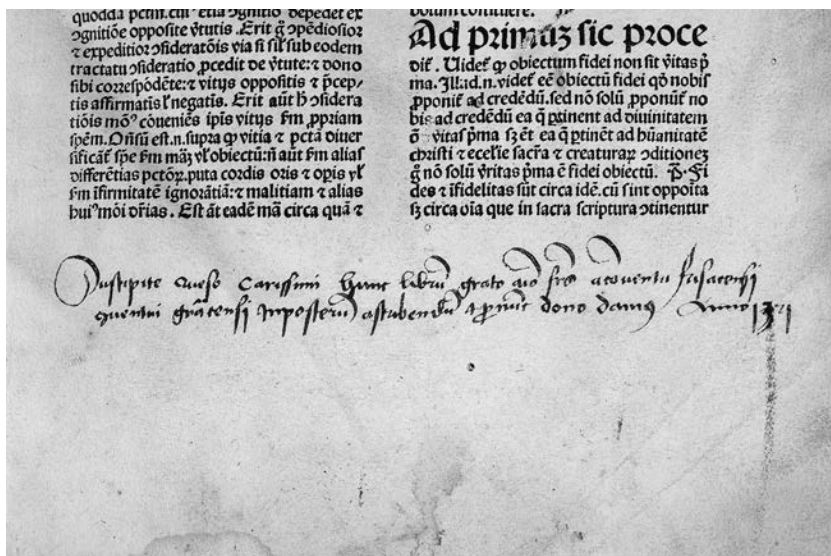


Fig. 3. Inscription indicating the transfer of books from the monastery in Friesach to the convent in Graz.

Archives and the Society for the Advancement of Sciences.⁶

The original owner of the volume under investigation was also Jan Ławrowski, whose stamp bearing the text: “Ex libris Joan.Lawrowski archidec. P” is placed on the recto of the first leaf (il. 2, bottom). Who was Jan Ławrowski?

Jan Ławrowski (1773-1846) was born in Terka near Wołkowyja (*district* of Lesko). He attended the Greek-Catholic Seminary in Lviv, after which he studied philosophy and theology at the university there and obtained doctorates in both disciplines. In 1798 he was ordained as a priest and became the prefect of the seminary and also a lecturer in philosophy and theology at the university. In 1815, upon his resignation from the university chair, he was appointed the rector of the Greek-Catholic seminary and the canon of the Metropolitan Chapter in Lviv. In 1820 he moved to Przemyśl where he assumed the post of cathedral preacher (until 1833) and canon of the diocesan chapter. He was a pro-synodal examiner for three Lviv dioceses (Latin, Greek-Catholic and Armenian) and two Przemyśl dioceses (Latin and Greek Catholic), as well as the Director of the Chanters’ and Teachers’ Institute (in 1831-1835 and 1837-1840), and the first director (until 1832) of the Greek Catholic printing house bought in 1828 from the widow of Jan Gołębiowski. He published a number of works on theology and on the school system in Galicia. From 1820 he had been an honorary member of the Cracow Scientific Society. He was a bibliophile and gathered an impressive book collection (ca. 1818 it numbered over 15,000 volumes, and in 1832, ca. 33,000, including around 300 manuscripts and incunabula), as well as a numismatic and iconographic collection. He donated them to the newly created Greek Catholic chapter libraries in Lviv and Przemyśl. The second donation took place in 1835, and the confirmation of the act of donation in 1846.⁷

Before Jan Ławrowski, our book belonged to the monastery of the Dominicans in Graz, as shown by the exlibris note (directly underneath where Ławrowski put his stamp), which reads as follows: “Prima secundae Sancti Thomae conuentus Graecensis sancti sanguinis ordinis Praed[icato]r[um]” (il. 2, top of page).

The Dominicans’ Monastery of the Holy Blood in Graz (the capital of Styria) was founded by Emperor Friedrich III in 1466. In 1585, when the Jesuits arrived in Graz, the Dominicans were forced to turn the building over to them and to move to the suburban Church of St. Andrew, on the site of which a new, magnificent temple was built from 1616. In 1807 the monastic buildings were taken over for military purposes, and the expelled monks settled at the parish church of St. Anne. This monastery was in turn closed in 1852, and the buildings were turned over to the Jesuits. The Dominicans returned to this location five years later, and the reactivated *studium generale* was in operation until 1938. During World War II the monastery was partly destroyed.

The book collection had been established in the monastery from the beginning of its existence. It was largely dispersed in Napoleonic times and incurred losses again during World War II. At present it contains ca. 16,000 volumes, including 62 incunabula.

From a comparison of the dates, it follows that Ławrowski had to come into possession of our incunable in 1807 (or soon thereafter), when the expelled Dominicans were unable to take the entire book collection with them. Since the time of Emperor Joseph’s II reforms,

6 To find out more about the library’s history cf. i.e. the introduction to: Z. Żurawińska, Z. Jaroszewicz-Pieresławcew, *Katalog druków cyrylickich XV-XVIII wieku w zbiorach Biblioteki Narodowej* [The Catalogue of 15th-18th Century Cyrillic Books in the National Library Collection], Warszawa 2004, pp. 13-14.

7 To see biographies of Ławrowski cf. i.e. *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* [Polish Biographical Dictionary], *Słownik Pracowników Książki Polskiej* [Dictionary of Polish Book Professionals], *Encyklopedia Katolicka* [Catholic Encyclopedia].

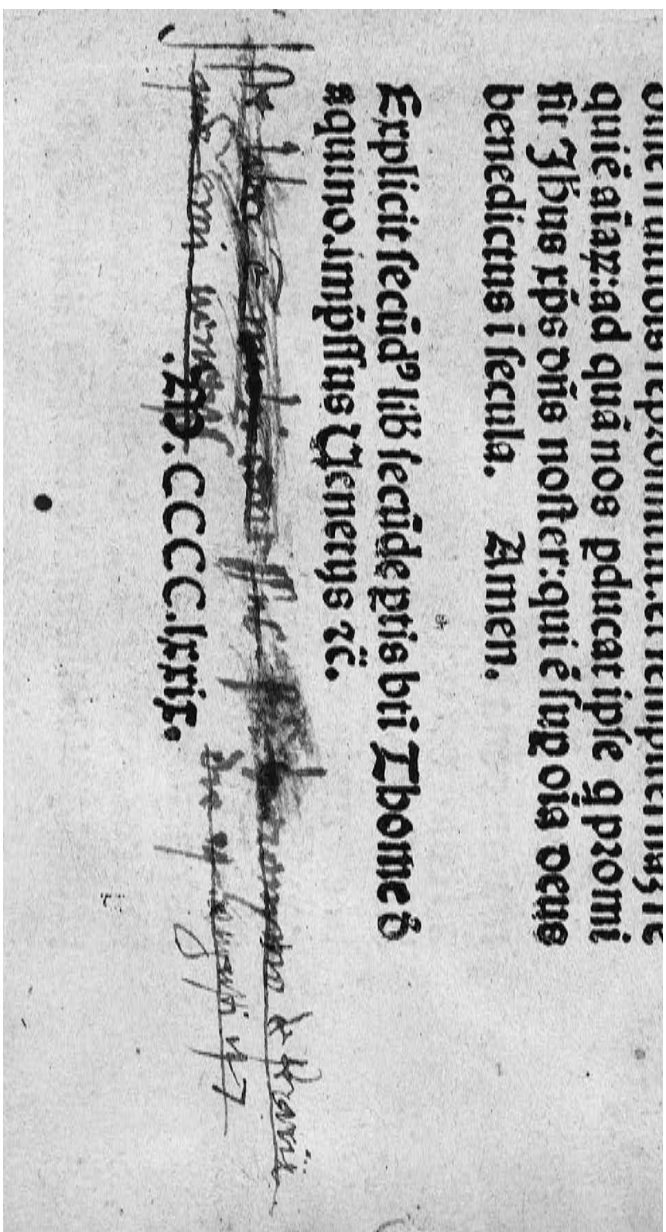


Fig. 4. Colophon with an added exlibris note of the first owner.

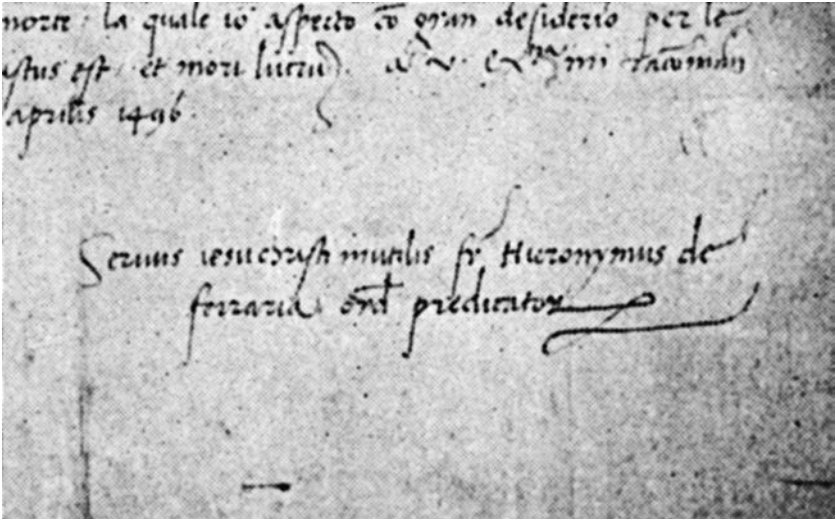


Fig. 5. Reproduction of the signature of Savonarola in a letter to Lodovico il Moro.

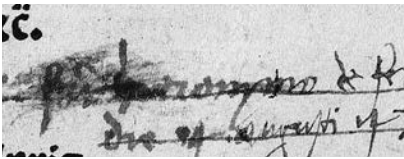


Fig. 6. Detail of Fig. 4.

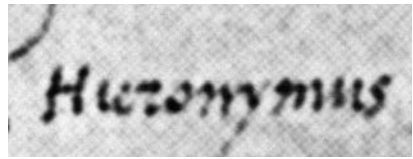


Fig. 7. Detail of Fig. 5.

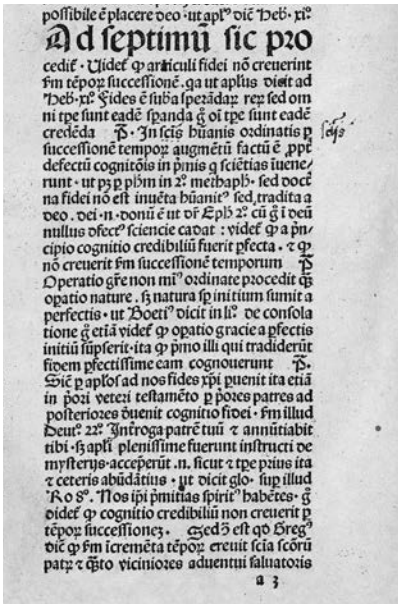


Fig. 8. Correction
by Savonarola on Lf3r.

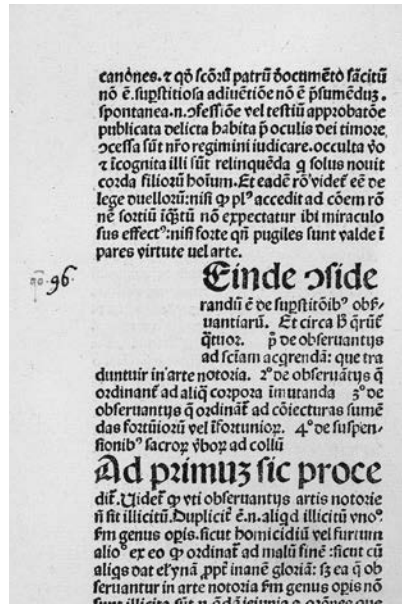


Fig. 9. Example appended by Savonarola in the margins on the
numbering of the subsequent "quaestiones."

books from the libraries of suppressed monasteries were usually sold. Many books of such provenance were incorporated in the University Library of Lviv, where the collection had been built up since 1784. Apparently, Lawrowski also made use of this occasion.

The Dominicans in Graz came into possession of the incunabulum in 1521, according to the entry placed on the recto of the first leaf of the text: “Suscipite queso carissimi hunc libru[m] grato a[n]i[m]o fr[at]re]s a co[n]uentu frisacensi [con]uentui gr̄acensi imposteru[m] ascribendu[m] [et] p[ro] nu[n]c dono dam[us] anno 1521” (il. 3). This shows that the book was a gift from a Dominican monastery⁸ in Friesach.

The Dominicans arrived in Friesach, the oldest town of Carynthia, in 1217, and in 1251 they obtained permission to build a monastery on the site where it still stands today. The prime years of the monastery lasted until the end of the 14th century. In 1672 a fire consumed the entire complex, including the library. The monastery was emptied completely in the 19th century and, subsequently, in 1858 was leased to the Dominicans. The Dominicans returned to their seat in 1890 and have resided there ever since. The book collection, built from scratch chiefly from gifts after 1672, numbers at present ca. 7,500 volumes, including 15 incunabula.

In 1521, the library of the monastery in Friesach probably held many editions of the *Summa* by St. Thomas Aquinas, since the decision was made to donate such a precious gift to the brothers from a younger monastic house.⁹ This, however, is something that we may only surmise in a situation where the entire library burned down in the 17th century, our volume surviving only because it had previously been donated to another monastery.

We know thus that in 1521 the book left the library in Friesach, but when and under what circumstances did it arrive there? Here we are confined to pure guesswork, for while we know the first owner of our book, its further whereabouts are uncertain.

Hence, prior to producing any hypotheses, let us deliberate on the facts.

The first buyer and reader of the book signed himself next to the colophon as follows: “Iste liber e[st] michi concessus fr[at]ri] hieronymo de feraria que[m] emi uenetijs”. This is followed by the date as printed in the colophon: “M. CCCC.lxxix,” after which comes the next part of the entry: “die 14 augusti [...]”¹⁰ (il. 4), hence we are to understand that the book was bought on the 14th of August 1479.¹¹

Hieronymus de Feraria, Hieronymus of Ferrara – this is how Girolamo Savonarola signed himself. Was he the first reader of our incunable?

Upon turning 16 years old, Savonarola, born in Ferrara on 21st September 1452, focused his attentions on the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas.¹² He travelled extensively: in 1474 he was in Faenza, and in April 1475 in Bologna, and there he joined the convent of the Dominicans. In 1479, again in Ferrara, he began theological studies. We have not determined whether in August of that year he was in Venice (where he definitely went later on, e. g. in 1491 and

8 Another source of proof is that in the quoted entry there is no mention of the convent's name; moreover, while book exchanges between monasteries of the same order were very frequent, they practically never occurred between monasteries of different orders.

9 The matter is all the more obvious where it concerns probably the most important theologian in history who was a Dominican himself.

10 The end of this entry is nearly indecipherable. Perhaps it is an abbreviated price entry.

11 This entry enables us also to specify the date of the printing: instead of the formerly cited “1479,” the proper date of printing is [before 14 August] 1479.

12 R. Ridolfi, *Vita di Girolamo Savonarola*, Roma 1952, pp. 6-7.

1493), but we cannot exclude that prior to taking up regular studies he did make such a trip to what was after all not a very distant town. Another interpretation of the above-quoted entry would be that the book was bought by someone on behalf of our main character. To sum up this argument, we may say that the facts from the life of Savonarola that are known to us do not contradict what follows from our book, but neither do they provide an irrefutable proof for the identity of both Hieronymuses.

Luckily enough, we also have other arguments at our disposal. We know, for instance, of a reproduction of Savonarola's autograph, namely his Latin letter written to Lodovico il Moro¹³ (a photograph of the signature is in il 5). The letter was produced nearly 17 years (11th April 1496) after the entry in our incunabulum, however, if we compare the "Hieronymus" entry in both versions it becomes clear that it is written in the same hand (il. 6 and 7), which definitely resolves the issue of the identity of the first owner of our incunabulum.

The book contains no glosses by Savonarola; the only marginal note in his hand (sign. a3r) is of a proofreading nature (a correction of an erroneously printed word, il 8), whereas the whole volume features numbers for subsequent "quaestiones" (i. e. chapters) added in the margins by the same hand. The process of inserting these corrections in a volume numbering ff.332 must have taken quite a lot of time, hence we may presume that Savonarola used this book often enough to make this effort worthwhile.

What was the history of this book between its purchase by Savonarola in 1479 and its donation by the Dominicans of Friesach to the monastery in Graz in 1521? Here we are reduced to pure speculation again.

Savonarola's entry is crossed out and obliterated, which would mean that he had not donated the book to anyone¹⁴ – this would correspond with the above-mentioned conclusion that he used it himself. Hence, it is most likely that upon Savonarola's execution on 23rd May 1498, whereupon all his memorabilia were destroyed to prevent their transformation into cult objects, our book was turned over to the monastery in Friesach – a town very distant from Florence at that time. The incunable's subsequent history has already been traced.

In August 1939 the National Library held around 2,250 incunabula, nearly 90% of which were made up of Polish holdings returned from Russia under the Riga Treaty, including a sizeable group of incunabula from the Załuski Library, the first National Library of Poland and a probably the biggest public library in Enlightenment Europe. Only five copies survived – by accident: the rest was burned in Warsaw by the Nazis in October 1944,¹⁵ and with it an essential part of Polish cultural history went up in smoke. By way of a small consolation, among the rare books that arrived at the National Library after 1945, we may find such witnesses of European history as the book we have described above.

13 G. Savonarola, *Prediche e scritti, con introduzione, commento, nota bibliografica e uno studio... di Mario Ferrara*, Milano 1930, plate VII.

14 The best evidence for this was usually a new note entered beneath the note in the hand of the original owner.

15 This figure refers to the main collection. Of the Rapperswil Library only 3 incunabula survived, and the rest were burned in the wake of a bombardment on 24th September 1939.