

**Domenico Cavalca, Excerpts from *Vite dei santi padri*
In Italian, manuscript on paper
Italy (Tuscany?), c. 1440-1460**

iv (paper) + 128 + i, modern foliation, top, outer corner, pencil, 1-121, followed by seven blank, unfoliated leaves, on paper, watermark, Briquet 6645, Lucca 1445 (collation, i^s ii-xi²), horizontal catchwords, middle lower margin, no signatures, ruled very lightly in lead with single full-length vertical bounding lines, ruling usually indiscernible, written in twenty-seven to twenty-eight long lines in an upright rounded fere-humanistica script (justification, 161-155 x 110-103 mm.), majuscules at the beginning of sections stroked with red, red paragraph marks, red rubrics, two- to three-line red initials, a few with decorative void spaces within the initial, slightly more elaborate 3-line initial, f. 9, with decorative void spaces within the initial, repair, lower margin, f. 34, tear, f. 57, foxing and staining from damp throughout, with no loss of legibility, many leaves are splitting along the inside margin, most quires reinforced with paper. Bound in eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century pasteboard covered with rough brown paper, sewn on three cords which are stitched through the cover, title on paper label on spine, "<?> di S. Padri" (cf. note in pen, back flyleaf, "Libri de santi padri," now upside down), front board detached from bookblock, although it is still attached along the spine, covers stained. Dimension 202 x 137 mm.

This is an unpretentious but well-organized copy of a very popular collection of the Lives of the early desert fathers in Italian. The particular sections of the text included here deserve further study, since they were likely a unique selection chosen by the original owner (and possibly writer) of the manuscript. Although the text itself survives in numerous manuscripts, most are in Italian libraries, and it has rarely been available for sale in recent decades.

PROVENANCE

1. Written in Italy, probably in Tuscany, in the middle of the fifteenth-century, as indicated by the watermark and the script. This is not a deluxe manuscript, but instead one that was probably copied for its owner's personal use. It is written in a legible script, with simple initials and paragraph marks that divide the text into sections, and includes a table of chapters so one can "trouare legiermente alcuna cosa in questo libro" ("to find something easily in this book"). The text is an abbreviated version the very popular *Vite dei santi padri*, and it seems likely that the owner chose which sections to include, thus creating his own, unique version of the text.
2. No other clues to its history remain in the manuscript, although it likely remained in Italy until the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century when it was bound.

TEXT

ff 1-5, Table of Chapters, *Qui cominciano i capitoli di questo libro chi uuole adunque trouare legiermente alcuna cosa in questo libro raguardi il numero deglinfrascritti capitoli*, incipit, "Della

dottrina che diede epredico adalquanti frati che uenero allui inducendogli auirtu, capitoli vno Am aestramenti edesenpri diuera patientia econtritione. Capitoli otanta tre"; [ff. 5v-8v blank];

f. 9, Prologue, *Queste si sono alquante storie ellegende deuotissime ed eccellente edesenpri notabili della perfetta uita de santi padri*, incipit, "Al nome di dio edella gloriosa uergine madonna santa maria editutti esanti esante diparadiso. In percio che come scriue messer santo gregorio el nobile dottore di santa chiesa alquanti ... ne potiate trare utilidade econforto edifacatione";

Part of the prologue, Manni, ed., 1853-4, volume one, p. 49.

ff. 9-16, extracts from the life of St. Anthony, *In prima diro alcuna cosa della uita di santo antonio della sua dottrina ede suoi amaestramenti. Della dottrina che diede epredico adalquanti frati che uenero allui inducendogli auirtu capitolo uno*, incipit, "Un giorno essendo pregato dalquanti fratri che desse ... santo paulo non credete a ogni spirito edidiuersi modi che sonno in alcuno";

Part of the Life of St. Anthony Abbot; Naselli, ed., 1926, chapters 5-8, pp. 38-54; Delcorno, ed., 1992, chapters 6-9 pp. 108-120; note the manuscript adds a phrase not in the editions.

ff. 16-23, extracts from the life of St. Giovanni, *Incomincia di giouanni eremita ein prima del suo abitacolo e come per molti segni mostro ... capitolo prima*, incipit, "E in prima per fondamento della nostra opera per essenpro debuoni ... quale benedetto in secula seculorum. Amen;"

Part of the Life of St. John the Hermit; Naselli, ed., 1926, chapters 1-2, and 6, pp. 149-161, and 171-173.

f. 23v, *Duno romito che dimando uno santo padre ... per la quale io auessi uita eterna, capitoli otto*, incipit, "Uno frate dimando uno santo padre edisse che cosa potre io fare ... che un frate dimandoe labate nestore ...";

ff. 23v-24, *Dalquanti detti ea maestramenti esentenze di diuersi santi padri capitoli none*, incipit, "Disse uno santo padre come alla pentola ... ma eltiepido persegui ...";

f. 24rv, *Dellira edesuoimedi condue esenpri eduno chesi uolse uendicare capitoli deci*, incipit, "Disse uno santo padre per quatro cagione lira procede ...";

ff. 24v-26, *Detti esentenze edesenpri notabili di diuersi santi padri ...*, incipit, "Era uno santo padre ditanta patientia che quanto luomo piu lugiuriana ...":

ff. 26-28, *Di santa sinclata edesuoimedi edesenpri ecome perla infermita delcorpo sicurano iuitii dell anima, capitoli dodici*, incipit, "Disse santa sinclata come per grande eforte medicine si cura lanfermita del corpo cosi per lenfermitadi del corpo si curano iuitii dellanima ... perla uolontaria pouerta;"

ff. 28-29, *Duno solitario licui passi langelo anouerua ..*, incipit, "Uno solitario antico aueua dilungi lasuocella dallacqua bene dodici E sommo medico";

f. 29rv, *Duno solitario infermo alquale idio glimando langelo suo chelseruisse ...*, incipit, "Essendo infermato uno solitario stette piu di che non fu saputo ...";

ff. 29v-30v, *Deti esentenze edesenpri ea munimenti notabili dal quanti santi padri, capitoli quindici*, incipit, "Disse un santo padre che sonno alquanti che siguasta no el corpo pertroppa astinencia ..";

ff. 30v-31, *Dellabate or edella suo dottrina conalquanti suo detti esentenze ...*, incipit, "Diceuasi dellabate or che mai non menti ne mai non giuiro ...";

f. 31rv, *Duna utile dottrina dellabate euagrio e della memoria dellamorte ...*, incipit, "Diceua labate euagrio quando tu stai in cella ricogli nelcuore tuo epena deldi della morte ...";

f. 31v-32, *Amunizioni dell abate machario ...*, incipit, "Mandarono una uolta molti santi padri delmonte dinitria allabate machario ...";

ff. 32-33, *Dellabate iperizio edecerte altre sentenze notabili ...*, incipit, "Disse labate iperizio ...";

ff. 33rv, *Duno pouero elquale atempo difredo si confortaua mirabile mente ...*, incipit, "Disse uno santo padre che essendo egli inoserinto uenneno alquanti poueri ...";

ff. 33v-34v, *Della indiscreta astinentia deuolgio monaco ...*, incipit, "Fue uno discepolo di santo giouanni arciescouo che auena nome eulogio ...";

ff. 34v-35v, *Della falsa humilita dunfrate ed ella uera humilita del labate moise elquale si fuggi ...*, incipit, "Disse labate cassiano ...";

ff. 35v-36, *Di due frati giudicati ...*;

Text continues with similar short extracts; selected incipits only given below:

ff 37v-38, *Come labate arsenio ...*, incipit, "Disse labate daniello che quando labate arsenio sta ua inisciti ...";

ff. 55v-56v, *Della morte delsantissimo abate piamone e dellabate agatone ...*, incipit, "Passando di questa uita labate piamone disse a frati che glistauano dintorno ...";

ff. 70v-74, *Di santo Antonio edicerti filosafi che andarono perdi sputare ...*, incipit, "Una uolta due filosafi udendo lafama di santo Antonio andarono allui ...";

cf. Manni, ed., 1853-4, volume 1, p. 110.

ff. 74-78, *Di santo arsenio elquale fu inprima secolare ...*, incipit, "Labate arsenio quandera secolare egrande barone nella corte ...";

Manni, ed., 1853-4, volume 2, p. 56.

ff. 78- 81, *Dellabate pastore ede fuoi detti ecome mando pel beato nestore ...*, incipit, "Essendo labate pastore monaco incongregatione udendo lafama delbeato nestore ...";

Manni, ed., 1853-4, volume 2, p. 62.

ff. 81-82v, *Dellabate pemen ecome molti fratri eldimandarono didiuerso cose ...*, incipit, "Dimandoe unfrate labate pemen edisse ...";

Manni, ed., 1853-4, volume 2, p. 69.

ff. 82v-83, *Delabate zenone ...*;

ff. 83-84, *Dellabate agatone ...*;

ff. 93v-97, *Di pietro talonario cioe banchiere e come andando allui unpouero ...*, incipit, "Auena inusanza questo santissimo patriarca didire ispesse ...";

Manni, ed., 1853-4, volume 3, p. 1.

f. 97rv, *Come giouani patriarca tesse lauita di santo serapione ...*, incipit, "Come disopra edetto questo beatissimo patriarca ...";

ff. 102-106, *Di santa giustina uergine ...*, incipit, "Giustina uergine della citta dantiochia figlino la dunsacerdote ...";

ff. 106-114v, *Di santa eufruosina uergine ...*, incipit, "Fue nella citta dalesandria ungentile huomo ... auena nome panutio", f. 110, *Come el suo padre panutio lapianse emandolla cercando ...*, incipit, "Etornando panutio suo padre acasa ... e gloriosa in secula seculoro amen";

Life of St. Euphrosina; Naselli, ed., 1926, pp. 255-263;

ff. 114v-116, *Dimargherita detta pelagia ecome fu maritata ...*, incipit, "Margherita detta pelagia uergine bellissima ericca ...";

Manni, ed., 1853-4, volume 3, p. 200.

ff. 117v-119v, *De ladroni equali andauano ailarione ...*, incipit, "Quando ilarione staua in quello tugurio ... alumino ilcieco nato";

Part of the life of St. Hilarion; Delcorno, ed., 1992, chapter 3, pp. 160-163, line 7.

ff. 120-121v, *Amaestramenti edesenpri diuera patientia econtritione, capitoli otanta tre*, incipit, "Fue una gentil donna dalesandria laquale rimanendo dopo lamorte del padre edella madre ... fu liberato daldimonio." [Followed by seven blank unnumbered leaves.]

The *Vite dei Santi Padri* (Lives of the Holy Fathers) is an Italian translation of a collection of writings on the lives and sayings of the holy men and women often called the Desert Fathers, the saints who lived in Egypt and elsewhere in the Near East in the first three centuries after Christ. The translation was the work of Domenico Cavalca (c. 1270-1342), a Dominican monk, and his collaborators. Domenico was born at Vicopisano, near Pisa, and he spent most of his life in Pisa; Although he wrote original works, including sermons and other treatises, he is best known for his translations from Latin into Italian, including the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great, the Acts of the Apostles, and his masterwork, the *Vite dei Santi Padri* (see Thomas Kaeppli. *Scriptores ordinis praedicatorum medii aevi*, Romae, Ad S. Sabinae, 1970- , 1:304-314, nos. 832-846).

Domenico Cavalca was proclaimed by one literary critic, Pietro Giordani (1774-1848) "the father of Italian prose," and while his contribution to the formation of Italian as a literary language is less-well known than that of his contemporary, Dante Alighieri (c. 1265-1321),

author of the Divine Comedy, it was nonetheless extremely important. The *Vite dei Santi Padri* was immensely popular during the Middle Ages. Carlo Delcorno lists one hundred and ninety-one surviving manuscripts (see Delcorno. *La Tradizione*, Venice, 2000, pp. 7-489, with an appendix describing four manuscripts with other translations, pp. 490-506). Over one hundred of these manuscripts are miscellanies or legendaries which include only excerpts or single lives. The manuscript described here was not known to Delcorno.

Most of the manuscripts of the *Vite dei santi padri* are in Italian libraries; only four are listed in the United Kingdom, and only two are in the United States, MS 9 in the Bancroft Library, of the University of California at Berkeley, and fMS Typ 192 in the Houghton Library, Harvard University. This last manuscript includes translations that are different from those attributed to Domenico Cavalca. In addition, two manuscripts, now at Columbia and the University of Kansas include small excerpts from the text. Manuscripts of the *Vite* have been sold only infrequently in recent decades (three can be cited; London, Sotheby's, 9 December, 1974, lot 41, now in Munich, Staatsbibliothek Cod. Ital. 691; London, Sotheby's, June 25, 1985, lot 79, and a manuscript currently for sale at Textmanuscripts.com, reference number 221).

The popularity of the text continued into the latter half of the fifteenth century with the invention of printing, when twenty editions appeared between 1474 and 1499 (L. Hain. *Repertorium bibliographicum*, 1826-38, II, pars I, Reprint, Milan, Görlich, 1948, nos. 8613-8627; W. A. Copinger. *Supplement to Hain's Repertorium bibliographicum*, part I, London, 1895, nos. 8613, 8615, 8619; Part II, *ibid*, 1898, nos. 2968-2970; and others, see Domenico Cavalca, *Cinque vite di eremiti*, ed. Carolo Delcorno, Venice, Marsilio editori, 1992, pp. 294-295; and Cioni, listed below). There is currently no modern critical edition of the text, although Delcorno's *La Tradizione* (listed below), has prepared the way. Although there have been numerous modern editions, most are based on the original eighteenth-century edition (see Manni, below; on previous editions, see Delcorno, 1992, pp. 295-296). The text was a fluid one, with many variations from manuscript to manuscript. The excerpts in this manuscript certainly deserve further analysis.

The history of the Latin texts behind the *Vite dei santi padri* is complex. Although it frequently circulated in the late Middle Ages as the *Vitas patrum* by St. Jerome, it is actually a collection of texts by many authors, including Athanasius, Jerome, Rufinus, Palladius, and others. The Jesuit scholar, Heribert Rosweyde, published a ten volume edition of the *Vitae partum* in 1615, and a version was printed in Migne, *Patrologia latina*, volumes 73-74.

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Domenico Cavalca. *Vite dei Santi Padri* (Intratext CT); reproduces editon by Naselli, 1926.
http://www.intratext.com/ixt/ITA1836/_P9.HTM

Cavalca's *Vite dei santi padre:*

<http://www.bnrcrm.librari.beniculturali.it/ita/bibliote/fsvitedeisanti.htm>

Manni, D. M., ed. *Volgarizzamento delle Vite de SS. Padri ...* (vol. 6), 1853-1854 reprint of Silvestri's 1830 edition;

http://books.google.com/books?q=editions:0vixG3_aGs-MuymkO_sWl5Y&id=D3cMAAAAIAAJ&hl=En

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