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Analysis of a correspondence between Giovanni Poleni and Jacopo Belgrado

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In my master's thesis, I transcribed and studied the correspondence between Giovanni Poleni and a mostly unknown character: Father Jacopo Belgrado. Born in Udine in 1704, he joined the Jesuit company of Parma in 1723. In 1738, he was assigned to the chair of mathematics at the Studium Parmense, precursor of the University of Parma. In this role, he improved the didactics and became one of the first "lecture-demonstrators" in Italy, building his own instruments. After that, he became court mathematician for the duke Filippo di Borbone. He also carried on research in Physics and Mathematics, and in 1757 he founded the third Italian astronomical observatory in Parma.

His career ended abruptly in 1768 when the minister du Tillot, guide of an anti-jesuitic movement, decided to expel Jesuits from Parma and seize their possessions. The information about Belgrado is, therefore, fragmented: most of his possessions were lost, sold or kept in private collections.

In his life, Belgrado has proven to be a polyhedric, enterprising scientist. He was in touch with many Enlightenment exponents all over Europe, such as Jean Antoine Nollet, and contributed to scientific research and communication.

Belgrado and Poleni had a strong bond characterised by mutual esteem regarding each other's research, and their correspondence is characterised by many exchanges of opinions, advice and collaboration. Belgrade managed, thanks to Poleni's mediation, to publish two dissertations at the seminary printing house in Padua. Some of the instruments in the Poleni Museum in Padua were built and sent by Belgrade himself.

Primary author: DAMIANI, Francesca (Università degli Studi di Bologna)

Presenter: DAMIANI, Francesca (Università degli Studi di Bologna)

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