

## The Nobility and the Coat of Arms of the Bonacorsi in Florence

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The oldest certificate of nobility with a grant of a coat of arms that is found in the registration books of the Realm of Vienna, that is, the house, court, and state archives, concerns the brothers Peter, Franz, Bartholomew, and Alois Bonacorsi, sons of the deceased nobleman Nero Bonacorsi in Florence. The same certificate was granted at Trent on October 15, 1401 by the Roman king Ruprecht, and reads as follows according to Volume A, page 47 of these books:

“Letter of Familiaritas<sup>1</sup> of Bonacorsi and his brothers, and that they can wear a coat of arms.

Rupert, by the grace of God King of the Romans, always August, to the noblemen, the esteemed Peter, Franz, Bartholmew, and Alois Bonacorsi, brothers of the same Bonacorsi family and esteemed sons of the late Nero, faithfully beloved of me and of the Holy Empire: Let there be royal favor and every good. Although a royal and liberal munificence rightly exists toward all the faithful of the Holy Empire, because of a certain general clemency native to it, nevertheless, it ought to extend more richly the gifts of its generosity to those whom reputation more solemnly gives evidence that they have labored with more fervent zeal for special honors of the Holy Empire. Hence, because with regard given to the constancy of loyalty and to the useful services of sincere fidelity, which you, Bonacorsi, have faithfully shown to us and to the Holy Empire, you and your brothers inscribed above ought to show to us something else. Wherefore, we graciously admit you and anyone of your family into our friendship, and we add you to the

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<sup>1</sup> *Familiaritas* is the grant from a higher noble to an inferior noble, which makes the inferior noble a member of the superior noble's household. It is something less than full-fledged vassalage.

community of our friends, with firm acknowledgement, recognizing that you enjoy and rejoice in all individual privileges, prerogatives, favors, and liberties wherever you wish, which our other friends enjoy however they wish, forever, in all things, et that in all your individual dealings and those dealings incumbent upon you, you implore the royal crown under full faith. We also grant this special favor of our royal munificence of majesty mentioned above by royal authority for the present, both to you and to anyone of your family, and to those legitimately descended from you, that you and anyone of your family ought freely to carry and wear for the performance of military display in wars, tournaments, and whatever other military acts everywhere, a coat of arms depicted with respect to its circumference and colors accordingly in the handiwork of the painter, with special figures in its images, with any impediment thoroughly removed, with the arms of any others always preserved. The shape and figure of this coat of arms contains alternating black and white waves and through the length of the shield a golden grasping lion with a red crown and red claws as is depicted in its very form in the picture below.



The witnesses of this document are the Venerable Frederick, Archbishop of Cologne, Archchancellor of the Holy Roman Empire throughout Italy, Rabanus, Bishop of Spirensis, Conrad de Soltano, Bishop of Verden, the noblemen Emicho, Count of Lynnigen, Master of the Royal Curia, Guther, Count of Schwarzburg, Friederich, elder son of Morse and Count in Sarwerde, the Honorable Henry, superior of the Church of Saint Severinus, Colomanus Albert Goletus and Colbo de Buchart, soldiers, Nicloaus Buman, Prothonotary of the Royal Curia, Johann de Stamenstorff et Johann de Empache, Canons of the Church in Trent, Bertholdus de Novadomo, Rabanus de Helmstat, and Dieter Betendorffer, as testimony of this letter under the addition of the Seal of Our Royal Majesty. Given at Trent, the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the one thousandth, four hundredth first year of Our Lord, during the first year of our reign.

By order of the Lord King,

Johann Winheim”

It is further known to me:<sup>2</sup>

1. That a certain John Buonacorsi was Master of the Mint in Florence in 1325, whose son, Lapus John followed him in this office in 1326 and with whose descendants the family line became extinct after 1381. The coat of arms of this family is completely different from the one in the above preceding document, and prefers for this reason to be acknowledged in its further relationship to the coat of arms first mentioned. Coat of arms: In blue, three golden crossbars hanging down from the top in three equal spaces, under the middle two spaces a golden flap hangs equally as is worn in a tournament

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<sup>2</sup> The following describes the coats of arms of various Bonacorsi (or Buonacorsi or Buonaccorsi) in Italy. Since I am not familiar with the ins and outs of heraldry, and am even less so in trying to decipher these technical terms from the German, I am not very confident of the translation which follows.

2. The coat of arms of the Buonacorsi of Massio, likewise in Florence: on the blue shield along the length, a lion of gold and red in the middle.
3. Coat of arms of the Buonacorsi of Confalon Terza San Spirito in Florence (1629): In blue, a golden right fess<sup>3</sup>, which an eight-pointed gold star flanks on both sides.
4. Coat of arms of the Buonaccorsi of Confalon Carlo Santa Croce in Florence (1672): On the shield of gold over blue divided diagonally of alternating colors, a clawed griffin in red. A red right fess, which in this arrangement a golden cross ending everywhere in foliage covers in the middle, covers the whole shield.
5. Coat of arms of the Buonacorsi in Toscana: in Blue, a golden lion, which holds a golden lilly between its paws.
6. Coat of arms of the Buonacorsi in Rome: In blue, an erect, natural, forward-looking black-spotted leopard.
7. Coat of arms of the Buonacorsi in Verona, from which line Johann was a knight in the same place in 1226. In silver, a blue-tongued clawed lion in red.
8. Coat of arms of the Corradini or Bonacorsi in Padua:
  - a) In blue a silver right fess, which three red hearts placed vertically along its length cover, is arrayed from the upper left to the right and is accompanied below by a gold star.
  - b) Is the same as a), only that the sloping fess is accompanied by a gold star above as well as below the fess.

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<sup>3</sup> A right fess is a broad stripe, which runs diagonally from the viewer's upper right down toward the lower left. In heraldry, one would say that it runs diagonally from the upper left to the lower right, since in heraldry, the orientation is given from the perspective of the bearer. Thus to the viewer, left is right and right is left. Go figure.

- c) In blue, under a gold main shield, on which a black eagle stands, there is a natural tree covered in foliage upon green soil, on whose branches a silver lion stands erect on both sides.
- d) On a shield of blue and gold divided diagonally into six sections. The first blue section is followed with three sections next to it. The third section is covered with two such (sections?), and the fifth is covered with a gold star.

9. Coat of arms of the Buonacorsi of Pistoia in Italy, Austria, and Bavaria: In gold, a blue right fess, which three silver moons with extended rays cover one right behind the other, and which a red star flanks on both sides.

The ancestor of the latter branch of the family was Bonus Kurz, who was Chancellor of Duke Wilhelm IV of Bavaria (born Nov. 13, 1493, ruled from 1511 until his death on March 6, 1550), and who frequently employed as his envoy, Latinized his name according to the contemporary custom into “Bonus Curtius”. His descendants gave themselves into the service of Italian princes, and changed the name to Buona Corsio, or Buonacorsi. A member of this branch of the family first returned to Bavaria around 1829, where the family was recorded in the list of nobles of that place.