ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on the trade of antique objects imported from the eastern Mediterranean into Italy during the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries. Through a close examination of archival and visual sources, including drawings, letters, travel accounts, and inventories, this study explores how ancient artifacts, such as coins, marbles, sculptures, gems, vases, and inscriptions, were recovered and transferred from the territories bordering the eastern Mediterranean to the Italian peninsula where they entered the art market and rapidly circulated among collectors.

Chapter one considers the revival of Greek learning in fifteenth-century Italy and argues how the search for Greek manuscripts also marked the beginning of the Renaissance importation of classical artifacts from the eastern Mediterranean. The chapter discusses both early travelers such as Cristoforo Buondelmonti (1386-1430c.) and early collectors: Niccolò Niccoli; Poggio Bracciolini; and the Genoese Andreolo Gisutiniani. Chapter two focuses on Ciriaco d’Ancona (c.1391-1452) and considers his role as purveyor of antiquities to the west. It aims to reconstruct his personal collection of antique objects and to illustrate how an interest in classical artifacts had also developed among his circle of friends in the eastern Mediterranean. Chapter three takes into account discoveries and importations of antiquities after the fall of Byzantium, and considers the Ottomans’ participation in this trade with the west. Chapter four looks at the archeological activities of Venetian officials in the territories of the Stato da Mar and considers the wealth of antique material shipped back to Venice for public and private use.
Chapter 5 investigates the structure and the functioning of the antiquity market in Venice and illustrates the commercial activities of merchants, jewelers and *antiquari* dealing in antique artifacts. The final chapter considers the developing awareness of stylistic distinctions between Greek and Roman antiquities in the later sixteenth century and the emergence of a new critical sensibility.

While providing new important insights into the history of antiquities collecting, this study shows how the revival of interest in classical remains during the early modern period was not exclusively focused on the objects unearthed in Rome nor was it a phenomenon confined to the west.
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INTRODUCTION

At the end of the second century B.C. in Alexandria, Egypt, a large semitransparent chalcedony was carved in the shape of a bowl and richly decorated in relief inside and out with an elaborate symbolic divine iconography (fig. 1).\(^1\) When the Ptolemaic dynasty of Egypt fell to the Romans in the first century B.C. the cup, together with other royal riches, was transferred to Rome and deposited in the state treasury. From Rome it was later moved to Constantinople and only in the aftermath of the sack of Byzantium, perpetrated by the Crusaders in 1204, did the bowl return to the west.\(^2\)

In November of 1239 the cup was in Italy where two Provencal merchants, Gusbertus de Turano and Bernardus de Lyes, sold it to the emperor Frederick II (1194-1250) for 1,230 ounces of gold.\(^3\) In 1253 Frederick’s treasury was dispersed and two hundred years later the antique cup reappeared at the Timurids’ court in the east. Either in Samarqand or in Heart the precious Hellenistic object attracted the attention of the painter

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\(^2\) This reconstruction of the cup’s movements is offered by Carlo Gasparri, "«La scudella nostra di calcidonio»: una Tazza per molte corti," in *Le Gemme Farnes*, ed. Carlo Gasparri (Naples: Electa, 1994), 75.

\(^3\) See Ulrico Pannuti, "La ‘Tazza Farnese’: Datazione, interpretazione e trasmissione del cimelio," in *Technology and Analysis of Ancient Gemstones. Proceedings of the European Workshop held at Ravello*, ed. Tony Hackens and Ghislaine Moucharte (Rixensart: Pact Belgium, 1989), 205-15. As Pannuti points out, this was a huge sum if we consider that in 1272 Thomas Aquinas’ monthly salary as a lecturer in theology at the University of Naples was one gold ounce.
Mohammed al-Khayyam who drew it with pen and ink on an inscribed sheet now in Berlin (fig. 2).\(^4\)

Some decades later, before 1458, the cup was again among the possessions of a western ruler. The poet Angelo Poliziano reports how Alfonso V of Aragon (1396-1458), King of Naples, had acquired it from a merchant.\(^5\) Since then the cup has remained in Italian collections. It was owned by Cardinal Lodovico Trevisan (1465), then went to the collection of Pope Paul II and in 1471 Lorenzo de’ Medici acquired it in Rome.\(^6\) In the sixteenth century the bowl passed from the Medici to the Farnese family when, in 1586, Alessandro Farnese inherited it from his mother Margherita of Austria (1522-1586). Since then the antique cup has been known as the “Tazza Farnese” [Farnese Bowl].\(^7\) In 1735 it finally reached Naples where it is preserved to this day in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale. But in Naples the antique sardonyx from Egypt had to endure

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\(^6\) For the vicissitudes of the bowl during the fifteenth century see most recently also Laurie S. Fusco and Gino Corti, *Lorenzo de’ Medici, Collector and Antiquarian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 128 and the documents published in the appendix.

one final misadventure when, during the night of October 1, 1925, a museum guard smashed it with his umbrella and broke it into several pieces (fig. 3).8

The Tazza Farnese is, and probably has always been since its creation, an extraordinary artifact, and it is because of its exceptionality and some fortunate coincidences that it is possible to reconstruct with many details its long biography.9 This is not, however, the case for most of the antique objects that circulated and were collected during the Renaissance. Our knowledge of the vicissitudes of a late antique marble casket today in Leiden is perhaps more typical (fig. 4).10 Produced during the sixth century A.D., it does not appear in the historical record until the end of the sixteenth century, when it is documented in the collection of the noble Venetian Andrea Vendramin (fig. 5).11 At Vendramin’s death it was sold to the Dutch collectors Gerard and Jan Reynst, but

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later disappeared until it was fished out of a canal in Amsterdam in the eighteenth century. It is now in the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden in Leiden.

The tales of both the Tazza Farnese and the Leiden casket - featuring an object with antique origins; travelers, merchants and collectors; and trade between east and west - are emblematic of this dissertation, which examines the arrival and the commerce of antique objects from the eastern Mediterranean into Italy during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. More specifically this study explores how antiquities - coins, marbles, bronze sculptures, gems and inscriptions - were found, recovered and transferred from the east to the Italian peninsula, whence they entered the art market and rapidly circulated throughout Europe. This was a time when travelers began to venture out into the eastern Mediterranean, moved by a new curiosity towards the Greek culture they had come to know through classical texts. It was also a time when ancient artifacts began to be prized as relics of the past and studied for their historical value; they were no longer simply reused as building materials or displayed as trophies of conquest in the decoration of public spaces. Now they would begin to enter private collections as objects of prestige and aesthetic delight.

As demonstrated by the two examples mentioned above – the Tazza Farnese of the second century B.C. and the late antique casket of the sixth century A.D. – I did not

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12 See Franciscus van Oudendorp, *Brevis veterum monumentorum ab Ampl. V. Gerardo Papenbroekio academiae Lugduno-Batavorum legatorum descriptio* (Lugdunum Batavorum1746), 59, n. 79.

set strict chronological limits to the age of the objects I discuss in this dissertation. It is important to keep in mind, indeed, that the category of “antiquities” during the Renaissance was interpreted in a much broader sense than it is today. Yet, having to somehow limit the scope of my investigation, I generally tried to consider objects primarily created in Greek and Roman times and I left out of my discussion many of those “alternative antiquities,” such as objects from Medieval and Byzantine periods, that were, in fact, also part of Renaissance antiquarianism.\(^\text{14}\)

Nor in my investigation did I give preference to one typology of objects over another: I write about small coins as well as about large marble columns. Nonetheless it is good to remember that Renaissance collectors themselves were discriminating in their choices and changed their collecting preferences over time. While in the fifteenth century they were mainly interested in coins, gems and other small precious artifacts, by the end of that century marble statuary had become the new focus of attention for many collectors.

In the title of the dissertation, and throughout the text, I use the expression “eastern Mediterranean” to define the geographical area from where the antique objects with which I am concerned came from (fig. 6). I chose this broad term because its

\(^\text{14}\) For the idea that numerous objects and monuments that today we classify as Byzantine or Medieval were considered antique in the Renaissance see Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood, "What counted as an "Antiquity" in the Renaissance?," in *Renaissance Medievalisms*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2009), 53-74. In a forthcoming essay I touch upon another aspect important to understand that the Renaissance idea of “antiquity” was broad not only in chronological terms, but also concerning typologies. Many kinds of objects that we do not include traditionally in our art historical accounts, such as for example unicorn horns, were often in fact considered in the Renaissance antique items and followed the same commercial and collecting paths as coins or marble sculptures. Giada Damen, “Shopping for “cose antiche” in late Sixteenth century Venice,” in *Venice in the Renaissance: Essays in Honor of Patricia Fortini Brown*, edited by Blake De Maria and Mary Frank (Milan: 5 Continents Editions, 2012 forthcoming).
flexibility and expansiveness allow me to include territories of Asia Minor and Greece, which comprised in antiquity important centers of the Greek world and later of the Roman Empire. These territories belong today to many different modern nations: Greece, Turkey, Albania, Bulgaria and in some cases, like Cyprus, to more than one. “Eastern Mediterranean” was not an expression used during the early modern period when these regions were mentioned in many other different ways, using both ancient and more recently created place names. Yet, an early example from the court of Mantua at the end of the fifteenth century shows how confusing it would have been to adopt a more specific term such as “Greece” or “Graecia.” The marquis Francesco II Gonzaga (1466-1519) indeed had a room in his palace at Marmirolo called the “Camera Graeca” or the Greek Room. The walls had been decorated around 1494 by Francesco Mantegna with murals representing five different locations: Constantinople (Istanbul in Turkey), Adrianople (Edirne in Turkey), the Strait of Gallipoli (Geliobu in Turkey), the port city of Valona (Vlorë in Albania) and the island of Rhodes (in Greece). The topographical views of these centers made up the panorama of Graecia as it was known and perceived by the Gonzagas who at that time maintained frequent political and commercial relations with the Ottomans in these regions.

By reading Ptolemy, Pausanias and Strabo, Renaissance scholars had acquired knowledge about the ancient Greek world and its sites, but still by the middle of the sixteenth century many uncertainties existed when trying to set the geographical borders.

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15 Among the terms I found in archival documents and primary sources used to indicate these regions are for example: “Grecia,” “Levante,” and “Oriente.”

of Greece.\textsuperscript{17} Around 1540, Nicholaos Sophianos produced his extensive depiction of Greece in a map - \textit{Totius Graeciae Descriptio} – which combined together the ancient and the modern Greek worlds.\textsuperscript{18} Sophianos’ map became an important tool for antiquarian research, but the extremely wide borders of his Greece – the map includes an area extending to the Balkans and to Southern Italy – reflect once again the author’s own vision of the Greek world.\textsuperscript{19}

In some instances I too have interpreted the “eastern Mediterranean” broadly, to include in my discussion objects that, like the \textit{Tazza Farnese}, travelled from well beyond this region.

In a passage of his \textit{Venetia città nobilissima et singolare} (1581), Francesco Sansovino introduces the collection of antiquities assembled in the palace of the Patriarch of Aquileia Giovanni Grimani on the ruga Giuffa with these words:

Nor are lacking the collections of antiquities and medals, among which the most noteworthy not only in Venice, but also in any other city, is that of Giovanni Grimani, Patriarch of Aquileia, in which, first instituted by the Cardinals, his predecessors, with sculptures and medals from Rome, from Athens, from

\textsuperscript{17} William Stenhouse, \textit{Greek Antiquities and the Extent of the Classical World}, paper delivered at the Annual meeting of the Renaissance Society of America on April 9, 2010. I am extremely grateful to William Stenhouse for having given me the opportunity to read the text of his paper.


Constantinople and from all over Greece, he has created a place famous for and full of beautiful antiquities, rare for quantity and quality.\textsuperscript{20}

When, in 1604, Giovanni Stringa augmented Sansovino’s volume with his additions, he described in similar terms the collection of another Venetian, the procurator of Saint Mark, Federico Contarini:

This gentleman had carried with great expense from Athens, from Constantinople, from the Morea and from almost all of the islands of the archipelagos, many statues whole and fragmentary, with which he decorated his dwelling or palace in Saint Mark’s square in the \textit{Procuratie Nuove}.\textsuperscript{21}

Both early and recent scholarship on Venetian collections of antiquities has been built upon these passages.\textsuperscript{22} But what do we really know about the arrival of antiquities into Venice during the early modern period? What do the documents tell us about the concrete circumstances of these importations? Who were the protagonists of this trade? Do the archives offer any details to support Sansovino’s and Stringa’s claims?

Initially the aim of this dissertation was to find answers to these questions and to define solidly documented examples of the importation of antique objects from the eastern Mediterranean into Venice during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. As I


\textsuperscript{22} For a comprehensive treatment of the subject see Irene Favaretto, \textit{Arte antica e cultura antiquaria nelle collezioni venete al tempo della Serenissima}, Rist. riv. e corretta. ed. (Rome: L’Erma di Bretschneider, 2002).
began my research its scope immediately expanded beyond the limits of Venice to include other Italian centers, some of which at various points had been even more receptive than Venice itself to the antiquities coming from the eastern Mediterranean. Accordingly, Florence, Mantua, Genoa, Ferrara, Ancona and Rome are also discussed in this study as important receptacles for the ancient artifacts arriving from the east.

The literature on antiquity collections assembled in Italy during the Renaissance period is vast, as antique objects and their owners in Rome, Venice, Florence, Mantua, and Naples are the subjects of an ever increasing number of new publications.23 Within this extensive scholarship, most studies looking into the topic of the importation of antique artifacts from the eastern Mediterranean focused on Venetian collections.24 However, a handful of researchers have attempted to survey the subject in broader terms. Already in 1969 in one of the chapters of his still fundamental book, The Renaissance Discovery of Classical Antiquity, Roberto Weiss addressed the issue of the


discovery of the ancient Greek world by fifteenth century humanists and antiquarians.\textsuperscript{25} At the very beginning of his essay, in a sentence that has since become almost proverbial, Weiss wrote: “the archaeological study of the Greek world during the Renaissance practically began and ended with Ciriaco d’Ancona, and by 1455 Ciriaco was dead.”\textsuperscript{26} Accordingly, Weiss’ account goes no further. His contribution, however, sowed the fruitful seeds for all future investigations.

In 1986 Luigi Beschi resumed the discourse in his essay, “La scoperta dell’arte greca,” in a three-volume publication edited by Salvatore Settis entitled \textit{Memoria dell’antico nell’arte italiana} (1984-86).\textsuperscript{27} Beschi’s account covers a much-expanded chronological span from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. By the time he wrote his essay, Beschi, an archeologist and former professor at the University of Florence, had already been engaged for more than ten years in the investigation of the provenance of many Greek sculptures collected in Venice during the Renaissance.\textsuperscript{28} Beschi’s intent was to individuate the archeological provenance - “provenienza di scavo” - of works that once collected in Venice are now scattered in museums throughout the world.

Analyzing the style, iconography and technical aspects of the pieces with the support of


\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 131.


some archival documentation, but mainly using archeological evidence, Beschi has been successful in recognizing the original provenance for many of these fragments.

More recently, *In the Light of Apollo: Italian Renaissance and Greece*, an exhibition organized in Athens in 2003, expanded on the topic.\textsuperscript{29} The scope of the project, directed by Mina Gregori, was broad and ambitious. It brought together a good number of antique objects and Renaissance artworks - from manuscripts to statuary - inspired by antique (not exclusively of Greek provenance) models. An accompanying two-volume catalogue, published in English and in Greek, included essays on literary, philosophical and artistic connections between Italy and Greece during the Renaissance period, taking into account both the ancient and the early-modern Greek world. Beschi also contributed an important essay to the volume on travelers and collectors interested in the antiquities of Greece.\textsuperscript{30}

Although my research has greatly benefitted from the groundwork laid by these past studies, in this dissertation I have tried to look at the topic in a distinct way. In contrast to Beschi, my approach is less archeological and more art historical. My aim has not been to compile an inventory of the works that arrived in Italy from the eastern Mediterranean nor to individuate the specific archeological provenance of individual objects, but rather to tell the larger story of how and by whom these antiquities were transferred to the west. I have tried to provide concrete accounts of the journeys of antique objects from their site of origin to Italy before they actually entered the cabinets.

\textsuperscript{29} Mina Gregori, ed. *In the Light of Apollo: Italian Renaissance and Greece*, 2 vols. (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana, 2003).

and galleries of private collectors. Together with the ancient artworks, the focus of my investigation has been on the people who saw, found, transported, sold and finally owned them. In this work I place the quest for and commerce of antique objects in a wide historical and cultural context by considering some major themes: the revival of Greek learning at the beginning of the fifteenth century; the development of antiquity collecting in Renaissance Italy and Europe; travel and trade in the Mediterranean basin; and cultural exchanges between the Latin west and the Greek and Ottoman east. My interest in these broader questions has been inspired by the works of numerous scholars. Seminars, lectures and books by Patricia Fortini Brown have been most important in sparking my curiosity towards life in Renaissance Venice and in particular towards the Venetians’ special relationship with both the ancient past and the eastern Mediterranean.31 Her writings, together with Marilyn Perry’s contributions on Venetian collectors and their antiquities, drew me to this dissertation topic in the first place.32 Recent literature on cross-cultural exchanges within the Mediterranean world and more general reassessments of the history of the Mediterranean basin have led me to look towards the east, at the


antiquities discovered outside Italy. Studies on the cultural and intellectual life of early modern Italy have induced me to take into account in my discussion the activities and lives of individuals that do not typically fall within the scope of art historical investigations. Finally, the growing amount of literature on the material culture and economic life of the Renaissance have influenced my analysis of the functioning of the antiquity market that developed in early modern Italy and in Venice in particular.


My narrative begins in the first chapter with the revival of Greek learning in fifteenth-century Italy. Indeed, it was the humanists’ enthusiasm and eagerness to learn the ancient Greek language that prompted numerous travels from Italy to the eastern Mediterranean in the first decades of that century. The search for Greek manuscripts in Constantinople and the formation of the first Greek libraries on the Italian peninsula have been studied extensively. Less attention, however, has been paid to the fact that together with hundreds of manuscripts, antique objects also migrated at this time to the west. Here I write as well about Cristoforo Buondelmonti (1386-1430c.), who was one of the learned men who travelled to the east searching for books. As far as we know, Buondelmonti did not acquire any antique artifacts in the eastern Mediterranean, but his travels were crucial in stimulating the curiosity of many educated men towards the antiquities of Greece. In two important volumes – Descriptio insulae Cretae and Liber Insularum Archipelagi - Buondelmonti described and portrayed in maps the antique sites of Crete and the Aegean islands, territories that he had explored with great scrutiny. His books became true bestsellers and were reproduced in numerous copies, translated into various languages and read by many.36

36 The Descriptio Insulae Cretae was first printed by Flaminio Corner in Latin in 1755 in his Creta Sacra sive De episcopis utriusque ritus Graeci et Latini in insula Cretae (Venice: Giovan Battista Pasquali, 1775), I, 2-76. Most recently the text has been published with a French translation: Cristoforo Buondelmonti, Descriptio insule Crete; et, Liber insularum. Cap. XI, Creta (Heraklion: Syllogos politistikes anaptýxeos Herakleioú, 1981). This edition includes also the chapter on Crete from the Liber Insularum. The Liber insularum Archipelagi is known in numerous manuscript redactions, but it has been published only in three editions: Cristoforo Buondelmonti, Librum Insularum Archipelagi (Lipsiae - Berolini: G. Reimer, 1824). A later edition by Émile Legrand is the French translation of a Greek version of the text preserved in two copies (Istanbul, Topkapi Saray Kütüphanesi, gr. 24 and Paris, Bibliothèque National, suppl. gr. 1184): Cristoforo Buondelmonti, Description des îles de l'archipel par Christophe Buondelmonti (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1897). The most recent includes a German translation of a manuscript in Düssedorf: Cristoforo Buondelmonti, Liber Insularum Archipelagi: Transkription des Exemplars Universtität und Landesbibliothek Düssedorf Ms. G 13 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2007).
The second chapter is dedicated to Ciriaco d’Ancona (c.1391-1452), a merchant who has been credited with being the father of modern archeology.\(^\text{37}\) During the first half of the fifteenth century Ciriaco traveled tirelessly in the eastern Mediterranean and recorded in texts and drawings the antiquities he encountered, having a special interest in inscriptions. Ciriaco and his now-lost notebooks have been studied by many scholars beginning in the last century and the literature on him is now extensive.\(^\text{38}\) However, in my discussion I consider Ciriaco mainly in his role as purveyor of antique objects to the west, aiming to reconstruct the collection of antiquities he accumulated over time. Following Ciriaco’s peripatetic life I also look at his circle of friends, especially those who lived in the eastern Mediterranean and shared his enthusiasm and curiosity towards the study of antiquities. The collecting activities of these individuals show how antiquarian curiosity had developed beyond the Italian peninsula and how the Renaissance interest in remains of the past had its offspring in the eastern Mediterranean.

By 1455, Ciriaco seems to have died, and Constantinople had fallen into Turkish hands.\(^\text{39}\) These events have been often considered to mark the end of early archeological explorations in the east. In reality many individuals curious about antique remains continued to travel to the eastern Mediterranean, and ancient objects, together with many Byzantine artifacts, kept arriving to the west. In the third chapter I consider some of the


\(^\text{38}\) While the literature on Ciriaco is continuously growing, nobody has produced a book-length study on him, except for Jean Colin who had planned a monograph which was never completed, see Jean Colin, \textit{Cyriaque d'Ancône. Le voyageur, le marchand, l'humaniste} (Paris: Maloine Editeur, 1981). More recently a biographical novel on Ciriaco’s life has been written by Marina Belozerskaya, see Marina Belozerskaya, \textit{To Wake the Dead. A Renaissance Merchant and the Birth of Archaeology} (New York - London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009).

\(^\text{39}\) The precise date of Ciriaco’s death is unknown, but it is generally accepted as 1452.
protagonists of these importations - including collectors, merchants, pilgrims and antiquarians – and the ways in which antiquities reached the Italian peninsula after the fall of Byzantium. In my discussion I also take into account the fact that by the second half of the fifteenth century the Ottomans had greatly expanded towards the west, becoming the new custodians of the remains of the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations. Thus the search for classical monuments often became also the occasion for western antiquarians to encounter the exotic Turks.

Venice has been the point of departure for this study and takes a central position in my project. In the fourth chapter I look at some of the Venetian officials who actively became involved in the excavation of antiquities in the territories of Venice’s maritime empire, the Stato da Mar, during the sixteenth century. The findings of these early archeological campaigns – consisting of life-size sculptures, marble fragments, coins and inscriptions - were sometimes re-used locally, but more often were shipped back to Venice for public and private use.

In the fifth chapter I examine the structure and the functioning of the market in antique objects that had developed in Venice by the sixteenth century. Using both published and unpublished sources I tell the stories of the numerous merchants - jewelers, antiquari and second-hand retailers – engaged in buying and selling ancient artifacts to an international group of clients.

In the sixth and final chapter I conclude by looking back at some of the archival documents I have used in my study and I consider the ways in which Renaissance sources record (and do not record) the presence in Italy of artifacts imported from the eastern
Mediterranean. I also reflect on how these objects, coming from a vastly-expanded geography, were understood and seen by Renaissance collectors, antiquarians and artists.

During the early modern period the interaction and interchange of people and cultures along the Mediterranean shores – specifically, the Greek and Ottoman east and the Latin west – occurred not only thanks to the circulation of ideas and individuals, but also through the transfer of objects, among which were the ancient artifacts discussed in this dissertation. By looking carefully at the migration of these objects into western collections and by reflecting on how they enhanced Renaissance art and learning, this dissertation aims to offer new insight to the history of archeology, the history of collecting, and the development of a new sense of the ancient past. In sum, it aims to contribute to current debates on the Mediterranean basin as a place of vibrant cultural, economic and artistic exchange.

Translations

All the translations are my own unless otherwise noted.
CHAPTER I
REDISCOVERING ANCIENT GREECE: BOOKS AND MARBLES

You have sent me from the confines of Europe a gift than which nothing could be more worthy of the donor, more gratifying to the recipient, or more noble in itself … Some make presents of gold and silver … others of gems and precious stones … others again of jewelry and goldsmith’s work. … You have given me Homer … pure and undefiled in his own tongue as it sprang from that divine mind … Alas! Your Homer has no voice for me, or rather I have no ears for him! Yet the mere sight of him rejoices me, and I often embrace him and sighing over him I say: «O great man, how much I wish I could hear you!»

With these words, Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374) gave thanks in 1354 to Nicholas Sigeros, a dignitary of the Byzantine court whom he had met some years earlier in Verona, for the gift of a Greek manuscript of Homer. Despite the joy of owning Homer’s text, Petrarch could only enjoy the exterior beauty of the manuscript and the pleasure of holding it in his hands, as its contents were silent to him. Petrarch was unable to read Greek and never managed to do so. It is unclear why he did not master the ancient language since he had in the Calabrese monk Barlaam di Seminara his first teacher of Greek. We know, however, that by the middle of the fourteenth century only a very

1 “Misisti enim ad me de Europe ultimis donum, quo nullum vel te dignius vel mihi gratius vel re ipsa nobilius mittere potuisses … Donant aurum quidam vel argentum … lapillos gemmasque … donant monilia et baltheos, fulginosorum decus artificium … Donasti Homerus … ex ipsis greci eloquii scatebris purum et incorruptum et qualis primum divino illi perfluxit ingenio … Homerus tuus apud me mutus, imo vero ego apud illum surdus sum. Gaudeo tamen vel aspectu solo et sepe illum amplexus ac suspirans dico: «O magne vir, quam cupide te audirem!».” Francesco Petrarca, Familiarum rerum libri (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1933-1942), book 18, letter 2.


3 Petrarch met Barlaam in Avignon in 1342 where the latter was teaching Greek at the papal Curia. After this first experience, from which he did not learn much, Petrarch never looked for other Greek instructors. Later on another Calabrese, Leontius Pilatus, helped him with the translation of Homer, but did not give him any formal lessons of grammar. On these matters see Roberto Weiss, "Petrarca e il mondo greco," Atti e Memorie dell'Accademia Petrarca di Lettere, Arti e Scienze di Arezzo 36 (1952-1953): 65-96.
limited group of people in Italy, mainly from the southern regions, could actually read Greek.\(^4\)

The situation was about to change when, a few decades later, Coluccio Salutati (1331-1406), the humanist Chancellor of Florence (fig. 7), together with the wealthy Palla Strozzi (1372-1462), managed to have the teaching of Greek at the Florentine studium assigned to the Constantinopolitan Manuel Chrysoloras (c.1355-1415).\(^5\)

In 1396, writing to his pupil Iacopo Angeli da Scarperia (ca. 1360-1410),\(^6\) who had moved to Constantinople to study Greek, Salutati announced: “Thanks to God and to the generosity of our leaders, my dearest son, the most excellent Chrysoloras, has been accepted as teacher of Greek letters in Florence,” and gave him instructions to return to Italy with as many Greek manuscripts as possible, sending a list of desiderata.\(^7\)

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\(^{5}\) Already between 1360 and 1361, Leontius Pilatus, a Greek scholar from Calabria, had taught Greek at the Florentine studium, thanks to the mediation of Boccaccio. See Pier Giorgio Ricci, "La prima cattedra di greco a Firenze," *Rinascimento* 3 (1952): 159-65. On Coluccio Salutati and his role in promoting Greek studies in Florence see Berthold L. Ullman, *The Humanism of Coluccio Salutati* (Padua: Antenore, 1963), in particular 117-26.


\(^{7}\) “Postquam Dei et dominorum nostrorum gratia factum est, dilectissime fili, quod vir Chrysoloras docendis grecis litteris Florentiam est ascites…” Coluccio Salutati, *Epistolario di Coluccio Salutati* (Rome: Grafica editrice romana, 1891-1911), letter 3, 129.
Manuel Chrysoloras’s arrival in Florence in 1397 marked the beginning of Greek scholarship in Italy (fig. 8). Chrysoloras stayed in Florence for only three years, until 1400, receiving an annual salary of 150 gold florins - later raised to 250 gold florins - with the assignment to teach Greek literature and grammar. His lessons immediately prompted the need to acquire ancient Greek texts in the east and induced many to travel to Constantinople to gather manuscripts and to learn the language. As the Florentine bookseller Vespasiano da Bisticci (1421-1498) explains in the biography of Palla Strozzi:

When Manuel arrived in Italy, in the said way, with the favor of Messer Palla, there were no books; and since without books nothing could be done, Messer Palla sent for an infinite number of volumes from Greece at his own expense; he had Ptolemy’s *Cosmography* with a map sent all the way from Constantinople; Plutarch’s *Lives*, the works of Plato and many more books.

Thus, in those final years of the fourteenth century the voyages undertaken between west and east to procure texts by Greek authors written in their original language multiplied, as did the trips from east to west of Byzantine scholars moving to Italy to teach the language.

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10 “Venuto Manuello in Italia, nel modo detto, col favore di messer Palla, mancavano i libri; chè sanza i libri non si poteva fare nulla. Messer Palla mandò in Grecia per infiniti volumi, tutti a sua ispese; la *Cosmografia* di Tolomeo colla pittura, fece venire infino da Gostantinopoli; le *Vite* di Plutarco, l’opere di Platone, e infiniti libri degli altri.” Vespasiano Da Bisticci, *Vite di uomini illustri del secolo XV* (Florence: Barbera, Bianchi e Comp., 1859), 272.
Venice thus did not have the primacy in establishing the teaching of Greek, and only in 1463 was the first chair of Greek created at the University of Padua.\footnote{Deno J. Geanakoplos, "The Discourse of Demetrius Chalcondyles on the Inauguration of Greek Studies at the University of Padua in 1463," \textit{Studies in the Renaissance} 21 (1974): 118-44.} At the end of the fourteenth century when Greek studies were burgeoning in Florence, Venice was described by the noble Byzantine humanist Demetrios Kydones (1324-1398), who lived for a year in the lagoon city, as a mercantile port with not much to offer to an intellectual like him:

> Staying all this time in Venice I did not know what to do because, as you know well, this city since its origins has been the homeland of merchants, and it is very difficult and nonsensical to live there without a specific reason, unless you have trading to do or you have been sent there for business. I was bored during my stay and the memory of my homeland and my friends prevented me from sleeping.\footnote{Letter written by Kydones to his friend the friar Maximos Chrysoberges, from Pera soon after his return to Constantinople from Venice in 1391. See Raymond Joseph Loenertz, ed. \textit{Les recueils de lettres de Demetrius Cydones} (Rome: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1947), II, letter 443. Quoted in Italian in Agostino Petrusi, "Venezia, la cultura greca e il Boccaccio," in \textit{Saggi Veneto-Bizantini}, ed. Giovanni Battista Parente (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1999), 242-43. On Kydones’ travel to Italy with the emperor John V between 1369 and 1391 see Kianka, "Demetrios Kydones and Italy," 99-110.}

It was, however, thanks to its very own mercantile nature that the city became the major port of departure and arrival for learned men and antique Greek books. In 1403 Guarino da Verona (1370-1460) sailed off from Venice on the same ship that was taking the Venetian ambassador Paolo Zane to Constantinople. Guarino spent five years in the eastern Mediterranean, where he learned Greek and gathered a booty of antique
manuscripts. Sometime after his return Guarino moved to Venice and began to teach Greek to a multitude of young men in a private school he had established in his house. Even Francesco Filelfo (1398-1481) stopped in Venice before leaving for the eastern Mediterranean. He left the lagoon in 1420 after receiving Venetian citizenship and traveled to Constantinople as secretary of the bailo Benedetto Emo. Filelfo returned to Italy seven years later with a Greek wife, a retinue of servants and slaves, and a cargo of Greek books.

The mercantile activities of the Venetian patriciate, however, did not prevent them from becoming serious students and collectors of Greek texts. Guglielmo Querini, for example, was an active merchant with diverse commercial activities in the eastern Mediterranean. He administered his business from Venice through numerous agents and traded in a great number of goods: spices, gemstones, pearls, slaves, exotic animals and precious fabrics. Thanks to his financial security Querini was able to lend money to humanists in search of Greek codices. Francesco Filelfo, for example, apparently

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13 Remigio Sabbadini, Le scoperte dei codici Latini e Greci ne' secoli XIV e XV (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1905), 44.


18 Gino Luzzato, Storia economica di Venezia dall'XI an XVI secolo (Venice: Marsilio, 1995), 152-57.
borrowed a large sum from Querini and his brother Taddeo during his stay in Constantinople.19 But Querini also cultivated literary interests and acquired numerous books for his own pleasure. He gathered a quite large library from which he often lent books to his friends. At the time of his death the executors of Querini’s will sold more than one hundred volumes which had been found in his library.20

Guarino’s disciples in Venice – Francesco Barbaro, Leonardo Giustinianii and Andrea Giuliani – soon became distinguished humanists and nurtured tight relationships with their Florentine counterparts, exchanging books, translations, and ideas with them.21 Barbaro had traveled to Florence in 1415 where he met Ambrogio Traversari, Niccolò Niccoli and other humanists with whom he maintained epistolary exchanges for many years afterwards.22 The correspondence between Francesco Barbaro and Ambrogio Traversari attests to these lively relationships between Venice and Florence.23

Two illuminations in a manuscript containing Guarino’s Latin translation of Strabo’s Geography suggest the prominence attained by some of the Venetian nobility in

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21 On these early humanists see their biographies in King, Venetian Humanism in an Age of Patrician Dominance.


the world of Greek learning by the middle of the fifteenth century.24 One of the miniatures (fig. 9) shows the old Guarino in scholar’s robes, against the background of an *all’antica* archway, presenting his work of translation to the Venetian nobleman Jacopo Antonio Marcello (1398/99 – 1464/65). The pope, Nicholas V, had originally commissioned Guarino’s translation, but at his death in 1455 Marcello had become the patron of the work. The event is narrated by Vespasiano da Bisticci:

Pope Nicholas asked him [Guarino] to translate Strabo’s *De situ orbis*, and since it was divided into the three parts of Asia, Africa and Europe, he paid him five hundred florins for each part. Before the Pope’s death he had translated two parts and had received a thousand ducats. After Nicholas died he translated the third part and wished to send it to some one who would pay him for his effort because since he had children and little wealth he was obliged to earn money with his work. He offered it to one of the chief men of Florence at that time, and since this one did not want to give him anything, he sent it to a Venetian gentleman, who generously gratified him for his labor.25

The second illumination represents Marcello offering the work to his friend the king René of Anjou (fig. 10). These images are important not only for their value as exquisite works of art, probably by the hand of the young Giovanni Bellini (c.1430-1513), but also

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24 The illuminated manuscript is preserved in France (Albi, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 77). It is a presentation copy of Guarino’s translation into Latin of the Greek text of Strabo’s *Geography*, completed on September 13, 1459. Guarino’s original autograph translation was completed on July 13, 1458 and is preserved in a manuscript at Oxford (Bodleian Library, cod. Canon. Lat. 301). Together with the two full-page miniatures the Albi manuscript contains also a series of illuminated initials. On Guarino’s translation see Germaine Aujac, "La géographie grecque durant le Quattrocento: l’exemple de Strabon," *Geographia Antiqua* 13 (2004): 147-69. For Jacopo Antonio Marcello see Margaret L. King, *The Death of the Child Valerio Marcello* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

25 “Pregato di poi da papa Nicola, eh’egli traducessi Istrabone *De situ orbis*, et perché gli era diviso in tre parti, l’Asia, l’Africa et l’Europa, gli dava per la sua fatica d’ogni parte cinquecento fiorini. Tradusse due, inanzie che pontefice morisse, et ebbe ducati mille. Morto papa Nicola, tradusse la terza parte, et voleva mandarla a qualche uomo, che gli donassi premio della sua fatica, perché avendo più figliuoli e non molte susstanze, bisognava che si valessi colla sua fatica. Cercato in Firenze di mandarlo a uno de’ principali di quegli tempi, trovandolo non disposto a dargli nulla della sua fatica, lo mandò a uno gentile uomo viniciano, che ebbe grandissimo animo a sodisfallo della sua fatica.” Da Bisticci, *Vite di uomini illustri del secolo XV*: 497.
since they reveal the Venetian engagement with Greek learning. The learned Marcello had patronized the translation of the Greek text into Latin and had commissioned its precious binding and the full-page illustrations in which he is represented as an intermediary of culture between the humanist translator and the French king.

The study of Greek spread rapidly in many Italian centers and ancient Greek works of philosophy, science and history were ever more often sought out to enrich libraries throughout Italy. Giovanni Aurispa (1376-1459) would create a profitable business in selling Greek codices. He had traveled to the eastern Mediterranean for the first time in 1413 to learn Greek. During his stay he procured numerous manuscripts - including the works of Sophocles and Euripides, which he recovered on the island of Chios. It is recorded that in Constantinople Aurispa used to sell his own clothes to put together enough money to buy Greek manuscripts, volumes that he later sold in Florence, Messina and other Italian centers. At the time of his second journey to the east, between 1421 and 1423, Aurispa procured the impressive number of 238 manuscripts.

In 1431 Nicolò Martinozzi, chancellor of Novello Malatesta (1418-1465) (fig. 11), was also in Constantinople buying manuscripts for the library that Novello was building in Cesena. Martinozzi acquired from the Genoese merchant Giovanni Galeotti a codex of Demosthenes for twenty-one iperpera (roughly the equivalent of seven ducats)

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26 For a recent discussion on the authorship of the two illuminations see the exhibition catalogue Giovanni Agosti and Dominique Thiébault, eds., Mantegna 1431-1506 (Milan: Officina Libraria, 2008), 122-23.


that still survives in Cesena. Unfortunately a larger consignment of books from the
eastern Mediterranean destined for Malatesta’s library was lost at sea. Nicolò Masini, the
sixteenth century biographer of Malatesta Novello, narrates:

Domenico Novello Malatesta had decided to make the library larger than it is, as
is clear from the foundations and from the wall erected above those walls adjacent
to the library on the eastern façade. But the lack of the necessary number of books
(some affirm, reporting a piece of information that came down through the
centuries by word of mouth, not in writing, that Novello was waiting for a great
number of precious books to arrive from Greece, but heard that the captain of the
ship was forced by a storm to throw them into the sea together with other goods)
induced him to give up on constructing the library as high as he had envisioned.

According to Pontico Virunio (1467-1520), Guarino da Verona experienced a similar,
even more dramatic, loss. On his way back to Italy from Constantinople, Guarino in fact
lost a chest full of precious manuscripts, causing him such deep grief that his hair turned
white overnight. Despite these and other similar losses, which must have occurred


32 The episode is narrated in the Vita Chrysolorae, an introduction included in Virunio’s edition of Guarino’s translation of the Erotemata written by Chrysoloras. Agostino Petrusi, "ΕΡΩΤΕΜΑΤΑ per la storia e le fonti delle prime grammatiche greche a stampa," Italia Medioevale e Umanistica 5 (1962): 321-51. Numerous similar unhappy cases of shipwrecks can be found in the sources. Leontius Pilatus, for example, drowned together with his Greek codices in a shipwreck on his way back from Constantinople in 1368. Niccolò Sagundino, instead, lost
countless times, Greek manuscripts continued to be imported into Italy and Europe from the eastern Mediterranean for many years afterwards.\textsuperscript{33}

Although many of the early humanists did not gain more than a superficial knowledge of the ancient Greek language and only a few became capable of producing fine works of translations, the study of Greek texts provided Italian intellectuals with a deeper understanding of antiquity. As a consequence, soon ancient artifacts from this newly discovered past, together with books, began to be searched for and imported into the libraries and collections of the west.

\textbf{Niccolò Niccoli: A Florentine Collector of Antiquities}

Among the most engaged humanists and avid collectors in the early years of the fifteenth century was one of Chrysoloras’s students, the Florentine Niccolò Niccoli (c.1365-1437).\textsuperscript{34} Numerous details about Niccoli’s biography are known from the writings of his contemporaries. These, however, provide contrasting portrayals of his personality depending on what their own relationship with Niccoli was. Those on friendly terms with him, such as Poggiro Bracciolini, Vespasiano da Bisticci, and Giannozzo

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{34} Although Niccoli is often mentioned in the literature about Florentine humanism and early collecting, the only monographic study on him is Giuseppe Zippel, \textit{Niccolò Niccoli. Contributo alla storia dell’umanesimo} (Florence: Fratelli Boccia, 1890). A more recent profile of Niccoli is in Joseph Alsop, \textit{The Rare Art Traditions: The History of Art Collecting and Its Linked Phenomena Wherever These Have Appeared}, 1st ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 322-34.
\end{itemize}
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Manetti, emphasized Niccoli’s moral virtues and intellectual achievements, while his enemies wrote bitter invectives against him and his unpleasant behavior.35

Niccoli was an enthusiastic scholar of ancient texts, which he collected extensively, and also copied himself. He was a protégé of Coluccio Salutati and attended Chrysoloras’ lectures without, however, really learning Greek in depth.36 In Florence he assembled a vast library of very old Greek and Latin manuscripts.37 Although the exact number of volumes he had gathered cannot be ascertained, it was very likely close to the 800 estimated by his contemporaries. Niccoli began to collect classical books very early in his life and relied on the help of friends, especially Bracciolini, Ambrogio Traversari, and Cosimo de’ Medici, to augment his holdings. As Vespasiano da Bisticci attests, Niccoli seized every opportunity to enlarge his library: “If somebody was leaving Florence to go to Greece or France or somewhere else, he would give them lists of books that were not available in Florence; and with the help of Cosimo de’ Medici, who was all his, he procured them from various places.”38


36 Vespasiano da Bisticci narrates that when Chrysoloras arrived in Florence Niccoli “entrò sotto la sua disciplina, e diventò dottissimo in quella lingua.” Da Bisticci, Vita di uomini illustri del secolo XV: 473. There are reasons to believe, however, that Niccoli never mastered the Greek language. Niccoli’s friend Giannozzo Manetti reports that although Niccoli played an important role in the recruitment of Chrysoloras for the Florentine studium, family troubles prevented him from learning Greek. See Berthold L. Ullman and Philip A. Stadter, The Public Library of Renaissance Florence Niccolò Niccoli, Cosimo de’ Medici, and the Library of San Marco (Padua: Editrice Antenore, 1972), 84.

37 For Niccoli’s library see Ibid., 57-104.

38 “Se di Firenze si partiva persona che andasse o in Grecia o in Francia o altrove, gli dava note di libri che non fussino in Firenze; e col mezzo di Cosimo de’ Medici, ch’era tutto suo, ne trasse di più luoghi.” Da Bisticci, Vita di uomini illustri del secolo XV: 474.
Moved by his great enthusiasm for antiquity, Niccoli was interested not only in rescuing classical texts, but also in the physical remains of the past. Already in 1409 Leonardo Bruni wrote a letter to Niccoli to satisfy his curiosity about the Roman monuments of Rimini. Together with books, Niccoli gathered in his house an extraordinarily rich collection of antique objects. The extent and content of his possessions are not known in detail, but Vespasiano da Bisticci described the abundance and variety of Niccoli’s holdings: “He had in his house an infinite number of medals, made of bronze and silver and gold, and many antique brass images, and numerous marble heads and other notable things.” From Vespasiano we learn also that many pieces had been gathered from all over through the generosity of friends: “Nicolò’s connections throughout the whole world, who wanted to please him, sent him marble statues, or antique vases, sculptures, marble epigraphs, paintings by exceptional artists, and many small mosaic tablets.” Some objects were also purchased, including the most famous piece in his collection: the chalcedony with Diomedes and the Palladium (fig. 12) which Niccoli bought for five gold florins from a boy on the street and resold sometime later to Ludovico Trevisan for two hundred florins. These were the early stages of

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40 “aveva in casa sua infinite medaglie di bronzo e di ariento e d’oro, e molte figure antiche d’ottone, e molte teste di marmo, e altre cose degne.” Da Bisticci, *Vite di uomini illustri del secolo XV*: 476.

41 “Avendo Nicolao notizia per tutto il mondo, chi gli voleva gratificare, gli mandava o statue di marmo, o vasi fatti dagli antichi, sculture, epitafi di marmo, pitture di mano di singolari maestri, e di molte cose di mosaico in tavolette.” Ibid., 480.

42 The complicated history of this gem, known today only through a cast and later reproductions, is summarized in Laurie S. Fusco and Gino Corti, *Lorenzo de' Medici, Collector and Antiquarian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 247, note 47.
collecting and not many people appreciated the value of antique objects, which therefore could be found at affordable prices.\textsuperscript{43}

Ancient manuscripts and precious artifacts often arrived together in Niccoli’s home. From a letter written by Ambrogio Traversari around 1424 we know, for example, that a dear friend of Niccoli, a certain Salomone, was sending to Florence from far away rare books and “supellectilem omnium pretiosissimam” [extremely precious objects].\textsuperscript{44} Some of the pieces in Niccoli’s collection arrived from the eastern Mediterranean. Around 1430 unspecified objects had been sent to him by Andreolo Giustiniani of Chios\textsuperscript{45} and in 1433 the Venetian Benedetto Dandolo reported to Traversari about having met a certain Francesco da Pistoia, in Syria, who was securing ancient coins on Niccoli’s behalf.\textsuperscript{46}

Niccoli was also well informed about the holdings of other early collections of antiquities assembled in Italy. When Ambrogio Traversari visited Venice in 1432 he had been instructed by Niccoli to make sure to inspect some specific objects. One was an

\textsuperscript{43} On Niccoli’s finances see Alsop, The Rare Art Traditions: The History of Art Collecting and Its Linked Phenomena Wherever These Have Appeared: 322-34.

\textsuperscript{44} Lorenzo Mehus, ed. \textit{Ambrosii Traversarri Generalii Camaldulensis aliorumque ad Ipsum et ad Alios de Eodem Ambrosio Latinae Epistolae a Domino Petro Canneto Abbate Camaldulensi in Libros XXV Tributae, Variorum Opera Distinctae, et Observationes Illustratae} (Florence: 1759). II, Liber 8, epistola 40. The letter is dated by Sabbadini to 1424, see Sabbadini, \textit{Le scoperte dei codici Latini e Greci ne’ secoli XIV e XV}: 54.


\textsuperscript{46} “Ex eo viro factus sum certior magistrum Franciscum Pistoriensem, quem quem offendid in Syria, multa tuo nomine quaerere, pluraque iam invenisse.” Mehus, \textit{Ambrosii Traversarri Generalii Camaldulensis aliorumque ad Ipsum et ad Alios de Eodem Ambrosio Latinae Epistolae a Domino Petro Canneto Abbate Camaldulensi in Libros XXV Tributae, Variorum Opera Distinctae, et Observationes Illustratae}, II, liber 8, epistola 48.
ancient Greek coin of the Queen Berenice and another a crystal gem bearing the portrait of Alexander (fig. 13).\textsuperscript{47} Benedetto Dandolo owned the coin of Berenice and showed it to Traversari who immediately wrote about it to Niccoli in one of his letters.\textsuperscript{48} Even more interestingly, Traversari also ordered a lead cast of the coin to send to his friend in Florence.\textsuperscript{49} To his great regret, Traversari did not have access to the crystal of Alexander, however, since it was no longer in Venice, having been sent somewhere far away by its “ineptus” owner.\textsuperscript{50}

Around 1420 Niccoli had planned to travel to Greece himself with the intention of exploring in person the territories he had learned about from his ancient books. Writing

\textsuperscript{47} “Effigiem auream Berenicis videre contendam, tuoque desiderio satisfacere, & chrystallinam Alexandri.” Ibid., II, liber 8, epistola 47.


\textsuperscript{49} See the letter written by Traversari to Ambrosio Geronimo in Mehus, \textit{Ambrosii Traversarii Generalis Camaldulensis alliorumque ad Ipsum et ad Alios de Eodem Ambrosio Latinæ Epistolæ a Domino Petro Canneto Abbate Camaldulensi in Libros XXV Tributæ, Variorum Opera Distinctæ, et Observationes Illustratae}, II, liber 8, epistola 76. This episode of the early 1430s predates the examples of lead casts after Renaissance medals mentioned in Roberto Weiss, “Nota sugli esemplari plumbei di medaglie rinascimentali,” \textit{Italia Numismatica} 15 (1964): 71-72.

\textsuperscript{50} “Alexandri crystallinam immaginem videre ne quivisse, quod possessor eius hanc distraxisset memoretur, & ad regions misisse remotas.” Mehus, \textit{Ambrosii Traversarii Generalis Camaldulensis alliorumque ad Ipsum et ad Alios de Eodem Ambrosio Latinæ Epistolæ a Domino Petro Canneto Abbate Camaldulensi in Libros XXV Tributæ, Variorum Opera Distinctæ, et Observationes Illustratae}, II, liber 11, epistola 76. For a reference to the “ineptus” owner see also ibid., II, liber 8, epistola 48. Alsop suggested that this crystal was the same one that sometime later, around 1445, Bertuccio Dolfin showed to Ciriaco d’Ancona on board his galley near Crete. Ciriaco himself identified the image carved on the gem as Alexander of Macedon, this is instead a portrait of Pallas Athene. See Alsop, \textit{The Rare Art Traditions: The History of Art Collecting and Its Linked Phenomena Wherever These Have Appeared}: 347. The gem is today in Berlin, at the Staatliche Museen. For Ciriaco’s detailed description of the gem see Patricia Fortini Brown, \textit{Venice & Antiquity: the Venetian Sense of the Past} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 85. On Bertuccio Dolfin see also my chapter 4.
him from England, however, his friend Poggio Bracciolini tried to dissuade Niccoli from his decision, presenting all the difficulties of such a journey:

I certainly praise you for your desire to see Greece, for the sake of study and of travel; but thinking over two aspects of it, I have reason to hesitate a little and I should not dare to urge you to undertake this effort … Now many things are pleasant in the telling, which, if you went through the experience itself, would be very unpleasant. Study yourself and consider to what extent you can bear so many discomforts and the thousand obstacles which you will have to meet on your way.51

Niccoli followed Poggio’s advice and did not leave Florence. It is said that he was extremely concerned with cleanliness and suffered from poor health at the time; he must have realized how difficult it would have been for him to bear the harshness of the journey. Niccoli’s intention to explore Greece “for the sake of study and of travel” had certainly been influenced by his readings of the Greek authors. In particular the Latin translation of Ptolemy’s Geography, a text that Chrysoloras had brought with him from Constantinople, had raised in Florence a new interest in geographical studies and explorations.52 But Niccoli’s desire to travel to the eastern Mediterranean could also have been stirred by the journey of his fellow citizen Cristoforo Buondelmonti (c.1384 - c. 1430) who had already left Florence, around 1414, in search of what was left of ancient Greece.

51 “Laudo quidem animum tuum tam cupidum Grecie vidende, tum doctrine causa, tum peregrinationis; sed considerans duo est ut non nihil dubitem neque te audeam hortari ad hoc munus suscipiendum …multa nunc tibi loquendo placent, que, si re ipsa experireris, displicerent. Tu te ipsum metier et considera quemadmodum ferre possis tot incommoda milleque rerum difficultates, que tibi perferenda proponuntur.” Letter written from London on October 29, 1420. Bracciolini, Lettere: I, 19-21. Published in English in Phyllis Walter Goodhart Gordan, Two Renaissance Book Hunters: The Letters of Poggius Bracciolini to Nicolaus de Niccolis (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 47. Other references to Niccoli’s intention to travel to Greece can be found in letters written by Poggio during the previous summer.

Buondelmonti’s travels are of great importance as he was the first among his contemporaries who moved to the eastern Mediterranean with the intention of investigating at first hand, on site, what survived of the classical past. Buondelmonti’s contributions to geographical and topographical studies have been recognized for many years; already at the end of the sixteenth century, in a short biographical note, Michele Poccianti (1535-1576) described Buondelmonti as: “Vir scientiae cosmographiae, & geographiae, immo ominum humanarum studiis refertissimus, sermone apertus, ingenio clarus ac triplici lingua decoratus” [A man extremely learned in cosmography and geography and in any other discipline, of clear eloquence, of bright intellect and educated in three languages]. By contrast the Florentine’s antiquarian undertakings have received less consideration by scholars, but they are worthy of notice as they represent the first humanistic archeological explorations in the eastern Mediterranean.

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53 Michele Poccianti, *Catalogus scriptorum Florentinorum omnis generis : quorum, et memoria extat, atque lucubrationes in literas relatae sunt ad nostras vsque tempora* (Florence: Philippum Iunctam, 1589), 36.

Cristoforo Buondelmonti belonged to a prominent Florentine family and was a
cleric, probably a priest of the church of Santa Maria sopra Arno.55 In a 1429 manuscript
preserved at Norfolk in England, Buondelmonti is represented in his clerical garments
holding one of his books (fig. 14).56 At the time of his departure for the eastern
Mediterranean, in 1414, he was likely thirty years old. Together with Niccoli,
Buondelmonti took part in the early humanistic circle of Coluccio Salutati. Indeed, in his
little-known work Nomina virorum illustrium he mentions both Salutati and Domenico
Bandini da Arezzo (1335-1418) as his preceptors.57

55 Little is known with certainty about Buondelmonti’s biography. For a concise summary see
Roberto Weiss, "Buondelmonti, Cristoforo," in Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1972), vol. 15, 198-200. Flaminio Corner, who was the first to publish Buondelmonti’s work the Descriptio Insulae Cretae in 1755, referred to the author of the text as “Christophori Bondelmontii Florentini Ecclesiae Sanctae Mariae supra Arnun Archipresbyteri.” See the preface without page numbers in Flaminio Cornaro, Creta Sacra sive De episcopis utriusque ritus Graeci et Latini in insula Cretae (Venice: Giovan Battista Pasquali, 1755).

56 The illumination is in one of the oldest dated copies of the Liber Insularum Archipelagi, the manuscript 475 of Holkham Hall, Library of Earl Leicester, at c. 147v. On this manuscript see Giuseppe Ragone, "Il Liber Insularum Archipelagi di Cristoforo Buondelmonti: filologia del testo, filologia dell’immagine," in Humanisme et culture géographique à l’époque du concile de Constance. Autour de Guillaume Fillastre (2002), 181, note 12. The illumination is published, without archival location, in Hilary L. Turner, "The Expanding Horizons of Christopher Buondelmonti," History Today (1990): 40.

57 Barsanti, "Costantinopoli e l'Egeo nei primi decenni del XV secolo: la testimonianza di Cristoforo Buondelmonti," 95-96. The Nomina virorum illustrium has never been published and is preserved in manuscript form in Rimini in the Biblioteca Gambalunghiana (cod. 124 (C 351), ff. 188r-204v). Buondelmonti composed the text on Rhodes in 1423 for Janus, the King of Cyprus. It consists of a list of famous people from creation up to the end of the thirteenth century in which each name is followed by a short biographical line. Domenico Bandini had been summoned to Florence by Salutati to teach grammar. Here he spent almost twenty years between 1381 and 1399 at the Florentine Studio. On Bandini see A. Teresa Hankey, "Bandini, Domenico," in Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1963), vol. 5, 707-09.
Buondelmonti’s departure for the eastern Mediterranean is significant as it inaugurates a novel kind of travel motivated mainly by cultural interests. Cristoforo himself explicitly states the reasons for his voyage:

Having read in various books by poets of histories and also of natural matters, I found that in the Islands of the Archipelago there were and still are marvelous and splendid and incredible things … I decided in my heart that I wanted to see the islands of the Archipelago, and in order to do so I spent sixteen years, and so I saw and found many things that I have never seen written in books … the only scope of my travels was to investigate the conditions of the islands and their present state.58

If many learned men had already crossed the Mediterranean in search of books and Greek learning, no one before Buondelmonti seems to have departed with the intention of exploring the landscapes of ancient Greece and comparing what was left with the writings of the classical authors.

The Florentine priest left two accounts of his investigations, the *Descriptio Insulae Cretae* (Description of Crete) of 1417 and the *Liber Insularum Archipelagi* (Book of the Islands of the Archipelago) of 1420, because, as he explains:

My knowledge would be nothing and would be like a treasure hidden and buried underground, of no help or use to anyone, and therefore in order to give not only fruit but also pleasure to many who will come after me I decided to write about the things that I found in these islands and therefore I will write and depict all of these things in this book so that more clearly they will be known.59

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58 “Leggendo in vari libri de poeti de historie et anchi de cose naturali, ho trovato nelle Isole dellu archipelago esser state et anche li ne sonno cose meravigliose et stupende et non credibile … deliberai nel mio animo volere vedere le isole dellu Archipelago, et per fare questo ho consumpti anni sedici et così ho visto et trovate multe cose che scripte non ho vidute … lo fine del mio navigare solo era per posser investigare la condizione et effetto delle isole.” From a manuscript of the *Liber insularum Archipelagi* preserved at the Vatican Library in Rome (Rossiano 704, cc. 1r-1v). Quoted in Almagià, *Monumenta Cartographica Vaticana*, vol. 1 (Rome: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1943), 113.

59 “lo mio savere serria niente et serria come el thesoro nascosto et oculto sotto terra che non dà nè presta scudo over utilità ad alcuno, per tanto ho immaginato nella mia mente per dare non solo fructo ma ancor delecto ad multi che seguirono de po me, volere scrivere le cose che ho trovate nelle dicte Isole et così scrivereò in questo libro et quello depingerò accio che più chiaramente se cognoscano.” From the codex Rossiano 704 (cc.1r-1v.) of the Vatican Library, quoted in ibid.
The *Descriptio insulae Cretae* was dedicated to Niccolò Niccoli, who received the work directly from Candia in 1417. The text describes in three chapters Buondelmonti’s exploration of the island undertaken in the company of the humanist Rinuccio d’Arezzo between the end of March and the beginning of June of 1415. The two travelers first circumnavigated the island by boat observing coasts and ports, then they traversed the interior from east to west riding on the back of mules for twenty-four days. The main reason for their wanderings was to find the one hundred mythical Cretan cities, the Hecatonpolis, celebrated in Homer’s *Iliad*. What they found, however, was a landscape strewn with ruins that Buondelmonti compares to a worn parchment on which the letters had been erased by time. More than once during his investigations Buondelmonti contemplated with sadness the decay of the ancient monuments he found, their desolate


Buondelmonti’s work on Crete is known from eight manuscripts, which reproduce different versions of the text. The author himself produced two slightly different versions of the work: one sent to Niccoli from Candia in 1417 and a second shorter redaction made in Constantinople in 1422. The latter was also sent to Niccoli. See Ragone, "Il Liber Insularum Archipelagi di Cristoforo Buondelmonti: filologia del testo, filologia dell’immagine," 193-94.

Rinuccio d’Arezzo was in Crete between 1415 and 1416 where he studied Greek with the Portopapa of Candia John Simeonachis. Cortesi, "Umanesimo greco," 487.

present state and the disinterest of the local people towards the testimonies of their past.\textsuperscript{63} When Buondelmonti arrived in the port of Loutro, for example, he saw pigs rooting among the ruins of ancient Phoenix, as he explained:

\begin{quote}
We arrived in the harbor of what was formerly called Phoenix, but now Loutro, and we saw an extremely old city in ruins, with columns lying on the ground. In between them I found, near the houses of the farmers, sarcophagi of snow-white marble in which the pigs were eating their food and they were scratching the magnificent sculptures all around. I saw many damaged busts of fragmentary statues scattered among the marble buildings.\textsuperscript{64}
\end{quote}

Buondelmonti’s second work, the \textit{Liber Insularum Archipelagi}, is known from more than seventy manuscripts containing slightly different versions of the original text, which, however, does not survive.\textsuperscript{65} The author dedicated this work, which was finished in 1420, to the powerful Cardinal Giordano Orsini (c. 1360/70-1438), a prominent figure in the humanist circles of Rome. Already before 1420, probably in 1418, Buondelmonti had sent a first shorter version of his work to Orsini.\textsuperscript{66} The \textit{Liber} presents a short general

\textsuperscript{63} The only exception to the general disengagement of the local inhabitants towards the remains of ancient civilizations, was the collection of antique statuary that a nobleman of Venetian origin, Nicolò Corner, had assembled in his villa in the countryside near Matalia. On Buondelmonti’s encounter with Corner see Weiss, "Un umanista antiquario: Cristoforo Buondelmonti," 113-14; and Brown, \textit{Venice & Antiquity: the Venetian Sense of the Past}: 80-81. On Corner’s collection see also my chapter 4.

\textsuperscript{64} “in portum olim Penicis, hocie Lutro, intravimus et destructam civitatem vetustissimaque cum columnis prostratam videmus. Inter eas candidissimis marmoreis sepulcras, prope casas illorum rusticiorum, inveni; in quibus sues polentum comedeabant et sculpturas circum nobilissimas laniabant. Lacerata et fracta multa vidi busta ydolorum et, intra marmorum hedifitia, sparsa iacebant.” Buondelmonti, \textit{Descripotion insule Crete; et, Liber insularum. Cap. XI, Creta.}, 117.


\textsuperscript{66} The existence of a first version is attested by a note that appears at the end of some of the \textit{Liber}’s manuscripts. The note reads: “Christoforus ego Ensenum, venerande pater, primum tibi affectanter misi, ut notitiam insule Cieladum omnibus per te fuerit indicatum. Nunc vero postquam magis in partibus perscrutatus fui, secundum copiosorem etiam tibi descriptionem volui
introduction and then describes, following a complicated travel itinerary, numerous islands of the Ionian and Aegean seas. To each island is devoted a short chapter in which Buondelmonti provides information on the geography, the population, the current state and the past history of the territory, furnishing his narratives with numerous literary and mythological references. Despite its title the book also includes the descriptions of Gallipoli, Mount Athos and Constantinople.

The text was an immediate success. It began to circulate widely, and was copied and translated in numerous languages between the second half of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the following century. Scholars agree that Buondelmonti’s Liber Insularum inaugurated a new genre of geographic treatise, the isolario (book of islands), a model that would have a great success for many years afterwards.

In producing his vivid geographical accounts of the islands, the Florentine priest had certainly been influenced by the recently recovered text of Ptolemy’s Geography, which arrived in Florence with Chrysoloras and included not only maps, but also explanations on how to create them. Buondelmonti was furthermore very likely familiar with encyclopedic texts of medieval tradition that included geographical material such as

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68 On the isolari inspired by Buondelmonti’s work see, for example, Laura Cassi and Adele Dei, "Le esplorazioni vicine: geografia e letteratura negli Isolari," Rivista Geografica Italiana 100 (1993): 205-69.

the *Sfera* attributed to the Florentine Goro Dati (1362-1436) or the more recent *De insulis* written by another Florentine, Domenico Silvestri (1335-1410c.). The accurate descriptions of coastal territories found in sailing charts and portolans were certainly another source known to Buondelmonti (fig. 15).  

According to his own account, upon his arrival in the eastern Mediterranean Buondelmonti settled on Rhodes, which became the main port from which he set out for his frequent travels in the Aegean over the following years. Buondelmonti’s excursions can be dated with certainty thanks to the manuscripts he acquired and on which he painstakingly annotated the date, the place of purchase and often the price he paid. Several of these manuscripts survive to this day in Italian libraries; many of them were sold to Niccolò Niccoli. In May of 1415 Buondelmonti was on Crete where he bought two old codices. One of them, a commentary by Gregory of Nyssa, was purchased “apud castellum Belvedere insulae Crete a quodam Caloghero,” while the other was found “in monte Iucta in monasterio S. Salvatoris.” In the autographed note inserted on one of the

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71 Although it is generally accepted by scholars that Buondelmonti spent many years on Rhodes, as that was his main base in the eastern Mediterranean, Hilary Louise Turner suggests that he settled on the island only in 1423, see Hilary L. Turner, "Christopher Buondelmonti: Adventurer, Explorer and Cartographer," in *Géographie du Monde au Moyen Âge et à la Renaissance*, ed. Pelletier Monique (Paris: C.T.H.S., 1989), 216.


two volumes Buondelmonti signed his name as “presbyter Christophorus Raynerii de Bondelmontibus de Florencia, scolaris in Grecis scientiis.”74 Other works by Aristotle, Gregory of Nyssa and Libanius were acquired on Crete some time later, in 1416 and in 1418, while in 1419 Buondelmonti bought a volume of Plutarch’s Lives on the island Imbros.75 A few years later on Andros he made the most important of his finds: a volume containing the Hieroglyphica by Horapollo.76

But together with his activities as a book-hunter and scholar of Greek, Buondelmonti also cultivated his geographical and antiquarian interests in the eastern Mediterranean.77 It is important to emphasize here that Buondelmonti had conceived both the description of Crete and that of the Aegean islands as literary accounts complemented by a visual apparatus of maps. Accordingly, the text of the Liber Insularum Archipelagi was indeed interspaced with maps of the islands and the Descriptio Insulae Cretae contained a general map of Crete.78 The study of the surviving cartographic material,

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75 For a concise list of the codices acquired by Buondelmonti see Ragone, "Il Liber Insularum Archipelagi di Cristoforo Buondelmonti: filologia del testo, filologia dell’immagine," 187, note 31; Brown, Venice & Antiquity: the Venetian Sense of the Past: 77.


77 For Buondelmonti’s activity as a cartographer see the account about the map (membrana maxima) of Constantinople he made for Vytautas of Lithuania in Ragone, "Il Liber Insularum Archipelagi di Cristoforo Buondelmonti: filologia del testo, filologia dell’immagine," 204-17. For other aspects of Buondelmonti’s stay in the eastern Mediterranean see Francesca Luzzati Laganà, "La funzione politica della memoria di Bisanzio nella Descriptio Cretae (1417-1422) di Cristoforo Buondelmonti," Bullettin dell’Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo e Archivio Muratoriano 94 (1988): 395-420.

78 Only one manuscript of the Descriptio (Rome, Vatican Library, Cod. Rossiano 703) still contains a partial map of Crete. But a note at the end of another copy (Rome, Vatican Library, Ms. Vat. Chigi IV.74) of the text attests that Buondelmonti had originally included a map of the
however, poses several problems since the maps are known in numerous different later variants while Buondelmonti’s originals are now lost. Therefore it is very difficult to determine with certainty what the original maps represented and what is instead the result of additions by later copyists.

In the introduction to the Liber Buondelmonti refers to his work as a “libro figurato” and provides a concise explanation of the conventions he had used in his representations: “Ea propter ut cuncta comprehendas, in nigro montes, in albo planities, in viridi aquae panduntur manifeste” [So that you see everything clearly the mountains are represented in black, the plains in white and the water in green]. The maps accompanying Buondelmonti’s text depict not only physical details such as mountains, rivers, plains, and local vegetation, but they also note the presence of built settlements, usually represented in the form of small towers or castles, and, even more interestingly, many of the maps illustrate the existence of ancient sites.

79 The dedication to Giordano Orsini in a version of the Liber in volgare preserved in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan (Ms. Y. 72) reads: “… io me ho determinà scriverti uno libro figurato de la mia navigacione con le insule de lo arcipelago dicte ciclade et de le altre sparse per lo mare insieme con li termini suo antichi et con li fatti fino al di dozi.” Quoted in Barsanti, "Costantinopoli e l'Egeo nei primi decenni del XV secolo: la testimonianza di Cristoforo Buondelmonti," 118. The Liber Insularum contained a smaller map of Crete, which survives in different manuscripts. See Almagià, Monumenta Cartographica Vaticana, 1: 106.

80 Cristoforo Buondelmonti, Librum Insularum Archipelagi (Lipsiae - Berolini: G. Reimer, 1824), 53-54.

81 Patricia Fortini Brown has noted, for example, how in the copy of the Liber preserved at the Marciana library in Venice, Cod. Lat. XIV 45 (4595) twenty-three of the islands are depicted with classical ruins. See Brown, Venice & Antiquity: the Venetian Sense of the Past: 78.
In a codex of the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris the map of Corfu, usually the first to be found in the manuscripts of the *Liber*, clearly shows the site of ancient Corcyra at the center of the island marked by scattered blocks of marble and by numerous columns laying on the ground (fig. 16). The island of Santorini, which Buondelmonti specifies has a perimeter of forty miles and extends “ad modum lunae cornutae,” is represented in the maps as a half moon floating in the sea. A version of this map in Padua shows an area filled with antique fragments – marble blocks, columns, bases and capitals - signaling the settlement near the sea mentioned by Buondelmonti in the text as an ancient “magnifica civitas” now abandoned by the islanders (fig. 17).

More detailed representations of ancient sites can be found in a group of illustrations that survive in only three copies of the *Descriptio* and represent details of Buondelmonti’s excursions to Mount Strouboulis, the city of Candia, Mount Iuktas, the ruins of Gortyna, the Labyrinth and Mount Ida. In a manuscript at the Laurenziana library in Florence the illustration of the remains of the Roman city of Gortyna provides an eloquent visual counterpart to Buondelmonti’s text (fig. 18). A plain scattered with countless columns and marble blocks illustrates the astonishment of the beholder in front of the ruin of the antique site:

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82 Cristoforo Buondelmonti, *Liber Insularum Archipelagi*, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Lat. 4824, c. 3r.

83 Cristoforo Buondelmonti, *Liber Insularum Archipelagi*, Padua, Biblioteca Universitaria, Ms. 1605 c. f. 6r.

84 For these illustrations see Barsanti, "Costantinopoli e l'Egeo nei primi decenni del XV secolo: la testimonianza di Cristoforo Buondelmonti," 119.

85 Cristoforo Buondelmonti, *Descriptio Insulae Cretae*, Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Ms. XXIX, c. 22r.
I entered a vast and sloping plain and to the side of the mountain I found the large city and metropolis of Gortyna, which that most just king Minos built. Alas, what shall I say, or what shall I talk about, upon seeing such a situation. Let all Cretans lament such a destruction and let their wives, with their hair hanging loose, rend their garments!86

The numerous passages that describe antique remains in Buondelmonti’s texts are very important since they represent the earliest eyewitness accounts of the encounter of a western antiquarian with the physical remains of ancient Greece.87 Buondelmonti’s peregrinations on the island of Crete reveal him to be a curious and deeply engaged observer of ancient monuments.88 Arriving at one very old site along the southwestern coast of the island (Agio Roumeli) Buondelmonti found the ruins of an antique temple and described what he saw in detail:

All sorts of marbles and porphyry pillars lay there in disarray. I saw busts of statues without heads. On the other side of the temple I found a marble head of Venus or Diana that looked to me to be the most beautiful thing of all. I turned around and on the evidence of a huge block of marble, we lifted up stones lying around. We saw extremely worn out Greek letters and spelled them out: alas! unfortunately the stone was broken. By conjecture I could make out the following: “wipe your feet, cover your head and enter.” Columns, cisterns and large buildings could be seen everywhere.89


87 Other travelers before Buondelmonti had noted in passing some of the antique ruins scattered in the territories of ancient Greece; none of them, however, had looked at these remains with a true antiquarian eye. See for example the travel account of the notary Niccolò de Martoni da Carinola who visited Athens in 1395. Morton J. Paton, Chapters on Medieval and Renaissance Visitors to Greek Lands (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 32-34.

88 The explorations of the island are described both in the Descriptio Insulae Cretae and in the chapter on Crete included in the Liber Insularum.

89 “in quo omnia genera marmorum atque porfirum columne sine ordine iacent. Aspicio ydolorum sine capite busta. Ab altero latere templi caput marmoreum Veneris vel Dyane inveni, quod super omnia pulcherrimum videtur. Revolvo me ad angulum quemdam et ab indito ingenti marmoris circum lapides elevamus, cernimus nimis deletas grecas litteras sculptas. Sequimur deinde eas:
Buondelmonti had read about Crete and its famous cities in the texts of the classical authors, but the material reality of the island in his own days was often painfully different from what he expected. When he arrived at the ancient city of Sfichium (Sfakia), he could not contain his tears in front of its ruinous state: “When I saw it I wept not a little at seeing this desolate place. Alas! How unhappy are mortal men who undertake to raise great mountains, to put together pieces of marble and build up blocks of rock. Everything decays to nothing and is like the fame that fades within an hour.”\textsuperscript{90}

Buondelmonti’s excursions were not without dangers as he narrates, for example, in a passage describing his exploration of the ancient city of Minoa:

On a mountain toward the south we saw the ancient Minoa. After walking for two miles up to the top I find the city in complete ruin with wheat grown tall among the marble fragments. I walk in the direction of an abandoned temple where I see abundant and pleasant vegetation. As I was making my way through impenetrable bushes I fell into very large cisterns. Alas, my hands fell into the depths and my limbs became stiff with fright until my companions put me in a safe place. After that I look at these cisterns carved out of the rocks, one of which was certainly forty-five feet long and eighteen feet wide.\textsuperscript{91}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{90}“quam ut vidi, non modicum collacrimavi hunc desolatum videre locum, Heu! Quid miseris mortales currant moles instruire magna, aut quid coadunare student et marmorea erigere saxa? Traseunt in nichilum et tanquam fama que in una labitur hora.” Ibid., 114-115.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{91}“Ad austrum Minoam antiquam civitatem in monte videmus. Ad summum accedo per duo miliaria ubi totam prosternatam inveni et segetes altas per media marmorum fragmenta erigere. Ad templum desertum convenio denique pedem, in quo herbarum congeriem amplam video atque gratam. Dumque ergo per inextricabiles pergerem herbas inscius in maximas cisternas pedes devenerunt. Heu! Cecidere manus et sine sanguine membra frigebant, donec in tum toti me posuere locum. Aspicio deinde eas in saxo incises quorum erat in longitudine pedum quinque et quadraginta et in latitudine octo et decem.” Ibid. 140-141.}
Although he was imbued with the readings of the classics, Buondelmonti was able to look at the antique remains with a critical eye. When, near Gortyna, he found what was believed to be the legendary Labyrinth that King Minos had built to imprison the Minotaur he explored its inhospitable interior with care. He took measures of some of his tunnels and described the whole site in detail:

The entrance to it is narrow, but after that it gets wider; there is a path that goes two hundreds paces eastwards, another goes north, and it appears as people say that they have no end. Many paths have been found that cross each other and they return to the main one. At one thousand and five hundreds paces from the entrance there is a spring, next to which you can find a small pool with rushes round it. On the left you will see an enormous pillar. Behind the spring there is a path, but nobody or only a few people formerly went along it. Everywhere there are the arms and the names of those who went in there, and there are many bats to be seen. It is extremely dangerous to walk through this labyrinth, for every now and then enormous lumps of stone hanging from the ceiling of the passages fall down and often obstruct obviously every passage way.

The Florentine priest thus did not merely look at the ruins, but, equipped with the skills of an experienced cartographer, he also measured them with relatively good accuracy.

Buondelmonti’s on-site exploration allowed him to explain to his friend Niccoli in Florence: “Niccolò you must not think that this is what people believe to be the labyrinth” and acutely explained that the Labyrinth was in reality a stone quarry: “for the

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93 “Est enim os suum arduum deinde in amplitudinem devenit. Via una verus orientem ducentorum passuum est; altera vero versus septentrionem, nullam ut dicitur habet finem; per quam multe vie circumflexe videntur et in istam revertuntur principalen. Ab ostio per mille et quingentos passus fons cernitur iuxta quem paludem parvulam arundinibus cohoptertam comperimus una cum huiusmodi de lapide pilla a sinistra. Ultra hanc aquam longa manifestatur via, quam nullus aut pauci ingredi currant vel transitum agree per eamdem. Arma vero intrantium atque nomina designata per omnia errant et vespertilionum multitudo ubique videtur. Valde per eum ambulare periculosum est, quia aliquando immensurati lapides ab alto per venas pendentes cadunt et totum sepe obturat transitum.” Buondelmonti, Descriptio insule Crete; et, Liber insularum. Cap. XI, Creta: 176-77.
stone taken from this mountain strongly resembles the stone of ancient city, and as in
various parts of this island there are innumerable caves and underground passages from
similar quarries to be found.” Therefore he could conclude: “I have sought all over this
island for the artificial cave which the ancient authors called the labyrinth, but nowhere
have I found it.” Following Buondelmonti’s explanation the Labyrinth is illustrated in a
manuscript of the *Decriptio* preserved in Rome, as a series of intertwined tunnels
excavated in the mountains rather than in the traditional symbolic shape of a schematic
maze (fig. 19). This episode shows the importance of Buondelmonti’s surveys in
amending traditional interpretations of the classical sources.

The *Liber Insularum* also contains numerous references to the remains of ancient
structures: theaters, urban settlements and other monuments, which Buondelmonti
expected to find. On Chios, for example, Buondelmonti visited Homer’s tomb, on Cos he
saw the house of Hippocrates, and on Naxos he found an ancient temple dedicated to
Apollo where he discovered among the ruins a marble statue of the god. On the island
of Delos Buondelmonti got involved in a true archeological enterprise. Together with an
impressively large group of helpers, he tried in vain to raise up from the ground an
enormous statue found among the ruins of an antique temple: “On a plain near an old
temple adorned with columns we saw a statue lying on the ground; it was of such a great

94 “Tu qui cuncta noscis, mi Nicolae, non esse hunc quem hominess tenet laberinthum bene
existimare posses, quia lapsis ab isto monte extractus lapidi antique civitatis simulatur. Et sic per
diversas partes hius insule antra huismodique lapidum vene subterranea reperiuntur infinita. Per
totam hanc insulam artificiosum atque nominatum laberinthum ob amorem tui, mi Nicolae,
quesivi, quem nunquam alibi potui reperire.” Ibid., 177-178.

95 Cristoforo Buondelmonti, *Descripito Insulae Cretae*, Rome, Vatican Library, Ms. Chigi F.
IV.74, c. 43v.

magnitude, that in no way could we, a thousand of us, erect it with ropes and the equipment we had on our galleys. Instead we left it in its place as we found it."\(^97\) Other similar sculptures were found in other parts of the island, whose abundance of marble ruins is clearly illustrated in the maps. The map of Delos in a manuscript copy of the Liber once preserved in the Phillips collection shows the huge marble statue lying on the ground among broken columns (fig. 20).\(^98\) When some thirty years after Buondelmonti’s visit Ciriaco d’Ancona arrived on Delos, he sketched in his travel diary a close up view of the sculpture (fig. 21).\(^99\)

On nearby Paros Buondelmonti recorded the presence of the vestiges of a temple of extremely white marble “templo marmareo immaculato” and the existence of an antique fortress built with huge stone blocks (fig. 22).\(^100\) Impressive to his eyes were also the marble remains of theaters and buildings seen on Cos near the town of Arangea: “I found everywhere so many marble buildings and theaters that it is a wonderful thing to see” (fig. 23).\(^101\) Similarly on Kalamos he found an uncountable number of antiquities.\(^102\)

\(^97\) “prope olim templum vetustum, in plano, praeparatum columnarum idolum videmus, quod in tanta magnitudine iacet, quod nullo modo nos, qui mille fuimus, erigere potuimus, erigere potuimus argumentis rudentum galearum, sed ad suum pristinum dimisimus loco.” Ibid., 92.

\(^98\) The manuscript of the Liber Insularum Archipelagi that was once in the Phillipps Collection (Ms. 4473, c. 48b) is mentioned and illustrated in Barsanti, “Costantinopoli e l’Egeo nei primi decenni del XV secolo: la testimonianza di Cristoforo Buondelmonti,” 156.

\(^99\) The original drawing by Ciriaco is lost, but it is known from a copy of an excerpt of his diary in Munich (Staatsbibliothek, Ms. CLM 716, f. 31r). See Edward W. Bodnar S.J., "A Visit to Delos in April, 1445," Archaeology 25 (1972): 210-15.

\(^100\) “Insuper ad radices eiusdem montis oppidum vetustissimum erigitur immanium structum lapidum.” Buondelmonti, Librum Insularum Archipelagi: 94.

\(^101\) “In quo toto et tanta aedificia marmorea et theatra reperi, quod est mirabile ad videndum.” Ibid., 102.
From time to time in his descriptions of the islands Buondelmonti also describes antique objects found underground. During his long stay on Rhodes, for example, he often discovered numerous Roman coins with the effigy of Caesar, and even buried funerary vases filled with ashes.\(^\text{103}\) He reports moreover of the recent discovery on the island of a hoard containing five hundred intact sculptures found in a vineyard near the church of Saint Anthony.\(^\text{104}\)

While visiting Tenosa, Buondelmonti took pains to uncover some antique remains that were partially hidden below the ground, covered with thorn bushes.\(^\text{105}\) An even more interesting episode had occurred some time before Buondelmonti’s visit to Gallipoli. A local farmer had found a treasure hidden in the ground while ploughing his fields. The treasure consisted of a vase full of very ancient gold coins that the poor man immediately brought to the Ottoman sultan Murad I (1362-1389). The sultan had the coins inspected by his courtiers who were unable to identify the effigies on their obverses and therefore Murad returned them to the farmer, saying: “Good man, this is neither my image, nor that

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\(^\text{102}\) “Quae olim illustriissima usque nunc aedificorum fuisse videtur; et quis posset in ea tot explicare numerum antiquitatum, et indicare lineamenta marmorum sparsa per totum, cum nihil in ea aliiu percipere valeamus.” Ibid., 104.

\(^\text{103}\) “per omnes parte, hiue inde Caesaris signo reperimus, una cum urceis cadaverum combustorum infinitis, quorum vestigia usque in hodiernum diem perlubent testimonium.” Ibid., 72.

\(^\text{104}\) “Nunc etiam de novo, prope Sanctum Antoniumque Salvatorem in vinea quadam quingenta idola omnium manerierum in fovea reperta sunt.” Ibid., 72-3. On the nature of these \textit{idola} see the different interpretations suggested by Benedetta Bessi, "Cristoforo Buondelmonti: Greek Antiquities in Florentine Humanism" and by Beschi, "La scoperta dell’arte greca," 322.

\(^\text{105}\) Buondelmonti, \textit{Librum Insularum Archipelagi}: 110.
of my ancestors, therefore it would be not right to seize the achievement of someone else and take possession of the virtue of another person. Hence it is yours. Go in peace.”106

One more, almost incredible, retrieval happened near Nicomedia in the Propontis. Here another farmer found a coffin with the remains of a prince dressed with his crown, scepter and sword. Unfortunately when he tried to take the corpse out of his coffin, it crumbled to dust.107

Unlike the Descriptio, the Liber Insularum includes numerous detailed descriptions of ancient statuary. These give Buondelmonti the starting point to include in his text a rich apparatus of literary information about the mythology and iconography of the gods of ancient Greece.108 But while in a few cases Buondelmonti explicitly claims to have seen the marble sculptures abandoned in ancient sites, more often the references to the actual existence of those works are rather vague or non-existent. While writing about the ruins seen on Samos, for example, Buondelmonti refers to an image of Juno in this way:

Towards the south on a plain by the sea there was a magnificent settlement, where so many remains of buildings and columns could be recognized, that it would be impossible to describe it in one day. And there it is said there was an important temple, constructed with imposing columns, dedicated to Juno because her sculpted image was found nearby.109

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107 “Quo in loco bubulcus arcam reperit, in qua rex illaesus, corona, sceptro et ense aureate erat. Dum vero nunciatur domino, et ab arca eum extrahere vellet, in cinerem illico est reverses.” Ibid., 120.

108 On this aspect of the Liber see Benedetta Bessi, “Cristoforo Buondelmonti: Greek Antiquities in Florentine Humanism.”

From the words used in the text it seems that the sculpture was no longer there when
Buondelmonti arrived on site, however, he provides a detailed description of Juno’s
iconography, writing: “Regina cum sceptro, et in capite nubes; iris ex traverso; pavones
in pedibus eius lambebant, et ideo aves illius dictae. Iuno aer est, et soror et uxor
Iovis.”

Other similar examples can be found when Buondelmonti describes the images of
Cybele on Milos, Pan on Sifnos, Apollo in Serifos, Mercury on Andros, Bacchus on
Naxos, Minerva on Karpathos and Venus on Kythira. One of these descriptions - the
image of Mercury connected with the island of Andros – would sometime later induce
Ciriaco d’Ancona to create his famous illustration of the pagan god on the margins of his
own copy of Buondelmonti’s Liber (fig. 24).

It has been noticed how Buondelmonti’s descriptions have strong affinities to
literary sources, in particular they present quite explicit connections with medieval
mythological descriptions of deities which were still popular in the fifteenth century as

110 Ibid., 108.

111 On these mythological descriptions and their pertinence to the original version of
Buondelmonti’s text see Benedetta Bessi, “Cristoforo Buondelmonti: Greek Antiquities in
Florentine Humanism.”

112 Ciriaco’s autograph image is not known, but a copy is to be found on a transcription of the
Liber Insularum in a manuscript in Oxford (Bodley MS Canonici Misc. 280) that derives from
Ciriaco’s own copy of Buondelmonti’s text. Charles Mitchell, "Ex Libris Kiriaci Anconitani,"
Italia Medioevale e Umanistica 5 (1962): 297-98. In his illustration of Mercury, which began a
new Renaissance iconography, Ciriaco conflated Buondelmonti’s literary description with an
archeological source, see Fritz Saxl, "The Classical Inscription in Renaissance Art and Politics,
Journal of the Warburg and Corteauld Institutes 4(1940-1941): 19-46. On this image see also
Phyllis Williams Lehmann and Karl Lehmann, Samothracian Reflections: Aspects of the Revival
attested for example by the *De Deorum Imaginibus Libellus*, an illustrated manuscript of 1420 (fig. 25).113

These descriptions of ancient sculptures therefore need to be considered with caution, as they may not pertain to actual antique artifacts that Buondelmonti saw on the islands.114 This literary apparatus, however, could provide a fruitful point of entry for the investigation of Buondelmonti’s cultural world and in particular his relationship with the dedicatee of this work, the Cardinal Giordano Orsini.115 These literary references indeed are peculiar to the *Liber* and are not to be found in the *Descriptio*. Orsini was an avid

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113 This richly illustrated manuscript is preserved at the Vatican Library in Rome (Cod. Reginensis 1290) and was published in Hans Liebeschutz, *Fulgentius Metaforalis. Eine Beitrag zur Geschichte der Antiken Mythologie im Mittelalter* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1926), 117-28. In the *Libellus* Juno is described in this way: “Antiqui enim ipsam Jovis, id est ignis, uxorem et sororem dixerunt, yridem et nimphas eidem attribuerunt. Cuius ymago taliter pingebatur. Erat enim femina in trono sedens, sceptrum regium tenens in dextera. Cuius caput nube tenebatur opertum supra dyadaema, quod capite gestabat. … Pavones autem ante pedes eius lambebat, qui a dextris et a sinistris domine stabant avesse Junonis specialiter dicte errant.” See also Mitchell, "Ex Libris Kiriaci Anconitani," 297-98.

114 Often scholars have taken these passages in Buondelmonti’s texts as descriptions of actual statuary. J. P. van der Vin for example writes: “Sculpture receive more attention in the Liber insularum Archipelagi than in the Descriptio. On different islands Buondelmonti saw innumerable statues, large and small; a few of these are described in detail.” See Vin, *Travellers to Greece and Constantinople: Ancient Monuments and Old Traditions in Medieval Travellers' Tales*: 146.

115 To my knowledge scholars have not yet investigated in depth the relationship between Buondelmonti and the Roman Cardinal Orsini. Giuseppe Ragone (Ragone, “Il Liber Insularum Archipelagi di Cristoforo Buondelmonti: filologia del testo, filologia dell’immagine,” 191, note 40) has pointed out that Buondelmonti’s literary work completed for King Janus of Cyprus - the *Nomina virorum illustrium* of 1423 - might have been of some interest also to Giordano Orsini, who had decorated a room in his residence on Monte Giordano with a fresco cycle of illustrious men. This fact is also mentioned in Annelies Amberger, *Giordano Orsinis uomini famosi in Rom: Helden der Weltgeschichte im Fréuhhumanismus* (München: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2003), 266-67. In his library, at his death, Orsini had two copies of Buondelmonti’s *Liber* and several maps (*rotuli*), of which one was by Buondelmonti. See Ragone, "Il Liber Insularum Archipelagi di Cristoforo Buondelmonti: filologia del testo, filologia dell’immagine," 198. On the decoration of the Orsini palace see also Robert L. Mode, "The Orsini Sala Theatri at Monte Giordano in Rome," *Renaissance Quarterly* 26 (1973): 167-72. An extensive discussion of the fresco cycle is also in Kristin Adrean Triff, "Patronage and Public Image in Renaissance Rome: Three Orsini Palaces" (PhD Dissertation, Brown University, 2000), 151-80.
book-collector and an antiquarian who had established in his fortress on Monte Giordano a seat of lively literary gatherings.\footnote{Kathleen Wren Christian,\textit{ Empire without End: Antiquities Collections in Renaissance Rome, c. 1350-1527} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 123-24.} Certainly Buondelmonti’s learned accounts on the images of the ancient gods combined with his first-hand observations of the landscapes of Greece would have greatly pleased an intellectual with such prominent antiquarian tastes.\footnote{W. A. Simpson, "Cardinal Giordano Orsini (+1438) as a Prince of the Church and a Patron of the Arts," \textit{Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes} 29 (1966): 135-59.}

With the exception of ancient Greek manuscripts, Buondelmonti apparently did not send back to Italy any antique objects. And yet, his written and illustrated accounts portraying the current status of what survived of ancient Greece spurred a lively interest among Italian and foreign humanists in his archeological finds.

It is important to note that in Buondelmonti’s texts there are almost no descriptions of still-standing buildings. Indeed, the Ionian and Aegean islands did not preserve any of the imposing structures that instead survived in Rome, and nothing grandiose that could speak clearly of the highest achievements of ancient architects and artists. What Buondelmonti saw and described were instead territories full of vanished cities, of collapsed buildings and litterings of broken marbles.\footnote{Buondelmonti did not write about Athens, where the Parthenon was still standing, nor about other buildings such as the temple of Hadrian at Cyzicus which greatly impressed Ciriaco d’Ancona sometime later. This fact should make us wary when we think about the influence of Greek architecture in the Italian Renaissance. On this topic see for example Deborah Howard, "Responses to Ancient Greek Architecture in Renaissance Venice," \textit{Annali di Architettura} 6 (1994): 23-38.} It was, however, this overwhelming abundance of fragmentary vestiges that the Florentine priest had vividly recorded which stimulated the curiosity of the many western antiquarians and collectors.
who would soon set off for the eastern Mediterranean in search of these archeological remains.

POGGIO BRACCIOLINI’S COLLECTION OF STATUARY FROM GREECE

The humanist Poggio Bracciolini (1380-1459) was another of Niccoli’s intimate friends (fig. 26). While Cristoforo Buondelmonti was exploring antique ruins in the eastern Mediterranean, Poggio was inspecting, with greater archeological acumen, the remains of ancient Rome.\(^{119}\) He was for fifty years - beginning in 1403 - at the service of the papal Curia in Rome, where he spent his free time walking the streets of the ancient city and its deserted areas recording with care what was left of Rome’s great past. In his book, *De varietate fortunae* (*On the Mutability of Fortune*), Poggio wrote a detailed survey of what he had seen, describing Rome’s antique buildings and monuments one by one.\(^{120}\) In Rome he also visited the collections of antiquities that had begun to be gathered in those years in the palaces of Cardinals and humanists, and he sought out pieces for his own collection, which he assembled with guidance from Donatello.\(^{121}\) Despite the fact that Poggio did not have the same availability of funds as Niccoli did, he was in fact able, while avidly collecting manuscripts, also to gather a collection of antique objects. Unlike

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\(^{119}\) A concise profile of Poggio’s archeological interests is given in *Rome Reborn: the Vatican Library and Renaissance Culture*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 87-123.

\(^{120}\) For Poggio’s description of the antiquities of Rome see Cesare D’Onofrio, *Visitiiamo Roma nel Quattrocento: la città degli Umanisti* (Rome: Romano Società Editrice, 1989).

Niccoli, Poggio did not give preference to small precious items such as gems or hard stone vases, but rather focused his attention on large marbles.122

In a letter to Niccoli of 1427, Poggio wrote about his collection of marbles and about his plan to install them in his “achademiam”:

I have a room full of marble heads; among them there is one that is elegant and complete; the others have broken noses but would be rewarding for a good master. With these statues and some which I am getting I want to decorate my academy in the Valdarno, where I mean to rest if any rest can be had in this tempestuous sea.123

Poggio had just purchased a few months earlier a property on the outskirts of Florence at Terranuova. The idea of creating his own academy there adorned with classical sculptures derived from his readings of the classical authors. In one of his literary works, the dialogue *De vera nobilitate* of 1440, Poggio indeed wrote:

It is known that the ancients, learned men, devoted much attention and enthusiasm to procuring statues and paintings. Cicero, Varro, Aristotle, and others both Greek and Latin, outstanding in all fields of learning, spurred themselves on to study through images of virtue, and so adorned their own libraries and gardens with these [portraits], in order to enoble the very places in which they were set up, [since] they wanted that same amount of praise and industry. For they believed that the images of those who excelled in the study of glory and wisdom, when placed in front of the eyes, greatly inspired and ennobled the spirit.124

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122 These were available at cheaper prices compared to small precious artifacts such as carved gems. See Alsop, *The Rare Art Traditions: The History of Art Collecting and Its Linked Phenomena Wherever These Have Appeared*: 348-52. On Poggio’s collection of antiquities see also William Shepherd, *The Life of Poggio Bracciolini* (Liverpool: J. M'Creery, 1802), 289-97. And more recently Claudio Franzoni, "«Rimembranze d’infinite cose». Le collezioni rinascimentali di antichità," in *Memoria dell’antico nell’arte italiana. L’uso dei classici*, ed. Salvatore Settis (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1984), 309-10.


Poggio’s initiative was also influenced by the numerous literary and antiquarian academies established in those years in Florence and in Rome.¹²⁵ But Poggio’s readings of the Latin authors about the art collections assembled in ancient Rome, combined with the Greek teachings of Manuel Chrysoloras in Florence, prompted in particular his desire to acquire marbles from the eastern Mediterranean. As he wrote in one of his letters, Poggio was sure the territories of ancient Greece were plentiful in antique statuary: “maximam copiam esse in eis partibus.”¹²⁶ Together with the classical texts, Poggio could also have consulted the up-to-date information about the eastern Mediterranean provided by Buondelmonti’s works that at that time had already reached both Florence and Rome.

In the letters written by Cicero (106 B.C. – 43 B.C.) to his friend Atticus (112/109 B.C. - 35/32 B.C.) in the first century B.C., Poggio could find the lively chronicle of the formation of a collection of Greek statuary.¹²⁷ These vivid accounts and other classical sources such as Pliny’s passages in his *Naturalis Historia* on art and artists of ancient Greece, were pivotal to the formation of Poggio’s own collection. In a number of his letters to Atticus, Cicero wrote in detail about his plans for furnishing his villa at Tuscolo

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¹²⁵ For the birth of these academies see Christian, *Empire without End: Antiquities Collections in Renaissance Rome, c. 1350-1527*: 121-25.


¹²⁷ That Poggio’s collecting practices were influenced by his readings of Cicero’s texts has been pointed out by numerous scholars. See most recently Christian, *Empire without End: Antiquities Collections in Renaissance Rome, c. 1350-1527*: 123. No one, however, has put emphasis on the fact that Poggio, imitating Cicero, was trying to procure statuary from Greece.
with a collection of Greek marbles. In November 68 B.C., for example, Cicero asked Atticus to look for marbles appropriate for his country residence: “Yes, do please look after my commissions and anything else that may strike you as suitable to my place in Tusculum, so far as you can without putting yourself to too much trouble.” A few days later Cicero again reminded Atticus: “If you succeed in finding any objects d’art suitable for a gymnasium, which would do for you know where, I hope you won’t let them slip.” Sometime later with great impatience Cicero was waiting to receive pieces from the eastern Mediterranean, which had been shipped by Atticus:

I have paid Lucius Cincius the HS 20,400 sesterces for the Megarian statues in accordance with your earlier letter. I am already quite enchanted with your Pentelic herms with the bronze heads, about which you write to me, so please send them and the statues and any other things you think would do credit to the place in question and to my enthusiasm and to your good taste, as many and as soon as possible, especially any you think suitable to a lecture hall and colonnade. I am so carried away by my enthusiasm for this sort of thing that it’s your duty to help me – and other people’s perhaps to scold me. If a ship of Lentulus is not available, put them aboard any you think fit.

128 The Roman Titus Pomponius came to be called Atticus from his long residence in Athens and for his love of Hellenic things. After living in Athens for twenty years, around 65 B.C., Atticus moved back to Rome, though he made frequent visits to his estate in Epirus, opposite the island of Corfu. It is to his absence from Rome and Cicero’s travels that we owe the correspondence between the two friends.


130 “Haec habebam fere quae te scire vellem tu velim, si qua ornamenta γυμνασιῳ δη reperire poteris quae loci sint eius quem tu non ignoras, ne praetermittas.” Ibid., I, letter 2 (I. 6.2).

131 “L. Cincio HS CCIĆĆ CCIĆĆ CCCC pro signis Megaricis, ut tu ad me scripseras, curavi. Hermae tui Pentelici cum capitis aëneis, de quibus ad me scripsisti, iam nunc me admodum delectant. qua re velim et eos et signa et cetera quae tibi eius loci et nostri studi et tuae elegantiae esse videbuntur quam plurima quam primumque mittas, et maxime quae tibi gymnasi xystique videbuntur esse. nam in eo genere sic studio efferimur, ut abs te adiuvandi, ab aliiis prope reprehendendi simus. si Lentuli navis non erit, quo tibi placebit imponito.” Ibid., I, letter 4 (I. 8.2).
In other letters Cicero wrote with great enthusiasm about the pieces acquired and displayed carefully in his collection: “I am quite delighted with our Hermathena. It’s so judiciously placed that the whole hall is like an offering at its feet.”

At the end of the 1420s Poggio probably felt he had found his Atticus in a friar named Francesco of Pistoia (Franciscus Pitrosiensis). Francesco, who has recently been defined a “crafty dealer operating in the Levant,” is in fact an elusive figure that we do not know very well and who still remains pretty mysterious. His name emerges from sporadic references in fifteenth century documents and especially in the epistolary exchanges between Poggio, Niccoli and Ambrogio Traversari in the 1430s. Francesco was a friar member of the Franciscan order who is referred to in the documents as magister or professor of theology. He collaborated in a Latin translation of Dante’s Commedia around 1427-1429, but we do not know much else about his literary education.

Francesco is mentioned in two letters from the summer of 1429 written by Poggio to Niccolò Niccoli. From those we learn that with Niccoli’s help, Francesco was trying to

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132 “Hermathena tua valde me delectat et posita ita belle est ut totum gymnasium eliu αναθηµα esse videatur.” Ibid., I, letter 10 (I. 1.5).

133 This definition comes from Fusco and Corti, Lorenzo de' Medici, Collector and Antiquarian: 212. Joseph Alsop defined Francesco as “the first art dealer specialized in supplying collectors to be found in Western record, nearly a hundred years before the first such dealer in Western works of art,” see Alsop, The Rare Art Traditions: The History of Art Collecting and Its Linked Phenomena Wherever These Have Appeared: 352. While Francesco is an important figure because of his involvement in the first documented transactions in antique collectables from the eastern Mediterranean, it would be inaccurate to call him a specialized dealer.


135 Vittorio Capponi, Biografia pistoiese (Pistoia: Tipografia Rossetti, 1878), 194.
obtain papal permission to travel to the Holy Land and probably to stop for some time on
the island of Chios. According to Poggio the Pope was willing to grant his permission,
but in exchange requested that Francesco during his trip go to Cairo to deliver a letter to
the sultan.136 Since we do not have Niccoli’s letters to Poggio we do not precisely know
the main motivation for Francesco’s trip, but it is likely that Niccoli was helping the friar
to obtain the papal safe-conduct as he had found in him another traveler willing to
procure books and objects on his behalf, similarly to what Cristoforo Buondelmonti had
done before.

A travel permit issued on August 20, 1429 to “Dilecto filio Francisco de Pistorio
ordinis minorum professori sacre theologie magistro” is preserved in the Vatican archives
and confirms Francesco’s first trip to the Holy Land.137

Not only Martin V, but also Poggio himself had entrusted Francesco with some
errands, as we learn from one of his letters to Niccoli: “I gave some specific errands to
Master Francesco da Pistoia when he left us. Among them the most important was to look
for any marble statue, even if it were broken, or any unusual head which he could bring
back to me with him.”138

136 Francesco is mentioned first in a letter written by Poggio to Niccoli on July 23, 1429.
Bracciolini, Lettere: I, 214-16. His name appears again sometime later in a letter written by
Poggio on August 13, 1429. Ibid., I, 85-86.

137 Goodhart Gordan, "Poggio at the Curia," 113. Francesco’s departure is also attested in the
annals of the Franciscan Order: “Missum ad Soldanum Babyloniae promoturum causas
Christianorum fratrem Franciscum Pistoriensem sacrae Theologiae Magistrum, referunt Chronica
nostra antiqua.” See also Luke Wadding, Annales Minorum seu Trium Ordinum a S. Francisco
Institutorum, vol. 10 (Florence 1932), 166.

138 “Dedi quedam mandata magistro Francisco Pistoriensis cum a nobis discersit, inter que illud
precipuum fuit, ut perquireret aliquod signum marmoreum, vel etiam confractum, aut aliquod
caput egregium, quod ad me secum deferret.” Letter written by Poggio from Rome on September
23, 1430. Bracciolini, Lettere: I, 195-96. Published in English in Gordan, Two Renaissance Book
Soon after his departure Francesco began to report on his archeological finds in the eastern Mediterranean. Writing from Chios he assured Poggio of having secured three marble heads of very high quality: a Juno, a Minerva, and a Bacchus attributed to Polykleitos and Praxiteles (fig. 27). The owner was a Greek monk who apparently had recently found a group of one hundred intact statues in a cave on Rhodes. The Greek monk is referred to as “Caloiros”, a term which has been mistakenly considered a first name rather than the transliteration of the Greek term ᾲκαλογερός, which means monk. Poggio wrote immediately about the three heads to his friend Niccoli:

Yesterday I received letters from him [Francesco] written from Chios in which he informed me that he was holding in my name three marble heads by Polykleitos and Praxiteles. They are the heads of Juno, Minerva, and Bacchus, which he praises highly and says that he will carry with them as far as Gaeta. I do not know what to say about the names of the sculptors; as you know, the Greeks are very wordy and perhaps they have made up the names in order to sell the heads more dearly. I hope that I am wrong to suspect this.

139 Luigi Beschi has tentatively suggested identifying the sculpture of Bacchus with a bust today in the collection of the Uffizi in Florence. Beschi, "La scoperta dell’arte greca,” 322. The bust comes from the Medicean Villa of Poggio Imperiale, but its previous whereabouts are unknown, see Guido A. Mansuelli, Galleria degli Uffizi. Le Sculture (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1958), I, 49-50.

140 We do not have Francesco’s letters to Poggio, but their content can be gained from what Poggio narrates in his letters to Niccoli and in his answers to Francesco. Luigi Beschi has suggested that these one hundred statues recovered on Rhodes were the same mentioned by Cristoforo Buondelmonti as: “quingenta idola omnium manerierum in fovea reperta sunt.” Beschi, "La scoperta dell’arte greca,” 322.

141 The literal translation of the Greek world would be “good old man,” but it used to mean “monk.” See Pernis, "Greek Sources for Donatello’s Annunciation in Santa Croce,” 17. For more considerations on this point see Fusco and Corti, Lorenzo de’ Medici, Collector and Antiquarian: 184 and 267, note 38.

Similarly to what Cicero had done while waiting for the delivery of the marbles from Atticus, Poggio dreamed about how he would display the marbles from Rhodes in his villa:

He [Francesco] writes that the head of Minerva has a laurel crown and that of Bacchus two horns. When they arrive, I shall place them in my little gymnasium. The Minerva will not feel out of place with us; I shall put her among my books. The Bacchus ought to feel grand, for if he deserves a lodging anywhere it is certainly in my country where he is particularly worshiped. We shall also have a place for Juno, for since at one time she was the wife of an adulterer, she will now be a concubine.143

Sometime afterwards Francesco reported about another excellent head, an Apollo, that he had also secured for Poggio.144 The latter enthusiastically wrote back about these finds, once again echoing Cicero in expressing his admiration for marble statuary and his overwhelming desire to possess some whole sculptures:

You can do nothing more welcome to me, Francesco, than if you return to me laden with such sculptures … Many men labor under various diseases, this one holds me especially, that I admire these works in marble sculpture by outstanding artists perhaps too much, and beyond the degree that should suffice for learned man. I am struck with awe by the genius of the artist, when I see the powers of nature represented in marble.145

143 “Caput Minerve scribit esse cum laurea corona, Bacchi vero cum duobus corniculis. Cum venerint, collocabo ea in gymnasiolo meo. Minerva apud nos non omnino male erit; collocabo enim illam inter libros meos. Bacchus autem optime; nam si quo in loco diversorium meretur, in patria mea recte esse potest, in qua et colitur precipue. Iunioni item locum dabimus; cum enim fuerit olim uxor adultery, nun pellex erit.” Bracciolini, Lettere: I, 196.

144 In his response to Francesco, Poggio wrote: “Nunc vero scribes te habere caput Phebi et addis ad eius excellentiam Virgili verum: ...vivos ducent de marmore vultus.” Letter written by Poggio at the end of 1430 from Rome. Ibid., II, 105.

145 “Nihil potes mihi facere acceptius, mi Francisce, quam si similibus sculptures ad me onustus redieris ... Multi variis morbis laborent; hic precipue me tenet, ut niumit forsan, et ultra quam sit doctor viro satis admirer hec Marmora ab egregiis artificibus sculpta. Licet enim natura ipsa excellentior sit ipsis quae instar eius fiunt, tamen cogor admirari artem eius qui in re multa ipsum exprimit animantem, ita ut nil preter spiritum persepe abesse videatur.” Ibid., II, 106.
The information transmitted by Francesco regarding the Rhodian monk who owned one hundred intact antique sculptures did not leave Poggio indifferent and only whetted his appetite. He thus soon tried to gain more information about the hoard of marbles and to verify through his other acquaintances the truthfulness of Francesco’s account.146

In the spring of 1431 we find Poggio writing directly to Rhodes to a certain Suffretus.147 Poggio did not know him personally, but had learned that he was in the possession of a large collection of antique statues. Fra Francesco da Pistoia had informed Poggio, and the fact had been confirmed also by Pietro Lamandi, the general treasurer of the Knights of Rhodes. Suffretus’ collection was the same one which Francesco had seen in the hands of the Caloiros and from which he had already reserved three heads for Poggio.148 Probably at some point the Greek monk had died and the statues had passed over to Suffretus.149 Suffretus, who is to be identified with Suffreto Calvi, was a

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146 In a letter of August 11, 1431 Ambrogio Traversari reported to Niccoli that Poggio had tried to obtain information from members of the Order of Saint John’s about a gathering of one thousand [sic] statues that had belonged to a monk who was now dead: “hodie profectus ad me Iulianus Beninus Roma rediens ait scrisisse a Poggio rogatum ad Principem Militiae Religionisque suae Rhodum; ut inquiri diligenter faciat ubinam moratus est Monachus quidam vita functus, cuius intra parietes domesticos mille signa tum lapidea, tum marmoreal antiqui operis condita sint: ita enim sibi sciptum ab amico hoc nostro. Quid sperandum sit vix mecum statuere possum: facit enim ingens numerus imaginum, ut difficile credatur. Quando enim unus homo solitarius plura quam mille cubitalia signa concesserit.” Mehus, Ambrosii Traversarii Generalis Camaldulensium aliorumque ad Ipsum et ad Alios de Eodem Ambrosio Latinae Epistolae a Domino Petro Canneto Abbate Camaldulensi in Libros XXV Tributae, Variorum Opera Distinctae, et Observationes Illustratae, II, liber 8, epistola 38.

147 The letter was written from Rome on May 26, 1431 and is addressed to “Suffreto,” see Bracciolini, Lettere: II, 139-40.

148 This becomes clear from a later letter written by Poggio to Andreolo Giustiniani in 1438. See below.

149 On this see Fusco and Corti, Lorenzo de’ Medici, Collector and Antiquarian: 267, note 38. See also the reference to a dead monk on Rhodes who owned a large number of sculptures mentioned
prominent citizen of Rhodes with tight connections to the Order. Poggio wrote Suffretus using the most flattering manners, calling him “virum doctissimum” and “humanissimum” as he was trying to obtain more marble statues from him either as gifts or for sale.

Although Poggio was full of expectations for Francesco da Pistoia’s activities on his behalf in the eastern Mediterranean, Ambrogio Traversari had some reservations about the friar’s doings. In a letter of November 1430 Traversari warned his friend Niccoli about Francesco, saying:

I hear what you will have to say about that Francesco Theologian. But as the days go by, I am warned greatly that I will believe less than I will learn. He gave me letters, in which he offered me many things from the noble Genoese Andreolo. In reality he writes to me nothing of this sort of things, and does not mention any sculptures or paintings.

Some time later Traversari wrote again: “Iacopo Theologian, an old acquaintance of that friend of ours, dimmed my hope a little. That hope had been raised about these marvelous

in footnote 147. Referring to Suffretus’ sculptures Poggio indeed wrote: “illa precipue que olim fuerunt Garsie.” Unfortunately it is difficult to determine who Garsie was.


things that would have delivered to us. For [Iacopo] states that his nature is indeed to promise big things, but deliver little."\textsuperscript{152}

Around 1433 Fra Francesco was once again in the east. This time he had been seen in Syria procuring numerous ancient coins for Niccoli.\textsuperscript{153} Francesco had also obtained some manuscripts for Ambrogio Traversari as we learn from a letter that Traversari wrote to Andreolo Giustiniani of Chios on July 10, 1435.\textsuperscript{154} Four other manuscripts that Andreolo had sent to Traversari through Francesco some years earlier instead had never arrived as they apparently had been stolen.\textsuperscript{155}

Upon Francesco’s return from the east, in the spring of 1435, Pope Eugenius IV suggested that Guglielmo da Casale, General Minister of the Franciscan Order, nominate him \textit{Ministrum provinciae Orientalis}. The Pope, who probably still felt in debt for the favor he had asked six years earlier, in his endorsement emphasized how Francesco was “aptus et idoneus” for that role in virtue not only of his great learning, but for his “probitate morum et integritate vitae.”\textsuperscript{156}

\textsuperscript{152} “eam spem meam, quia efferebar, modice depressit Iacobus Theologus familiaris antiquus illius amici nostri, qui haec nobis mira perferibit. Adserit enim illius ingenium id esse, ut ingentia polliceatur, pauciora exhibeat.” Ibid., II, Liber 8, epistola 38.

\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., II, Liber 8, epistola 48.


\textsuperscript{155} ibid., 18.

\textsuperscript{156} \textit{Bullarium franciscanum continens constitutiones, epistolas, diplomata Romanorum pontificum: nova series}, (Florence: Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1929-1949), I, 83. See also a reference in the annals of the Franciscan Order: “Minister Provinciae Orientalis creatus est, Pontifice volente, frater Franciscus Pistoriensis, sacrae Theologiae professor, qui in illis partibus diu fuerat commoratus: Intelleximus officium, die XIII Maii.” Wadding, \textit{Annales Minorum seu Trium Ordinum a S. Francisco Institutorum}, 10: 277.
But a letter written by Poggio in 1438 reveals the unhappy ending of the story.  

Bitterly Poggio wrote to Andreolo Giustiniani on Chios about Francesco da Pistoia. Poggio lamented how Francesco, after having promised him “maria” and “montes” [seas and mountains], had delivered nothing, and he went on to list all the fraudulent actions of the friar. In Rhodes Suffretus had given Francesco three marble heads and a whole statue of two cubits for Poggio, but only the heads had arrived while the friar made up a story about the theft of the statue by Catalan pirates. Poggio suspected instead that the sculptures had been brought to Florence and given to someone else. Moreover Andreolo had sent some antique gems to Poggio through Francesco, but none had arrived as the friar had given them to Cosimo de’ Medici instead. Other gems that Poggio knew through the wax impressions that Francesco had sent with his letters, with the promise to send the real objects, had never been delivered. Finally, Francesco had promised to Cosimo, who was now waiting for it, the very same gem bearing the head of Trajan that Andreolo was using to seal his own private letters. Full of anger and disappointment Poggio wrote:

“And so you see how great the deceit of this man is; how his talent is for using words like snow; and how great his lies.”

Francesco’s fate is not known, but we do know that by 1437 he had already been replaced as Minister of the eastern provinces by Giovanni “de Primaditiis.” The last document in which Francesco is mentioned is a letter by Ambrogio Traversari of 1438 in

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158 “Itaque vides quanta hominis huius sit fallacia, quanta verbositas, quantua mendaciorum officina.” Ibid., II, 296.

159 Ciaralli, "Francesco da Pistoia," 822.
which he asks a certain Ambrosius Michaeli to pay off in his name a certain sum of
money he owed Fra Francesco for books.160

The unhappy Poggio did not succeed in acquiring many fine sculptures from
Greece; he did, however, achieve his dream of furnishing his academy in Valdarno with a
collection of antique marbles. Although not much is known about the contents of his
collection, a sense of it can be gained from passages in the dialogue De vera nobilitate,
which Poggio wrote in 1440. Here the author imagined receiving the visit of his friends
Niccolò Niccoli and Lorenzo de’ Medici in his Valdarnian garden and wrote:

When they were in my garden, which I had eagerly ornamented with a few
imported marbles, Lorenzo looked around and smiled at my treasures, with the
remark: «Reading how prominent people in classical times adorned their homes,
villas, gardens, arcades, and gymnasiums with various images and paintings, as
well as with statues of their ancestors to glorify the nobility of their family, our
host, lacking images of his own ancestors, wants to make this place and himself
noble with these puny and broken remains of marble, hoping the novelty of his
collection will perpetuate his fame hereafter». «If he wants nobility,» Niccolò
remarked, «he will have to dig it up from some other source than statues and
broken fragments of marble (not the kinds of things a wise person should desire),
and that other source is the mind; for wisdom and virtue alone elevate one to
nobility».161

160 “Ambrosius Michaeli salutem. Scripsimus nuper ad te, orantes, ut Magistro Francisco
Pistoriens pro libris illis pecunias solvendas curares.” Mehus, Ambrosii Traversarii Generalis
Camaldulensium aliorumque ad Ipsum et ad Alios de Eodem Ambrosio Latinae Epistolae a
Domino Petro Canneto Abbate Camaldulensi in Libros XXV Tributae, Variorum Opera

161 “Hi cum essent in hortulo, quem peregrinis quibusdam marmoribus celebrem reddere
cupiebam parvule suppellectilis inditio, ridens, cum oculos circumtulisset, Laurentius: «Hic
hospes noster» inquit «cum legerity fuisse moris antique apud priscos illos excellentis viros, ut
domos, villas, hortos, porticus, gymnasia variis signis tabulisque maiorum quoque statuis
exornarent ad gloriam et nobilitandum genus, voluit, cum progenitorum imagines deessent, hunc
locum et se insuper his pusillis et confractis marmorum reliquis nobilem reddere, ut rei novitiate
alia eius ad posteros istor ad eum gria emanaret». «Sic hoc appetit» Nicolaus inquit «aliunde
eruenda est materia nobilitatis, non admodum appetendis. Ex animo, hoc est ex sapientia et
virtute, excutienda nobis est que sola erigit homines ad laudem nobilitatis.»” Translated in English
in Humanism & Liberty: Writings on Freedom from Fifteenth-Century Florence, (Columbia:
University of South Carolina Press, 1978), 122. Quoted in part also in Christian, Empire without
The presence in Poggio’s garden of many “puny and broken remains” could be taken literally. We know that Poggio owned fragmentary marbles rather than intact statues and this was probably due not only to the trickeries of Fra Francesco, but also to Poggio’s financial constraints that did not allow him to obtain the best pieces available on the flourishing market of antiquities.162

The story of Poggio as a collector of antique objects from ancient Greece sheds an interesting light also on Rome during these early decades of the fifteenth century. The city was indeed a burgeoning center of collections not only in virtue of the abundance of antique material available locally, but also for the presence of the papal Curia. In those years when the Byzantine empire was looking westwards under the pressing threat of the Turkish expansion, the roman Curia was the seat of important connections with the eastern Mediterranean. Political and religious information together with numerous travelers, especially from clerical foundations, arrived and passed through Rome frequently. Here a Franciscan friar, like Francesco da Pistoia, could become a papal envoy to the Sultan and at the same time act as a purveyor of antiquities for collectors.

Another of Poggio’s letters to his friend Niccoli confirms how numerous objects were constantly arriving from the eastern Mediterranean into Rome in various ways. In 1433 Poggio announced: “A collector in Greece has died and the man of whom you spoke left a month ago to get his property.”163 Gordan has proposed to identify the dead

162 On this aspects of Poggio’s collection see Weiss, The Renaissance Discovery of Classical Antiquity: 184.

collector in Greece with Cristoforo Buondelmonti, but, although appealing, unfortunately there is no documentary evidence to support this claim.\textsuperscript{164}

**ANDREOLO GIUSTINIANI ON CHIOS: A COLLECTOR IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN**

The correspondence of Poggio Bracciolini and his Florentine friends brings to light the interesting figure of Andreolo Banca Giustiniani (1385 or 1392 -1456).\textsuperscript{165} Andreolo was born in the village of Lithion on the island of Chios and was a member of an important Genoese family. By 1409 he appears already as a prominent member of the Mahona, the company of merchants and landowners in charge of the financial and administrative management of Chios (fig. 28).\textsuperscript{166} As a young man Andreolo had studied first at the Katholikon Mouseion in Constantinople and then had continued his education in Europe (Bologna, Prague and Paris). He traveled extensively both in Europe and the eastern Mediterranean, visiting numerous ancient sites. Andreolo cultivated literary and antiquarian interests and by the end of his life had gathered a huge library and a collection of antique artifacts. His grandson, Agostino Giustiniani, described Andreolo in

\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., 355, note 10 and 11. Gordon suggests also that the man sent to recover the deceased’s belongings was Ciriaco d’Ancona. This identification, however, is not correct since in a later passage of the same letter Poggio writes that the man who went to Greece was nominated papal secretary. An alternative possible indentification is with Christforus Garatone, who was papal secretary and is remembered as “peritus lingue grece.” See Walther von Hoffman, *Forschungen zur Geschichte der kurialen Behörden, vom Schisma bis zur Reformation* (Rome: Loescher, 1914), II, 111.


\textsuperscript{166} Andreolo belonged to the Banca family but, as did all the shareholders of the Mahona since 1362, he too took the last name of Giustiniani.
1513 as a man learned in all the arts and declared that his library contained two thousand volumes.\textsuperscript{167} Despite the possibility that the number of volumes could be exaggerated, Andreolo must have assembled a large collection of manuscripts gathered first from Greek monasteries and augmented, at the time of the fall of Constantinople in 1453, by the dispersal of the libraries of learned Byzantine exiles.

Andreolo and his book holdings were well known among Italian humanists, many of whom corresponded regularly with Giustiniani and benefited from his generosity in enriching their own libraries with precious Greek codices.\textsuperscript{168} We have already mentioned how in the early 1430s Giustiniani had sent numerous manuscripts to Ambrogio Traversari through Francesco da Pistoia, even though only one of them actually reached him in Florence.\textsuperscript{169} In 1457, soon after Andreolo’s death, Poggio Bracciolini wrote to his son Angelo asking for a work of Dionysius of Halicarnassus.\textsuperscript{170} While Giustiniani’s library had considerable Greek holdings, we know that he also sought out Latin volumes in the west through his network of Italian acquaintances. In 1436 Traversari sent

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\item \textsuperscript{167} "in cius nimirum bibliotheca ad duo millia librorum volumina habebantur: numerus certe in domo privati civis non contemnendus eo tempore, quo libri non stamneis characteribus, uti nostra aetate, sed manu, magna quidem impensa, scribantur." From the dedicatory letter addressed by Giustiniani to Filippo Sauli inserted as a preface to the printed edition of Ambrogio Traversari’s Latin translation of the \textit{De immortalitate animorum} by Aeneas of Gaza. Traversari had dedicated his translation to Andreolo and Domenico had it published in Venice in 1513 (\textit{Aeneae Platonici Graeci Christianissimi, De immortalitate animorum deque corporum resurrecctione, aureus libellus, cui titulus est Theophrastus}, Venice: Alexandrum de Paganinis, 1513).
\item \textsuperscript{169} On the manuscripts sent by Andreolo to Traversari see Mercati, \textit{Ultimi contributi alla storia degli Umanisti}, 1: 19.
\item \textsuperscript{170} Bracciolini, \textit{Lettere}: III, 480-81.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Andreolo his Latin translation of the treatise of Aeneas Gazeus *De immortalitate animae*, and in 1440 the Genoese requested a copy of a codex of Ptolemy from his friend Jacopo Bracelli (1390 – c.1466).\(^{171}\)

Chios had been under Genoese control since 1346.\(^{172}\) The wealthy mercantile elite in charge of the island’s administration had made it an important outpost in the eastern Aegean even before Andreolo’s time. In the early years of the fifteenth century, many intellectuals on their way to Constantinople in search of Greek manuscripts had stopped on the island. We know that Guarino da Verona spent some time on Chios before returning to Italy in 1408, and that he became an intimate friend of the governor Gabriele Raccanelli.\(^{173}\) In a letter of 1418 Guarino acknowledged Raccanelli’s cultural interests, writing about him: “[He] is also devoted to literary studies and gives the greatest encouragement to intellectuals.” Apparently Guarino stayed on Chios for quite some time having received an official assignment, as attested by a letter from an unidentified writer who mentions “the official post which he [Guarino] exercised with distinction in the celebrated island of Chios in the Aegean.”\(^{174}\)

Giovanni Aurispa stayed on Chios as well. Here, in the spring of 1413, he made the important discovery of a manuscript containing the plays of both Sophocles and

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\(^{174}\) Ibid., 56.
Euripides, a volume that still survives to this day in the Laurenziana library in Florence.\textsuperscript{175} In the first half of the fourteenth century Nicolaus Bartholomaeus de Columnis (1400-1487) was also on Chios, reading and copying not only Greek volumes, but also one of the bestsellers of his day: Buondelmonti’s \textit{Descriptio Insulae Cretae}.\textsuperscript{176}

Among Andreolo’s friends was the tireless merchant and antiquarian Ciriaco d’Ancona (c.1391- c.1452). Since their first encounter on Chios in 1425 Andreolo and Ciriaco had become close friends.\textsuperscript{177} A group of twenty-six letters written by Ciriaco to Andreolo between 1444 and 1447 still survives.\textsuperscript{178} They attest to the close friendship between the two men and of their frequent encounters and regular epistolary exchanges.

As clearly emerges from these letters, Andreolo and Ciriaco shared not only mercantile and political interests but also a great curiosity for the vestiges of the past. In the spring of 1444 Ciriaco presented to Andreolo the gift of an excerpt of his travel diaries narrating his most recent visit to Athens. After describing in detail the ancient

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175 Cortesi, "Umanesimo greco," 485.
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178 These letters are preserved in a manuscript (Targ. 49) donated to the Biblioteca Nazionale of Florence by Giovanni Targioni Tozzetti (1863-1934). Andreolo must have saved the letters from Ciriaco, which were copied, most likely on Chios, towards the end of the fifteenth century. Targioni published substantial portions of the letters in Giovanni Targioni Tozzetti, \textit{Relazioni d'aluni viaggi fatti in diverse parti della Toscana}, vol. 5 (Florence: Gaetano Cambiagi, 1773), 408-61. The texts of all the letters have been recently republished in Edward W. Bodnar, ed. \textit{Cyriac of Ancona Later Travels} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).
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monuments of the city, Ciriaco, who addressed his friend as “cultori Musarum,” concluded his letter by saying:

I took pains to include a drawing of this absolutely splendid building [the Parthenon], as far as in me lay … and today the 29th of March, a calm Sunday of good omen, in Chios, that remarkable Asian island in the Aegean sea and a city most dear to us, most fittingly and with great pleasure we presented it to Andreolo Giustiniani, our incomparable friend, a man expert and most eager for knowledge of every kind.179

In his other letters to Andreolo, Ciriaco often chronicled his excursions to ancient sites. In a letter written in Foglia Nuova in 1444, for example, Ciriaco described to his correspondent his visit to the ruins of Sardis in Asia Minor.180 There he had seen twelve huge columns of an antique temple still standing in their original position and was struck by “the marble base of a statue, inscribed long ago in honor of a certain priest.” In regard to this inscription Ciriaco added in his letter: “I have undertaken, to the best of my ability, to write it down here and to send it off for your enjoyment.”181

In November 1445 Ciriaco wrote again to his friend: “Dearest Andreolo, I am sending you two chairs made of cypress wood, seats for the theater, which I have charged Philippos Pagiotis, the Europontine captain of this little ship, to deliver to you.”182

Ciriaco’s writings also attest how over the years he shipped to Andreolo much more than

179 “Cuiusce magnificentissimi operis figuram hiisce nostris et hac tempestate per Graeciam comenariis, quoad licuit, responendam curavimus et hodie, IIII Kalendas Aprilium, fausto, sereno Kyriaceo die, apud Chyum, Asianam insignem Aegaeo in pelago insulam et dilectissimam nobis urbeam, Andreolo Iustinianam, amico incomparabili nostro et viro rerum omnigenu peritissimo cuiosissimoque dignissime atque libentissime dedimus.” Ibid., letter 3, 19.

180 Bodnar, Cyriac of Ancona Later Travels, letter 6, 25-29.

181 Ibid., letter 6, 27.

182 Ibid., letter 27, 207-09.
wooden chairs. He also sent books, inscriptions, antique marbles and small antiquities, the objects he collected during his explorations.\textsuperscript{183}

With the help of traveling friends such as Ciriaco d’Ancona, Andreolo was able to gather on Chios numerous antique artifacts. Many of these he often generously gave away to humanists and collectors in the west. The Franciscan friar Francesco da Pistoia, whom we have met earlier, had visited Chios during his peregrinations in the eastern Mediterranean. Through his letters Francesco had disclosed to western collectors, such as Poggio Bracciolini and Niccolò Niccoli, the treasures that Andreolo had amassed on Chios.

In a letter from November of 1430 Ambrogio Traversari mentioned to Niccoli that a \textit{socius} of Fra Francesco, a certain Jacopo theologian, had reported that upon his imminent return Francesco would have brought back antique coins sent as a gift by the Genoese Giustiniani.\textsuperscript{184} Only a few months later Poggio Bracciolini sent a letter to Andreolo asking for marble sculptures:

\begin{quote}
The honorable master Francesco from Pistoia already wrote me in two letters about some heads in his possession that are marvelous works of marble. He wants to bring them to me as a gift, and he added in his letters that you are a man with an excellent mind and very learned, and that you have collected many notable sculptures from many places.\textsuperscript{185}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{183} On Ciriaco’s collection of antique objects see chapter two of the dissertation.

\textsuperscript{184} “Ceterum ex alio Theologo Iacobo illius socio sum factus certior quod, quum frater eius ex hisce loci redisset, dixerit sibi vidisse, se penes Andream ipsum nummos aureos vetustissimos, & quaedam id genus, quae mittere ille instituisset dono; & quum ea memoratus Juvenis tuto perferre esset pollicitus, noluisse illum; verum ad reditum Francisci, qui proxime futurus est, reservare male, ut ipse ea perferat ad te.” Mehus, \textit{Ambrosii Traversarii Generalis Camaldulensium aliorumque ad Ipsum et ad Alios de Eodem Ambrosio Latinae Epistolae a Domino Petro Canneto Abbate Camaldulensi in Libros XXV Tributae, Variorum Opera Distinctae, et Observationes Illustratae}, II, Liber 8, epistola 35.

\textsuperscript{185} “Scripsit ad me duabus iam epistolis egregius vir magister Franciscus Pistoriensis habere se capita quedam marmorea mirandi operis, que dono velit ad me deferre addituque in litteris suis te
At the end of his letter Poggio added:

I therefore beg you such that there is nothing more I could ask or beg for from my heart. If you wanted to give to me as a gift and send through Francesco a marble sculpture that you had or a noble head, that you can give away without being greatly offended, I will be extremely grateful for anything that could be donated to me.186

In a later letter from 1438, which we have already mentioned, Poggio wrote bitterly of Francesco da Pistoia’s wrong doings to Andreolo, but also thanked Giustiniani for some gifts he had sent him: “a gold coin, knives and also the small presents, that your most illustrious wife, sent to my wife.”187 From Poggio’s letter we also learn that even Pope Eugenius IV had received his own share of gifts from Andreolo. Poggio indeed wrote: “your gifts have been given through my mediation to the Pope, who received them with thankful heart.”188 While we do not know the nature of these gifts, we can suppose they consisted of antiquities.189


186 “Peto igitur a te rogoque atque ita, ut nil magis ex animo vel rogare vel petere possim, ut si quod habens signum marmoreum, vel caput nobile, in quo dando non magnopere offendaris, velis id mihi elargiri mittereque per Franciscum donum, futurum mihi gratissimum omnium, quae quidem donari possent.” Ibid., II, 109.

187 “numisma aureum, cultelloes et item munuscula, que preclarissima femina uxor tua ad meam uxorem destinavit.” Ibid. II, 296.

188 “Dona tua pontifici me intermedio sunt reddita, quo ille grato animo cepit.” Ibid. II, 297.

189 In the literature on Andreolo Giustinianii it is often repeated that he gave to Eugenius IV gold coins and statues, but no documentary references have been published on this point. See Giovanna Balbi, L'epistolario di Iacopo Bracelli (Genoa: Fratelli Bozzi, 1969), 30, note 13. That Eugenius received gifts from Andreolo is, however, an interesting fact that is not usually remembered in the literature on this Pope. Eugenius IV is not recorded as a collector of antiquities as his collecting activities have probably been overshadowed by those of his nephew Paul II, who was an extremely avid collector.
In 1440 Jacopo Bracelli, writing from Genoa to Giustiniani, apologized for having asked him for the gift of antique marbles, and explained:

I am sorry that in asking you for a sample of marble sculptures, which delight you so much, I ignored the fact that your generosity towards others had already deprived you of similar things. Refrain therefore from sending me the statue that you have set aside for me. If it will happen that you have plenty of such sculptures, then I will allow my home, which is also yours, to be adorned by you with some excellent work by Phidias or Polykleitos.190

While staying in constant contact with Italian humanists and collectors, Giustiniani played a pivotal role in the migration of antique objects from the territories of ancient Greece to Italy during the first decades of the fifteenth century. But other Genoese merchants, taking advantage of their business activities in the eastern Mediterranean, were involved in similar antiquarian pursuits.

**Genoese Merchants and Antiquities**

Niccolò Cebà belonged to a noble Genoese family of very ancient origins.191 He received a humanistic education and then moved from Genoa to Adrianople first and to Pera afterwards. Here Cebà established a successful commercial business, while also cultivating his cultural interests. Around 1431 Ciriaco d’Ancona met him in Adrianople and arranged to follow him on his next trip to Persia. Sometime later, however, Ciriaco’s

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190 “Piget me quod delicis tuas, marmorea signa, petierim: inopem enim te, quod ignorabam, earum rerum liberalitas fecit itaque oro te desinas statuam ad me mittere; si quis vero casus effecerit ut huissmodi statuarum copia tibi sit, tunc patiar ut, electo aliquo phidiaco vel policletico opere, meas edes, que tue sunt, exornes.” Letter written by Jacopo Bracelli to Andreolo Giustiniani on July 2, 1440. Ibid., 28-30.

plans changed and he decided against making the journey with Cebà.\textsuperscript{192} The Genoese merchant was in contact with many Italian humanists to whom he sent his poetic and literary compositions. To Francesco Filelfo and Leonardo Bruni he offered to procure Greek manuscripts.\textsuperscript{193}

Another Genoese merchant with humanistic interests was Eliano Spinola di Luccoli (c.1390-1470/74) who, through his mercantile network, became an important purveyor of antiquities to the west. Since the end of the 1430s Spinola occupied prominent positions at the service of the Genoese Republic, but it was thanks to his business activities in the eastern Mediterranean that he accumulated a great fortune and gained a notable position in Genoese society.\textsuperscript{194} Spinola distributed part of his riches so generously to the poor that a statue was erected in his honor in the Palazzo San Giorgio in Genoa (fig. 29).\textsuperscript{195}

Eliano was a busy merchant who conducted his business with the help of numerous agents and was involved in a great variety of commerce.\textsuperscript{196} He very likely

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\item \textsuperscript{192} Scalamonti, \textit{Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani}: paragraphs 75 and 79.
\item \textsuperscript{193} Ferdinando Gabotto, "Un nuovo contributo alla storia dell'Umanesimo ligure," \textit{Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria} 24 (1892): 31-32.
\item \textsuperscript{194} Eliano Spinola was probably born around 1390, but his exact date of birth is still unknown. He was "Anziano del Comune" in 1438, Genoese ambassador at the court of Alfonso d’Aragona in 1451, and \textit{Ufficiale di Moneta} in 1460. For a brief summary of these activities see Alessandra Gagliano Candela, "Un antiquario genovese del XV secolo: Eliano Spinola," in \textit{La Storia dei Genovesi} (Genoa: Centro internazionale di studi sui ceti dirigenti nelle istituzioni della Repubblica di Genova, 1985), 430.
\item \textsuperscript{196} On Eliano’s mercantile practices see Jacques Heers, \textit{Gênes du XVe siècle. Activité économique et problèmes sociaux} (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1961), 540-43. Heers compares Spinola’s role in
\end{itemize}
traveled to the east himself around 1439 when he wrote his will in Naples. During the following years his Mediterranean business continued and was carried out by others acting on his behalf. Spinola dealt in iron, alum, coral and numerous other goods, and his trading network extended from Constantinople to Flanders. He was also a banker and one of the very few Genoese private ship owners. The extent of his wealth and of his business dealings can be gleaned not only from archival commercial documents, but also from the correspondence of many of his contemporaries.\textsuperscript{197}

Spinola’s business in precious gemstones is documented by a group of letters that he wrote to King Alfonso d’Argona between 1456 and 1457. From this correspondence we learn that Eliano was procuring diamonds, bracelets and rare stones upon the King’s request.\textsuperscript{198}

Spinola also cultivated learned interests. He was a close friend of Jacopo Bracelli, one of the most important Genovese humanists at the time, and had accumulated an important library comprising almost three hundred volumes by ancient authors.\textsuperscript{199}

\textsuperscript{197} Braggio, "Giacomo Bracelli e l’Umanesimo dei Liguri," 65-78.

\textsuperscript{198} Gagliano Candela, "Un antiquario genovese del XV secolo: Eliano Spinola," 426-27.

\textsuperscript{199} The library’s contents are recorded in an inventory post mortem of 1479 of Spinola’s possessions which is mentioned in Heers, Gênes du XVe siècle. Activité économique et problèmes sociaux 542-43, note 5. Heers believed that the Palazzo Spinola dei Marmi was property of Eliano, but more recent studies assign it to Eliano’s brother Jacopo. On the palace see Ennio Poleggi, Una reggia repubblicana: atlante dei Palazzi di Genova (Turin: U. Allemandi, 1998), 186. Inside the palace there were numerous interesting objects coming from the eastern Mediterranean, including: oriental rugs, Byzantine ivories, paintings, precious silverware and objects made of rare kinds of wood. See Gagliano Candela, "Un antiquario genovese del XV secolo: Eliano Spinola," 429-30.
But among his contemporaries Eliano was also famous for his collection of antique objects imported directly from the eastern Mediterranean. Two letters of 1464 reveal how Eliano’s reputation as a collector of antiquities reached well beyond the city of Genoa. On November 26 of that year Eliano wrote to his friend the Cardinal of Pavia Iacopo Ammannati Piccolomini asking for a favor. Eliano was trying to obtain papal intervention to dissuade his son Domenico from entering the Domenican order; according to Eliano the boy had so many natural gifts that he would have much preferred to see him employed at the papal Curia rather than becoming a monk. Ammannati presented his friend’s concern to Paul II who, upon hearing Eliano’s name, exclaimed: “I know that Eliano. He is a distinguished and noble man. He is guided by the same pleasure as I am. He has learned eyes to recognize excellent objects, many of which he searched out from Greece, Asia and other places.”

Paul II was an eager collector of antiquities himself and, being well informed about Spinola’s holdings, seized the opportunity to get hold of some of Eliano’s objects. The Pope knew that from Spinola’s collection he could obtain antique Byzantine icons, embroidered oriental fabrics, and perhaps some antique sculptures or paintings, vases of precious materials, carved objects, gold and silver coins, or other sorts of antiquities. The Pope was willing to buy any of these objects.


201 “Generatim autem recensuit haec: imagines sanctorum operis antiqui ex Graecia allatas, quas illi iconas vocant, aulaea item, textura acuve picta, indidem advecta, si quid insuper vetustae picturae sculpturae apud te esset, vascular quoque cuiusque modi cari lapidis, insigna porro, toreumata et numismata ex auro et argento ac reliquia huiusmodi, quae vos vetustatis amatores, melius inter vos esse in pretio scitis.” Ibid. II, 570.
But Ammannati, writing in response to Spinola, bestowed on his friend a piece of advice:

Eliano you should choose among your things, something elegant to present him as a gift (you can not avoid this without being accused of rude stinginess); the rest send it here through your trustful agents. Who presents everything to the Pope should say: «This is what Eliano Spinola sends you as a present, for everything else give what you want».202

In the end Domenico Spinola, Eliano’s son, did not enter the Dominican order, but his father probably did have to give away some of his antique treasures. Despite the fact that Eliano was a merchant, we do not known whether he dealt also in antique objects or rather if he simply collected these for his personal enjoyment. The fact that Ammannati wrote in his letter: “I know, dearest Eliano, how hard is to give away your beloved things” leads one to think that the latter was the case.203 Ammannati was a collector himself and would have honestly understood Spinola’s pain.204

The teachings of Chrysoloras in Florence at the end of the fourteenth century created among Italian humanists a vivid interest in learning the Greek language and stimulated the need to procure books by classical writers in their original versions. This search for manuscripts created a new category of travelers heading to the eastern Mediterranean in their quest for books and learning, while the need for Greek teachers in Italian schools attracted Byzantine intellectuals to the west. Italy and the eastern


203 “Non ignoro, Heliane carissime, amanti haec durum esse haec dare.” Ibid., II, 570.

204 For Ammannati’s collection see the recent reference in Christian, Empire without End: Antiquities Collections in Renaissance Rome, c. 1350-1527: 135.
Mediterranean were now connected by new cultural relations weaved by the frequent travels of books and intellectuals.

Soon afterwards, during the first decades of the fifteenth century, ancient artifacts, in the form of small coins and gems or larger fragmentary marbles, also found their way from the east into the west together with books and men. These antiquities arriving from faraway immediately found their place in the palaces and libraries of collectors, right next to manuscripts of classical texts and antique objects recovered from Italian soil.
CHAPTER 2
CIRIACO D’ANCONA IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

He traveled over almost the whole world. With his own eyes he inspected buildings, temples of the gods, marble statues, inscriptions, and all manner of antiquities. Nor was he ever daunted by the harshness of the way, the cruelty of the sea, or the weariness of long journeying: everything was most easy, agreeable, and pleasant to him on account of his courage and the antiquities to be discovered.

Antonio Leonardi, 5 October 1457.1

In 1412 the famous merchant and “founding father of modern classical archeology,” Ciriaco d’Ancona (c.1391-1452), began as a young man to navigate the waters of the eastern Mediterranean (fig. 30).2 Ciriaco was employed as scriba minor [minor clerk] on board a ship captained by a relative, Cincio de’ Pizzicolli, and headed to Alexandria in Egypt with a cargo of fruit.3 Ciriaco’s travels in the Mediterranean started off as mercantile trips, but soon became the opportunity for pursuing other broader interests.4

1 “Totum ferme peragravit mundum. Nam aedificia, temple deorum marmorea, statuas, epigrammata, antiquitates omnes hic propriis oculis conspectus est; nec huic unquam nocuit itineris asperitas, nec pelagi saevitia neque longae peregrinationis lassitude; omnia ob virtutem, ob antiquitates inveniendas facillima, suavia, iucundaque fuerunt.” Letter by Antonio Leonardi to Felice Feliciano, Treviso, Biblioteca Capitolare, MS 2 A/1. Published in Francesco Scalamonti, Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1996), 196.

2 Ibid., paragraph 1.

3 Ibid., par. 18.

4 Together with his mercantile and antiquarian activities, it has been shown how Ciriaco was also often involved in semi-official diplomatic missions on behalf of the Roman Curia. On these aspects of his travels see, for example, Edward W. Bodnar, "Ciriaco d'Ancona and the Crusade of Varna: A Closer Look," Mediaevalia 14 (1988): 253-80; and Colin Imber, The Crusade of Varna, 1443-45 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 197-99.
According to Ciriaco’s first biographer, his friend and fellow Anconitan Francesco Scalamonti,\textsuperscript{5} it was the diligent study of the Arch of Trajan in the port of Ancona, around 1421 (fig. 31), that spurred Ciriaco’s interest in antique monuments:

This remarkable great work of architecture, with its important, well-lettered Latin inscription, was the first seminal inspiration to Ciriaco, as we often heard him say, to search and examine all the other worthy memorials of antiquity in the world.\textsuperscript{6}

From that point forward, Ciriaco’s curiosity about the remains of the ancient past became an important motivation for his continuous wanderings. In many passages of his biography we read about the detours taken by Ciriaco from his business routes in search for antiquities. One day, for example, after having settled all of his business in Adrianople and loaded his merchandise onto a ship directed to Ancona, he hurried off with a group of Turkish guides to visit Macedonia and the antique monuments of Philippi.\textsuperscript{7} Probably inspired also by Cristoforo Buondelmonti’s accounts of the Aegean islands, which he had personally copied in one of his manuscripts, Ciriaco set out to

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item\textsuperscript{7} Scalamonti, \textit{Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani}: par. 76.
\end{itemize}
explore what was still visible of the ancient sites mentioned by the classical authors, with
the ambition of seeing for himself the whole world that was described in those texts.\(^8\)

The sociability of his nature, the extensiveness of his explorations and the novelty
of his accounts brought Ciriaco and his voyages to the immediate attention of those who
were studying and collecting fragments of the classical world in Italy. Ciriaco’s ability to
describe what he saw in distant lands stimulated the curiosity of the many who did not
travel, and the objects he brought back home whetted the appetites of numerous
collectors. Ciriaco returned from his journeys with notebooks filled with descriptions of
classical monuments and with transcriptions of countless Greek and Latin inscriptions.\(^9\)

Like Buondelmonti’s writings, Ciriaco’s eyewitness records also described with a fresh
new voice places that up to that point had only been known from the narratives of the
classical authors. But Ciriaco did not simply take copious written notes of what he
inspected; he also produced lively pictures of many of the antique remains he
encountered. His drawings, despite their amateurish quality, made visible for the first
time what had been described in the literary sources in a language that was at times
difficult to interpret, understand and visualize. While in his charts Buondelmonti had
mapped out the presence of antique sites on the Greek islands, Ciriaco’s sketches showed

\(^8\) On Ciriaco’s habit of carrying collections of excerpts from the classical authors during his
travels see Giuseppe Ragone, "Umanesimo e «filologia geografica»: Ciriaco d’Ancona sulle orme

\(^9\) Ciriaco’s original notebooks are now lost. Almost all of them were probably destroyed by fire in
1514 with the Sforza library of Pesaro. Only one autograph fragment of these travel-diaries
survives in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan (Ms. Trotti 373, ff. 101-124). On this manuscript
see Remigio Sabbadini, "Ciriaco d’Ancona e la sua descrizione autografa del Peloponneso
their destruction, however, Ciriaco’s manuscripts were copied by many of his friends and other
later humanists; some of these copies still survive to this day. On the fate of Ciriaco’s diaries see
also Edward William Bodnar, *Cyriacus of Ancona and Athens* (Brussel-Berchem: Universa
details of those sites, such as marble reliefs carved with antique images, still-standing buildings and inscriptions bearing worn out Greek letterings.

With his written notes, interspaced with drawings and copies of inscriptions, Ciriaco filled six volumes of travel diaries, the commentaria as he called them (fig. 32).\(^\text{10}\) The interest that these notes provoked among his contemporaries is attested by the survival of numerous fragmentary excerpts from Ciriaco’s now lost originals.\(^\text{11}\) Ciriaco himself dispensed many abstracts of his diaries to his most important and dearest acquaintances as precious gifts.\(^\text{12}\) That those presents were highly appreciated by his contemporaries, who were fascinated by the novelty of Ciriaco’s accounts and discoveries, is clearly expressed in a letter by the humanist Guarino da Verona who - in writing to Feltrino Boiaro in 1439 - encouraged Ciriaco to continue in his investigation of antiquities “vel in bibliothecis vel in marmoribus.”\(^\text{13}\)

Numerous art historians have recognized the importance of Ciriaco’s drawings of antiquities.\(^\text{14}\) Ciriaco’s diaries, combining text and images, have been placed at the origin

\(^{10}\) Bodnar, Cyriacus of Ancona and Athens: 21 and 29.

\(^{11}\) An early account of the vicissitudes of Ciriaco’s original manuscripts is in Giovanni Battista De Rossi, Inscriptiones christianae urbis Romae septimo saeculo antiquiore (Rome: Officina Libraria Pontificia, 1861-1888).

\(^{12}\) One such example is the epitome made by Ciriaco for his friend the bishop of Padua Pietro Donato. On this see Patricia Fortini Brown, Venice & Antiquity: the Venetian Sense of the Past (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 86-91; Luigi Beschi, "Antiquarian Research in Greece during the Renaissance: Travellers and Collectors," in In the Light of Apollo: Italian Renaissance and Greece ed. Mina Gregori (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana, 2003), 245-47.

\(^{13}\) Remigio Sabbadini, La scuola e gli studi di Guarino Guarini Veronese (Catania: Francesco Galati, 1896), 104.

of the tradition of fifteenth century sylloge and at the very beginning of the production of
drawings after the antique. Moreover, scholars have recognized the archeological value
of these images as the only surviving visual records of many now lost monuments. The
study of these drawings does, however, pose numerous problems since, with the
exception of a handful of images by Ciriaco’s own hand, they all survive only in later
versions by different copyists.

Another group of drawings connected with Ciriaco has been less discussed by
scholars. These are the illustrations of the exotic and rare animals that Ciriaco saw during
his travels in the east. Despite the fact that they do not pertain strictly to the study of
antiquities, these images are lively documents of the unusual things that Ciriaco
encountered in the eastern Mediterranean and they provide us with the opportunity to

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15 See Sarah Cartwright, "The Collectio Antiquitatum of Giovanni Marcanova (Modena,
Biblioteca Estense Universitaria Ms. alfa.L.5.15 = Lat. 992) and the Quattrocento Antiquarian
Sylloge" (PhD Dissertation, New York University, 2007); Christian Hülsen, La Roma antica di
Ciriaco d'Ancona (Rome: E. Loescher, 1907).

16 Bernard Ashmole, "Cyriac of Ancona and the Temple of Hadrian at Cyzicus," Journal of the
Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 19 (1956): 179-91; Andrea Barattolo, "Ciriaco de' Pizzicolloni e
tempo di Proserpina a Cizico: per una nuova lettura della descrizione dell'Anconetano," in
Ciriaco d'Ancona e la cultura antiquaria dell'Umanesimo. Atti del convegno internazionale di
studio, ed. Gianfranco Paci and Sergio Sconocchia (Reggio Emilia: Edizioni Diabasis, 1998),
103-40.

17 Luigi Beschi, "I disegni ateniesi di Ciriaco: analisi di una tradizione," in Ciriaco d'Ancona e la
cultura antiquaria dell'Umanesimo. Atti del convegno internazionale di studio, ed. Gianfranco
appreciate the importance of Ciriaco’s contribution to the imagery of the Renaissance in the west.\textsuperscript{18} But even more importantly these drawings, which Ciriaco included in his correspondence, allow a brief consideration of the way in which the Anconitan himself advertised his explorations and voyages among his Italian and foreigner friends. Ciriaco’s illustrated letters give us a chance to look inside Ciriaco’s own historic context, a time when antiquarian, geographical and naturalistic interests were frequently intertwined.

**ELEPHANTS, GIRAFFES AND CROCODILES**

In 1436 Ciriaco traveled to Egypt, where he explored many ancient sites, advancing from Alexandria up the Nile to Cairo and visiting the pyramids at Memphis.\textsuperscript{19} From the highest of the pyramids he transcribed in his *commentaria* an inscription in hieroglyphs that he immediately also sent to Florence to his friend, the “curiosissimo,” Niccolò Niccoli.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{18} These drawings have been studied by Phyllis Williams Lehmann, *Cyriacus of Ancona’s Egyptian Visit and Its Reflections in Gentile Bellini and Hieronymus Bosch* (Locust Valley: J. J. Augustin, 1977). The focus of her study is the influence of these drawings on paintings by Gentile Bellini and Hieronymus Bosch.

\textsuperscript{19} On Ciriaco’s visit to Egypt in 1436 see Carel Claudius Van Essen, “Cyriaque d’Ancône en Egypte,” *Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen* 21(1958): 297-301.

\textsuperscript{20} “Nam ita ingentes, & mirifico architectorum opere cospicuas vidimus lapidum moles, ut vel tantum humani generis opus nusquam terries editum crederem, quum & a solo bina fere stadia latitudinis quaelibet amplissimae parietis facies habebat, tantaque altitudinis X, & ipsos parietes ad summum sui verticem pyramidalem in figuram vidimus ascendentes, quarumque ad maximam antiquissimum Phoenicibus cararctebris epigramma conspeximus, ignotum nostra acetate hominibus puto ob longinquam aevi vetustatem, & magnarum, & antiquissimarum atrium imperitiam, & desuetudinem, quod & tamen excepimus ut admirabile, ac nostris praedigne adjecimus commentaris, nec non primum exemplar Florentiam nostro Nicolao Niccolo viro in primis harum curiosissimo rerum misimus, & alterum postea simile ad uitque florentissimam Tuscorum urbem.” Lorenzo Mehus, ed. *Kyriaci Anconitani Itinerarium Nunc Primum ex Ms. Cod. in Lucem Eruatum ex Bibl. Illus. Clarissimique Baronis Philippi Stosch* (Florence: Joannis Pauli Giovannelli, 1742), 51-52. Ciriaco was conscious that he was taking notes and sending to
Some years after his return, in 1441, Ciriaco wrote at great length about his
Egyptian journey in a letter to Pope Eugenius IV:

After I saw all the high points of such a great city and viewed all at length their
exotic animals, dromedaries, giraffes and those huge beasts the elephants, and
previously in the Nile, those dreadful snake-engendered crocodiles; what I wanted
more and that for which I had come and had crossed so many rivers – I gazed on
the marvels of the pyramids at Memphis…

Not long afterwards Ciriaco began to bestow on his many friends and notable
 correspondents the very detailed descriptions, illustrated by drawings, not of the
pyramids, but rather of the animals that had made such an impression on him during the
Egyptian expedition.

In a letter of January 1, 1443 sent as a New Year’s gift to Filippo Maria Visconti
(1392-1447), Ciriaco carefully described the zoraphan [giraffe], the elephantum
[elephant] and the crocodillos [crocodiles], and then wrote:

I have taken pains to have sent to your Excellency’s most worthy gaze true
 likenesses of these beasts, so that, as far as possible, we might think that you had

Niccoli knowledge that had been completely lost among his contemporaries. Often his peers
expressed their admiration and gratitude for Ciriaco’s ability to resurrect antique testimonies from
the past. In a poetic composition another Florentine humanist, Carlo Marsuppini, specifically
mentioned the hieroglyphics that Ciriaco had made known to the west: “Nam modo Pyramidum
spectas miracula sollers et legis ignotis scripta notata feris.” De Rossi, Inscriptiones christianae
urbis Romae septimo saeculo antiquiore: 862.

21 “Ego se denim postquam omnia tantae civitatis fastigia vidi, & sua quaeque animalia peregrina
conspexi Dromedarios, Zozaphos, & immanes elephantum bellvas, nec non antea per Nilum
horribicos illos anguigenos crocodiles, tandem & quod magis optabam, & cuius gratia venimus, &
tantos tranavimus annes, ut Pyramidum miracula Memphis aspicerem…” Letter written by
Ciriaco to Eugenius IV (Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ms. Ottob. Lat. 2967, fols. 20r-
21v). The letter was published by Mehus, Kyriaci Anconitani Itinerarium Nunc Primum ex Ms.
Cod. in Lucem Erutum ex Bibl. Illus. Clarissimique Baronis Philippi Stosch, 50-51. This section
of the text is quoted in English translation in Lehmann, Cyriacus of Ancona’s Egyptian Visit: 11.
An earlier version of the same letter, dated 18 October 1442, is preserved in Florence (Biblioteca
Medicea Laurenziana, XC inf. 55), together with an original autograph by Ciriaco of the same
text sent also to Cosimo de’ Medici on November 13, 1442. See Sebastiano Gentile, ed. Firenze e
la scoperta dell’America. Umanesimo e geografia nel ’400 Fiorentino (Florence: Leo S. Olschki,
1992), 176-77.
seen the beasts, although you remain at your brilliant court of Milan and have not yet, as I have on my journey, crossed the sea or the Egyptian Nile or the immeasurable expanse of so much sand, and so that your Serenity might be able to know the more easily from these that, if I ever happen to see anything worthy of note in the world, every part of which I desire to investigate in your glorious name, not only in words, but also in true and proper drawings.\textsuperscript{22}

This letter speaks clearly of the importance given by Ciriaco to the “veras imaginis” of what he had seen. In a time long before photography was invented, Ciriaco was sending along with his written accounts snapshots of what he had admired. These were intended as surrogates of real journeys and as vivid documents of what was out there in far-off lands.\textsuperscript{23} The original drawings of exotic animals sent to Filippo Maria Visconti are lost, but copies of Ciriaco’s giraffe, elephant, and crocodile survive in several manuscripts,

\textsuperscript{22} “Quarum vero veras ferarum imaginis hisce Magnitudini tuae \& praedignissime spectationi destinandum curavi, ut quo ad licet eas te vidisse feras putaremus, tuae manendo splendidissimae Mediolaneae Arcis aulai, nec dum a te vasto, ut a nobis, permenso aequore, aut Aegyptiaco Nilo, immensave itineris tantarum arenarum mole; utque ex his facilius tua serentita intelligere queat, me, si quando per orbem, quem omni ex parte tuo sub inclyto nomine perscrutari desidero, quid novi mihi videre dignum notatione contigerit, non modo literis, sed veris propriis lineamentis stilo utique proprias rerum omnigenum Majestati Tuae referre possa figuras.” The text, from a now lost manuscript, was published in Annibale Olivieri degli Abati, ed. \textit{Commentariorum Cyriaci Anconitani Nova Fragmenta Notis Illustrata} (Pesaro: 1763), 56-57. This excerpt of the letter is quoted in English by Lehmann, \textit{Cyriacus of Ancona's Egyptian Visit}: 10. Other copies of the letter to Filippo Maria Visconti are in Naples (Biblioteca Nazionale V.E. 64, fol. 16r-v), in Rome (Biblioteca Casanatense 3636, fol. 141v-142v) and in Treviso (Biblioteca Capitolare, cod. 1.138, fol. 172r-v). The Treviso manuscript also contains two partially torn drawings of the elephant and the giraffe. See ibid., pl. 30 A.B. These drawings are also mentioned in Charles Mitchell, "Ex Libris Kiriaci Anconitani," \textit{Italia Medioevale e Umanistica} 5 (1962): 285, note 4.

\textsuperscript{23} Ciriaco’s drawings immediately gained credibility and were perceived as reliable visual documents. See, for example, the discussion on the image of “Aristotle” from a drawing by Ciriaco in Phyllis Williams Lehmann and Karl Lehmann, \textit{Samothracian Reflections: Aspects of the Revival of the Antique} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 15-25. Here Lehmann writes: “Shortly after Cyriacus sketched his “Aristotle” in the autumn of 1444, his drawing became known in Italy, known and accepted as an authentic document of the philosopher’s appearance.”
attesting to the breadth of their circulation (fig. 33). Ciriaco himself was responsible for producing multiple images of these animals.

Ciriaco sent another account of his trip to Egypt, similar in content to the one addressed to Filippo Maria Visconti, to a certain Marianus and again included drawings of an elephant and a giraffe (fig. 34). An analogous narration of the same journey is preserved in a letter addressed to a fellow Anconitan, the poet Andrea Stagi.

24 Already when Annibale Olivieri degli Abati published Ciriaco’s letter to Visconti in 1763, the accompanying drawings in the manuscript he was copying were missing. A note by degli Abati following Ciriaco’s letter reads: “Hic deficient imagines animalium praedictorum.” Together with those that will be mentioned below, other drawings of the elephant and the giraffe from Ciriaco’s originals are in Florence (Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, Ms. Ashb. 1174, fols. 142v, 143v) and Oxford (Bodleian Library, Ms. Lat. Misc. d 85, fols. 72v, 73r). All of them are discussed and reproduced in Lehmann, *Cyriacus of Ancona's Egyptian Visit*: 10 and pl. 31 A.B. 32, and 33. One more version of the elephant is in ms. Hamilton 108 of the Staatsbibliothek of Berlin (f. 98v), which once belonged to the Venetian senator Antonio Venier. See Augusto Campana, "L'elefante malatestiano e Ciriaco d'Ancona," in *Cyriacus of Ancona e la cultura antiquaria dell'Umanesimo. Atti del convegno internazionale di studio*, ed. Gianfranco Paci and Sergio Sconocchia (Reggio Emilia: Edizioni Diabasis, 1998), 198-200; Claudia Barsanti, "Costantinopoli e l'Egeo nei primi decenni del XV secolo: la testimonianza di Cristoforo Buondelmonti," *Rivista dell'Istituto Nazionale d'Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte* 56 (2001): 89-90. The unpublished drawing of a crocodile is preserved in a manuscript in Rome (Biblioteca Casanatense, 3636, fol. 142v) following the text of the letter to Filippo Maria Visconti. See Lehmann, *Cyriacus of Ancona's Egyptian Visit*: 30, note 71.


Again, at some point in 1442, Ciriaco presented other images of the exotic animals as gifts to his Veronese friend Giacomo Rizzoni. A thank you note written by Rizzoni on May 6, 1442 eloquently expresses his admiration for the images. In his letter Rizzoni referred to Ciriaco as “patrem antiquitatis” and “ferarum admirandarum pictorem” and wrote:

Indeed, by the immortal god, who, gazing on the giraffe that you recently gave me, is not held in admiration of it, and who does not remain enchanted with his eyes fixed on it? Because the head, the neck, the mane, the chest, and every other part do not look drawn, but borne and grown by nature: certainly a noble animal and appropriate for a regal court. I refrain from speaking about the small furry half snake-engendered dog, who is visible barking loudly at the giraffe. Further I consider the letter, in which you describe with such elegance the drawing of the animal, that even if the image was lacking, I could depict and portray it in my mind.

The little hairy dog mentioned by Rizzoni is depicted, together with the giraffe, in two drawings derived from Ciriaco’s originals (fig. 35). As explained by a caption next to

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29 Marchi, "Due corrispondenti veronesi di Ciriaco d'Ancona," 317-29.

30 “Nam, per deum immortalem, quis non admiratione tenetur intuens zoropham que me nuper donasti, obtuitque haeret defluxus in illa? Nam caput, collum, iubae, pectus ceteraque non picta, sed nata atque adulta suapte natura esse videntur: nobile quipped animal et aulis regaligus dedicandum. Tacce de lanigero ac semianigneo caniculo, qui sane ad feram sublatrare conspicatur. Porro epistolam adieci, qua bellve lineamenta describes tam elegantur, ut etiam si pictura deesset, ipsam animo intueri ac defingere possem.” The letter, written by Giacomo Rizzoni to Ciriaco, was published from a manuscript in the Biblioteca Guarnacci in Volterra (ms. 5031, ff. 45r-46r) by ibid., 321-22. For other surviving excerpts of the same letter see ibid., 320, note 2.

31 It appears in a manuscript of the Bodleian Library of Oxford (Ms. Lat. Misc. d. 85, f. 73r), reproduced in Lehmann, fig. 31b; and also in the manuscript of the Laurenziana Library in Florence which includes Ciriaco’s the letter to Stagius (Ms. Ashburnham 1174, f. 143v). On this manuscript see Firenze e la scoperta dell’America. Umanesimo e geografia nel ‘400 Fiorentino, 177-80.
the image, the dog was the pet of Giovanni Berardi, known as Cardinal Tarentino. It is suggestive of the tastes and ideas in Ciriaco’s entourage to see how in these drawings the little domestic animal is easily juxtaposed to the exotic elegant giraffe.

Again, on July 19, 1444, writing from Constantinople to his friend Andreolo Giustiniani, Ciriaco announced:

Today we have given to the most worthy emperor, and now to you your Beatitude, a likeness of it [the giraffe] that I made recently during our hunt, so that in our estimation, as far as possible, you have seen the living beast as we did, though you remain at your hearth and have not yet traversed the vast sea as we have in our journey.

In a previous section of the letter, Ciriaco narrated that while he was hunting with the Byzantine emperor he had stopped to rest and, as if in a daydream, had seen the Egyptian giraffe and had drawn it for his friends.

The only original drawing of exotic animals by the hand of Ciriaco to survive to this day is the image of an elephant preserved in a Greek manuscript compiled in the Byzantine center of Mistrà in around 1441 (fig. 36). A note by Dimitrios Raoul Kavakis, one of Georgius Gemistos Plethon’s students, attributes the drawing to Ciriaco. The image of the elephant was originally accompanied by that of the giraffe, which has been torn out from the book. Both drawings had been executed by Ciriaco as his personal

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32 Next to the dog in the Oxford version of the drawing (Ms. Lat. Misc. d. 85, f. 73r) appears the inscription “Tarentini R. Cardin CANICULUS.” On the cardinal of Taranto, Giovanni Berardi, see Ingeborg Walter, “Berardi, Giovanni,” in Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1966), vol. 8, 758-61.


contribution to the collective manuscript produced at the school of Georgius Gemistos Plethon (after 1355-1452). Thus, five years after his visit to Egypt, the exotic animals were still occupying Ciriaco’s mind and were still considered worthy gifts for his intellectual friends.35

Finally, the learned bishop of Padua, Jacopo Zeno, in a letter written from Florence on 13 June 1442, praised many qualities of his restless friend Ciriaco, but especially placed emphasis on the importance of his animal drawings:

What could be brought to men in these our times more useful, more worth while, than these beasts of the forests, these unheard of and unfamiliar prodigies brought to light and knowledge by you? For who before you brought the giraffe to us or disclosed its likeness to us? Who has delineated the elephant in a form so appropriate and natural? You wanted to fashion and shape it to our use by your own hand, by your own marvelous talent, as you saw it after enduring the greatest hardship and journeys…36

The above account of the dissemination of Ciriaco’s images with his letters documents one of the ways in which the visual culture of the Italian Renaissance received stimuli and ideas from well beyond the Italian borders.37 But Ciriaco’s letters also suggest how he was personally in touch with a wide network of learned men that extended from the

35 On this manuscript see also Anna Pontani, "I Graeca di Ciriaco d'Ancona (con due disegni autografi inediti e una notizia su Cristoforo da Rieti)," Thesaurismata 24 (1994): 124-36. In her essay Anna Pontani publishes two newly discovered drawings by Ciriaco, one representing a lion and a dog, and the other a lion attacking a bull.

36 “Quid vero utilius, quid dignius his temporibus nostris hominibus afferri potuit quam in his silvestribus feris et inauditis et inusitatis monsters per te ad lucem cognitionem redactis? Quid enim ante te zorofam ad nos detulerat aut eius nobis imaginem patefecerat? Quis elephantem tam propria et naturali forma descripsisset? Quem tu ut videres maximis difficultatibus et itineribus functus ad nostrum usu tuo manu, tuo quodam mirabilis ingenio formare ac defingere voluisti.” Bertalot and Campana, "Gli scritti di Jacopo Zeno e il suo elogio di Ciriaco d'Ancona," 373. This passage from Zeno’s letter is quoted in English in Lehmann, Cyriacus of Ancona's Egyptian Visit: 13.

37 On the long-lasting influence of Ciriaco’s images on the visual culture of the Italian Renaissance, see Campana, "L'elefante malatestiano e Ciriaco d'Ancona," 198-200. See also Marchi, "Due corrispondenti veronesi di Ciriaco d'Ancona," 323.
emperor in Byzantium to Visconti in Milan, from local poets to the Pope.  
Ciriaco’s habit of spreading accounts of his experiences had been judged a practice “ingenua e ciarlatanesca.” But whether it originated from Ciriaco’s enthusiasm or ingenuity does not really matter here; what it is important to consider is that Ciriaco succeeded in having his discoveries circulated widely, becoming an important purveyor of images to the west.

Together with his drawings, his notes and, most of all, his numerous transcriptions of Latin and Greek inscriptions, Ciriaco also imported from the eastern Mediterranean into Italy a trove of antique objects. Being an experienced merchant he was able to acquire everywhere manuscripts, small antiquities, large marbles and other rare items. And similarly to what he was doing with his drawings, Ciriaco also shared many of his antiquities with the same circle of acquaintances, giving many objects away or having them circulate through faithful reproductions.

HUNTING FOR BOOKS

As noted in chapter 1, Cristoforo Buondelmonti and several Italian humanists who traveled to the eastern Mediterranean in the early years of the fifteenth century had acquired antique and Byzantine Greek texts. Like those early pioneers, Ciriaco did not miss the opportunity to procure manuscripts during his frequent journeys. Ciriaco

38 It is worth mentioning how with both of his letters to Eugenius IV and to Filippo Maria Visconti Ciriaco was also trying to persuade them to assign him official missions to the eastern Mediterranean.

39 Vittorio Rossi, Storia Letteraria d’Italia. Il Quattrocento (Milan: Dottor Francesco Valladori, 1933), 177: “trascriveva bellamente in caratteri antichi epigrafi latine greche egizie, schizzava nel suo taccuino il profilo del Partenone e delle mura di Micene, misurava i massi delle costruzioni ciclopiche, raccoglieva cammei medaglie sculture manoscritti, e di siffatta attività menava vanto con aria tra ingenua e ciarlatanesca.”
purchased some ancient texts with the intention of learning Greek, others he carried with him during his explorations and consulted as guidebooks, and a final group he shipped home to Ancona to enrich his library. A brief excursus on Ciriaco’s book-hunting activities in the eastern Mediterranean discloses his own contribution to the importation of Greek texts to the west and shows how Ciriaco was able dexterously to combine his business activities with his cultural interests (fig. 37).\\(^{40}\)

In 1425 Ciriaco disembarked on the island of Chios.\\(^{41}\) Here Francesco Ferretti, a fellow citizen from Ancona, introduced him to Andreolo Giustiniani, the prominent and learned member of the Genoese Mahona whom we have already met. As Francesco Scalamonti writes, from that moment on Andreolo and Ciriaco were destined to become close and intimate friends.\\(^{42}\) Soon after his arrival Ciriaco set off in search of Greek inscriptions and with him went Andreolo, who shared the same enthusiasm for the classical past.

During his stay on the island Ciriaco, with Giustiniani’s help, purchased for twenty gold florins a Greek codex of the New Testament described by Scalamonti as “regium” [regal] and “pulcherrimum” [extremely beautiful].\\(^{43}\) This volume is in all

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\\(^{40}\) This section of the present chapter is not intended to be an exhaustive account of all the manuscripts owned by Ciriaco; it aims rather to describe how and where in the eastern Mediterranean Ciriaco acquired codices. On Ciriaco’s library see Jean Colin, *Cyriaque d’Ancône. Le voyageur, le marchand, l’humaniste* (Paris: Maloine Editeur, 1981), 444-90. More recently see Pontani, "I Graeca di Ciriaco d'Ancona (con due disegni autografi inediti e una notizia su Cristoforo da Rieti)," 37-148. This is a comprehensive study concerned mainly with all of the existing manuscripts that contain autograph notes in Greek by Ciriaco.

\\(^{41}\) Scalamonti, *Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani*: par. 63.

\\(^{42}\) On Andreolo Giustiniani and his friendship with Ciriaco see my chapter 1.

\\(^{43}\) “et ibidem eo potissimum intercedente, regium illum Greacum pulcherrimumque Novi Testamenti codicem viginti aureorum prece omit.” Scalamonti, *Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani*: par. 63. On the prices of manuscripts at that time see Vassiliki
likelihood the sumptuously illuminated manuscript Vat. Urb. Gr. 2 preserved in the Vatican Library in Rome (fig. 38). The medium-size codex had been assembled in the twelfth century and elegantly decorated with numerous illuminations, including a portrait of the emperor John II Komnenos (1087-1143) with his son Alexios. Some autograph annotations on the initial pages and on the margins of the volume both in Latin and Greek by Ciriaco’s own hand prove that at some point he owned this luxury codex.

A few months later Ciriaco traveled from Chios to Nicosia in Cyprus, where he was to take up the administration of the business activities of his Venetian relatives, the brothers Zaccaria and Pietro Contarini. During the time spent on Cyprus, when free

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45 It has been suggested that the adjective “regium” used by Scalandoni when referring to the manuscript bought by Ciriaco could have been chosen because of the presence of these imperial portraits. Filippo Di Benedetto, "Il punto su alcune questioni riguardanti Ciriaco," in *Ciriaco d'Ancona e la cultura antiquaria dell'Umanesimo. Atti del convegno internazionale di studio*, ed. Gianfranco Paci and Sergio Sconocchia (Reggio Emilia: Edizioni Diabasis, 1998), 39, note 26. It is not certain whether the manuscript was commissioned by the Emperor himself or by another aristocratic patron. See Francesco D'Aiuto, Giovanni Morello, and Ambrogio M. Piazzoni, eds., *I vangeli dei popoli: la parola e l'immagine del Cristo nelle culture e nella storia* (Rome: Edizioni Rinnovamento nello Spirito Santo, 2000), 260.

46 Ciriaco’s autograph notes are found at the beginning of the volume and on the margins throughout the text. See Pontani, "I Graecia di Ciriaco d'Ancona (con due disegni autografi inediti e una notizia su Cristoforo da Rieti)," 123; Di Benedetto, "Il punto su alcune questioni riguardanti Ciriaco," 22; D'Aiuto, Morello, and Piazzoni, *I vangeli dei popoli: la parola e l'immagine del Cristo nelle culture e nella storia*, 263. By 1474 the volume had entered the library of Federico da Montefeltro in Urbino.

47 According to Francesco Scalandoni, in 1425 Ciriaco was offered by his relative Zaccaria Contarini the role of commercial representative in Piceno or Apulia. But, since Ciriaco preferred to conduct business in the east to have the opportunity to “learn Greek and better understand Homer,” Zaccaria sent him to Cyprus to replace his brother Pietro with full authority over their business on the island. Scalandoni, *Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani*: par. 61.
from his business assignments, Ciriaco often went hunting in the company of the island’s ruler, King Janus (1375-1432), and one day during one of these outings, according to Scalamonti, Ciriaco made a lucky find:

After a good day’s hunting for panthers, the king, laden with the kill, arrived at a hunting lodge where he conferred knighthood on a Dacian youth; and Ciriaco, on his usual search for books, went to a certain old monastery where, among its squalidly kept and long neglected manuscripts, he was overjoyed to discover an ancient codex of Homer’s *Iliad*, which he persuaded an illiterate monk, not without difficulty, to let him have in exchange for a Gospel book.48

Thanks to his mercantile experience, which gave him skills of negotiation and persuasion, Ciriaco obtained a volume with which to begin the study of the Greek language and literature. In Nicosia he purchased more books: an *Odyssey*,49 a number of tragedies of Euripides and a book of antiquities by Theodosius Alexandrinus, and “whenever he found a moment of leisure, he would pore over the task of construing and reading them

48 "Se denim vero insuper pro bona Kiriaci fortuna, cum ex quadam felici pardorum venatione onustus praeda ad villam quondam se rex inclytus recepisset, et nobilem quondam ex Dacia iuvenem equestris ordinis insignibus decorasset, Kiriacus ad vetustum quoddam monasterium pergens, et libros de more perquirens, abiectos inter et longa squalentes vetustate codice antiquam Homerii Iliadem comperit, quam cum laetus cognovisset, non facile a Monica litterarum ignaro tetravangelico intercedente volumine compravit.” Ibid., par. 71.

49 The manuscript of the *Odyssey* bought by Ciriaco in Nicosia has been tentatively identified with a codex in the Biblioteca Malatestiana of Cesena (ms D. XXVII.2). The Cesena manuscript was compiled in 1311 and belonged to the Metropolitan of Crete Nikephoros Moschopoulos; it contains autograph annotations by Ciriaco written in red and green ink, see Pontani, "Il Greco di Ciriaco d'Ancona (con due disegni autografi inediti e una notizia su Cristoforo da Rieti)," 119. An opinion against the identification of the *Odyssey* purchased in Nicosia with the one in Cesena was expressed in Anna Pontani, "Ciriaco d'Ancona e la Biblioteca Malatestiana di Cesena," in *Filologia Umanistica per Gianvito Resta*, ed. Vincenzo Fera and Giacomo Ferrà (Padua: Editrice Antenore, 1997), 1479. But see more recently on this topic Gianfrancesco Fiaccadori, "Omero fra i 'greci' di Malatesta Novello: sul codice malatestiano dell'Odissea," in *Il dono di Malatesta Novello. Atti del convegno*, ed. Loretta Righetti and Daniela Savoia (Cesena: Il ponte vecchio, 2006), 321-33. According to Fiaccadori it is possible that after having studied and annotated the *Odyssey*, Ciriaco sold it in Constantinople. Here indeed it was later acquired by the chancellor of Novello Malatesta, who was in Constantinople in 1431 buying manuscripts for the library in Cesena. Anna Pontani, "Primi appunti sul Malatestiano D.XXVII.1 e sulla biblioteca dei Crisolora," in *Libreria Domini: i manoscritti della Biblioteca malatestiana: testi e decorazioni*, ed. Fabrizio Lollini and Piero Lucchi (Bologna: Grafis, 1995), 353-86.
The diligent study of these texts soon proved successful, and not long afterwards Ciriaco had mastered the basics of Greek grammar and was able to translate short passages into Latin: “while reading the Greek books recently bought on Cyprus he came upon a life of Euripides that was brief enough for him to put into Latin; and he sent his translation to his good friend Andreolo Giustiniani.”

Ciriaco spent the winter between 1430 and 1431 in Adrianople conducting his business. He sold his own merchandise and bought a consignment of hides and carpets on behalf of Zaccaria Contarini. On the slave market he also purchased “a very intelligent servant girl from Epirus named Clara, whom he wanted to send home to his mother.”

His free time was spent studying Greek with the scholar “Bolete” and reading Homer’s *Iliad* and Hesiod’s *Works and Days.* With the mediation of his teacher, Ciriaco was able to buy a good number of manuscripts also in Adrianople, many of which had been

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50 “dum aliquod dabatur oculum, percurrere intelligereque operam diligentissimam dabat.” Scalamonti, *Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani*: par. 71.


52 “Claraque ancilla Chaonia, praecelarae indolis puera, quam ex Theucrorum praedae apud Adrianopolim emerat, eandem per navim Massiellae matri Ciucio consobrino intercedente missa.” Ibid., par. 76.

recently plundered by the Turks in Thessaloniki. Among Ciriaco’s acquisitions was a text by Ptolemy that, as Scalamonti specifies, “was particularly useful to him.”

Not long afterwards Ciriaco visited Thessaloniki himself and acquired more ecclesiastical and secular manuscripts; these he sent immediately to Andreolo Giustiniani in Chios for safekeeping while he instead continued his journey towards Gallipoli.

Ciriaco obtained additional manuscripts as he carried on his explorations in the eastern Mediterranean during the following years. In April of 1436 his itinerary brought him to the highlands of the Morea. After traveling on impervious paths he arrived in Kalavryta, in the mountains behind Patras, where he met George Palaiologos Cantacuzenus, the cousin of the Byzantine Emperor John VIII Palaiologos. Ciriaco described this episode in his diary:

After having traveled across the snow-white mountains of Saturn and impervious valleys, I arrived at Kalavryta where I met George Cantacuzenus, a man learned in the age of Greek letters who possessed a vast library of all kinds of Greek books, who lent me a history of Herodotus and many other of his best and antique books.

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54 “et eo [Bolete Greco grammatico] curante ex Thessalonicea praeda Graecos nonnullos codices emit, et precipe Claudim Ptholomaeum Alexandrinum, geographum insignem sibi accommodatissimum, comparavit.” Scalamonti, *Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani*: par. 75. Anna Pontani has noted that while Scalamonti refers to Ptolemy as “the great Alexandrian geographer,” it is not clear whether on this occasion Ciriaco acquired a copy of the Geography or a different work by that author. A volume with an astronomical text by Ptolemy was in Ciriaco’s library at his death, and it was described as “Ptholomeus in astrologia, volumen quidem pergrande et nobile Graecis litteris scriptum.” See Pontani, "I Graeca di Ciriaco d'Ancona (con due disegni autografi inediti e una notizia su Cristoforo da Rieti)," 115-16. On Ciriaco’s Ptolemy see also Ragone, "Umanesimo e «filologia geografica»: Ciriaco d’Ancona sulle orme di Pomponio Mela," 126. For the proposition that Ciriaco is the author of twenty-seven maps in a Greek codex of Ptolemy’s Geography see Harlfinger, "Ptolemaios-Karten des Cyriacus von Ancona," 225-36.


56 "per niveos Saturnei montis, et difficiles calles Calabrutam adveni, ubi Georgium Catacuzinon, virum hac aetate graecis litteris eruditum, ac librorum Graecorum omnigenum copiosissimum,
George was a military commander, but also a passionate bibliophile who had assembled a large and important library in his country estate in Kalavryta.\textsuperscript{57} Although Ciriaco did not acquire any manuscripts from George, but only borrowed some of them, the episode attests how the most learned encounters could happen even in the most inaccessible territories.\textsuperscript{58}

The libraries of Byzantine monasteries preserved a great number of Greek codices, safeguarded under the vigilant eyes of local monks. Therefore, when in November of 1444, Ciriaco visited Mount Athos for ten days his quest for books bore great fruit. The curious Anconitan wandered from monastery to monastery, inspecting buildings, relics, and libraries.\textsuperscript{59} Ciriaco was first at Vatopedi where he examined very old codices of Homer and Ovid. After a couple of days, accompanied overland by the poor monk David, Ciriaco arrived at the monastery of the Pantokrator, where the abbot Nicander showed him an extremely old volume by Dionysios Areopagite.\textsuperscript{60} The following day Ciriaco was at Iveron where the sacristan Iacobus showed him “all the

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qui mihi Herodotum historicum, ac alios plerosque suos optimos, et antiquos libros accomodavit.”
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Carlo Moroni, ed. \textit{Epigrammata reperta per Illyricum a Cyriaco Anconitano apud Liburniam} (Rome 1660ca.), 19.


\textsuperscript{58} On this episode see also Colin, \textit{Cyriaque d'Ancône. Le voyageur, le marchand, l'humaniste}: 457.

\textsuperscript{59} Ciriaco’s accounts of his journey to Athos were published for the first time in Edward W. Bodnar and Charles Mitchell, eds., \textit{Cyriacus of Ancona's Journeys in the Propontis and the Northern Aegean, 1444-1445} (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1976), 49-56. See also Ragone, "Umanesimo e «filologia geografica»: Ciriaco d'Ancona sulle orme di Pomponio Mela," 131.

\textsuperscript{60} Bodnar, \textit{Cyriac of Ancona Later Travels}, 123.
important holdings of the monastery including three ancient wine-casks, huge in size.”61
These were so imposing and large in size that Ciriaco decided to measure them. Iacobus also opened to Ciriaco the monastery’s library, which included numerous sacred and secular manuscripts. Among these Ciriaco saw a miscellaneous volume that included Plutarch’s *Moral Essays* and numerous other works, and acquired it as he wrote in his diary: “with great pleasure I purchased this splendid volume.”62 The manuscript from Mount Athos still exists and bears an autograph note by Ciriaco written in Greek that reads: “from the most holy monastery of Iveron from the holy monk Iacobus, its worthy sacristan from the Strymon valley, on the 25th of November.”63

Before leaving the region of Mount Athos Ciriaco climbed on a lofty mountain to the monastery of Philotheou, then moved on to Karakalou, to Morphinou and finally arrived at the monastery of Lavra on the highest hill of Athos. About this visit he wrote: “I was more pleased to examine the very considerable library filled with a multitude of volumes of Greek writings on every kind of discipline.”64

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61 “Ipse vero ecclesiarches mihi omnia insignia monasterii ostendit et tris quas antiques in monitione habent ingenti magnitudine vegetes.” Ibid., 122.


63 The two-volume manuscript is preserved at the Vatican Library in Rome (Vat. Gr. 1309) and contains, together with Plutarch’s *Moralia*, 256 Greek letters. See Bodnar and Mitchell, *Cyriacus of Ancona’s Journeys in the Propontis and the Northern Aegean, 1444-1445*, 66, note 119. More recently: Pontani, ”I Graeca di Ciriaco d’Ancona (con due disegni autografi inediti e una notizia su Cristoforo da Rieti),” 122; Bodnar, *Cyriac of Ancona Later Travels*, 421, note 19. The codex includes a note by Cristoforo da Rieti who had purchased the manuscript at Ciriaco’s death from his nephew. For Cristoforo da Rieti and the dispersal of Ciriaco’s library see below in this chapter.

64 “At quod libentius placuerat, amplissimam eius vidimus bibliothecam Graecarum quidem litterarum omnigenum disciplinarum voluminum multitudo refertam.” Bodnar, *Cyriac of Ancona Later Travels*, 128.
In a letter written to Andreolo Giustiniani on February 13, 1447, Ciriaco reported one more purchase of books made in Constantinople: “my business in Byzantium was not yet entirely finished, since I had to wait, mainly to receive my copy of Strabo from the Greek scribe.”65 This codex, freshly copied in the Byzantine capital for Ciriaco, survives to this day divided into two parts - one in the library of Eton College in England and the other in the Biblioteca Laurenziana in Florence.66 A note written by Ciriaco, in Greek with green ink on folio 300r of the Eton manuscript, provides more details on its acquisition, specifying that it had been copied by the Greek scribe Theodoros Agallianus. We know that Ciriaco carried his Strabo along during his wanderings in the Peloponnesus in the following winter.67 This is revealed by the only surviving autograph section of Ciriaco’s Commentaria, a manuscript preserved in Milan which deals with this journey of 1447-1448 and contains numerous quotes from Strabo’s text.68 Moreover, Ciriaco heavily annotated his copy of Strabo using purple, blue, green, yellow, and brown ink to add glosses, marginal indices and scolia. But he also copied on the margins of the volume, right next to the relevant passages, ten inscriptions – nine Greek and one Latin - that he

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65 “non adhuc equidem integer nostris ex Bizantio rebus exactis, Stabonis nostri Graeco a librario excipiendi potissimum causa detentus, ad posteram denique diem.” Ibid., 274-77.

66 The two codices are: Cod. 141 of the library of Eton College and the cod. Laur. 28, 15 of the Biblioteca Laurenziana in Florence. See Bodnar, Cyriacus of Ancona and Athens: 118-19. A detailed account on these manuscripts is in Aubrey Diller, The Textual Tradition of Strabo’s Geography (Amsterdam: A. M. Hakkert, 1975). Diller also traces the whereabouts of the text after Ciriaco’s time; one excerpt of which was at some point owned by Cardinal Pietro Bembo.

67 Bodnar, Cyriacus of Ancona and Athens: 53-64.

68 Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Codex Ambrosianus-Trotti, 373, ff. 101-125. This manuscript was discovered and published by Sabbadini; see Sabbadini, "Ciriaco d'Ancona e la sua descrizione autografa del Peloponneso trasmessa da Leonardo Botta," 183-247.
saw carved in stones along his way. When, between 1447 and 1448, Ciriaco spent the winter in Mistrà he studied Strabo’s text with the learned George Gemistos Plethon. The two men had probably already met in Florence in 1439 during the council, and now the elderly Plethon compared, amended and integrated with Ciriaco the text of the classical geographer. Incidentally, it was the text of Strabo that had been brought to Italy by Ciriaco that Guarino da Verona translated into Latin for Nicholas V and Jacopo Marcello, a work that we have discussed in the preceding chapter.

Soon after Ciriaco’s death the library he had collected in Ancona began to be dispersed. The Greek books he had gathered from so many places and studied with care

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69 In a similar way, soon after his exploration of ancient Philippi (1426-1431), Ciriaco transcribed some of the inscriptions he saw during his journey on the margins of his copy of Ovid’s *Fasti* (Rome, Vatican Library, Ms. Lat. 10672). Luisa Banti, "Iscrizioni di Filippi copiate da Ciriaco Anconitano nel codice Vaticano Latino 10672," *Annuario della R. Scuola Archeologica di Atene* 1-2 (1939-1940): 213-20. See also Pontani, "I Graeca di Ciriaco d'Ancona (con due disegni autografi inediti e una notizia su Cristoforo da Rieti)," 59-61.


were almost immediately sold by his heirs. The little-known humanist Cristoforo da Rieti, who was living in exile in Ancona just a few years after Ciriaco’s death in 1452, visited his library, which by then had been inherited by an unnamed nephew of Ciriaco. Here Cristoforo studied Ciriaco’s papers, transcribed several sections of the *commentaria* and copied excerpts from the Greek manuscripts he found in the library. A codex now in Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale, Par. Gr. 425) by the hand of Cristoforo da Rieti collects these excerpts and includes a note that describes the highlights seen in Ciriaco’s library.\(^7^4\) In the same note Cristoforo wrote about some volumes that he was able to buy from Ciriaco’s nephew:

> When I was living in exile in Ancona, I saw in the library of Ciriaco Anconitano, a man extremely zealous for all sorts of antiquities: a large and noble volume of Ptolemy on astrology written in Greek. An *Iliad* of Homer. I saw and I read Hesiodus, Herodotus, Pindar in Greek. And also the tragedians Aristides, Euripides, Aristophanes and Sophocles. Also Aristotle’s *Ethics* and *De Anima*. Also some books of astrology and geometry … Moreover I bought with great desire from the nephew of Ciriaco a whole *New Testament* and a Psalter in Greek. I also bought from him an *Ethics* by Plutarch, in fourteen books, and I acquired 155 letters written in Greek.\(^7^5\)

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\(^7^4\) On Cristoforo da Rieti see Pontani, "I Graeca di Ciriaco d’Ancona (con due disegni autografi inediti e una notizia su Cristoforo da Rieti)," 103-14.

A second manuscript, preserved at the Vatican library in Rome, contains a further note by Cristoforo da Rieti, which attests how the humanist in Ancona had access to Ciriaco’s travel diaries.\(^\text{76}\)

Although Ciriaco was not one of the most avid book hunters of his time and the quantity of manuscripts he imported was certainly modest in comparison to those of other humanists, his activity of gathering ancient texts introduces an aspect of his biography that has not yet been fully studied.\(^\text{77}\) The way in which Ciriaco built his library has a counterpart in the way he assembled his collection of antiquities.

Jean Colin, in his muddled biography of Ciriaco, has portrayed the Anconitan as an extremely enterprising merchant dealing in all sorts of goods ranging from carpets to books, and from slaves to antiquities.\(^\text{78}\) Since then, Ciriaco has been considered by numerous scholars a dealer in antiquities, and many of his friends have been referred to in the literature as his clients.\(^\text{79}\) This is, however, more the result of an artificial juxtaposition of the information we have on Ciriaco’s commercial activities and those on

\(^{76}\) A passage in the manuscript (Vat. Gr. 1309, ff. 210v-211v) contains a summary by Cristoforo’s hand of the passage in the *commentaria* relative to Ciriaco’s visit to Mount Athos. Ibid., 116-18.

\(^{77}\) More than once scholars have remarked on this lacuna on the studies on Ciriaco. See for example Chiarlo, "'Gli fragmenti della sancta antiquitate': studi antiquari e produzione delle immagini da Ciriaco d'Ancona a Francesco Colonna," 271-97; Di Benedetto, "Il punto su alcune questioni riguardanti Ciriaco," 24.

\(^{78}\) Among the many references in Colin’s book, see for example Colin, *Cyriaque d'Ancône. Le voyageur, le merchant, l'humaniste*: 66.

\(^{79}\) See, for example, Irene Favaretto, *Arte antica e cultura antiquaria nelle collezioni venete al tempo della Serenissima*, Rist. riv. e corretta. ed. (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2002), 47. Favaretto writes: “Anche Ciriaco ebbe una sua collezione, come narra il suo biografo Scalamonti, ma il continuo vagabondare non lo rendeva troppo legato a questi oggetti, tanto da farne spesso commercio.”
his antiquarian interests, rather than the fruit of a careful reading of the sources. Ciriaco was a skilled and wise merchant who often settled his own affairs before taking off for archeological explorations. However, there is no clear proof in the sources to support the idea that he acquired antique objects and manuscripts for resale. Rather there is evidence to claim that certain objects he expressly bought for himself while many others he generously used as gifts for his friends.

CIRIACO’S COLLECTION OF ANTIQUITIES

In Ciriaco’s biography, Francesco Scalamonti mentions in passing that Ciriaco owned a collection of art objects which Scalamonti himself had seen in Ancona. This point in Scalmonti’s narration is taken here as the springboard from which to explore Ciriaco’s collection of antique and rare objects.

Around 1429 Ciriaco took one of the above-mentioned detours from his business routes to visit Damascus. There he explored the most important monuments of the city under the guidance of the Venetian Ermolao Donato, a prominent figure in the local mercantile community and himself a learned man. Scalamonti narrates that with Donato:

He [Ciriaco] also saw a number of antiquities from the ancient citadel of Sidon along with beautiful bronze vases inlaid with gold and silver and wonderfully polished with exceptional artistry of the makers, from whom he purchased some for his own collection of objects of this kind, where I have seen them myself.  

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80 Alsop too argues that Ciriaco had a side business in antiquities, but as he himself writes the evidence in this respect is not strong: “As to the view that he [Ciriaco] also had a sideline as a dealer in antiquities, you have to fit the bits of evidence together to see why this is likely.” Joseph Alsop, *The Rare Art Traditions: The History of Art Collecting and Its Linked Phenomena Wherever These Have Appeared*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 353.

81 “Viderat utique deinde nonnullas antiqua ab acre Sydonum reliquias, et aenea pulchra auro argentoque permista vasa mira et expolita fabrefactorum arte conspicua, e quibus ab eo empta quaedam sua inter eiusdem generis supellectilia vidimus.” Scalamonti, *Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani*: par. 65.
The extent and contents of Ciriaco’s collection, which included the precious Damascene vases and numerous antique objects, cannot be fully reconstructed in the absence of an inventory and any other documentary evidence regarding the collection as a whole. It is probably for lack of this documentation that modern scholars have never seriously acknowledged Ciriaco among the collectors of the fifteenth century. However, it is possible to gather information on several of the antique objects that Ciriaco purchased during his excursions in the eastern Mediterranean and either collected in his home in Ancona or bestowed as gifts to his friends. The stories of these objects are relevant in that they enhance our understanding of the flow of antiquities into Italy from the eastern Mediterranean during the first part of the fifteenth century. Moreover, they clearly document which items were available for purchase, where they came from and by which means they arrived at the Italian peninsula. Additionally, the narratives surrounding these objects provide an entryway into the material culture of the humanists, collectors, and artists with whom Ciriaco was in touch. Ciriaco in fact shared, reproduced, and offered many of his antique collectables as tokens to his friends and learned acquaintances. Finally, if Ciriaco’s drawings contributed important additions to the visual world of his contemporaries, the objects that he brought from his travels also carried novel iconographies that became part of the visual patrimony of Italian Renaissance artists.

**Coins, Gems and Other Small Antique Objects**

Around 1431 Ciriaco was in Phocaea on the western coast of Asia Minor where, with the help of the Genoese Federico Giustiniani, father-in-law of his friend Andreolo,
he purchased some “excellent” gold coins bearing the effigies of Philip of Macedonia, Alexander the Great and Lysimachus (fig. 39). Some time later Ciriaco traveled to Venice and carried with him his antique golden coins from Phocaea, together with other small antiquities from his collection. In the lagoon Ciriaco met Ambrogio Traversari (1386-1439), the general of the Camaldolesian Order who was temporarily residing at the monastery of San Michele in Murano, and showed him his antique treasures.

Traversari, who cultivated humanistic and antiquarian interests, recorded this encounter in his travel diary, the *Hodoeporicon*, and also immediately wrote to his friend Niccolò Niccoli in Florence about the most remarkable pieces that Ciriaco had shown him:

I met Ciriaco Anconitano passionate of antiquities. He showed me gold and silver coins, certainly those which you yourself have seen, with the images of Lysimachus, Philip and Alexander, but I am skeptical they are from Macedonia. An image of Scipio the Younger carved, as he explained, in onyx of such supreme elegance (with Latin letters covered by gold) that I had never seen a more beautiful one.

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82 “Inde vero Phocaeas vetustam novamque venerat et ingentes inibi aluminum mineras vidit, ubi Fredericum Justinianum Andreoli sui socerum eiusdem loci patronum offendit ac eo iuvante aurea Philippi, Alexandri Lysimachique numismata insignia comparavit.” Ibid., par. 89. On Ciriaco’s coins and gems see the recently published article by Michail Chatzidakis, “Ciriacos Numismata und Gemmae. Die Bedeutung der Münz- und Gemmenkunde für die Altertumsforschungen des Ciriaco d’Ancona,” *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 54 (2010-2012): 31-58. Chatzidakis’ essay was published after this section of the dissertation had already been written.


84 “Offendi Cyriacum Anconitanum antiquitatis studiosum. Ostendit aureos & argenteos nummos, eos scilicet, quos ipse vidisti: Lisymachi, Philippi, & Alexandri ostendebat imagines: sed an Macedonum sint, scrupulus est. Scipionis lunioris in lapide onychino, ut ipse aiebat, effigem (nostrae litterae auro tegebantur) vidi summae elegantiae; adeo ut numquam viderim
While Traversari praised with enthusiasm Ciriaco’s onyx gem bearing the image of Scipio the Younger, he was skeptical about the provenance of the three golden coins. But we know from Scalamonti’s account that Ciriaco had purchased them in Phocaea. We do not know instead where Ciriaco had obtained the gem with Scipio’s image. From Traversari’s letter we also learn that Ciriaco had already shown his precious coins to Niccolo Niccoli, probably carrying them to Florence during his visit to the city when he had met Niccoli and other important collectors and artists of the time.85

In Venice it is likely that Ciriaco’s collection of small antiquities, newly arrived from the eastern Mediterranean, attracted the curiosity of many. The painter Jacopo Bellini (c. 1400- c.1470) included some Greek coins as decorative motives on the buildings he represented in two drawings now in Paris. A silver tetradrachm of Alexander is drawn in the Flagellation of Christ (fig. 40), while in Presentation of the Virgin the reverse of a gold stater of Lysimachus, probably inspired by the piece that Ciriaco had brought to Venice, is clearly visible on the pediment of the temple (fig. 41).86


85 Scalamonti, Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani: par. 101-03.

We do not know how many coins Ciriaco gathered in his collection over the years, but it seems likely that he amassed a quite large number. In his letters and diaries we often find mention of antique coins, and Ciriaco writes with familiarity about many of their iconographies. Moreover, coins were also the most abundant and affordable antique items circulating amongst collectors at the time. The antiquarian Giovanni Marcanova (1410/18-1467) had gathered a collection of more than two hundred and fifty coins, of which one hundred and eighty were of silver and twenty-one of gold. Indeed, silver coins were much more abundant than gold ones in any collection. The inventory of the numismatic cabinet assembled by cardinal Pietro Barbo (1417-1471), drawn up in 1457, records only ninety-seven gold coins against one thousand silver ones. During the fifteenth century, Rome and other Roman cities in Italy were perceived as almost inexhaustible sources of antique coins. The situation, however, was about to change very soon, when the fashion for collecting antiquities grew at great speed all over in Italy


89 For Marcanova’s collection of coins see Lino Sighinolfi, "La Biblioteca di Giovanni Marcanova," in Collectanea Variae Doctrinae Leoni S. Olschki Bibliopolae Florentino sexagenario (Munich: Jacques Rosenthal, 1921), 185-222. On Marcanova see more recently Elisabetta Barile, Paula C. Clarke, and Giorgia Nordio, Cittadini veneziani del Quattrocento: i due Giovanni Marcanova, il mercante e l'umanista (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze Lettere ed Arti, 2006). Marcanova’s inventory exemplifies the content of collections assembled by humanists. The collections of noblemen or cardinals, such as Pietro Barbo’s, for example, were even larger.

90 Roberto Weiss, Un umanista veneziano, papa Paolo II (Venice: Istituto per la collaborazione culturale, 1958), 28.

and beyond. Greek coins were far scarcer than Roman, so much so that they had already begun to be counterfeited as attested by a note in Barbo’s inventory that mentions:

“Unum illorum quatuor numismatum est falsificatum cum litteris grecis.”92 Therefore the coins imported by Ciriaco must have been quite uncommon and their iconographies unusual, and for this reason they were highly attractive to early numismatists and artists.

Ciriaco’s coin collection was not static, as he often selected specimens from his holdings to offer as gifts to his acquaintances and periodically acquired new ones. When in 1432 Ciriaco met the emperor-elect Sigismund in Siena, he presented him the gift of a coin and for the occasion selected a gold coin of Trajan (fig. 42). That Ciriaco’s intent in offering the image of an emperor so dear to him went beyond the simple gesture of offering a precious antique token is clearly stated by Scalamonti, who explains that Ciriaco presented the coin:

To give Sigismund an exemplar of a good emperor worthy to be imitated, he presented him with a magnificent gold coin of the emperor Trajan, at the same time reminding him that Trajan had conferred a special luster on Ciriaco's own native Ancona.93

Ciriaco’s offer was not uncommon, as diplomatic etiquette contemplated the exchange of gifts. Many years earlier, in 1354, Petrarch had presented a selection of coins from his own collection to Sigismund’s father, Charles IV, in Mantua, with the same aim of

92 Eugène Müntz, *Les Arts a la Cour des Papes pendant le XVe et le XVIe siècle* (Paris: Ernest Thorin, 1879), 142, note 1. Fifteenth century inventories of numismatic collections, when they exist, rarely distinguish between Greek and Latin coins. Usually coins are classified by their material, so it is difficult to give precise numbers of the Greek and Latin exemplars existing in a certain collection.

93 “Et sibi peregregium munus dederat aureum Traiani Caesaris numisma, ut optumi principis imitandi exemplar haberet, et Anconem potissime patriam eodem ab principe exornatum memoria quandoque recenseret.” Scalamonti, *Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani*: par. 97.
providing the emperor with worthy examples to imitate.\textsuperscript{94} Moreover, only a few years after Ciriaco’s offer of the Trajan coin to Sigismund, during the Council of Florence, other antique coins would be exchanged as official gifts. Cosimo de’ Medici the Elder (1389-1464) in fact received from the Patriarch of Constantinople the gift of a Greek antique coin, a silver specimen from Rhodes.\textsuperscript{95} This, however, did not enter the Medici collection of antiquities; but being considered one of the thirty pieces of silver with which Judas betrayed Christ, it was deposited in the church of Santa Croce in a reliquary containing the bones of the Oriental Saints Cosma and Damian.\textsuperscript{96}

But Ciriaco gave away samples of his coin collection not only because they conveyed moral messages. In Ciriaco’s eyes they also had value as historic sources, documents of the ancient past. When, in 1444, Ciriaco sent his friend Andreolo


\textsuperscript{95} On the so-called “Judas pennies” see George Francis Hill, ”The Thirty Pieces of Silver,” \textit{Archaeologia} 59 (1905): 246.

\textsuperscript{96} Giuseppe Richa, \textit{Notizie istoriche delle chiese fiorentine, divise ne’ suoi quartieri} (Florence: P. G. Viviani, 1754-1762), I, 75. Richa, describing the relics in Santa Croce with a certain skepticism, writes: “dono di Cosimo Pater Patriae è il Reliquiario avente Ossa de’ SS. Cosma, e Damiano, con sopra una moneta, che il detto Cosimo ebbe dal Patriarca Greco venuto al Concilio Fiorentino, e si dice essere uno dei 30 denari di Giuda traditore, ma noi ne sospendiamo il giudizio, tanto più che la moneta non è né Ebraica, né Romana.” See also Fernand De Mély, ”Les Deniers de Judas dans la Tradition du Moyen Age,” \textit{Revue Numismatique} 13 (1899): 500-09.
Giustiniani a coin which had just been unearthed in Chrysonea in Asia Minor, in the accompanying letter he explained:

Moreover, that you may be able to look upon a worthy souvenir of that city, I have given to Antonio Boccone, to deliver to you, a bronze bird, which you see grazing a snake with his beak, and you see the snake, with curved coil and highly-arched, smooth neck biting the bent-neck of the bird that his attacking it. Be pleased to keep it for me, worthy sir, in your collection of more noteworthy items of the same sort. When I explain to your Excellency in greater detail about this very old image, you will conclude that this tiny bronze should not be thought insignificant. For concerning the same fateful bird and fate-prophesying serpent, there is in the great poet Homer a reference that should not be overlooked.  

Ciriaco knew that Andreolo was capable of recognizing even in the humble bronze coin the intangible value given by its exceptional antiquity (fig. 43).

Ciriaco’s letter to Andreolo is also of interest for another detail. In a subsequent passage Ciriaco narrated to his friend how he had procured the coin and explained that it was a sort of archeological find, having been dug up from under the ground: “And indeed native satyrs, who dig stones from the depths of the earth for a fee ( alas for the antique generosity!) found it for our sake, as I believe, under Mercury's guidance.”

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97 “Praeterea, ut quid dignum tantae civitatis monumenti conspectare queas, avem aeneam, quam colubrum rostro stringentem eumque sinuato volumine ab alto tereti cervice reflexum collum eiusdem lacessentis nomordentem vides, Antonio Bocchoni nostro dedi, ut tibi redderet; eamque mihi tu, vir degne, dignora tua inter eiusdem generis suppellectilia servare velis. At et cum latius eo de simulacho vetustissimo tuae claritati declararim, non aes parvum parvifaciundum censebis. Nam et ipsa de fatali ave fatidicoque serpentis equum apud vatem Homerum mentio habetur haud aspernenda.” Bodnar, *Cyriac of Ancona Later Travels*, 30-33. The image a bird attacking a snake is frequent on coins of Greek cities from the sixth to the third century B.C.

98 It is not clear whether Ciriaco was giving the coin to Andreolo as a gift or for safekeeping. We know that he used the island of Chios as his main base of operation in the eastern Aegean, shipping there to Andreolo his belongings such as books, as we have seen earlier, and small objects.

Ciriaco was always careful to select among his holdings the most appropriate coins to offer on the different occasions. This is made clear by another episode. In the summer of 1444 Ciriaco wrote in his diary about a silver coin of the Roman emperor Vespasian (fig. 44):

Today, the 14\textsuperscript{th} of August, at the Mystrean village of the Perinthian state, I bestowed this very coin of Vespasian Caesar on Raffaele Castiglione, my dear friend, as upon a man whom I know to be a lover and devout and assiduous worshiper of our nourishing Christian faith. For I could choose from my antiquities no worthier keepsake to give him as a souvenir of our friendship than the image of the most sacred head of Vespasian, a man most devoted to the Christian name, a portrait of the avenger of the wrongs done to Christ for him to look upon, to reverence, and to recall again and again.\textsuperscript{100}

Raffaele Castiglione was a wealthy Genoese merchant living in Heraclea Perinthus on the northern shore of the Sea of Marmara. With his gift Ciriaco wanted to honor Castiglione’s devotion to the Christian faith, probably with the intention of having him involved in the crusade against the Turks.\textsuperscript{101} But Castiglione also shared Ciriaco’s admiration for antiquities. In another letter to his friend, Ciriaco wrote how he was impatient to show him his most recent archeological discoveries: “If you do come, my dearest Raphael, with the help of the great god, Jove, I will show you important remains

\textsuperscript{100} “Argenteum hoc ipsum Vespasiani Caesaris nomisma hodie XIX Kalendas Septembris apud Mystreum Perinthinae civitatis vicum Raphaei Castillioneo amico dulcissimo nostro dedi, ut ad quem almae Christicolum religionis nostrae amatorem cultoremque pium et observatorem diligentissimum cognovi. Nam nil dignius nilque nostrae amicitiae memorandae preciosius monumentum sibi nostris antiques de rebus dare deligimus, quam Vespasiani sacratissimi capitis agalma, ut vir ipse Christiani nominis amantisissimus, Christi iniuriarum ultiarum imaginem videre, colere atque saepius memorare possit.” Ibid., 84-85.

of antiquity that I found here, and then an important handiwork of the Thracian people that I saw again in Cyzicus."  

In the summer of 1445, Ciriaco was on the island of Crete and once again was presented with the opportunity to offer a sample from his coin collection to a friend. Ciriaco was in Chania attending an athletic contest held on the beach in front of the walled citadel. All of the civic authorities were present to watch the archery competition. The Venetian Niccolò Zancarol won first prize. This time Ciriaco selected an antique coin from Rhodes representing the head of Apollo on the reverse and bearing the name of the Rhodian magistrate Antaios on the obverse and gave it to the young Niccolò Zancarolo. Ciriaco therefore found it appropriate to give him a coin representing the image of Apollo “pharetrati arciferentisque divi” [the quiver and bow bearing god] (fig.

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103 On this member of the Zancarolo family see Pontani, "I Graeca di Ciriaco d'Ancona (con due disegni autografi inediti e una notizia su Cristoforo da Rieti)," 73-74.

104 “Venit clara dies qua mi Cyri ace petebas/ Inclita quos nutrit clara Cydonia Crete/ Famososque videre viros quos fama per orbem/ Succinctos pharetra celebrat primosque sagittis/ Convenere viri nulli cessura iuventus/ Cum validis flexos curvabunt viribus arcus/ Letifera et quando depromant tela pharetris/ Litus erenosum est nosti huc tu dirige gressum/ Hic erit huracide olim famosissimus arte/ Hic erit Heurition et qui prostravit achivos/ Pandarus hic et trimacrie famosus aceses/ Hic erit ille alchon tantum solempnis in arcu/ Ut quondam Colubrum telo penetraverit ipse/ Illeso nato quem serpens atra vorarat/ Adsunt crethies mixti quoque sarmate parthi/ Qui versis tergis telum inmedicabile torquent/ Accipe crethenses nunc hos famaque per orbem/ Toll etuis scriptis oro renovaque deletas/ Ipsorum laudes quia nunc dominantur achivis/ Si faciem prestet tibi cui tu es ipse dicatus/ Mercurius museque novem nec desit Apollo/ Si faveant satyri montanaque numina semper/ DELIUS IN AGONE/ Delius arcitenens radiis fulgentibus adstans/ Effigiem sacro point nomismate vobis/ Flecte nunc arcus depromite tela pharetris/ Lamque cydon veniam nam prestat laurea primo.” The episode is recorded in a passage in a manuscript preserved in the Biblioteca Nazionale of Florence (MS Palatino Targioni 49, ff. 31r-32v). It is published in Latin in Mitchell, "Ex Libris Kiriaci Anconitani," 293-94. A section is also in Bodnar, *Cyriac of Ancona Later Travels*, 179-81.
For the occasion Ciriaco even wrote a short composition in Greek to honor the young man’s victory. The archery competition in Chania inspired Ciriaco to sketch a lively vignette in which the young Apollo is represented with his bow and arrow killing the snake Python (fig. 46). It was characteristic of Ciriaco’s eclectic mind to connect current events to mythological narrations and often in his diaries reality and myth are woven together.

In his account of the antiquities of Delos, Ciriaco describes another coin bearing the image of Apollo. He first mentions many fragmentary marbles, including the remains of a colossal statue of Apollo, which survived on the island and which he carefully measured and drew. This was the same marble that Buondelmonti some years before had tried in vain to set in its original position. After recording many marble inscriptions, Ciriaco then describes an ancient silver coin representing on the obverse what was in his opinion the head of the colossal Apollo and on the reverse a flower (fig. 47). Inscribed with the Greek name of ΑΘΑΝΟΔΩΡΟΣ, the second-century B.C. magistrate Athanadoros, the Rhodian coin was probably in Ciriaco’s collection.


107 Ibid., 292-95. The drawing appears in a manuscript (Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale, Ms. Palatino Targioni Tozzetti 49) that contains the passage of Ciriaco’s diary on his Cretan visit. Although it is the work of a transcriber, it was presumably copied from an original by Ciriaco. On this codex see Di Benedetto, "Il punto su alcune questioni riguardanti Ciriaco," 21-22.


109 Rhodian coins of this kind must have been fairly common in the eastern Mediterranean at that time. Hill, "The Thirty Pieces of Silver," 251.
The excerpt of the diary about Delos is dated to the spring of 1445.\textsuperscript{110} A few months later Ciriaco sent a similar Rhodian coin to another of his friends, a certain Bandinus, who was one of the knights of Saint John and lived on Rhodes. Ciriaco explained the reasons for his gift in a letter in which he also described the coin in detail:

And meanwhile, that you may have from me a reminder worthy of me and a handsome pledge of our mutual love, I have chosen, with a light heart, to send you this Rhodian silver coin, here enclosed, that I found, engraved with the head of the colossal Apollo of Rhodes, that the people of Rhodes used as money long ago in the reign of prince Artemon … The Rhodian silver coin [is inscribed] \textit{ΑΡΤΕΜΩΝ}, in Latin \emph{Artemon}, a prince of the Rhodians. It has the flower of the pomegranate, which the Greeks call \textit{rhodion}, after the island of Rhodes.\textsuperscript{111}

Ciriaco thus also provided his historical interpretation of the subject when he sent his coin to Bandinus. He was, however, probably unaware that on the island of Rhodes a similar silver piece was kept in the castle of the knights as a holy relic.\textsuperscript{112} In 1413 the Marquis of Ferrara, Niccolò III d’Este (1383-1441), stopped on Rhodes on his way back from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Inside the knights’ castle, in the “sachresthia di Santo Gianni” he saw “one of those very silver coins for which Our Lord Jesus Christ was sold; this is of the size of an \textit{agontano} and on one side is a head in relief, and on the other is a flower similar to the flower of the marguerite.”\textsuperscript{113} Rhodian coins with the head

\textsuperscript{110} Bodnar, \textit{Cyriac of Ancona Later Travels}, 167.


\textsuperscript{112} Hill, "The Thirty Pieces of Silver," 246-47.

\textsuperscript{113} “uno de li proprii denari di argento per li qualli du venduto il Nostro Signore Messer Jesu Cristo, e questo è di grandezza di uno agontano e da un lato ha una testa relevata, e da l’altro uno fiore simile al fior de malgarita.” Luchino Da Campo, \textit{Viaggio del marchese Nicolò III d’Este in
of the sun-god Helios on the obverse and a rose on the reverse were identified by fifteenth century pilgrims as “Judas pennies,” the money that Judas received for betraying Christ.\textsuperscript{114}

It is relevant to note how by the mid fifteenth century the same antique object could be described in different ways. The same ancient Rhodian coin belonged to two parallel worlds - the lay world of antiquarian erudition and the religious one of pious devotion. Bandinus, whom Ciriaco addresses as “cultor musarum” [devotee of the Muses], was living on Rhodes precisely in between these two worlds. Bandinus can be identified as Melchiore Bandini (? -1473), a native of Camerino near Ancona, who was a prelate and prominent figure of the order of Saint John.\textsuperscript{115} Bandini became vice-chancellor of the Hospital and was also the first historian of the Order.\textsuperscript{116} A detached

\textit{Terrasanta (1413)} (Edizioni digitali del CISVA, 2007), 77. The “agontano” was a silver coin struck in the fourteenth century in the town of Ancona.

\textsuperscript{114} These antique coins circulated also in silver copies, reproduced through lead cast. This is narrated, for example, by the pilgrim Felix Faber who upon his visit to Rhodes at the end of the fifteenth century wrote about one of this coins: “I saw one at Rhodes, of which Johann Tucher of Nürnberg made an impression. He made a model in lead and cast similar ones in silver, which he distributed to his friends. In the year 1485, when we were assembled in Nürnberg to hold the provincial chapter, the said person gave one of these denarii to each of the brothers.” Quoted in Hill, "The Thirty Pieces of Silver," 248.


fresco in the art museum of Camerino portrays Ciriaco’s friend after his return to Italy from Rhodes (fig. 48).  

Ciriaco’s letter to Bandini provides other telling details regarding Ciriaco’s search for antiquities in the eastern Mediterranean. Ciriaco continues:

For your part, if you find any antique sculpture worth my attention, living faces fashioned from marble as they say, see that it is acquired in my name; and if, among the ancient stones that they dig up from time to time, you come upon an inscription, please copy it.  

Ciriaco was aware of the abundance of ancient material available on Rhodes; as we shall see, he had already acquired some marbles on the island almost twenty years earlier. Now, with Bandini’s help, Ciriaco was hoping to augment his collection even further.

While Ciriaco generously gave samples from his collection to his friends they also in return presented gifts to him. When in 1442 Ciriaco visited Pavia he met Gianlucido Gonzaga (c.1421-1448), the third son of Gianfrancesco Gonzaga Marquis of Mantua, who was studying jurisprudence at the local university. Gianlucido was a frail and humpbacked young man, but a prodigy of learning. He had been trained by Vittorino da Feltre and by the age of twelve had already impressed his humanist audience delivering a poetic composition of two hundreds verses of his own invention in which he described

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119 Müntz, *Les Arts a la Cour des Papes pendant le XVe et le XVIe siècle*: 173.
the entrance of the Emperor Sigismund in Mantua in 1433. In Pavia Gianlucido patronized the arts and assembled an important collection of coins. On the occasion of their encounter Gianlucido showed Ciriaco his collection and gave him the gift of a silver coin:

In the same town I found the illustrious Gian Lucido Marquis of Mantua, who after having shown me numerous gold, silver and bronze coins, gave me as a gift a silver coin of Stesimbrotus of Thasos. On one side of the coin was Stesimbrotus' head crowned with ivy, and on the other side was the image of Hercules carrying his club and lion skin, his attributes. On the coin inscribed in Greek letters was: ΗΡΑΚΛΕΙΣ ΣΩΤΗΠΟΣ ΘΑΣΟΝ.

Ciriaco mistakenly identified the profile on the obverse of the coin with that of the ancient philosopher Stesimbrotos of Thasos, failing to recognize in it the image of Dionysus (fig. 49). It is worthy of note that in spite of his extensive travels Ciriaco obtained the Greek tetradrachm from Thasos in Pavia reminding us how easily small portable collectables could travel long distances.

During his stay in the northern Italian town, Ciriaco added more pieces to his coin collection. Among the most notable inhabitants of Pavia, he met the jurist Catone Sacco,


121 On an illuminated manuscript commissioned by Gianlucido to Giovanni Belbello da Pavia see Giuse Pastore and Giancarlo Manzoli, Il Messale di Barbara (Mantua: Sintesi, 1991).

122 “Invenimus et eadem in urbe illustrem Ioannem Lucidum Mantuanum Marchionem, qui mihi postquam plurima numismata aurea, argenteaque, et aerea ostenterat, Stesimbroti Thasii argenteum numnum largitus est, qui prima in parte ejusdem caput hederam coronatum habeth; alia vero in facie Herculis imaginem suis cum insignibus, clavamque, et leonis pellem gerebat, cui sic Atticis literis inscriptum erat: ΗΡΑΚΛΕΙΣ ΣΩΤΗΠΟΣ ΘΑΣΟΝ.” Olivieri degli Abati, Commentariorum Cyriaci Anconitani Nova Fragmenta Notis Illustrata, 26-27; Müntz, Les Arts a la Cour des Papes pendant le XVe et le XVIe siècle: 173.

with whom he exchanged coins. Ciriaco very aptly offered Catone a silver coin showing his homonymous Roman statesman Marcus Porcius Cato, while in exchange he received four very ancient Roman coins:

> Among the other illustrious and learned men I found the jurist Catone. As a gift I gave him a silver coin of Cato, and he gave me the gift of four extremely old silver coins in exchange, of which one bore the marks of the horsemen Castor and Pollux; in another the image of the head of Marcus Lucinius Crassus was visible; another had on one side a pair of horses carrying banners.

Other friends also assisted Ciriaco in expanding his collection of antiquities. In a letter written in Dubrovnik on Christmas day of (probably) 1435, Ciriaco thanked the Venetian Natale Bon for his gift of a small bronze head of a horse. Bon had obtained the head from a farmer who had found it in the countryside just outside Dubrovnik, the Roman Epidaurum, and because Ciriaco admired it profusely Bon let him have it. It was a small object ("opusculum") that could be easily held in one hand ("manu cepissem"), but nothing more is known about it.


125 “Invenimus et preclaros inter, et doctissimos viros Catenem Jure consultissimum hominem, quot Catanis argenteum nomisma dono dedi, et ipse me contra 4 argenteis antiquissimis donatum fecit, quorum in altero Castorem, et Pollucem equestres insignitos habeat; in altero vero M. Lucini videbatur capitis imago; alter ex parte bijugales equos pro insigne gerens.” . In the same work a letter written by Ciriaco as a thank you note to Catone is also published. Olivieri degli Abati, *Commentariorum Cyriaci Anconitani Nova Fragmenta Notis Illustrata*, 36.

126 The letter is preserved in Rome at the Biblioteca Vaticana, ms. Vat. Capponi 3, cc. 110r-111r. According to Di Benedetto, Natale Bon was an active merchant of Ragusa. Di Benedetto, "Il punto su alcune questioni riguardanti Ciriaco," 25.

When Ciriaco met Ambrogio Traversari in Venice, as we have seen, he showed him not only his coins but also an antique onyx of “supreme elegance” bearing the image of Scipio the Younger. This was not the only antique carved gem that Ciriaco owned. We read about yet another gem in a postscript to a letter written by Ciriaco to Andreolo Giustiniani on April 2, 1444: “You can read what deeply learned men have written in Greek and Latin about our most precious gem that depicts a Scylla.” Ciriaco had sent replicas of his gem to some of his acquaintances and had received great praises in return; these written compositions in Greek and Latin survive to this day. In December 1442 Angelo de’ Grassi, the bishop of Ariano Irpino, was in Castiglione Olona and wrote a letter to Ciriaco thanking him for his gift of a lead cast of the Scylla gem. De’ Grassi sent also a thirteen-verse Latin poem that he had just composed to celebrate the beauty of the gem: “In order to thank you for both your letters and your gift, I send you separately 13 verses describing the image of the monster Scylla made out of of lead cast from your

128 Scipionis Junioris in lapide onychino, ut ipse aiebat, effigem (nostrae litterae auro tegebantur) vidi summae elegantiae: adeo ut numquam viderim pulchriorem.” Mehus, Ambrosii Traversarii Generalis Camaldulensium aliorumque ad Ipsum et ad Alios de Eodem Ambrosio Latine Epistolae a Domino Petro Canneto Abbate Camaldulensi in Libros XXV Tributae, Variorum Opera Distinctae, et Observationes Illustratae, libro 8, episola 45.

129 “Praeterea quae nostra de Scyllea preciosissima gemma, quam nobis Urbini principem servasse diximus, perdocti Graece Latinque scripsere viri, lectitare potestis.” Bodnar, Cyric of Ancona Later Travels, 22-24. The final part of the sentence has been translated and interpreted in different ways. Bodnard translates it as: “which we said the prince of Urbino has kept for us” and identifies the prince of Urbino with Federico of Montefeltro who became lord of Urbino in 1444. Conversely, Filippo Di Benedetto suggests that the prince of Urbino (identified by him more persuasively as Guidantonio di Montefeltro who was lord of Urbino until 1443) gave the gem to Ciriaco as a gift. Di Benedetto, "Il punto su alcune questioni riguardanti Ciriaco," 26.

130 Olivieri degli Abati, Commentariorum Cyriaci Anconitani Nova Fragmenta Notis Illustrata, 54. Angelo de Grassi is a little known figure, see Angelus De Grassis, Oratio Panigerica dicta domino Alfonso (Rome: Istituto Palazzo Borromini, 2006), VIII-X. Angelo de Grassi had also composed another poem for Ciriaco on occasion of the latter’s visit to the baths of Petriolo near Siena. Di Benedetto, "Il punto su alcune questioni riguardanti Ciriaco," 24.
famous gem of sardonyx agate.” From the description given in the poem it is possible to gain a better sense of the appearance of the now-lost gem. The reference made to colors in verses 10-11 “Ingentium celebratur opus, niveique coloris/ Surgit ab oscuro decus, haec inimical renectens” leads one to think that the lead cast sent by Ciriaco was painted with the intent of reproducing the chromatic effects of the original gem. A fragment of a Scylla gem now at the British Museum in London only vaguely suggests the appearance of Ciriaco’s precious sardonyx (fig. 50).

In the same year Ciriaco’s friend, the Greek humanist Theodorus of Gaza (ca. 1400 -1475), sent him another poetic composition, written in Greek, expressing thanks for an image of Scylla he had received from the Anconitan. Theodorus had probably also received a lead cast taken from Ciriaco’s gem.


133 Olivieri degli Abati, Commentariorum Cyriaci Anconitani Nova Fragmenta Notis Illustrata, 37 in Greek with Latin translation. See also Delle Donne, "Una raffigurazione di Scilla in due epigrammi di Angelo de Grassis e Teodoro Gaza," 226. The text is preserved also in a manuscript of the late sixteenth century now in Florence (Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, ms. Conv. Sopp. I.IX.30, c. 391v) which contains copies of inscriptions from an original silloge by Ciriaco.
The use of lead casts as surrogates of small original artifacts was not uncommon among early antiquarians and collectors. Already in the 1414 inventory of the collection of the Duke Jean of Berry a lead cast after a medal of Francesco da Carrara is mentioned.134 Ambrogio Traversari, during his stay in Venice, had a gold coin with the image of the queen Berenice cast in lead for his friend Niccolò Niccoli, as we learn from one of his letters.135

Through the use of reproductions, Ciriaco made the rare iconography of the nymph Scylla available to a large group of friends. When Jacopo Zeno wrote his celebratory letter in honor of Ciriaco, he emphasized the role played by the tireless traveler in bringing a whole new repertoire of images into the west. Among Ciriaco’s contributions Zeno highlighted the portraits of exotic animals, already mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, but also the image of Scylla: “Who brought to the notice of men for their knowledge and understanding Scylla with a virginal face and the bottom in the form of a sea-monster?”136

In Zeno’s text there is a reference to another rare object that Ciriaco brought to the attention of his contemporaries: the chryselectrum - a piece of amber of the color of


135 “Berenicis imaginem pridie quam proficiscerer, in plumbo exprimi iussi optime, & diligentissime, quam ad te missem continuo, si adfuisset, cui tuto committi posset.” Mehus, Ambrosii Traversarii Generalis Camaldulensium aliorumque ad Ipsum et ad Alios de Eodem Ambrosio Latiniæ Epistolæ a Domino Petro Canneto Abbate Camaldulensi in Libros XXV Tributæ, Variorum Opera Distinctae, et Observationes Illustratae, II, lib. 8, epistola 48.

gold with an insect trapped inside.\textsuperscript{137} Also, the humanist Giovanni Pontano (1426-1503), active at the Aragon court of Naples in the second half of the fifteenth century, reports to have heard that Ciriaco had given such an amber as a gift to Alfonso of Aragon (1396-1458). The king greatly appreciated the exceptional gift and rejoiced with enthusiasm:

It is said that Alfonso began to jump with joy when Ciriaco gave him a \emph{chryselectrum}, inside of which there was a fly with its wings spread: such a small thing, but its rarity made it huge in the prince’s eyes, since he did not measure its price but rather its rarity.\textsuperscript{138}

The amber was a gift fit for the magnificence of a king, according to Pontano, thanks to its extreme rarity.

In writing about Ciriaco’s amber, Zeno borrowed his words directly from Pliny, who had described the \emph{chryselectrum} in his \emph{Naturalis Historia}.\textsuperscript{139} Ciriaco himself was familiar with Pliny’s text as he had in fact transcribed the passage on gems and ambers from chapter thirty-seven of the \emph{Naturalis Historia} in a collection of excerpts from classical and modern authors that he had put together and which still survives in his own hand.\textsuperscript{140}

\textsuperscript{137} “
Quis vero ante te iocundissimum illud chryselectrum quod aurei coloris et matutini gratissimum aspectu culice intercluso scribit Plinius … deduxerat?” Ibid.


\textsuperscript{139} Pliny, \textit{Naturalis Historia} (Pisa Giardini, 1984), book 37, 12, 51. “Hic et differentiam novam fecit appellando chryselectrum quod sit coloris aurei et matutini gratissimi aspectus, rapacissimum ignium, si iuxta fuerint, celerrime ardescens.” In an earlier passage of the section on amber, Pliny mentions the small insects that could be found trapped inside: “Liquidum id primo destillare argumento sunt quaedam intus tralucentia, ut formicae culicesque et lacerate, quae adhaesisse musteo non est dubium et inclusa durescente codem remanisse.” Ibid., (book 37, 11, 46.

\textsuperscript{140} This is the manuscript Ottoboniano Latino 1586 of the Vatican Library of Rome mentioned for the first time by Bertalot and Campana, ”Gli scritti di Iacopo Zeno e il suo elogio di Ciriaco
From Pliny’s text on gems Ciriaco not only had learned about the *chryselectrum*, but he had also become acquainted with the art and with the names of the famous gem carvers of antiquity. For this reason, when one day in 1445 the Venetian captain Bertuccio Dolfin showed Ciriaco the collection of small antiquities that he kept on his galley, the Anconitan was particularly impressed by a rock crystal intaglio bearing the name of the Greek artist Eutyches (fig. 51). In a letter addressed to Marco Lippomani Ciriaco described the gem in painstaking detail, even though he misinterpreted its subject.141 Through the reading of classical texts Ciriaco could thus make sense not only of the places and monuments he visited, but also of the objects he found.142

We do not know where or when Ciriaco acquired the *chryselectrum*, but certainly the knowledge of Pliny’s text made him aware of its rarity and induced him to consider it a gift worthy for Alfonso. Similarly, when Ciriaco visited in Lydia the ruins of Sardis, the royal city of Croesus, he remembered his readings of the classics and took a sample of...
sand from the river Pactolus. He recognized in fact from his Strabo the sand from which the king Croesus had acquired enormous wealth by extracting gold.

Antique Marbles

Ciriaco acquired not only small antiquities in the eastern Mediterranean, but also large antique marbles. Francesco Scalamonti narrates that around 1430, after having settled Zaccaria and Pietro Contarini’s affairs on Cyprus, Ciriaco resumed his travels. From Cyprus he navigated to Rhodes where, upon his arrival, the most notable residents of the island greeted him. With his fellow countryman Boezio of Tolentino, who was the metropolitan bishop of Rhodes, and Fantino Quirini, a prominent Venetian member of the order of Saint John, Ciriaco explored the island, observing and recording its numerous antique ruins. Scalamonti continues:

From a Greek monk he bought for himself three recently excavated antiquities, a marble bust of a plebeian priest, a statue of Venus, and another of Bacchus, which he dispatched home to Ancona in the hands of his brother-in-law, Bartolomeo, who had just arrived at Rhodes in an Anconitan ship belonging to Bonifazio, which was bound for Jerusalem.

Scalamonti’s account is instructive for many reasons. First of all, the island of Rhodes emerges as a fertile terrain rich in archeological remains, many of which were visible above the ground while others were dug up by means of archeological excavations. Scalamonti’s narrative attests once again, moreover, how monks were often not only the

143 Bodnar, Cyriac of Ancona Later Travels, 29.

144 Scalamonti, Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani: par. 73.

145 “e quis plebes sacerdotis marmoreum caput, Veneream statuam, et Liberi patris imaginem, quas a Graeco calohiero tum forte defossas emerat et per Bartholomoeum sororium Anconem ad patriam misit, cum is navi quadam Anconitana Bonifacio patrono Hierosolima petens Rhodum applicuisset.” Ibid.
guardians of precious libraries, but also of classical marbles. As emerges from various
sources, the Greek “calohieri” [monks], who lived in many of the sparsely inhabited
regions of the eastern Mediterranean, often played a strategic role in trading antiquities
with western collectors.\textsuperscript{146}

More important, however, is what Scalamonti adds to the story of Ciriaco as

A notary and grammar teacher active in Ancona in the first part of the sixteenth
century, Bartolomeo Alfeo (ca.1460-1555), wrote a chronicle of the city in the form of
annals, in which he included some information on Ciriaco (fig. 52).\textsuperscript{149} Alfeo writes about Ciriaco:

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{146}] On this topic see my considerations in chapter 1.
\item[\textsuperscript{147}] The \textit{Bacchus} is referred to by Scalamonti as “Liberti patris imaginem.” This too was probably a marble, perhaps only a bust. See Maurizio Landolfi, "Ciriaco e il collezionismo di antichità greche nel Piceno," in Ciriaco d'Ancona e la cultura antiquaria dell'Umanesimo. Atti del convegno internazionale di studio, ed. Gianfranco Paci and Sergio Sconocchia (Reggio Emilia: Edizioni Diabasis, 1998), 448, note 14 who translates “imaginem” with bust.
\item[\textsuperscript{148}] See Scalamonti, \textit{Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani}: 152, note 94; Antonio Leoni, \textit{Ancona illustrata} (Ancona: A. Forni, 1832), 218-19.
\item[\textsuperscript{149}] On Bartolomeo Alfeo and his annals of Ancona see Ernesto Spadolini, "Gli annali anconitani di Bartolomeo Alfeo," \textit{Atti e Memorie della Regia Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Province delle Marche} (1906): 137-88; Maria Leuzzi, "Alfei, Bartolomeo," in \textit{Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani} (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1960), vol. 2, 261-62. A section of Alfeo’s text is preserved in Venice in a richly illustrated manuscript copy in the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana (\textit{Annali di Bartolomeo Alfeo: anni 1513-1556}, cod. Ital. VII-8, 6085). Two other manuscripts of the annals are preserved in the Biblioteca Comunale Benincasa of Ancona. One of them (Bartolomeo Alfeo, \textit{Storia di Ancona}, ms. 236) is an original version by Alfeo, while the other is a seventeenth century transcription by the local historian Giovanni Pichi Tancredi (1630-1697) of a slightly different version of Alfeo’s text (Giovanni Pichi Tancredi, \textit{Croniche di}
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
He himself wrote many epigrams and eulogies in the antique Latin and Greek language, and brought back sculptures and statues and other worthy inscriptions, and among the other notable things he brought back with him was a half Venus made of marble, a very admirable piece, an extremely elegant work by that famous sculptor Phidias. This he had put up on a wall above the doorway of his paternal house, where it stayed for many years while he was alive and also after his death, providing a rare and singular display, as it was an extremely beautiful thing and was usually admired and regarded with pleasure by everyone. And the numerous princes and prelates that came to Ancona all fell in love with it, as it was made with such beautiful artistry, surpassing with art the work of nature.  

While we may discount his attribution of the marble to the hand of Phidias, which is very likely an overstatement, Alfeo provides some important details for reconstructing the story of this Venus that almost certainly is the one that Ciriaco procured in Rhodes.  

Alfeo’s account is worth taking into consideration here since it provides relevant information not only on Ciriaco’s own biography, but also on several other important Italian collectors of antiquities active soon after Ciriaco’s death.  

For Alfeo continues his narration by stating:  

Ancona, ms. 238). On the first page of Pichi Tancredi’s manuscript we read: “Parte delle Croniche d’Ancona di Bartolomeo Alfeo copiate da me Giovanni Pichi Tancredi da un libro manoscritto esistente preso li PP. di San Francesco delle Scale nel quale a 6 di d.o si legge così: “Questo libro fu copiato in una notte da novizi quando io Fra Maria Angelo ero loro maestro dall’originale di Bartolomeo Alfeo.” Et ho copiato quello che è accaduto nel tempo suo [Alfeo’s] che fu notaro di sommo credito e fede e maestro di grammatica.”

150 “di sua mano scrisse molti epigrammi et elogij antichi in latino idioma e Greco, e portò statue e colossi et altre scritture degne, e fra l’alte cose notande seco portò una mezza Venere in marmo molto degna, opera elegantissima di quel gran scultore Fidia, la quale fece murare sopra la porta della sua casa paterna, ove stette molti anni dopo la sua morte come al tempo suo per un raro e singolar spettacolo, e cosa molto bella e molto spettanda e mirata con deleattazione generalmente da ogniuno e venendo in Ancona più principi e prelati ognuno di quelli che la vedevano se inamoravano tanto era di bello artificio ben fatta che supera con l’arte l’opera di natura.” This quote comes from the sixteenth century copy by Pichi Tancredi, Croniche di Ancona, ms. 238, c. 15. Some small differences appear in the version in Alfeo, ms. 236, c. 95: “portò molte belle antiquitate et forme et littere et di statue vetustissime et degne et operose et le altre una Venere marmoria non integra ma purche mezza di tale bellezza et arte excellente che l’ha fixe et ripose sopra la porta ovvero uscio di li suoi Picecolli cassata nobile et alquanti principi et homini grandi et ingeniosi consurrivano a vederla.”
Fracasso, the cousin of the duke of Milan, offered eighty ducats to have it [the Venus] from the owner, who was Vincenzo di Marinozzo de' Pizzecolli, a real gentleman, but he could not have it. Sometime afterwards, at the time of pope Julius II who was elected in 1503, the cardinal of Mantua came as legate of the Marca and stayed in Ancona for many months. Seeing and craving the marble Venus, he had asked the owner for it, but since he could not obtain it in the end one night he had it taken down from the wall and shipped to Mantua to his brother, the Marquis, who appreciated it greatly.151

From Alfeo we also learn that Ciriaco had installed the statue of Venus on the Pizzicolli family palace, which presumably was his residence in the city. We do not know whether or not Ciriaco had spent his youth in that palace. From Francesco Scalamonti we know that Ciriaco’s father, Filippo de’ Pizzicolli, was already dead when Ciriaco was only nine years old.152 At that point his mother, Masiella Selvatico, had to provide on her own, with the help of her father, for the education of her children: Ciriaco, Nicolosa and probably several other siblings.153 In a further passage from Ciriaco’s biography Scalamonti explains how, upon completing a seven-year apprenticeship with the rich merchant Pietro, the son of an eminent physician, Ciriaco returned home to his mother’s house, which is described as “paupere.”154 Therefore Masiella probably did not live in the Pizzicolli palace, but at some point later on Ciriaco must have moved into it.

151 “dal sig. Fracasso cugino del duca di Milano li furono offerti ducati ottanta per haver dal patrone chiamato Vincenzo di Marinozzo de' Pizzecolli molto galante gentilhuomo, ne' la potette havere. Di poi al tempo del papa Giulio II che fu del 1503 venendo legato della Marca il cardinale di Mantova tenendo la sua residentia molti mesi in Ancona, vedendo e desiderando d.a Venere di marmo con grande istanza, facendola adimandare al Pro.ne non trovando da quello poterla ottenere finalmente una notte di potenza la fece cavare e levare e la mandò a Mantova al S. Marchese suo fratello, al quale fù gratissima.” Pichi Tancredi, Croniche di Ancona, cc. 15-16.

152 Scalamonti, Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani: 145, note 2.

153 Ibid., par. 5.

154 Ibid., par. 15.
We have also seen how Ciriaco’s library, which most likely was kept in the same palace, had been inherited at his death by a nephew who began to sell its contents soon after Ciriaco’s passing.\footnote{There is no evidence that Ciriaco ever married or had children. One or more nephews from the Pizzicolli family must have inherited his possessions. The Pizzicollis became known in the sixteenth century by the surname of Marinozzi de’ Pizzicolli and the family ended with the captain Vincenzo Marinozzi de’ Pizzicolli, who died in Ancona on December 20, 1645 at the age of 85 and was buried in the church of San Francesco alle Scale. See Giovanni Pichi Tancredi, \textit{Stemmi de Patrizi Anconitani}, Ancona, Biblioteca Benincasa, ms. 241, c. 54.} Following Alfeo’s account, we learn that at the beginning of the sixteenth century the palace was owned by a certain Vincenzo di Marinozzi de’ Pizzicolli, whose exact relationship to Ciriaco is unclear, even though they shared the same surname. Vincenzo di Marinozzi de’ Pizzicolli is described by Alfeo as a “molto galante gentilhuomo,” yet today little is known about him. Vincenzo’s name appears in various documents drawn up by Anconitan notaries in the early decades of the sixteenth century.\footnote{Numerous business contacts are registered by the notary Troilo Leoni between 1506 and 1527, ASAn, Notarile Atti Troilo Leoni, B. 163, B. 164, B. 165, B. 172, B. 173, and B. 174. Other documents are in ASAn, Notarile Atti Giacomo Alberici, B. 95, c. 203v (document dated 1506); Notarile Atti Giacomo Alberici, B 97, c. 82 v (document of 1508); Notarile Atti Andrea Pilestri B. 221, c. 251v (document of 1523).} From these archival records, which mainly consist of financial transactions and business agreements, Vincenzo, who often acted together with his brother Francesco, emerges as a prominent and wealthy merchant. Even more faint is the figure of Vincenzo’s father Marinozzi de’ Pizzicolli.\footnote{Marinozzi de Pizzicolli’s generation is the one that separates Ciriaco from Vincenzo di Marinozzi. Unfortunately my research in the archives in Ancona has been unsuccessful in finding any information about Marinozzi beyond his name. The archival material that survives for the second half of the fifteenth century in Ancona is very limited.}

Following the traces of the brothers Francesco and Vincenzo de’ Pizzicolli in the archives makes it possible to locate their palace within the urban fabric of sixteenth-century Ancona and therefore to discover where Ciriaco lived and where his ancient
Venus was displayed. The *catastico pontificio* of 1531 reveals that by that date Francesco and Vincenzo Pizzecolli had died and that the Pizzicolli palace had been divided in half between Francesco’s heirs and Vincenzo’s son Lorenzo.\(^{158}\) The *catastico* precisely describes the properties and streets surrounding the building, which stood in the parish of San Pietro (fig. 53).\(^{159}\) Next to the Pizzicollis Gabriele Fatati lived on one side, while on the other was the home of Giacomo Stocchetti.

But the information from the archives is detailed enough to allow a reconstruction of the enfilade of houses facing the public street between the church of San Francesco alle Scale and San Pietro (fig. 54).\(^{160}\) Beginning with the palace of Girolamo di Giovanni Nappi located “scontro delle scale de S. Francesco” [against the stairs of S. Francesco] we find the palace of Gabriele of Simone Fatati next, and then the Pizzicolli’s. Ciriaco’s home therefore stood on the “via pubblica” not far from the church of San Francesco (fig. 55). Many of the Renaissance constructions in Ancona have greatly changed since the sixteenth century, but on the ancient “via pubblica” (today Via Matas) some very old buildings still survive (fig. 56).


\(^{159}\) The church of San Pietro was demolished after having been badly damaged during World War II. See Vincenzo Pirani, *Le chiese di Ancona* (Ancona: Nuove Ricerche 1998), 198-204.

\(^{160}\) Although the layout of San Francesco’s stairs was completely changed in 1817, their original form can be seen clearly in old views of the city. See for example Vincenzo Pirani, *Una pianta di Ancona del 1745* (Ancona: Tecnoprint, 1991), 49. On the history of this church see Pirani, *Le chiese di Ancona*: 57-60.
According to Alfeo, the antique Venus from Rhodes prominently showcased on the Pizzicolli’s palace façade attracted the attention of many visitors arriving in the city. Alfeo, who writes about facts that happened during his lifetime, says that the captain Gaspare Sanseverino, better known by the surname of Capitan Fracasso, tried to acquire the marble Venus for eighty ducats, but Vincenzo Pizzicolli rejected the offer. Gaspare Sanseverino is famous mainly for his military achievements and his almost proverbial vehemence, but nothing is known about his interest in antiquities. Fracasso was in Ancona on February 18, 1507 and again in April of 1509. It was probably at the time of one of his visits that he saw the beautiful Venus and tried unsuccessfully to buy it.

Some time later Sigismondo Gonzaga (1469-1525) arrived in Ancona as Cardinal Legate of the Marche and tried to obtain the Venus from the Pizzicolli. Since he could not acquire it from the reluctant owner, Sigismondo had it stolen from the palace overnight and Bartolomeo Alfeo reports:

The aforementioned owner was very sorry to have been violently deprived of it by his superior, who gave him against his will only sixty ducats because of his stubbornness and because he had shown such little gratitude towards his request, which he had in any case satisfied.


162 Marino Sanudo, I diarii di Marino Sanuto (MCCCCXCVI-MDXXXIII) dall’ autografo Marciano ital. cl. VII codd. CDIX-CDLXXVII (Venice: F. Visentini, 1879), vol. 8, 118-19. From Sanudo we know that on April 22, 1509, Fracasso was both in Ancona and nearby Osimo.


164 “benché al P.rone sopradetto molto dispiacesse vedendosi esser privato violentemente dal suo superiore, il quale contro sua volontà donò a quello ducati sessanta per ostinazione e poca gratitudine ricevuta della sua dimanda ad ogni modo conseguita.” Alfeo, Storia di Ancona, ms. 236, c. 16.
Thus the reluctant Vincenzo ultimately only received a meager reimbursement of sixty ducats for the ancient marble.

Cardinal Sigismondo Gonzaga was described in a Roman pasquinade as “il babbion mantovano” [the fool from Mantua] and was mocked by Pietro Aretino for his “loquacità et intolerabile spuzor del fiato” [chattiness and terribly bad breath].\(^\text{165}\) Brother of the marquis of Mantua Francesco Gonzaga, Sigismondo was appointed Cardinal Legate of the Marche at the beginning of 1509 (fig. 57). A few weeks after his nomination, Sigismondo left Mantua for the Marche heading towards Macerata. Along the way he stopped in Ancona where he was supposed to stay only a few days, but because he fell ill and because of the outbreak of the War of League of Cambrai his sojourn in the city lasted for over three months. Sigismondo was immediately received with benevolence in the city, as attested by a letter written by Alessandro Cardinalis to the marquis Francesco Gonzaga: “The Duke [Francesco Maria della Rovere] and everyone who has been with the Most Illustrious Signoria says that it is impossible to underrate just how highly regarded the Cardinal is in Ancona.”\(^\text{166}\) It was during this time that a medal representing Sigismondo in profile on the obverse and a female figure holding a crown with the inscription “Securitas Anconae” on the reverse was struck (fig. 58).

Recent studies have drawn attention to Sigismondo’s role as a seeker of antique objects for his sister in law, Isabella d’Este, and as a collector of antiquities in his own


\(^{166}\) “Il signor Ducha [Francesco Maria della Rovere] et tutti quelli che sono stati con sua Signoria Illustissima dicono ch’el cardinale è tanto ben visto in Anchona che dir non se poteria.” Quoted in ibid., 340, note 68.
right. The cardinal acquired a good number of antique pieces for his and Isabella’s collection during his time in Rome, where presumably his purchases were conducted in a more orthodox way than in the provincial Ancona. These accounts, however, have missed the acquisition by Sigismondo of Ciriaco’s Venus from Rhodes.

But another episode related to Sigimondo’s stay in the Marche is relevant here. At the time of his visit to Macerata, the Cardinal very likely visited the small village of Tolentino. Here, a Roman statue representing Giulia, which had been excavated in the nearby countryside in 1508, had been installed on the main façade of the Palazzo Comunale (fig. 59). Like the Venus of Ancona, this publicly displayed female statue also attracted Sigimondo’s attention, so much so that some time later, in 1520, the cardinal tried in vain to obtain the Giulia for his collection as well.

In spite of the bitter disappointment created amongst Ciriaco’s heirs by the theft of the sculpture, Sigismondo had left a good impression of himself in Ancona. In a letter to Francesco Gonzaga, the prior of the Dominican friary at Fermo commented: “[Sigismondo] seguita cum prudentia et maturitate una vera et dolce iustitia” [pursues with prudence and maturity a true and sweet justice].

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169 Tamalio, "Gonzaga, Sigismondo," 856.

According to Alfeo’s account, Sigismondo did not keep the Venus for his own collection, but shipped it to his brother Francesco in Mantua. The marquis Francesco Gonzaga’s interest in art collecting and his patronage in art projects had long been overshadowed in scholarship by the activities of his wife Isabella d’Este and by those of other members of the Gonzaga family. In recent years, however, art historians have reconsidered Francesco’s activities as patron of the arts and have brought to light his involvement in important architectural projects.171 The fact that at some point Francesco owned the marble Venus that Ciriaco had acquired in Rhodes therefore adds a new element to the understanding of the Marquis’ role as patron and collector of the arts.172 At this point we lose track of the fragmentary marble from Rhodes since it becomes very difficult to identify it among the ancient marbles collected in Mantua by the Gonzaga family considering how little we know about the statue’s appearance.173

Despite its prominent public location in Ancona and the attraction it exerted on both princes and “hominis grandi et ingeniosi,”174 the classical Venus from Rhodes seems to have left no explicit influence on the works of art produced in fifteenth century Ancona.175 However, the sculptor Giorgio di Matteo from Sebenico (ca. 1410-1473) might have had Ciriaco’s fragmentary marble in mind when he sculpted the fleshy naked

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171 See the recent volume by Molly Bourne, Francesco II Gonzaga: the Soldier-Prince as Patron (Rome: Bulzoni, 2008).

172 Francesco Gonzaga was imprisoned in Venice in August 1509 so he must have received the statue from Ancona before then, when his brother Sigismondo was still in the Marche.

173 The few details known on the fragmentary sculpture are insufficient to locate it with certainty among either the Gonzaga’s antiquities, which remained in Mantua or those that were sold to King Charles I in 1627-1628.

174 Ancona, Biblioteca Benincasa, ms. 236, Alfeo Bartolomeo, Storia di Ancona, c. 95v.

175 Ronald Lightbown, Carlo Crivelli (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 32
body of the *Charity* for the Loggia dei Mercanti in Ancona between 1451 and 1459 (fig. 60).\(^{176}\) This suggestion is plausible considering that Loggia was indeed just a short distance from where the *Venus* was located.

Other evidence for Ciriaco’s activity of collecting ancient marbles comes from some of the letters he wrote in the 1440s to his friend Andreolo Giustiniani of Chios. Writing from Paros on December 12, 1445, Ciriaco informed Andreolo that some fragmentary marbles - one head and one leg - were about to arrive in Chios with the boatman Galaphatos.\(^ {177}\) We do not know whether those artifacts were being sent to Andreolo or whether they were Ciriaco’s property which he was having sent to Chios only for safekeeping. The letter, however, is significant for the details it provides on how antiquities traveled in the Aegean, migrating from one island to the other. Ciriaco writes to his friend:

> From the same bright Paros, the 25\(^{th}\) of December, the favorable, bright, solemn and greatly celebrated birthday of Jove Incarnate. Receive from the carrier, A. Galaphatos, one marble head, one leg, and two little cypress wood boxes wrapped in cloth with the seal: K+A.\(^ {178}\)

Even more intriguing is a later letter to Andreolo written from Lesbos on March 13, 1446.\(^ {179}\) Here Ciriaco tells of his encounter in Mytilene, a few days earlier, with Dorino I,

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\(^{177}\) Bodnar, *Cyriac of Ancona Later Travels*, 208-11.

\(^{178}\) “Ex eadem clara Pario, VIII Kalendas Ianuarii, fausto, sereno et humanati Iovis natalicio solemnmi et celeberrimo die. Recipe a portitore, A. Galaphato, caput unum marmoreum unumque crus et bina de cypresso scriiniola pannis involuta hoc sub signo K+A.” Ibid., 211.

\(^{179}\) Ibid., 236-39.
the lord of Lesbos, and with another old friend Cristiano Spinola. Ciriaco mentions some antique marbles, including an inscribed porphyry stone and two marble heads, but the text of the letter is difficult to interpret. Not only does it allude to unknown “matters” that had happened previously, but the writing itself is also cryptic with several sentences written in abbreviated form:

Among other old friends, I saw Cristiano Spinola, and when I inquired of him about the matters you brought to my attention, know that he and the prince [Dorino I Gattilusio], regarding the inscribed porphyry stone, and all the others, regarding the other appropriate matters, though they have not yet crossed the river Lethe, have certainly drunk its waters of unconcern; and because something may survive of the objects you once saw, they even know it and che S.Q.S.I.P. _nol crediate_; but concerning the marble heads, Spinola said he is sending you one; and the other he showed me set in a wall, quite unsuitable and largely defective. But I must tell you concerning each of these two, _L.D.I.C.E.V.C.C._

Then Ciriaco concludes: “Farewell, and know that, with the help of the prince, I shall investigate the more worthwhile part of the whole island of Lesbos, and have already found some things worth my while.”

Ciriaco’s mysterious letter reminds us that many lacunae remain concerning our knowledge of the movements and trade of antique objects between the ancient sites of the eastern Mediterranean.

180 “Vidimus et alios veteres inter amicos Christianum Spinolam et cum ab eo de his quae mihi memoria recensebas sciscitaremur, eum et principem de porphyreo lapide conscripto ac alios omnes de ceteris dignis quibusque rebus, Lethaeo non adhuc amne tranato eius vero seculos bibisse lattices habeto. Et quod aliquid de rebus a te iam visis extet aut norant et _che S.Q.S.I.P. nol crediate_. De capitibus vero marmoreis unum ad te Spinola mittere dixit, alterum mihi in muro collatum ostendit, ineptum satis et magna ex parte defectum, verum et tibi dicendum erit de quoviscumque duorum hac _L.D.I.C.A.E.V.C.C._” ibid. The abbreviations have never been deciphered. In another of his letters, Ciriaco mentions that the expression “_che S.Q.S.I.P. nol crediate_” was a saying commonly used by Andreolo. Ibid., 241. As Professor Michael Koortbojian has suggested to me, S.Q.S.I.P. is very likely the abbreviated form of “secundum quod simpliciter” from Thomas Aquinas.

181 “Vale et scias me Lesbeam omnem insulam digniori ex parte indagaturum, iuvante principe, et hic usque nunc digna aliqua comperuisse.” Ibid., 238.
CIRIACO’S FRIENDS

It is tempting to portray Ciriaco d’Ancona as the romantic figure of a lonely traveler who undertook solitary explorations among antique ruins in the eastern Mediterranean, and who was the only one of his contemporaries aware of their classical past. However, from the few surviving writings by Ciriaco’s own hand and from Scalamonti’s biography we gain a sense that in fact Ciriaco was not alone in the eastern Mediterranean in his engagement with the relics of antiquity. Although exceptional and unique in many ways, especially in his practice of systematically recording the antiquities and inscriptions he sought out during his extensive travels, Ciriaco seldom set off for archeological explorations alone.

From an early age, Ciriaco had become used to interacting with people of high rank. Before turning twelve he had traveled with his maternal grandfather, Ciriaco Selvatico, to southern Italy where he had met many members of the local nobility in the entourage of King Ladislao of Naples (1377-1414).\textsuperscript{182} Among these were the Grand Chamberlain of Naples Goffredo Count of Alife, the Duke of Sessa Giacomo di Marzano, and the Count of Squillace Roberto di Marzano.\textsuperscript{183}

Later in his life Ciriaco was able to cultivate other important relationships. He met Gabriele Condulmer (1383-1447) for the first time when Condulmer was cardinal legate

\textsuperscript{182} From Scalamonti we learn that Ciriaco Selvatico had lived in Hungary at the court of king Charles III of Durazzo (1381-1386). Scalamonti, \textit{Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani}: par. 9.

\textsuperscript{183} Ibid., par. 10 and par. 13. According to Scalamonti, during the time spent at the court of Sessa Ciriaco became an intimate friend of the duke’s son, the young Giovanni Antonio Marzano, so much so “that one could not distinguish which one of the two the duke regarded as his own child.”
in Ancona in the early 1420s. Soon after Condulmer’s election to the papacy as Eugenius IV, in 1431, Ciriaco went to visit him in Rome (fig. 61). There he was received in the nave of Saint Peter’s and he offered the Pope the exotic gift of two ewers made of Indian porcelain and decorated with gold. We already saw how in 1432 Ciriaco had met the emperor-elect Sigismund in Siena and how soon afterwards he had served as Sigismund’s guide to the ancient monuments of Rome.

But Ciriaco moved equally at ease among the powerful leaders of the east. In the spring of 1444 he was in Adrianople at the court of the Ottoman sultan Murad II Bey (1404-1451) together with his Genoese friends, the merchants Francesco Draperio and Raffaele Castiglione. Only a few months later he was in Constantinople reading and translating missives to the Byzantine emperor John VIII Palaiologos (1392-1448) (fig. 62).

Ciriaco’s versatile personality and his many interests enabled him to fit in the most diverse situations. He often accompanied his noble friends in their courtly pastimes. Around 1425 we find Ciriaco on Cyprus participating in a hunting expedition with King

184 Gabriele Condulmer (1383-1447) was appointed legate of the Marche in 1420 and lived in Ancona until 1423. In 1421 he promoted works for the restoration of the town’s harbor, an enterprise in which Ciriaco participated. Campana, "Giannozzo Manetti, Ciriaco e l'arco di Traiano ad Ancona," 483-504.

185 Scalamonti, Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani: par. 92. For Ciriaco’s relationship with Eugenius IV see also the letter written by Ciriaco to Eugenius in 1441, the so-called itinerarium. Lorenzo Mehus, Kyriaci Anconitani itinerarium nunc primum ex ms. cod. in lucem erutum ex bibl. illus. clarissimique baronis Philippi Stosch (Florence: Joannis Pauli Giovannelli, 1742), 1-52.

186 Scalamonti, Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani: par. 97-98.

187 Bodnar, Cyriac of Ancona Later Travels, 35-36.

188 Ibid., 89.
Janus, and in the summer of 1444 he was among the Venetian and Genoese noblemen following the Byzantine Emperor and his brother Theodore II in an excursion outside Constantinople. Sometime afterwards Ciriaco was collecting conchs and snail shells on the shores of Tenedos with several Italian gentlemen.

In 1446, he was invited to attend the wedding ceremony in Galata of Elisabetta, the daughter of Francesco Draperio, one of the most important merchants of the Genoese community of Constantinople. Draperio’s grandiose mansion, just outside the walls of Pera, is even labeled in a map of Constantinople in a codex containing Cristoforo Buondelmonti’s *Liber Insularum* now in Paris (fig. 63).

Ciriaco exchanged gifts of antiquities with his noble acquaintances, as we have seen, but also traded favors of different sorts and engaged in conversations regarding important matters. In 1431 Ciriaco met Memnon, the bastard son of Carlo I Tocco, the late Lord of Cephalonia. Together they discussed “eastern affairs” and then Memnon introduced Ciriaco to the Turkish governor Canuza Bey, who was lodging on Mount

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189 For the hunt on Cyprus see Scalamonti, *Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani*: par. 71. On the excursion with the Byzantine emperor see Bodnar, *Cyriac of Ancona Later Travels*, 53-59.

190 Bodnar, *Cyriac of Ancona Later Travels*, 281-83.


192 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. N.A. Lat. 2383, f. 34v. On this map made probably soon after 1453 and containing captions in Arabic see Barsanti, "Costantinopoli e l'Egeo nei primi decenni del XV secolo: la testimonianza di Cristoforo Buondelmonti," 230-38.

193 Scalamonti, *Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani*: par. 80.
Olympus. As Scalamonti writes, “Canuza Bey was a Greek by birth and education and thus able knowledgeably to discuss with Ciriaco the antiquities of the province, especially the great temple at Cyzicus” (fig. 64).\textsuperscript{194} Ciriaco expressed his concern about the destruction of the temple, whose antique stones were removed daily to be employed in new constructions.\textsuperscript{195} Canuza Bey, Scalamonti emphasized, “had the learning to appreciate” Ciriaco’s reasoning and immediately promised to prevent further destruction. Some years later Ciriaco met Memnon again and delivered to him a letter and gifts from a mutual friend. In turn, Memnon gave Ciriaco the skin of a huge female bear and guided him among the ruins of ancient Sparta.\textsuperscript{196}

\textit{Learned Acquaintances and Collectors in the Eastern Mediterranean}

Welcomed in the learned circles of Italy, Ciriaco also mingled with humanists and collectors residing outside the peninsula. These were less numerous than their Italian peers and lived scattered in the small principalities of the eastern Mediterranean.

Just across the Adriatic, along the Dalmatian coast, a fervent antiquarianism and a taste for humanistic studies had begun sprouting in the early decades of the fifteenth century (fig. 65). With Venice’s territorial expansion across the Adriatic, almost all of the Dalmatian towns and islands became part of the Venetian empire during the first half of

\textsuperscript{194} Ibid., par. 81.

\textsuperscript{195} For Ciriaco’s visits to Cyzicus see ibid., par. 82-83; Ashmole, "Cyriac of Ancona and the Temple of Hadrian at Cyzicus," 179-91. And more recently Barattolo, "Ciriaco de’ Pizzicolli e il tempio di Proserpina a Cizico: per una nuova lettura della descrizione dell'Anconetano," 103-40. On the ancient site of Cyzicus see also chapter 3 of this dissertation.

\textsuperscript{196} This encounter is recorded in a letter written by Ciriaco to a certain “Danieli Sacerdoti optimo, & amico dulcissimo suo” published in Moroni, \textit{Epigrammata reperta per Illyricum a Cyriaco Anconitano apud Liburniam}, 30. See also Bodnar, \textit{Cyriacus of Ancona and Athens}: 48.
the fifteenth century. Among Venetian office-holders and local intellectuals Ciriaco found in Dalmatia numerous friends who shared with him an interest in antiquities and who had begun to collect, record and study ancient inscriptions. With them Ciriaco visited many Roman sites, as he did in 1418, when he arrived in the Istrian town of Pula, and with the local governor, the Venetian Andrea Contarini, “saw, both inside the city and outside its walls down to the sea, numerous stone tombs, many of whose epitaphs he transcribed.”

Further south along the coast, where Ciriaco often stopped on his way to conduct business in the eastern Mediterranean, he had established other important relationships. Ciriaco stayed for almost a month in Zara (Zadar) with Giorgio Begna (Juraj Benja) in November of 1435. Begna was a prominent scholar of ancient texts, who copied the


199 “viderat et innumera per urbem et extra ad mare usque lapidea sepulchral, quorum pleraque nobilia exceperat epigramma, Andrea Contareno tum pro Venetis praetoria potestate comite curante favitateque.” Scalamonti, Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani: par. 44. On the study of the antiquities of Pola during the fifteenth and sixteenth century see Jasenka Gudelj, "Le antichità di Pola nel Quattro e Cinquecento" (PhD Dissertation, Univeristy of Ca' Foscari Venice, 2008).

200 Already before then Ciriaco and Begna were in contact. Scalamonti (Scalamonti, Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani: par. 78.) reports indeed that Begna was among the first acquaintances to whom Ciriaco wrote to share the news of Cardinal Condulmer’s election to the papacy in 1431. Ciriaco’s account of his journeys of 1435-1436 survives in a seventeenth century printed edition by Carlo Moroni from a now lost manuscript: Moroni, Epigrammata reperta per Illyricum a Cyriaco Anconitano apud Liburniam. See also Bodnar, Cyriacus of Ancona and Athens: 25.
works of the classical authors and collected Greek and Latin inscriptions. The two visited the ancient settlements of Nina (Nin) and Nedinum and recorded inscriptions together. Similar to what Ciriaco was doing with his Italian friends, Begna too had the habit of bestowing on his learned acquaintances his writings and copies of the inscriptions he had gathered. After Ciriaco’s departure from Zara the two men kept in touch through letters in which they exchanged information about their archeological finds. Many other learned men were part of this same antiquarian milieu; among them was the sopracomito Pietro Cippico (Petrus Cepio) of Traù (Trogir). Cippico was an expert transcriber and translator of the Greek authors, of which he had assembled a large library. Like Ciriaco, Cippico collected and transcribed ancient inscriptions during his frequent navigations along the Adriatic shore.

In 1435 Ciriaco was in Ragusa (Dubrovnik), where he was invited to lunch by the Venetian merchant Natale Bon. The sophisticated conversations among the guests about

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201 See Giuseppe Praga, "Il codice marciano di Giorgio Begna e Pietro Cippico," Archivio storico per la Dalmazia 13(1932): 210-18. We do not know Begna’s date of birth, but we know that he made his will in August of 1437 and died soon thereafter.


the horses of Saint Mark’s in Venice and the aforementioned exchange of gifts provide another glimpse into Ciriaco’s learned frequentations along the Dalmatian coast. Sometime later, in 1443-1444, Ciriaco again stopped in Ragusa, and on that occasion he was commissioned by the town’s authorities to compose two public inscriptions to be placed in the Rector’s palace.206

Even when Ciriaco traveled in the most distant territories was he rarely alone. Local governors always welcomed him with generosity and learned men often showed him around the classical remains (fig. 66). In the fall of 1444, for example, Ciriaco explored the island of Imbros with the Greek historian Michael Kritoboulos, as we learn from a letter that Ciriaco wrote to George Scholarios: “together with your good friend, the most learned of the Imbriotes, Michael Kritoboulos, I walked over rocky, steep hills to ancient Imbros which they call ‘the Old Town’.” George Scholarios (ca.1403- ca. 1473) himself was a learned man; he was a theologian and philosopher destined to become Patriarch of Constantinople after its fall to the Turks in 1453.208

The following spring (1445) Ciriaco set off to explore the Cyclades. Upon disembarking on Mykonos he was welcomed by the Venetian Francesco Nani, who was in charge of the island’s administration. In a letter written to his friend Andreolo Giustiniani, Ciriaco revealed his intention of exploring the antiquities of Delos and the

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207 “una tuo cum amicissimo viro et Imbriotum doctissimo, Michaele Critobulo, heri IIII Kalendas Octobres terrestri itinere scrupeos arduosque per colles Imbron ad ipsam venimus vetustam, quam Palaiopolin dicunt.” Bodnar, Cyriac of Ancona Later Travels, 96-97.

208 See a letter written by Ciriaco on September 29, 1444 to Scholarios in ibid., 94-97 and 375-76.
other Cyclades with Francesco: “with his [Francesco Nani’s] help I shall make a point of seeing and investigating everything there [on Delos] and in each of the other neighboring islands.”\textsuperscript{209} Indeed Nani accompanied Ciriaco in his exploration of Delos and the other islands.\textsuperscript{210} They traveled together on board the governor’s flagship, as Ciriaco narrates: “accompanied by the noble Francesco Nani, who has charge of these famous Cycladic islands for Venice as their financial officer, aboard the governor’s flagship, which is equipped with fourteen rowers.”\textsuperscript{211} Francesco Nani had been elected rector of Mykonos and Tinos in 1442.\textsuperscript{212} Soon after his arrival on Mykonos he received authorization and funds from the Serenissima to restore the Rector’s palace on the island. It was probably at this time and because of Nani’s personal initiative that some antique marbles from Delos - one inscription, some fragmentary statues and stelae - were transferred to Mykonos. Here they were recorded by Ciriaco during his visit in 1445.\textsuperscript{213}

Traveling among the many islands of the Aegean Ciriaco often encountered other collectors of antiquities. From Ciriaco’s notes we learn that inscriptions recorded by him were not always found on stones abandoned on the ground or scattered in the landscape in their original settings, but were sometimes housed in private residences. During a stop

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{209} “et omnia quae ibidem et in aliis quibusque adiacentibus insulis, eo iuvante, videre atque perscrutare curabo.” Ibid., 148-49.
\item \textsuperscript{210} On Ciriaco’s visit to Delos see Bodnar S.J., "A Visit to Delos in April, 1445," 210-25.
\item \textsuperscript{211} “cum viro Francisco Nanni has nobiles Cycladum insulas pro Venitis quaeestoria potestate curante et praetoria sua bis septem munita remigibus navi honorifice.” Bodnar, \textit{Cyriac of Ancona Later Travels}, 160-61.
\item \textsuperscript{212} Freddy Thiriet, \textit{Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Romanie} (Paris: Mouton, 1961), 93-94.
\item \textsuperscript{213} Bodnar, \textit{Cyriac of Ancona Later Travels}, 149.
\end{itemize}
in Epirus in 1435, for example, Ciriaco recorded a Greek inscription: “In domo Domini Thomasi Venerij Viri magnifici.”

When Ciriaco visited Athens for the first time in the spring of 1436, a long period of prosperity and tranquility for the city had just ended. In fact, the Duke Antonio Acciaiuoli (1403-1435) had died the previous year. During his reign as Duke of Athens, Acciaiuoli had beautified the ancient city and had enlarged his residence in the Propylaea on the Acropolis. He had also strengthened the city’s relationship with Florence so much that Athens had become an attractive destination for many Tuscans. Florentine merchants were granted free access to the city’s port and we know of many who were attracted by the amenity of Athens. A certain Uberto, writing from Arezzo in 1423, tried to enter in the Acciaiuoli’s service by offering his talents as teacher of jurisprudence, logic, medicine, natural or moral philosophy. The Florentine Niccolò Machiavelli, a relative of the homonym author of The Prince, described Athens in a letter of 1423: “Mio tu non vedesti mai el più belo paese che questo ne la più bela forteza” [Ah, you have never seen a fairer land than this, nor a finer fortress].

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215 Ciriaco was in Athens between April 7 and April 22, 1436. He was back again later in 1444. On Ciriaco’s visits to Athens see Bodnar, *Cyriacus of Ancona and Athens*; Bodnar, "Athens in April 1436. Part I," 96-106; and Edward W. Bodnar, "Athens in April 1436. Part II," *Archaeology*, no. 3 (1970): 188-99.


During his stay in the city Ciriaco was the guest of a certain Antonello Balduino. We do not know much about Antonello except that he very likely lived on the Acropolis, an ideal location for Ciriaco’s archeological excursions.\(^{219}\) As was his habit, Ciriaco took copious notes of inscriptions in his diary during his Athenian visit and sketched the Parthenon and the other antiquities he saw (fig. 67).\(^{220}\) One of the Greek inscriptions transcribed by Ciriaco was copied from the fine base of a statue that he saw in the house of his host Balduino.\(^{221}\) We can easily imagine that Balduino had selected, from the abundance of fragmentary marbles of the Acropolis, some inscriptions for his house, thus showing a certain appreciation for the historical remains around him. The inscribed base mentioned by Ciriaco and once displayed in Balduino’s house still survives to this day on the Acropolis.\(^{222}\)

Another of Ciriaco’s friends in the eastern Mediterranean who collected antique marbles was the Duke of Paros and Naxos, Crusino I, of the Veronese family of the Sommaripa (? -1462), whom Ciriaco mentions in his diary of 1445 as his “old friend.”\(^{223}\)

\(^{219}\) Bodnar, "Athens in April 1436. Part I," 100.


\(^{221}\) Ciriaco recorded the inscription as: “Athenis ad nobilissimam basim in domo Antonelli Balduini. hosp. n.” It is from this reference to Antonello as his host that we deduce that Ciriaco stayed with him. Moroni, Epigrammata reperta per Illyricum a Cyriaco Anconitano apud Liburniam, 94.

\(^{222}\) Bodnar, "Athens in April 1436. Part I," 100.

\(^{223}\) “Cursinum Summaripa, optimum loci principem et veterem nobis amicum” Bodnar, Cyriac of Ancona Later Travels, 166-67.
Ciriaco visited Crusino on Paros more than once and together the two men systematically explored the island. They visited the quarries of the famous local marble, the most celebrated material used in ancient Greek sculpture. Inside the quarries, escorted by servants and walking in torchlight, they explored the deep heart of the mountain and marveled at the grandiosity of the excavations. On Paros Ciriaco recorded in his notebook a relief carved at the entrance of one of the quarries and observed in the port how ships were being loaded with marble destined for Chios.

But Crusino and Ciriaco particularly shared a love for antiquities and together visited the many ancient ruins of the island. They inspected sections of ancient walls made from shining blocks of marble, remains of beautiful temples, fragments of statues, tombs, columns, and inscriptions scattered in the rocky landscape. When they found a group of statues sunken into the ground they “extracted them from mother [earth] not without effort and brought them to light.”

Because of its quarries operating since antiquity Paros was extremely rich in antique marble fragments. Many of these remains were easily transportable and were often carried away from the island together with newly quarried blocks. Ciriaco himself, as we have seen, shipped a marble leg and a head to his friend Andreolo in Chios. Other

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226 “Vidimus et ibidem pleraque eiusdem ad honorem dei simulachra, diversorum bases solo magna ex parte suffossas et e nobis non sine labore ab ipsa matre revulsas et in lucem deductas” Bodnar, Cyriac of Ancona Later Travels, 170-71.
antique marbles from Paros were dispersed farther away. A Greek inscription bearing a dedication to Asklepios et Hygie, for example, at some point in those same years found its way along the Adriatic to Zara.  

Crusino Sommaripa was particularly active in carrying out archeological excavations, and he proudly showed Ciriaco the collection of statues and inscriptions that had been newly unearthed thanks to his own initiative. Ciriaco enthusiastically remarked:

I was absolutely delighted to gaze on life-like faces made of marble and life-like bodies adorned in alien armor [carved] from dazzling stone recently excavated under the very careful supervision of Duke Crusino. I was especially delighted by the discovery of the name of Thrasyxenos, the founder of a once huge temple and of statues and of many kinds of notable works.

After his visit Ciriaco was so fascinated by the island and its noble prince that he composed a poem in honor of Crusino celebrating Paros and its precious marble:

Snow-white Paros, of shining marble,
Glory of the Cyclades in the Aegean sea,
Honor of the great heroes and of the gods,
So that the world is made radiant by you.
   You added luster to Apollo in heaven and to the east, through Cyrus and Heracles, to Indians and Thebans; to Minerva in Athens and to Jove the plains of the Alphaeus; to Alexander the east and to Caesar the west.
   The great prowess of Phidias and Polykleitos Showed how adorned you were by nature; from you, Lysippos and the others drew their splendor; and governed by Minos, Minoa were you called;
   but now Crusino Sommaripa, younger than they, rules you; and the one from Ancona with his kindly pen

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228 “non nullos quoque vivos de marmore vultus vivaque et peregrines armis ornate de lapide nitissimo corpora nuper, Cursino ipso curiosissimo curante principe, defossa perquam iocunde conspexi, et potissime laetus sum Trasyxeni ingenitis olim delubri statuarumque et nobelium plurigenum operum conditoris nomine comperto.” Bodnar, Cyriac of Ancona Later Travels, 208-09.
now praises you, most blessed among the others; and throughout the world, will renew your name so great and joyful.\textsuperscript{229}

The same poetic composition was reworked some time later and adapted by Ciriaco into a celebration of some contemporary artists, namely the sculptors Lorenzo Ghiberti, Donatello and Niccolò Baroncelli.\textsuperscript{230}

Like Crusino Sommaripa, even some members of the Genoese family of the Gattilusio cultivated antiquarian interests in the Levant.\textsuperscript{231} In his \textit{commentaria} of 1444 and 1445 Ciriaco recorded his journeys in the northern Aegean and the Propontis (Sea of

\textsuperscript{229} "Nivea Paros, di marmor candente,/ Cycladum decus equoris Egei,/ honor delli heroi magni et delli dei,/ sicch 'l mondo di te si fa splendente./ Ornasti Apollo in cielo eùllo Oriente/ per Cyro et per Alcide, Indi et Thebei:/ Minerva Athene, et Iove e' champi alphi;/ Alexandro, Austro et Cesar l'Occidente./ Di Phydia et Polycleto il gran valore/ mostró qual fussi da natura ornata; da te Lysippo e gl’altri ebbor splendore et da Minos, Mynoa dicta et guidata;/ ma Cursino Sommaripa, hor ch’ei minore,/ ti regge, et te, tra l’altre piú beata,/ hora con sua penna grata/ l'Anchonitan ti cierchia; et per lo mondo/ rinnoverá il tuo nome almo et iucondo.” The text of this poem is included in a letter to Andreolo Giustiniani written by Ciriaco from Paros in 1445. Ibid., 210-11. For other literary and poetic compositions by Ciriaco in vulgar see Guido Arbizzoni, "Ciriaco e il volgare," in \textit{Ciriaco d'Ancona e la cultura antiquaria dell'Umanesimo. Atti del convegno internazionale di studio}, ed. Gianfranco Paci and Sergio Sconocchia (Reggio Emilia: Edizioni Diabasis, 1998), 217-33.

\textsuperscript{230} This second version, probably dated to 1449, is preserved at cc. 193v-194r of the ms (I-138) in the Biblioteca Capitolare di Treviso, which contains Ciriaco’s biography by Francesco Scalamonti. This version is published in Bergstein, "Donatello's Gattamelata and its Humanist Audience," 850-51; see also Chiarlo, "Gli fragmenti dilla sancta antiquitate': studi antiquari e produzione delle immagini da Ciriaco d'Ancona a Francesco Colonna," 279-80. In the Treviso manuscript at the end of Ciriaco’s poem Felice Feliciano added two verses by his own hand that celebrate the sculptor Jacopino da Tradate. See Laura Cavazzini, "Jacopino da Tradate fra la Milano dei Visconti e la Mantova dei Gonzaga," \textit{Prospettiva} 86 (1997): 24-25.

Marmora), writing about his visits to the territories governed by the Gattilusio family: Samothrace, Ainos, Thasos, and Lesbos.  

When Ciriaco arrived in Samothrace in October 1444, Janos Laskaris, the governor representing the Gattilusio on the island, showed him around. Ciriaco recorded the presence of antique stones and marbles scattered everywhere on the ground, but he also took note of many other fragments, which had been recovered from antique structures and displayed on newly constructed buildings.

In the years between 1431 and 1433 Palamede Gattilusio (ca. 1395-1455) had built in Samothrace a new fortress, which is still partially standing today (fig. 68). Here numerous marble blocks from ancient constructions had been employed as building materials, while others had been displayed for their decorative qualities. We know of some of these pieces and of their fifteenth-century display from Ciriaco’s drawings.  

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232 The original diaries are lost, but Ciriaco’s narrative accounts are known from a series of derivative manuscripts, which have been published in a combined version in Bodnar and Mitchell, *Cyriacus of Ancona’s Journeys in the Propontis and the Northern Aegean, 1444-1445*. See also Miller, "The Gattilusio of Lesbos (1355-1462)," 313-53. The possessions of the Gattilusio over time included also the islands Lemnos, Imbros and Phocaea in Ionia.  

233 For Ciriaco’s visit to Samothrace see Michele Polverari, "Ciriaco a Samotracia," in *Ciriaco d'Ancona e la cultura antiquaria dell'Umanesimo. Atti del convegno internazionale di studio*, ed. Gianfranco Paci and Sergio Sconocchia (Reggio Emilia: Edizioni Diabasis, 1998), 141-44. In his essay Polverari explains the reasons that moved Ciriaco to visit these territories and shows how Ciriaco’s narrative is filled with references to his studies of the classics.  


On the walls of the Gattilusio’s stronghold, for example, Ciriaco saw a bronze medallion with the head of Medusa, which greatly impressed him. Ciriaco immortalized it in one of his drawings with a caption that clarifies its exact location: “Medusae caput aheneum apud Samothraciam ad novam arcem positum” [Bronze head of Medusa in Samothrace set on the new citadel] (fig. 69).236

Similarly, Ciriaco saw a frieze with dancing maidens installed on one of the towers built by Palamede and once again the topographical note on the drawing clarifies the exact location of the fragmentary marble: “Ad arcem antiquae Samothraciae urbem, quam hodie Παλαιοπόλιν vocitant, ad antiquissimam listam marmoream insigni arte persculptam ad turrisque parietem ornatum poenam” [On the citadel of the ancient city of Samothrace, which today they call “the Old City,” on a very ancient marble frieze carved with extraordinary skill and set as a decoration in the wall of the tower] (fig. 70).237 The frieze had been taken from the ruins of the nearby ancient temple of the Great Gods and remained in its Renaissance context until the nineteenth century. It still survives today divided between the archeological museum of Samothrace and the Louvre (fig. 71).238 In Samothrace Ciriaco also found a collection of Greek inscriptions “inside

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236 See Bodnar and Mitchell, *Cyriacus of Ancona's Journeys in the Propontis and the Northern Aegean, 1444-1445*, 3-4. The head of Medusa is reproduced with the same caption in all three of the manuscripts containing copies of Ciriaco’s drawings of the Propontis journey: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Lat. Misc. d. 85, c. 140v, Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Laur. Ms. Ash. 1174, c. 121r, and Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, A. 55 inf, c. 71r.

237 See also ibid., 3-4. The frieze is reproduced with the same caption in two manuscripts: one at Oxford (Bodleian Library, Ms. Lat. Misc. d. 85, cc. 137v-138v), and one in Florence (Biblioteca Laurenziana, Laur. Ms. Ash. 1174, cc. 123v-125r).

the royal gardens by the sea.”239 Palamede Gattilusio was a well-educated man with a distinct interest in the past history of his dominions.240 He loved to hear learned conversations and surrounded himself with scholars.241 It is probably therefore with a conscious interest in the past that he had displayed antique artifacts on his new constructions.

Ciriaco met Palamede personally at his main residence in Ainos (Enos), where he found him with his two sons: Giorgio and Dorino.242 With them and two other Latin noblemen, Francesco Calvo and Cristoforo Dentuto, Ciriaco explored the great antiquities of the Thracian city. They saw in the countryside the tomb of Polydorus, the son of Priam and Hecuba who had been killed by the King of Thrace for his gold. This consisted of a large mound of earth, and when Ciriaco and Cristoforo reached the top on horseback they recited verses from Virgil’s Aeneid together.243 In Ainos Ciriaco also drew an extremely


241 Palamede and also his nephew Francesco, the lord of Thasos, wrote letters for Ciriaco so that he was granted access to the libraries on Mount Athos. Bodnar, Cyriac of Ancona Later Travels, 129.


243 Bodnar, Cyriac of Ancona Later Travels, 107.
ancient relief of Pan that he saw carved on a rock, but the drawing survives only in later copies (fig. 72).244

Palamede’s brother Dorino I was the overlord of the nearby island of Lesbos and Ciriaco was on friendly terms with him as well.245 From the sources it appears that Ciriaco sometimes acted as an intermediary between Dorino and his friend Andreolo Giustiniani.246 Several visits by Ciriaco to Lesbos are confirmed by his surviving letters and by a number of inscriptions that he copied on the island.247 In his notes Ciriaco recorded the specific sites where he copied inscriptions. These topographical indications are of particular interest for us. Many inscriptions, indeed, were collected in Mytilene


245 From Francesco Scalamonti we know that Ciriaco was on Lesbos in 1431 when he inspected the important sites of the island (Scalamonti, *Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani*: par. 86.). Other sojourns are recorded in 1444 (Bodnar, *Cyriac of Ancona Later Travels*, 27.) and in 1446 (ibid., 237.). For Dorino I Gattilusio see Basso, "Gattilusio, Dorino," vol. 52, 605-06. Mytilene at this time see Laura Balletto, "Note e documenti sull'isola di Mitilene al tempo dei Gattilusio," in *Ωι Γατελουζοι τησ Λεσβου. Πρακτικα Συνεδριου 9–11 Σεπτεμβριου 1994 Μυτιληνη*, ed. A. Μαζαρακησ (Athens: Αθήνα, 1996), 307-42.

246 Bodnar, *Cyriac of Ancona Later Travels*, 237. In a letter dated March 13, 1446 Ciriaco wrote to Andreolo from Lesbos: “I went to Mytilene on March 8, revisited Prince Dorino, and gave him your letter and greetings, which he received with joy on his face and his heart.”

247 The antique inscriptions copied by Ciriaco on Lesbos are known from copies preserved in a manuscript in Pavia, see Georg Kaibel, "Cyriaci Anconitani inscriptionum Lesbiaearum sylloge inedita," in *Ephemeris epigraphica* (1875), 1-24. A sylloge including, among others, the inscriptions from Lesbos was found not long ago in Florence by Filippo di Benedetto (Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, ms. Conv. Supp. I.X.30). The Florentine manuscript is a copy by Giovan Battista Bracceschi (who died in 1612) of a sylloge compiled by Ciriaco. The original sylloge contained not only inscriptions but also drawings of ancient sites in Greece, the Aegean islands, Cyprus, Constantinople and Asia Minor and was probably prepared by Ciriaco for some of his learned friends. The later copyist did not reproduce the drawings, but marked the places in which they were included with notes such as “Hic depictus erat.” Di Benedetto, "Un codice epigrafico di Ciriaco ritrovato," 147-67.
inside Dorino’s palace. Ciriaco, for example, saw a marble slab with Greek lettering set in the staircase at the entrance of Dorino’s palace: “Ad regiam Dorini principis aulam in gradibus atticis antquis litteris.” The marble was displayed in such a way that its text was easily visible and readable. Another inscription recorded by Ciriaco was embedded on a fountain in the garden (ad paradisum orto) of Dorino’s wife, the noblewoman Orietta Doria.

One of Dorino’s six children, Francesco III Gattilusio, had just become head of the government of Thasos when Ciriaco visited him at the end of 1444. Ciriaco spent Christmas and New Year’s Eve at Francesco’s court. During his stay he visited the ancient sites of the island under the guidance of the nobleman Carlo Grimaldi.

Francesco Gattilusio had undertaken important restorations on the island, as attested by an inscription dedicated by the inhabitants of Thasos to their ruler, which Ciriaco saw on the ancient walls of the city. In the text Francesco was celebrated as the one who “saw to the restoration of the illustrious island of Thasos and its glorious city, fallen to ruins by the destructive effects of the ages.” Indeed, during Francesco’s renovation campaign antique marbles were prominently displayed in the main port area of the island, with a “marble statue fashioned with remarkable skill” placed at the

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248 Di Benedetto, “Un codice epigrafico di Ciriaco ritrovato,” 150.

249 Ibid., 149.


251 “Thasium insulam illustrem ipsam et civitatem praeclaram longi temporis labe collapsam providentissime pie atque magnaminiter cum omni cultu restituendam curavit.” Ibid., 108-09.
harbor’s entrance (fig. 73). Ciriaco sketched it and wrote in his notebooks: “it is clear from the ancient inscription carved on its base that in times past it served as an effigy of the Council of Thasos.” The statue is now lost, but Ciriaco’s drawing survives in two copies derived from his original.

In the port, near the pier, Ciriaco also saw another marble group, which he carefully described at length, writing:

fashioned with extraordinary skill from a single block of marble [representing] a fierce struggle between a nude man and a lion, from which it appears that the man, gaining the advantage, with both hands thrust around the lion’s neck and forcefully joined together, is [in the act of] strangling the broken beast to death.

The sculpture does not survive today, but its display in the harbor attests to the importance of the cult of Heracles that had been brought to the island from Paros in the 7th century B.C. Before leaving the island, as after his visit to Paros, Ciriaco felt

252 “Statua marmorea et eximia arte fabrefacta.” Ibid., 110-11.


254 One is in Oxford (Bodleian Library, Ms. Lat. Misc. d. 85, c. 139v) and the other in Florence (Biblioteca Laurenziana, Laur. Ms. Ash. 1174, c. 119v). Bodnar and Mitchell, Cyriacus of Ancona's Journeys in the Propontis and the Northern Aegean, 1444-1445, 3-4.


256 On the statue recorded by Ciriaco see Di Benedetto, "Il punto su alcune questioni riguardanti Ciriaco," 25. On the cult of Heracles on Thasos see Birgitta Bergquist, Herakles on Thasos (Uppsala: University of Uppsala, 1973).
inspired to compose a long inscription and poem in honor of his learned host Francesco Gattilusio.257

Ciriaco’s friends in Dalmatia, Athens, Paros, Lesbos, and Thasos lived surrounded by antique remains just as their contemporaries did in Rome.258 Thus it is important to acknowledge how, through their antiquarian activities, these early collectors in the eastern Mediterranean participated in the Renaissance interest in antiquity. As we have seen, some of the antique artifacts surviving on the Mediterranean islands were often re-used simply as building materials while others were re-employed in new ways; the Gattilusio, for example, readapted ancient sarcophagi for their funerary monuments.259 Yet many other pieces were rescued from ruin to be displayed on the walls of modern buildings as precious relics of the past. Similar displays of antique fragments were visible at that time also along the streets of Rome and need to be accounted as part of the slow process whereby in the Renaissance ancient marbles changed their status from abandoned ruins to collectors’ items.260

Ciriaco was a pioneer. Like Buondelmonti, he had found a new reason to travel to the eastern Mediterranean: the search for the classical past. After him, numerous

257 Bodnar, Cyriac of Ancona Later Travels, 135-41.


individuals began to travel east no longer exclusively for commercial, diplomatic or religious reasons, but also motivated by a new cultural curiosity that the Anconitan had helped to spark. The Mediterranean world in which Ciriaco had traveled, recording ruins and rescuing fragments, was about to change permanently. When, in 1453, Constantinople fell under the advance of the Turks, numerous intellectuals in the west feared that the catastrophe marked the end of ancient Greek culture. Western and eastern intellectuals alike were particularly worried about the fate of the many manuscripts housed in the libraries of Byzantium. However, while the city did endure great losses of people, books and precious objects, numerous ancient manuscripts and artifacts survived intact. Soon after the Byzantine Empire’s demise, as we shall see, trade and travel between west and east resumed; pilgrims, merchants, diplomats, intellectuals and antiquarians continued to visit the regions of the eastern Mediterranean, often carrying back home precious antique treasures.
CHAPTER 3
HUNTING FOR ANTIQUITIES

After the 1470s the curtain fell over Greek archaeological studies for nearly a century. This was mainly due to the Turkish domination of the Greek world; but not entirely so, since travel in those lands never ceased and some Greek islands - Rhodes, Cyprus, and Crete among them - remained in Christian hands for some time, so that perhaps the principal cause was apathy among scholars rather than impossibility of access to the remains of ancient Greece.


This chapter presents an alternative narrative. It follows the tracks of many individuals who, with various degrees of knowledge and learning, went hunting for antiquities in the eastern Mediterranean during those 100 years – between 1470 and 1570 - that according to Weiss were marked by apathy. It also shows how the Ottomans, occupying the territories bordering the eastern Mediterranean, not only did not completely prevent western access to the ancient Greek sites, but became themselves involved in the trade of antiquities.

RENAISSANCE COLLECTORS AFTER THE FALL OF CONSTANTINOPLE

By the time he became Pope as Paul II in 1464, the Venetian Pietro Barbo (1417-1471) had already assembled one of the most important collections of antiquities in all of Europe (fig. 74). An inventory drawn up in 1457 sheds light on the contents of the

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collection, which included more than three thousand objects, such as small (presumably antique) bronzes, ancient coins, carved gems and cameos, tapestries, ivories and Byzantine icons. Although most of the objects in Barbo’s collection cannot be identified today, several pieces are well known, including the sardonyx-agate cup known today as the *Tazza Farnese* (fig. 1) and the carnelian intaglio that was named *Sigillo di Nerone* (fig. 75).

Some of the objects included in the inventory, which is only a partial list of the Cardinal’s possessions, had certainly been imported from the eastern Mediterranean. This is, for example, the case with the more than thirty religious images, products of Byzantine art, either painted or executed in micro-mosaic that are listed in the document as “icona greca.” The exact provenance of the numerous other items is, unfortunately, not equally certain. We know, however, that Barbo was extremely resourceful when it came to procuring antique objects. A letter of 1455 written by Carlo de’ Medici (1428-1492), natural son of Cosimo, to his brother Giovanni is revealing in this sense:

> In these days I had bought almost 30 very good silver coins from a boy of Pisanello, who had just died. I do not know how, but monsignor of San Marco

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3 The inventory is published in Eugène Müntz, *Les Arts a la cour des papes pendant le XV et le XVI siècle* (Paris: E. Thorin, 1879), 181-287. For the *Tazza Farnese*, see my introduction above.

4 Both of these pieces have a long collecting history and upon Barbo’s death passed into Lorenzo de’ Medici’s collection. See Laurie S. Fusco and Gino Corti, *Lorenzo de’ Medici, Collector and Antiquarian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 6-10 and 124-27.


6 Müntz, *Les Arts a la cour des papes pendant le XV et le XVI siècle*: 202-05.
[Barbo] knew it and when he met me one day in Saint Apostle he took me by the hand and did not let me go until we were in his room; and here he took everything I had in my pockets, that between rings, seals, and money he took from me a value of 20 florins and never wanted to give it back to me.  

Yet, Barbo also had more orthodox ways of obtaining antiquities. From the early 1450s and continuing throughout his life Barbo was in touch with both professional merchants and personal friends who helped him increase his collection with antique objects procured from outside Rome and from well beyond the Italian peninsula.  

The correspondence between Barbo and his friend the Venetian Maffeo Vallaresso (? -1496), Archbishop of Zara (now Zadar), in the 1450s touches on several occasions upon the procurement of antiquities. In 1451, writing from Dalmatia, Vallaresso lamented the local scarcity of small antique objects such as “medaiis” [medals] and “corniolis” [carved gems] that he had been trying to procure for his friend Barbo. Some years later, however, the Archbishop was able to send from Padua...

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7 “Io avevo a questi dì comprate circa di 30 medaglie d’ariento molto buone da uno garzone del Pisanello, che morì a questi dì. Non so come monsignor di sancto Marco lo seppe e trovandomi un dì in sancto Apostolo mi prese per mano e mai me stacò che lui m’ebbe condotto in camera sua; et quivi toltomi ciò che io avevo nelle iscarselle, che tra anelli e sugelli e denari mi tols the valore xx fiorini et mai me le vole rendere” Vittorio Rossi, “L’indole e gli studi di Giovanni di Cosimo de’ Medici,” Rendiconti dell’Accademia dei Lincei, classe di scienze morali, storiche e filosofiche 2 (1893): 130.


eighteen ancient gold coins together with some silver ones and with “certis corniolis” to Barbo in Rome.\footnote{Letter dated December 7, 1459 written by Maffeo Vallaresso from Padua to Pietro Barbo: “Mitto Reverendissime D. V. aliquos nummos antiquitatis superstites, videlicet Medalias aureas num. 18., nonnullas quoque argentaeas, cum certis Corniolis.” Quoted in Gaetano Marini, Degli Archiatri Pontifici (Rome: Stamperia Pagliarini, 1784), 198, note 6.}

The account-books of the papal expenses, preserved in the Vatican archives, document Barbo’s conspicuous investment in jewels and other precious objects after his election to the papacy. Many of Barbo’s suppliers were merchants and jewelers from his native Venice. The records register, for example, the names of “Luca Paolo de Aman de Venetiis,” “Marco de Tomasiis merchanti et zoilerio Veneto,” and “Bartolomeo de Veneciis aurifici.”\footnote{Giuseppe Zippel, ed. Le vite di Paolo II di Gaspare da Verona e Michele Canensi (Città di Castello: S. Lapi, 1904), 188-90.} One of the merchants whose name consistently recurs in the papal records next to substantial bills is that of the intriguing Venetian jeweler and antiquarian Domenico di Piero (1406-1497).\footnote{See the short biographic note in Michel Hochmann, Rosella Lauber, and Stefania Mason, eds., Il collezionismo d'arte a Venezia. Dalle origini al Cinquecento (Venice: Marsilio, 2008), 269-70.} Domenico was an extremely wealthy and successful merchant who by the end of his life had amassed a huge fortune in cash, precious objects and real estate. Throughout his life the jeweler served an international clientele, among whom were Lorenzo and Giovanni de’ Medici in Florence, the Este in Ferrara, King Matthias Corvinus and his wife Beatrice in Hungary, King Ferdinand in Spain, and Giovanni Sforza in Pesaro. Domenico sold to his clients rare, antique, and exotic luxury goods of all sorts, many of which were procured in the eastern Mediterranean. From the jeweler’s will we learn that his nephew, Giorgio, had managed Domenico’s commercial
business in Damascus for thirty-three years. But Paul II was also able to obtain antique 
collectables of eastern provenance from merchants active on the other shore of the Italian 
peninsula, such as the Genoese Eliano Spinola, encountered in a previous chapter.

It has been suggested how another important collection formed in those years, that 
of Cardinal Lodovico Trevisan (1401-1465), might also have been enriched with pieces 
coming directly from the eastern Mediterranean (fig. 76). The Cardinal was a friend of 
Ciriaco d’Ancona, who referred to him as “vetustarum rerum amatorem” [lover of 
ancient things] and was in touch with the Florentine collector Niccolò Niccoli from 
whom he acquired an antique chalcedony intaglio representing Diomedes and the 
Palladium (fig. 77). Trevisan travelled frequently to the eastern Mediterranean 
conducting military campaigns against the Turks in his capacity as Captain General of the 
Church.

14 A portion of Domenico di Piero’s will was published by Paolo Paoletti, L'architettura e la 
scultura del Rinascimento a Venezia, ricerche storico-artistiche (Venice: Ongania-Naya, 1893- 
1897), 134-35. The will is preserved in Venice (ASVe, Notarile, Testamenti, Francesco 
Malipiede, n. 85, n. 86, n. 87, and n. 88) and includes several codicils. Despite the fact that art 
historians working on the Italian Renaissance often mention Domenico di Piero in their works, he 
has not been the object of a through investigation. I plan to work on this jeweler in one of my 
future projects.

15 See chapter 1 of this dissertation.

Some of the objects owned by Trevisan passed later into Barbo’s collection.

17 For some of Trevisan’s holdings see Francesco Caglioti and Davide Gasparotto, "Lorenzo 
Ghiberti, il 'Sigillo di Nerone' e le origini della placchetta 'antiquaria'," Prospettiva 85 (1997): 2- 
38. The gem is known today only from impressions and later copies, but it was highly esteemed 
during the Renaissance.

18 On Ciriaco and Trevisan see Lorenzo Mehus, ed. Kyriaci Anconitani Itinerarium Nunc Primum 
ex Ms. Cod. in Lucem Erutum ex Bibli. Illus. Clarissimique Baronis Philippi Stosch (Florence: 
Joannis Pauli Giovannelli, 1742), 77-80. See also Pio Paschini, Lodovico Cardinal Camerlengo 
(+1465) (Rome: Facultas Theologica Pontificii Athenaei Lateranensis, 1939), 33.
Pietro Barbo’s collection was assembled at a time when the major historical events that resulted in the fall of the Byzantine Empire permanently reshaped the dynamics between Europe and the regions facing the eastern Mediterranean. These events are reflected in the Cardinal’s collection and influenced the character of his holdings. In 1438 and 1439 the twenty-one year old Barbo took part in the Council of Florence with his uncle Pope Eugenius IV. It has been argued how it was probably on this occasion that Barbo first developed an appreciation for precious Byzantine artifacts like the Dittico Queriniano that appear so prominently in the inventory of 1457 (fig. 78). It is worth mentioning, however, that in his youth Barbo had a Greek tutor, as he attended the private school established in Venice by the Cretan George of Trebizond (1395-1486).

The inventory of Barbo’s collection was written only a few years after Constantinople had fallen into Turkish hands, and several intrinsic characteristics of the document have suggested that the largest portion of Byzantine objects had entered Barbo’s collection after 1453. It is very likely that Barbo obtained many of his small antiquities at this time, together with icons and other Byzantine artifacts. An epigram recorded in a manuscript of Claude Bellièvre connects Barbo’s collecting activities even more explicitly with the advancement of the Ottomans in the eastern Mediterranean. The short poem concerns a gold tapestry representing Constantine and his mother:


After the Constantinian city was captured by the impious Empire of the Turks, the Venetian Cardinal Father Pietro of the Barbo family, So that this work would not be dispersed, Acquired these divine figures from the loathsome enemy, And he restored their very beautiful, yet corrupted form, Reweaving it with yellow gold.22

While many antique and Byzantine treasures and manuscripts perished in the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople, a good number of items were transferred to the west. The story of Barbo’s collection shows clearly that while Byzantium’s demise on the one hand made less accessible many places once familiar to western travelers and interrupted the established trading relationships between Constantinople and the west, it also caused a rapid dispersion of many antique and medieval objects that found common refuge in the collections of the west. A wealth of relics and objects were brought along by Greek refugees, while other objects became available to merchants.23 For the second time, after the sack of the Byzantium by the crusaders in 1204, the west received a conspicuous influx of antique materials from the eastern capital.24

22 Published in the English translation from the Latin in Christian, Empire without End: Antiquities Collections in Renaissance Rome, c. 1350-1527: 94. According to Ludwig Pastor, Barbo was especially sensitive to the destiny of people who fled the Turks. He writes: “Almost every page of the account books of his reign furnishes documentary proof of his magnificent benevolence. Entry after entry records alms bestowed on needy widows and maidens, on nobles, on invalids or fugitives from the countries which had fallen under Turkish domination, from Hungary, and from the East.” Ludwig Pastor, The history of the Popes from the close of the Middle Ages (Consortium Books, 1977), IV, 28.

23 For the objects brought into Italy by Greek refugees it is important to consider the role played, for instance, by Cardinal Bessarion, see Fabrizio Lollini, "Bessarione e Perotti diffusori della cultura figurativa bizantina," Studi umanistici piceni 11 (1991): 127-42.

24 See for example the account of the objects imported into Venice after the fourth crusade in Marilyn Caldwell Perry, “The Public Display of Antique Sculpture in Venice 1200-1600” (PhD Dissertation, University of London, 1975), 7-35.
The death of Paul II coincides with the beginning of the “era of collecting” in early modern Rome.\(^{25}\) Indeed, during the last thirty years of the fifteenth century collections of antiquities began to proliferate everywhere in Italy. Rome’s soil continued to yield numerous classical objects, and a prosperous market for antiquities rapidly expanded in the city. When, at the end of the sixteenth century, Flaminio Vacca (1538-1605) looked back to the most memorable discoveries that happened during his lifetime he could remember more than one hundred episodes of ancient marbles unearthed from the soil of Rome.\(^{26}\) Vacca’s list comprises the famous discovery of the Laocoön in 1506, but also many smaller incidents when antique treasures were brought to light in the \textit{vigne} of Cardinals and noblemen.

Together with the objects found in Roman sites on the Italian peninsula the market of antiquities in Venice in particular, but also in other Italian centers, was supplied with items arriving from ancient Greece.

\textbf{ANTIQUE OBJECTS FROM GREECE IN THE LORENZO DE’ MEDICI COLLECTION}

In the last years of the fifteenth century Lorenzo de’ Medici (1449-1492), unelected leader of the Republic of Florence, was one of the most notable collectors of antiquities in Italy (fig. 79).\(^{27}\) Lorenzo had inherited the collection of antique objects assembled by his grandfather and father to which, when he was only sixteen years old, he


\(^{27}\) On Lorenzo de Medici as a collector see Fusco and Corti, \textit{Lorenzo de’ Medici, Collector and Antiquarian}. 
began to add other items. Lorenzo continued throughout his life to acquire antique collectables, assembling a vast treasure consisting both of large sculptures and especially of small precious objects such as coins, gems and hard stone vases. Among Lorenzo’s most notable purchases was a large portion of Pietro Barbo’s collection that Sixtus IV had dispersed immediately after his predecessor’s death.28

Lorenzo’s collection was remarkable for its contents, and its display was meant to impress those visiting his palace on the Via Larga in Florence. The large marble statuary was placed in the courtyard of the palace and in the Medici’s sculpture garden at San Marco – the “giardin de’ Medici di San Marco,” as it was mentioned by Condivi.29 Smaller objects were treasured in Lorenzo’s schrittoio.30 In the years following Lorenzo’s death the collection was dispersed, but we are informed about its contents and about the ways in which it was progressively assembled by letters, inventories and other archival documents that survive to this day.31

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28 In his Ricordi Lorenzo wrote: “Di settembre 1471 fui eletto ambasciatore a Roma per l’incoronazione di Papa Sisto, dove fui molto onorato, e di quindi portai le due teste di marmot antiche delle immagini di Augusto e Agrippa, le quali mi donò detto Papa Sisto, e più portai la scudella nostra di calcedonio intagliata con molti altri cammei e medaglie che si comprarono allora, fra le alter il calcedonio.” Quoted in English in ibid., 6.


30 For the vases and antique gems in the schrittoio see Il Tesoro. The term “schrittoio” is used in an inventory of 1492 of Lorenzo’s objects. See Fusco and Corti, Lorenzo de' Medici, Collector and Antiquarian: 378-83.

The largest portion of the antique objects in the Medici collection was acquired in Italy. Many pieces came from Naples, but even more from Rome where both the business transactions of the Medici bank and the activities of the dealer Giovanni Ciampolini played an important part in supplying Lorenzo. Scattered archival evidence attests, however, how antiquities arrived in the Medici collection also directly from Greece.

According to Niccolò Valori, a long-desired bust of the ancient philosopher Plato, which had just been recovered in Athens, was given to Lorenzo by a certain Girolamo Rossi from Pistoia. In his biography of Lorenzo, the *Laurentii Medices Vita* written at the beginning of the sixteenth century, Valori narrates:

And Lorenzo was such a studious lover of antiquity that he made every effort to obtain either books or images of antique subjects. And having news that someone had found a statue and portrait of Plato, he could not find peace until, thanks to Gerolamo Rossi from Pistoia, he was presented with the very statue of Plato that had been found among the ruins of the philosopher’s academy. That statue, according to Marsilio, was so dear to him that the joy he showed when it was actually given to him was visible.32

Apparently the marble not only filled Lorenzo with joy, but also became an object of veneration for the philosopher Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499). A malevolent tale from Savonarola’s circle narrates that Ficino “di continuo tena una lamapada accesa dinanzi...”

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32 “E tanto fu Lorenzo della antiquità studioso et amatore che, o libri o imagini che quella rappresentassino, con ogni studio cercava avere presso di sé. E venendogli notizia essersi trovata la statua et imagine di Platone, mai quietò per insino a tanto che per opera di Ieronimo Roscio, pistoriense, quella propria gli fu presentata, che poco innanzi, nelle ruine della sua Academia s’era ritrovata. La quale, diceva Marsilio, che tanta li fu cara che mirabile fu la letizia che lui dimostrò, quando quella imagine gli fu attualmente innanzi offerta.” Niccolò Valori, *Vita di Lorenzo de’ Medici* (Vicenza: Accademia Olimpica, 1991), 104. Lorenzo’s biography was written by Niccolò Valori in Latin, and later was translated into Italian by his son Filippo. This statue is only mentioned in passing by Fusco and Corti, *Lorenzo de’ Medici, Collector and Antiquarian*: doc. 208, who cite a seventeenth century account by Michelangelo Salvi, *Delle Historie di Pistoia e fazioni d’Italia* (Pistoia: Pier Antonio Fortunati, 1657). Evidently misinterpreting Valori’s text, Salvi believed that the head of Plato had been found in Pistoia among the ruins of an ancient academy that Rossi had re-established.
all’immagine di Platone, tanto li era affezionato” [always kept a light on in front of Plato’s image, so much was he devoted to him].

The antique bust that had arrived in Florence and was allegedly recognized as Plato’s portrait has yet to be identified with certainty among the surviving marbles once in the Medici’s collection. A probable candidate, however, is an antique marble today in the Uffizi whose whereabouts before 1676 are unfortunately unknown (fig. 80). To this antique bust had been added during the Renaissance a pedestal with the Greek inscription “ΠΛΑΤΩΝ” [Platon] which was meant to unequivocally sanction the marble’s identity. In all likelihood, in order to satisfy Lorenzo’s desire to own the bust of Plato, a forgery had been produced. An antique marble bust, which might have arrived in Italy from Greece, had been recognized as the portrait of the ancient philosopher, equipped with a label that made its identity clear and with a prestigious pedigree: a provenance from the very same ruins of Plato’s Academy in Athens. The fabricator of this forgery remains


36 Although the actual archeological site of Plato’s academy in Athens was not known in the Renaissance, Italian humanists were well acquainted with the texts of the ancient authors describing Plato’s school. Luigi Beschi, "Antiquarian Research in Greece during the Renaissance: Travelers and Collectors," in In the Light of Apollo: Italian Renaissance and Greece (Cisinello Balsamo: Silvana, 2003), 49. Moreover we know from an anonymous Greek description of Athens dated around 1460 that at that time some of the ancient ruins in the city were identified
unknown, but the story narrated by Valori brings to light the figure of Girolamo de Rossi, a fascinating individual in the circle of Lorenzo.

Girolamo de Rossi (c. 1445-1517) was a nobleman from Pistoia, who resided for more than twenty years, until around 1495, in Venice. De Rossi was an intimate friend of Marsilio Ficino who, in a letter of 1479, addressed him as “his beloved Girolamo Rossi” and to whom he dedicated the twelfth book of his letters. According to Ficino himself, de Rossi played a fundamental part in the publication of the first edition of his correspondence published in Venice in 1495. In the preface to the letters Ficino wrote:

My letters: each time at my behest you greet my friends you will also offer up immortal greetings to our dearest friend Girolamo Rossi. For I had fathered you mortal; soon to die by what fate I know not. But Girolamo, a man noted for his piety, has recently caused you to be born again, I hope to immortal life.

What brought de Rossi to Venice is not known in detail, but it appears that in the city he conducted business activities in association with the merchant Giovanni de’ Martini. De Rossi lived in de Martini’s palace, in the parish of San Geremia, and after the latter’s premature death, in 1475, continued to manage his finances and business. Giovanni de’ Martini was a cittadino with an important business in textiles which he conducted with the site of the philosopher’s academy. See Léon Laborde, Athènes aux XVe, XVIe et XVIIe siècles, 2 vols. (Paris: J. Renouard et cie, 1854), I, 17 and the French translation at page 20.


between Venice and Florence. But de Martini’s affairs extended beyond Italy, to Cyprus and Rhodes in the eastern Mediterranean, where the family owned properties. In his last will, drawn up in 1475, Giovanni de’ Martini named de Rossi among his executors and left him a bequest of 1,000 ducats. With the same act de’ Martini commissioned the construction and decoration of a family chapel in the church of San Giobbe in Venice, a structure which survives to this day with its strikingly Tuscan decoration (fig. 81).

Because of his mercantile activities, Girolamo de Rossi often travelled between Venice, Rome, Naples and Florence. In 1482, for example, he is documented in Florence “pe’ Martini di Vinegia a requisitione di Bernardo Rucellai.” De Rossi’s business was presumably very successful, since upon his return to Tuscany, in the 1490s, on several occasions he generously provided conspicuous financial endowments to the Dominican Order. In those same years de Rossi became a faithful advocate of Savonarola’s cause, so much so that in 1504, at the advanced age of sixty, he himself entered the Order in the monastery of San Marco in Florence.

During the years spent in Venice (1475-82), de Rossi had been in contact not only with successful Tuscan merchants, but also with prominent local humanists such as Ermolao Barbaro, who is mentioned in the correspondence between de Rossi and Marsilio Ficino. De Rossi himself engaged in cultural and artistic endeavors. It was in


42 See ibid., 313.


44 Ibid., 32. See also Armando F. Verde and Domenico Corsi, eds., La “cronaca” del Convento Domenicano di S. Romano di Lucca (Pistoia: 1990), 216.
fact in Venice that he had an impressive number of printed books decorated by local miniaturists. Many of his illuminated volumes survive to this day (fig. 82). They were all printed in the 1470s and 1480s and bear decorated frontispieces and historiated initials executed with ink and wash by two of the most productive illuminators active in Venice at the time: the so-called Pico Master and the Master of the Seven Virtues. These decorations reveal Rossi’s refined tastes and show a penchant for classical and archeological motives (fig. 83).

In light of de Rossi’s cultural interests and mercantile connections it is all the more plausible that he had the opportunity to procure in Venice the antique marble head of Plato from Greece for Lorenzo. We may also remember that while de Rossi was living in Venice the painter Gentile Bellini (1429-1507) owned another head believed to be Plato’s portrait. The marble, probably once in Jacopo Bellini’s workshop, had gained a certain fame in the city and had been mentioned by the poet Pietro Valeriano in one of his epigrams: “Ad illud Antipatri De Platone – Nos des marmoreo eius capite apud Bellinos Venetiis.” After Bellini’s death the marble was offered for sale to Isabella d’Este, who, despite the poor condition of the damaged head and its uncertain identity, bought it for fifteen ducats.

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Other antiquities from Greece arrived in Lorenzo de Medici’s collection through Venice. In the summer of 1491 Angelo Poliziano and Pico della Mirandola traveled to northern Italy in search of rare manuscripts for Lorenzo’s library, while also cultivating diplomatic relationships.\textsuperscript{50} In a letter from Venice Poliziano wrote:

> The said messer Zaccaria [Barbaro] showed me this morning a very ancient clay vase, which had just been sent to him from Greece; and he told me that if I thought it would please you, he would gladly send it to you along with two other small vases also made of clay. I told him that I believed that the object was truly worthy of your Majesty and therefore it will be yours. Tomorrow morning I will have the crate made and I will ship it with care. I think you do not have such a beautiful one of this kind. It is almost three spans high and four across.\textsuperscript{51}

Lorenzo probably had a small collection of antique terracotta vases, for Poliziano compares the vase offered by Zaccaria Barbaro to other similar ones in Lorenzo’s possession. There is documentary evidence of at least one other Greek vase in the Medici collection that was given to Lorenzo’s forbears by a certain Leonardo Vernacci.\textsuperscript{52}

Throughout his lifetime Lorenzo devoted great efforts to assemble a rich library of Greek volumes.\textsuperscript{53} Although he could not personally read them, Lorenzo acquired and commissioned magnificent manuscript copies of Hellenistic poetry, of religious and


\textsuperscript{51} “Un bellissimo vaso di terra antiquissimo mi mostrò stamattina detto messer Zaccheria, el quale nuovamente di Grecia gli è stato mandato: mi disse che se ‘l credessi vi piacessi, volentieri ve lo manderebbe, con altri due vasetti pur di terra. Io dissi che mi pareva proprio cosa da V.M.; et tandem sarà vostro. Domattina fari fare la cassetta, e manderallo con diligenzia. Credo non ne abbia uno si bello in eo genere: è presso che tre spanne alto e quattro largo.” Ibid., 145.

\textsuperscript{52} Fusco and Corti, Lorenzo de' Medici, Collector and Antiquarian: 73.

philosophical texts by the ancient Greek authors. This gathering of Greek codices helped to create an aura of fame and intellectual prestige around Lorenzo among his contemporaries, as stated clearly by Angelo Poliziano, who wrote in a letter: “that enterprise of writing Greek books and the favor you bestow on the learned brings you so much and universal goodwill as no man has enjoyed for years.” What is relevant here is that this quest for books also brought antique objects into Lorenzo’s hands.

The two expeditions to Greece by Janus Lascaris (1445-1535) to procure Greek volumes for the Medici library and to conduct diplomatic and political missions are well known. During those two trips in 1490 and 1491, Lascaris procured more than two hundred volumes. At the end of his second mission, in the spring of 1492, in Candia, on the island of Crete, Lascaris signed a contract to purchase a group of forty-one Greek volumes from the physician Niccolò di Iacopo da Siena. A copy of the document, which includes a detailed list of the books, is preserved in Florence. Little attention has been paid by scholars to the last item on the list, which is not a manuscript, but a marble statue: “Una statua marmorea, de qua fuit facta mentio in indice librorum qui fuit missus Florentie” [A marble statue which was mentioned in the list of books sent to Florence].

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54 Ibid. II, 736.


56 Enea Piccolomini, "Due documenti relativi ad acquisti di codici greci, fatti da Giovanni Lascaris per conto di Lorenzo de' Medici," Rivista di Filologia d'istruzione classica 2 (1874): 401-23.

57 “Una statua marmorea, de qua fuit facta mentio in indice librorum qui fuit missus Florentie.” Ibid., 423.
Unfortunately, both the books and the statue arrived in Florence only after Lorenzo’s premature death in 1492.

Throughout the entire fifteenth century and for many years afterwards, even when collecting antiquities was no longer exclusively an activity of the humanists, antique objects often reached the Italian peninsula from the eastern Mediterranean in consignments of manuscripts. In 1567, for example, we find the Venetian Daniele Barbaro (1514-1570), writing to his friend Francesco Barozzi (1537-1604) in Crete, hoping to receive from him books and antiquities:

I would be grateful if you could bring me books about the Holy Scripture such as Origen, Hippolito martyr, Theophilus, Cyril, and other holy doctors. When you arrive (may God let you arrive soon) I will reimburse you for the expense. Similarly, if you happen to find some medals or beautiful marble.58

Similarly, in 1595, Niccolò Manasse, the man responsible for the Aldine press in Venice, while trying to sell to the Gonzaga of Mantua books and manuscripts also offered antique bronze statuettes “di buona mano et tenute antiche, che così io le stimo” [made by a good master and believed to be antique, so I think].59

With the help of his agents and through a large circle of acquaintances Lorenzo was able to add to his collections a trove of books and antique objects directly imported from Greece. These items fit in perfectly with Lorenzo’s interest in the study of the

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philosophy and the doctrines of the ancient Greek world. Travelers returning to Florence from journeys in the eastern Mediterranean often recounted experiences that sparked the curiosity of local intellectuals and humanists about what survived of ancient Greece. It has even been suggested that the architecture of Lorenzo’s villa at Poggio a Caiano was probably influenced by the structure of the palace built by the Florentine Acciaiuoli in the Propylaea of the Acropolis at Athens (fig. 84). After Lorenzo’s death letters addressed by Bernardo Michelozzi and Bonsignore Bonsignori to Niccolò Michelozzi in Florence reporting their explorations in the east were often read aloud to Ficino and other members of the Florentine intellectual community.

A SHORT DIGRESSION: COLLECTING ANTIQUE VASES IN THE RENAISSANCE

Scholarly accounts of the interest in collecting antique pottery in Italy during the Renaissance have usually dealt with material dug up locally from Etruscan tombs. An early source, Ristoro d’Arezzo, writing at the end of the thirteenth century, attests how

60 On Hellenism in Florence see Chastel, Art et humanisme à Florence au temps de Laurent le Magnifique: études sur la Renaissance et l'humanisme platonicien: 184-86.

61 Already around 1433 when Ciraco d’Ancona arrived in Florence he visited humanists and artists describing his travels to the east. According to Francesco Scalamonti, Niccolo Niccoli was particularly intrigued by Ciriacos account of the ruins of Cyzicus. See Francesco Scalamonti, Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1996), 69.


ancient fragmentary vases were found in the environs of Arezzo and treasured by collectors for their extraordinary craftsmanship.65 In Ristoro’s time and throughout the Renaissance, numerous examples of antique wares were found in Tuscany and central Italy and gathered by early modern collectors.66 Several studies have shown how artists active in central and northern Italy during the fifteenth century, and even before, occasionally borrowed motifs from ancient pottery in their artworks, suggesting that antique painted vases were available to painters and sculptors at that time.67

Poliziano’s reference to an antique terracotta vase from Greece that he procured for Lorenzo’s collection is a rare example of primary source documentation attesting to the arrival of ancient vases, in particular terracotta ones, in Italy from the eastern Mediterranean during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.68 In general the story of


68 Scholars have rarely addressed the topic of collecting antique vases in the Renaissance period. The only early modern collection that has been studied with attention is Lorenzo de’ Medici’s trove of precious hard stone vessels. On this collection see for example the catalogue Detlef Heikamp, ed. *Il Tesoro di Lorenzo il Magnifico. I vasi* (Florence: Sansoni, 1973). On other antique hard stone vases in Rome and Florence see Carlo Gasparri, "Vasi antichi in pietra dura a Firenze e Roma," *Prospettiva* 19 (1979): 4-13.
western interest in Greek vases is told beginning only with the eighteenth century.69 Indeed, at that time major archeological finds both in southern Italy and in Greece brought to light large quantities of ancient painted pottery, thereby giving birth to interest in collecting them and driving systematic study.70

Writing in 1972 about Greek vases, Robert Manuel Cook maintained that: “avid though they were for other kinds of antiques, it is clear that writers and collectors, at least till the middle of the seventeenth century, had generally no interest in ancient painted pottery.”71 It is possible, however, to collect scattered archival and visual evidence that attests how ancient vases from Greece were already circulating among Italian collectors during the Renaissance and that demonstrates how a taste for various kinds of antique painted pottery existed long before the seventeenth century.

We know from Vasari that, some decades before Lorenzo de Medici’s time, Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378-1455) owned in Florence a number of “vases procured from Greece at no small cost.”72 One of them was made of marble, with Francesco Albertini carefully describing it as: “uno vaso grande marmoreo intagliato bellissimo il quale Lorenzo Ghiberti fece portare di Grecia, cosa bellissima” [a large extremely beautiful


carved marble vase that Lorenzo Ghiberti had had shipped from Greece, a very beautiful object.\textsuperscript{73} But whether the other pieces in Ghiberti’s possession were made of marble, terracotta or other materials we do not know.

A painting by Vittore Carpaccio, \textit{The Vision of Saint Augustine}, and a drawing by Lorenzo Lotto, \textit{An Ecclesiastic in his Study}, provide visual evidence of the presence of painted terracotta pottery in northern Italian collections in the first decades of the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{74} Among the objects displayed on the cornice running along the walls of Saint Augustine’s study, Carpaccio painted some small black-figured vases. These have been variously identified as either examples of the geometric Apulian style or more generally as Greek wares (fig. 85).\textsuperscript{75} The vases drawn by Lorenzo Lotto on the loaded shelves behind the ecclesiastic’s desk also display a certain similarity with the shapes of larger Greek vessels (fig. 86).

Among the collections visited by Marcantonio Michiel at the beginning of the sixteenth century in Padua and Venice and described in his \textit{Notizia}, at least four

\textsuperscript{73} Francesco Albertini, \textit{Memoriale di molte statue e pitture della città di Firenze (1510)} (Florence: Cellini, 1863), 12.


contained examples of antique pottery. In Padua, in the house of Leonico Tomeo, Michiel saw antique terracotta vases: “vasi di terra,” gathered together with gems and coins. Pietro Bembo owned both antique vases made of “terra” and others made of glass. Numerous examples of antique wares are also recorded in the Venetian homes of Francesco Zio and Zuan Ram. Michiel does not mention any antique vases in the cabinet of Gabriele Vendramin, but a 1567 inventory of the collection records numerous clay vases, including antique exemplars made of black terracotta “miniadi” or “depinti.” Unfortunately Michiel does not specify the geographical provenance of any of these objects.

From other sources we know that by the end of his life the Paduan jurist and humanist Marco Mantova Benavides (1489 -1582) had also gathered an extensive collection of antiquities, which included more than fifty terracotta vases. Benavides’ holdings are described in detail in a posthumous inventory of 1695 drawn up by his heir Andrea Mantova Benavides. Thanks to this document, some of the antiquities once in

76 Marcantonio Michiel, Notizia d' opere del disegno (Florence: Edifir, 2000).
77 “Le infinite medaglie, vasi di terra, gemme intagliate, etc. sono opera antiche.” Ibid., 30.
79 In the house of Francesco Zio, Michiel describes: “Li molti vasi de terra sono antichi.” Ibid., 55. In Zuan Ram’s collection he records: “Li molti vasi de terra et trallaltri uno grande integro sono opera antiche.” Ibid., 57.
the Paduan collection have been identified in several European museums. A group of
eight vases is still in Padua today, but it has been shown that none of them came from
Greece, being in the Apulian style (fig. 87).\textsuperscript{83} But more importantly, together with the
antique pottery from southern Italy, Marco Mantova Benavides also owned many ancient
objects that had arrived directly from Greece.\textsuperscript{84} Among these was an alabaster urn with a
Latin inscription, today in St. Petersburg, that Marco Mantova stated in a letter to a friend
had been imported directly from the Peloponnese (fig. 88).\textsuperscript{85}

The inventory of the Benavides collection raises another important issue
concerning the interest in antique painted wares that developed around the middle of the
sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{86} Among the antique pots in the family collection there were two
painted kraters made in Padua towards the middle of the sixteenth century in imitation of
antique terracottas (fig. 89).\textsuperscript{87} Their maker, recently identified in Nicola dalle Maioliche,
had clearly been inspired by the antique painted wares available in local collections.\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{83} Irene Favaretto, "Un'urna in alabastro della collezione Mantova Benavides al Museo
dell'Ermitage," \textit{Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia. Università di Padova} 3 (1978): 97-
102; Irene Favaretto, "I vasi italioti. La ceramica antica nelle collezioni venete del XVI secolo,"
in \textit{Marco Mantova Benavides, il suo museo e la cultura padovana del Cinquecento: atti della
Favaretto (Padua: Erredicci, 1984), 159-92.

\textsuperscript{84} On Greek marbles in Benavides collection see Polacco, "Il museo di M. Mantova Benavides e
la sua formazione," 665-73.

\textsuperscript{85} Irene Favaretto, "Un' urna in alabastro della collezione Mantova Benavides al Museo dell'

\textsuperscript{86} Favaretto, "Andrea Mantova Benavides. Inventario delle antichità di casa Mantova Benavides -
1695," 60.

\textsuperscript{87} Favaretto, "I vasi italioti. La ceramica antica nelle collezioni venete del XVI secolo," 173-76.

\textsuperscript{88} Andrea Bacchi and Luciana Giacomelli, eds., \textit{Rinascimento e passione per l'antico. Andrea
Riccio e il suo tempo} (Trento: Privincia Autonoma di Trento, 2008), 404-05.
Together with the Benavides collection, also the Patriarch Giovanni Grimani’s important *studio* of antiquities also included examples of painted wares produced in Magna Graecia.89

The conspicuous presence of pottery from Apulia in Venetian collections has generally been explained with references to archeological finds of Attic and Apulian vases in areas such as Adria in the Veneto region.90 Given the abundance of these materials in Venetian collections and considering Venice’s commercial activities along the Adriatic coasts, it is tempting, however, to suggest that importations from southern Italy might also have taken place during the early modern period.91 To my knowledge scholars have never investigated the topic in depth. An unpublished letter in the Este archives in Modena documents the arrival in 1593 in the lagoon of a ship from Messina loaded with numerous objects, all most likely antique: a large alabaster vase, ten crates containing various sculptures and pieces of marble. The cargo was destined for the Duke of Ferrara, and the Este ambassador in Venice felt overwhelmed at having to handle *roba di si gran preggio et si pericolosa da maneggiarsi* [objects of such great value and extremely delicate to handle].92

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89 On these vases see Favaretto, "I vasi italioti. La ceramica antica nelle collezioni venete del XVI secolo," 166-68.

90 Ibid., 169-172.

91 For commercial and cultural relations between Venice and Puglia in the sixteenth century see Amilcare Foscarini, "Venezia e Terra d’Otranto nel Cinquecento," *Studi Salentini* 71 (1994): 5-56.

92 Letter by Annibale Ariosti of February 25, 1593 in ASMo, Cancelleria Ducale, Carteggio Ambasciatori, Venezia, B. 71. From two subsequent letters we learn that the statues were shipped to Ferrara with a *burchio* in early March: ASMo, Cancelleria Ducale, Carteggio Ambasciatori, Venezia, B. 71, letter of March 6, 1593 and letter of March 10, 1593.
The fact that the soil of southern Italy was rich in antique treasures was well-known during the Renaissance. In 1586 two Venetian gentlemen, Giovanni and Sebastiano de Agostini, presumably cousins, travelled to Siracusa in Sicily. They had been informed by a Greek from Candia, who at the time was serving as interpreter for the Doge in Venice, that in Sicily buried treasures could be found underground. The two Venetians left their hometown and “con molte dispese, in tanti travagli et pericoli” [with great expense, amidst many troubles and dangers] reached Siracusa where they asked for authorization to look for these “thesorij nascosti” [hidden treasures]. What exactly the two de Agostini were hoping to find is not known. The archival documentation specifies, however, that they were digging up “thesorj et moneti” [treasures and coins], giving the sense that they were really conducting early archeological excavations.

The art collection assembled in the second half of the sixteenth century by the Venetian Andrea Vendramin (1554-1629) also included numerous antique vases. The

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93 In the Archivio di Stato di Palermo there is a document that records the request by the two de Agostini of authorization to conduct excavation in Sicily, Archivio di Stato di Palermo, Conservatoria del Real Patrimonio, f. 207, cc. 422r-422v. The document is mentioned in Adelaide Baviera Albanese, *In Sicilia nel sec. XVI: verso una rivoluzione industriale?* (Caltanissetta and Rome: Salvatore Sciascia, 1974), 49-50. The two de Agostini were probably cousins since Giovanni was the son of a certain Francesco while Sebastiano was the son of Alvise.


impressive display of ancient pottery in the Vendramin palace in the parish of San Gregorio is recorded in a drawing at the opening of the manuscript catalogue of Vendramin’s vase collection drawn in 1627 (fig. 90). The illustrated catalogue, *De Sacrificiorum et Triumphorum Vasculis*, provides important visual information on the pieces in the collection, yet these have never been studied in detail.\(^96\) The manuscript depicts more than seventy painted terracotta pieces, some of which have been definitively identified as Apulian while others are probably Attic.\(^97\) The collection also included fifty-one vases and cups classified under the rubric of “vasi da sacrificcci,” more than thirty “lucerne”, “urne sacre” and “lacrimatorij” made of alabaster, glass “ampolle” and numerous other pieces in glass, marble, alabaster and precious hard-stones (fig. 91). The catalogue illustrates a total of two hundred and fifty-one objects. It has been noted how some of these were not ancient, but of modern manufacture, such as a standing cup made of rock crystal that resembles a product of the Miseroni workshop (fig. 92).\(^98\)

A pair of large marble vases, illustrated on folio 28, are of particular interest (fig. 93). A note accompanying the images seems to in fact indicate that the vases had been made using antique pieces of marble that had been brought back to Venice from the ruins of Troy: “Vasi di marmo antico, portato d’Arcipelago da N. delle rovine di Troia,

\(^96\) Only a handful of pages from Vendramin’s manuscript have been published, see Brown, *Private Lives in Renaissance Venice: Art, Architecture, and the Family*: 239-40. The catalogue, preserved in the Bodleian Library at Oxford (Ms. D’Orville 539), remains mostly unstudied and unpublished.


\(^98\) Thornton, *The Scholar in His Study: Ownership and Experience in Renaissance Italy*: 100.
durissimo, et di bellissima macchia” [Vases made of antique marble brought from the Archipelagos by N. from the ruins of Troy, extremely hard and of very beautiful color].

Vendramin’s catalogue also includes a brief introductory discussion on the various typologies of vases and on how they were used in antiquity. The text includes as well a number of bibliographic references useful for the study of vases. Among these, of particular interest is the mention of the 1535 publication De Vasculis libellus, a work by the French diplomat and humanist Lazare de Baïf (1496-1547) who lived in Venice for many years. This text sheds light on the Renaissance knowledge and interest in the study of antique vessels (fig. 94). The author, drawing information from classical texts, carefully describes different typologies of vases classifying them on the basis of their materials and functions.

Other collections of antique wares are documented in Ferrara. The humanist Lilio Gregorio Giraldi (1479-1552) had gathered a large quantity of antique pottery according to the introduction of one of his volumes, De Re Nautica, dedicated to Ercole II d’Este. Another important Ferrarese collection of antiquities was that of the Franciscan Agostino Righini of Reggio. Cited in a letter of July 23, 1548, written by Gaspare Sardi, it seems to have included different examples of antique pottery:

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100 The treatise in which vases are classified on the basis of their materials was published in several different editions during the first half of the sixteenth century.


102 Ibid., 218-219.
Those rooms of yours shining with various images made of polished marble, elegant and notable pictures, and glittering sculptures made of silver, gold, ivory, marble … vases from Corinth, Sounion, and Delos and coins made not only of silver and bronze which carry the images of heroes and princes.\footnote{“Cubiculaque illa tua refulgentia vario emblemate: ex polito marmore: pictura nitida, insigni: et collustrata: sculptura argento: aere: ebor: marmore: lingo: inroque explendescienti: Corinthijis, Sunijs, Deliacisque vasis: nec non argenteis, aereisque numismatibus, Heroum principumque imagines posse ferentibus: contemplari: suavissimaeque cum admiratione oculis collustrare: animo inbibere: pectori infigere: cordique adserere…” Quoted in ibid., 219.}

While Hubert Goltzius (1526-1583) confirms that Righini was one of the major collectors of antique coins in Ferrara, little is known of the other objects in the collection.\footnote{In his \textit{C. Iulius Caesar} (Bruges, 1563) Goltzius included a list of the scholars and collectors of antique coins who had assisted him while traveling in Italy, the Netherlands, Germany and France. Righini is mentioned, among the collectors of Ferrara, as: “Augustinus Richinius Franciscanus.” See Missere Fontana, "Raccolte Numismatiche e scambi antiquari del Cinquecento. Gli Stati Estensi," 216. On Goltzius’ list see also John Cunnally, \textit{Images of the illustrious : the numismatic presence in the Renaissance} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 41-44.} We know, however, that one of Righini’s vases was made of painted terracotta. In 1567 it was presented to Alfonso II d’Este by the famous antiquarian Enea Vico, who unexpectedly died while showing the piece to the Duke. The episode is recorded in a note in an inventory of the Este collection drawn in 1584, which reads:

Another large terracotta vase decorated with figures with two handles twisted towards the rim. This vase is the one that when Enea Vico, antiquarian from Parma, was showing it to His Highness on behalf of the friar Righini, he was surprised by a stroke and suddenly fell down dead while trying to put it down. And although the vase got broken only a little on the front, nevertheless Signor Enea died from this on August 17, 1562.\footnote{“Un altro gran vaso pur di terra figurato con dui manichi ritorti su la bocca. Questo vaso fu quello che portando Enea Vico Parmesano antiquario di Sua Altezza a presentargiolo in nome del frate Rigno; soprapreso da accidente mentre lo voleva appoggiare giù cade morto et se ben li dete sul fronte rompendolo un poco nondimeno mori di tal accidente il detto Signor Enea, il di 17 Agosto 1562.” The inventory is published in \textit{Documenti inediti per servire alla storia dei Musei d’Italia}, 4 vols. (Florence and Rome: Tipografia Bencini, 1878-1880), III, 6-22.}
Archival documents also attest to the presence of antique vases available for purchase on the Venetian antiquity market. In June of 1525 the Este ambassador in Venice wrote a detailed report to the court in Ferrara about an antique alabaster vase for sale for two hundred ducats:

Here there is a vase for sale that is made of Greek alabaster, very beautiful and antique. It has one handle with a head of Medusa on one side and on the other side another similar head of Medusa, but without the handle as that one was never made. All around the middle of the vase there is a patch of color and in the middle of this patch there is a white spot that makes it looks as if it were made of agate in that part. And inside the white section are carved dolphins and fauns with nymphs on their backs, and they all look as if they were in the water. It is true that the size of the fauns and nymphs is larger than the size of the white area. The whole head of one faun has been broken off and the foot of the vase has been broken in two places, but the pieces have been glued back on. Master Vettore, who made the decoration to Your Highness’s crystal mirror, told me that that vase has a value of 200 ducats or even more, and since it is all dusty he told me that he could clean it and make it shine so that it would look like it was made of agate. This vase does not have a lid.106

Venetian antiquari also dealt in terracotta vases, as we learn from a letter written by the Savoia ambassador in the Lagoon. In 1576 Bernardo Rovero wrote to Emanuele Filiberto:

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106 “se retrova qui uno vaso da vendersi ch’è d’alabastro Greco, multo bello et anticho. Il qual’ ha uno manico con una testa de Medusa dal uno, et dal altro canto una testa pure de Medusa, ma senza maicho, perchè non le fu fatto mai. Ne la panza del vaso v’è una gran machia de colore, che lo cinge intorno, et nel mezzo de questa machia l’è una machia biancha, che lo fa parere d’Agata in quella parte. Et ne la machia biancha sono tagliati delphinì, fhauni, con Nimphe in groppa et tuti paion in aqua. Vero è che la grandeza deli Phauni et Nimphe è maior de la largeza de la detta machia biancha. L’astato rotto via tuta la testa d’uno Phauno et lo pede è stato rotto in due loci, ma le sono incolati li sua pezetti. Magistro Vettore, che fece l’adornamento al spechio de cristallo de Vostra Ecceletia m’ha ditto che il detto vaso vale duecento ducati et piu, et perchè l’è da polvere imbratato, il m’ha dicto, che lo nectarìa et daria uno tal lustro che faria parere d’agata. Questo vaso non ha coperchio.” Letter by Giacomo Tebaldi of June 3, 1525. ASMo, Cancelleria Ducale, Carteggio Ambasciatori, Venezia, B. 16. The price of 200 ducats for this vase, which had some missing pieces and reparations on its base, reveals that it was a particularly notable object. In 1506 Isabella d’Este had acquired in Venice an onyx vase for only 105 ducats. See Clifford M. Brown, Per dare qualche splendore a la gloriosa cità di Mantua: Documents for the Antiquarian Collection of Isabella d’Este (Rome: Bulzoni, 2002), 221.
I am sending you the letter from the antiquarian with the knives and the box that he gave me. He told me that he has eight antique clay vases decorated with figures and that if you want them he would send them to you. He thinks you would love them since you already bought two similar ones that were not as beautiful as these in his shop.\textsuperscript{107}

Although it is not specified where these figured vases came from, it is possible that they had been imported into Venice from the eastern Mediterranean.

Vases usually appear less prominently than marble sculptures in descriptions and accounts of Renaissance collections of antiquities. In his description of Roman collections, however, Ulisse Aldrovandi mentions numerous vases, but only rarely does he provide descriptive details for these objects. In the Cesi collection Aldrovandi saw several vessels made of alabaster and terracotta, while he recorded two extremely beautiful black antique vases in the house of Giordano Boccabella.\textsuperscript{108} The most extensive collection of pottery described by Aldrovandi was found in the house of the Cardinal Pio da Carpi where more than forty painted vases were displayed on a cornice running along the walls of two of his studies.\textsuperscript{109}

The scanty descriptions we have make it difficult to identify the exact provenance (from southern Italy or from Greece) of the vases collected in Italy during the sixteenth century. Thus quantifying the presence of eastern Mediterranean wares in western

\textsuperscript{107} “Mando a V. A. l'alligata del Antichuario con li coltelli et scatola mi ha consignato, et dettomi che a otto vasi, di terra antichi lavorati a figure, che se saranno a contento di V. A. li mandero. Si persuade che li habbino a piacere poi che ne compro a soa botega doi di non tanta bellezza come questi.” This excerpt from a letter of March 16, 1576 is published in \textit{Documenti inediti per servire alla storia dei Musei d'Italia}: II, 399.

\textsuperscript{108} Ulisse Aldrovandi, "Delle statue antiche che per tutta Roma in diversi luoghi e case si veggono," in \textit{Le antichità della città di Roma}, ed. Lucio Mario (Venice: Giordano Ziletti, 1556), 134 and 70.

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., 202.
collections is an issue that must remain unresolved. Yet it is certain that antique pottery was appreciated and circulated widely among Italian collectors at that time.

ANTIQUTIES FROM RHODES: SABBA DA CASTIGLIONE AND ISABELLA D’ESTE

When, in 1503, a life-size bronze statue representing a naked young man arrived in Venice from Rhodes it was immediately recognized by many as an exceptional piece and the news of its arrival spread quickly beyond the lagoon city (fig. 95). The sculpture was the property of a powerful knight of Saint John, the Venetian Andrea de’ Martini, who had it transferred from Rhodes, where it had been discovered during excavations along the walls of the knights’ settlement, to his house in Venice.

At that time Isabella d’Este was the twenty-nine year old marchioness of Mantua and because she was a passionate collector of antiquities Lorenzo da Pavia, an intarsiatore and instrument maker who acted at times as her agent in Venice, offered to ship the bronze “in una caseta fina a Mantova” [in a wooden crate all the way to Mantua] so that the marchioness might privately admire such a rare piece newly arrived from Greece without traveling to Venice. The provenance of the bronze from the island of Rhodes must have sparked in Isabella’s mind the idea that from the Aegean islands antiquities could be acquired easily, avoiding the rapacious rivalry of the other collectors who competed in the antiquity market in Rome.111


111 On Isabella’s acquisitions of antiquities see Brown, Per dare qualche splendore a la gloriosa cità di Mantua: Documents for the Antiquarian Collection of Isabella d’Este: 13-20. It is also important to recall here that one of the artists working for Isabella in those years, Gian Cristoforo Romano, had journeyed to the “Levante” in the fall of 1501, see Sally Hickson, "Gian Cristoforo Romano in Rome: with Some Thoughts on the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus and the Tomb of
In a young man from Milan, Sabba da Castiglione (1480-1554), Isabella found her personal hunter of antiquities in the eastern Mediterranean (fig. 96). In the spring of 1505 Sabba spent some time in Mantua where his friend, the sculptor Gian Cristoforo Romano (1456-1512), was on friendly terms with Isabella, having served her since 1499. Here Sabba apparently received instructions from Isabella on how to procure antique objects for her collection. Soon after his departure from Mantua Sabba travelled to Rhodes, where in August of the same year he became a member of the Order of Saint John. Over the next three years Sabba corresponded with Isabella, writing mainly about antiquities and about his efforts to obtain objects for her collection.

While Sabba shipped only a small number of fragmentary marbles and a handful of antique coins to Mantua during that time, his letters to Isabella provide a vivid sense of the state of the antique ruins surviving on the Aegean islands and of what was available for collectors in the west.

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Julius II," *Renaissance and Reformation* 33 (2010): 26, note 26. We do not know which sites Gian Cristoforo visited, but certainly he was on Rhodes where he saw the bronze statue of the Adorante before its transfer to Venice, see Perry, "A Greek Bronze in Renaissance Venice," 205.


114 The letters exchanged by Sabba and Isabella between 1505 and 1508, originally published by Alessandro Luzio in *Archivio Storico Lombardo* in 1886, have been most recently collected and published in Santa Cortesi, *Fra Sabba da Castiglione, Isabella d'Este e altri: voci di un carteggio: 1505-1542* (Faenza: S. Casanova, 2004). Excerpts of the same correspondence are
Soon after his arrival on Rhodes Sabba described to Isabella what he saw on the island:

Here on Rhodes there are many sculptures of great excellence especially in the garden of the most illustrious and most reverend Monsignor Great Master. These, being unknown, are discarded, poorly treated and held in such low consideration that they are left outside exposed to the wind, the rain, the snow and storms, which miserably erode and destroy them.\(^{115}\)

Moved by piety for the degradation of these antique remains, Sabba composed a sonnet and hung it around the neck of one of the broken statues. He also sent a copy of it to Isabella, but this did not survive. Sabba’s passion for antique remains was not shared by everyone on Rhodes, as he wrote to Isabella that the Grand Master himself – Emery d’Amboise (1434-1512) - did not value antiquities. In one of his later letters Sabba narrated that when an antique marble urn excavated from the ruins of Halicarnassus was given to d’Amboise he used it as a “refrescoio de fischi” [ice bucket].\(^{116}\)

Not long after his arrival in the Aegean, Sabba would obtain a marble torso found in a vigna near the village of Lindos. It was just a fragment without head, arms and legs, but Sabba was hopeful that with further excavations the missing limbs could be recovered.\(^{117}\) Only two years later did he finally decide to ship the marble to Isabella and, apologizing for its incomplete state, wrote: “I am very sorry that I was not able to send

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\(^{115}\) “Qua a Rodi glie sonno molte sculture excellentissime et presertim in nel giardino de lo Illustriissimo et Reverendissimo Monsignor Gran Mastro, le quale per non essere cognosciute sono sprezzate, vituperate et tanto tenute a vile che iaceno scoperte al vento, a pioggia, a neve et a tempesta, le quale miseramente le consumano et guastano.” Letter datable September 1505. Cortesi, *Fra Sabba da Castiglione, Isabella d’Este e altri: voci di un carteggio: 1505-1542*: 9.

\(^{116}\) Letter of October 2, 1507. Ibid., 76.

\(^{117}\) Letter of September 1505. Ibid., 10-11.
the whole statue as I wished; May Your Signoria take it in this form as a sample of the antiquities of Greece.”  

On top of the pain of seeing antique objects neglected, Sabba also feared for his own reputation as he was worried about being accused by the other knights of being “idolatra e eretico” because of his love for classical remains. Sabba’s lonely pursuit of learned interests on Rhodes is suggested in a letter describing to Isabella the private “Academia” he had established on a rock by the shore:

I made here on Rhodes a new Academy or you could say an unusual Parnassus … on a barren, naked and hard rock, where you can always hear the sea waves crying broken by the noisy winds … and here I perform comedies or better tragedies, eclogues and satires in front of such a sparse audience that if while I am performing I see a raspy crow listening to me, I feel very happy that day and I mark it with a white stone and in this way I spend my time among these barbarians.

From Rhodes Sabba traveled throughout the Aegean finding time to visit numerous ancient sites. After an excursion to the island of Delos, he reported to Isabella:

I went to the bright island of Delos, homeland of Apollo and Diana, where with sad heart and worried mind I admired the desolate walls, the broken columns and the statues scattered on the ground, miserable relics of the famous and decorated temple built in antiquity and dedicated to Apollo.

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118 “Assai mi doglio che no lo abbia potuto mandare integro come io desideraria; pur tale quale è la Vostra Signoria lo prenda per monstra et assaggio dele antiquità de Grecia.” Letter of October 1, 1506. Ibid., 32.

119 Letter of September 1505. Ibid., 10.

120 “Ho fatto qua a Rode una nova Academia sive uno strano Parnaso …l’ho costruita in sopra un arido, ignudo et rigido scoglio, ove le onde marine rotte da li sonanti venti sempre se senteno mugendo piangere, et ivi a posta mia recito comedie anzi tragedie, eglogue et satire senza troppa frequenza de areduati populi tal che, se recitando per mia grazia io veggia un rocco corbo prestarme le attente orecchie, io me tengo per quel giorno felicissimo et segno quello di con bianca pietra et così va ci tra barbari vol consumare el suo tempo.” Letter of September 1505. Ibid., 11.

121 “Io fui in la Chiara insula de Delo, patria de Apollo et de Diana, ove col cor tristo et con turbato ciglio mirai le disolate mura, le rotte colonne e le statue in terra sparse, infelice relequie...
Once again in front of the ruins of classical monuments Sabba felt inspired to compose a sonnet, with which he wrapped an antique coin to send to Mantua. Both Cristoforo Buondelmonti and Ciriaco d’Ancona had visited Delos in the first half of the fifteenth century and had described the many fragments still visible on the island, but neither of their accounts is imbued with the poetic and mournful tones with which Sabba wrote to Isabella. The diverse tenor of these approaches show not only the different personalities of their authors, but also reveal that a new, more sophisticated, attitude towards the remains of the past had developed among those exploring the eastern Mediterranean. In her response to Sabba’s letter, Isabella praised the friar’s sensitive and artful description of the ruins: “the sonnet and the letter had greatly pleased us, seeing how artfully you have described the ruins and the ancient island of Delos.”

Despite the abundance of fragments seen on Delos, Sabba’s booty of antique treasures was meager, as he explained:

It is true that there I found infinite statues made by a good hammer, but they were so much larger than life size that it was impossible to dig them out and carry them away. I believe that if these were of portable size they would have already been taken away. Even worse, none of them had its head or hand, but rather they all looked as if they had been in the hands of a delinquent and I was so sorry that this time I could not serve your most illustrious Signoria because I would have liked to have sent you so many heads, hands, arms and feet to bring celebration to Mantua for many months.

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122 “il sonetto et la lettera ce hanno molto delectate vedendo quanto artificiosamente aveti discripto le ruine de l’antiqua e famosa insula de Delo.” Letter of May 11, 1506. Ibid., 25.

123 “Vero è ch’io li trovai infinite statue marmoree uscite da bon Martello, ma erano tanto maggiore del natural che era impossibile el levarle et condurle, le quale io credo se state fossero portabile che esse non serrebbono state li per fine questa ora, et peggio ancor mi seppe che nisuna ne fosse che avessi capo o mano, anzi tutte parevano essere state in mano del manigoldo et asai me doles che a questa volta per compiacere a la Vostra Signoria io non possi far tale officio per
Thanks to Sabba’s efforts Isabella’s collection was enriched with an array of fragmentary objects. Among these was, for example, a marine monster “the size of nearly a cubit, who with a lascivious act caresses a Nymph, whom he holds tight in one of his arms,” but also a small statue recovered on the island of Naxos that, while lacking a head and arms, Sabba thought would have been appreciated by Andrea Mantegna and Gian Cristoforo Romano, the most expert antiquarians at the Mantuan court.\(^{124}\) Other objects sent to Isabella included three coins, one of which was completely eroded by time; five heads, of which three had been unearthed on Cos and two near Halicarnassus; and two marble torsos.

Sabba’s accounts reveal how the retrieval of large intact artifacts from the soil of ancient Greece was a rare event and that often difficulties in excavating and transporting larger pieces set limits to what could be transferred to the west. The knight’s lively reports give the sense that what was left above the ground and easy to reach without extensive excavations were mainly fragments. For this reason when larger monuments were brought to light they did not pass unnoticed and the news of significant archeological finds echoed rapidly throughout the eastern Mediterranean. This was the case when a large tomb was discovered near the Knights’ Castle of Saint Peter at Bodrum.

In a letter dated October 1, 1506 Sabba wrote to Isabella about the recent discovery of an antique tomb at Bodrum, of which he had been informed by the Captain

\(^{124}\) “grande circa un cubito, che con lascivo atto fa vezzi a una Nimpha, quale esso tiene con un braccio stretta.” Letter of April 16, 1507. Ibid., 49-50.
(Costanzo de Opertis) of Saint Peter’s castle. According to Sabba, this was a large sarcophagus made of marble, approximately three and a half meters long and one and a half meters wide; its sides were carved by the hand of a “ben dotto maestro” illustrating a hunt scene with nymphs and many animals. Apparently inside the sarcophagus some Turks had found an “infinito tesoro.” In subsequent letters Sabba assured the Marchioness of his intention to go to Bodrum in person to see for himself the new discovery. With great optimism Sabba also suggested that was not unfeasible to have the whole tomb transferred to Mantua for Isabella’s collection. He in fact wrote:

I tried to find out if it was possible to remove it from there and carry it away, and in these past days I have been discussing this with the Captain of Saint Peter’s … and also with an engineer from Cremona who had been there. Both of them told me that it would be easy and not expensive to dig it out without breaking it and carry it wherever I desire.

News of the discovery of the sepulcher had also reached an English pilgrim, Sir Richard Guylforde, who in October 1506, on his way back home from the Holy Land, had stopped on the island of Cos and recorded in his travel account: “Note, of the tumbe that was founde at seynt Peer whyles we were in these ptyes.”

125 Letter of October 1, 1506. Ibid., 31.

126 This tomb was not Mausolus’ famous sepulcher which would be discovered only some time later, see Anthony Luttrell, "The Later History of the Maussolleion and Its Utilization in the Hospitaller Castle at Bodrum," in The Maussolleion at Halikarnassos, ed. Kristian Jeppesen and Anthony Luttrell (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1986), 115-214.

127 “Io cercava se possibile era de levarla de lì et di cindurla altrove, et avendone questi di passati ragionato col capitaniao del detto Castel San Piero …et parimente cn uningegnero cremonese el quale è stato là, l’uno e l’altro me ha detto che facilemte con poca spesa se lavaria sana et integra de là dove è et conducieriase là dove lo uomo volessi.” Letter of October 2, 1507. Cortesi, Fra Sabba da Castiglione, Isabella d’Este e altri: voci di un carteggio: 1505-1542: 76.

Only a few months later, in January 1507, the Venetian merchant Zuan Antonio de Piero wrote from Cyprus to his friend Zuan Battista Merlini, who was in Tripoli, about the archeological discovery at Halicarnassus. De Piero provided in his letter some colorful details about the find and, with a typical mercantile mentality, emphasized the economic value of the objects found: shortly after the Turks, who had been the first to uncover the tomb, had hauled away an inestimable treasure found inside the sepulture, the Knights visited the site and found coins and other objects worth six hundred ducats.\textsuperscript{129}

The Frenchman André Thevet, who travelled in the Levant in 1549-1554, in his \textit{Cosmographie de Levant} mentions a very antique sarcophagus seen in one of the ports of Rhodes, and provides an illustration of it (fig. 97).\textsuperscript{130} According to Thevet, who accurately describes the images carved in marble on the sides of the tomb, this was the sarcophagus of Artemisia, wife of Mausolus. To my knowledge Thevet’s passage has never been connected with the tomb discovered in 1506, yet it could be possible that this was the sarcophagus that Sabba mentioned in his letters and intended to ship to Mantua.

The story of the tomb discovered near Halicarnassus allows us to reflect on how by this time, in spite of Sabba’s complaints about living on Rhodes among barbarians, western appreciation for antique remains was widespread.

\textbf{REAL ANTIQUITIES AND FANCIFUL INTERPRETATIONS}

Throughout the sixteenth century numerous individuals continued to venture into the regions bordering the eastern Mediterranean. In his survey of travelers to the Ottoman

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., 79-86.

\textsuperscript{130} André Thevet, \textit{Cosmographie de Levant} (Genève: Droz, 1985), 110-12.
Empire, Stephane Yerasimos has recorded more than three hundred European visitors who during the sixteenth century journeyed through the territories occupied by the Turks.\textsuperscript{131} As in the previous century, Europeans had various reasons to travel east: commercial activities, religious pilgrimages, military campaigns and diplomatic missions. The military alliances established between European rulers and the Ottoman sultan Sulyeman the Magnificent (1520-1566) fostered frequent diplomatic expeditions and allowed safe access to the Ottoman territories. Thanks to a constant traffic of people between west and east, antique items continued to arrive in Italy throughout the sixteenth century, although it is often difficult to track down their precise paths and the exact means of their arrival. The opportunities to procure antique objects were frequent, and the purveyors of antiquities to the west were a very heterogeneous group of travelers.

In 1486 a learned Lombard judge, Antonio da Crema (1435-1489), left his hometown to visit the Holy Land.\textsuperscript{132} During his trip on at least two occasions Antonio took advantage of the opportunity to buy antique coins to bring home.\textsuperscript{133} On the island of Corfu he acquired two silver coins, which he described in his diary:

on one of them the image of Alexander the Great with a helmet and long curly hair is engraved, on the reverse is Bucephalus, who has wings indicating his quickness; on the other one is the head of the illustrious Pyrrhus with a Herculean beard and a severe appearance, on the reverse is a falcon with a garland on its head.\textsuperscript{134}


\textsuperscript{134} “ne l’una è stampita la effigie dil Magno Alexandro, con la celata e li longi crini anelati, e per lo inverso c’è il Bucephalo, qual è alato per signo di sua velocità; ne l’altra è la testa de lo illustre
During a later stop on the island of Crete the pilgrim visited the antique ruins of Gortyna and bought another silver coin, which he judged to be truly ancient: “in these days the farmers dig there and find antique coins, of which I bought a silver one that shows the head of Minos with the regal crown and the labyrinth on the reverse and it appears to be extremely old.”\textsuperscript{135}

Thanks to a letter of Ambrosius Nicander we know that around 1539 an otherwise unknown merchant disembarked in the port of Ancona carrying with him a Greek inscribed stone which he had procured from Thera (Santorini).\textsuperscript{136} Almost one hundred years earlier Ciriaco d’Ancona had seen the same inscription on the island and recorded it in his notebook.\textsuperscript{137} Noblemen too, who often traveled to the eastern Mediterranean on diplomatic missions, occasionally carried home antiquities. The 1584 inventory of the Este collection, for example, records antique coins brought back by young gentlemen who had travelled to the Levant: “An antique metal basin for water to wash the head or

\textsuperscript{135} “in questi tempi li rustici lì caveno e ritrovino medalie, de le qual ne comprai una argentea che dimostra la testa di Minos cum regal corona e lo labirinto per inverso e a l’ochio manifesta veramente essere vetustissima.” Ibid., 71.

\textsuperscript{136} On this inscription and a porphry copy of it produced around 1600 see Hélène Cuvigny and Ginette Vagenheim, "Un 'Faux' sur porphyre: Avatars et aventures de la stele de Théra honorant le gymnasiarque batôn (“IG” XII, 3, 331, 153av. J.-C.) " Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 151 (2005): 105-26.

something else, with some not very beautiful antique coins, I believe they were brought by these young gentlemen when they came back from the Levant.”138

Antiquarian scholarship and historical investigations of the past developed greatly during the sixteenth century, and European intellectuals progressively refined new ways of researching and interpreting the ancient world. This was the time when the foundations of modern disciplines, such as epigraphy, were laid and when antique objects were ever more often used as documents to investigate and understand the past.139 The study of the ancient Greek language and culture had greatly advanced since the early fifteenth century and now new modern tools were available for scholars interested in ancient Greece.

Around 1540 Nicolaos Sophianos had produced his Totius Graeciae Descriptio, a large map that illustrated the sites of the ancient Greek world (fig. 98).140 The map included both ancient Greek and Roman monuments, and indicated the location of two thousand antique sites. With his work Sophianos provided an important antiquarian tool that placed the sites mentioned by ancient Greek writers in their geographical context and became a cartographic bestseller. Travel accounts produced at this time became more elaborate and rich in details about antiquities. In his work, De topographia Constatinopoleos et de illius antiquitatibus libri quatuor published in 1561, the polymath Pierre Gilles (1490-1557)

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138 “Una tazza di metalo antiqua per fondere aqua a lavare il capo o fare altro con alcune medaiuce dentro assai brute, credo fussero portate da quesi giovani gentilhomeni quando vennero di levante.” Documenti inediti per servire alla storia dei Musei d'Italia: III, 14.

139 William Stenhouse, Reading Inscriptions and Writing Ancient History: Historical Scholarship in the Late Renaissance (London: Institute of Classical Studies, University of London School of Advanced Study, 2005).

provided, for example, a systematic description of the topography and the antiquities of Constantinople which he had explored and examined closely during his stays in the city between 1544 and 1547 and again in 1550 at the service of the King of France Francis I.\textsuperscript{141} Other travelers reaching Constantinople around the middle of the sixteenth century recorded the city’s monuments, buildings and inhabitants in images.\textsuperscript{142}

While some centers rich in antique history and remains, such as Athens, lay outside of the routes commonly followed by western travelers and were therefore rarely visited, many other ancient sites became familiar attractions. The antiquities procured from these places often arrived in Italy not simply as anonymous fragments, but rather with elaborate stories and notable pedigrees. The tale of an inscription found on the island of Zakynthos is illuminating in this sense.

On December 1, 1544 the friar Angelo della Puglia, prior of the Franciscan monastery of the island of Zakynthos, while conducting excavations near the chapel of Santa Maria delle Grazie, discovered a marble inscription bearing Cicero’s name:

\begin{flushright}
M. TVLLI CICERO
HAVE
ET TV TERTIA
ANTONIA
\end{flushright}

Together with the inscription, two vessels made of glass were also found. One of these was apparently filled with very ancient ashes and had some antique letters carved on the

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}
Soon after the discovery, on February 9, 1545, Fra Angelo wrote a letter to Pietro Lomellino di Campo communicating the text of the inscription.

When one year later the Dominican Desiderio Dal Legname (1500-1581c.) stopped on the island on his way home from Crete, where he had taught Latin grammar and rhetoric for ten years, he was thrilled to hear about the discovery. Desiderio was not only a passionate collector of ancient inscriptions, but also a creative inventor of forgeries. Upon his return to Italy the Dominican occupied himself by broadly spreading, amongst Venetian and Paduan antiquarians, the news of the important archeological find. In 1557 he published a pamphlet: *Sepulchri facies M. T. Ciceronis paucis ante annis in Zacyntho insula reperti et à F. Desyderio Lignamineo Patavino in lucem aedit*, in which he illustrated the stele with the inscription, the cinerary urn and the second vessel, a “lacrimatoio,” said to have contained the tears shed by Cicero’s friends at his death. Desiderio explained in his text how Cicero’s ashes ended up on Zakynthos; he narrated that, after the orator’s death in Italy, his body was burned and the ashes were brought by his servants to Zakynthos.

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143 According to other Renaissance sources the lettering on the bottom of the urn was instead: TVL CICERO. Jacopo Morelli, *Operette di Jacopo Morelli Bibliotecario di San Marco* (Venice: Alvisopoli, 1820), 64.

144 Reference to this letter, preserved in Madrid among Antonio Agustín’s papers, is in CIL III, 22*.


147 Desiderio had already printed his material on Cicero’s sepulcher in a single page publication ten years earlier in 1547. Morelli, *Operette di Jacopo Morelli Bibliotecario di San Marco*: 64-65.
It was very likely thanks to Desiderio’s enthusiasm for the archeological discovery that the alleged epitaph was immediately included by Girolamo dal Santo in his frescoes in the cloister of Santa Giustina in Padua. But Desiderio’s publicity campaign had even further-reaching consequences. The discovery of what was believed to be Cicero’s tomb obviously created a great interest among European intellectuals, and the tomb on Zakynthos became a favorite attraction for many learned travelers to the eastern Mediterranean. Numerous curious explorers stopped on the island and reported their visit to the tomb.

In the meantime, in 1566 the French polymath François de Belleforest published a French translation of Cicero’s letters, the *Epistres familiars de Marc Tulle Ciceron pere d’eloquence*. In the preface to the text Belleforest included a letter of dedication to the “excellent Geographe” André Thevet in which he mentioned Cicero’s tomb (fig. 100). In Belleforest’s text the tomb had become a much more elaborate ensemble: a long stone erected on four columns of white marble, on top of which stood three glass urns. According to Belleforest an unreadable inscription was found next to the tomb carved on a lead tablet. He maintained that Thevet was the first person able to identify the archeological finds as Cicero’s funerary monument thanks to the letterings M.T.C. read

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148 In the 1540s Girolamo del Santo was completing the fresco decoration of the cloister begun at the end of the fifteenth century by Bernardino da Parenzo. The frescoes are today almost illegible, but a detailed description of them was produced around 1615 by Girolamo da Potenza. See Billanovich, "Una miniera di epigrafi e di antichità. Il Chiostro Maggiore di S. Giustina a Padova," 197-292.

149 One of these visitors was the Italian Pellegrino Brocardi who included in his 1557 account now lost drawings of the tomb and urns. See Morelli, *Operette di Jacopo Morelli Bibliotecario di San Marco*: 64. The Frenchman Hugo Favolius in his *Hodeporico* of 1563 included the illustrations of the inscription and of the two urns on page 99v and 100r, copying them from Desidero Dal Legname’s publication.

on the three vases. And yet, well before Belleforest’s publication, André Thevet had already published in 1556 an account of his travels to the eastern Mediterranean, the *Cosmographie de Levant*, without spending a single word on Cicero’s tomb. But in his later book, the *Cosmographie universelle* of 1575, he decided to include not only a description of *his* discovery, but also to illustrate Cicero’s tomb with an image (fig. 101). Later on in his *Grand Insularie* (1588) Thevet explicitly declared: “j’ay descouvert le tombeau de ce grand et fameux Orateur Ciceron, vray pere de l’eloquence latine” [I discovered the tomb of the great and famous Orator, true father of Latin eloquence].\(^{151}\)

We know from the traveler Jan von Cootwijk that already in 1599 the inscription was no longer on the island, as it had been brought to Venice and was visible in the collection of the procurator of Saint Mark’s Federico Contarini.\(^{152}\) Sometime later Thomas Coryat saw and described it in Contarini’s residence in the *Procuratie* in Saint Mark’s square:

> There I read this inscription written in a certain stone which is about three foote high, had a foote and halfe broade. Marce Tulli Cicero have, & tu Terentia Antoniana. I have read that this stone was kept within these few years in Zacynthos now called Zante a famous Island in the Ionian Sea, from whence it was afterward brought to Venice.\(^{153}\)

\(^{151}\) Ibid., 126.


Thus when, in 1675, Jacob Spon (1647-1685) and George Wheler (1650-1725) visited Zakynthos they searched in vain for Cicero’s epitaph:

The Church of Saint Helia lieth above the Town, on the right hand of the way leading to the Cittadel. It is a pretty pleasant place, set round with Orange trees; and is beside remarkable for the fame of Cicero’s Tomb, which (as some have written) hath been found there, with an Inscription upon it, mentioning him, and his Wife Tertia Antonia; whereof now there remains nothing but the bottom of an Urn of Porphyry. Nor could we learn what was become of the rest; there being none at Zant so curious concerning the antiquity of their Country.154

The story of Cicero’s epitaph, which has since disappeared, clearly shows how by the middle of the sixteenth century many intellectuals were curious about the antique objects discovered in Greece. Similarly to the more accessible antiquities found in Rome, these antique artifacts became objects of study, investigation and also of fanciful interpretations. Information and misinformation about these archeological finds circulated widely among European antiquarians by means of both texts and images. The tale of Cicero’s sepulcher also reveals how, after having become an antiquarian attraction and the subject of learned disquisitions, the inscription found on Zakynthos became a desirable collectable item and fell into the flow of antique objects that reached Venice from the eastern Mediterranean. While Contarini had been fortunate enough to acquire the epitaph of the father of Latin eloquence, his contemporary Andrea Vendramin had assembled a whole collection of ancient sepulchers and tomb inscriptions.155 These

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155 Vendramin’s collection is known thanks to a manuscript catalogue entitled: *De Antiquorum Tumulis* preserved in Berlin, Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, Ms. Phill. 1893. Some pages from the
included numerous pieces of different sizes and periods, and among them was an elaborately decorated marble chest believed to be “la sepoltura di Aristotile” [the tomb of Aristotle] (fig. 102). From a note written by Vendramin himself, we learn how he had procured this rare object unearthed in Athens:

It was brought to Venice by sir Manusso Cresci, nobleman from Romania, in the year 1560, who gave it to a Greek priest of the church of San Giovanni del Tempio known as the church of the Furlani; the priest gave it to the archbishop Suirò of Philadelphia (Aleşehir) who sold it in the year 1590 to Bernardo dall’Orso antiquario, from whom I obtained it. And when one day sir Manusso came to visit my studio, he immediately recognized it, and told me that he had found it in Athens in an underground place, where once was the school in which Aristotle used to teach (walking) to his students, who used to sit on steps on either side of him, as it is possible to see from the remains of the school. And I believe that the above-mentioned sir Manusso is still alive and extremely old, and has just recently departed for the Archipelagos!

**COMMERCIAL OFFER TO THE OTTOMANS**

By the time Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453, most of the territories of Asia Minor surrounding the Byzantine capital were already under Ottoman control (fig. 103). Many of these lands were rich in ancient remains and numerous buildings survived still partially standing in their monumental forms. Along the coasts of Asia Minor ruins manuscript have been published in Anne-Marie S. Logan, *The 'Cabinet' of the Brothers Gerard and Jan Reynst* (Amsterdam and New York: North-Holland Publishing Co., 1979), 52.

156 Berlin, Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, *De Antiquorum Tumulis*, Ms. Phill. 1893, f. 9r.

157 “Fù condotta à Venetia per ms. Manusso Cresci nob. di Romania, l’anno 1560, e la donò a un Papà Greco à S. Zuan dal tempio detto dei furlani, che la diede all’Arcivesco Suirò, di Filadelfia; lui la vendete l’anno 1590 a ms. Bernardo dall’orso antiquario, per l’opera del quale mi è capitata. Et essendo capitato il detto ms. Manusso à veder il mio studio, subito la conobbe, il qual mi affermò haverla trovata in Atene in certo sotteraneo luoco, dove era la scuola che Aristotile ammaestrava (passeggiando) li scolari, che sopra gradi dell’una e l’altra parte sedevano, come nelle vestiggie di essa manifestate si vedono: e credo ancora vivi detto ms. Manusso in età vechissima, che poco prima è partito per Arcipelago!” Quoted in Emily Jacobs, "Das Museo Vendramin und die Sammlung Reynst," *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* 46 (1925): 38. “Bernardo dall’Orso antiquario” is to be identified with the antiquities dealer Bernardo Petrobelli discussed in chapter 5.
of the Greek and Roman civilizations existed in larger numbers than on the Aegean islands, whose shores had been exposed over the centuries to numerous destructions and assaults by the sea.

From the time of Ciriaco’s early expeditions in the eastern Mediterranean and ever more frequently during the following century, western travelers and antiquarians in search of the vestiges of the ancient world had to deal with the Ottoman Turks, who had progressively become the new guardians of the classical past. Sixteenth century accounts written by educated European explorers to the east report frequently about these encounters with the Ottomans. In their narratives the learned antiquarians typically display contempt toward the Turks’ attitudes toward antique artifacts. If Cristoforo Buondelmonti had blamed the local Greek population of the Aegean islands for its ignorance and indifference towards the remains of its glorious past, now the Ottomans were to be criticized for their barbarous treatment of the antique relics. In western reports the Turks are usually depicted either as completely uninterested in antiquities or as actively engaged in destroying them.158 The four Turkish Letters written by Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq (1522-1492), who travelled to Constantinople twice as imperial ambassador between 1554 and 1562, are replete with examples of Ottomans ransacking ancient sites and attacking antiquities. One of these incidents happened, for example, when Busbecq arrived in Nicaea:

While we were there, they [the Turks] had discovered a fine statue, almost intact, representing an armed soldier, but they quickly mutilated it by blows from their

158 On this topic see Wunder, "Western Travelers, Eastern Antiquities, and the Image of the Turk in Early Modern Europe," 89-119.
hammers. When we showed our annoyance, the workmen laughed at us and asked whether we wished, in accordance with our custom, to worship it and pray to it.\textsuperscript{159}

The depiction of the Turks as the barbarous enemies of classical antiquity soon joined the imagery of the Ottomans as unethical and dishonest individuals, capable of various fierce monstrosities.\textsuperscript{160} Although the Turks did destroy many of the antique artifacts that had survived up to their time, it is possible to pull together a more nuanced and variegated picture of the different ways in which the Ottomans materially engaged with the artifacts they had inherited from their Greek and Roman predecessors.

When Ciriaco d’Ancona visited Cyzicus in 1431, the imposing Roman temple built in the second century A.D. by the emperor Hadrian was still partially standing on the site (fig. 64). Ciriaco reported, and recorded in drawings, that thirty-one of the original columns were in place supporting the temple architrave and that the building façade was richly ornamented with numerous sculptures.\textsuperscript{161} Yet Ciriaco was concerned about the survival of the antique monument as just a few days earlier he had seen large quantities of marble been carried away from the site by the Turks and sent to nearby Bursa to be reemployed in new constructions.\textsuperscript{162} In fact, the fifteenth century Ottoman structures that survive to this day in Bursa eloquently confirm how numerous materials

\textsuperscript{159} I used the English translation of the letters published in Ogier Ghislain De Busbecq, \textit{The Turkish Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, Imperial Ambassador at Constantinople, 1554-1562} (Baton Rouge: Lousiana State University Press, 2005), 45.

\textsuperscript{160} For considerations on some western views of the Ottoman see, for example, Lester J. Jr. Libby, "Venetian Views of the Ottoman Empire from the Peace of 1503 to the War of Cyprus," \textit{The Sixteenth Century Journal} 9 (1978): 103-26; Nancy Bisaha, \textit{Creating East and West: Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks} (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

\textsuperscript{161} Scalamonti, \textit{Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani}: par. 83. In a later account he said the columns were 31.

\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., par. 81.
integrated in the buildings are spolia recovered from nearby sites. Ciriaco made an effort to stop the destruction of the temple by trying to persuade the local governor, Canuza Bey, to forbid further despoliation. The plundering, however, appears to have continued as Ciriaco himself realized when he visited Cyzicus for the second time in 1444. By then the number of columns still standing in the temple was down to twenty-nine and Ciriaco lamented:

How unsightly a structure we returned to, compared to the one we inspected fourteen years ago! For then we saw thirty-one surviving columns standing erect, whereas now I find that twenty-nine columns remain, some shorn of their architraves. And the famous walls, almost all of which were then intact, now in great part lie ruined and dashed to the ground, evidently by the barbarians.

The demolition continued. By the end of the century, in 1498, when the two Florentine travelers Bonsignore Bonsignori and Bernardo Michelozzi reached Cyzicus to visit the ruins of the famous temple, although many beautiful fragments of the original decoration were still in situ, more columns had disappeared. The plundering of the site persisted in the following centuries. During the time of Suleiman the Magnificent, marble materials were employed in the Sultan’s mosque built in Constantinople and in the eighteenth

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166 Borsook, "The Travels of Bernardo Michelozzi and Bonsignore Bonsignori in the Levant (1497-98)," 145-97.
century the ancient site of Cyzicus was still used as a marble quarry, so much so that nothing of the temple, except its foundations, survives today.\textsuperscript{167}

If the progressive devastation of the temple at Cyzicus seems to corroborate the image of the Turks as plunderers and destroyers of classical artifacts, their practice of procuring old materials and employing them as \textit{spolia} in the erection of new buildings aligns the Ottomans with both their predecessors in Asia Minor and their contemporaries in the west. The quarrying activities of the Turks in fact carried forward a practice already established in antiquity and perpetuated in medieval times. The very same site of Cyzicus had already been robbed of precious materials during Constantine’s time when marble columns, statues, and also a brass clock had been taken to Constantinople.\textsuperscript{168} Recent studies have amply shown how Byzantine builders heavily employed antique \textit{spolia} from ancient buildings in their new constructions both in the capital of Byzantium and outside.\textsuperscript{169} Similarly, when the Seljuks settled in Anatolia beginning in the twelfth century, they too began to frequently incorporate classical materials into their architecture.\textsuperscript{170} Therefore the Ottomans’ appropriation of antique artifacts was not simply an indiscriminate barbarous destructive habit as it was depicted in the narratives of western antiquarians, but rather a practice in line with what their predecessors had done.


\textsuperscript{168} A summary of all the exportations of materials from Constantine to the 19\textsuperscript{th} century is in ibid., 42-43.


for centuries before them.\textsuperscript{171} If entire buildings disappeared under the pillage of the Turks in the eastern Mediterranean it is also important to remember that in the same years numerous antique sites in Rome were also quarried for reusable marbles. Ciriaco himself, when visiting Rome in 1433 with the emperor Sigismund, lamented the destruction perpetrated by the citizens of Rome.\textsuperscript{172}

Together with the use of \textit{spolia}, the re-adaptation of antique buildings to new functions also became a standard practice adopted by the Ottomans. As the Byzantine church of Hagia Sophia was transformed into Mehmed’s royal mosque soon after the conquest of Constantinople, similarly the Parthenon in Athens became, around 1460, an Islamic building. The pagan temple, which had already been transformed in previous centuries into a Christian cathedral, was adapted into a mosque with few changes.\textsuperscript{173}

But the Ottomans’ attitude towards the ruins of the classical past was not only one of pragmatic despoliation, reuse and adaptation of raw materials, as the Turks in reality also showed a more sophisticated curiosity towards antiquities. The Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (1432-1481), the conqueror of Constantinople, was certainly well equipped to appreciate the historical relevance of classical ruins (fig. 104). In his youth he had been educated not only by Muslim teachers, but also by two tutors who had schooled him in


Latin and Greek. Mehmed was knowledgeable in ancient history, and during his visit to Athens in 1458 he inspected the ruins with astonishment and admiration. According to his biographer Kristovoulos:

He was greatly enamored of that city and of the wonders in it, for he had heard many fine things about the wisdom and prudence of its ancient inhabitants, and also of their valor and virtues ... from the ruins and remains, he reconstructed mentally the ancient buildings, being a wise man and a Philhellene and as a great king, and he conjectured how they must have been originally.

Some years later, in 1462, during a campaign against Mytilene, the Sultan took a detour to Troy and asked about the tombs of the Greek heroes Achilles and Ajax. On the plain of Ilium Mehmed stood “shaking his head a little” and contemplating how fortunate these heroes had been in having Homer as their eulogist. We know that Mehmed owned a copy of the *Iliad*, which apparently had been produced for him shortly after his visit to Troy.

When the Sultan entered Constantinople in 1453 little remained in the city of the great collection of antique monuments gathered by Constantine the Great and his successors. The ransacking following the capture of Byzantium in 1204, as well as the three days of looting and slaughter by Mehmed’s army that followed the Ottomans’ occupation of the city had left little behind, as Mehmed himself observed weeping.

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176 Ibid., 181.

177 Ibid., 77.
Sultan, following the advice of his astrologers, was himself responsible for having the bronze statue of Justinian pulled down from its high column and removed in pieces to the courtyard of his palace.\textsuperscript{178} The equestrian monument is recorded in a drawing attributed to Ciriaco d’Ancona today in Budapest (fig. 105).\textsuperscript{179} A handful of antique monumental artifacts however survived unharmed in Constantinople. Among these were, for example, twelve reliefs representing the \textit{Labors of Hercules} and other subjects immured at the Golden gate which remained in place until the end of the eighteenth century. Also the monumental serpent column, originally erected in Delphi after the battle of Plataea and later transferred to the Hippodrome in Byzantium, survived untouched.\textsuperscript{180} When the afore-mentioned Bonsignori and Michelozzi explored Constantinople at the end of the fifteenth century, in the Hippodrome they saw an exedra made of ancient columns with other antiquities nearby. Despite their curiosity the two Florentines did not dare to examine these artifacts at close hand for fear of the Turks who were jealous of these monuments.\textsuperscript{181}

Mehmed was a collector of antique artifacts. He is credited for having gathered numerous Byzantine marble sculptures within the precincts of his royal palace. These included several imperial porphyry sarcophagi and other monumental remains collected.


\textsuperscript{179} Brown, \textit{Venice & Antiquity: the Venetian Sense of the Past}: 89-90.

\textsuperscript{180} On these antiquities see Cyril Mango, "Antique Statuary and the Byzantine Beholder," \textit{Dumbarton Oaks Papers} 17 (1963): 75. See also Sarah Bassett, \textit{The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), catalogue nn. 141, 38, 09, 31, 47, 75, 44, 04, 10, 16, 32, 57.

\textsuperscript{181} “perchè e i Turchi hanno gelosia et saria dubbio ti facessimo qualche iniuria.” Borsook, "The Travels of Bernardo Michelozzi and Bonsignore Bonsignori in the Levant (1497-98)," 160, note 89.
from different sites in the city.\textsuperscript{182} In his palace, inside the library, Mehmed had also assembled a large collection of Christian relics, which are known in detail from an inventory in Italian compiled in the time of his son Bayezid II. The story of one of these pieces – the \textit{Stone of the Deposition} – provides an intriguing example of how antique artifacts survived and were collected through time and across cultures.

The \textit{Stone of the Deposition} was a large red stone identified in some sources also as the “\textit{petra doue nacque nostro signor Jesu Christo}” [stone where our lord Jesus Christ was born].\textsuperscript{183} Mehmed kept it in his library and one day his librarian, the learned Molla Lütfi, stepped on it while trying to reach for a book on a high shelf, provoking Mehmed’s reproach.\textsuperscript{184} The antique stone originally came from the Roman city of Ephesus where, probably in late antiquity, it had been identified and venerated as the slab on which Joseph of Arimathea had washed the body of Christ after it had been taken down from the cross.\textsuperscript{185} The Byzantine emperor Manuel I Comnenus (1118-1180) had it transferred from Ephesus to Byzantium where, with a grandiose ceremony, he personally carried it on his shoulders from the port to the chapel of Our Lady of the Pharos. After Manuel’s death the

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\textsuperscript{182} Julian Raby, "El Gran Turco. Mehmed the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christiandom" (PhD Dissertation, Oxford University, 1980), 222-25.


\textsuperscript{185} On the history of Ephesus see Clive Foss, \textit{Ephesus after Antiquity: A Late Antique, Byzantine and Turkish City} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 125.
relic was placed next to the Emperor’s tomb in the Pantokrator monastery. It was recorded as being in that location by numerous visitors to Constantinople until 1453, when the stone was taken by Mehmed and transferred to his palace. Venetians are said to have tried to buy the precious relic for the price of thirty thousand ducats, but the old Mehmed declared he would not part with it for even one hundred thousand ducats. Thus the ancient marble slab from Ephesus traveled to Constantinople where, after being venerated as a holy relic by a Christian Emperor, it entered the collector’s cabinet of a Muslim ruler as the ancient remains of a foreign religion. The later fate of the stone is not known.

But other Ottomans as well, outside the realm of Mehmed’s learned court, spared classical artifacts. In 1436 the Spanish traveler Pero Tafur (1410c.-1484c.) sailed for the East headed to the Holy Land. Upon arriving near Troy, Tafur set off to visit the antique ruins of Ilium and reported:

The whole of this country is strewn with villages, and the Turks regard the ancient buildings as relics and do not destroy anything, but build their houses adjoining. That which made me understand that this was, indeed, ancient Troy, was the sight of such great ruined buildings, and so many marbles and stones.

Many years later, in 1591, the Venetian nobleman Lorenzo Bernardo on his way to Constantinople visited the ancient Thessalonica (Thessaloniki) where he saw numerous pieces of marbles and columns scattered throughout the city. Bernardo also noticed a

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187 Raby, "East & West in the Conqueror's Library," 298.

huge antique column made of porphyry erected inside a Turkish home. Its antiquity was
well known to the owner and its history had survived: “We saw in the private house of a
Turk an entire column of notable height and made of porphyry; on top of it they say that
in antiquity there was a snake, who was adored as God by the local population.”

While the Ottomans did not indiscriminately destroy every antique artifact they
encountered, what survived of the classical past may not have excited them as much as it
fascinated the Europeans. By the beginning of the sixteenth century numerous western
travelers to the eastern Mediterranean had developed a special interest in any sort of
antique remains. Many European intellectuals had developed antiquarian tastes and
ancient objects, such as for example coins, were by then ubiquitously collected in the
West. On the contrary, the Ottomans seemed to have little interest in numismatics.

Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, in another of his letters, narrates the episode of a coppersmith
he had encountered:

A coppersmith, from whom I inquired for coins, greatly aroused my wrath by
telling me that, a few days before, he had had a whole jarful of them and had
made some bronze vessels out of them, thinking they were of no use or value. I
was very much grieved at the loss of all these relics of antiquity.

And yet, the Ottomans’ indifference towards antique coins frequently provided the
opportunity for western collectors to enrich their own cabinets. When the Frenchman
André Thevet visited Chalcedon in 1550 he was able to obtain many Greek coins found
among the ruins of antique buildings, while from the same site the Turks were carrying

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189 “vedessimo in una casa d’un turco privata eretta una colonna intiera di notabile grandezza di
porfido; in cima della quale si dice che anticamente vi era un serpente, che era adorato come
(Costantinopoli) (Turin: Bottega d’Erasmo, 1965), 203.

190 De Busbecq, The Turkish Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, Imperial Ambassador at
Constantinople, 1554-1562: 49.
away marbles to build a new mosque in Constantinople.\textsuperscript{191} Thevet’s desire to acquire antique coins became a source of astonishment for the local population when, in Alexandria, he proposed to knock down a classical column to see if coins were buried underneath.\textsuperscript{192}

Thevet was not the only westerner to know that good samples of antique coins could be procured in the eastern Mediterranean. In a letter of 1546 Cosimo I de’ Medici gave detailed instructions to Alfonso Berardi, the Florentine \textit{bailo in Levante}, on the items he needed to procure for the court: Greek books, seeds of rare herbs to be planted in the Grand Ducal gardens, pearls, and especially antique coins:

You will try to obtain as many antique coins as possible, made of gold, silver, copper or any other metal, both of the ancient Romans and Greeks, Egyptians and others. And you will send them all to us, since we know that over there they melt them to obtain gold and silver, and please use in all of this great diligence.\textsuperscript{193}

From time to time the Turks became actively involved in the trade of antique remains. There is evidence that soon after the fall of the Constantinople, the Ottomans became partners in the commerce of those antique materials that were avidly sought out by westerner collectors. Numerous letters from the 1460s reveal how in those years the Marquis Ludovico Gonzaga (1412-1478) was actively trying to procure throughout Italy, with the help of his agents and collaborators, pieces of antique stones – such as porphyry

\textsuperscript{191} Thevet, \textit{Cosmographie de Levant}: 78.

\textsuperscript{192} Ibid., 132.

and serpentine – for the new buildings he was constructing in Mantua.\textsuperscript{194} The Marquis’ agent in Florence, Pietro del Tovaglia, wrote regularly to Mantua updating Ludovico about each slab of porphyry or marble he was able to obtain and describing the many challenges he was encountering to secure those materials. Apparently Tovaglia was a resourceful man and in April of 1464 he informed the Marquis that he had found a way to procure numerous pieces from Constantinople with the mediation of an Italian friend and the help of a Turkish man:

And with a ship that is leaving from Ancona a friend of mine is going to Constantinople. I commissioned him to bring back many pieces of porphyry. He tells me, since he had already been there for about three years, that he knows where they are and he will be able to obtain them with the help of a Turk who will take them on the ship.\textsuperscript{195}

Other western antiquarians were able to acquire even more conspicuous antiquities from the Ottomans. Arriving in Constantinople in 1544 in the entourage of the French Ambassador, Pierre Gilles (1490-1555) noticed within the Saray’s enclosure an obelisk made of Egyptian granite “ex lapide Thebaico.” Some time later he reported that the obelisk was no longer within the palace precinct, but had been moved outside the walls and sold to a Venetian nobleman named Antonius Priolus (Antonio Priuli).\textsuperscript{196} According to Gilles, Priuli wanted to ship the 35-foot monolith to Venice and erect it near his palace in campo Santo Stefano. The obelisk has since disappeared and there is no evidence that

\textsuperscript{194} Corinna Vasic Vatovec, ed. \textit{Luca Fancelli, architetto: epistolario gonzaghesco} (Florence: Uniedit, 1979), 3-74.

\textsuperscript{195} “Et per una nave che parte d’Anchona in sulla quale va un’ mio amicho in Chostantinopoli, al quale ò chomeso me ne rechi parecchi pezi [di porfido]. E lui mi dice, perché è stato là circha IIII anni, che sa dove n’è e che arà mezzo chon uno turcho che ciele chonducierà insino in nave.” This excerpt from the letter was first published by Francesco Rodolico, "Ricerca ed acquisto di "pietre antiche" alla corte dei Gonzaga " \textit{Archivio storico italiano} 114, no. 4: 749-53.

\textsuperscript{196} Gilles, \textit{De topographia Constantinopoleos et de illius antiquitatibus libri quatuor} 84.
it had ever reached Venice. Its owner is to be identified in all likelihood with an Antonio Priuli who, according to Barbaro’s genealogies, died under mysterious circumstances in 1557, probably in prison.197

While the Egyptian obelisk may never have arrived in the lagoon, another antique piece, said to have come from the Sultan’s palace, did reach Venice in those same years. The story is reported by a Camaldolesian monk, Germano Vecchi, who in 1586 visited the famous collection of antique statuary assembled in Venice by the Patriarch of Aquileia Giovanni Grimani. Vecchi described in a manuscript chronicle the most notable pieces he had seen in the Grimani palace. Among the marbles that attracted his attention was a marble group representing the Abduction of Ganymede (fig. 106), a piece that according to Vecchi had been acquired in Constantinople through the mediation of a Venetian ambassador and which came directly from the Sultan’s Saray: “the abduction of Ganymede by Jupiter as an Eagle who takes him away in flight; from the Eagle it is possible to see the artistry of the master, it was obtained from the Saray of the Turk by an ambassador and given as a gift to the Patriarch.”198


198 “Il ratto di Ganimede da Giove in forma d'Aquila che sembra portato via volando; onde si vede in lei grand'arte del maestro, avuta dal serraglio del turco da uno ambasciatore, e donata al Patriarca.” Vecchi’s original manuscript (Delle Istorie del Friuli, 1586-1593) is in Padua in the Biblioteca del Santo, but several copies survive. A transcription by Jacopo Morelli is preserved in the Biblioteca Marciana of Venice (Mss. Riservati 73), while the copy I have consulted is in Udine, Biblioteca Bartoliniiana, Ms. 51, Germano Vecchi, "Nemesi ovvero Storieta del Friuli di D. Germano Vecchi da Udine Monaco Camaldolese dedicata agl'Ill.mi Deputati della stessa città -1583," in Opuscoli Friuliani raccolti dal signor Gio. Giuseppe Lirutti signor di Villa Freda ed uniti per cura d'un cittadino udinese l'anno 1815, c. 337. For the statue see Gustavo Traversari, La statuaria ellenistica del Museo archeologico di Venezia (Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider, 1986), 154-57.
Through the hands of skillful merchants, many objects continued to arrive in Europe from the Ottoman capital throughout the following century. Around 1609 the French humanist Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc (1580-1637) would acquire a gem with the image of Achilles carved on it from a Provencal goldsmith, who had purchased it in Constantinople together with other precious gemstones. The price paid by Peiresc was low, only half a *scudo*, apparently because the goldsmith could not make sense of the image carved on the gem. But some time later Peiresc found out that the gem was not antique. He had sent an impression of it to his friend Lelio Pasqualini (1549-1611), a renowned Roman collector and expert in coins and other sorts of antiquities, who had declared without hesitation: “Dell’Achille affermo bene che non è buono” [Of the Achilles I say for sure that it is not good].  

These episodes only mark the beginnings of the conspicuous commerce in antique artifacts that would take place during the seventeenth century between Constantinople and Europe. During that period, numerous European collectors, or their agents, would flock to the Ottoman capital in search of antiquities for their galleries, given the growing difficulties and high costs in obtaining them from Italy. The letters written by Sir Thomas Roe (1581-1644) to Thomas Howard Earl of Arundel (1585-1646) in the early 1620s clearly indicate that a thriving international market in antique objects had by then

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developed in the city; on this market antiquities circulated both in licit and illicit ways. In a letter of May 1623 Sir Roe wrote about ancient coins:

Antiquities in gold and silver, of the ancient Greeks, from Alexander downward, and many Romans more ancient, are here to be gathered; but so dear, by reason the last French ambassador made great search, and some Italians are ready to buy, that I know not whether your Lordship will esteem them at such rates.

Soon after he reported about marbles:

On Asia side, about Troy, Zizicum, and all the way to Aleppo, are innumerable pillars, statues, and tombstones of marble, with inscriptions in Greek: these may be fetched at charge and secretly; but if we ask leave, it cannot be obtained; therefore Mr. Markham will use discretion rather than power, and so the Turks will bring them for their profit.201

Therefore the plundering of the temple at Cyzicus continued despite Ciriaco’s early efforts to stop it; the stripping of the antique marbles would now be done for the benefit of European collections.

Finally, a manual attributed to another Englishman, Sir William Petty (1623-1687), Of Statues & Antiquities, clearly shows how by the middle of the seventeenth century European collectors had become expert buyers in the eastern Mediterranean and how they had developed sophisticated strategies to deal with the Ottomans who owned the antique objects they hoped to acquire:

The means to get these things are these, there must be a passé or safe conduct from the Great Turk procured by the Ambassadour at Constantinople authorizing and securing the man employed in all the aforesaid places, to search, dig up, & transport these things only for curiosity, for the Turkes must not know that they are of any value, he that is employed must always wear poor apparell, for by that means the Turkes will imagine the things he seeks for to be of no great estimation … he must never be without great store of Tobacco, & English Knives, to present the Turks with all, who are governours of places, & other officers, with whom he shall have to doe; for these small presents, together with his shew of poverty, will save him from many Troubles which other wise might happen.202

201 Henry Ellis, British Museum: the Townley gallery (London: Knight, 1836), I, 61.
202 The text is published in Frank Allen Patterson, ed. The Works of John Milton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), vol. 18, 260-61. For the attribution to Petty see Elizabeth
The arrival of numerous antique objects from the eastern Mediterranean into western collections after 1453 clearly shows how the Ottoman occupation of these regions did not prevent travelers and collectors from looking at the east as an important source of antique material and as an alternative to Rome. Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, while the Turks advanced toward the west, the Republic of Venice was able to maintain strategic outposts in the eastern Mediterranean. These territories functioned not only as important mercantile and military strongholds, but came ever more often to be exploited by Venetian officials for their riches of precious and antique marbles.

CHAPTER 4
THE VENETIAN STATO DA MAR AS AN ANTIQUARIAN QUARRY

Since our Church of San Marco has need of marbles in fine condition, and since
we have heard reports that on the island of Mykonos and also other islands of the
eastern Mediterranean, there are to be found the most beautiful marbles of every
color and type, we ask … that when you are in those parts … you make inquiries
everywhere about those marbles which are whole shafts or pieces thereof, and
about medium-sized columns – white, veined, green, porphyry, and every type.
And if they are beautiful, you should procure them and load them into our galleys

Letter from the Collegio to Gabriele Dandolo, Venice, 3 March 1309.1

Beginning in medieval times, Venice established itself as a powerful maritime
empire extending beyond the lagoon. This extensive territory was known as the Stato da
Mar and consisted of colonies and protectorates along the Adriatic coast and throughout
the eastern Mediterranean.2 The borders of the Venetian empire changed over time, as
some territories were lost and a number of new ones were acquired (fig. 107).3 These
overseas possessions functioned as military outposts and trade stations, but also played a
crucial role in shaping important aspects of Venice’s life, art, and culture. During the

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1 “Cum Ecclesia nostra sancti Marci indigeat marmoribus cuiuscumque pulcre conditionis, et ad
nostrum auditum pervenerit quod in insula micholarum, et eciam alii insulis romaine, sint et
reperiantur pulcherrima Marmor, et cuiuscumque conditionis et coloris prudentiam vestram
rogamus…cum eritis in dictis partibus…quod inquiri facatis in omni parte, de ipsis marmoribus
qui essent in astis vel clapis astarum et mediis columnnis albis vergatis viridis porfiis et
cuiuscumque conditionis, et si reperientur de pulcris de eis accipi facatis, et poni in nostris
galeis…” ASVe, Collegio, Lettere segrete, 1308-1310, fol. 78, cited by Bartolomeo Cecchetti, ed.
Documenti per la storia dell’augusta ducale basilica di San Marco in Venezia dal nono secolo
sino alla fine del decimo ottavo (Venice: F. Ongania, 1886), 13, doc. 99. Published in English
translation in Patricia Fortini Brown, Venice & Antiquity: the Venetian Sense of the Past (New

2 Frederic Chapin Lane, Venice, a Maritime Republic (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University

3 Benjamin Arbel, "Colonie d'oltremare," in Storia di Venezia dalle Origini alla Caduta della
Serenissima, ed. Alberto Tenenti and Ugo Tucci (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana,
1996), 947-85.
fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, numerous Venetian officials administering the lands of
the Stato da Mar became interested in the ancient remains surviving in these territories
and began to actively excavate ancient material. This chapter focuses on these
archeological activities - which are particularly well documented for the sixteenth century
– and suggests that the men at the service of the Serenissima were important agents in the
arrival of small and large antiquities in the west.

ANTIQUE MARBLES FOR VENICE

In spite of the fact that the marshy grounds of the lagoon did not yield any
classical remains, since the Middle Ages the city of Venice displayed on its buildings an
extraordinary abundance of valuable marbles, antique spolia and rare ancient artifacts.4
Antique and precious treasures were imported into the city from the territories of the
Venetian empire on the terraferma and overseas. Venice relied greatly on these
importations and in fact, as Patricia Fortini Brown has effectively written: “The center
was not just supported by, but was constructed from, the material of the periphery.”5

Already in the ninth century, Latin inscriptions rescued from Aquileia, Altino and
other Roman sites had been employed in the foundations of the Campanile of San Marco
and when, in the eleventh century, the church of San Marco was being rebuilt, many
materials used in its decoration came from far away (fig. 108).6 Francesco Sansovino

4 See Marilyn Caldwell Perry, "The Public Display of Antique Sculpture in Venice 1200-1600"
(PhD Dissertation, University of London, 1975), 7-111; Brown, Venice & Antiquity: the Venetian
Sense of the Past: 11-29.


6 Bruna Forlati Tamaro, "Le iscrizioni greche e latine a Venezia e la loro provenienza," in Actes
du deuxième congrès international d’épigraphie grecque et latine (Paris 1952), 291-98; Otto
narrates how Doge Domenico Selvo (1071-1084) was “the first who began to have it [San Marco] encrusted with very fine marbles and who had numerous columns brought from Athens and various Greek islands and from the Morea.”7

In 1309 the galley captain Gabriele Dandolo was ordered to procure on the island of Mykonos marbles for the church of San Marco. The letter given by the Collegio to Dandolo clearly reveals that Venetian authorities were well informed of what useful material was available on the islands of the eastern Mediterranean.8 A later document, addressed to the duca di Candia, attests how the merchant Giovanni Gradenigo, while transporting firewood to the town of Candia on Crete in 1433, was asked by local authorities to load his ship with a cargo of marble columns (complete with their bases) excavated from the island’s ancient site of Ierapetra.9

The Roman city of Pola (Pula), conveniently located just on the other side of the Adriatic, was also heavily despoiled by the Venetians over time. In the 1490s the German pilgrim Arnold von Harff noted:

This is a very old town, a harbor, which belongs to the lordship of Venice. Here one sees many old walls. And on the right hand side outside the town is an ancient and splendid palace built with great stones. […] the Venetians are now causing

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8 The text of the letter is quoted at the beginning of the chapter. For this episode see Brown, Venice & Antiquity: the Venetian Sense of the Past: 29.

the palace to be broken up and are building their palaces in Venice therewith. It is said that the Doge’s Palace is entirely built from this palace.\textsuperscript{10}

Some years afterwards, in 1549, Jacopo Sansovino (1486-1570) sent to Venice three shiploads of precious marbles procured in Pola, and Pietro Aretino (1492-1556) praised the architect’s work adding: “I am certain that Rome itself, more than any other famous city, would be happy to be stripped of the miraculous artifice of its marbles, with the intention of adorning Venice, a city equally cherished and sacred.”\textsuperscript{11}

Together with materials employed to renovate and embellish Venice’s most important buildings, ancient and Byzantine artifacts were also brought back to the city as trophies of war. The Basilica of San Marco still today proudly displays part of the conspicuous treasure carried home by the crusaders from Byzantium in 1204 and the following years: the life-sized bronze horses prominently placed on the façade (fig. 109); the imperial head of the so called \textit{Carmagnola} (fig. 110); the porphyry group of the Tetrarchs, inserted on the corner of the treasury of San Marco (fig. 111); a truncated porphyry column known as the \textit{Pietra del Bando}; and the \textit{Pilastri Acritani} (fig. 112).\textsuperscript{12}


\textsuperscript{11} “E son certo che Roma, più di alcuna altra città che abbia nome, terrebbe per felicità il rimanere disordinata dei miracoli che si veggano ne l’artifizio dei suoi marmi; perché se ne adornasse Vinezia, quanto lei alma e sacra.” Ettore Camesasca, ed. \textit{Lettere sull’arte di Pietro Aretino} (Milan: Edizioni del Milione, 1957), II, 322. The quarrying of Pola was part of Sansovino’s restoration of the local church of Santa Maria in Canneto founded in 546 A.D.. See Howard, "Renovation and Innovation in Venetian Architecture," 66-74. Aretino’s text is quoted by Howard in a slightly different English translation.

\textsuperscript{12} The literature on these \textit{spolia} is vast, for recent discussions with previous bibliography see Robert S. Nelson, "High Justice: Venice, San Marco, and the Spoils of 1204," in \textit{Byzantine Art in the Aftermath of the Fourth Crusade}, ed. Panayotis L. Vocotopoulos (Athens: Academy of Athens,
Early Venetian chronicles explain that also “many gentlemen and common people have marbles in Aquileia and Ravenna picked up, as well as many in Constantinople.”\textsuperscript{13} A natural mercantile inclination and pragmatic mentality made all Venetians particularly prone to eagerly bringing back to the homeland the beautiful objects and relics found during their numerous travels.\textsuperscript{14} If many of these importations, especially during the Middle Ages, were destined for the embellishment of Venetian public spaces, antique artifacts were also displayed on private buildings. The Mastelli palace in Cannaregio, the residence of a rich mercantile family, is significant in this sense (fig. 113). When the building was refurbished, towards the end of the fifteenth century, a first-century B.C. marble altar was embedded on a corner of the façade facing the Rio de la Madonna de l’Orto (fig. 114).\textsuperscript{15} The ancient artifact was most likely procured in the eastern Mediterranean – on Paros or Delos - where the family conducted its trading business.\textsuperscript{16}

In the fourteenth century, a new taste for the antique began to develop in Venice, as in the rest of Italy, and ancient artifacts started to be viewed as more than valuable commodities, useful building materials, or military trophies. They now began to be

\textsuperscript{13} “molti gentilomeni et populari mandono a tuor marmori in Aquilegia et Ravena, et molti mandono a Constantinopoli.” Ferdinando Ongania, ed. Documenti per la storia dell'augusta Ducale Basilica di San Marco in Venezia dal nono secolo sino alla fine del decimo ottavo (Venice: F. Ongania, 1886), 210, n. 812.

\textsuperscript{14} See also the text of a fifteenth century chronicle quoted in Brown, Venice & Antiquity: the Venetian Sense of the Past: 17 and 296, note 56.


\textsuperscript{16} For the influence of similar antique altars on architectural motives used in fifteenth century Venice see Luigi Sperti, "Qualche nota sui rapporti con l'antico nella decorazione architettonica veneziana del primo Rinascimento," in Iconografia 2005: immagini e immaginari dall’antichità classica al mondo moderno, ed. Isabella Colpo, Irene Favaretto, and Francesca Ghedini (Rome: Quasar, 2005), 325-31.
appreciated for their old age, their exceptional survival from the ravages of time and also for their beauty. In the eyes of many Venetians, antiquities became significant objects worthy of being collected. This appreciation grew steadily during the following years, so much so that by the sixteenth century Venice had become second only to Rome as a center of collecting and as a marketplace for antiquities.

Venice’s territorial possessions in the eastern Mediterranean were a particularly rich source of antique artifacts and the officials elected to administer these regions played an important role in bringing home numerous antique objects. The antiquarian activities of these officials, together with the importations of merchants, were crucial to the enrichment of numerous private collections of antiquities formed in Venice at the time.

**Venetian Travelers and Their Friends in the Stato da Mar**

Venice’s life was integrally connected with that of the territories it had conquered along the Adriatic coast and in the eastern Mediterranean. The city’s maritime possessions played a crucial role in safeguarding Venice’s mercantile economy and were a point of pride of the Republic’s politics. In the fifteenth century, Venice’s maritime state was made up of numerous territories acquired primarily for commercial reasons, but which were important also as strategic defensive outposts against the advancement of the Turks. The Serenissima’s presence in the eastern Mediterranean was widespread; Venetians directly ruled some territories (Crete, Cyprus, and Corfu, during at least part of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries for example), while they extended their influence to numerous smaller islands (for instance Santorini and Andros) and kept trading and
diplomatic institutions in foreign cities such as Constantinople, Alexandria, and Damascus.\textsuperscript{17}

The regions that Venice administered directly, the true and proper Stato da Mar, formed a fragmented geography, yet they were governed and controlled closely by the Republic. The city councils – mainly the Great Council – were responsible for the election of the men in charge of the administration of these regions. Venetian officials, or rettori, were elected from the nobility for terms of about two years. Their role in the regions of the empire was to put into practice Venetian state policies and to mediate among the local heterogeneous populations. The most experienced and prominent patricians were elected to the most important offices, such as those of governor and captain of Zara, Corfu, Crete, and Cyprus. The governors (called conte, bailo, duca, rettore, provveditore or luogotenente) were in charge of the civil, juridical and financial administration while the capitani were responsible for military matters. Often, however, their functions overlapped. Officially almost any patrician was eligible for overseas positions, but in 1486 the Great Council had specified that the individuals elected to the most important posts on Cyprus, Crete and Constantinople needed to be men of “reputation and authority.”\textsuperscript{18}

By the beginning of the fifteenth century, numerous members of the Venetian nobility, educated like their peers in the rest of Italy in the new humanist climate, had

\textsuperscript{17} For this section on the Venetian Stato da Mar and its administrative organization I have relied on the recent study Monique O’Connell, Men of Empire: Power and Negotiation in Venice’s Maritime State (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 39.
developed a strong interest in ancient letters and culture. Many of them had also become collectors of antiquities and, when opportunity arose, they pursued their learned and antiquarian interests while also serving the Serenissima on the \textit{terraferma} and abroad. Mercantile and military expeditions along the Adriatic and in the eastern Mediterranean were also good opportunities for Venetians to discover, study and acquire antiquities.

Ambrogio Traversari’s visit to Venice in 1432-33, mentioned in a previous chapter, is a precious source of information on the antiquarian interests of Venetian noblemen early in the century. Many Venetians went to visit Traversari in the monastery of San Michele di Murano and showed him their holdings of ancient objects and manuscripts. The physician and humanist Pietro Tomasi (1375/80-1458) brought, for example, Greek codices and silver coins. Tomasi was not a nobleman but did belong to an important family. He had received a doctorate at the University of Padua and immediately thereafter had joined the Venetian fleet of Carlo Zeno, perhaps as a physician. Between 1411 and 1418 Tommasi lived in Candia and it was probably on the island that he obtained his antique manuscripts and coins. The noblemen Francesco Barbaro (1390-1454) and Benedetto Dandolo also showed their collections of antique

\begin{itemize}
\item [20] On Ambrogio Traversari and his Venetian sojourn see my chapter 1.
\item [21] An account of Traversari’s visit to Venice is in Brown, \textit{Venice & Antiquity: the Venetian Sense of the Past}: 83.
\item [22] King, \textit{Venetian Humanism in an Age of Patrician Dominance}: 434-36.
\end{itemize}

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gold coins and manuscripts to Traversari. Among Dandolo’s holdings was a rare coin with the effigy of Queen Berenice II of Egypt (c. 269 – 221 B.C.); it was such a special exemplar that Traversari had a lead cast made of it to bring back to Florence (fig. 13). Dandolo belonged to an important mercantile family and had travelled in his youth as far as Persia and it was in the eastern Mediterranean, in Syria, that he had procured his ancient coins. 23 The nobleman Bertuccio Dolfin used to carry his collection of antique gems along with him during his travels. In 1445 he was capitano delle galere di Alessandria and met Ciriaco d’Ancona in the port of Candia. 24 On board his galley Bertuccio showed him his precious antique holdings, including a rock crystal intaglio signed by the artist Eutyches that survives to this day (fig. 51). 25

Coriolano Cippico (1425-1493) was a nobleman of Traù (Trogir), a Dalmatian town under Venetian rule since 1420. Cippico had studied law in Padua during his youth and had developed an interest in antiquarian matters. 26 We have already mentioned his father, Pietro Cippico, one of Ciriaco d’Ancona’s friends. 27 In 1470, after the Turks had taken the Venetian colony of Negroponte, Cippico was nominated sopracomito of one of the Venetian galleys of Pietro Mocenigo’s fleet heading to battle against the Ottomans.

23 On these early Venetian collectors see also Marino Zorzi and Irene Favaretto, eds., Collezioni di antichità a Venezia: nei secoli della Repubblica (dai libri e documenti della Biblioteca Marciana) (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1988), 15-18.


25 On Dolfin see also my chapter 1.


27 See chapter 2 in this dissertation.
Coriolano wrote a chronicle of the expedition – *Petri Mocenici imperatoris gestorum libri tres* – in which he included numerous descriptions of the antique sites and ruins he had seen in the eastern Mediterranean (fig. 115).28 In 1473 Mocenigo’s fleet arrived in Seleucia (Silifke), a city founded in the 3rd century B.C. on the banks of the river Calycadnus (Göksu) in Asia Minor, Cippico described the ruins laying in front of them in this way:

> There are still many remains of buildings, especially along the river’s bank. Here I saw, together with the ruins of temples and of the amphitheater, a squared loggia, which was for the most part intact, except for the roof, it was adorned by numerous columns, statues and any other kind of sculptures; when I saw it I felt sorrow that such a rare and costly work was decaying into ruin for the neglect of the barbarians.29

The author of the first *isolario* [Book of islands] printed in Venice around 1485, Bartolomeo dalli Sonetti, was also a galley captain. Little is known about him, except that he presented himself in his book as an experienced traveler who had sailed throughout the Aegean fifteen times.30 In his verses, dalli Sonetti describes the Aegean islands and remarks on their ancient ruined cities, Latin and Greek inscriptions, fragmentary buildings and mosaics (fig. 116).

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28 Cippico’s work was first published in Venice in Latin in 1477. An Italian translation of the text was published in 1796, Coriolano Cippico, *Delle Guerre de' Veneziani nel'Asia dal MCCCCLXX al MCCCCLXXIII* (Venice: Carlo Palese, 1796).

29 “Restano ancora molte vestigia di edifizii, specialmente sulla riva del fiume. Qui vidi io oltra le rovine di tempii e dell’anfiteatro, una loggia quadrata, la maggior parte della quale era intera, eccetto il coperto, ornatissima di colonne di statue e d’ogni altra scultura: la quale vedendo mi dolsi che un’opera così rara e di tanta spesa, per la negligeza de’ barbari, fusse andata in rovina.” Ibid., 54-55.

ARCHEOLOGICAL FINDS ON CYPRUS

The last significant jewel added to Venice’s imperial crown was the island of Cyprus (fig. 117). Through a skillful diplomatic campaign Venice took formal possession of this territory in 1489, but a Venetian Queen, Caterina Cornaro (1454-1510) the “Daughter of Saint Mark,” had been governing the island since the death of her husband, James II, the last Lusignan king, in 1474.31

Situated in the easternmost corner of the Mediterranean, Cyprus had sat on the routes of pilgrims and merchants since medieval times. Much information about archeological findings on the island comes to us from the writings of these visitors who stopped ashore.

On his way to the Holy Land, in 1474, a Florentine pilgrim, Alessandro Rinuccini (1431-1494), arrived on Cyprus. Observing the ruins of some very ancient buildings in the area of Cizio (Larnaka) on the southeastern shores of the island he wrote in his diary:

And in various places it is possible to see the foundations of buildings, houses or palaces, with many large stones, and among these foundations was found by a seafarer a gold coin weighing around two ducats, with the image of the emperor Constantine sculpted on one side and that of Saint Helen, his mother, on the other.32

31 Among the numerous accounts of the island’s history see George Francis Hill, A History of Cyprus (Cambridge: University Press, 1940). And also Benjamin Arbel’s essays in Benjamin Arbel, Cyprus, the Franks and Venice, 13th-16th Centuries (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2000). For the history of Cyprus during the Venetian period see the recent Evangelia Skoufari, Cipro veneziana, 1473-1571: istituzioni e culture nel regno della Serenissima, 1. ed. (Rome: Viella, 2011).

32 “Et in diversi luoghi si dimostrano fondamenti di hedificii di chase o palazi con molte grosse pietre, et già fra essi fondamenti è stata trovata da alcuno marinaio moneta d’oro di peso di circha ducati due, ischolpiti dall’uno de’ lati chon l’yimage di Costantino imperadore et dall’altro con l’yimage di sancta Helena, sua madre.” Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini, Santissimo Peregrinaggio del Sancto Sepolcro 1474 (Pisa: Pacini Editore, 1993), 56. During his youth Rinuccini had been a merchant and had traveled to London, where he worked at the British branch of the Medici bank, but by the age of twenty eight he had left the secular life to enter the Dominican convent of San Marco in Florence.
When, in 1542, another pilgrim, the Swiss Jost von Meggen (1509-1559), disembarked on Cyprus, the fortuitous findings of ancient and late-antique coins noted by Rinuccini had evolved into more systematic excavations. In his travel diary Meggen describes the activities of men, whom he defines with the term of “fossores,” who carefully searched and sifted through the graveyards of ancient Salamis to bring to light numerous precious artifacts: “they obtain these things by sifting and carefully picking through the soil.” These early archeological campaigns were undertaken for profit, as many learned pilgrims arriving on Cyprus were often interested in visiting the antique ruins of the island and were willing to purchase ancient souvenirs. Von Meggen himself, who was a well-educated man with antiquarian interests, descended into one of the open subterranean crypts and there acquired some small objects. Among his purchases were gold and silver jewels, “gems and extremely old ancient coins, some of them made of gold and some of bronze, embossed with Greek and Latin characters.”

Meggen is not an isolated voice amongst travelers of that time. Only a few years later, in 1546, the Bohemian traveler Oldrich Prefát (1523-1565) confirms how the

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34 “ad has res cribrata terra ac scrupolosius discreta perveniunt.” Ibid., 74-75.

35 Jost von Meggen had received a good classical education and was learned in numerous languages, including Greek, Hebrew, Portuguese and some Slavic tongues. See Robert Royal, *The Pope's Army. 500 Years of the Papal Swiss Guard* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2006), 94-99.

Cypriots were deeply engaged in archeological excavations. The sites of the ancient Roman city of Salamis and of its necropolis are described by Prefat as extensively pierced with holes from where the diggers were unearthing jewels, gems and coins; a wealth of precious objects which had been buried with the dead.37 The English traveler John Locke observed in 1553: “Moreover when they digge, plowe, or trench they finde sometimes olde ancient coines, some of golde, some of silver, and some of copper, yea and many tombes and vautes with sepulchers in them.”38

In 1557 an Italian merchant, Alessandro Magno (1538-1576), reported how antique objects were dug up daily on the island not only from the area of Salamis, but also from other sites such as Paphos on the western coast and Limassol in the south.39 Magno also pointed to the fact that not only local people, but also Venetian authorities, were personally engaged in such excavations. He reports the tale of a sopracomito [ship captain] of the Lando family who died while searching in vain for a great treasure hidden in the necropolis of Paphos:

At Baffo other antiquities are still visible, and under the church of San Francesco there is a cave, which they say has one hundred and one chambers. In one of these there is a great treasure, and while all the other chambers are visible, this is the only one that can not be found and they tell the tale of a sopracomito of the Lando family who, while trying to find the treasure, met a Moor who asked him what was he looking for. The sopracomito responded that he was looking for the

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37 For Prefat’s account see Lorenzo Calvelli, Cipro e la memoria dell'antico fra Medioevo e Rinascimento. La precezione del passato romano dell'isola nel mondo occidentale (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2009), 104.

38 Richard Hakluyt, The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation Made by Sea or Over-Land to the Remote and Farthest Distant Quarters of the Earth at Any Time whithin the Compasse of these 1600 Yeeres (Glasgow: J. MacLehose and sons, 1904), V, 95.

treasure and the Moor said that he could not see it as it was his (the Moor’s) and he struck the *sopracomito*. The *sopracomito* died four days after coming out of the cave.40

That other necropolis of Cyprus contained many precious objects is also documented by local writers. Florio Bustron a notary of Nicosia, in his *Historia di Cipro* composed around 1560, describes the site of Curium (Kourion) as a landscape scattered with the monumental ruins of ancient temples, theaters and with “numeorous burial places underground, carved with the chisel; where they found terracotta vases, some golden rings, copper and silver medals, some of Ptolemy and other ancient kings.”41

Another local writer, Stefano da Lusignano, adds in his *Chorografia et breve historia universale dell’isola di Cipro* of 1573:

There are other of these burial places in Amathus, in Salamis, in Paphos, and in many other sites; and they found beautiful terracotta vases, plates, carved cups, golden and silver rings, earrings, bracelets for the hands and the feet, and other things.42
Occasionally accounts of archeological finds report information on unusual, almost improbable, retrievals. Lusignano narrates, for example, that in the site of Cithera (Conuclia):

In the tombs of the ancients they found many antiquities and precious things: these tombs are made like chambers underground. And it was not even four, or maybe six, years ago that they found a King almost intact and among other things they found a carbonchio and a Unicorn intact, dried out and with his horn. Since it was buried underground for such a long time, when they took it out the horn broke into pieces and I got one small piece of it. The farmer who found these things, because of his ignorance, lost much of great value and was fooled.⁴³

Similarly, in his description of the ancient sites visited on Cyprus, the German priest Wolfgang Gebhardt narrates how one day, in 1560, some poor local inhabitants unearthed some precious objects, among which were unspecified ornaments and decorations, but also two golden spurs, shields and emblems, and a cup made of gold. Everything was immediately handed over to the Venetian authorities who generously rewarded the discoverers.⁴⁴ Other sources suggest that it was a quite common practice for local

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⁴³ “si ritrovano molte anticaglie, e cose preciose nelle sepolture di essi antichi: le quali sepolture sono fatte à modo di camere sotto terra: e non è da quattro anni, over sei, che hanno trovato un Re quasi intiero: e infra le altre cose trovarono un carbonchio e un Liocorno tutto intero, e secco, con il corno: il quale per esser così rinchiuso tanto tempo, si guastò, e si ruppe il corno: e io n’ebbi un pezzetto: e il villano che ritrovò queste cose, per la ignorantia sua, perdè assai, e fu ingannato.” Lusignano, Chorographia et breve Historia universale dell’isola de Cypre principiando al tempo di Noé per infino al 1572: 7. In the French version of the text, Lusignano specifies that the discovery was made in 1564, see Lusignano, Description de toute l’isle de Cypre et des roys, princes, et seigneurs, tant payens que chrestiens, qui ont commandé en icelle: contenant l’entièr histoire de tout ce qui s’y est passé depuis le Délude Universel, l’an 142 et du monde 1798, jusque en l’an de l’incarnation et nativité de Jésus-Christ mil cinq cens soixante et douze: 17.

⁴⁴ See Calvelli, Cipro e la memoria dell’antico fra Medioevo e Rinascimento: 115.
inhabitants to turn their archeological finds over to local administrators who were able to appreciate their commercial value. Lusignano observes that one day in Limassol:

They found in a tomb, which had already been secretly opened, something that can not be mentioned in writing; and also a quite large, beautiful vase made of porphyry: the foot was twisted like a spiral and when you put a candle inside, it glowed so beautifully that it looked like a lantern. This vase was given to Giulio Podocataro, Captain of Limassol.45

The archeological materials retrieved from the ancient sites of Cyprus were rapidly dispersed to distant places. Between 1556 and 1558 the twenty-year-old future doge Leonardo Donà (1536-1612) spent time on Cyprus with his father Giovanni Battista, who had been elected luogotenente in Nicosia.46 On the island Leonardo took the opportunity to learn about the local history. He studied with “non pocca diligentia et fatica” [not little diligence and effort] the chancellery’s documents and traveled around the island with the consigliere and provveditore Nicolò da Mula taking notes on people, places and objects.47

Donà’s copious records show how he was also attracted by the material remains of the

45 “ritrovorno in una sepoltura già aperta secretamente, quello che non si scrive; e ancho un vaso bello grandetto di porfido: il piede andava a vite fatto e quando mettevi dentro una candela, lucea si bene, che parea una lanterna, e l’ebbe Giulio abodochataro Capitaneo de Limisso, e continuamente si ritrova qualche cosa chi vi cerca.” Lusignano, Chorographia et breve Historia universale dell’isola de Cipro principiando al tempo di Noè per infino al 1572: 7. It is not known to what the expression “quello che non si scrive,” refers and this must remain a mystery. Giulio Podocataro is a little known figure of the important Podocataro family, which counted amongst its members archbishops, knights and writers, see Emmanuele Antonio Cicogna, Delle inscrizioni veneziane (Venice: Giuseppe Picotti, 1824-27), IV, 142-47.

46 For Leonardo’s youth see Federico Seneca, Il Doge Leonardo Donà. La sua vita e la sua preparazione politica prima del dogado (Padova: Antenore, 1959).

island’s past and how, although still young, he had already developed an impressive sensitivity in observing ancient artifacts. In his account Donà reported that he saw numerous beautiful columns in Salamis that had been inadvertently broken into pieces by those who were trying to carry them away. He also records that near the ancient settlement of Machairionas, almost at the northeastern tip of the island, “there is a broken sarcophagus, which I believe was brought there to be taken away, very large and beautiful and made of Greek marble. I do not know where it was found.”

While the fate of the sarcophagus from Machairionas is unknown, another marble tomb found on the ancient site of Soli did leave the island and was transferred to Venice. The story of this antique piece is recorded by Florio Bustron in 1558:

This city [Soli] was located near the village of Leuca. Here the remains of this very large town are visible and it is possible to find underground beautiful sarcophagi made of marble with their lids; inside they find rings, pendants and many antique jewels. Not long ago they found a sarcophagus made of extremely fine marble, carved on all four sides with figures so naturally made that they lacked only breath. There were women and men riding horses without saddles and without bridles, holding clubs in their hands, and they were in the act of fighting; some were lying on the ground so naturally carved that they did not look as if they were made out of stone since you could see the joints, the nerves, the blood vessels, the fingernails, and muscles. They had certainly been made with great artistry by those very famous antique masters. This sepulcher was originally located in the middle of a temple standing on top of four little columns even though it was found underground. It was shipped to Venice in 1558 by the magnificent Lieutenant Giovanni Renier.

48 “Famagosta vecchia, che gia era detta Salamina, è lontana da Famagosta fortezza due leghe, della quale si veggono molte rovine; e specialmente di bellissime colonne di mistura nella sua piazza rovinate da quelli che volendole portar via non seppero distenderle senza farle cader e rompersi, ma tuttavia ne sono intiere alcune.” Grivaud, "Le Vénétien Leonardo Donà, témoin de découvertes archéologiques a Chypre en 1557," 23.


50 “Questa città [Solia] era appresso il casal Leuca, nella qual si vedono li vestiggi della città ampiissima, et in quella si trovano sotto terra sepuliture bellissime di marmoro con li soi coperchi, et dentro si trovano annelli, pendenti, et molte gentilezze antique. Et non è molto tempo che s'è
Thanks to the description provided by Bustron, the marble tomb has been identified with a fourth-century B.C. sarcophagus still preserved to this day in Vienna (fig. 118). The tale of its wanderings from the eastern Mediterranean to central Europe can be reconstructed in some detail, although little is known about Giovanni Renier, the Venetian *luogotenente* responsible for transferring the sarcophagus to Italy. Giovanni di Federico Renier (1507-1560), whose branch of the family was located at the Ponte di Ca’ Foscari in Venice, served two terms of office on Cyprus as *capitano* of Famagusta (1552-1554) and as *luogotenente* (1557-1559). The sarcophagus he shipped to Venice arrived safely in the lagoon, while apparently Renier never did. According to Marco Barbaro’s genealogies, indeed, the *luogotenente* died in the month of September of 1560 on his way to Venice.  


52 Giovanni Renier was the son of Federico Renier and Maria de Garzoni. His date of birth is recorded in ASVe, Avogaria di Comun, Libro d’Oro, Nascite, I, c. 243. See also George Jeffery, *A Description of the Historic Monuments of Cyprus. Studies in the Archaeology and Architecture of the Island* (Nicosia: James Archer, 1918), 439.
back home to Venice from the eastern Mediterranean.\textsuperscript{53} The sarcophagus was kept in the Renier palace in Venice until 1567, when Giovanni’s heirs decided to sell it.\textsuperscript{54} A letter by the Flemish art dealer Nicolò Stoppio, reveals that the merchant David Ott acquired the marble sarcophagus from the Renier family in the summer of that year for 150 ducats.\textsuperscript{55} Only a few months later Ott was able to re-sell it to Hans Fugger for 250 ducats. At that point the sarcophagus was shipped to Augsburg and from there it would later be transferred to Vienna.\textsuperscript{56}

Many of the antique marbles found on Cyprus left the island to reach western collections by way of Venetian officials such as Renier or via travelers such as Jost von Meggen. But during the period of Venetian control of the island, numerous finds also remained on Cyprus and were re-used in the construction and decoration of local monuments and buildings.\textsuperscript{57} Already at the end of the fifteenth century antique panels and

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\textsuperscript{53} “1560 settembre muore nel ritorno di Cipro ove fu luogotenente.” ASVe, Misc. Cod. I, Storia Veneta 21, Marco Barbaro, Arbori de’ patritti veneti: Renier.
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\textsuperscript{54} From the archival records that I have consulted in Venice it seems that Giovanni never married, no wedding is recorded for him in the registers of the Avogaria di Comun. Therefore his assets must have passed over to his brothers or nephews. Unfortunately I have not been able to locate Renier’s testament and even the exact circumstances of his death remain unknown.
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roundels of white and red marble had been embedded on Famagusta’s Sea Gate (Porta del Mare), the main city entrance from the port. During the same period the central square of Nicosia had also been embellished with an antique granite column (fig. 119).

Giovanni Renier himself had also employed ancient remains locally to refurbish the buildings of Famagusta. It was indeed during his term as luogotenente that the Palazzo del Proveditore received a new monumental façade, as attested by the Renier coat of arms, still visible on the skeletal remains of the palace’s entrance (fig. 120). The three monumental archways that give access to the palace are executed in rusticated masonry and flanked by antique grey granite columns recovered from the ruins of Salamis. Leonardo Donà also recorded in his Memorie how numerous marbles carried away from ancient Salamis were employed in the buildings of Famagusta during his time.

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60 Past and recent studies on the palazzo del provveditore in Famagusta suggest that the façade was built in 1552 during Renier’s tenure as capitano, see, for example, Langdale, "At the Edge of Empire: the Venetian Monuments of Famagusta, Cyprus," 173. Yet it is more likely that construction took place in 1557 when Renier was on Cyprus as luogotenente, since Venetian officials were prohibited from exhibiting their coat of arms on public buildings (this prohibition was however often violated). On this prohibition see Giulio Bistort, *Il Magistrato alle Pompe nella Republica di Venezia* (Venice: Tipografia-Libreria Emiliana, 1912), 277-88. The later date of 1557 better suits also Giangirolamo Sanmicheli’s chronology, to whom the design of the façade has been attributed in the past, see Erik Johan Langenskiold, *Michele Sanmicheli, the architect of Verona, his life and works* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri, 1938), 169.

61 Langdale, "At the Edge of Empire: the Venetian Monuments of Famagusta, Cyprus," 173.

62 “Di questo luoco si cavano di molte buone pietre per le fabbriche di Famagosta et da molti altri luochi vicini si cava la rocca e si lavora per la detta fabbrica.” Grivaud, "Le Vénétien Leonardo Doná, témoin de découvertes archéologiques a Chypre en 1557," 23.
Yet the most significant ornament of all was placed on the main square of Famagusta by another Venetian official, Gian Matteo Bembo (1491ca.-1570). During his term as capitano of Famagusta on the island Bembo made an important archeological discovery when, in 1548, he brought to light the tomb of the ancient goddess Venus. Thus to him and to his archeological finds we shall now turn.

A FORGOTTEN COLLECTOR: GIAN MATTEO BEMBO AND HIS DISCOVERIES

Francesco Sansovino (1521-1586) used the literary device of a dialogue between a Venetian and a foreigner to recount the attractions of the city in his *Delle cose notabili che sono in Venetia* of 1561 (fig. 121). The Venetian, after calling attention to the statues of Adam and Eve by Andrea Riccio displayed in the courtyard of the Ducal Palace, turns to enumerate the city’s notable collections of antiquities. He first mentions the bronze statue of the Adorante, which had arrived in Venice from Rhodes in 1503 and had once been owned by Andrea di Martini. He then names the “bellissimo studio” of Gabriele Vendramin at Santa Fosca, the renowned collection of the Patriarch of Aquileia Giovanni Grimani, the treasures assembled by Andrea Loredan at San Pantaleone, and the numismatic cabinets of Alessandro Contarini and of the Cavalier Centani. But the Venetian also adds that some beautiful pieces could be found in the house of the senator

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63 Francesco Sansovino, *Delle cose notabili che sono in Venetia* (Venice: Domenico de Farri, 1561), 19. The dialogue was first published in 1556 under the pseudonym of Anselmo Guisconi and only later, beginning in 1561, under Sansovino’s name. Between 1561 and 1606 the text was republished in Venice in at least 13 different editions.

Gian Matteo Bembo: “Sono anco alcune belle cose appresso M. Gian Matteo Bembo Senator illustriissimo e chiaro.”

Vendramin, Grimani, di Martini, Contarini and Loredan are familiar names in the history of collecting in sixteenth-century Venice, but by contrast Gian Matteo Bembo has never been counted by scholars among Renaissance collectors despite this quite explicit reference by his friend Sansovino in the dialogue.

Gian Matteo Bembo (1491ca.- 1570) was a prominent man in Venice, who had built for himself a long political career in the Venetian administration. He was known and esteemed by his contemporaries for his erudition, a quality that might be expected from a relative of the famous Cardinal Pietro Bembo (1470-1547). But Gian Matteo was even more praised for his virtuous and illustrious deeds, for his life spent as rettore,

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65 This reference to Gian Matteo Bembo is found for the first time in the 1561 edition of the dialogue.

66 Francesco Sansovino knew Bembo personally and had planned to write his biography, Cicogna, *Delle iscrizioni veneziane*: IV, 87. Furthermore Sansovino wrote the life of Giulia Bembo, Gian Matteo’s daughter, see Patricia Fortini Brown, "The Exemplary Life of Giulia Bembo Della Torre," in *Philanagnostes: Studi in Onore di Marino Zorzi*, ed. Chryssa A. Maltezou and Peter Schreiner (Bari: Istituto Ellenico di Studi Bizantini, 2008), 155-74.


68 Gian Matteo was an active participant in Venice’s cultural life. Not only was he among the founding members of the Venetian Accademia degli Uniti, but he acted also on behalf of Pietro Bembo in publishing his works, see Cicogna, *Delle iscrizioni veneziane*: III, 321. Finally, Gian Matteo was a prolific writer of letters, see Giammaria Mazzuchelli, *Gli scrittori d'Italia cioè notizie storiche, e critiche intorno alle vite, e agli scritti dei letterati italiani* (Brescia: G. Bossini, 1753), II, 731-35.
capitano, podestá on the terraferma and in the Stato da Mar.69 Particularly important for Gian Matteo’s reputation had been his role as leader of the defense of Cattaro against Ariadeno Barbarossa in 1538.70 From that time on, many contemporary writers included Bembo’s biography among those of the illustrious men.71 It was for his military and political achievements that Bembo himself wished to be remembered, as testified by the sculpted pastiche and inscription that still remains on the façade of his casa da stazio on Campiello Santa Maria Nuova in Venice (fig. 122 and fig. 123).72


71 Cicogna, Delle iscrizioni veneziane: III, 522. In a letter to Francesco Sansovino, Gian Matteo himself suggested that his battles in Cattaro, against the forces of Barbarossa, could be compared to those of the ancient kings Fastidia and Ostregota, see ibid., IV, 87.

72 Brown, Venice & Antiquity: the Venetian Sense of the Past: 285-86. It is unclear when the unusual statue of a wild man holding a sundial was embedded on the façade of Bembo’s house. In his Ragionamento of 1556 Paolo Giovio attests that Bembo’s personal impresa, a sun with a plant of sempervivum and the inscription DUM VOLVITUR ISTE NOB. P. I. S. M., was painted on the façade of Bembo’s house: “questa impresa intendo che quell gentil’huomo ha fatta dipingere sopra la facciata ò il frontispicio della casa sua in Venetia.” Paolo Giovio, Ragionamento di mons. Paolo Giovio sopra i motti, & disegni d’arme, & d’amore, che comunemente chiamano imprese: con un discorso di Girolamo Ruscelli, intorno allo stesso soggetto (Venice: Giordano Ziletti, 1556), 106. It is possible, however, that Giovio had never seen this with his own eyes. Apparently some time afterwards the niche with the marble statue was added and the original motto replaced by the longer inscription which mentions all the places where Gian Matteo had served the Serenissima: DUM VOLVITUR ISTE IAD. ASR. IVSTINOP. VER. SALAMIS. CRETA. IOVIS. TESTES. ERVNT. ACTOR. PA. IO. SE. M. As noted by Patricia Fortini Brown, the inscription must predate Bembo’s service in Brescia in 1560 as that assignment is not mentioned.
The story of Bembo’s antiquarian pursuits is tightly entangled with that of his official duties. It was indeed his career that brought Bembo to territories rich in classical remains and presented him with the opportunity of becoming a collector and a purveyor of antiquities to Venice.

Whether residing in Venice or in the territories of the Venetian empire, Gian Matteo kept in touch with his uncle Pietro Bembo through regular epistolary exchanges, until the latter’s death in 1547. Gian Matteo served as conte di Zara (Zadar) between 1534 and 1537 (fig. 124). The letters written by Pietro Bembo provide a glimpse into Gian Matteo’s Dalmatian life and often include colorful details. In a letter of April 1537 Pietro Bembo impatiently wrote to his nephew:

I understand you have gathered many ancient silver coins for me, with the idea of bringing them here yourself to me. If this is true, and I am sure it is, I ask you to send them with the first trusted messenger, so that I can see them without waiting for your arrival. I promise I will keep them as you send them, so when you come back you can do whatever you please you with them.

Zara, with its layered Greek and Roman past, was a fruitful terrain for antiquarian pursuits. Already in the fifteenth century, local humanists had been gathering small antique artifacts and inscriptions for their own private collections and for those of their correspondents in Italy. We have seen, for instance, how the Venetian nobleman Maffeo Valaresso, Archibishop of Zara, in the 1450s searched for small antiquities on behalf of

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73 In 1519 Gian Matteo Bembo married Marcella Marcello, daughter of Antonia Bembo, Pietro’s sister. For this reason, Gian Matteo is usually referred to as Pietro’s nephew. In reality they were also connected by distant relatives, see Brown, "Pietro Bembo e l’arte di diplomazia."

74 “Ho inteso che avete raccolte molte Medaglie d’argento per me, con pensiero di portarle voi qui e darmele. Se così è, ché sono certo di sì, vi priego state contento mandarmele per lo primo fidato messo, acciò io le possa vedere senza aspettar la vostra venuta, promettendovi di servarle tali quali me le manderete, acciò che, venuto, ne possiate fare il piacer vostro.” Pietro Bembo, Lettere (Bologna: Commissione per i testi di lingua, 1987), IV, letter 1833.
his friend, the avid collector Pietro Barbo. By the time of Gian Matteo’s stay in the

town, nearly a century later, interest in collecting antiquities was even more widespread,
as attested by the inventory of the possessions left by the nobleman Giovanni de Ciprianis

at his death in 1528. Ciprianis had gathered not only a rich library of important books, but

also a collection of medals and antique coins.

Later in his career Gian Matteo travelled to other Venetian territories equally rich

in antique remains and became even more involved in rescuing the vestiges of the past.

From 1546 to 1548 he was in Cyprus as capitano of Famagusta. Bembo’s primary

responsibility was to oversee the military administration of the territory, but he also

engaged in other activities meant to improve living conditions on the island. He

attempted to bring running water to Famagusta from a well outside the city, but, while

great energies and efforts were invested in the project, the results proved disappointing

and it was left incomplete.

Maffeo Valaresso is mentioned in chapter 3 of this dissertation.

Giuseppe Praga, "Zara nel Rinascimento," Archivio Storico per la Dalmazia 20, no. 115

(1935): 316. Ciprianis’ collection included: “uno ducato d’oro de santa Lena et una medai a d’oro

picola cum una testa suso; 11 medaie nove de arzento peso onza 1, k. ½ ; 16 certi soldi antigi de

arzento et altre monede pesa onze ½ .”

Benjamin Arbel, "Η Κυπρος υπο ενετικη κυριαρχια," in Ιστορια τησ Κυπρου (Nicosia: 1995),

535.

For Bembo’s appearance in a court in Nicosia on 20 March 1547, see Nicholas Coureas and

Christopher David Schabel, The Cartulary of the Cathedral of Holy Wisdom of Nicosia

(Nicosia: Cyprus Research Center, 1997), 324.

See Benjamin Arbel, "Supplying Water to Famagusta: New Evidence from the Venetian

Period," in Praktika tou tritou diethnous Kypriologikou Synedriou (Nicosia 16-20 April 1996),

Acts of the Third International Congress of Cypriot Studies, ed. Athanasios Papageorgiou

(Nicosia: 2001), 651-56. The source of this information is Leonardo Donà’s manuscript, Memorie

per la Relazione di Cipro 1556, in Venice, Biblioteca del Museo Correr, Ms. Donà dale Rose 45,

c. 142-175. Some excerpts from the manuscript have been recently published in English by

Patapiou, "Leonardo Donà, Memorie per le cose di Cipro: from the City of Shoal Waters to

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According to the Paduan chronicler Marco Guazzo, Bembo became an active searcher of antique materials to be reused for the embellishment of the Venetian palazzo del provveditore:

So [Bembo] having undertaken a search in the year 1548 for ancient marbles in many sites to restore that building to its original dignity, he found underground the sepulcher of the goddess Venus made of extremely beautiful marble. It was recognized by the letters which were carved on it and which had not been eroded by time. This [discovery] brought extreme happiness to this special gentleman, who had it carried to the middle of the square in Famagusta and put in an eminent place between two beautiful columns, where it stands as a great ornament for that town, both for its beauty and for its antiquity.80

The Roman sarcophagus found by Bembo, and immediately identified as the tomb of Venus, was recovered from the ruins of ancient Paphos, on the western shores of the island, and from there was transported all the way to Famagusta (fig. 125).81 As described by Guazzo and shown in a view of the city of 1571, the marble sarcophagus was prominently displayed in front of the Latin cathedral of Saint Nicholas as part of a

Outermost Karpasia," 209-30. Patapiou’s translation of the passage on the aqueduct reads: 
“Outside Famagusta, one league away, in a place called St. Constantine, there is a well. Because the area is at a higher elevation when compared with the city, the nobleman Zuan Matteo Bembo, governor of Famagusta thought it right to distribute its water to the city. For this reason, he had pipes placed at the distance of two or more shots of the arquebus [sic] – that is where they are still found today. It seems, though, that the amount of water was not enough or that the project proved to be too expensive, so the work stopped before it was completed. Efforts were made to dig out other wells from within the rocks, in the hope of finding a greater water-source, but in vain!”

80 “Adunque, facendo con diligenza cercare in più luoghi marmi antichi l’anno 1548 per ridurre quel luogo uguale a la sua dignità, trovossi di marmo bellissimo et sotto terra il sopolcro de la dea Venere conosciuto per le lettere che in quello sono intagliate et non dal tempo consummate. Cosa di gran contento a questo raro gentilhuomo, che lo fece portare nel mezzo de la piazza di Famagosta et in luogo eminente tra due bellissime colonne collocare, grand’ornamento di quella città, si per bellezza quanto per l’antichità di quel sopolcro.” Marco Guazzo, Cronica di M. Marco Gvazzo. Ne la qvale ordinatamente contieni l’essere de gli huomini illustri antiqui, & moderni, le cose, & i fatti di eterna memoria degni, occorsi dal principio del mondo sino à questi nostri tempi (Venice: F. Bindoni, 1553), 413v.

81 On the provenance of the sarcophagus from Paphos and of the columns from Salamis see Calvelli, Cipro e la memoria dell'antico fra Medioevo e Rinascimento: 140-45.
complex assemblage of antique spolia (fig. 126). The tomb of Venus was in fact monumentally placed between two ancient granite columns excavated from the site of Salamis. Guazzo reports, as proof of authenticity for the sarcophagus, that it bore an inscription that clearly identified it as the tomb of Venus. The inscription unfortunately does not survive.

Another contemporary source, however, narrates the story of Bembo’s discovery in a different way. In his *Storietta del Friuli*, written at the end of the sixteenth century, Germano Vecchi writes about Bembo’s find, mentioning it as an exemplary “impostura”:

The Illustrious Giammatteo Bembo, captain of that realm, a sarcophagus having been found underground among the ruins of Salamis, had someone write around its base in Arabic letters, that he said to be Phoenician: ‘Sepulcher of Venus of Cyprus’ and had the sarcophagus carried to Famagusta to the square in front of the church of San Niccolò, so that it could be seen by everyone; and Mister Daniele Capriileo from Udine, erudite and excellent historian, saw the sepulcher in 1561. Bembo laughingly told him this anecdote.

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82 The sarcophagus is clearly visible on Famagusta’s square between the two columns in the view representing the siege of Famagusta of 1571 executed by Stefano Gibellino. For a history of Famagusta’s buildings and an illustration of Gibellino’s engraving see Catherine Otten-Froux, "La ville de Famagouste," in *L'Art Gothique en Chypre* (Paris: Institut de France, 2006), 109-18.

83 A “Greek inscription on a black stone” was seen in the proximity of Venus’s sarcophagus by Richard Pococke during his visit to Famagusta in 1738, see Calvelli, *Cipro e la memoria dell'antico fra Medioevo e Rinascimento*: 145-46. Calvelli suggests also that another inscription, in honor of Trajan, could have been brought to the square by Gian Matteo Bembo at that time.

Thus according to Vecchi, Gian Matteo Bembo had skillfully fabricated a forgery, applying a newly made inscription to the Roman sarcophagus. Sometimes, after his return to Venice, Bembo laughed at his astuteness.85

Yet, the news of the archeological find on Cyprus spread quickly and soon reached Venice. Here Francesco Sansovino recorded Bembo’s discovery in the first edition of his *Dialogo* in 1556. While describing the image of Venus represented on one of the panels of the Loggetta, Sansovino evoked Bembo’s discovery of the goddess’ tomb as proof of her real existence (fig. 127).86

The memory of the retrieval of Venus’ sarcophagus by the Venetian capitano survived also on Cyprus for a long time, even after the island fell into Turkish hands in 1571. In February of 1582 the Frenchman Jean Palerne (1557-1592) was traveling to Constantinople. On board a Turkish ship navigating along the southern coast of the island, he met a Venetian gentleman who reported having been with the Venetian “podestá” at the time of the discovery of Venus’ sarcophagus:

There was a Venetian gentleman who told me, that at the time when the Signoria of

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85 A seventeenth century writer, Barezzo Barezzi, in his *Proprinomio* of 1643 narrates: “Dicano, che già no è molto tempo, essendo nell’isola di Cipri in Magistrato M. Matteo Bembo, Senator di gran nome, e huomo di grand’animo, e fabricando egli allora in Famagosta per abbellimento di quella Città, ritrovò la sepoltura della già detta prima Venere, la qual cosa riputandosi egli à somma felicità, fece metter il Sepollcro sù la piazza di Famagosta in luogo publico à perpetua memoria di quella Dea, ch’alciuni hanno creduto, ch’ella fosse una cosa finta, con lettere significanti in che tempi, e da chi ella fosse trovata à giorni nostri.” Barezzo Barezzi, *Proprinomio historico, geografico e poetico* (Venice: Barezzi, 1643), 468-69.

Venice had control of the island, he set off with the podestá and they found the tomb of Venus where there was an inscription that was then interpreted, and that it was not a fantasy, but that in reality she was a great courtesan, who ultimately was adored as a goddess for her beauty.87

We do not know the identity of Palerene’s Venetian informant, but it has been noted that during his stay on Cyprus the French traveler spent most of his time in Limassol.88 In the port town, probably among Greek and Venetian merchants, Palerne gathered information on the past and recent history of the island. In his account the Frenchman adds one new detail to the story of the recovery of Venus’ tomb. The sarcophagus apparently was not found empty: “She used to be buried inside, as he told me that they found the head, which was carried to Venice, and that this magnificent gentleman keeps it dearly preserved.”89 Whether the head of the courtesan Venus was really found and ever arrived in Venice we do not know with certainty, since Palerene is the only known source to report this detail of the story.

Similarly untraceable in Venice is another antique artifact connected with Venus and found on Cyprus. A few years after Bembo’s retrieval of her sarcophagus, an antique statue of the goddess was also found on the island and shipped immediately to Venice because of its unsurpassed beauty. The Frenchman André Thevet (1516-1590) is the

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87 “Il y eut un Gentilhomme Vénitien, qui me dict, que du temps la Seigneurie de Venise tenoit l’isle, il y fut avec le potesta, & trouvèrent la sepulture de Vénus, où il y avoit quelques characters, qui avoyent depuis esté interprétéz, & que ce n’estoit point une chose feincte, comme l’on pense, mais que véritablement c’estoit une grande courtisane, & laquelle en fin pour sa beauté fut adorée, comme déesse.” Jean Palerne, D’Alexandrie à Istanbul: pérégrinations dans l’Empire Ottomane, 1581-1583 (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1991), 222.


89 “Elle y souloit ester ensépulturée: car il me dict qu’ils y avoyent trouvée la teste, qui fut portée à Venise, laquelle ce magnifique garde bien chérement.” Palerne, D’Alexandrie à Istanbul: pérégrinations dans l’Empire Ottomane, 1581-1583: 222.
source for this episode which happened at the time of his stay on the island, in 1552: “A statue of Venus, the beautiful one par excellence, was found underground and was taken to the Signoria of Venice as a most exquisite object.”⁹⁰ While it is not known where the statue is today, Thevet considered it worthy of being portrayed in one of the few images that illustrate his text and this image remains the only surviving record of the marble (fig. 128).

Another French gentleman, who was traveling in the eastern Mediterranean at that time, wrote of one more antique sculpture shipped to the lagoon by a Venetian official. At the end of the summer of 1551 Nicolas de Nicolay (1517-1583), on his way to Constantinople with the French ambassador to the Grand Turk, Gabriel d’Aramon, was compelled by strong contrary winds to stop for eight days on the Venetian island of Cerigo (fig. 129). The forced stay gave de Nicolay the opportunity to visit many sites of the island: the port of San Nicolao on the eastern shore and the fortress of Capsali in the south. The Venetian provveditore, Andrea Vincenzo Querini, showed the French traveler the island’s defense system and hosted him in his own residence. Here de Nicolay was admitted into a room decorated with a painted frieze bearing the coats of arms of all the Venetian provveditori who had served on the island since the beginning of the sixteenth century.⁹¹ On Cerigo, de Nicolay also explored many ancient sites led by local guides.⁹²


He visited the ruins of the temple of Venus where several ionic columns were still standing. Nearby, de Nicolay saw a female statue of huge proportions dressed in the Greek manner without her head, and noted: “my guide said that a few years ago the head had been removed by a provveditore of the island who sent it to Venice, and the people of the island say that it was the image of Helen.”

While these objects presumably imported to the lagoon by Venetian officials around the middle of the sixteenth century are now untraceable, one ancient artifact survives in Venice to this day and can be linked to Gian Matteo Bembo’s archeological excavations on Cyprus. This is the fragmentary lid of a sixth-century B.C. anthropoid sarcophagus found in Venice, embedded at the water entrance of a building complex on the Rio di San Giovanni Grisostomo, at the end of the nineteenth century (fig. 130). The entryway used to provide access to an internal courtyard that in the sixteenth century was part of Bembo’s palace on Campiello Santa Maria Nuova. Too little is known about the history of this marble to assert with certainty when it was brought to Venice; however

92 “pour rassasier mon esprit et éviter oisiveté, je mis peine de rechercher les reliques des antiquités tant de la ville Cythérée que du château de Ménélaus, et ancien temple de Vénus.” Ibid., 102.

93 “mais à ce que me dit ma guide, quelques années auparavant, la tête en avait été ôtée par un provéditeur de l’ île, qui la fit porter à Venise, et affirment les isolans que c’était l’effigie d’Hélène.” Ibid., 102.


since its provenance from Cyprus is convincing it was, in all likelihood, one of the fruits of Bembo’s excavations on the island.⁹⁶

A few years after the end of his assignment on Cyprus, Gian Matteo Bembo was elected capitano of Crete, which was also a fruitful quarry for Venetian officials. During his term (1552 – 1554) Bembo again, as in Famagusta, busied himself in solving the island’s water supply problems.⁹⁷ He built the first aqueduct to bring running water to the main town of Candia. At the end of the aqueduct, in front of the Augustinian monastery of San Salvatore, a monumental fountain was erected (fig. 131).⁹⁸ Still visible today –

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⁹⁶ For recent bibliography on this typology of sarcophagi from Cyprus see, for example, Vassos Karageorghis, Ancient art from Cyprus: the Cesnola collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000).

⁹⁷ Bembo would build for himself a reputation as an expert in hydraulic problems. Giordano Ziletti, in his dedication to Gian Matteo of Alessandro Piccolomini’s work Della grandezza della terra e dell’acqua (Venice: Giordano Ziletti, 1561), wrote: “ho eletto di aggiungerli l’onoratissimo nome, e il patrocinio di vostra Clarissima Magnificentia, alla quale ne fo dono, sperando che a lei debbia esser gratissimo, si per l’affettion che porta all’autor suo, et si ancora per rispetto del soggetto del libro, essendo V. M. oltre a molt’altre eccellentie del l’ingegno suo, particolarmente intendentissima di queste cose dell’acque, e si fattamente che molti di coloro, che l’hanno per sola e per principale profession loro, si glorijno di confessare, che piu acquistano da un ragionamento o discorso di lei, che da lungo studio, e esperientia.” For Bembo’s hydraulic expertise see also Lionello Puppi, “Venezia per sempre,” in Il re delle Isole Fortunate (Vicenza: Angelo Colla, 2010), 45-49; Cicogna, Delle inscrizioni veneziane: III, 329.

⁹⁸ A manuscript note by Apostolo Zeno on his copy of the volume Lettere famigliari di Messer Pietro Bembo Cardinale scritte a Messer Gio. Mattheo Bembo suo nipote (Venice: Francesco Rampazetto, 1564) preserved in Venice the Biblioteca Marciana (BMVe, 7 D 264) reports: “Avanti la chiesa di San Salvatore nella città di Candia v’è una fonte che fu fatta fabricare da Gianni Matteo Bembo quando fu capitano in Candia e quivi è posta una bella statua antica senza mano. E la pietra ove si sogliono pubblicare i bandi. Era un’ara antica ottangola di marmo bianco bellissima.” Zeno had taken the information from the Rerum Creticarum Observationes written by the Vicentine Onorio Belli, a manuscript that he had the opportunity to read before it disappeared. Lorenzo Calvelli, Cipro e la memoria dell’antico fra Medioevo e Rinascimento. La percezione del passato romano dell’isola nel mondo occidentale, 151, has recently suggested that the pietra del bando mentioned in Zeno’s note should be identified with the fountain itself. It is, however, more plausible that this was a different marble. An octagonal structure, similar to a large wellhead, is clearly visible in a representation of Candia’s main square in one of the illustrations (c. 84) of the universal history (Chronographia) by the Cretan painter George
albeit altered from its original form – the structure is an elaborate assemblage of antique spolia and sixteenth-century marble reliefs. The latter include two lions of San Marco and eight coats of arms of Venetian officials who served on Crete from 1551 to 1554: Gian Matteo Bembo capitano (1552-1554); Alvise Gritti, duca di Candia (1552-1554); Giovanni Tiepolo, consigliere (1552-1554); Giorgio Emo, camerlengo (from 1553-1555); Pietro Marino Diedo (1551-1553); Vittore Bragadin, camerlengo; Domenico Contarini, castellano (1552-1555); and one official is yet unidentified. The other elements of the fountain: two monolithic marble columns; a rectangular basin; a marble fragment carved with vegetal motives; and other polychrome marbles are all spolia recovered on the island from ancient sites. At the center of the fountain stands a monumental headless statue, a Roman marble representing Asclepius (fig. 132).

The Cretan nobleman Francesco Barozzi (1537-1604) in his *Descrizione dell’isola di Creta* (1577-78) reports on the provenance of this statue:

> Where the Castle of Ierapetra now is, there are infinite columns made of marble of different colors, and also a great number of marble statues buried underground, some large and some small. From this site in the past and still to this day, many illustrious Rettori have had excavated and carried away many statues and marble columns; here they find heads, legs and arms which belonged to broken statues and also some figures of animals. From this place was also taken the large marble statue without head and right arm up to the elbow that is on the fountain of San Salvatore in the town of Candia; this statue was taken from Ierapetra and installed

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on that fountain built by the illustrious Gian Matteo Bembo, *Capitano Generale* of Candia in the year 1558.101

While we do not have evidence of Gian Matteo Bembo exporting antiquities from Crete to Venice, the fountain he built clearly demonstrates his ongoing interest in collecting antique fragments. Once Bembo returned to the *terraferma*, his taste for ancient artifacts did not diminish. His active commitment in administering and embellishing the Venetian possessions in fact put him once again in front of the vestiges of the ancient past. In a letter of 1560 written to Girolamo Faletti, the Este ambassador in Venice, Bembo reveals his natural inclination to improve and beautify the cities where he served the Serenissima: “moved by a certain natural inclination of mine, that I have always had, to decorate and refurbish places where and when I have seen the need, as I have done somewhere else.”102 In the same letter Bembo explains that as *capitano* in Brescia he decided:

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101 “dove hora è il Castello Girapetra, vi sono una infinità di colonne di marmo di diversi colori, et parimente un grandissimo numero di statue di marmo sepolte sotterra, alcune grande, alcune piccole, dal qual luogo molti clarissimi Rettori hanno fatto e fanno alla giornata cavar et portar via molte statue et colonne di marmo, dove si trovano, et teste et gambe et braccia di marmo che sono rotte dalle statue, et alcune sorte d’animali; dal qual luogo fu cavata anco la statua grande di marmo senza capo et man dritta fin al gomedo posta alla Fontana di Santo Salvatore, nella città di Candia, la qual statua fu tratta dal detto luogo di Girapetra, et fu posta in detta Fontana fabricata dal clarissimo signor Gian Matteo Bembo, Capitano General di Candia, l’anno 1558.”. It is not clear from the sources whether it was Bembo himself who installed the fragmentary marble statue on the fountain or if this was carried there only some time later, in 1558, to complete the decoration. A manuscript description of Candia by Leonardo Quirini (BCVe, Ms Wcovich Lazzari, 26, 6, c. 18), quoted by Giuseppe Gerola (ibid., IV, 42, note 3.), seems to allude to a slightly later addition to the fountain built by Bembo: “Et una delle statue senza capo et senza la mano destra fu posta sotto al cupedo della Fontana della città di Candia detta San Salvatore, la qual fu fatta dall’eccellentissimo signor Matteo Bembo quando fu capitano generale di Candia l’anno 1538.”. Obviously, the date 1538, as transcribed by Gerola, is incorrect as Bembo arrived on Crete only in 1552. On the fountain see also Brown, *Private Lives in Renaissance Venice: Art, Architecture, and the Family*: 191.

102 “invitato ancora da una certa mia naturale inclinazione, che ho sempre havuta d’abbellire, e accomodare alcuni luoghi, dove, e quando ne ho veduto il bisogno, come ho già fatto altrove.” Letter written by Gian Matteo Bembo from Brescia to Girolamo Faletti on June 1, 1560,
to enlarge the square that is in front of my palace; in this way not only was the splendor and beauty of this part of the city increased, as per my wish, but the place was made suitable to have in it a display of chivalry and infantry, or to enact a battle, and to keep in it an adequate number of soldiers whenever necessary.\textsuperscript{103}

While he was attending to the enlargement of the piazza del Duomo, vestiges of the city’s Roman past were discovered in the ancient forum nearby. As Ottavio Rossi, a local historian, narrates:

In the Arrij square together with many other marbles was even found the statue of Marco Nonio Macrino the younger, dressed in a toga and decorated with part of those emblems which were the attributes of the genius of the city of Brescia. This statue was later taken to Venice in 1561 by Gian Matteo Bembo, who had been our capitano.\textsuperscript{104}

Although known today only from the sixteenth-century illustration included in Rossi’s volume, the statue of Marco Nonio Macrino was very likely one of the “belle cose” that Sansovino mentioned in Bembo’s house in Venice (fig. 133).\textsuperscript{105}


\textsuperscript{103} “di volere aggrandire la piazza, che è d'avanti al palazzo della mia stanza; col quale effetto si veniva non solamente ad accrescere ornamento, e vaghezza in questa parte alla Città, secondo il mio desiderio; ma si rendeva anche il luogo atto, e capace da potervisi fare una mostra di gente da cavallo, et da piedi, et da rappresentarvi una battaglia, et mantenervi un convenevole numero di soldati in ogni occorrenza, et per ogni rispetto.” Letter written by Gian Matteo Bembo from Brescia to Girolamo Faletti on June 1, 1560. Ibid., 206-211. On this episode see also Magno, Voyages, 1557-1565: 726.

\textsuperscript{104} “nella piazza de gli Arrij, oltre a' tanti marmi, vi fu ritrovata ancora la statua di Marco Nonio Macrino il più giovine, vestito con la pretesta, & ornato con parte di quelle insegne, ch’ attribuivano al Genio della Città di Brescia. La qual Statua fu poi portata a Venetia nell’anno Mille e cinquecento sessanta uno, dal Sig. Gian Matteo Bembo già nostro Capitano.” Ottavio Rossi, Le Memorie Bresciane opera istorica et simbolica (Brescia: Bartolomeo Fontana, 1616), 45. See also Irene Favaretto, Arte antica e cultura antiquaria nelle collezioni venete al tempo della Serenissima, Rist. riv. e corretta. ed. (Rome: L’Erma di Bretschneider, 2002), 178.

\textsuperscript{105} Rossi’s book was published in 1616, more than fifty years after the episode happened. From his text, however, it is clear that he was in contact with many local antiquari, who must have recorded information about the statue.
EXCAVATIONS ON CRETE: JACOPO FOSCARINI AND ALVISE GRIMANI

When Cyprus was conquered by the Ottoman Turks in 1571, the Venetian maritime empire suffered an important loss. At that point the island of Crete was the most prominent and vital territory still in Venice’s possession in the eastern Mediterranean (fig. 134). Yet the shrunken Stato da Mar continued to be quarried for ancient artifacts for both public and private use by Venetian officials.

The island of Crete had been purchased by Venice in 1204, but the Republic had actually taken possession of it only in 1211. Since then Crete had been administered and governed by the Serenissima for over four centuries until, in 1669, the island fell to the Turks. Famous as the island of the god Jove and of the one hundred cities, chanted by Homer, Crete’s landscape was strewn with classical ruins, the material remains of its long history.

We know that upon their arrival on the island, since the fourteenth century, Venetian magistrates were officially introduced to the local antiquities through organized visits to Gortyna, Crete’s ancient Roman capital. According to De Orthographia by Gasparino Barzizza (1370-1431), an Italian humanist from Bergamo who taught rhetoric at Padua, the Venetian officials were taken more than 400 meters inside the mountain

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through narrow, torch-lit passages and were guided by local Jews to what was believed to be the labyrinth built by Daedalus.\textsuperscript{109}

It was on Crete that in the early years of the fifteenth century a noble Venetian, Nicola Cornaro, had gathered in his country retreat one of the earliest collections of antique marbles. In a valley near the citadel of Pedaia, Cristoforo Buondelmonti had met Cornaro and wrote:

I came upon a grove, a \textit{viridarium} like a pleasure garden, in which the noble and learned gentleman Nicolas, descendent from the Scipios, lives without heirs. He has constructed and adorned it with the most ancient marbles, and whatever pleasure the body finds in trees is found abundantly there. He delights in reading Latin books and occasionally a work of Dante. From the mouth of a marble statue flows a natural spring; to the right and to the left his ancestors had placed the busts of Mark Antony and Pompey. I noticed some beautiful marbles that were brought there from other structures.\textsuperscript{110}

Yet, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, sculptures and inscriptions found on the island had also been sent back to Venice. A manuscript in the Marciana Library in Venice, compiled by Paolo Ramusio, contains a series of drawings illustrating the

\textsuperscript{109} Arthur Maurice Woodward, "The Gortyn 'Labyrinth' and its visitors in the fifteenth century," \textit{The annual of the British School at Athens} 44 (1949): 324-25. What was believed to be the labyrinth at Gortyna (Gortyn, Gortys, Gortina) was in fact a system of passages formed on the site of an old stone quarry. For a summary of the story of the labyrinth and its early modern visitors see J. P. A. van der Vin, \textit{Travellers to Greece and Constantinople: Ancient Monuments and Old Traditions in Medieval Travellers' Tales} (Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1980), 229-34; Democratia Hemmerdinger Iliadou, "La Crète sous la domination vénitienne et turque," \textit{Studi Veneziani} 9 (1967): 585-87. For descriptions of the ruins at Gortyna in the fourteenth and sixteenth century see also Johanna Heinrichs,"The Topography of Antiquity in Travel Accounts of Venetian Crete" (forthcoming).

inscriptions and funerary stelae owned by his father, Giovann Battista Ramusio (1485-1557), a Venetian secretary of the Senate and member of the Council of Ten.\textsuperscript{111} A provenance from the eastern Mediterranean is specified for many of these marbles. A note accompanying one of the drawings, for example, explains: “Images of Roman Magistrates wearing togas, found in past years on the island of Crete, and given as a gift to Giovan Battista Ramusio, that his son Paolo transported to his Paduan home.”\textsuperscript{112}

When, in the last decades of the sixteenth century, Crete remained the only extensive territorial Venetian possession in the eastern Mediterranean, its antique marble riches were heavily exploited by the Serenissima’s officials through extensive archeological campaigns.\textsuperscript{113}

Jacopo (Giacomo) Foscarini (1523-1603) was on Crete for four years, from the fall of 1574 to the beginning of 1578.\textsuperscript{114} Having been a successful international merchant as a young man and having rapidly climbed the political ladder during his maturity, he arrived on the island with extraordinary powers, holding the multiple titles of

\textsuperscript{111} Ramusio was an expert geographer and, although he did not personally travel extensively, he published an influential collection of travel stories entitled \textit{Delle Navigationi et Viaggi}. See Giovanni Battista Ramusio, \textit{Delle navigazioni e viaggi} (Turin: Einaudi, 1978–1988).


\textsuperscript{114} Roberto Zago, "Foscarini, Giacomo (Jacopo)," in \textit{Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani} (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1997), vol. 49, 364-70
provveditore generale, sindaco and inquisitore (fig. 135). Only the threat of the Ottomans’ advancement against Venice’s possession in the Mediterranean prompted the Republic to assign to one man alone such a large concentration of responsibilities. During his time on Crete Foscarini had the authority and the ability to deeply transform many aspects of the material, religious, military and social life of the people of the island. Meanwhile, he was able to simultaneously cultivate his personal cultural interests. Foscarini enjoyed friendly relations with prominent local and Italian intellectuals such as the Cretan Francesco Barozzi, who dedicated to him his edition of the prophetic text Oracula Leonis, and the Vicentine traveler and polygraph Filippo

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115 A life of Jacopo Foscarini was written by Giovanni Antonio Ridolfi Sforza in Latin in 1623; the text was translated into Italian the following year by Sforza’s son Bartolomeo. See Giovanni Antonio Ridolfi Sforza, Vita di Giacopo Foscarini Cavaliere e Procuratore di S. Marco tradotta per Bartolomeo Ridolfi Sforza D. (Venice: Antonio Pinelli, 1624).

116 On the exceptional circumstances that brought Foscarini to hold multiple titles see Zago, "Foscarini, Giacomo (Jacopo)," 367.


118 On cultural life on Crete at this time see David Holton, ed. Literature and Society in Renaissance Crete (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

119 Barozzi was born on Crete to a family of Venetian origins, he studied at the University of Padua, where he later taught mathematics. In 1577-78 he wrote a description of Crete, Descrittione dell’isola di Creta, which is preserved in several manuscript copies in Venice. The text has been recently published with a Greek translation in Francesco Barozzi, Descrittione dell’isola di Creta (1577/8) (Herakleion: Vikelaia Demotike Vivliotheke, 2004). On Francesco Barozzi see also Gianfranco Spiazzi, "Barozzi, Francesco," in Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1964), vol. 4, 495-99; Paul Lawrence Rose, "A Venetian Patron and Mathematician in the Sixteenth Century: Francesco Barozzi (1537-1604)," Studi Veneziani 1 (1977): 119-78. For Barozzi’s edition of the oracles of Leo the Wise dedicated to Jacopo Foscarini see Jeannine Vereecken and Lydie Hadermann-Misguich, Les oracles de Léon le Sage illustrés par Georges Klontzas: la version Barozzi dans le Codex Bute (Venice and Hérakleion: Institut hellénique de Venise and Bibliothèque Vikelaia d'Hérakleion, 2000).
Pigafetta (1533-1604) who lived on Crete for some time with his cousin Valerio Chiericati.120

Already before Foscarini disembarked on the island, at the end of September 1574, the Collegio in Venice had charged him with the order to procure marbles and columns to be used in the restoration of the Ducal Palace that had been partially destroyed by fire the previous spring:

We need a good number of columns and other marbles, to restore those parts of our palace that have just been destroyed by the recent fire […] And because we know that in the site of the Messarea and in other places of our island there are extremely beautiful columns of different kinds of marble, we commission you to find with every diligence as many of the most beautiful as possible.121

The instructions were clear and specific both on where to procure the material and on what was needed. Once again the Serenissima demonstrated that she was well informed about what could be exploited from her possessions overseas. Only a few months later, on January 22, 1575, Foscarini wrote back to Venice to Doge Alvise Mocenigo, informing him that he had given orders to procure the marbles and that the only obstacle to their speedy delivery was the difficulty in dragging them down to the port.122


122 “Per risposta delle qual cose, le dico che ho già dato buon ordine per trovar colonne et marmi, quanti piú si potrà, et spero di averne per via di Messarea che seranno al proposito. Ne in ciò temo di haver altro contrario, se non nella condotta fino alle marine. La qual è difficilissima, si
Documents concerning the restoration of the Ducal Palace in Venice after the tragic fire of May 1574 reveal the strenuous effort of the *provveditori sopra la fabbrica del palazzo* – Andrea Badoer, Vincenzo Morosini, and Pietro Foscari - to gather marbles and other materials to refurbish the building. Columns and pieces of precious stones were procured from many sources inside Venice: from the nuns of San Girolamo, from the piovan of San Giuliano, from Messer Leonardo Mocenigo, and from the church of San Avian. Yet more marble was needed from Crete. We do not known exactly what Foscarini was able to ship back to Venice. Only Flaminio Corner, in his *Creta Sacra*, mentions that four exceptional columns made of marble that decorate the entryways to the Sala del Collegio came from Gortyna.

Foscarini’s diligent search for ancient materials gave him the opportunity to explore firsthand the archeological sites of the island and to gather numerous objects. In Gortyna he found marble columns and fragmentary slabs, in Ierapetra Greek

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124 No reference to materials arriving from Crete is to be found among the documents published in Giambattista Lorenzi, *Monumenti per servire alla storia del Palazzo Ducale di Venezia* (Venice: Tipografia del commercio, 1868), 382-99.

125 "Ex huius urbis ruinis erutae fuerunt quatuor eximii marmoris columnae, quae januas Aulae Collegii magni Venetiarum mire exornant." Flaminio Cornaro, *Creta Sacra sive De episcopis utriusque ritus Graeci et Latini in insula Cretae* (Venice: Giovan Battista Pasquali, 1755), vol. 1, 120. The same information is reported also in one of the numerous manuscript versions derived from Francesco Barozzi’s description of Crete, see Edward Falkener, "On the Antiquities of Candia. N. 1. "La Descrizione dell'Isola di Candia" a Ms. of the Sixteenth Century," *Museum of Classical Antiquities* 2 (1852): 277.
inscriptions, and in Knossos sculptures, as reported some years later by Onorio Belli: “on different occasions many beautiful statues were found here, which were later carried to Venice, and among the others Jacopo Foscarini took some extremely beautiful and unbroken.”

It was probably while Foscarini was searching for materials for the Ducal Palace that he also had an antique “pezzo di colonna quadrata come pilastro” [fragment of a square column similar to a pillar] removed from a wall of the church of Agios Georgios in Sitia. The pillar, bearing a long Greek inscription recording an alliance between the cities of Ierapetra and Caragitna, had been excavated from the ruins of Ierapetra ten years earlier, in 1565, and embedded in a wall of the church. The rarity of the piece induced Foscarini to send it back to his home in Venice: “fu portata a Venetia, dove hora si trova appresso Sua Signoria Illustissima” [it was carried to Venice, where it is now in the house of that Illustrious man], while copies of the inscription continued to circulate among the intellectuals of Crete.

Thus, the evidence suggests that among the antique marbles found by Foscarini and sent to Venice some did not end up in the Ducal Palace, but were instead delivered to

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126 Barozzi, *Descrittione dell’isola di Creta (1577/8)*: 193.


128 Barozzi, *Descrittione dell’isola di Creta (1577/8)*: 195.

129 The marble is untraceable today, but the inscription is known from many copies. Onorio Belli, who was on Crete from 1583, came into possession of a copy of it and had it translated from Greek into Latin by Daniel Furlan, a physician of Rethymnon. See Belli, *Scritti di Antiquaria e Botanica (1586-1602)*: 56.
Foscarini’s own residence in the parish of Santa Maria dei Carmini (fig. 136). Francesco Sansovino mentions Foscarini’s palace as a notable building furnished with numerous “anticaglie,” yet the extent of this collection of antiquities has been little studied. However, Foscarini’s will, together with other contemporary documents, provide a glimpse into his antiquarian holdings. In a codicil added to his testament on July 25 of 1599, Foscarini specified that to his son Alvise were destined the four antique statues displayed in a loggia on the first floor of the family palace: “adding furthermore four antique statues that are under the loggia on that floor, which have to stay within the palace and can not be removed.” Within the same document Foscarini assigned to his second son Zuanbattista “all the marble statues that are at Strà, that will be used to decorate the new building.” While the codicil does not make clear whether this second group of marbles contained antique or modern sculptures, it is likely that the four antique statues left to Alvise were part of Foscarini’s Cretan booty.


132 Jacopo Foscarini drew up his testament on March 8, 1595 (ASVe, Notarile Testamenti, B. 344, n. 370). The will was later updated on November 10, 1597 (ASVe, Notarile Testamenti, B. 1244, n. 368) and codicills were added on July 25, 1599 and on March 13, 1602 (ASVe, Notarile Testamenti, B. 1244, n. 368).

133 “aggiungendo di più quattro statue antiche, che sono sotto la loza del detto soler, le quali debbino star con detta casa congiunte ne possino da casa esser separate.” ASVe, Notarile Testamenti, B. 1244, n. 368.

134 “tutte le statue di marmo che sono a Strà che serviranno per adornamento della nuova fabbrica.” ASVe, Notarile Testamenti, B. 1244, n. 368.
When the Patriarch Giovanni Grimani (1501-1593) died in Venice in 1593, his large collection of antiquities was inventoried and among the marble sculptures in his possessions were found two pieces that belonged to Jacopo Foscarini. Federico Contarini (1538-1613), who was in charge of the inventory of the Grimani collection, reported to the Collegio that:

not all of them [sculptures] belonged to Monsignor Patriarch, especially two of them were of the Procurator Foscarini; the Patriarch had taken them to have them restored explaining to him [Foscarini] that he felt in debt towards him for the many others that he had given him as gifts and that he kept these as decoration in his courtyard as long as he was allowed to do so.\(^{135}\)

From Contarini’s words it appears that Giovanni Grimani and Jacopo Foscarini were linked by a friendship that also involved the exchange of rare gifts. While Foscarini had given Grimani antique pieces both as gifts and as temporary loans, the Patriarch had donated to Foscarini a precious “scrittoretto d’ebano” [small ebony writing desk] that the latter kept in a camerino near his bed chamber until his death.\(^{136}\) The exchanges of antique marbles between Foscarini and Grimani are noteworthy, as they clearly establish a definitive link between the activities of Venetian officials in the Stato da Mar and the formation of antiquity collections in sixteenth century Venice.

\(^{135}\) “non tutte [le statue] erano di Mons. Patriarca, massime due dell’Ill.mo Sr. Proc.r Foscarini, le quali prese per fargliele restaurare, come egli haveva detto a lui per obigo che aveva ad esso Ill.mo Foscarini per molte altre, che gli haveva donato, et che teneva quelle per maggior ornamento della sua corte, fino a che dalla cortesia di detto signore li era permesso.” Quoted in Zorzi and Favaretto, *Collezioni di antichità a Venezia: nei secoli della Repubblica (dai libri e documenti della Biblioteca Marciana)*, 62.

\(^{136}\) In his will Foscarini left it to Giacomo Ragazzoni: “Al M.co M. Giacomo Ragazzoni con quale so passatti hormai cinquant’anni intrinsecamente ho conversato, e per lungo tempo con molto amore accomunati li negozii non ho che altro ricordare se non conservazione di memoria in luogo di godimento di presenza, et in segno di questo amore li lasso il tavolin d’Alabastro frisato, di pietra da toco con il scrittoretto d’ebano già datomi dal Patriarca Grimani che si trova nel mio camerino.” ASVe, Notarile Testamenti, B. 344, n. 370.
During his time on Crete Foscarini had been able to procure antique items for his collector friends, while at the same time his own collection had been enriched with the help of his acquaintances. In 1576 the Vicentine Filippo Pigafetta left Crete to visit Egypt and the Holy Land. When he entered the pyramid of Cheops and saw the ancient sarcophagus of the pharaoh, he decided to break off a piece to send to Foscarini, who would have certainly appreciated such an “anticaglia quanto all’antichità rarissima.”

In spite of Foscarini’s active plundering of the ancient sites of Crete on behalf of the Serenissima and for his own collecting purposes, the island was still rich in antique remains. The years following Foscarini’s departure continued to be a period of intense excavations during which many other antique artifacts were unearthed and sent to Venice. When Alvise Grimani (1518-1591) arrived on Crete as provveditore generale in 1583, most of the marbles and sculptures lying on the ground of ancient Knossos had been carried away and the site looked as if Foscarini had ransacked it. In his relazione Grimani wrote: “far from Candia towards the south there is the ancient town of Macritico, which is three miles away from Candia, and its name derives from a long wall. In this place there are no sculptures or other marbles, but they say that in Foscarini’s time many different kinds of marbles were found.” A later account reiterates the difficulty of


138 Some of Alvise Grimani’s dispatches survive in the Archivio di Stato of Venice. ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Provveditori da Terra e da Mar, filze 747-748.

139 “anchora lontano de Candia, per Ostro, è l’antiqua città di Macritico lontano tre miglia de Candia nominata rispetto a muro longo. In questo loco non vi è figuri né marmori ma sotto il Foscarini si dice che è stato trovato diversa sorta de marmori.” BCVe, Ms. Morosini-Grimani,
making sense of what little was still visible of ancient Knossos: “there is only a great quantity of piles of ruins made of rough stones, but mostly destroyed. You can see the foundations of an extremely large theater or of another building, as it is not possible to discern clearly what it once was.”

Grimani began his office on Crete at the age of sixty-five. By then he had already journeyed, on various assignments, to many territories of the Venetian empire.

Travelling with him to Crete was his personal physician, the Vicentine Onorio Belli (1550-1604), grandson of the famous medalist and engraver Valerio Belli (1468-1546).

Onorio Belli is a precious source of information on the excavations conducted during Grimani’s tenure on the island and in the years immediately afterwards. Together with some letters of his personal correspondence, two accounts written by Belli are known. The most important is a geographical description of the island of Crete, which Belli dedicated in 1591 to one of Grimani’s homonymous nephews, Alvise Grimani (1559-1635) who was sindico di Levante. Belli’s text survives in a manuscript preserved among the papers of the private archive of the Grimani family’s branch known as

304, f. 404r. Quoted in Beschi, "Antichità cretesi a Venezia," 494. Casal Macritico was a settlement located a few miles away from the ruins of Knossos.


141 For Grimani’s political assignments see Paul F. Grendler, "The Leaders of the Venetian State, 1540-1609: a Prosopographical Analysis," in Renaissance Education Between Religion and Politics (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 73. See also Cicogna, Delle inscrizioni veneziane: IV, 158-59.

“Grimani dei Servi.” A second work by Belli, entitled *Rerum Creticarum Observationes*, is now lost and is known only from some excerpts copied by Apostolo Zeno (1669-1750) in the eighteenth century.

In the *Rerum Creticarum Observationes* Belli wrote that, upon his arrival on Crete, Alvise Grimani found the island “tutta in disordine” [all in disarray] and decided “to reorganize everything and, willing to do something good, he had to tame it all.”

Grimani traveled, with Belli at his side, through the entire island inspecting the countryside, the towns and villages, and investigating its ancient sites. Grimani’s archeological surveys yielded numerous precious artifacts, objects that he promptly shipped to Venice to his palace in Cannaregio near the church of the Servi (fig. 137).

On the site of ancient Lyttos Belli recorded many ancient remains, drew the plan of an antique theater and transcribed the texts of the numerous Greek inscriptions that he

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144 The original work by Belli was written in two volumes containing a description of the antiquities of the island and numerous illustrations. Belli had worked on the text for a long time until 1596, when he dedicated it to Alfonso Ragona, the secretary of the Accademia Olimpica of Vicenza. At some point in the eighteenth century Apostolo Zeno copied excerpts of Belli’s manuscript in a booklet that is today in Venice: BMVe, ms. It. X, 345=7162. Zeno’s notes, entitled *Excerpta Apostoli Zeni*, are published, together with Belli’s surviving correspondences and his description of 1591, in Belli, *Scritti di Antiquaria e Botanica* (1586-1602): 3-45.


146 On the palace see . A detailed inventory of the palace’s rich furnishings was drawn up in 1562-64 at the death of Alvise’s father Antonio Grimani. The document survives in Venice, ASVe, Archivio Grimani Gisutiniani, B. 25, 2. On the content of this inventory see . Finocchi Ghersi believes that the palace has since then disappeared. In reality it is still standing, although it has been deeply transformed over the centuries and is in precarious condition. In this palace Alvise Grimani drew up his will on June 30, 1589 on the eve of his departure from Venice with the assignment of provveditore di terraferma; the document is in ASVe, Notarile Testamenti, B. 1224, 1.

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himself had dug up from the ground: “all of the aforementioned epitaphs were found on marble slabs within the theater, and they were still there when the author was writing.

These others instead were discovered by him underground among the ruins.”\(^{147}\) But Belli also narrates:

\begin{quote}
In Lyttos the ruins of a very large theater, with the diameter of its orchestra 150 feet, are visible […] also visible are the ruins of a basilica from where I have had excavated six very beautiful marble statues, with one of them more beautiful than the others. Your very illustrious uncle [Alvise Grimani] had three of these sent to Venice and the other three, since they were very damaged and not particularly beautiful, were left there.\(^{148}\)
\end{quote}

Further details on the statues sent to Venice come from Apostolo Zeno’s notes:

\begin{quote}
Here [in Lyttos] there are the remains of some temples and some buildings full of statues, among which one of a woman dressed in the Greek style, and another of a six-foot tall Roman man intact without head, but beautiful. It had an armor decorated on the breastplate with the heads of lions, elephants, women and other animals; it had a necklace from which was hanging an armed Victory standing on a she-wolf nursing two naked children. In one hand it was holding a sword and in the other a round shield. At the statue’s feet there was a two-foot tall chained prisoner who was kneeling with his face looking up in the act of begging. This prisoner was not completely finished and had been left rough because it was supposed to be seen from faraway; but this statue in armor was extremely beautiful and was sent to Venice by Alvise Grimani together with other statues to be used for decoration.\(^{149}\)
\end{quote}

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\(^{148}\) “In Litto, si vedono le rovine di un Theatro grandissimo, sendo il diametro suo della orchestra cento e cinquanta piedi […] vedesi le rovine di una basilica, nella quale feci cavar sei statue marmoree assai belle, ma una sopra le altre; delle quali l’illustrissimo zio di Vostra Signoria Illustrissima [Alvise Grimani] ne fece condur tre a Venetia et le altre tre, perché erano molto guaste nè di molto bel disegno, furono lasciate stare.” Ibid., 61.

\(^{149}\) “Quivi [in Lyttos] si ritrovano libere le reliquie di alcuni templi e alcune fabbriche ricche di diverse statue fra le quali una di donna vestita alla greca, un’altra d’uomo de romano, d’altezza di 6 piedi intatta senza testa ma era bellissima con una corazza indosso nelli scarselloni della quale aveva scolpito teste di leoni, di elefanti, di donne e d’altri animali; aveva al collo una collana dalla quale pendeva in mezzo il scollo una Vittoria armata che posava i piedi sopra una lupa sotto la pancia della quale giacevano due fanciulli nudi che lattavano. Nell’una mano teneva una spada nell’altra uno scudo tondo imbracciato. Ai piedi della statua grande stava legato un prigione di
Despite the fact that these marble sculptures are untraceable today, we know that at least some arrived safely in Venice. In October of 1586 in a letter to his uncle, Belli wrote again about the site of Lyttos: “I found many beautiful statues as you can see in the house of my most illustrious master.”\(^\text{150}\) Furthermore, a seventeenth century note added to the margins of Belli’s manuscript confirms the survival of at least one of the marbles in the courtyard of the Grimani palace after Alvise Grimani’s death.\(^\text{151}\)

The abundance of ancient artifacts yielded by Crete’s soil gave Grimani the opportunity to be selective and decide what was worth being carried away for “usi belli” [decorative uses]. Only the most notable sculptures - those in better condition and of “bel disegno” - were taken, while others were left behind, such as when he excavated a “statue without head, sitting on a large chair carved in a rough manner; since it was not of fine execution and was difficult to carry away, it was left where it was found.”\(^\text{152}\)


\(^{150}\) “io gli trovai molte statue belle come si può vedere in casa dell’Illustrissimo mio Patrone.” Belli, Scritti di Antiquaria e Botanica (1586-1602): 129.

\(^{151}\) The note added to the margins of Belli’s manuscript near the name of Lyttos reads: “il luogo dove fu cavata la statua (che) havemo in Corte.” Luigi Beschi thinks that the reference is to the Palazzo Grimani at San Polo. Ibid., 61.

\(^{152}\) “statua che sedeva, senza testa sopra un carregone molto sodo e rozzo; ma perché dava di rozzo tal disegno e per la difficoltà nel condurla la lasciò nel luogo ove la ritrovò.” Ibid., 25.
During his stay on Crete Grimani gathered numerous artifacts also from many other ancient sites of the island. Marble columns were found in Metallum, architectural fragments were taken from Ieraptera, and more sculptures were dug up in Gortyna. Everything was shipped to Venice despite the poor quality of the transportation service offered by the seafarers, as Belli lamented in another letter to his uncle:

But it is a pain to have to deal with sailors as they are the worst scoundrels in the world and they promise everything, but then they dump you; with them neither friendship nor money works. I am telling you this because I know what they have done to the illustrious Grimani my patron who could also have punished them; nevertheless they never wanted to take care of any beautiful thing that the Illustrious sent to Venice, but everything was badly treated so he decided to avoid sending trees or other special things back to Italy.

Grimani’s collection of ancient marbles imported from Crete has not yet been studied in depth and little remains in Venice to attest to the importance of his possessions. What remains today of the Grimani family palace on the fondamenta Canal in Cannaregio does not convey the importance of the building and of its contents during the sixteenth century.


154 In a letter to Valerio Barbarano from Canea Belli, while describing Ierapetra’s ancient theater, wrote: “il quale era adornatissimo di due ordini di colonne di marmo bianchissimo, grosse cinque quarti, et l’ordine era jonic con capitelli et cornice bellissime, de’ quali molti l’Illustissimo mio Signore ne mandò a Venezia.” Belli, Scritti di Antiquaria e Botanica (1586-1602): 122.

155 Ibid., 122 note 8 and 64.

156 “Ma è una morte haver a fare con marinari che sono la peggior canaglia del mondo et vi prometton ogni cosa, ma sul piú bello vi piantano, né con loro vale né amicizia né pagamento. Questo vi dico poiché so li tratti che hanno fatto all’Illustissimo Grimani mio patrone che pure poteva castigarli, nondimeno mai vollero haver cura di qualche cosa bella che Sua Signoria Illustrissima mandasse in Venezia ma ogni cosa fu malissimo condizionata onde disperatosi della loro farfanteria si dispose li lasciar da parte il mandare né arbori né altre cose degne in Italia.” Ibid., 100-101.
century. Francesco Sansovino remembers the palace among the “edifici honorevoli e belli” owned by the Grimani family, while Giorgio Vasari recalls how the façade had been once decorated with frescoes by Titian.157

Numerous unpublished archival documents, however, reveal that at the time of his death Alvise Grimani had amassed a vast patrimony. He owned not only a large section of the family palace, but also a second house and a savoneria [soap factory] on the Giudecca (fig. 138); other real estate properties in the neighborhood of Castello; and he was building a new residence in Padua on Prato della Valle (fig. 139).158 Both of his Venetian dwellings, near the Servi and on the Giudecca, were filled with paintings and statues.

Alvise Grimani was not the only Venetian official to have an interest in the antiquities of Crete in the 1580s and to benefit from extensive archeological

157 Sansovino, Venetia, città nobilissima et singolare: 144; Giorgio Vasari, Le vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568 (Florence: Studio per Edizioni Scelte, 1966-1987), VI, 157. Nothing is left of the exterior decoration and the façade was partially dismantled in the nineteenth century, see Bassi, Palazzi di Venezia: Admiranda urbis Venetae: 552-55.

158 Following the death of his parents (Antonio Grimani and Elisabetta Vendramin), Alvise inherited a conspicuous patrimony. Together with Alvise’s will (ASVe, Notarile Testamenti, B. 1224, n. 1) and his redecima of 1582 (ASVe, Dieci Savi alle Decime, B. 162), important documents to assess the consistency of his possessions are in the Biblioteca del Museo Correr: BMC, Ms Provenienze Diverse, 2249/7. These documents deserve further careful investigation, as they consist of copies of important notarial acts that attest the division of Alvise’s inheritance among his nephews when his son, Antonio Grimani (1569-1607), died in 1607 without leaving a testament. Other documents relative to Alvise’s possessions on the Giudecca are in ASVe, Archivio Giustinian Grimani, B. 25. In ASVe, Archivio Giustinian Grimani, B. 11 are preserved important unpublished drawings showing the plans of the house and of the savoneria on the Giudecca. Only one of the drawings has been published without archival reference in Alessandro Albrizzi and Mary Jane Pool, The Gardens of Venice (New York: Rizzoli, 1989), 28. For Alvise Grimani’s palace in Padua see Giulio Bresciani Alvarez, Architettura a Padova (Padua: Il Poligrafo, 1999), 523-24; Giuliano Marella, “Il palazzo Grimani in Prato della Valle,” Padova e il suo Territorio 62 (1996): 13-15; Lionello Puppi, “Il Prato della Valle in età moderna,” in Prato della Valle. Due millenni di storia di un’avventura urbana, ed. Lionello Puppi (Padua: Signum, 1986), 69-94.
investigations. When excavations were undertaken in Canea, many objects were brought to light near the remains of an ancient aqueduct, as narrated by Belli: “Many coins of Gordiano and Massimino and some marble heads, among which was a very beautiful one of Antinous taken by Vincenzo da Canale, provveditore on the island at that time.”

Vincenzo da Canal (1532-1597) had a busy career in the service of the Serenissima in the *Stato da Mar*, but nothing is known about his interests in antiquities. Francesco Sansovino, writing in 1581, remembers a certain Fabio da Canal, as the owner of an important collection of armor. Fabio was very likely Vincenzo’s brother. Belli’s testimony is the only known reference to the head of Antinous found in Canea, but it has been suggested that a marble bust today in Munich, and coming from the Bevilacqua collection of Verona, could be the one found on Crete (fig. 140).

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160 Vincenzo da Canal was born in 1532 (ASVe, Avogaria di Comun. Libro d’Oro, Nascite, III, c. 94) and belonged to the family branch dei Carmini. In his will drawn up on February 21, 1597 (ASVe, Notarile Testamenti, B. 1246, n. 714) there is no mention of antiquities.

161 Sansovino, *Venetia, città nobilissima et singolare*: 380. Vincenzo had a brother named Fabio who had also an intense political career, see Majer, “Sigilli di magistrature veneziane nei possedimenti d’oltremare (Dalmazia, Albania, Istra, Friuli),” 226-27.

When Alvise Grimani returned to Venice in 1585, Onorio Belli (fig. 141) remained on Crete, as we read in Apostolo Zeno’s notes: “when Grimani, having to go back to Venice at the end of his term, arrived at Canea was begged by the illustrious Venetians to leave Belli with them as a physician; both Grimani and Belli did not want to disappoint their requests.”

On the island Belli maintained a medical practice in Canea and continued to pursue his botanical and antiquarian interests. His surviving writings attest how, while traveling throughout Crete, Belli collected both countless specimens of the local vegetation and many antique fragments. As he himself reported, he personally had excavations undertaken in numerous ancient sites, which led to the recovery of statues, coins, inscriptions, and other fragmentary marbles. He writes, for example, of ancient coins “belle et in copia” [beautiful and numerous] found at the feet of Mount Ida, of a statue of a river brought to light from the ruins of ancient Eleutherna, and of a marble...

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163 “Il Grimani, finito il suo reggimento dovendo rimpatriare, giunto che fu alla Canea fu pregato da quelli Illustrissimi Veneziani che si disperavano a lasciar loro il Belli per medico, che tanto l’uno quanto l’altro volle non dispiacere alle loro istanze.” Belli, Scritti di Antiquaria e Botanica (1586-1602): 5.

164 “Ma io, che piú di una volta ho cavalcato tutta l’isola et ho fatto cavar molte statue et colonne in molte sue città rovinate.” Ibid., 48-49.

165 “in questo loco spesse volte si sono trovate medaglie belle et in copia.” Ibid., 70.

head and a Roman statue uncovered in the territory of Rethymnon. While we do not
know where most of these archeological finds ended up, it is very likely that several
pieces reached Italy. On the basis of the information provided by Belli and from stylistic
and archeological considerations, Luigi Beschi has suggested, for instance, that a group
of marble statues today in the Museo Archeologico in Venice arrived in the lagoon from
the ancient sites of Crete at this time (fig. 142 and fig. 143).

From Crete Belli kept in touch with a large network of intellectuals and
naturalists, and soon the results of his scientific observations and his archeological
explorations began to circulate among Italian and European learned men, stimulating the
curiosity of many in the Republic of Letters. Among Belli’s most assiduous
correspondents was his uncle, Valerio Barbarano. Barbarano owned the drogheria
dell’Angelo e del Saraceno in Vicenza and was one of the founding members of the

167 “trovai quivi una testa di marmo et una statua romana assai bella.” Belli, Scritti di Antiquaria e
Botanica (1586-1602): 71. Another “statua di marmo assai bella” was found on the site of
Anfimala and some beautiful fragments were “cavati” among the ruins of Falasarna.

168 Beschi suggests that the sculptures came from the ancient site of Knossos; at the end of the
sixteenth century, many of them were in the collection of Giovanni Grimani (Venice, Museo
Archeologico, inv. 15, inv. 33, inv. 106, inv. 71, inv. 12, inv. 21, inv. 36) others in that of
Federico Contarini (inv. 116, inv. 158), see Beschi, "Onorio Belli a Creta: Le linee metodologiche
di un impegno antiquario," 175-84. The statues are illustrated in Irene Favaretto, Marcella De
Paoli, and Maria Cristina Dossi, eds., Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Venezia (Milan: Electa,
2004), 26-35.

169 Among Belli’s correspondents were: Paolo Gualdo, Prospero Alpino, Carolus Clusius, Jacob
Zwinger, Alfonso Ragona, Jacobus Cortusus, and Orazio Bembo. Some of the surviving letters
exchanged with these individuals has been published in Belli, Scritti di Antiquaria e Botanica
(1586-1602): 79-245. The botanist Carolus Clusius (1526-1609) published Belli’s discoveries on
the flora of Crete in his Rariorum plantarum Historia in 1601, while the Dutch Jan Gruter (1560-
1627) printed in 1603 the Cretan inscriptions collected by Belli in his volume Inscriptiones
antiquae totius orbis romani, published in Heidelberg.
Accademia Olimpica, he therefore shared Belli’s interests for flora and antiquities. To Barbarano, Belli regularly sent herbs, plants and seeds together with notes and drawings of the ancient sites inspected on Crete.

Belli’s firsthand observations of the antique remains of the island soon came to the attention of prominent antiquarians. In 1587 Gian Vincenzo Pinelli (1535-1601), a famous intellectual and collector in Vicenza, expressed his admiration for “the beautiful spirit and intellect of Sir Onorio and for his praiseworthy curiosity.” Sometime later also Marc Velser (1558-1614) eloquently revealed his interest in Belli’s work:

O how it makes my mouth water to hear that description of ancient and modern Crete by Belli, full of drawings of ancient buildings and Greek inscriptions! […] such a curious work that must have racked his brains for many years, and perhaps shortened his life.

While surveying the ancient sites of Crete during his “peregrinaggio fatto per tutto questo Regno,” [peregrination throughout this entire realm] Belli drew numerous plans of the

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170 Valerio Barbarano is mentioned by Andrea Palladio in the Proemio to the Quattro Libri di architettura as a gentleman: “diligentissimo osservatore di tutto quello che a questa professione si appartiene.” See Andrea Palladio, I quattro libri dell’architettura (Venice: Domenico de’ Franceschi, 1570), vol. 1, 5.


172 “O come mi fa venire l’acqua alla bocca di quella descrizione di Candia antica, e moderna del Sig. Belli b.m. piena di disegni, di fabbriche antiche, ed iscrizioni greche! […] un’opera sì curiosa, dietro alla cui composizione l’Autore debbe aver lambiccato il cervello molti anni, e forse raccorciato buon pezzo della vita.” The excerpt by Vesler is quoted in a letter written by Lorenzo Pignoria to Paolo Gualdo, on January 19, 1611. See Giacomo Maria Paitoni, ed. Lettere d’uomini illustri, che fiorirono nel principio del secolo decimosettimo, non più stampate (Venice: Stamperia Baglioni, 1744), 118-20. For other praises of Belli’s by his contemporaries see Edward Falkener, A Description of Some Important Theaters and Other Remains in Crete from a Ms. History of Candia by Onorio Belli in 1586, vol. 2, Supplement to the Museum of Classical Antiquities (1854), 9-10.
ancient theaters, the temples and the other buildings that he discovered amidst the overgrown landscape. As Belli himself declared, some of his drawings were executed with “great diligence,” while of others he confessed: “these drawings that I am sending now have been done quickly and the paper and the ink have killed me, but the ones that are in my book are better executed.” Nine of Belli’s drawings survive in multiple copies preserved in Milan and Athens. Each drawing represents the plan of an ancient building and each is clearly labeled: “Tempio nella citta di Lebeno in Candia;” “Pianta di uno delli teatri di Gierapetra et è il piu piccolo;” “Pianta di uno delli teatri della citta de Gortina in Candia et è il più piccolo;” “Pianta d’un teatro grande della citta di Gortina;” “Teatro grandissimo della citta di Litto in Candia;” “Teatro della citta di Cheronesso in Candia;” “Teatro grande della citta di Gierapetra in Candia;” “Tempio della citta di


174 “Sapiate che io nel levar queste et altre piante ho ustao gran diligenza perché havevo tempo et commodità.” Letter by Onorio Belli to Valerio Barbarano, Canea October 11, 1586. Belli, *Scritti di Antiquaria e Botanica (1586-1602)*: 133. As we evince from this letter, the drawings that Belli was sending to his uncle were copies of those, of higher quality, that he had included in his, now lost, description of the island.

Lampeo in Candia;” and “Nelle rovine della citta di Gnosso si vede questa” (fig. 144 and fig. 145). Belli’s drawings are unique representations of these ancient Cretan sites and often they represent the most important surviving evidence to understand the original forms of antique structures that have since disappeared. It is important to remember, indeed, that despite the fact that by the end of the sixteenth century an interest for antique remains was widespread among Venetian authorities on Crete, often security and military concerns prevailed over the preservation of the antiquities of the island. Soon after his arrival on Crete, Belli had immortalized, in one of his drawings, the remains of an ancient theater in the town of Canea, but just a few years later the classical building was dismantled to leave space for a new fortress.177

In his plans Belli combined onsite visual observations, careful measurements (each drawing shows a scale) and his knowledge of antique architecture.178 This derived both from the direct reading of the classical sources and from the contemporary discussions on antique buildings taking place in the Accademia Olimpica in his native Vicenza. In those very years an all’antica theater was being built in Vicenza on Andrea Palladio’s design. Although not always accurate, Belli’s plans contributed an important step to the development of the archeological study and the systematic survey of classical ruins.179 Moreover, similar to Ciriaco d’Ancona’s drawings executed almost two

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179 Beschi, "Onorio Belli a Creta: Le linee metodologiche di un impegno antiquario," 175-84.
centuries earlier, Belli’s images brought to the attention of Italian antiquarians and intellectuals a new visual repertoire of images that documented the architecture surviving in the faraway lands of ancient Greece.\footnote{On the reception of Greek architecture in Renaissance Venice see Deborah Howard, "Responses to Ancient Greek Architecture in Renaissance Venice," \textit{Annali di Architettura} 6 (1994): 23-38.}

Yet sometimes drawings and written descriptions of remnants of the classical past were not enough to satisfy Italian men of learning, and Belli also became a purveyor of antique objects. The episode of a third-century B.C. inscription found on the island of Thera (Santorini) illustrates another aspect of Belli’s intellectual and material contribution to the antiquarian studies of sixteenth century Venice and beyond.\footnote{On this inscription see Serafino Ricci, "Il 'Testamento d'Epikteta'. Storia e revisione dell'epigrafe," \textit{Monumenti Antichi} 2 (1893): 70-158; Tullia Ritti, \textit{Iscrizioni e rilievi greci nel Museo Maffeiiano di Verona} (Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider, 1981), 72-81; Luigi Beschi, "Vecchie ricerche a Thera," in \textit{Φωσ Κυκλαδιχον} \textit{(Studies in honour of N. Zapheiroupolou)} (Athens: 1999), 384-93; Andreas Wittenburg, \textit{Il testamento di Epikteta} (Trieste: Giulio Bernardi Editore, 1990).}

In 1586 Belli wrote from Canea to his uncle about a lengthy Greek inscription that an unnamed correspondent sent to him from the island of Thera. The inscription was written in small characters on four different slabs of marble (fig. 146). Belli decided to transcribe the text and, being unable to translate it from the Greek, sent a copy to his uncle in Italy.\footnote{"Tra questi epitafij quel longhissimo mi fu mandato dall’isola di Thera collonia di Lacedemoni, et è scritto in quattro pietre di marmo in lettere molto piccole et corrose. Ho fatto gran fatica nel levarle, et credo che vi siano degli errori perché le lettere erano corrose dalla vecchiezza, non di meno vi bisogna usar ingegno et fattica.” Letter by Onorio Belli to Valerio Barbarano written from Canea on April 24, 1586. Belli, \textit{Scritti di Antiquaria e Botanica} (1586-1602): 123.}

Belli candidly admitted his difficulties with the ancient Greek language and the transcription he provided proved to be far from accurate.\footnote{"perché come sapete, se bene leggo e scrivo greco, non di meno non possedo la lingua."} Once it arrived in Vicenza, however, local...
intellectuals, such as Paolo Gualdo (1553-1621) and Vincenzo Pinelli, became intrigued by the text\textsuperscript{184} and asked for more precise details.\textsuperscript{185} In response, Belli attempted a second, more accurate, transcription:

Since I understand that the long epitaph that I sent you to be translated is a worthy thing and it is much appreciated by the Magnificent Pinelli, I am sending you another transcription of it taken by me on a different occasion. I used the most diligence that I could since I do not know the antique Greek language and these stones are badly damaged by time and ruin.\textsuperscript{186}

Unfortunately, however, not much progress could be done on the translation through such a long distance correspondence. The marbles were in Candia as Belli explained: “as no ship wanted to load them for Venice;” but even so Vincenzo Pinelli suggested that they be sent to Venice so that the Greek text could be read directly from the stones.\textsuperscript{187} Belli responded in the affirmative:

Since they are very inconvenient to handle, with the next available galley I will go to Candia and I will have them cleaned up and I will take care that they are loaded on a ship to Venice and I will send them to the most illustrious Giacomo

\begin{flushright}
Ibid. 123.
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\textsuperscript{184} “per quanto si può così alla grossa cavare, quel lungo è molto bello et contiene in se cose molto curiose et degne da sapersi.” Letter written by Paolo Gualdo to Valerio Barbarano from Padua on February 10, 1587. Ibid., 79-80.

\textsuperscript{185} Letter by Vincenzo Pinelli to Valerio Barbarano through Paolo Gualdo, written from Vicenza on March 24, 1587. Ibid., 89.

\textsuperscript{186} “poiché vedo che quel epitafio lungo che io mandai da tradurre è cosa degna et stimata dal detto Magnifico Pinelli, vi mando un’altra copia tratta da me un’altra volta con quella maggiore diligentia ch’ho saputo sendo che non intendo la lingua greca antica et essendo li sassi et dal tempo et dalle rovine molto guasti.” Letter by Onorio Belli to Valerio Barbarano, Canea April 28, 1587.” Ibid., 99.

\textsuperscript{187} “perché niuna nave me gli ha voluti levar per Venezia.” Letter by Onorio Belli to Valerio Barbarano from Canea, April 24, 1586. See ibid., 122. And in another letter the following year: “I quali sassi al mio partire di Candia lasciai in casa dell’Eccellentissimo Signor Generale ove ancora sono.” Letter by Onorio Belli to Valerio Barbarano from Canea, April 28, 1587. See ibid., 100.
Contarini. Even though he does not know me, I am aware that he takes pleasure in rare things and that he is able to appreciate beautiful objects.\textsuperscript{188}

We know that the shipment successfully arrived in Venice, for the marbles were seen in Giacomo Contarini’s palace a few years later, in 1588.\textsuperscript{189} They were still there in 1594 when the inscription was published in a single folio by the Venetian printer Francesco de’ Zuliani where it was said to come “Ex musaeo Jacobi Contareni.”\textsuperscript{190}

The inscription again changed hands at the beginning of the eighteenth century when Scipione Maffei (1675-1755) bought it in Venice. He announced to Ludovico Antonio Muratori (1672-1750): “Some months ago I bought for 10 zecchini from a procurator of San Marco, who swims in gold, a Greek inscription that has no equals; it is two sheets of paper long, and it was embedded in his palace ab antiquo.”\textsuperscript{191} In another letter Maffei proudly declared: “It is the most prominent inscription among the others that appears in our Museum, and I believe I have never spent money better on similar kinds of things, since it is of inestimable value, if you think that it is the only one of such length that is preserved today in Europe.”\textsuperscript{192}

\textsuperscript{188} “poiché sono molto scomodi al maneggiarli con prossima occasione di passaggio di galea andarò fino in Candia et li farò disagrossare et opero che siano caricati sopra qualche vassello per Venezia et li indirizzerò al Clarissimo Signor Giacomo Contarini, il quale sebbene non mi conosce non di meno so quanto si dilettà di cose rare et sa amar le cose belle.” Letter by Onorio Belli to Valerio Barbarano from Canea, April 28, 1587. See ibid. 100

\textsuperscript{189} Letter by Massineo Margunio to Pinelli written on December 20, 1588 quoted in ibid., 89, note 55.

\textsuperscript{190} Ibid., 80, note 8.

\textsuperscript{191} “Ho comperato mesi fa da a un procuratore di San Marco che nuota nell’oro un’iscrizione greca che non ha pari, e lunga due fogli di carta, ch’era incastrata ab antiquo nel suo palazzo, per dieci zecchini.” Ricci, “Il 'Testamento d'Epikteta'. Storia e revisione dell’epigrafe,” 78.

\textsuperscript{192} “quella che prima delle altre [iscrizioni] comparisce è nel nostro Museo, nè credo d’aver mai meglio impiegato denaro in si fatte cose, dovendosi giudicar d’inestimabile prezzo, se si
This episode of the inscription from Thera exemplifies how, by the second half of
the sixteenth century, the archeological activities of the Venetian administrators in the
eastern Mediterranean, and of those in their following, were beneficial to a large circle of
individuals. These activities in fact fueled the ever-growing European interest in
collecting and studying the classical past of ancient Greece.

The engagement of Venetian officials with archeological artifacts continued
through the last years of the sixteenth century and beyond. Zuanne (Giovanni) Mocenigo
(1531-1598), of the family branch of San Giovanni Crisostomo, spent many years in the
service of the Serenissima on the island of Crete.\(^{193}\) Evidence of his activities as official
in the *Stato da Mar* survives both in the form of written records and of material objects.
On Crete Mocenigo endorsed the building of the *hospitale delli soldati* in Candia and his
name is displayed on the *New Gate* in the city’s fortifications. Mocenigo, like his
predecessors, also procured antiquities for his collection.\(^{194}\)

\(^{193}\) Mocenigo was in Crete with different consecutive assignments. He was *capitano* in 1583, then
he was *provveditore generale* for the first time between 1585 and 1587, he was later elected again
*provveditore generale* and *inquisitore* in 1591. Later, Mocenigo was nominated *provveditore
generale* at Palmanova (1594), *provveditore di San Marco* (1595) and *provveditore generale di
terraferma* (1597). Grendler states that, unlike his brother Giovanni Battista (1527-1594), Zuanne
was a powerful man. Paul F. Grendler, "The Tre Savii Sopra Eresia 1547-1605: a
Prosopographical Study," *Studi Veneziani* 3 (1979): 355. For other offices see also Horst De la
Croix, "Palmanova: a Study in Sixteenth Century Urbanism," *Saggi e memorie di storia dell'arte*

\(^{194}\) See Anastasia Papadia-Lala, *Ospizi ed Ospedali nell'isola di Creta sotto il dominio veneziano*
In a codicil added to his will in 1598, Mocenigo wrote: “It is my wish that my two marble statues, that is the one of Hadrian and the one of the Goddess with her body, once they are restored, be placed in the public antiquarium of this Most Serene Dominium as every-lasting memory.” Mocenigo referred to a bust of Hadrian that was a Renaissance work and to a fragmentary female statue that was antique and had been shipped to Venice by Mocenigo himself a few years earlier from Crete. Onorio Belli provided information about the statue’s provenance from Ierapetra and recorded a now-lost inscription that once was on the base of the sculpture:

ΜΑΡΚΟΣ ΑΝΤΟΝΙΟΣ ΘΕΟΠΟΜΠΟΥ ΑΠΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΣ: These lines were written under the feet of a statue owned by Giovanni Mocenigo most illustrious Provveditor Generale in 1594: the statue was of larger than life-sized woman and was sent by the illustrious Mocenigo to Venice.

Mocenigo’s will mentions that his marbles needed to be restored before being properly displayed in the *antiquario pubblico*. When the female antique sculpture was inventoried it was in fact described as made of two pieces: “one head of Pallas, and her torso broken in the middle of the legs and without arms.” Recent investigations have demonstrated

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198 “una testa di Pallade, et un torso di essa Pallade scheckuzzo à mezzo le gambe, et senza brazzi.” ASVe, Procuratoria de Supra, Chiesa San Marco, B. 68, prot. 151, c. 7. Quoted in Gallo, "Le donazioni alla Serenissima di Domenico e Giovanni Grimani," 58.
that while both the head and the torso come very likely from the same site on Crete, they belonged to two different sculptures: a Nike and an Athena (fig. 147 and fig. 148). In execution of Mocenigo’s will, however, the two pieces were assembled together in a pastiche realized sometime before 1613 (fig. 149).199

In 1612, Nicolò Crasso the younger (1585-1655) was in the eastern Mediterranean with his father Marco, who had been appointed gran cancelliere in Candia. Nicolò traveled to the islands of Cefalonia, Zakynthos, Corfù, Cerigo and Crete and took the opportunity to investigate local antiquities. He was also able to gather some antique items for his own collection, such as, for example, an extremely rare shekel from Samaria.200 Similarly, when the future doge Francesco da Molin (1575-1655) was provveditore generale of Crete in 1628, he procured numerous funerary stelae for the collection of his brother Domenico (1572-1635).201 A manuscript in Oxford records, for example, how Francesco recovered in the countryside near Canea an antique marble bearing a Greek inscription that a farmer was using as a tabletop:

Tablet of the agreements between the two Cretan people of Latos and Olous, from an ancient marble, that a peasant in the countryside near Cydonia not far from Salinas used as a tabletop, which the most illustrious and most excellent Francesco Molino, while presiding over the government of Crete, sent to the most

199 The statue is illustrated by Antonio Maria Zanetti in a manuscript of the Biblioteca Marciana, BMVe, Ms. It. IV, 65 n. 203. See also Giuseppe Valentinelli, Marmi Scolpiti del Museo Archeologico della Marciana di Venezia (Prato: Tipografia Aldina, 1866), 58.

200 Cicogna, Delle inscrizioni veneziane: IV, 163.

201 On this branch of the Molin family see Elena Bassi, Tre palazzi veneziani della Regione Veneto: Balbi, Flangini-Morosini, Molin (Venice: Regione del Veneto, 1982), 230. See also Marco Foscarini, Della letteratura veneziana (Venice: Teresa Gattei Editrice, 1854), 107-09.
illustrious and most excellent Domenico Molino, his brother, most magnificent senator.\textsuperscript{202}

Many of the inscriptions gathered by Domenico Molino in the eastern Mediterranean with the help of his brother survive to this day in museums in Venice and Verona (fig. 150).\textsuperscript{203}

Sometimes antiquities also reached the Italian peninsula from the territories of the Venetian empire as a consequence of the death of their owners. When in 1611 the nobleman Andrea Cornaro (1547-1616 ca.) wrote his last will in Candia he carefully disposed of all of his extensive possessions, dividing them among pious institutions, family, friends and servants.\textsuperscript{204} His house was full of precious furniture, fabrics, paintings, silver objects, books and jewels. Cornaro determined to leave some of his most valuable objects to his \textit{padrone}, Alvise Zorzi, who was in Venice. Among them were two


\textsuperscript{203} Domenico’s collection, however, has never been studied in depth. For some of the objects he owned see, for example, Marie-Thérèse Couilloud, \textit{Les monuments funéraires de Rhénée}, Exploration archéologique de Délos (Paris: Dépositaire Diffusion de Bocard, 1974); Ritti, \textit{Iscrizioni e rilievi greci nel Museo Maffeiano di Verona}: 120; Luigi Sperti, \textit{Rilievi greci e romani del Museo Archeologico di Venezia} (Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider Editore, 1988), 26-28; Stefano Struffolino, "Le epigrafi in viaggio. Aspetti antiquari di iscrizioni greche,” \textit{Acme: annali della Facoltà di lettere e filosofia dell’Università degli studi di Milano} 57, no. 3 (2004): 264-70.

\textsuperscript{204} Stergios Spanakes, "Η Διαθηκή Του Αντρεα Κορναρού (1611),” \textit{Kretika Chronika} 9 (155): 379-478.
small Greek icons and a marble head, almost certainly antique, that he kept in his studio and wanted to be delivered “per sicura mano” to Zorzi.205

This survey of the quarrying activities of Venetian officials in the Stato da Mar during the sixteenth century shows how the men in the service of the Republic actively participated in the transfer of antique artifacts - statues, inscriptions, precious marbles, and coins - from their ancient sites to Italy. And yet while European collections of antiquities grew in number and contents, the territories in the eastern Mediterranean lost precious memories of their classical past.

Upon visiting Delos, between 1675 and 1676, Jacob Spon (1647-1685) described the extent of despoliation of the island’s ancient sites:

We found ourselves on the site of the temple of Apollo. We would probably not have noticed it if we hadn’t seen the statue, fallen to the ground, so badly worn that it resembles a formless torso; this was the consequence of its age, or of the poor treatment it received at the hands of those who visited Delos. Some took away a leg, others an arm, without respecting the great esteem in which this statue had been held in the past. It is not very long ago that the governor of Tinos sawed off the face since he reckoned that the head was very bulky and he would not be able to load it on his boat (fig. 151).206

When in the early eighteenth century the French visitor Joseph Pitton de Tournefort (1656-1708) arrived on Crete, the memory of past and recent Venetian exportations of antiquities was still vivid. Standing before the ruins of Gortyna (fig. 152), Tournefort

205 Ibid., 427.

declared: “with respect to the statues, little is left; the Venetians have taken the most beautiful ones.”

The archeological discoveries of the Venetian officials in the territories of the 
*Stato da Mar* contributed significantly to shape the cultural and artistic world of 
Renaissance Venice. Through their activities the city was enriched not only with an 
abundance of precious materials and antique fragments, but also with a wealth of first-
hand knowledge about a classical past that Venice never had.

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207 “à l’égard des figures, il en reste peu; les Vénitiens en ont enlevé les plus belles.” Pitton 
THE TRADE IN ANTIQUITIES BETWEEN
ITALY AND THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (ca.1400-1600)
(VOLUME 2)

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Adviser: Patricia Fortini Brown

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CHAPTER 5
VENICE: A MARKETPLACE FOR ANTIQUITIES

We went to the house of Zoanne Andrea di Fiore to see certain antiquities, and there we saw, among the most beautiful things, together with ancient marble torsos some very beautiful small trays in which 36 gold coins were mounted on each one. The price was half a ducat for each coin plus the value of the gold. He showed us other trays with cameos, each one displaying approximately eight pieces; on one of these there were two intaglios of excellent quality… All of these things belonged to Domenico di Piero who is now dead and had established in his will how each object is to be sold and at what price.

Tolomeo Spagnolo to Isabella d’Este, Venice 13 October 1498.¹

The study of Venetian collections of antiquities has attracted the attention of scholars for many years, and for this reason the names of collectors such as Andrea Odoni (1488-1545), Giovanni Grimani (1501-1593) or Federico Contarini (1538-1613) sound familiar to anyone interested in the history of collecting not only in Venice, but also in Italy at large.² On the heels of well-known studies regarding the functioning of the art market in Northern Europe, art historians have more recently engaged in the study of the circulation

¹ “Siamo stati a casa di Zoanne Andrea di Fiore a vedere certe antiquità et ivi, ultra li tronchi marmorei de corpi antique, vedessimo per le più belle cose certe tavolette ove erano inserite medaglie di oro a 36 medaglie per tavoletta, molto belle. El precio loro era mezzo ducato per medaglia, ultra la valuta di l’oro. Ne mostrò anche certe tavolette cum alcuni camei che cadauna tavoletta poteva haverne circa octo, tra le quale una gli era che havea dui optimi intaglio … Queste cose furono tutte di quello Domenico di Petro che hora è morto et per testamento ha lassato il modo et il precio che cadauna cosa si debbe vendere.” ASMn, B. 1438, cc. 351-352. Published for the first time in Antonino Bertolotti, Le arti minori alla corte di Mantova nel secoli XV, XVI e XVII (Milan: Bortolotti di Giuseppe Fafo, 1889), 280.

of artistic objects in Italy during the early modern period. For most of these studies the main focus remains the trade in paintings, while little attention is given to other artifacts such as antiquities. Documents, such as the letter by Tolomeo Spagnolo to Isabella d’Este, show how different sorts of agents, advisors and intermediaries actively operated on the art market, purchasing paintings, sculptures or antiquities for their patrons. While the buyers, being the collectors and their agents, have been well studied, the sellers still remain largely unfamiliar. This lacuna is especially deep for the market in antiquities that developed in Venice during the early modern period, a topic that as of today has been only tangentially studied. This chapter focuses on individuals engaged in the trade in antiquities in Venice during the sixteenth century. From their business activities it shows how ancient artifacts, after arriving in Venice from the eastern Mediterranean, circulated within the city and from there were dispersed throughout Italy and beyond.

Although Venice had been a flourishing market for antiquities since the fourteenth century - the very moment when the passion for collecting ancient artifacts was born - it is only in the sixteenth century that we have sufficient evidence to draw a

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clear picture of this expanded market and its mechanisms. It is in this century that letters, inventories, wills, and other archival documents offer both the names of numerous individuals active in the traffic of antiquities and evidence of many transactions.

Moreover it was during this time that the taste and appreciation for antiquities spread to a large audience. This is shown, for example, by the reputation rapidly attained by the bronze statue of the Berlin *Adorante* (or *Praying Boy*) upon its arrival in Venice from Rhodes in 1503 (fig. 95).⁶ Not only did intellectuals, artists and scholars cherish the arrival of such a rare artifact and praise it extensively, but the statue attracted the attention of many merchants and wealthy collectors as well. Indeed, the long history of the bronze’s wanderings from one collection to another speaks to the liveliness of the market of antiquities during the sixteenth century.⁷

Thanks to its monopoly on a large number of luxury goods coming from the east, Venice had attracted a lively international trade for centuries. The city was populated by a wealthy clientele, coming from all over Italy and beyond, in search not only of numerous commodities but also of costly and rare items. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, a number of Venice’s rich customers had begun to also collect antiquities. It was the trade with the eastern Mediterranean, on which the economy of the city was still largely based, that fueled the traffic in antique artifacts. The importance of the mercantile galleys for the city is clearly illustrated in Jacopo de’ Barbari’s view of Venice of 1500, in which large ships are prominently represented in the *Bacino* (fig.

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Although few official records survive documenting the importation of ancient pieces into Venice, it is apparent that the large galleys of the mude, as well as the smaller private ships that traveled back and forth along the Adriatic and the Aegean, carried more than ordinary merchandise. On January 28, 1525 a certain Gerolamo Cittadino wrote to Isabella d’Este in Mantua (fig. 154):

Just yesterday the ships came into the port, and I went out more than two miles to meet them and was almost the first one to board them to see if there was something new aboard on the deck… but as of now, as far as I can see, I believe that they are carrying little more than their goods, of which they are quite well stocked, that is to say silk, spices and other similar things; there I saw a Barbary ape and an Indian goat, but neither was particularly beautiful. It is true that until now it has been hard to see everything well since on the ship there is such a confusion of workers unloading their goods.8

Cittadino’s letter vividly documents the excitement and expectations aroused among buyers in Venice at the arrival of the galleys from the Mediterranean. Although the letter does not explicitly mention antiquities it is plausible that among the objects that Cittadino was hoping to find “sopra coperta” there were collectables, maybe antique ones, a category that Isabella avidly desired in that period. The assumption makes even more sense if we consider it in the context of the whole letter. In a previous section of the same text Cittadino was, in fact, updating Isabella about an ongoing negotiation with the

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8 “Non heri l’altro le galee entrarono in porto, le andai incontro piu di due miglia et quasi fui delli primi che le montassero suso per vedere se sopra coperta le era qualche nova cosa … ma infine ad hora per quanto posso vedere credo che habbiano poco altro che loro mercantie delle quali sono assai ben cariche, cioè sede specie et altre simili cose, li vidi una gattina mamona et una capra Indiana ma no’ molto bella né l’una né l’altra vero é che infino ad hora si é potuto male vedere perché ne lo entrare li é tanta confusione di galeotti che scaricano le loro robe.” Cited in Tiziana Gozzi, “Primaticcio "mercante d’arte" a Venezia?,” in Per Maria Cionini Visani: scritti di amici (Turin: Stabilimento Tipolitografico G. Canale, 1977), 88-92.
Bolognese painter Francesco Primaticcio (1504-1570), who was in Venice at the time, regarding the acquisition of one “taccia di porphido,” presumably an antique tazza.9

That Venetian ships were loaded with many exotic items attractive for sixteenth century patrons and collectors is confirmed by numerous other sources. In 1532 Benedetto Agnello, the Mantuan ambassador in Venice, wrote to the Duke Federico Gonzaga:

On board the ships returning from Alexandria there was a very strange animal, such as has never been seen in this area. As of yet I have not been able to see it, and even from what I have heard about it I am unable to describe what it is like. Titian promised me that he would make a portrait of the animal, which I will send to your Highness as soon as it is provided to me.10

The Gonzaga of Mantua were assiduous customers on the Venetian market, and since the end of the previous century Isabella d’Este’s numerous purchases are well documented.11 Although Isabella only rarely visited the city, she kept a network of faithful friends who assisted her in signaling, negotiating and acquiring numerous items. Her correspondence with agents and intermediaries in Venice documents her significant expenditures on all

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9 The tazza had been already mentioned by Cittadino a month earlier, in one of his other letters to Isabella. See ibid., 91.


11 The literature on Isabella d’Este is extensive, but for a general overview on the marchioness’ shopping habits see the chapter that Evelyn Welch dedicates to her in Evelyn S. Welch, Shopping in the Renaissance: Consumer Cultures in Italy 1400-1600 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 245-73.
sorts of objects, from musical instruments to manicuring sets.\textsuperscript{12} And when, as she confessed, she was devoured by the intense desire to possess antique objects, in Venice she found several pieces for her collection.\textsuperscript{13} With the mediation of Giorgio Brognolo, Lorenzo da Pavia, Taddeo Albano, Tolomeo Spagnolo and others, Isabella was in touch with many suppliers of antiquities: jewelers, collectors, artists, and antiquarians. The letter by Tolomeo Spagnolo quoted at the beginning of this chapter refers to the possessions of a Venetian jeweler, Domenico di Piero (1406-1497), who had just recently died in Venice leaving a large number of antiquities. Soon after Domenico’s death Isabella tried to obtain pieces from his estate to enrich her own collection.\textsuperscript{14} In the years between 1497 and 1538, numerous antique objects: vases, cameos, marble heads, and busts from Venice arrived in Mantua in Isabella’s hands (fig. 155).\textsuperscript{15} Together with these antiquities, whose provenance from the eastern Mediterranean cannot be ascertained, we have seen how Isabella had in Sabba da Castiglione a devoted purveyor of ancient artifacts from the Aegean.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{12} See for example the collection of documents published in Clifford M. Brown and Anna Maria Lorenzoni, \textit{Isabella d'Este and Lorenzo da Pavia: Documents for the History of Art and Culture in Renaissance Mantua} (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1982).

\textsuperscript{13} In a letter to Niccolò Frisio dated January 2, 1507, Isabella expressed her passion for antiquities with the phrase: “lo insaciabile desiderio nostro de cose antique.” Clifford M. Brown, ”Lo insaciabile desiderio nostro de cose antique': New Documents on Isabella d'Este's Collection of Antiquities " in \textit{Cultural Aspects of the Italian Renaissance: Essays in Honour of Paul Oskar Kristeller} (1976), 324-53.

\textsuperscript{14} The correspondence between Isabella and her agents regarding Domenico di Piero’s antiquities, is published in Clifford M. Brown, \textit{Per dare qualche splendore a la gloriosa cità di Mantua: Documents for the Antiquarian Collection of Isabella d'Este} (Rome: Bulzoni, 2002), 127-30.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{16} For Sabba da Castiglione and the antiquities from Rhodes see chapter 3 of this dissertation.
In 1511 Isabella added to her collection an antique marble head, which had just arrived in Venice from the island of Rhodes. This was a gift from the Venetian Giovanni Francesco Valier, who wrote to the Marchioness:

The head was thus sent to Your Illustrious Highness as it had just recently arrived from Rhodes, and even though in Venice certain experts considered it be not very unattractive, it is not, however, of a quality worthy of your Highness and is vile and of limited value; but, in any case, I agreed to send it to you so that amongst your praiseworthy antique objects this will be the least special one, while here, amongst ours, it would be the most special. God knows, if this had been made of the most precious diamond or ruby I would have been much happier to give it to you.17

Valier’s present to Isabella not only shows that antiquities circulated amongst collectors as gifts, but also, and most importantly here, that many individuals in Venice - not only merchants - had the opportunity to procure antiquities imported from the eastern Mediterranean. Although Giovanni Francesco Valier is known for his strong political and literary connections, more work remains to be done on his passion for antiquities and on the “anticaglie de ogne sorte pizole e grande, de marmo e de bronzo” he had gathered in his house on the island of Murano.18

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17 “La testa così fu mandata a vostra signoria illustissima come era di pochi di giunta da Rhodi et benché a Venetia da qualche giudiziosa persona fusse estimata non molto trista, nondimeno alla degna qualità di vostra signoria fu cognosciuta vile et di poco prezzo; ma più volentieri ho consentito mandarla aciò che fra le lodevoli anticaglie sue la ultima sia, che qui, fra le nostre, la prima. Deh Dio, fusse ella stata di bellissimo diamante o rubino che più contento l’haverei fatta della schiera di vostra signoria.” Cited in Brown, Per dare qualche splendore a la gloriosa cità di Mantua: Documents for the Antiquarian Collection of Isabella d’Este: 248-49.

18 While the literature on Valier is extensive, his name is almost completely unknown to art historians. The most extensive mention of his role as a collector is a footnote in Nuccio Ordine, "Giovan Francesco Valier, Homme de lettres et espion au Service de Francois Ier," in La Circulation des hommes et des œuvres entre la France et l'Italie à l'époque de la Renaissance : actes du colloque International, 22-23-24 novembre 1990, Université de la Sorbonne, Institut culturel italien de Paris, ed. Alessandro Fontana (Paris: Université de la Sorbonne nouvelle, 1992), 225-45. Yet the sporadic archival references, found in the literature on Valier, suggest that the Venetian gentleman played an interesting role both as a collector and as a purveyor of antiquities for others.
JEWELERS

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Rialto was an important marketplace for antiquities. Here the trading activities of Venetian goldsmiths and jewelers were concentrated in the very heart of the city’s commercial center on the *ruga degli oresi*. Goldsmith and jeweler shops were located along the street corresponding to what is now called the *Ruga Vecchia di San Giovanni* and its extension the *Rughetta del Ravano* (fig. 156). The whole path from the *Calle della scimmia* towards the Grand Canal to what was once the *ponte di ca’ Sanudo* was lined with stores selling precious merchandise (fig. 157). Goldsmiths’ and jewelers’ shops maintained a central position in the commerce of antiquities, being natural repositories for small antiquities such as coins, gems and cameos. These ancient artifacts were sold, together with precious gemstones, individually or set in rings, seals and pendants manufactured by goldsmiths. The business dealings of both jewelers and goldsmiths depended greatly on their ability to assess the quality of valuable metals and precious stones, therefore it is easy to understand how they also developed skills in judging the value and authenticity of antique cameos and carved gems. But by virtue of their exclusive clientele and their commercial contacts, jewelers also often dealt in larger antique pieces such as hard stone vases, and marble or bronze sculptures. As early as 1335, Oliviero Forzetta, a notary and collector from Treviso, hoped to procure bronze and marble heads in Venice in the stores of goldsmiths. In his

19 The street that today directly extends from the Rialto Bridge into the narrow calli of the market area bears the name of *ruga dei oresi*, but the original hub of Venetian jewelers was the perpendicular axis now called *Ruga vecchia di San Giovanni*. This can be argued from a careful reading of the sources. See Annibale Alberti and Roberto Cessi, *Rialto: l’isola, il ponte, il mercato* (Bologna: Nicola Zanichelli, 1934).

famous “shopping list,” which enlisted the items he intended to acquire in Venice, Forzetta wrote: “Place an order with the goldsmith Ser Giovanni the German for bronze heads from Milan, etc. … A marble head from magister Ognibene goldsmith.” During the sixteenth century a number of Venetian jewelers dealt so extensively in antiquities to be known with the double title of gioielliere and antiquario. Marcantonio Michiel (1484-1552) in his Notizia d’opere del disegno already referred to the fifteenth-century jeweler and merchant Domenico di Piero as “zogiellier e antiquario singular.”

Alessandro Caravia

By the middle of the century Alessandro Caravia (1503-1568) was a well-known jeweler in Venice with an established shop in Rialto (fig. 158). Yet he has attracted the attention of contemporary scholars mainly for his pastime of writing literary and poetic compositions rather than for his business as a jeweler and merchant in precious goods. Some passages in one of Caravia’s poetic works – La verra antiga de Castellani, Canaruoli e Gnatti, con la morte de Giurco e Gnagni in lengua brava – were suspected of heterodoxy and attracted the attention of the Venetian Inquisition around 1556.

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21 "Item ponere me in ordine cum ser Iohanne Theotonico aurifice de facto teste brondine de Mediolano etc. … Item de testa lapidea magistri Omnibenii aurificis.” On Forzetta and the text of his list see Luciano Gargan, "Oliviero Forzetta e le origini del collezionismo veneziano," in Venezia e l’archeologia: un importante capitolo nella storia del gusto dell’antico nella cultura artistica veneziana (Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider Editore, 1990), 13-21.

22 Marcantonio Michiel, Notizia d’opere del disegno (Florence: Edifir, 2000), 59.


24 Enrica Benini Clementi, Riforma religiosa e poesia popolare a Venezia nel Cinquecento: Alessandro Caravia (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2000).
Today the best-known aspect of Caravia’s biography is the trial before the Inquisition he went through between 1556 and 1560, which ended without a conviction.25

But a look at Caravia’s business activities discloses important aspects of the trade in antiquities and other luxury goods in Venice during the sixteenth century. From a store on the *ruga*, Caravia practiced his business as “sanser da zoye” [appraiser of jewels] and “zoyelier” [jeweler].26 We do not know much about what (if anything) was really produced in his store, but we do know that his shop was a busy one. In his business at some point Caravia was helped by three younger assistants, whose names - Zesaro, Domenigo, and Janrigo - are known from the documents.27 Caravia had built for himself a strong reputation in Venice, with Pietro Aretino praising his ability in evaluating gems in a letter of 1550: “Your opinion regarding precious stones is more important than that of all other jewelers: with only a glance you are able to value them. No one contests what you say they are worth.”28 Amongst his prominent acquaintances the jeweler counted the Patriarch Giovanni Grimani, whose famous *studio* of antiquities Caravia had visited and described in detail in one of his poetic compositions (fig. 159):

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I saw the rare studio of Grimani Patriarch of Aquileia, so beautifully ornate with numerous antiquities, that plunges into astonishment the connoisseur who looks all around. There are objects of different kinds accumulated over many years and most of them come from Greece and Rome and they are worth a huge sum of ducats. In this studio, so famous and so beautiful, there are statues of Greek marble of such beauty that they look as if they had been made in the sky, and heads of Emperors with their noses still intact, of this and of that in such great number that my tongue can not mention all of them as it would be like trying to count the hair of the Blonde. There are an infinite number of rare cameos with carved beautiful and varied stories of ancient Roman and Greek Emperors and citizens, who have left memories more significant than those of King Carlo and the paladins from which it is possible to understand the virtues of Captains and other illustrious men, these cameos are real treasures. There are numerous antique coins extremely beautiful, esteemed for their rarity, they come from Rome and also from the Levant. These are considered jewels by those who are knowledgeable and have a gallant spirit. [...] The studio contains also bronzes, of large, medium and any other size, and you can see Jupiter, Hercules and Mars.29

But Caravia’s standing among his Venetian peers can be argued also from his involvement in the re-fashioning of the “beretta ducale” in 1555.30 On August 18, 1555, in the soprasacrestia of San Marco gathered the procuratori de Supra, the gastaldi, the proto Jacopo Sansovino, and the jewelers Marc’Antonio Benzon, Alessandro Caravia, Zuanne goldsmith at the sign of the Sapienza, and Philippo Cordan and “the jeweled

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29 “Ho visto el raro studio del Grimani/ Patriarca de Aquileia, si ben adorno/ De cose antighe, ch’el cava de affanni/ Chi se ne intende, e l vede atorno atorno./ Tutte cose sunae za molti ani/ Al mondo in questo, e quel’altro contorno,/ E la piu parte vien da Greta, e Roma/ Che de ducati el costa una gran soma/ In questo studio si famoso, e belo/ Statue se vede de marmaro griego/ si belle, che le par fabricà in cielo,/ E de le teste col so naso intriego/ De Imperadori, e de questo, e de quello/ Che a nominarli mia lengua no spiego/ Perch’i sarave, a voler dirghè el nome,/ Contarghe a Bionda i cavei de le chiome/ Ghe se infiniti, e rari camaini / Che ha intaià su de bele, e varie historie/ De Imperatori antighi, e citadini/ Romani, e Grieghi, che ha lassao memorie/ D’altro che de Re Carlo, e Paladini,/ Donde se intende le virtu, e vitorie/ De Capetani, e d’altri gran Signori/ Che sti camei è da presiar tresori/ De le antigue medaie ghe n’è tante/ Belissime, apresiae per esser rare,/ Che vien da Roma, e anche de Levante/ Queste a mo zoie si vien tignue care/ Da chi è d’inzegno, e d’anemo galante/ E che ha gran spasso de cose bizare. [...] De bronzi el studio ghe n’ha la so parte/ de grandi, e de mezani, e d’ogni taia,/ donde se vede Giove, Hercule e Marte.” Alessandro Caravia, Naspo Bizaro (Venice: Nicolini, 1565), 40v-41r. Quoted and translated in French by Michel Hochmann, Peintres et commanditaires à Venise (1540-1628) (Rome: École française de Rome, 1992), 212-15.

ducal hat was taken apart.”31 All of the gems that decorated the ducal hat were weighed and valued. Among these was a ruby of 28 carats, the “rubin cuogolegno” recorded also by Marin Sanudo in his diaries.32 The gem had been brought to Venice from Cairo by Pietro Diedo at the end of the fifteenth century. Only Marco Antonio Benzon and Alessandro Caravia were able to estimate the value of the important ruby “because the other two declared that they were not experienced in valuing jewels of such great price.”33 The gem’s value was appraised at 25,000 ducats. After two years, in the summer of 1557, the ducal crown was reassembled and completed. It weighed more than three and a half pounds for a total value of almost 200,000 ducats.

The episode documents Caravia’s familiarity with large and costly gemstones, a skill that helped him build his name with important clients outside Venice. For twenty years starting in 1547, Caravia’s business dealings with the court of the Medici in Florence are well documented by numerous letters.34 In those years Caravia supplied first Cosimo I de’ Medici (1519-1574) and later his son, the Grand Duke Francesco I (1541-1587), with gemstones of all types: rubies, diamonds, emeralds, and zephyrs. Together with gems, the jeweler provided pearls and precious hard stones such as red jasper, turquoise, lapis lazuli, plasma, agate and porphyry. These sales amounted to the value of

31 “fu desfatta per li detti Zogielieri la Bireta Ducal Zogieltata.” Piero Pazzi, _Il Corno ducale; o sia, Contributi alla conoscenza della corona ducale di Venezia volgarmente chiamata Corno_ (Treviso: Grafiche Trivellari, 1996), 49.


33 “perché li altri doi dissero non haver prattica del pretio de Zogie de tanto valor.” Pazzi, _Il Corno ducale; o sia, Contributi alla conoscenza della corona ducale di Venezia volgarmente chiamata Corno:_ 61.

thousands and thousands of ducats. During these same years, Caravia supplied similar precious goods to other Italian courts, such as to the Este in Ferrara.

Most of Caravia’s business depended upon the arrival of precious stones with the galleys from the eastern Mediterranean. This is made clear by a letter written by the jeweler himself. In 1559, upon Cosimo’s request for 150 rubies worth between 15 and 20 scudi each, Caravia wrote: “The large ships from Beirut are expected shortly, on which I was hoping there would be some type of rubies that could be of use to your Highness.” But a few days later, upon the arrival of the galleys from Beirut, Caravia wrote again: “Regarding the rubies … that I was hoping were coming with the large ships from Beirut, I sought them out with great care from the merchants who usually bring them; but they had brought only a few and not beautiful ones.” The traffic in gemstones put Caravia in touch with merchants coming from the eastern Mediterranean, dealers who brought back to Venice a great variety of items. This fact explains how easily a jeweler’s commerce


36 Several letters written by Girolamo Falletti, the Este representative in Venice, between 1558 and 1560 reveal the dealings between Caravia and the court of Ferrara. From two of these letters we learn that the jeweler visited the Duke in Ferrara sometime between May 20 and June 10, 1559. Falletti’s unpublished correspondence is in ASMo, Cancelleria Ducale, Carteggio Ambasciatori, Venezia, B. 46.


38 “Quanto alli rubini … ch’io speravo che ne veniseno con le galle de grande di Barutti, con ogni diligenza ho guardato da alcuni mercanti che ne sogliono portare, quali non ne hanno portato se non alcuni piccoli et tristi.” Letter from Alessandro Caravia to Cosimo I, January 31, 1559. ASFi, Mediceo del Principato, 483, c. 319r-v. Transcribed in ibid., 292-93.
could expand into other spheres. Over the years Caravia sold Turkish arms, dining sets, inkstands, lapis lazuli chessboards and silver objects. The opportunity to make his clients happy and do business set no limits to what a jeweler could sell. Being always on the outlook for rare objects in 1567, for example, Caravia proposed to Francesco I de’ Medici to purchase a “gatto pardo” [leopard]. The Duke instructed his resident in Venice to buy it from Caravia on the condition that “he is domesticated and gentle … but if he is wild or unpleasant it is out of the question.”

Among the other things, Caravia dealt throughout his life in antiquities. In 1552 he sold to Cosimo I an antique vase made of crystal valued at 400 *scudi*. Seven years later he offered the Duke the purchase of another antique vase, which he described in detail:

> Very ancient, made of stone that is similar to agate and chalcedony, but not as hard, and it is around two thirds of a sheet of paper high, with two handles carved with some snakes and two human heads, made by the hand of an excellent master. And there is a decorative border about two fingers wide with beautiful frameworks, and in the middle figurines and marine animals; and some of them are of as beautiful a variety and as well made as it is possible to ever see.

The vase was the property of a Venetian gentleman “dil clarissimo messer Alvise da cha’ da Mulla” [of the distinguished M. Alvise da Mula], who was willing to part with his

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39 “Egli é domestico et agevole … ma se é selvatico o spiacevole non se ne parli.” Letter from Francesco I to Cosimo Bartoli, November 27, 1567. ASFi, Mediceo del Principato, 229, c. 47.


41 “antichissimo di una pietra che rasimiglia agatta e calcedonia, ma non é così dura et é di altezza di dua terzi di foglio di carta in circa, con dua manichi intagliati con alcune serpi et dua teste umane, fate per mano di molto ecceleente maestro. Et evi uno friso largo circa dua ditta con alcune belissime cornice, et nel mezzo figurine et animalli maritimi; et zerte son de variate tanto belle et ben fatte quanto sia possibile di vedere.” Letter from Alessandro Caravia to Cosimo I. Venice January 3, 1559. ASFi, Mediceo del Principato, 483, c. 20r-v. Transcribed in ibid., 289-91.
antique treasure for the right price. As Caravia declared in his letter, in this case he was acting as “mezano” [middleman] between the seller and the buyer.

Among the international businessmen with whom Caravia dealt for his commerce we find a Greek man, mentioned by the jeweler as his “grande amico” [close friend]. From him Caravia bought in 1558 nine antique marble heads “extremely beautiful and very rare, particularly six of them.”42 According to the Greek, the marbles had been imported directly from Athens. Being short of cash, Caravia had to purchase the heads in compagnia with another merchant, Gasparo Surco, and was hoping to sell them quickly to the Duke of Florence for a high price. Caravia estimated that two of the heads alone were worth at least 1,000 scudi. The Duke offered only 600 scudi for the whole lot of nine sculptures and Caravia, with some disappointment, was able to negotiate a final price of 700 scudi for the nine marbles.43

A few months later, in April 1559, Caravia tried to sell a second group of marble heads. There were 14 of these and they had been acquired once again from a Greek merchant “come cosa sprezzata” [like a thing to be despised].44 The Ferrarese ambassador in Venice, Girolamo Falletti, was invited to look at the heads among which there were: “a wonderful Pythagoras, a Octavianus, a Brutus, a Mark Antony, a Trajan, a


43 We do not know much about Gasparo Surco who probably was a merchant active in Venice. For a certain “Gasparo de Surco” mentioned in a mercantile document of 1601 see Wilfrid Brulez, Marchands flamands à Venise, 2 vols. (Rome: Institut Historique Belge de Rome, 1965), 378, n. 1141.

Cleopatra, a Domitian and a Janus.” Falletti was impressed by the quality of seven of them in particular “of a such rare and marvelous manner, that I do not think it is possible to find others of similar quality” and was able to persuade the Duke Ercole II d’Este to buy them. But even on this occasion Caravia was not successful with his sale. The heads in fact were sent to Ferrara by burchio in two crates, but unfortunately only a couple of weeks after the shipment, on October 3, 1559, Ercole II died. The crates were never opened and, upon hearing of the Duke’s death, Caravia tried immediately to recover his marbles, but without success. Only during the following spring did the jeweler decide to go to Ferrara himself where he attempted to resolve the Greek head situation and to offer his services to the new Duke, Alfonso II, and his wife, for whom he brought a number of precious bracelets.

Cesare Targone

In the documents of the Arte degli Orefici e dei Gioiellieri, between 1548 and 1552 a certain “Zesaro in botega dil Caravio” [Cesare who works in Caravia’s shop] is

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45 “Uno Pitagora stupendo, uno Ottaviano, un Bruto, un Marcantonio, uno Traiano, una Cleopatra, uno Domiziano et un Jano … di maniera rara e maravigliose, ch’altra tai no credo si possino trovare.” Letter written by Girolamo Falletti to the Este court on April 15, 1559. ASMo, Cancelleria Ducale, Carteggio Ambasciatori, Venezia, B. 46. On September 14, 1559 Falletti wrote to the Duke that he was about to ship the marble heads to Ferrara. ASMo, Cancelleria Ducale, Carteggio Ambasciatori, Venezia, Appendice 2. The first letter was written on October 28, 1559, soon after the Duke’s death. A second letter is dated March 2, 1560.

46 From two letters written by Girolamo Falletti to the court in Ferrara we learn that Caravia was trying to recover the antique heads. ASMo, Cancelleria Ducale, Carteggio Ambasciatori, Venezia, Appendice 2. The first letter was written on October 28, 1559, soon after the Duke’s death. A second letter is dated March 2, 1560.

recorded. He has been identified as the Venetian goldsmith Cesare Targone. Targone is a significant figure since he followed in Caravia’s footsteps not only as a jeweler and goldsmith, but also, and most of all, as an antique dealer. The story of his business activities is fascinating as it shows how large and small antique objects could easily circulate inside Italy and beyond, moving from collector to collector while passing through the hands of resourceful dealers. Targone’s business also provides evidence of how ancient artifacts coming from the eastern Mediterranean and arriving in Italy by way of Venice could enter the circuit of the art market and find their final destination in another major marketplace for antiquities such as Rome.

Cesare Targone’s biography has never been studied in depth; we know however that he belonged to a family of renowned goldsmiths. His grandfather, Emiliano (Miliano) Targone (active between 1478 and 1498), had been a very important jeweler in Italy at the beginning of the century. Benvenuto Cellini (1500-1571) mentioned him in his autobiography as a goldsmith of great fame: “as it was told to the Pope that that diamond had been mounted by the first jeweler of the world in Venice, whose name was master Miliano Targhetta.” Recent research has also shown how Emiliano had been the

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51 “perché era stato detto al Papa, che quel diamante era legato per mano del primo gioiellier del mondo in Vinezia, il quale si chiamava maestro Miliano Targhetta.” Giuseppe Guido Ferrero, ed.
patron of at least two paintings, the works of the two most prominent Venetian artists of his time: Giorgione and Titian. Around 1513, in Venice Titian painted for Targone the canvas with the *Three ages of man* today in Edinburgh (fig. 160). Vasari saw the painting, probably in 1547 or 1548, in the house of the renowned medalist and gem-engraver Giovanni Bernardi (1496-1553), also known as Giovanni da Castel Bolognese. Bernardi had inherited Titian’s work from Emiliano Targone, his father-in-law, whose daughter Polissena had been his first wife. On the same occasion Vasari also saw a painting by Giorgione in Bernardi’s residence:

Another of Giorgione’s portraits is to be found in Faenza, in the house of Giovanni da Castel Bolognese, a skilled engraver of cameos and crystals; it was painted for his father-in-law and it is truly an inspired work of art, for the harmonious transitions of the tones from light to dark makes it more like a work in relief than a painting.

Although this portrait has not been identified with any extant work by Giorgione, Peter Humfrey has suggested that the painting must have been the “rittratto ad imagine di messer miliano targono in cassa di noce” mentioned in the inventory of the properties left by Bernardi at his death.

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*Opere di Benvenuto Cellini* (Turin: Unione Tipografico, 1971), 275. Miliano Targone is also mentioned in Cellini’s treatise on goldsmithing, see ibid., 650-54.

52 Polissena died in 1545 and, a year later, Bernardi married Girolama Mondini, see Valentino Donati, *Pietre dure e medaglie del Rinascimento: Giovanni da Castel Bolognese* (Ferrara: Belriguardo, 1989), 45.


54 Humfrey, "The Patron and Early Provenance of Titian's 'Three Ages of Man'," 791.
Cosimo Bartoli, the Florentine polymath who acted as agent of the Medici in Venice, introduced Emiliano’s grandson, Cesare Targone, to the Medici court in 1568. In a letter to the Grand Duke, Bartoli described Targone as a good friend of Alessandro Caravia and presented him as a very skilled goldsmith and expert in precious stones.\(^\text{55}\) Targone’s ability as a goldsmith is shown in several of his still-surviving works. One of them, a gold relief representing the standing Virgin mourning over the body of the dead Christ in the J. Paul Getty Museum of Los Angeles, is signed by the artist: “OPVS.CAESARIS.TAR/VENETI” (fig. 161).\(^\text{56}\) On the basis of this work, other similar gold repoussé reliefs set onto precious stones have also been attributed to Targone.\(^\text{57}\)

Thanks to Cosimo Bartoli’s introduction, Targone was, as early as the summer of 1568, able to carry out his first sale to Francesco I de’ Medici: “a box with 65 hard stones and 3 handles of different sorts” for the total value of 50 scudi.\(^\text{58}\) In 1575, Targone left Venice and relocated to Rome.\(^\text{59}\) From there, for the following two decades, he actively


\(^{57}\) Works by Targone are in Bergamo (Duomo), Florence (Uffizi), Baltimore (Walters Art Museum), Los Angeles (Getty Museum). There are no monographic studies on Cesare Targone’s activities as a goldsmith, on his work see Middeldorf Ulrich, "In the Wake of Guglielmo della Porta," *Connoisseur* 780 (1977): 75-84; Fogelman, Fusco, and Cambareri, *Italian and Spanish Sculpture: Catalogue of the J. Paul Getty Museum Collection*: 108-15.


\(^{59}\) In 1582 Targone is listed in the registers of the *Congregazione dei Virtuosi al Pantheon* in Rome, see Ulrich, "In the Wake of Guglielmo della Porta," 75.
operated as a dealer in antiquities maintaining a large network of customers in many Italian cities, and without losing the connection with his hometown. A look at Targone’s activities during the spring of 1575 reveals his capabilities, as he was able to have antique objects circulate up and down the Italian peninsula and delivered to the best buyers. In March of 1575 Targone obtained a license to export from Rome to Venice six antique marbles:

- a god Pan five palms long,
- a marine monster of about three palms,
- a Phoebus in half relief two palms long,
- a small Bacchus head made of red stone,
- a small torso similarly in half relief two palms long,
- and another small torso five palms long, all of them ancient and made of marble.\(^{60}\)

A month later, in April, he was offering for sale to the Medici in Florence the *studio* of the “clarissimo Cavaliero Mozzanico” [distinguished Knight Mocenigo].\(^{61}\) This was the collection of marbles, bronzes, and coins that Targone himself had helped the Venetian Leonardo Mocenigo (1523-1576) to assemble. In a letter to the Medici Grand Duke, the goldsmith explained his involvement in the formation of Mocenigo’s collection: “having been interested in antiquities for a long time and having been the advisor in the assembling of the illustrious knight Mocenigo’s collection in Venice and with him having suffered certain misfortunes he decided to sell his collection.”\(^{62}\) Targone sent to the

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\(^{62}\) “Avendomi delettato assai tempo ne l’antiquità et essendo io stato guida dell’acquisto fatto nel studio del clarissimo Cavaliero Mozzanico in Venezia et essendole occorse certe disgrazie si
Grand Duke a thirty-four page list of the marble and bronze sculptures belonging to Mocenigo, to which he then added a description of the “medaglie e medaglioni” [medals and medallions] and of the “collection of Greek silver coins that nothing more beautiful could be seen, and I think that no one who gathered all the Greek coins in the world could find so many of such exquisite quality.”

During the years that followed, Targone became a regular provider of antiquities to Francesco I de’ Medici, who was one of Targone’s best customers. But the jeweler also had dealings with other courts in northern Italy: the Este in Ferrara and the Gonzaga in Mantua.

Furthermore, archival documents show that Targone maintained business dealings in Venice where he continued to buy objects for resale. In 1579 he wrote to Francesco I de’ Medici about a piece of black coral that he had ordered to be delivered from Venice to the Medici court in Florence. In the same letter he offered for sale two Greek marble heads that he had acquired in Venice and was about to ship to the Medici. Once in Florence the heads were inspected by Nicoló Gaddi and valued at between 25 and 30 scudi for “la testa della femmina grande” [the head of the large female] and...
between 12 and 15 scudi for the one of the “fauna.” The Grand Duke did not buy the Greek marbles, which were therefore shipped back to Targone in Rome. There the goldsmith promptly sold them to an eager local collector, Giovan Giorgio Cesarini.67

After many years of dealings in Rome, the Venetian Targone had established himself as a well-known antiquario. According to Stefano degli Alli, the Medici agent in Rome, Targone worked in partnership (compagnia) with one of the Stampa brothers, Vincenzo and Giovanni, who themselves were the foremost dealers of antiquities in Rome at that time.68 Targone’s name appears repeatedly in the inventory of Fulvio Orsini’s collection of antique gems; from him, for example, Orsini acquired one “carnelian of beautiful color with a carriage pulled by four horses and Greek letters that read PLATΩΝΟC,” while other pieces were also purchased by Orsini from Targone’s business partner Giovanni Antonio Stampa.69

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In 1595 Targone was described in a letter to the Duke of Mantua as “homo principallissimo et notabile” [a very important and notable man] and well informed on where to find antiquities for sale at good prices. But his renown was not always without negative judgments; after having inspected an antique coin offered for purchase to the Grand Duke Francesco I, Nicoló Gaddi declared: “the medal is newly cast, but touched up to look minted, and varnished. I believe it comes from a certain Venetian Cesare Targone, who apparently often makes counterfeits.”

**Domenico Franceschi (Domenico dalle Due Regine)**

At the time when Targone left Venice in the 1570s and moved to Rome, his contemporary and fellow jeweler, Domenico Franceschi (1518-1601), kept a well-established store in Rialto at the sign of the Due Regine. From his store, Franceschi conducted a thriving business in antiquities, jewels and other luxury objects. Domenico dalle Due Regine (as he was generally known) had a large international clientele, as he
himself wrote almost at the end of his life in 1596 to the Duke of Urbino, Francesco Maria della Rovere.\textsuperscript{73}

Beginning in 1563 Domenico had established for himself a reputation not only as a famous jeweler, but also as an expert and specialist in the commerce of ancient coins. Some of Domenico’s ancient coins are illustrated in a manuscript by Enea Vico preserved in the Biblioteca Estense in Modena (fig. 162).\textsuperscript{74} When the Duke of Ferrara, Alfonso II d’Este (1533-1597), visited Venice in April 1563, he bought numerous antique medals and medallions from Franceschi’s store.\textsuperscript{75} Alfonso d’Este was such an enthusiastic buyer of antiquities that little of quality was left behind for other collectors. Writing to one of his correspondents in 1566, the numismatist Sebastiano Erizzo complained: “only a few antique things of value are available, mainly because with the Duke of Ferrara taking pleasure in such antiquities everyone gives them to him.”\textsuperscript{76}

A few years later, in 1568, “Menego dale dui Regine orese famoso” [Domenico dalle due Regine, a famous goldsmith] was summoned to draw up the inventory of the ancient coins in the camerino delle anticaglie left by Gabriele Vendramin (1484-1552) to

\textsuperscript{73} Letter from Domenico dalle Due Regine to Francesco Maria della Rovere, Venice, January 4, 1596. ASFi, Ducato di Urbino 219, cc. 400r-401r. Cited in McCrory, “The Dukes and Their Dealers,” 362.


\textsuperscript{75} Modena, Biblioteca Estense, Ms gamma Q.2.8, Domenico Vandelli, Notizie storiche della Bib.a Estense dell'abate Domenico Vandelli, c. 12v.

his heirs in the family palace at Santa Fosca.77 As recorded by Federico Vendramin, in his Libretto di Spese, not many good coins were left in the collection: “found were only very few ancient copper medals of good quality and no gold or silver ones.”78 Indeed Lucha Vendramin, one of Gabriele’s nephews, had already begun to cash out the collection secretly from his brothers, selling the rarest ancient coins to collectors and dealers throughout Venice.79

Domenico dalle Due Regine numbered among his clients Francesco I de’ Medici, to whom between 1573 and 1587 the jeweler sold a large variety of objects.80 These included a knife with a jeweled sheath in 1573, pearls and cameos worth thousands of scudi, and numerous ancient coins, with several pieces coming from Greece.81 But the

77 Venice, Biblioteca Carlo Goldoni, Archivio Vendramin, 42 F 16, Scritture diverse attinenti al Camerino dell’Antigaglie di ragione di Ca’ Vendramin. Libretto di Spese, c. 3, June 27, 1568.

78 “Non fu trovato se non pochissime medaglie de rame antiche bone et nissuna doro e nissuna d’argento.” Venice, Biblioteca Carlo Goldoni, Archivio Vendramin, 42 F 16, Scritture diverse attinenti al Camerino dell’Antigaglie di ragione di Ca’ Vendramin. Libretto di Spese, c. 3, July 1, 1568.


81 Evidence for Domenico dalle Due Regine’s sales to the Medici court is provided by numerous letters and documents preserved in the Medici Archive in Florence. To be added to the documents cited by McCrory ("The Dukes and Their Dealers: The Formation of the Medici Grand-Ducal Collections of the Sixteenth Century") is a letter from Nicolò Gaddi to Antonio Serguidi dated: Florence 23 November 1578. ASFi, Carteggio d’Artisti I, c. 232. Transcribed in Barocchi and Gaeta Bertelà, Collezionismo mediceo: Cosimo I, Francesco I e il Cardinale Ferdinando: documenti 1540-1587: 150, doc. 59. The letter includes a list of coins procured by Domenico dalle Due Regine for the Grand Duke. In this list the jeweler is mentioned with the diminutive “Domenichetto.” Other documents not mentioned by McCrory are: ASFi, Mediceo del Principato, 255, c. 154v. Transcribed in Ibid., 190, doc. 204; ASFi, Mediceo del Principato, 771 c. 514.
jeweler also served a local clientele, as we learn from a letter written by Fulvio Orsini to Alessandro Farnese in 1578.\textsuperscript{82} According to Orsini, “Domenichetto delle Regine” had been a supplier of medals for Leonardo Mocenigo who had assembled a rare collection of ancient coins, most famous for the Greek holdings.\textsuperscript{83} Dalle Due Regine was, of course, always informed on the deaths of Venetian collectors, as these often represented the opportunity to acquire antiquities from disinterested, or financially distressed, heirs. We know that the jeweler bought antique coins from the dispersed collections of members of the Contarini and Loredan families, and obtained a good deal at the death of Girolamo Superchi by buying from his nephew and heir, Sebastiano Piscina, “anticaglie” [antique objects] for a value of 130 ducats.\textsuperscript{84}

That Domenico Franceschi was a clever merchant and resourceful entrepreneur able to build a large network of clients beyond the Venetian market is demonstrated particularly well by two episodes. The will of the Venetian jeweler Piero Nicolai, who had moved to Paris and become a French citizen, reveals that Domenico dalle Due Regine had merchandise for sale in Paris. Among the items that Nicolai held in consignment from other Venetian merchants there were several cameos, presumably


\textsuperscript{83} As mentioned above, Mocenigo’s numismatic collection was offered for sale by Cesare Targone to Francesco de’ Medici in 1575. In his letter to Alessandro Farnese, Fulvio Orsini referred to the collection as “un conserto di medaglie Greche da non poterlo mai piú vedere.”

\textsuperscript{84} Hochmann, Lauber, and Mason Rinaldi, \textit{Il collezionismo d'arte a Venezia}, 313-15.
antique, from “Dominico des Deux Rennes, venitien.” Furthermore, in 1588 Domenico dalle Due Regine offered the Grand Duke of Florence, Ferdinando I, an ebony set of two chairs and a table decorated with pietre dure and ivory profiles. As the jeweler wrote to the Florentine representative Belisario Vinta, these special furnishings were set aside for the Grand Duke, who was given the option of buying them before they would be offered to other customers in Spain or Constantinople.

Thanks to his dealings in antiquities, Domenico had gained a reputation in Venice as an expert antiquarian and his ability in judging ancient sculptures was acknowledged by his contemporaries. In 1587, he was employed by the Signoria, together with the sculptor Alessandro Vittoria (1525-1608), to draw an inventory of the ancient marbles bequeathed by Cardinal Domenico Grimani (1461-1523) to the Republic of Venice in 1523. The sculptures (eleven busts, four small statues, and a torso) had been displayed in a room in the Doge’s Palace which came to be called after them, the Sala delle Teste; but in 1587, at the time of the inventory, they had been temporarily transferred to a different location. The jeweler, together with Vittoria, both “periti, et intelligenti di simil material” [experts and knowledgeable in similar matters], worked under the supervision of the provveditori, and compiled a list of the sixteen pieces, including portraits of Roman emperors, a Venus, and an Apollo. They carefully identified the marbles’ subjects,


described their appearance – noting their types of dress or absence of dress - and detailed all of the restorations found on the sculptures.87

Another sphere in which Domenico dalle Due Regine dealt largely throughout his life was the commerce in hard and semi-precious stones. Jasper, lapis lazuli, chalcedony, heliotrope, agate and plasma arrived in Venice from the eastern Mediterranean and were resold either as raw materials or refashioned into new objects.88 To the court in Florence Domenico sold *paternostri*, cups, seals, rings made of these rare rocks, but also boxes filled with raw pieces of hard stones. Similarly, to the Gonzaga in Mantua the jeweler provided in 1586, together with precious emeralds, also large pieces of heliotrope.89


88 This commerce of rare hard stones needs a deeper investigation. Many documents, indeed, show how Venetian jewelers had been involved in the commerce of precious hard stones since the fifteenth century. It was the Venetian jeweler Giovanni Andrea del Fiore, for example, that in 1502 procured several jasper slabs for Isabella d’Este. In a letter to Lorenzo da Pavia in Venice Isabella wrote: “Habiamo havuto la vernice et li quarto pezi de petre secati, quali sono molto belli et ne satisfano grandamente. Expectaremo che mandiati li altri tri et cossi quell pezo che gli avanza et havemo ordinato al nostro thesorero che’l remetta a messer Zoaan Andrea de Fiore li denari che’l spende.” Transcribed in Brown and Lorenzoni, *Isabella d’Este and Lorenzo da Pavia: Documents for the History of Art and Culture in Renaissance Mantua*: 67. Around 1510, “Schiavolino Gratiolo jogieliero” wrote to the Marquis of Mantua from Verona: “non ho potuto fare che io non mandi la presente a quella facendogli intendere come mi attruovo porfidi serpentini alabastri mischi et marinosi quali sono tutti di soma excellentia.” See Antonino Bertolotti, *Artisti in relazione coi Gonzaga duchi di Mantova nei secoli XVI e XVII* (Bologna: Forni, 1969), 180. Whether these hard stones imported into Venice were newly quarried in the east or (more likely) were the spoils of ancient buildings is not clear from the sources.

know that Domenico not only did commerce in these stones, but in his shop also worked oriental jasper, producing crosses, candlesticks and other similar objects.90

The importance of this trade for Domenico is eloquently reflected in his own funerary monument, an altar erected in the church of Santa Maria dei Carmini in 1574 (fig. 163).91 The structure and its precious materials are praised by Giustiniano Martinioni in his additions to Sansovino’s Venetia: “highly esteemed for the fine quality of its marbles, porphyries and serpentines and mostly for two small slabs in the columns’ bases, regarded as jewels.”92

Since Domenico dalle Due Regine dealt often in antiquities and other rare collectables it is not surprising to find his name among the owners of studi di anticaglie mentioned by Francesco Sansovino in his Venetia in 1581.93 While the extent of the jeweler’s collection of antiquities can only be imagined, a glimpse into his studio is offered by Ulisse Aldrovandi (1522-1605), who visited Venice in 1571. Aldrovandi recorded in his notes: “apud aurificem delle Due Regine, Venetiis” an intriguing collection of naturalia and other rarities, including an animal skull with two horns, a


91 The altar is mentioned in Domenico’s will. ASVe, Notarile Testamenti, B. 56, n. 143.

92 “Stimatissimo per la finezza di marmi, di porfidi, e serpentini e in particolare per due lastrette poste nelle basi delle colonne, stimate gioie.” Francesco Sansovino, Venetia, città nobilissima, et singolare, Descritta in XIII. Libri da M. Francesco Sansovino... Con aggiunta di tutte le cose notabili della città, fatte, & occorse dall’anno 1580. fino al presente 1663. da D. Giustiniano Martinioni (Venice: Stefano Curti, 1663), 264. The altar is still standing although its actual conditions barely reflect the sumptuousness of its original status. Two small black and white pictures of the altar are published in Hochmann, Lauber, and Mason Rinaldi, Il collezionismo d’arte a Venezia, 269.

93 Francesco Sansovino, Venetia, città nobilissima et singolare (Venice: Iacomo Sansovino, 1581), 138v.
phoenix’s rostrum, several petrified objects, ancient glass vases, and a papyrus with Hebrew characters and human figures.  

At Domenico’s death, in 1601, his business was carried on by his sons, as we learn from a document in which Francesco Franceschi and his brothers are all called “zogielieri alle doi Regine” [jewelers at the sign of the two Queens]. In 1617 the family store was still a successful enterprise; it is indeed described in the Mariegola of the jewelers and goldsmiths as: “negotio grande et importante” [big and successful shop].

**Rocco Scarizza (Rocco Diamantaro)**

Rocco Diamantaro (? - 1582) was another Venetian merchant often involved in the commerce of antiquities in the second half of the sixteenth century. He too, similarly to Domenico dalle Due Regine, had assembled a collection of antiquities that is mentioned by Francesco Sansovino.

While a short biography of Rocco di Zanetto Scarizza (Diamantaro’s full name) was recently written, several details on this intriguing figure have slipped the attention of scholars. Rocco Scarizza lived in Rialto in the parish of San Matteo, and in Rialto he

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95 ASVe, Notarile Atti, (notaio Fabrizio Beaciani anno 1601), B. 568 cc. 311v-312v.

96 BCVe, Mariegola (Orefici e Diamanteri) 205, c. 63r. Quoted in McCrory, "The Dukes and Their Dealers," note 53.


owned a shop on the *rupa degli oresi*. Scarizza’s nickname - “diamantaro” [diamond dealer] - reveals that he specialized in the trade of diamonds. The event we are most familiar with in Scarizza’s life is the sale of his entire collection of antiquities to the Grand Duke of Savoy, Emanuele Filiberto (1528 - 1580), in 1573. Letters and other documents in the Savoy archives allow a rather detailed reconstruction of the episode of the sale. This story is significant as it provides another view of the functioning of the antiquity market in Venice towards the end of the sixteenth century.

As often happened at the time, Emanuele Filiberto acquired the “cabinet or collection” of Rocco Scarizza not in person, but through a network of intermediaries. The Duke could inspect his purchase only after months of negotiations, when the almost one thousand objects were delivered to Turin from Venice. By then a contract had already been signed and Emanuele had agreed to pay the *diamantaro* an annual pension of 200 *scudi* for life, with 450 *scudi* as a first advance payment. Many individuals had advised, inspected, and helped to close the transaction. Vitale hebreo,

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99 Many of the documents mentioned later were signed in Venice “in domo habitations dicti d. Rochi posita in confinio S.ti Mathei de Rivoalto.”


Jewish merchant from Alessandria (Piedmont) who conducted business in Venice, presented the deal to the Duke and acted as a middleman between the Duke’s agents and Scarizza during the negotiations. Monsignor Giuseppe Parpaglia, the Savoy representative in Venice, was entrusted with accurately inspecting all of the objects in the collection. Parpaglia, being unfamiliar with antiquities, asked for help from the Roman Monsignor Orazio Muti, who happened to be in Venice in the fall of 1573. Muti was himself a collector of antiquities and also the owner of a vigna in Rome where many treasures had been found, and therefore had a reputation of being “intelligente et pratico di tali cose” [expert and skilled in this kind of matter]. An unnamed young sculptor from Rome was also involved to assist in the inspection of the bigger pieces in the collection - the marble and bronze statues. All of these figures were involved in the transaction, together with notaries and witnesses who stood at the side of the apparently old and frail Rocco Diamantaro.

On November 27 of 1573, after having inspected the antiquities, Orazio Muti reported to Emanuele Filiberto:

the three antique marble heads with busts that are there, when their small defects will have been repaired, are worth in my opinion at least 300 scudi; and if I needed them, which I do not because I already have some quite beautiful ones, I would buy them at that price. The other 27 life-size marble heads and the 37 small ones with certain figurines I value at only two scudi each or a little more than that. For your Highness they could be used over windows, doors or chimneys but they are not suitable for the collection of antiquities of a prince or of a private gentleman. Then, putting everything at a very low price there are about 600 scudi worth of bronzes and brass vases and precious, polished stones in my opinion. In terms of the jewels I cannot speak, as I have not seen or evaluated them.

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103 Ibid.

104 Documenti inediti per servire alla storia dei Musei d'Italia: II, 397, doc. 1.

105 “le tre teste di marmo antiche con i busti che vi sonno quando saranno acconcio in quel poco che li manca vaglion almeno al mio parere scuti 300 et io quando ne havessi bisogno come hora
In the same letter Muti gave his personal endorsement to the acquisition, adding:

but the reason why I believe your Highness is making a good deal at this price is that the owner is not only more than 60 years old, but he is also unhealthy and sickly, and I believe he will not be around to receive other money after the first installment your Highness gives him.\textsuperscript{106}

Orazio Muti might have been an expert in antiquities, but in this last judgment he completely underestimated Scarizza’s strength. The jeweler in fact was to live for almost other ten years, surviving Emanuele Filiberto himself who died in 1580. At Emanuele’s death, Carlo Emanuele (1562-1630), his son and successor, had to renew the annual pension to the \textit{diamantaro}.\textsuperscript{107}

The objects sold by Rocco Scarizza to the Savoy are known from a list preserved in the archives in Turin.\textsuperscript{108} Next to each item is given a value in \textit{scudi} that corresponds to Orazio Muti’s valuation. The list includes many antique objects: marble heads, busts, coins, cameos, small statuettes, carved emeralds, and other gems, yet for none of them is the provenance specified. Nevertheless, it is important to note that many of the other objects included in Rocco’s cabinet did clearly come from the eastern Mediterranean.

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnote{“Ma quello che mi fa creder che V. A. facci buona spesa per il prezzo è il vedere che il venditor non solo è vecchio di più assai di 60 anni ma è male habituato et valetudinario et non credo che sia per tirar altri danari che quei primi che V. A. li farà contare.” Ibid., 397-398, doc. 2.}
\footnote{Angelucci, "Arti e artisti in Piemonte. Documenti inediti con note," doc. 3.}
\footnote{Bava, "Antichi e moderni: la collezione di sculture," 176-77.}
\end{footnotesize}
The list includes for example: “two majolica mugs from Constantinople,” “ten pieces of cut oriental stone,” “34 bowls of different kinds decorated in the Turkish style with the agemina technique,” and “13 small candleholders and 4 bigger ones alla damaschina,” all almost certainly made in the east.\(^{109}\)

The documents do not explicitly mention whether the cabinet was Scarizza’s own private collection or rather the stock of his shop, yet it is clear that, at least from the 1570s, the diamantero was earning his living by trading the precious and antique objects in his possession. In a letter to the Duke of Savoy regarding payments to Scarizza, Parpaglia wrote:

M. Rocco, the owner of the cabinet, asked me to beg your Highness … to please send the said funds as soon as possible, as he is poor, old and sick, and has almost nothing other than the collection, and he makes his living by selling it or - even better - exchanging pieces of it; and because I took away the key, as you told me to, he cannot stay for many days in this state of suspense.\(^{110}\)

Showing his shrewdness as a merchant, Scarizza - while negotiating with the court of Savoy for the cabinet during the summer of 1573 - was also trying to sell a group of eighty ancient coins to the Florentine representative in Venice.\(^{111}\) Gathering antiquities

\(^{109}\) “Doi bocalli di Maiorica da Constantinopoli … Dieci pezzi di pietra segati oriental … 34 bacinelle de più sorte alla Turchesca alla azemina … 13 candellieri piccoli, 4 candellieri grandi alla damaschina.” Ibid.

\(^{110}\) “M. Rocco, patrone del gabinetto, m'ha pregato suplicar V. A. […] che le piaccia mandar quanto più tosto detti dinari, atteso che lui è povero, vechio et infermo, ne ha quasi altro che detto gabinetto, e col vender o vero cambiare delle cose che vi sono et haver rifatta, si va intratenendo, e pero poi ch'io ho tolta la chiave, come la me comanda, non può restar molti giorni così sospeso.” Transcribed in Documenti inediti per servire alla storia dei Musei d'Italia: II, 398, doc. 3.

\(^{111}\) This is learned from a letter written by Vincenzo Banchieri from Venice to Francesco I de’ Medici. In the letter Scarizza is mentioned as “Messer Rocco Carizzoli,” but it is clear from the context that the reference is to Scarizza. ASFi, Mediceo del Principato, 589, c. 159. Transcribed in Barocchi and Gaeta Bertelà, Collezionismo mediceo: Cosimo I, Francesco I e il Cardinale
was, therefore, not merely a pastime, but rather an important business for Scarizza. That he had gained a reputation in Venice as an expert in antiquities is indicated by another document from 1573, when Scarizza was summoned by the *giudici del proprio* to provide a valuation of the assets left by a certain “Ioanni scultoris” at his death, possessions that included numerous modern and antique sculptures.\(^{112}\)

Even after the sale of his collection, Scarizza continued his business in diamonds and antiquities. Indeed, in 1580 Domenico Belli wrote from Venice to the young prince Carlo Emanuele about a box filled with three hundred silver coins, “for the most part antique,” ready to be shipped by Scarizza to Turin for a possible sale.\(^{113}\) A year later Scarizza was employed by the *Signoria* of Venice to weigh and value two diamonds “legati in anello” [set in a ring] that the Doge had received from the Grand Duke of Tuscany on occasion of his [the Grand Duke’s] wedding with the Venetian noblewoman Bianca Cappello.\(^{114}\)

A final detail in Scarizza’s life deserves to be mentioned. The name of “Rocco Diamanter” appears in the *Libro di spese diverse* of the painter Lorenzo Lotto (1480c.-1556).\(^{115}\) According to Lotto’s account book the *diamantero* commissioned two small paintings. One was executed in 1549 and represented an elaborate subject: “un

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\(^{112}\) The inventory is published in Hochmann, Lauber, and Mason Rinaldi, *Il collezionismo d’arte a Venezia*, 346.

\(^{113}\) “La maggior parte antiche.” Bava, "Le collezioni di Carlo Emanuele I (Gli oggetti archeologici)," 137, note 13.


abatimento de la forteza con fortuna,” which Rocco wanted to employ as his personal device. This painting has been identified with a work in a private collection in Urbino (fig. 164).\textsuperscript{116} A second painting, that presumably does not survive, was commissioned the following year and represented an even more complicated scene: “un quadreto de la grandeza del supra ditto descrita de suo ordene, li conceti soj et sua valorosa virtù ne li diamantj essa virtù operativa da quale succede la speranza, cosa de importantia” [a small painting … representing his concepts and his valuable skill in working with diamonds, with the active virtu from which comes hope. An important painting]. For both paintings Rocco was to pay Lotto with diamonds and rubies worth twenty golden scudi.

Apparently, however, sometime later Scarizza returned the two works to the painter.

Much has been written about the friendship between Lorenzo Lotto and several Venetian jewelers, but nothing is known about Lotto’s relationship with Scarizza or about the two enigmatic paintings.

\textbf{ANTIQUARI}

From the beginning of the sixteenth century, several documents attest to the presence of \textit{antiquari} active in the trade of antique objects in Venice. Rodolfo Lanciani has shown how \textit{antiquari} and \textit{rigattieri} (second-hand dealers) were important protagonists in the commerce of the small and large antiquities unearthed in sixteenth-

century Rome. In a similar way, Venice too had developed its group of *antiquari* trading in both rare objects and antique artifacts often arriving from the eastern Mediterranean.

In the previous century the word “antiquaries” or its Italian equivalent “antiquario” had been used mainly to indicate someone engaged in the study of antique objects and remains, someone who interpreted and wrote about antiquities. Felice Feliciano, for example, had been given the nickname of *Antiquario*, as “he had spent his years searching for the abundant antique remains of Rome, Ravenna and all of Italy.” Yet by the early sixteenth century the term had assumed further meanings and was used to describe not only students of the material past, but also curators of collections of antiquities and antiquity dealers. Documentary evidence coming from the archives of the Este court clearly demonstrates the different connotations of the word “antiquario” in the sixteenth century. As reflected in the records of court expenses, both the ruling Dukes in Ferrara and Cardinal Ippolito d’Este in Rome were clients of a multitude of *antiquari* (antiquity dealers) from which they acquired objects for their collections. Yet, beginning in 1551, the Este also regularly employed as a member of their household staff (the


119 For these aspects I found extremely helpful the discussion on antiquarians in William Stenhouse, *Reading Inscriptions and Writing Ancient History: Historical Scholarship in the Late Renaissance* (London: Institute of Classical Studies, University of London School of Advanced Study, 2005), 16-20.
salariati di bolletta) an antiquario in the role of curator of the collections. Enea Vico (1523 - 1567) and Pirro Ligorio (c.1514 - 1583) were employed with the title of antiquario at the ducal court respectively from 1564 to 1567 and from 1568 to 1583. It was during the second half of the century that such professional antiquari often reached prominent positions as artistic advisors at the service of wealthy European patrons. But what concerns us the most here at the moment is the group of antiquari understood as antiquity dealers.

For the first half of the sixteenth century we have only sporadic records of some of these dealers in Venice. A document from the registers of the Venetian Provveditori al Sal mentiones in 1500 a certain “Christophalo da le medaglie” who was renting from the Signoria a commercial space, under the portico of the Ducal Palace, to store his precious merchandise. Although we do not know who Cristoforo was, given his nickname we can assume he was a merchant dealing extensively in the commerce of antique coins, often called at that time “medaglie.”


121 ASVe, Provveditori al Sal, B. 60, Notatorio, registro 2, f. 44r. Giambattista Lorenzi, Monumenti per servire alla storia del Palazzo Ducale di Venezia (Venice: Tipografia del commercio, 1868), 588-89.

122 Bertrand Jestaz, "L'orfèvrerie et les objets précieux à Venise dans la première moitié du XVIe siècle d'après les inventaires," Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome / Italie et Méditerranée 110 no. 2 (1998): 703-29. Jestaz, however, thinks that Cristoforo’s commercial space was in Rialto and not on the piazzetta.
In 1525 a certain “Zohanne antiquario veneziano” sold some unspecified antique pieces to Cardinal Sigismondo Gonzaga of Mantua (1469-1525). Some years later, in the summer of 1538, “Alessandro delli Angeli, antiquario”, wrote from Venice to Isabella d’Este offering some antique marbles (one head of Apollo, one Venus, and one Mars) and several ancient coins he had procured from the collection of the deceased Antonio Foscarini. Yet nothing else is known about delli Angeli.

Pellegrino (Peregrino) di Leuti

Pellegrino (Peregrino) di Leuti was a restless “antiquario e gioielliere” [antiquarian and jeweler], active in Italy in the first half of the century. Pellegrino was originally from Germany, but already in the first decades of the sixteenth century he is documented in Italy, where he seemed to have settled in Modena. In 1535 he entered

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125 Very likely Alessandro delli Angeli is to be identified with “Alexandro antiquario da le medaie” another antiquario in contact with the Gonzagas in those same years. Brown, *Per dare qualche splendore a la gloriosa cità di Mantua: Documents for the Antiquarian Collection of Isabella d'Este*: 50.

126 Pellegrino di Leuti or dei Leuti’s activities have received little scholarly attention. The fact that he is mentioned in the documents alternatively as Pellegrino (or Peregrino) Vildenario (or Vildencrio) or di Leuti, has created some confusion among scholars. The most complete references to this figure are Amadio Ronchini, "Pellegrino di Leuti," *Memorie delle RR. Deputazioni di Storia Patria per le provincie modenesi e parmensi* 6 (1872): 341-50; Paul Léon Dorez et al., *La cour du pape Paul III, d'après les registres de la trésorerie secrète (collection F. de Navenne)* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1932), 164-66.

127 Pellegrino’s German origins are stated by Iacopo Giustiniano in a letter to Pietro Aretino, published in Giovanni Gaetano Bottari and Stefano Ticozzi, *Raccolta di lettere sulla pittura,*
the services of the Farnese Pope Paul III (1468-1549) and soon became one of the most beloved jewelers at his service. Pellegrino received from the Pope a monthly provision of 6 scudi, but, as shown by the registers of the papal tesoriera segreta, other sums were dispensed for his living. At the end of the summer of 1537, for example, the jeweler was “infermo” [ill] and the Pope assigned him an extra 20 scudi, plus another 6 for his clothing.

That Pellegrino was truly passionate about antiquities is seen in a letter he wrote to the Pope in 1545 in which he expressed his desire to return to Rome “to investigate the beloved antiquities and gems.” But even before entering the Pope’s services Pellegrino had already established himself as an antiquario. In 1530 Federico II Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua, was in search of antiquities to install in the Palazzo Te and entrusted Pellegrino to look for some pieces. It was in Venice that the jeweler found a gentleman who owned “8 large life-size statues, but without necks, among which there is one Lucius

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128 Ferdinand Henri de Navenne, Rome, le palais Farnèse, et les Farnèse (Paris: Librairie Albin Michel, 1914).

129 Dorez et al., La cour du pape Paul III, d'après les registres de la trésorerie secrète (collection F. de Navenne): ad vocem.


Verus - Mark Antony’s son in law - one Antiochus and one Venus” and offered them for sale to the Duke.132

From other sixteenth-century sources we learn that Pellegrino had a turbulent life. In a letter by Jacopo Giustiniani from Rome to the Venetian Pietro Aretino we read that on March 1, 1540, at the hour of the Ave Maria, a rival, the sculptor Leone Leoni (1509-1590), slashed Pellegrino in the face. According to Leoni’s own version of the incident, not only had Pellegrino accused Leoni of having counterfeited money, but he had also offended the honor of his wife.133 Pellegrino was so badly disfigured that he looked like a horrid monster and the injury on his face was so terrible and incurable that “la sola Morte glielo toglierà mai” [only death could take it away]. After the crime Leoni was sentenced to have his right hand cut off, but, thanks to powerful friends, the punishment was reduced to an indefinite period on the papal fleet as a galley slave.134

Meanwhile, Pellegrino remained extremely busy working as a jeweler for the Pope. In the years between 1536 and 1547 Paul III entrusted him with several missions


that took Pellegrino to Ancona, Perugia, Spoleto, Piacenza, Tortona, Germany, Lombardy and Sulmona.\textsuperscript{135} While travelling around the Italian peninsula, the jeweler was always on the lookout for antiquities to buy and then resell to the Pope. In 1536 Pellegrino was in Ancona, where he procured lapis lazuli newly arrived from the eastern Mediterranean, but also “alcune medaglie rare d’oro e d’argento” [several rare gold and silver coins], these too probably unloaded in the port of Ancona. Other ancient gold and bronze coins, together with a “cameo with the portrait of Marius,” “a bronze figurine” and “an antique metal vase” were sold to the Pope in 1537.\textsuperscript{136} More items were bought by Paul III from Pellegrino in the 1540s: “small bronze statuettes,” an “ancient lamp” and a Cupid made of marble.\textsuperscript{137}

Bernardo Petrobelli and Other Dealers in the Sestiere of San Marco

A larger amount of evidence survives to document the presence of Venetian antiquari active in the last decades of the sixteenth century. More often than not, information from the archives reveals names of antiquari whose commercial activities are almost completely unknown and difficult to reconstruct. Yet, the analysis of these

\textsuperscript{135} In the registri there are records of reimbursement for trips from Modena to Rome; therefore it is likely that Pellegrino was still based in Modena. A payment of 1544 to Pellegrino’s son further confirms this ‘scudi cinquanta d’oro pagati a messer Matthia, mastro delle poste, per mandarli in mano di Olimpio Veldencrio, figlio di mastro Peregrino, antiquario in Modena, per servitio di sua Santità’. Dorez et al., \textit{La cour du pape Paul III, d’après les registres de la trésorerie secrète (collection F. de Navenne)}: 314.

\textsuperscript{136} “Un cameo di Mario, una figuretta di bronzo, un vaso antico di metallo.” Ibid., ad vocem.

scattered and fragmentary sources allows at least a partial assessment of the antiquari’s contribution to the traffic in antique objects from the eastern Mediterranean.

Although the evidence is far from complete, it seems that in the second half of the sixteenth century there was in Venice a good concentration of antiquari in the area near Piazza San Marco, an important commercial district where also numerous outlets of second-hand dealers could be found. Archival documents of the 1560s reveal the name of a certain Battista Pittoni antiquario, described as “un certo grasso piccolo” [a little fat man] residing in the parish of Sant’Angelo “along the fondamenta at the four doors, near the houses of M. Marcantonio Barbarigo.” Around 1567 Pittoni was selling ancient coins, which he had obtained from the heirs of the collector Gabriele Vendramin. Another antiquario, Antonio Fabriani, at the beginning of the seventeenth century was renting, for 25 denari and 6 grossi a year, from the procurators of St. Mark’s “una bottega sotto il portico vecchio” [a store under the old archway] of the Procuratie in Piazza San Marco. In the same years Bragadin Zen, who was both antiquario and

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141 This information comes from the registers of the Procuratori di San Marco in the Archivio di Stato in Venice. In 1613 the Procuratori established that “dovendosi proceder per accrescer l’entrata alla procuratia essendole anco accrescite molte spese et ogni giorno vanno accrescendo … siano riviste tutte le locazioni così dei stabili sublocati come de quelli che di gia sono finite le sue locazioni”, Antonio Fabriani was renting one of the shops. ASVe, Procuratori di San Marco de Supra, B. 37. Affittanze di Beni e stabili, c. 10v. For Fabriani Michel Hochmann mentions another document of 1594 in Venezia, Archivio Seminario Patriarcale, Curia, Sezione antica,
stassarolo [second-hand retailer], had his shop in the parish of San Moisé. Meanwhile, the *antiquario* Bernardo Petrobelli owned a store in the Merceria at the sign of the bear in “contrá de S. Basso.”

Details regarding the life and business of the antiquarian Bernardo Petrobelli are still fragmentary; however, a reconstruction of some of his activities sheds light on the circulation of antiquities in Venice at his time. We know that in the 1590s Petrobelli was on close terms with the procurator Federico Contarini, one of the most notable collectors in Venice. Petrobelli was well acquainted with Contarini’s precious collection of antique coins. Thanks to this relationship, at the death of the Patriarch of Aquileia Giovanni Grimani in 1593, Petrobelli was involved in the drafting of the inventory of the Grimani collection as part of its installation in the *Statuario Pubblico.* Petrobelli worked

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142 Antonio Fabriani and Bragadin Zen were the appraisers of the collection left at the death of the Patriarch Francesco Vendramin in 1619. Together with paintings, several antiquities were also found in Vendramin’s palace on the island of Murano. See Stefania Mason, "Il Patriarca Francesco Vendramin committente e collezionista d'arte," in *L'arte nella storia: contributi di critica e storia dell'arte per Gianni Carlo Sciolia*, ed. Gianni Carlo Sciolia, et al. (Milan: Skira, 2000), 243-57.

143 From Petrobelli’s will in the Archivio di Stato di Venezia, we learn that he lived in “contrá di San Severo nelle case delle monache di San Lorenzo” and died in 1615 asking to be buried in the church of San Lorenzo. ASVe, Notarile Testamenti (notaio Pietro Partenio), B. 784, n. 84. From the will of Livia Bernerio, Petrobelli’s wife, we learn that the antiquario’s store was located in the area of the church of San Basso, near Piazza San Marco. ASVe, Notarile Testamenti (notaio Pietro Partenio) B. 1244, n. 462.


145 Marilyn Perry, "The Statuario Publico of the Venetian Republic," *Saggi e Memorie di storia dell'arte* 8 (1972): 81. In 1613 Petrobelli was involved in the trial which began at Contarini’s death regarding some paintings that had disappeared from a hall in the Marciana Library. Giulio Lorenzetti, "Di un disperso ciclo pittorico cinquecentesco nel Vestibolo della Libreria di San
alongside Contarini, and most likely collaborated with the architect Vincenzo Scamozzi and the sculptor Alessandro Vittoria.\textsuperscript{146} A few years later, in August of 1600, a Venetian notary sought Petrobelli’s expertise in antique objects to evaluate another, less prominent, collection. This was the collection of the merchant Antonio Tasca that had been found stored, together with many paintings and furnishings, in a vault in Rialto at the owner’s death.\textsuperscript{147} We do not know why Tasca’s possessions had been packed in crates and left in Rialto; in his 1599 testament the merchant had mentioned the collection in these terms:

As I own some antiquities, and natural objects, and curiosities, and paintings that I used to keep for my enjoyment and study, I want these to be left to the son of mine who will have particular interest in these kind of things; and if by chance there will come difficulties between them as both will find pleasure in these objects, in that case the names of my sons need to be placed in a box or a hat and mixed together, and one name should be extracted by a child and to the son whose name is extracted shall be given my collection, and after his death to the other brother, and he is already dead, the owner is free to sell them.\textsuperscript{148}

A letter of August 19 of 1600, written by Ercole Udine, the Gonzaga ambassador in Venice, to the ducal councilor Annibale Chieppo, provides clues on Antonio Tasca’s


\textsuperscript{146} Perry, "The Statuario Publico of the Venetian Republic," 81.

\textsuperscript{147} Antonio Tasca and his collection have not been the object of scholarly investigation even though the merchant had gathered a significant group of objects. From the length and content of Tasca’s inventory it is clear that he was wealthy, owning not only precious objects, but also several properties on the \textit{terraferma}. He was very likely a merchant like his father Girolamo. An inventory of Girolamo Tasca’s assets in ASVe, Cancelleria Inferiore, Miscellanea di Notai Diversi, B. 42.

\textsuperscript{148} “Item ritrovandomi alcune cose di antiquità, et di natura, et di curiosità, et quadri che per mio diletto solo tenere havendone fatto studio poi dette cose voglio, et intendo che siano di quello dei miei figliuoli che ne haverà particular diletatione; et se per caso venissero tra loro in difficoltà facendo professione di dilettarsi ambidui in tal caso si metti ambidui li nomi di detti miei figliuoli in un busolo overo capelo, et mescolati insieme si faci cavare da un fanciulo et quello che verà fuori prima siano et s’intendono sue, et dapoi la sua morte al altro fratello il qual non essendo vivo voglio quello le possedera ne possi d’esponer.” Antonio Tasca’s will was drawn on November 27, 1599. ASVe, Notarile Testamenti, B. 219, n. 7.
death. In it we read that the merchant had been murdered in Treviso only a few days earlier. The main subject of the letter, however, is a little portrait of Ludovica Tasca (Antonio’s wife) that the Duke Vincenzo I Gonzaga had been given as a gift by the secretary of the apostolic nunzio in Venice and that now was claimed back. The existence of a portrait of Ludovica circulating between the Duke of Mantua and the secretary of the apostolic nunzio is an intriguing, but still unresolved matter.

Petrobelli was appointed to sort and inventory a large quantity of disparate objects which had belonged to Tasca. Together with antiquities, such as marble busts, reliefs, and “small antique black terracotta vases,” Petrobelli identified many natural curiosities, including a box full of “petrified scallops and oysters shells and mushrooms,” but also “two teeth of a dolphin.” Another interesting item in the collection was a sculpture...

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149 “Allei mi son scordato scrivere che detto signore supplica l’altezza sua rimandarli quell ritrattino picciolo, che diede a me da dare a sua altezza e ch’in effetto le diedi, et acciò che l’altezza sua meglio si raccordi, vostra signoria illustre potrà dire ch’egli è il ritratto di quella Tasca che fuggì da suo marito, il quale ultimamente è stato ammazzato in Trevigi, e lo desidera rihavere per darlo a un gentilhuomo che sua signoria l’imprestò.” Letter from Ercole Udine to Annibale Chieppo from Venice August 19, 1600. Published in Michaela Sermidi, Le collezioni Gonzaga. Il carteggio tra Venezia e Mantova (1588-1612) (Milan: Silvana, 2003), 272, doc. 470.

150 Also Tasca’s will reveals that he had a bitter relationship with his wife: “Item non vogli che mia moglie Lodovica Maffetti possi in alcun tempo soto qual si voglia protesto immaginabile ne lei ne altri per suo nome ne chi havere acione da lei haver cura ne administratione ne manegio ne altra cosa immaginabile aspetante a questa mia eredita ne al governo di miei figliuoli.” ASVe, Notarile Testamenti, B. 219, n. 7. Ludovica’s will (ASVe, Notarile Testamenti, B. 32, n. 520) does not bring to light anything relevant on this point.


152 “Vasetti di terra nigrì antighi … Cappe sante ostreghe e fonghi impetridi … Doi denti de porco marin.” ASVe, Cancelleria Inferiore, Miscellanea Notai Diversi, B. 45.
representing an unusual subject, “two heads kissing made of stone.” 153 It is not clear, however, whether this was a modern or antique work.

One of Petrobelli’s clients was the Duke Vincenzo I Gonzaga (1562-1612), who probably met the antiquarian at the time of one of his visits to Venice. Mantuan representatives in Venice often mention Petrobelli in their correspondence as: “M. Bernardo who sells here antique objects.”154 Between 1591 and 1605 Petrobelli sold several items to the Gonzagas, including three rhinoceros horns, one of which had still part of the animal skin attached, 155 two knives of which at least one had been newly made in Venice for the Duke, and two tails of seahorses.156 While most of these were rare and exotic items, imported from distant countries, we would hardly classify any of them as “cose antiche” [antique objects]. We might therefore argue that the merchandise sold by Venetian antiquari went far beyond our idea of antique. Many of the objects, both antique artifacts and natural curiosities, assembled by early modern collectors in their cabinets were likely often acquired together from the same merchants.157

153 “Doi teste che se basa de piera viva.” ASVe, Cancelleria Inferiore, Miscellanea Notai Diversi, B. 45.


157 For the Venetian market in natural curiosities see Paula Findlen, "Inventing Nature: Commerce, Art, and Science in the Early Modern Cabinet of Curiosities," in Merchants &
While the items that Petrobelli sold to the Mantuan court were not particularly costly, payments were nevertheless often late in arriving, making the antiquario’s life quite miserable. In the last years of the century Petrobelli was afflicted by gout and, in the words of the Mantuan representative in Venice, he was an “extremely poor man and in the greatest need.”158 But in 1605 Petrobelli probably hoped to conclude an important deal, when he tried to sell to Vincenzo I Gonzaga the collection of antique statuary of the aging Federico Contarini.159 The collection was famous for its objects gathered over time and at great expense from many ancient sites in the eastern Mediterranean, including, for example, a fifth century statue of Athena now in the Museo Archeologico in Venice (fig. 165).160 Petrobelli acted as sensale [broker], struggling for months to negotiate a deal between Vincenzo, who did not have the cash to secure the collection, and Contarini, who was reluctant to part with his treasures.161 During the long negotiations Petrobelli


161 The negotiations are documented by a group of letters in the Gonzaga archive in Mantua. See also Brown, "La Galleria della Mostra e le trattative veneziane e romane del Duca Vincenzo Gonzaga (1589-1605) per l'acquisto di antichità," 64-66.
lost some of his credit in the eyes of the Gonzaga and both he and Contarini were judged
by the Mantuan ambassador “due gran furbi” [two great thieves].\textsuperscript{162} In the end the Duke
of Mantua did not buy the marbles, which passed, as disposed in Contarini’s final will, to
his grandson Domenico Ruzzini.\textsuperscript{163}

\textit{Giovanni Paolo Ierucci (il Dottore Naso)}

Giovanni Paolo Ierucci was another antiquario active in Venice in the late
sixteenth century. According to his contemporaries he was well known amongst local
antiquari by his nickname “il dottore naso” [Doctor Nose].\textsuperscript{164} Only a few documents
linked to Ierucci’s activities are known, but from these it appears that he had business
dealings throughout Italy, moving at ease between Venice and Florence, and also further
away. In the fall of 1580, for example, Ierucci had traveled all the way to Leopoli (Lviv
in Ukraine) from where he informed the Medici court about an expensive antique object
that would have fit perfectly in the Grand Ducal collection.\textsuperscript{165} This was a unicorn horn,
that was intact, perfectly straight, translucent, fragrant and pierced from one end to the
other. According to the expert antiquary, the horn was not only a rarity of nature, but also

\textsuperscript{162} Letter from Ercole Udine to Annibale Chieppo. Venice, July 9, 1605. ASMn, Archivio
Venezia e Mantova (1588-1612)}: 397-98, doc. 758.

\textsuperscript{163} Favaretto, \textit{Arte antica e cultura antiquaria nelle collezioni venete al tempo della Serenissima}:
95-97.

\textsuperscript{164} In a letter to Francesco I de’ Medici, the Bolognese antiquity dealer Ercole Basso mentions
Ierucci: “Un certo Paolo Ierucci, qual stancia ora a Venezia, detto ordinariamente fra gli
Antiquarii il dottore naso.” Barocchi and Gaeta Bertelà, \textit{Collezionismo mediceo: Cosimo I,
Francesco I e il Cardinale Ferdinando: documenti 1540-1587} : 288, doc. 322.

\textsuperscript{165} Letter from Il Volpino to Francesco I de’ Medici. Wien, December 15, 1580. ASFi, Mediceo
del Principato, 742, c. 115. Transcribed in ibid., 183-84, doc. 97.
an exceptional antique piece having been the regal scepter of an Oriental King. Its price was regal too, amounting to 8,000 scudi. In the years that followed Ierucci supplied the Medici’s court with other interesting items, such as 334 pieces of jasper coming from Cyprus and delivered to Florence from Venice on the back of a donkey, and two cameos, presumably antique, which the antiquarian himself brought to the Grand Duke. Ierucci apparently did not have his own store in Venice, but primarily conducted his business via extensive travels. In the city he operated from the shop of the goldsmith Paolo di Gallici at the sign of the puttino on the ruga in Rialto.

MERCHANTS AND OTHER AGENTS

At the beginning of this chapter we have seen how the Venetian Giovan Francesco Valier, although not involved in the commerce of antiquities, had been able to obtain for Isabella d’Este an antique marble newly arrived in Venice from Rhodes. Valier’s example shows how antique objects from the eastern Mediterranean after arriving in Venice were dispersed throughout Italy by means of many different individuals, not all of whom were professional dealers. For this reason maintaining a large social network was an important ingredient for buyers who wanted to secure valuable pieces for their collections.


Andrea Londano

The Greek Andrea Londano was not a dealer in antiquities, yet he was able to procure in Venice for the Medici of Florence several antiquities and exotic collectables from the eastern Mediterranean.\(^{168}\) Londano was a jurist, trained at the University in Padua, as well as a writer, a poet and a translator of Greek texts.\(^{169}\) Londano has traditionally been mistakenly considered a Neapolitan, his hometown was in fact Nauplion in the Peloponnes, known in Italian as Napoli di Romania.\(^{170}\) After studying law in Padua, where he graduated in 1550, Londano settled in Venice in contrada San Severo, in the sestriere Castello, where he lived with his wife Isabetta Cubli until his death in 1586.\(^{171}\)

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\(^{168}\) Andrea Londano died in Venice in 1586 and was buried in the church of San Giorgio dei Greci. His date of birth is unknown. Londano is mentioned among the “qualified agents” who assisted Francesco I de’ Medici in expanding his family collections with acquisitions in the Venetian market in Paola Barocchi and Giovanna Gaeta Bertelà, *Collezionismo mediceo e storia artistica* (Florence: Studio per Edizioni Scelte, 2002), I, 138.


\(^{171}\) Isabetta’s will of 1604 has been published by Despina Vlassi, "Due testamenti degli inizi del XVII secolo dall’Archivio dell’Istituto Ellenico di Venezia," *Thesaurismata* 31(2001): 181-209. I owe to the generosity of Dr. Ersie Burke the archival reference to Londano’s will of 1582 (ASVe, Notarile Testamenti (notaio Giovanni Figolin), B. 439, n. 22). From this document we learn that Londano died in September 1586. The will was opened on September 4, 1586 *viso cadavere.*
In 1568 Londano had joined the Knights of Santo Stefano, a chivalric order established in 1561 by Cosimo I de’ Medici. From that year forward, on several occasions he tried to please the Florentine court with his services from Venice. In 1568 Londano helped the Grand Duke find a master glassmaker from Murano willing to settle in Florence, in 1572 he sent to Cosimo I de’ Medici one of his literary compositions, a book “sopra le cose del Peloponneso” [about the Peloponnese] and ten years later, in 1582, he dedicated another of his writings, *In difesa di Niceta, storico Coniano contro Girolamo Volfio Etingese*, to Francesco I.

In Venice, Londano kept in contact with a large network of friends who regularly traveled to Dalmatia, Syria, and the Peloponnese. Therefore when, in 1574, the Florentine ambassador in Venice was looking to buy “lupi cervieri vivi” [live lynxes] for the Grand Duke, Londano mobilized his acquaintances to procure some specimens from Turkey. Three years later, in the summer of 1577, Londano found a collection of antiquities for sale. He took the trouble to hire a painter and have all the objects in the collection drawn (fig. 166). Then he sent the drawings to the Grand Duke with a letter (fig. 167).

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173 The record of the letter in which Cosimo I thanked Londano for the gift is preserved in the Medici archives in Florence. ASFi, Mediceo del Principato, 238, c. 59. The text on the Peloponnese sent to Cosimo I is now preserved in Florence at the Biblioteca Nazionale. Londano read it in Venice on 7 June 1570 before the Consiglio dei Dieci. See Dal Borgo, "La descrizione del Peloponneso di Andrea Londano alla Repubblica di Venezia (1570),” 133-50.

174 In a letter written on August 2, 1582, to Londano, Francesco I de’ Medici thanked him for the “libretto.” ASFi, Mediceo del Principato, 257, c. 184. On this work see ibid., 134-35.


note Londano tried to please Francesco I with the offer of antique artifacts in the hope of persuading the Grand Duke to keep him in his service. Londano aspired to replace Orazio Urbani as residente of the Medici in Venice since he had lost his previous assignment as representative of the Order of Santo Stefano (recivitore). The collection offered for sale was that of Tomà Lion “dell’Ordine Senatorio” [a member of the Venetian Senate].

Although Lion is still unknown among sixteenth century Venetian collectors, Londano’s letter reveals that he possessed a quite large group of antique pieces: marble reliefs, the heads of Caesar and Vitellius, Greek inscriptions, one large head of Hercules, and the head of an Egyptian priest. Francesco I de’ Medici rejected the marbles offered, probably because most of them were in fragmentary condition.

In his letter to the Duke, Londano also wrote about another antique piece: a statue representing Bacchus carved in red marble, which had just arrived in Venice from “le parti di Levante” [the Levant area]. Londano admitted that the sculpture was not executed by an excellent master, yet its invention was marvelous because Bacchus “with one hand squeezes the grapes that he holds on his head, and with the wine or grape juice he makes himself all red; and pours out wine from a flask that he holds with the other hand.”

177 Andrea Londano and Tomà Lion were neighbors in Venice, as they both lived in the area of San Severo. See the redecima of Tomà Lion in ASVe, Dieci Savi alle Decime, Redecima 1582, B. 159, n. 210.


179 “Con una mano preme l’uva che tiene sopra il capo, e con il vino overo mosto si fa tutto rosso e per un bocchino d’un fiasco, qual tiene con l’altra mano esce fuori il vino.” Letter from Andrea Londano to Francesco I de’ Medici. Venice, 16 July 1577. ASFi, Mediceo del Principato, 700, cc. 9-11. Transcribed in ibid. The description continues: “Questo s’appoggia sopra una colonna...
We do not know whether the statue of Bacchus from the eastern Mediterranean was acquired by Francesco I and ever reached Florence. Yet a sculpture in the Galleria Palatina in Florence closely corresponds to Londano’s accurate description of the marble (fig. 168).\textsuperscript{180}

\textit{Giovanni Battista d’Alessandro}

A group of letters written from Padua by the nobleman Giacomo Alvise Cornaro to Vincenzo I Gonzaga during the summer of 1603 reveals the name of another Venetian who had imported antiquities from the Mediterranean: Giovanni Battista d’Alessandro.\textsuperscript{181} From the first of Cornaro’s letters we learn that d’Alessandro was a merchant who had brought to Venice four antique marble statues “piú grandi del vivo” [larger than life-size] “due di huomo et due di donna” [two male and two female] from the island of Paros.\textsuperscript{182} According to Cornaro the merchant had assembled a small collection of antiquities comprising, together with the four large marbles, also “un’ archa historiata” [carved chest] and about thirteen busts, all of which were made of Parian
dell’istesso marmo e tiene i piedi sopra una basa appresso sono et alcune testoline con una grande.”

\textsuperscript{180} Andrea Gáldy, \textit{Cosimo I de' Medici as Collector: Antiquities and Archaeology in Sixteenth-Century Florence} (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), 423-24. The sculpture is badly reproduced and not much is written on it in the text.

\textsuperscript{181} Brown, "La Galleria della Mostra e le trattative veneziane e romane del Duca Vincenzo Gonzaga (1589-1605) per l'acquisto di antichità," 64.

marble.\textsuperscript{183} Being in need of cash, d’Alessandro had resolved to sell his collection and Cornaro offered it to the Duke of Mantua. Vincenzo I wanted to ascertain the quality and the value of the pieces before making any offer, and therefore sent Ercole Udine, the Mantuan representative in Venice, to inspect the collection. Udine was taken to d’Alessandro’s house, in Corte de’ Cavalli in the \textit{sestiere} Castello, to look at the marbles. The sculptor Alessandro Vittoria, who had been consulted by Udine to help with the valuation of the pieces, reported that the four large marbles from Paros were works by an excellent master, but that they had been badly restored and that the heads and arms were not antique. Moreover, “the chest is of beautiful marble, they believe from Paros, and it is broken in two parts, with figures carved around representing a bacchanal of putti and grape vines, which were almost all worn.”\textsuperscript{184} Similarly, all of the busts were badly damaged. Vincenzo decided to purchase only the four large marbles, two of which were entire figures while the other two were herms: “two in human shape from head to toe, and two are herms from the waist down.”\textsuperscript{185} While we do not know what kind of business Giovan Battista d’Alessandro was engaged in, it is nevertheless very likely that thanks to his mercantile trade in the Aegean he was able to import antiquities from the island of Paros.


As the example of the collection of Giovanni Battista d’Alessandro shows, while antique objects could be found for sale in stores they often passed directly from one collector to another as their fortunes changed. In 1553, the sculptor Ludovico Ranci wrote to inform Alfonso II d’Este on what was available on the Venetian market for purchase:

Your Highness in recent days commissioned my brother M. Valentino to write to me to learn who possesses the ancient figures about which I wrote to your Highness. Briefly I will report that one is in the hands of M. Vettor Grimani, a Venetian gentleman and Procurator. This is a Curiazio made of marble, a beautiful life-sized figure. Another one is owned by monsignor Martini, a Venetian gentleman. This is an antique and beautiful bronze statue of a young boy. Certainly it would be worth it for your Highness to buy them. It did not seem wise for me to ask the price because when an artist such as me asks to buy similar things the word spreads, but if your Highness would like to try to buy them you could ask your ambassador ... I found other antique marble sculptures ... one of which is in the hands of Bortolo Vendramini, a Venetian gentleman. This is a very beautiful Venus, but without the head and arms. And there are two other torsos in the hands of Alvise Dudoni, supervisor at the wine custom office. These are ancient and extremely beautiful. One is Apollo standing and the other sitting.  

All of the antiquities mentioned by Ranci were not in the hands of dealers, but rather belonged to private collectors. The owners might have been willing to sell at a good

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186 “La Ex.ia Vostra a questi giorni passati dette commissione a M. Valentino mio fratello che mi scrivesi per intender in mano di cui erano le figure antique che io scrissi a Vostra Ex.ia le quali brevemente lì dirò che una ne tiene M. Vettor Grimani gentilhuomo Veneziano et procuratore quale è un curiacio di marmo figura bellissima di grandecia come il vivo. L’altra la tiene monsignor Martini gentilhuomo venetiano quale è una figura di bronzo antiqua e bella di un giovine che certamente l’una e l’altra seriano da pervenire alle manj di Vostra Ex.tia, delle quali a me non ha parso bene il domandarli del pretio perchè quando un par nostro dell’arte dimanda di comprar simil cose si viene a mettere in assai riputatione, ma se parrà a Vostra Ex.tia che si tenta di averle quelle ne potria dar commissione al suo Signor ambasator [...] ho ritrovato altre figure pur di marmo antique [...] la quale una è in mano de m. Bortolo Vendramini gentilhuomo veneziano, quale è una Venere bellissima ma senza testa e bracie et dui altri torsi in mano di Aloixio Dudoni superiore al dacio del vino quali sono antiqui e bellissimi l’uno di uno Apollo in piedi l’altro asentato.” Letter from Ludovico Ranci to Alfonso II d’Este. Venice, 25 July 1553. ASMo, Archivio Segreto Estense, Archivio per Materie – Scultori 17/1. Transcribed in Adolfo Venturi, La Regia Galleria Estense in Modena (Modena: Toschi & C., 1882), 71, note 2.
price, but still long negotiations had to occur between buyers and sellers. The purchase of antiquities was sometimes the result of a long series of consultations.

INTERNATIONAL PLAYERS

By the second half of the century interest in collecting antiquities had spread all over Europe, thus more than ever wealthy collectors began to look at Italy as their primary source of small and large antique objects. Venice had grown to become an international marketplace for antiquities, with buyers coming from all over Europe in search of antique objects for their collections. Venetian collections were attractive for foreign buyers for their holdings of pieces of eastern Mediterranean origin and in particular for their numismatic sections rich in rare Greek coins. In the city many important collections became available for sale during the last few decades of the century, whetting the appetites of many European princes.

In 1567, 15 years after the death of the Venetian nobleman Gabriele Vendramin, his heirs had begun to sell, albeit illegally, the antique objects he had left in his camerino delle antigaglie. In one of his letters Nicolò Stoppio, a Flemish merchant residing in Venice, vividly described the greed of Vendramin’s nephews: “one by one, in competition with each other, and especially with one of them taking the heads and secretly offering them for sale to make money to gamble and go with prostitutes.” In

187 For the presence of European buyers on the Italian antiquity market see Brown, "Le antichità," 309-37.

1575, as we have seen, another nobleman, Leonardo Mocenigo, was forced by economic constraints to sell his precious collection of sculptures and ancient coins.  

During this time numerous merchants would turn themselves into experts in searching, judging and finding antique objects for sale. Some of them attained a high reputation while trying to obtain for their international clients not only single items, but also entire collections. Individuals such as Jacopo Strada, Nicolò Stoppio and Ercole Basso, active as both agents and artistic advisors for particularly eager and wealthy clients, began to appear on the Venetian scene next to local dealers. Thanks to the mediation of these figures, several northern collectors, such as Hans Jakob Fugger (1516-1575), Duke Albrecht V of Bavaria (1528-1579), Archduke Ferdinand II of Tyrol (1529-1595) and the Imperial Court, spent thousands of ducats in Venice purchasing antiquities.

Jacopo Strada (1515-1588) was a successful antiquarian who concluded many important acquisitions on the Venetian market (fig. 169). In 1568 he was able to send to Albrecht V in Münich, a carefully-vetted choice of sculptures obtained from the collection of the old Andrea Loredan (1492-1569). The sculptures had been acquired by


Strada for 7,000 ducats after extended negotiations. Many praised Loredan’s collection
and in particular the scholar Carlo Sigonio who had described it as a museum “rich in all
types of ancient artifacts imported with immense expense from Greece.”192 Thanks to
Strada, Albercht V also obtained pieces from the collection of another Venetian, Simone
Zeno (1518-1590).193 Amongst Zeno’s holdings were pieces arrived from the
Mediterranean, such as a large marble basin imported from Candia.194

The merchant Nicolò Stoppio resided in Venice where maintained tight
commercial and artistic relations with the Fugger family in Nuremberg and the court of
Bavaria.195 From his numerous letters we learn many other details about the Venetian
market in the 1560s. Especially relevant are the letters in which he describes marbles
arriving from the eastern Mediterranean and available for sale.196 On June 8, 1567, for
example, Stoppio reported:

Yesterday someone brought me the head of a Diana that a Greek carried from
Smyrna in Greece; it is extremely beautiful, perfectly intact, except for the points
of the moon on her head that are quite ruined, but it will be easy to fix them. It is
worth fifty ducats, but I will have it for less than sixteen.197

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192 “Dovizioso in ogni qualitá d’antichi monumenti investigati con immensa spesa dalla Grecia.”
Favaretto, Arte antica e cultura antiquaria nelle collezioni venete al tempo della Serenissima: 83.

193 For Zeno’s collection see Hochmann, Lauber, and Mason Rinaldi, Il collezionismo d’arte a
Venezia, 324.

Frosien-Leinz, Das Antiquarium der Münchner Residenz: Katalog der Skulpturen, 2 vols.

195 There is no monographic study on Stoppio since, unfortunately, his interesting personality has
always been overshadowed by that of his contemporary and rival Jacopo Strada. See Jansen,
"Jacopo Strada et le commerce d’art," 11-21.

196 See Stoppio’s letter to H. J. Fugger mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

197 “Hieri m’e stato portato una testa di Diana che un Greco ha portato di Smirna in Grecia,
bellissima, integra senza macula, eccetto le punte della luna che ha in testa sono alquanto ruinate,
ma sera facile a rimediare, la vale cinquanta ducati et l’havero per mancho forse di 16.” Libri
A few months later Stoppio was writing about an ancient sarcophagus purchased from the Renier family by David Ott: “I learned that Mr. David (Ott) had obtained that sarcophagus at the price of 150 ducats from a gentleman of the Renieri family.”198 This was the marble sarcophagus, today in Vienna, that had been found on Cyprus and brought back to Venice by Giovanni Renier (fig. 118 and fig. 170).199

Later on, on November 9, 1567, Stoppio mentioned an antique head that had arrived in Venice from Constantinople200 and only a few days later, on November 14, he wrote again to Fugger about a ship that had just arrived with a cargo of ancient marble heads and busts from Candia and the Morea.201 The following fall Soppio wrote about several Greek inscriptions and other antiquities.202 And finally, in a letter written on April 9 of 1569, he described to Fugger “the head of a large woman, almost the size of a

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199 See chapter 4 in this dissertation.


201 Libri Antiquitatum, Munich, Hauptstaatsarchiv, Kurbayern, Äusseres Archiv 4851-4856, vol. II, fol. 88r-89v. Cited in ibid., 462, n. 96. The content of the letter has been cited by several scholars over time, yet the original text by Stoppio has never been transcribed.

colossus, which represents the province of Egypt, as shown from the veil that she has on her head” which had been imported into Venice from Greece by one of his friends.  

The combined presence in the Venetian market of wealthy foreign buyers willing to spend large sums of money and unrelenting dealers in search of collections to offer for sale induced many collectors to part with their treasures or at least to contemplate the possibility of selling off their collections. This is clearly stated in a letter written in 1574 by the famous numismatist Sebastiano Erizzo:

Regarding my collection of medals, about which Calestano already wrote to your Highness, I tell you that many times Calestano inquired insistently whether I wanted to sell them. Since his persuasion was so intense and also because I spent so much money buying them over many years in order to write my book, I decided I would be willing to part with them for the right opportunity, because not having children I do not want to keep dormant such a large amount of capital and also do not want to leave these to others, as not everyone appreciates them.

Within this ever more competitive market, shopping for antique items could become a difficult task even for an insider with many local connections. When, in the fall of 1570, Titian went searching for antique marbles on behalf of the Duke of Mantua he faced

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204 “Quanto alla studio mio delle medaglie, di cui già scrisse a V.S. il Calestano, io le dico che molte volte il detto mi fece istanza con ogni affetto, ch’io volessi contentarmi di venedere le mie medaglie; onde ha tanto potuto in me la sua persuasione, tanto piu havendo io con molta spesa fatto acquisto già molti anni di tali cose per la compositione dil libbro mio, che mi son contentato, quando mi venga l’occasione di privarmene per non volere, non havendo io posterità di figlioli, tenere morto un tanto capitale di danari et meno lasciar questa roba ad altri, che non é cosí intesa da tutti.” Erizzo’s letter was included in a note sent on July 7, 1574 by Prospero Valenti to the Duke William V. Transcribed in Henry Simonsfeld, "Mailander Briefe zur bayerischen und allgemeinen Geschichte des 16. Jahrhunderts," Abhandlungen der Historischen Classe der Koniglich Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 22 (1902): 334, doc. 156. Giulio Calestano, who was both a collector and a dealer, is still an enigmatic figure. On him see Hochmann, Lauber, and Mason Rinaldi, Il collezionismo d’arte a Venezia, 257.
numerous challenges. In September of that year, Guglielmo Gonzaga decided to present a gift of ancient statuary to the emperor Maximilian II (1527-1576). Alessandro Capilupi, the Gonzaga representative in Venice at that time, entrusted Titian and his son Orazio to help find the objects. In the early stages of the search Titian advised that the acquisition of high-quality pieces at reasonable prices required patience as “it is not wise to show haste because this would adversely affect the price.” For several weeks Titian, his son and Capilupi inspected a variety of objects: statues, marble sea monsters brought by a local merchant from Troy, Greek heads and numerous marble busts without limbs. Not a single piece was deemed appropriate for the Imperial court. Disheartened, Titian suggested looking in Rome where pieces could be found “easily, more advantageously and without difficulties.” But even when, six months later, a Roman “anticario” brought to Venice a pair of “mascheroni di marmo Greco, antichi” [antique masks of Greek marble], after inspecting them Titian declared: “they are not ancient and not of good quality and are not worth what is asked for them.”


208 “Non sono antichi ne de’ buoni e non vagliono quello che ne dimandano.” Letter from Alessandro Capilupi to Guglielmo Gonzaga, April 21, 1571. ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, B. 1504, II, cc. 454-457. Ibid., doc. 127.
Numerous Venetian collections of antiquities left the city at this time and found new permanent homes in other parts of the Italian peninsula or in other European countries. Yet since the beginning of the century, some Venetian collectors had developed a new sensitivity towards the importance of conserving their patrimony within Venice and had bequeathed many of their pieces to the antiquity collection of the Republic – the *Statuario Pubblico* - a public museum maintained by the state in a public building.²⁰⁹ When the statue of the *Adorante*, mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, acquired by a collector from Verona around 1574, a copy of it was cast in bronze and kept in Venice where it survives to this day (fig. 171).²¹⁰

This chapter has presented evidence of how the fact that Venice, a city without a classical past, did not have its own on-site sources of antiquities to exploit did not prevent it from becoming one of the most important marketplaces for antiquities in Europe, second only to Rome, during the sixteenth century. Many of the antique objects sold in Venice arrived in the city thanks to the commercial activities of local merchants in the eastern Mediterranean. Antiquities traveled together with exotic and luxury objects and then circulated in the hands of numerous dealers, passing from one collection to another. By the second half of the century Venetian dealers in antiquities were able to satisfy not only a local clientele, but also an international one. When it was not possible to meet the requests of the ever more discriminating buyers with what was available in the city, Venetian dealers were able to procure pieces from Rome. This is demonstrated, for

²⁰⁹ Perry, "The Statuario Publico of the Venetian Republic," 75-150.

example, by the *Nota di cert’antiquità da vendersi* [*List of antiquities for sale*] sent on July 9, 1582 by Claudio Ariosti, the Este representative in Venice, to the Duke in Ferrara. After having listed almost fifty antique sculptures, Ariosti ended the note by adding: “If you want to add busts to the heads add 20 scudi each and I will procure the busts from Rome.”

Antique heads available in Venice could easily be mounted on busts coming from Rome.

Yet Venice was a more attractive marketplace of antiquities for many buyers and presented some advantages compared to Rome. In Venice antique objects could be exported freely from the city without the need of a special license, while in Rome the situation was different, as Alessandro Grandi lamented in 1559 when writing about antique statues: “it is not possible to export without a license, and this is not easily given, and smugglers are harshly persecuted.” Moreover, compared to Rome, Venice was a less crowded market; often collectors and dealers in Rome complained about the competition among buyers: “that if the Pope himself wanted to collect antiquities, he would not find even mediocre pieces for a long time, so much is Rome already stripped of all its treasures.”

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211 “Se a le teste senza petti vorano petti creseti scudi 20 per testa per li faró venire de Roma.” ASMo, Archivio Segreto Estense, Archivio per Materie. Antichità, B. 7/1. Published in: *Documenti inediti per servire alla storia dei Musei d'Italia*: III, 4-5.


213 “Che se il papa volesse mettere insieme gli antichi, non trovrebbe cose mediocre neanco in molto tempo, tanto è Roma spogliata già di ogni bene.” Letter from Diomede Leoni to Pietro Usimbardi sent on July 23, 1574 from Rome. ASFi, Mediceo del Principato, 5100, c. 388. Barocchi and Gaeta Bertelà, *Collezionismo mediceo: Cosimo I, Francesco I e il Cardinale Ferdinando: documenti 1540-1587*: 80-81, doc. 80. Here in particular Leoni is referring to the numismatic market.
marketplace had a special allure as they were rare, almost exotic, treasures discovered underground in distant lands that had arrived in the city by sea.
CHAPTER 6  
MADE in GREECE

In Venerem Gentilis Bellini  
Anyone who would wish to see the Venus of Paphos with naked breasts  
in the ancient marble of Praxiteles,  
Should seek out the shelf of Gentile Bellini where she stands,  
even though the limbs are cut off, her image lives.

Raffaele Zovenzoni, Istrias.¹

In this study I have used a variety of printed and manuscript primary sources to identify the antique objects that entered Renaissance collections from the eastern Mediterranean and to understand how they arrived in Italy. Letters, descriptions, travel diaries, registers of court expenses, bills and official reports have supplied different sorts of evidence to examine the means by which these importations occurred. To conclude I want to turn now to those sources, such as the poem by Raffaele Zovenzoni, but mainly inventories, descriptions and wills, that mention the antique objects once they were already in private collections. My aim is to analyze how the antiquities of eastern provenance are recorded and described in these documents.

“HAVUTA DE GRECIA”

Once they arrived in Italy, ancient artifacts imported from the eastern Mediterranean immediately mingled with other antique collectables and more often than not their provenance remained unrecorded. Often inventories and descriptions of

¹ “Qui Paphiam nudis Venerem vidisse papillis / optet in antiquo marmore Praxitelis, / Bellini pluteum Gentilis quaerat, ubi stans, / trunca licet membris, vivit imago, suis.” Baccio Ziliotto, Raffaele Zovenzoni. La vita, i carmi (Trieste: Arti Grafiche Smolars, 1950), 109. Quoted in English in Patricia Fortini Brown, Venice & Antiquity: the Venetian Sense of the Past (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 118. The poetic composition is dated to the early 1470s, when Zovenoni, originally from Trieste, was living in exile in Venice.
Renaissance collections are not as detailed as we would like them to be and leave us wondering where, for instance, a certain "testa di bronzo" came from and, even more crucially, whether it was a modern or an antique work of art.² We know indeed that ancient, modern and "all’antica" artworks were displayed together, next to each other, in the cabinets and galleries of early modern collectors. It is well known, for example, how, upon entering Isabella d’Este’s grotta in Mantua, the Marchioness’ special guests could see “a Cupid sleeping on a lion skin, made by Praxiteles” displayed en pendant with “another Cupid sleeping, made of Carrara marble by the hand of Michelangelo.”³ Thus only in rare cases, when the provenance is clearly stated and the source is trustworthy, can we attest with certainty the presence of antique artifacts coming from the eastern Mediterranean in early modern collections. Yet unfortunately from reading the documents it appears that the provenance of antiquities in the Renaissance was not a major concern as it is today.

In his description of the statues and paintings of Florence published in 1510 - Memoriale di molte Statue e Picture sono nella inclyta Cipta di Florentia – Francesco Albertini wrote that in the Medici sculpture garden and in Casa Martelli there were “many antique things from Rome.”⁴ In the house of the goldsmith Lorenzo Ghiberti,

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⁴ “assai cose antique venute da Roma.” Francesco Albertini, Memoriale di molte statue e pitture della città di Firenze (1510) (Florence: Cellini, 1863), 12.
Albertini instead saw antique art works “of excellent quality made by the hand of the ancient Polykleitos” and “a large carved marble vase extremely beautiful that Lorenzo Ghiberti had had shipped from Greece.” Unfortunately, these kinds of references to where antiquities came from are scanty and only exceptionally can be found in the sources.

Even when we turn to documents relative to collections gathered in Venice, where antiquities were not found locally underground as in various other parts of Italy, but rather came from distant sites, again we find only insufficient evidence to corroborate the exact provenance of antique works. In his Notizia d’opere del disegno Marcantonio Michiel (1484-1552) provides descriptions of 28 private collections assembled in Venice and in other northern Italian centers in the first decades of the sixteenth century. Often Michiel, who was considered by his contemporaries “consumatissimo ne le antichità,” clarifies whether an artifact is “opera anticha” or a modern object created by a Renaissance artist. Rarely, however, does he report on the provenance of the objects he sees. In the Paduan collection of the learned Leonico Thomeo, Michiel describes a Byzantine parchment scroll and exceptionally he mentions that it was created in Constantinople. But among all of the antiquities he inspected, Michiel only specified a

5 “excellentissime per mano di Polycleto antique … uno vaso grande marmoreo intagliato bellissimo, il quale Lorenzo Ghiberti fece portare di Grecia, cosa bellissima.” Ibid. p. 12

6 Marcantonio Michiel, Notizia d’opere del disegno (Florence: Edifir, 2000).


8 “Lo rotolo in membrana che ha dipinta la istoria de Israelite et Yesu Naue, cum lhabiti et arme a lanticha, cum le immagini deli monti, fiumi, et cittadi humane, cum la explicatione della istoria
geographical provenance for two sculptures in the collection of Gabriele Vendramin (1484-1552): “the small naked figure without arms and head made of red stone that came from Rhodes, the head of the little Satyr laughing made of the same red stone, from Rhodes.” The provenance of these two fragmentary statues is not, however, recorded in the inventory of Vendramin’s camerino drawn up by his heirs in 1567. Thus it is clear that with the death of their owner, who personally knew from where the two objects had arrived, the Rhodian origin of the marbles was forgotten. The “nudetto” from Rhodes has been tentatively identified with a statue of Meleager, restored with the addition of head and arms, now in the Museo Nazionale in Naples (fig. 172).

Michiel also visited the house of Andrea Odoni (1488-1545), a merchant of Milanese origins, who had assembled an impressive collection of modern and antique works of art in his Venetian home in Cannaregio (fig. 173). But it is Pietro Aretino...
(1492-1556) who described with emphasis Odoni’s holdings of antique statuary, marveling at the numerous pieces imported from Greece: “And I do not know which prince has such rich beds, such rare paintings and such regal clothes. I do not mention the sculptures, as Greece almost certainly would keep the primacy of antiquity, if it had not let itself be stripped of the relics of its sculptures.” Yet unfortunately we do not know enough about the formation and the exact contents of Odoni’s collection to give full credit to Aretino’s emphatic claim.

Even for the two most notable Venetian collections of the second half of the sixteenth century - that of the Patriarch Giovanni Grimani (fig. 174) and that of the procurator of Saint Mark Federico Contarini – rarely do the sources specify the exact origin of individual pieces, despite the fact that these collections were widely renowned for their objects procured at great expense from the eastern Mediterranean.

The Grimani collection was described at the end of the sixteenth century by the Camaldolese friar Germano Vecchi who, as we have mentioned in a previous chapter, wrote that the marble group of the Abduction of Ganymede had been procured from Constantinople (fig. 106). Yet Vecchi reports the provenance for only one other piece in the collection:

In a large room at the entrance of a noble apartment of the Palace, there is an antique sculpture extremely rare for its subjects, so much so that the experts in antiquities say that there is not a comparable sculpture, not even the Adonis in Rome, that is so famous. These are two naked figures forming one group of

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14 See chapter 3 in this dissertation.
marble; one of them represents Bacchus standing extremely beautiful, bigger than life size; the other is a life size Faun [...] This sculpture was brought here at great expense and was found in Greece, among the ruins of Athens (fig. 175).  

In 1611 Orazio Pauli wrote from Venice to Carlo Emanuele, Duke of Savoy, in Turin about the collection of Federico Contarini that they were hoping to acquire:

Those who have seen the aforementioned statues have reminded me of the statues of the procurator Contarini, who, being extremely old and having enjoyed them for a long time, easily would depart from them; and I wanted to have a copy of them, since I know, as it is of common knowledge, that they are all extremely rare things, which he had gathered for his own pleasure over many years, having had them brought from Greece and other places.

Thus it was well known in Venice that many pieces in Contarini’s collection had been procured in Greece. However, when the collection was inventoried at the owner’s death,

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16 “Questi che hanno veduto le sud.te statue, m’hano ricordato quelle del si.r Procurator Contarini, che per essere hormai descrepito havendole godute lungo tempo facil.m.te si ridurrebbe a farne esito; e perché io so per openion comune, che sono tutte cose signalari, havendole egli cumulate per dilettat.ne propria con studio in molti anni, havendone fatte venir di Grecia, e d’altrove, ho volute avenir copia.” Letter written from Venice on 27 September 1611. ASTo, Corte, Lettere ministri Venezia, n. 120. Quoted in Anna Maria Bava, "Antichi e moderni: la collezione di sculture," in Arte in Piemonte: Le collezioni di Carlo Emanuele I di Savoia, ed. Giovanni Romano and Anna Maria Bava (Turin: Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Torino, 1995), 162.
in 1613, no provenance was recorded for any of the statues.\textsuperscript{17} Even Giovanni Stringa, who in 1604 had described with many details the antique objects displayed in Contarini’s residence in the \textit{procuratorie} on Saint Mark’s square, had not provided much information regarding their provenance. Stringa only reported that one statue of Cicero “used to be on top of the doorway in the famous \textit{Studio} in Athens”\textsuperscript{18} and that one bust of Julius Caesar had been made in Greece.\textsuperscript{19}

Thus inventories and descriptions of early modern collections often lack the evidence we would like to have to ascertain the provenance of antique pieces. These documents are succinct, usually dry lists, often drawn up by uninformed compilers and therefore leave us with many questions unanswered. Other archival documents, however, occasionally are more revealing in this sense, especially when it is the collector’s own voice talking about the objects in his possession. In 1535 a Venetian Grand Chancellor, Andrea de Franceschi (1473-1552), drew up his will in which he divided his precious objects among relatives and friends.\textsuperscript{20} To his beloved nephew Hieronimo, son of his

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{17} Maria Teresa Cipollato, "L'eredità di Federico Contarini: gli inventari della collezione e degli oggetti domestici " \textit{Bollettino dell'Istituto di Storia della Società e dello Stato Veneziano} 3 (1961): 221-57.


\footnote{19} “Giulio Cesare fatto in Grecia.” Ibid. 373. On this statue, wrongly identified by Stringa as Cicero, see Giuseppe Valentinelli, \textit{Marmi Scolpiti del Museo Archeologico della Marciana di Venezia} (Prato: Tipografia Aldina, 1866), 253-55.

\footnote{20} On Andrea de’ Franceschi see Sergio Zamperetti, "De Franceschi, Andrea," in \textit{Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani} (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1988), vol. 36, 24-26. I am most grateful to Deborah Howard who has provided me with the opportunity to read the text of a lecture she delivered at the symposium in honor of David Rosand held in New York at Columbia University in the Fall of 2008: Deborah Howard, “‘The People’s Doge’: The Cultural Milieu of the Grand Chancellors of Renaissance Venice” (lecture presented at the symposium in honor of
brother Agostino, de Franceschi left one of his two portraits painted by Titian (fig. 176); a gold medal of Hadrian; two tapestries; two table-carpets; and “una testa grande marmorea havuta de Grecia” [a large marble head obtained from Greece].

More often the provenance of an antique piece is recorded when the object is still on the market and offered for sale to potential buyers, as we have seen in the previous chapter. In 1570 Alessandro Capilupi, agent for the Gonzaga in Venice, was in search of antiquities. His appetite had been whetted by someone who had informed him “that a merchant had some antique marine monsters that he had brought from Troy with one of his own ships.” When Capilupi inspected the pieces that had arrived from ancient Troy, however, he soon found out that these were only a few fragmentary heads of little value as most of them were in poor condition.

The provenance of an antique object from the eastern Mediterranean is often associated with the assertion that great expenses were incurred to procure it. While it is difficult to estimate the real costs of these antiquities and compare them with those of objects recovered in Italy, it is clear that often antiquity dealers used a distant provenance to advertise a piece’s rarity and to justify a higher price. In 1598 the famous Roman

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David Rosand, New York, Columbia University, October 17 – 18, 2008. From this text I have drawn numerous information on Andrea de’ Franceschi and his testament. The will was drawn up on March 1, 1535 (ASVe, Notarile, Testamenti, B. 1210, n. 582) and it was followed by five codicils added in 1538, 1541, 1549 and 1551 respectively. Sections of the document have been published by Michel Hochmann, Peintres et commanditaires à Venise (1540-1628) (Rome: École française de Rome, 1992), 356-58.

21 Hochmann, Peintres et commanditaires à Venise (1540-1628): 358. Deborah Howard has discussed the Titian portraits in her 2008 lecture, see footnote 19 in this chapter.

antiquarian and collector Fulvio Orsini (1529-1600) had acquired a rare bronze coin from a certain Alessandro Borgianni in Bologna (fig. 177). According to the seller it was one of the most beautiful and rare Greek coins available on the Italian market; it had been struck at Magnesia in Asia Minor and bore Cicero’s profile. After having paid the conspicuous sum of 100 Florentine ducatoni, Orsini finally received the coin and realized it was not of the quality extolled. To his protest the seller wittily replied: “The price paid is not excessive because it would not even pay the expense of the passage from Magnesia to Rome.”

In sum, objects arriving from the eastern Mediterranean did not generally occupy a special place in western antiquity collections by virtue of their provenance. Similarly to the items unearthed on the Italian soil, in Rome or elsewhere, the objects recovered in the eastern Mediterranean were appreciated and admired simply because they were antique, beautiful, or provided knowledge about the past.

Yet when, from time to time, it became known that an object had travelled a long journey through the Mediterranean and had arrived in Italy from the remote sites of ancient Graecia, this provenance from a distant place increased the allure and importance of that object.

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“PÚ BELLA COSA, COSA GRECHA”

The story of the bronze statue of the so-called Adorante (or Praying Boy) in Berlin, briefly mentioned in earlier chapters, allows some considerations on the reactions of early modern viewers in front of antiquities imported from the eastern Mediterranean (fig. 95).25

Lorenzo da Pavia, an instrument maker residing in Venice, in 1503 wrote to Isabella d’Este announcing the arrival of the antique bronze in the lagoon city.26 The letter is notable in that it conveys Lorenzo’s enthusiasm at the sight of the ancient statue:

And to inform you, a naked bronze statue has been brought from Rhodes such that I have never seen a more beautiful thing, a Greek thing. It is lacking half of the arms and half of one foot, the head is whole, but the hair could be better. But for a naked statue of a boy around ten years old, I have never seen anything more beautiful.27

Lorenzo’s words not only attest to the exceptionality of the piece, an extraordinarily well preserved large bronze, but they are noteworthy for the emphasis given to the fact that the


statue was a Greek object: “cosa grecha.” Since the time of its arrival, the provenance of
the *Adorante* from Rhodes was never forgotten. In a letter of 1549 to “Monsignor de i
Martini” – to be identified with Benedetto de Martini who had inherited the *Adorante*
from his uncle Andrea, the first owner of the bronze - Pietro Aretino praised his
correspondent for having turned down an offer of 1,000 gold crowns and a benefice of
300 in exchange for the antique bronze:

In the meantime, I say that your spirit deserves the great praise of laude and
continual tribute from even the most famous sculptor; since by refusing a
thousand crowns of gold and a benefice worth three hundred you valued the
wonderful Ganymede in your room more highly than so much money deposited in
your account; and it is certain since that bronze figure was found in the east, that
one may not only believe but also swear without fear of lying that Phidias and no
one else was the sculptor.\(^{28}\)

Aretino’s attribution of the statue, which he identifies as *Ganymede*, to a famous artist of
antiquity was not a new idea.\(^{29}\) Since late antiquity and throughout mediaeval times,
indeed, sculptures and other kinds of ancient objects were often ascribed to Greek artists
whose names were known from the texts of the classical authors.\(^{30}\) The most beautiful,

\(^{28}\) “Intanto dico, che merita gran premio di laude il vostro animo e continuo tributo da chi più
famoso è scultore; da che le mille corone d’oro, et le trecento d’entrata poi recusò egli per estimar
più degna la maraviglia del Ganimede in la camera, che utile il capital di tanta pecunia in la cassa;
certo, ch’essendo suta cotal’ figura nel bronzo trovata, come fù in Oriente, non pur credere, ma si
può giurare senza timor di bugia, che fidia, non che altro ne sia stato il maestro.” Camesasca,
*Lettere sull’arte di Pietro Aretino*, II, 273-74. Published with a slightly different English
translation in Perry, "A Greek Bronze in Renaissance Venice," 207. Perry identifies the
addressee, Monsignor de Martini, with Benedetto de Martini.

\(^{29}\) Recent research has suggested that the author of the bronze was Teisikrates, a grandson of
Lysippos, active in the third century B.C. See Zimmer, "The Praying Boy and the Rhodian

\(^{30}\) See Salvatore Settis, "Nostalgia dell'arte greca," in *La forza del bello. L'arte greca conquista
l'Italia*, ed. Salvatore Settis and Maria Luisa Catoni (Milan: Skira, 2008), 235-41; Chiara Frugoni,
L'uso dei classici*, ed. Salvatore Settis (Turin: Einaudi, 1984), 5-72; Frank Zöller, "Policretior
manu - Zum Polykletbild der frühen Neuzeit," in *Polyklet: der Bildhauer der griechischen*
precious, imposing or attractive monuments surviving in Rome and elsewhere in Italy
were often associated with the excellence of Greek masters. Venice itself was full of
artifacts believed to be works by Phidias, Praxiteles and others. Yet that most of these
attributions were unfounded and only enthusiastic interpretations was already clear to
Poggio Bracciolini who, as we have previously seen, in 1430 had warned Nicolò Niccoli
about the wordiness of the Greeks who made up names in order to sell antique marbles at
higher prices.

The original and significant element in Aretino’s letter is, however, the
connection he makes between Phidias’ authorship and the geographical provenance of the
piece. Aretino mentions the arrival of the bronze from the east, “Oriente,” to support and
give certainty to his claim that the statue was the work of Phidias, an attribution
suggested on the basis of the aesthetic qualities and rarity of the work.

It is important to remember, however, that ideas about what the work of a Greek
master really was were still confused at this time and stylistic definitions of Greek and
Roman artifacts were far from fully understood. Even artists and antiquarians, who had

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31 Some examples are mentioned also in Luigi Beschi, "La scoperta dell’arte greca," in Memoria
dell’antico nell’arte italiana. Dalla tradizione all’archeologia, ed. Salvatore Settis (Turin: Giulio

32 Ciriaco d’Ancona believed that the bronze horses on the façade of San Marco were a work by
Phidias, see Brown, Venice & Antiquity: the Venetian Sense of the Past: 84. For other examples
see also André Chastel, "Di mano dell'antico Prassitele," in Éventail de l'histoire vivante,
hommage à Lucien Febvre offert à l’occasion de son 75e anniversaire (Paris: A. Colin, 1953),
265-71.

33 In a letter written from Rome on September 23, 1430, Poggio explained to Niccoli: “greculi, ut
nosti, sunt verbosiores et forsan ad vendendum carius hec finxerunt nomina. Cupio me hec falso
acquired expertise and authority in assessing the authenticity and the quality of antique artifacts, did not typically make such distinctions. Several studies have recently discussed this issue, in trying to trace the pre-history of Johann Joachim Winckelmann’s ideas on Greek art in the antiquarian writings of sixteenth century authors. References to a definition of the Greek style, found in writers such as Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574), Giovan Battista Adriani (1511/13-1579), Flaminio Vacca (1538-1605) and others, have been singled out as first attempts to explain the characteristics of Greek art and have been identified as the seeds from which eighteenth-century ideas on antiquity would develop.

In two passages of his *Vite*, Vasari refers to the Greek manner. In the biography of the sculptor Andrea Pisano in the 1550 edition Vasari wrote:

> Although [ancient sculpture] was often destroyed by fires, by ruin, and by the furor of wars, and was both buried and transported to different places, stripped the buildings of every beautiful decoration, nonetheless, the experienced man can recognize the difference between the styles of all the countries; as, for example, the Egyptian manner is slender and long in the figures, the Greek is scientific and shows much study in the nudes, and the heads have almost all the same appearance, and the most ancient of the Tuscans and of the Romans is beautiful for the expressions, poses, movements, nudes, and drapery, because they wrested the beauty of all the other provinces into one single manner to make it the most divine of all.

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35 Although a thorough account of these topics goes beyond the intention of my work, I find it useful to transcribe here some of the references to Greek art mentioned in sixteenth-century sources, in order to give a sense of the terms in which such distinctions were made at that time.

36 “La quale [la scultura antica], ancora che spesso sia destrutta da’ fuochi, da le rovine, dal furor delle guerre, e sotterrata e trasportata in diversi luoghi, spogliate le opere d’ogni bello artifizio, si riconosce nondimeno, da chi intende, la differenza delle maniere di tutti i paesi; come per esempio, la egizia è sottile e Lunga nelle figure, la greca è artifiziosa e di molto studio negl’ignudi, e le teste hanno quasi una aria medesima, e la antichissima de’ Toscani e de’ Romani è bella per l’arie, per le attitudini, e’ moti, per gl’ignudi e per i panni: che certo hanno cavato il
In the introduction to architecture Vasari explained that the *Dioscuri* on the Quirinal and the Belvedere *Nile*: “are recognizable as Greek works, not only by the marble, but also by the manner of the heads and by the hair style, and by the noses of the figures, which are rather square from the meeting of the eyebrows down to the nostrils.”

In a letter of September 1567, addressed to Giorgio Vasari, Giovann Battista Adriani explained the difference between Greek and Roman sculptures in these terms:

Greek and Roman statues had a very clear difference between them, that is: the Greek statues for the most part were nude, according to the custom of the gymnasi, where young men exercised themselves in wrestling and in other nude games, in which they placed the highest honor; the Roman statues were made clothed either with in armor or toga, a characteristic Roman garment.

Finally, in his *Memorie*, Flaminio Vacca described some archeological finds retrieved near San Giovanni in Laterano in this way:

Under the hospital of S. Gio. Laterano, there crosses a very large foundation, full of fragments of extremely beautiful figures, there I found some knees and elbows in the Greek manner, that looked entirely like the manner of the Laocoon of the Belvedere; these fragments can still be seen. Alas, where so many labors of the poor sculptors end up!
When the adjective “greco” is found in archival documents in relation to antique objects - not Byzantine ones such as icons - it is not usually intended as a stylistic designation. It is rare to find instances in which the term is used to distinguish a Greek artifact from a Roman one. Only for certain typologies of objects – specifically inscriptions and coins as they bore letters – were such distinctions often made. Fifteenth century inventories of coin collections show how at that time coins were usually organized by material: with gold, silver, bronze and copper specimens grouped separately. By the following century, however, antique coins sometimes came to be ordered following different criteria; and the plentiful coins from Rome were separated from the much more rare Greek exemplars. The documents mentioning Greek and Roman coins as two separate categories are numerous.

In a letter written to the Venetian Andrea Loredan in 1552, Paolo Manuzio praised his correspondent’s collection of antiquities and described his holdings of ancient coins: “When I got closer to the coins, I saw gold and silver ones; I saw the precious metal of the unfortunate Corinth (bronze); I saw who destroyed it. There were many images of the Greeks and of the Barbarians, of the Romans displayed in a beautiful and

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40 On Renaissance coin collections see John Cunnally, Images of the Illustrious. The Numismatic Presence in the Renaissance (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999). Important considerations on Greek coins have been offered by William Stenhouse in a paper entitled “Greek Coins and Greek Histories” presented at the annual meeting of the Renaissance Society of America in Los Angeles, 19-21 March 2009. I am grateful to Professor Stenhouse for having made available to me his text.
organized order.”

Thus Manuzio very likely saw a collection in which the different groups of Greek, Roman and “Barbarian” coins were clearly distinguishable.

Just a few months before his death, the Venetian nobleman Francesco Bernardo (1514-1580) disposed in his will of his collection of antique coins, which included both Roman and Greek specimens: “It has been more than twelve years since I began a collection of antique Greek and Roman coins, and of antique images; this collection needs to be stored in a studio made of ebony and silver, that is not ready yet.”

Yet, for sculptures and other kinds of objects it is very unusual to find the distinction between Roman and Greek artifacts spelled out in the sources. A document of 1647 listing a series of antique marbles in Bologna offered for sale to the Duke of Modena is a rare exception:

Two figures forming a group, each two and a half feet high they represent Friendship. They are Greek, and there is nothing more beautiful, and worthy of a prince in our city.
A female torso, not Greek, of singular beauty.

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41 “Fattomi poi più vicino alle medaglie, vidi l’oro e l’argento; vidi il pregiato metallo dell’infelice Corinto; vidi chi la distrusse. Eravi de’ Greci e de’ Barbari molte figure, de’ Romani infinite con bello e considerato ordine disposte.” Marco Foscarini, *Della letteratura veneziana* (Venice: Teresa Gattei Editrice, 1854), 410.

42 “sonno 12 e più anni che ho fatto principiar un ordine di medaglie antique greche et romane, et figure antique, el qual ordine ha da intrar in uno studio d’ebbaneto el d’argento el qual studio non e anchora finito.” ASVe, Notarile Testamenti (notaio Marcantonio Cavanis), B. 194. The will is dated December 30, 1580. Excerpts from the document have been published with the erroneous date of 1589 in Hochmann, *Peintres et commanditaires à Venise (1540-1628)*: 358-59.

It is difficult to speculate here on which criteria the unknown compiler of the list used to distinguish between the Greek and the non-Greek marble.

Finally, a sense of how ideas about Greek and Roman antiquities were still confused and vague during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries may be obtained by considering the perplexity of western travelers standing before the ruins they encountered in the territories of ancient Greece. Although the widely-traveled Ciriaco d’Ancona had already matured an acute eye and a good sense of chronology by the middle of the fifteenth century, for many other explorers antique artifacts and abandoned ruins were still difficult to interpret.44

In his *Itinerario* Fra Urbano Bolzanio of Belluno, who had travelled to the Aegean and Constantinople between 1475 and 1485 to learn Greek, described the antiquities of Athens.45 From a distance he looked up at the Acropolis, which by then was already occupied by the Turks, and saw the Parthenon: “in the castle there is a church that was once an ancient temple of the Romans, most admirable completely made of marble with columns all around.”46 Standing before the antique structure, Bolzanio without hesitation decided it must have been a Roman building (fig. 67). Similarly when Giuliano

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45 For Fra Urbano and his eyewitness account of the antiquities of Athens see ibid., 149-50.

46 “et è nel detto castello una chiessia che già fu tempio antico de romani molto mirabile tutto de marmore con col[on]ne a torno ...” Quoted in English with a slightly different translation in ibid., 149.
da Sangallo copied Ciriaco’s drawing of the Parthenon he made changes in order to give it a more familiar Roman appearance (fig. 178).  

When Bernardo Michelozzi and Bonsignore Bonsignori visited Troy in 1498 they carefully inspected the ruins and reasoned on what was in front of them: “there are numerous ancient buildings in ruins, which cannot have been made by the ancients of Troy, but rather by various Roman emperors, as we have found in 4 or 5 places Latin letters belonging to an emperor.”

Visiting Troy some fifty years after Michelozzi and Bonsignori, the French naturalist Pierre Belon (1517-1564) also reported his careful observations: “The tombs seem to be of the Greeks, since one can see Greek letters. Together there are also Latin ones, as appears from the Latin letters.” Antonio Veranzio (1504-1573) was similarly bewildered before the antique ruins he encountered while traveling from Buda to Adrianople. He was unable to understand whether they belonged to the Greeks, the Thracians, the Macedonians or the Romans.

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50 “Obscurum tamen judicatu Graecorum, an Thracum, an Macedonum, an Romanorum existat, quod argumentum nullum aderat, ex quo id perspici potuisse.” Quoted by William Stenhouse in
Inscriptions on stones, like letters on coins, provided important clues to make sense of antiquities, but still in the sixteenth century it was hard to classify in historical order the confused remains of the past. To sixteenth century observers it was clear that the ruins encountered in the landscapes of the eastern Mediterranean, like the marble sculptures displayed in the cabinets of western collectors, were antique, but often they struggled to understand from which part of antiquity they belonged.

EPILOGUE

I began this dissertation with a reference to Petrarch and with him I will conclude. In 1358 Giovanni Mandelli, a man of action connected to the Visconti family of Milan, invited his friend Francesco Petrarca to join him in a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.\textsuperscript{51}

Petrarch declined the invitation and explained the reasons to Mandelli:

I do not know by what burdens of sin I am weighted down and by what hooks I am now held back […] Although numerous causes hold me back, none is more powerful than fear of the sea […] I fear slow death and nausea worse than death itself, not without reason but from experience. How many times do you think I have challenged that monster in the hope that habit would defeat or soften nature? You ask if it did me any good? I tell you I have not reduced my fear but rather by sailing redoubled the torment. Perhaps nature has put this bridle on a vagabond soul and on an eye insatiable for new things.\textsuperscript{52}


While Petrarch did not sail off for the Holy Land, numerous fearless travelers after him did venture to the eastern Mediterranean. During their journeys these men often noticed abandoned ruins, explored many ancient sites, and from time to time became important purveyors of antique artifacts to the west. I have sought in this dissertation to look at the stories of these explorers who, while navigating the Mediterranean, became the protagonists of a novel kind of travel, which marked the beginning of “cultural tourism.”

In this study I have taken into consideration numerous antique objects found, bought, or pillaged in the eastern Mediterranean and transported to the west because of their antiquity, their historical value, or their aesthetic qualities. The stories of these objects, and of those who carried them, show how the revival of interest in antiquity during the early modern period was not a local phenomenon confined to the west nor was it exclusively focused on the antiquities unearthed in Rome or on the Italian peninsula. Although their eastern origins were often rapidly forgotten, many of the artifacts gathered by Italian collectors and antiquarians in their homes were in fact newly imported from the eastern Mediterranean. As shown in my study, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the trade in antiquities from the east was not made up of huge triumphal importations, as it would be in the following centuries. In the two hundred years take into account in this dissertation, materials from the eastern Mediterranean arrived in a steady but erratic flow through many different channels, often reaching the Italian peninsula by way of Venice. My narrative clearly shows how objects and people of

various provenances and backgrounds participated in this commerce and in the
development of early modern antiquarianism.

Focusing on the trade of antiquities arriving from the eastern Mediterranean, this
dissertation has presented a new way of looking at the history of collecting. While
generally studies on early modern collections pay attention either to the personalities of
the collectors themselves or to the contents, display and function of their holdings, my
research looks at the provenance of the objects and at the mechanisms of their acquisition
before they actually entered the homes of Renaissance collectors.

This dissertation is a survey of people and events, but also aims to be
comprehensive of broader themes connected with the Renaissance rediscovery of the
ancient Greek world. While looking carefully at numerous micro-histories, I take into
consideration the larger historical context as well. This study discusses, for example, how
the retrieval of antiquities evolved progressively from fortuitous finds to more
programmatic excavations; how antique materials passed, both in the west and in the east,
from being simply re-employed in new constructions to being collected as valuable
objects; how the study of the ancient Greek language and civilization, inaugurated by
Italian humanists at the end of the fourteenth century, matured steadily over time; and
how the practice of collecting antiquities encouraged the study and the investigation of
many aspects of the Greek past.

And yet travels to the eastern Mediterranean and importations of objects to the
west not only fostered knowledge of the classical past, but also offered opportunities
to establish important cultural connections between the different people living on the
Mediterranean shores. The protagonists of my study are indeed individuals of
heterogeneous provenance, coming from the Greek, the Latin and the Muslim worlds, with many of them living in between these worlds. While historical and economic studies have recently amply shown how global mercantile connections were at the base of the material culture of the early modern period, my analysis of the trade in antique artifacts provides a further fruitful angle from which to consider the Mediterranean as a place of intense cross-cultural exchange (fig. 179).
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ABBREVIATIONS

ASAn Archivio di Stato di Ancona, Ancona
ASFi Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Florence
ASMo Archivio di Stato di Modena, Modena
ASPa Archivio di Stato di Palermo, Palermo
ASTo Archivio di Stato di Torino, Turin
ASVe Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Venice
BCVe Biblioteca Museo Correr di Venezia, Venice
BMVe Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana di Venezia, Venice

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