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Pirro Ligorio and the forgery in some *Carmina Latina Epigraphica*.

Introduction

The workshop is founded on ESR 10 of the CARMEN project, that is The *Carmina Latina Epigraphica of Rome Preserved in the Manuscript Tradition*. As recorded by Chrstin Rochlitz on the CARMEN website, “During the Renaissance and Humanist period, the interest in antiquity did not embrace all “ancient” materials. Indeed, scholars discussed quality criteria and selected objects and texts they wanted to be connected with in future commemoration through their writing. Manuscript studies and the study of former and contemporary excavations, of collections and museology will explore a common issue: the background of selection processes. Composition and selection criteria of the manuscripts’ authors will be considered, and different factors (living conditions, region, older manuscripts etc.) affecting the base of knowledge will be researched”. Among her objectives, there is the “analysis of the *Carmina Latina Epigraphica* of the city of Rome up to Late Antiquity as presented and contextualised in the manuscripts of later periods, from the Renaissance period to the humanists”.

My contribution was divided in this way : After a presentation of Ligorio’s works and activity as a forger, my workshop was conceived as a dialogue with the young resaerchers from the CARMEN project around a powerpoint with inscriptions transmitted by Ligorio including some *carmina Latina epigraphica*, most of them considered as forgeries because transmitted only by here attached.

I. Ligorio’s work ans activity as a forger

1 Born in Naples around 1513, Ligorio grew up in Maddaloni, a fi(e)fdom of the prominent Carafa family. He was 21 years old when he moved to Rome in 1534, and thus he began a long career first as a painter, and then as an antiquarian, architect, and engineer. During this early Roman period (c.1534–1550), according to his first biographer, Giovanni Baglione, Ligorio started working as a fresco painter of façads in the manner of Baldassare Peruzzi and Polidoro da Caravaggio.

In 1538, Ligorio entered the Compagnia de’ pittori di San Luca, and ten years later he became a member of the confraternity of artists called the Virtuosi al Pantheon. He made several works, including the decoration “alla grottescha” of the palace of Francesco della Rovere, in Rome in 1542. His only preserved work, and major pictorial commission, is the fresco depicting the Dance of Salome, painted in 1544, in the Oratory of San Giovanni Decollato. **2**

In Rome, Ligorio gradually abàndoned his activity as a painter, which seems to not have been very profitable, and became more and more interested in antiquities, probably taking inspiration from his archaeological excavations conducted some years earlier in Tivoli, around 1538.

He began to avidly gather information on classical antiquity, especially in connection with the numerous excavations in Rome and in the surrounding areas. He was soon considered

to be an expert antiquarian, and he started to establish relationships with many erudites of the so-called Farnese circle.

At the same time, his friends were giving him ancient inscriptions discovered during the constructions of the fortifications of Rome; such friends included Andrea Palladio, who offered Ligorio an epigraphy related to Emperor Domitian as well as Antonio da Sangallo, who found one at the worksite of Castel Sant'Angelo,

When Sangallo was directing circa the fortifications of the Belvedere, Ligorio discovered inscriptions which were considered false by the CIL, at least in part, because they were transmitted only by him; that is the case, of a very important inscription that he discovered "in una tavola di marmo alli Spinelli, facendosi i bastioni, colla forma o pianta degli edifici"; the text copied on site by Ligorio, is preserved in a single folio in Ferrara, but the original drawing by Ligorio of the forma o pianta degli edifici is lost, ³; but we have a copy of it preserved in the Vatican Library with the indication "ex ligorio" followed by this interesting note: sar  falsa (it may be a fake)⁴; it seems to me that the author of this note can be Fulvio Orsini, an erudite of the Farnese circle, and the librarian of the Farnese Library, very close to Ligorio; another copy of the only text is preserved in the Vat.lat. 6035, one of the two epigraphical manuscripts put together by Onofrio Panvinio; the other manuscript being vat.lat.6036 ⁵; as Orsini, Panvinio was librarian at the Palazzo Farnese and a very close friend of Ligorio; he certainly received the text from Ligorio as shown for numerous other inscriptions preserved in both the manuscripts; Panvinio seemed not to have understood that the inscription was on a monument as there is no indication of this kind on the sheet. For my part, I had the opportunity to identify the original stone now preserved in Perugia which is a very rare case of "iconographical inscription" and to show that the drawing by Ligorio was not "falso" ⁶. Through this example, I wanted to show, once again, that inscriptions transmitted only by Ligorio or by Ligorio as first were not always false and that can be true for some carmina as I hope to demonstrate later.

Back to Ligorio's life. In 1546, Ligorio had the opportunity to demonstrate his expertise when the so-called Fasti Capitolini (the lists of the Roman consuls engraved on an arch during the reign of Augustus) were discovered in the Roman Forum. Again, Ligorio was present on the site during the excavations, and for that reason he was able to understand the shape of the monument that formerly carried the Fasti, today preserved in Michelangelo's display in the Musei Capitolini ⁷. Ligorio, in fact, made two drawings of the original arch of the Fasti, which are now preserved in his manuscripts called On Roman Antiquities (Delle antichit  romane)⁸. in which he collected the results of his archaeological investigations. On this occasion, he also had the courage to confute the opinion of the erudites of the Farnese circle about the shape of the monument and the identity of the author of the Roman Fasti. Quoting Suetonius who said that Verrius Flaccus the grammarian of Augustus time, composed Fasti in Preneste engraved on a semi-circular monument; the humanists tried to show that the word Preneste was an error in the manuscripts tradition and changed it in pro aede Vestae to prove that Suetonius was speaking of the Fasti discovered in the Roman forum. To confute them, Ligorio invented a clumsy inscription that explains that the grammarian Verrius Flaccus was the author of the Fasti prenestini that he made engrave on a semi-circular monument while the Fasti in

the Forum were inscribed on an arch **9**. As you can see, by the position in the margin and the different ink, the false inscription was added later by Ligorio in the chapter on Preneste.

Today, we know that Ligorio was right, thanks also to the testimony of the coins **10**, but in front of the scholars, he was in one way “obliged” to forge an inscription to demonstrate the truth of what he saw on the site.

In 1549, Ligorio was given the official title of antiquarian (*antiquario*) in the service of Cardinal Ippolito II d’Este; and also is cited in the documents of the same year as a member of the household (*familiari*) of Cardinal Rodolfo Pio da Carpi, who had one of the most important collection of inscriptions in Rome in the second half of the 16th century together with the cardinal Farnese (Heikki Solin just published an important book on both the collections).

In 1550, when Cardinal Ippolito triumphantly entered Tivoli as its governor, Ligorio accompanied him as his antiquarian. Ligorio was officially in charge of the excavations of Hadrian’s Villa and other ancient sites in the area, like the so called tempio della tosse **11** or the tempio di Ercole vincitore that he called Villa di Augusto in his manuscripts **12-13**. Indeed, under Cardinal Ippolito’s rule important sculptures were discovered in this first systematic excavation in Tivoli. The best of these were distributed among d’Este’s properties but mainly at the Villa d’Este; in fact, starting from 1550, Cardinal Ippolito decided to transform his residential monastery in Tivoli into a magnificent villa. In close collaboration with humanists such as Marc-Antoine Muret and Uberto Foglietta, Ligorio was the deviser of the villa’s decoration and the iconographic program of gardens and fountains **14-15**. The intensive period of excavations ended for Ligorio in 1555, when Cardinal Ippolito II was removed from his position in Tivoli after the election of Pope Paul IV. However, the election of a member of the Carafa family, old patrons of Ligorio’s relatives in Naples, would represent a great opportunity for Ligorio and would usher in his golden age at the Vatican.

While working for Cardinal Ippolito II, Ligorio also published with some success and regularity the first results of his archaeological and topographical studies, which were conceived in close collaboration with eminent humanists of the Farnese circle, such as Benedetto Egio, bishop of Spoleto. Between 1553 and 1561 two maps of Rome were engraved by the Venetian publisher Michele Tramezzino based on Ligorio’s designs **16**. The first map was not exclusively archaeological, while the second one was totally devoted to the reconstruction of ancient Rome. The context was a virulent querelle about Roman topography that gripped scholars in Rome, especially in response to Bartolomeo Marliani’s *Urbis Romae topographia* of 1544. Ligorio violently criticizes Marliani in his only published book, printed in Venice in 1553, also by Tramezzini (Pirro Ligorio’s book on the Roman antiquities about circuses, theatres and amphitheatres with the refutation on the common view about different sites in the City of Rome) **17**.

Concrete clues about this collaboration are Egio’s conspicuous annotations that Ligorio incorporated in his book and that can be seen today in the margins of Egio’s personal exemplar of Marliani’s book. **18** At any rate, many of Ligorio’s adversaries of the Farnese entourage during the querelle about the Fasti Capitolini were now supporting Ligorio’s

and Egio's opinions on Roman topography, such as Panvinio, and Antonio Agustín, bishop of Lleida. Along with the maps, between 1553 and 1558 Ligorio published with Tramezzini various engravings of reconstructions of ancient monuments clearly linked with his archaeological works (1552); the Circus Maximus (1553) [19](#), with the help of Egio's translation of Dionysus of Halicarnassus; the Praetorian camp (1553); the Port of Ostia (1554); and, later, the Baths of Diocletian and Maximilian (1558), the Theatre of Marcellus (1558), and Varro's Aviary in Casinum (1558) [20](#). These publications should have been followed by that of his monumental forty-volume *On Roman Antiquities*, as announced by Tramezzini in his dedicatory letter to Ippolito II d'Este in Ligorio's book quoted above. But, after several attempts to print it, Ligorio's main enterprise was never published. Despite his limited knowledge of Latin—underlined by Agustín—and thanks to his unchained curiosity and—as he said—his “indefatigable assiduity and vigilance” (“gravissima fatica di assiduità e vigilanza”), Ligorio kept trying to realize his main work, his goal being to make available the entirety of knowledge about antiquity known in his time, in one series of books (“perché non si vadino cercare altrove quel che si può trovare in un solo luogo”). Once published, this kind of encyclopaedia would have been immensely helpful both for erudites and volgari, for their own comprehension and interpretation of the classical texts and monuments.

The election of Pope Paul IV, was, as we have said, the greatest opportunity of Ligorio's career. I have no time to enumerate the numerous commissions that Ligorio had in the Vatican; let's record that in 1558, Ligorio received his major architectural commission: the design of a little retreat for Pope Paul IV Carafa in the Vatican gardens, but that was concluded under Pius the fourth [21](#) he also rebuild the cortile del Belvedere, now the cortile of the Vatican Library [22](#) and in the middle of all these demanding papal commissions, Ligorio continued to collaborate with erudites such as Gabriele Faerno, corrector at the Vatican Library whose edition of Aesop's Fables Ligorio illustrated in 1558 [23](#). In 1564 he was named architetto della fabbrica di San Pietro to replace Michelangelo.

In the same year, Vasari wrote to the great erudite Vincenzo Borghini, the secretary of Cosimo dei Medici that, Ligorio was pushing strongly for the foundation, of an artistic academy in Rome, on the model of the Florentine Accademia del disegno that was conceived by Borghini. This attempt eventually failed but it may have been replaced by the Accademia degli Sdegnati, the only academy in Rome that accepted antiquarians unlike the famous Accademia della virtù founded in the fortys by the senese erudite Claudio Tolomei who accepted only gentiluomini; in the very well known letter sent by Tolomei to the count Landi in 1542, we discover that the academicians not only had the project to translate, comment and illustrate Vitruvius, but also the project, already presented by Raphael to Pope Leo X, in 1519, to translate in drawing the ancient Rome, that is “porre in disegno la Roma antica”.

The programmatic letter said that they will explain all the preserved antiquities with the help of the texts “Si farà intender bene tutte l'anticaglie per via d'istorie”: the streets, tempels, porticos, theaters, amphitheaters, arches, circuses, bridges, coins and so on.

The Accademia della Virtù closed in 1566 before having concluded his project; but, the same people became members of the Accademia degli Sdegnati and it was during these

meetings between Ligorio and the other academicians that the main part of the Roman Antiquities was conceived, especially the chapters based on the classical texts and magnificently illustrated by Ligorio (24).

In 1566, in a climate of terrible violence and conflict in the Vatican that coincided with the election of the austere Pope Pius V, Ligorio was dismissed from his position; In a 1567 letter to Borghini, Vasari proudly claimed to be the reason for Ligorio's firing, alluding to his "many mistakes" and his willing to modify Michelangelo's drawings for Saint Peter's Basilica. Despite numerous attempts, as well as the support of Pope Paul IV and Pius IV, Ligorio had not been able to publish his ten manuscripts of the Roman Antiquities, and therefore in 1567, under pressure from the Farnese librarians Orsini and Panvinio, he sold them to Cardinal Farnese, along with his collection of coins that contained a certain numbers of fakes.

In 1568, Ligorio's fortune took a new turn when he was appointed antiquarian at the court of Duke Alfonso II d'Este, the nephew of his first patron, Cardinal Ippolito II. Ligorio moved to Ferrara by mid-1569 where he began to compose a new version of his Roman Antiquities, this time in thirty volumes, based on material brought from Rome, together with 5000 drawings of antiquities. Here again, I have no time to expose the various ad important works of Ligorio in Ferrara and also in Mantova.

Let's remind that Ligorio was involved in the organization of one of the famous Ferrarese festivals ("cavallerie ferraresi"), the tournament called Isola Beata and that for this event, Ligorio created an amazing spectacle with naumachiae and an amphitheatre inspired by the Roman models and in 1574, When the Duke of Ferrare had the occasion to host the future king of France, Henry the IIIth returning from Hungary for his coronation, He ordered a triumphal reception and Ligorio, qualified as "the antiquarian of His Excellency", created six splendid triumphal arches with inscriptions and allegorical statues; The king slept in the room called sala dei giochi, decorated with subjects from ancient sport conceived 25 by Ligorio ad already published a year before, by the famous doctor of cardinal Farnese, Girolamo Mercuriale in his book on ancient gymnastics 26. During his stay in Ferrara, Ligorio never ceased corresponding with his Roman friends about antiquarianism, for instance with Orsini on inscriptions and circuses, and with the famous dealers Vincenzo and Giovanni Antonio Stampa regarding the acquisition of antiquities for the duke's collections. Ligorio was also in touch with erudites from all over Italy, for example the Venetian Sebastiano Erizzo, who admired Ligorio's numismatic expertise and called him the "Oracle of Delphi". He never stopped sharing his antiquarian knowledge with many correspondents, as demonstrated by letter of 1581 to the dealer Ercole Basso, who sold his entire collection of coins for the duke's antiquarium. The year before in 1580, he was made citizen of Ferrara and died in the same city where he was buried in 1583.

Despite the fact that Ligorio's Roman Antiquities remained for the most part unpublished, this massive enterprise had already found great success during his life and without interruption in the following centuries. In fact, this illustrated encyclopedia in forty volumes was not only the huge legacy of the original investigations of a multifaceted and indefatigable artist, architect, and antiquarian, as Ligorio was, but also the summa of the knowledge on the ancient world acquired by the erudites of the mid-Cinquecento.

Some of the ten volumes preserved in the Farnese library were literally plundered by Panvinio and Orsini to publish their works on circuses and numismatics, before the volumes arrived in Naples along with the Farnese collections. They are now preserved in the Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli, while Ligorio's collection of coins was incorporated into the Medagliere farnesiano at the Museo Archeologico Nazionale. The thirty volumes composed in Ferrara were sold after Ligorio's death and acquired by Carlo Emanuele I, duke of Savoy, before 1615. They are now in the Archivio di Stato in Turin; two other volumes composed in Rome were brought by Ligorio to Ferrara and are now preserved in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and in the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Most of the 5,000 drawings that Ligorio took with him to Ferrara were lost, while some of them are dispersed in various collections.

In the 17th century, the reputation of Ligorio's Roman Antiquities spread throughout Europe, in particular through the network of the accademie, like that of the Lincei, with figures like Francesco Barberini who became governor of Tivoli and was looking of the famous plan by Ligorio fo the Hadrian'a villa; and also Barberini's secretary, Cassiano dal Pozzo, who commissioned a copy of Ligorio's manuscripts for his Museum chartaceum. The Roman Antiquities inspired not only attention but also passion up to the point of provoking diplomatic incidents—first in 1641, with the French court, when Mazarin and Richelieu wanted to edit in Paris the Turin volumes with the support of Cassiano dal Pozzo and his protégé, Nicolas Poussin; and later in 1656, with Cristina of Sweden, who discovered with admiration Ligorio's manuscripts in the occasion of her triumphal entry at the court of Savoy, and wished to have a copy of them, now preserved among the Ottoboniani manuscripts of the Vatican Library.

In the 19th century, however, Ligorio's stock plummeted when the editors of the CIL (Corpus inscriptionum latinarum) condemned him for his forgeries. They drew on evidence of accusations that already circulated in his lifetime. That was the case of Agustín, when he accused Ligorio of having invented an inscription that excludes Verrius Flaccus as the author of the Fasti Capitolini. Nevertheless, Ligorio was right, and this very example informs us about his outstanding expertise and extensive fieldwork on the archaeological sites, especially on that of the Roman Forum. But as we have seen, Ligorio was assisted by the erudites of the Farnese circle in elaborating his Roman Antiquities within the specific framework of the Accademia degli Sdegnati. This close ollaboration makes it particularly difficult to apprehend the genuine contribution of Ligorio in the construction of the Roman Antiquities, including the falsifications. For example, when Ligorio comments the names of the Scythian gods cited in Herodotus's Histories, he explains in detail that the correct name of the Scythian Venus is Artimpasa and not Argimpasa, as transmitted incorrectly by some manuscripts. In order to demonstrate this, he reproduces a Greek inscription showing the name Artimpasa that he claims was found during excavations; but he immediately uses here a characteristic subterfuge of forgery, claiming that the inscription was destroyed shortly after. As we know, Ligorio would never have been able to debate on philological questions, especially on Greek texts, nor would he have been able to compose a Greek inscription. Instead, his friend Benedetto Egio, who was one of the best specialists of Greek of the Farnese circle, most probably collaborated with Ligorio in the writing of the chapter on the Scythian gods and provided him with both a translation from Herodotus and the forged inscription. Ligorio's work is

not simply the product of his fertile mind, but also a reflection of the ideas and knowledge of his friends and colleagues. Here, Ligorio's Roman Antiquities clearly work as a sound box for the philological disputes of the time

In the field of numismatics, Ligorio's activity should be approached in the same balanced way. It was with great enthusiasm that Agustín announced that his "friend Ligorio, great antiquarian and painter", was about to publish a huge number of coins that had never been seen before.⁶² The aforementioned Erizzo praised Ligorio's expertise and contribution to his famous work on numismatics (*Discorso sopra le medaglie degli antichi*, Venice 1584), and Leone Leoni claimed that Ligorio owned one of the most beautiful collections of coins in Rome. Nevertheless, when Ligorio was imprisoned in 1565, the authorities who seized his manuscripts and his coins were surprised to discover that they were of little value ("di pochissima valuta").⁶³ Ligorio wished to have a complete series of Roman coins, and for this purpose he was used to reproducing by molding the missing coins of his series, taking as models the authentic exemplars that he saw in different collections. However, when he chemically degraded the coins' appearance to make them look antique, did he intend to deceive his public? At the same time, he violently denounced the antiquarians who counterfeited coins, like Valerio Belli when he invented a coin of Sappho at the request of Cardinal Bembo.⁶⁴ What Ligorio reproached him for was not making ancient coins but making them with inappropriate iconography, that is, not respecting the History.

In the same vein, Ligorio had no problem completing fragmentary texts by combining them with other inscriptions, as long as the result was plausible, while, for the same text, his Flemish friend, the erudite Martinus Smetius, secretary of Cardinal Rodolfo Pio da Carpi, clearly indicated on his manuscripts the missing parts.⁶⁵ Ligorio also oversaw the restoration of ancient statues, like that of the so-called Saint Hippolytus (3th century), discovered in 1553 in Via Nomentana and placed in the court of Belvedere (now in the Vatican Library). In this case he assembled pieces taken from different ancient statues,⁶⁶ but on the other hand he denounced as forgery the practice of his colleagues who gave themselves over to sculpture trafficking, including that done for the benefit of the king of France. These people, according to Ligorio, not only deprived their country of its treasures ("privando la sua patria dei suoi ornamenti") but also defraud others ("cacciando carote ad altri"), for the sole purpose of making money ("ha arricchito la sua casa").⁶⁷ Ligorio criticized these "malevolent and jealous antiquities dealers" ("malevoli e invidiosi antiquari"), who present themselves as experts just to contradict Ligorio, for example, in the field of numismatic iconography.⁶⁸ But antiquarians were not his only target. As we have seen, Ligorio had ambiguous and complicated relationships with erudites. On the one hand, Ligorio defined Agustín as a very honorable and very learned man in antiquities ("dottor dignissimo e studiosissimo delle cose antiche"),⁶⁹ but on the other hand he mocked him as one of those scholars "who trust in their little letters and do not understand ancient things and stumble about like blind people."⁷⁰ In the same ambivalent way, Agustín, on his side, praised Ligorio's expertise and work, which he said deserved to be taken seriously, but at the same time qualified him as a simple "artifice";⁷¹ and in a letter to Panvinio Agustín excluded Ligorio from the category of "galantuomini"

Today, Ligorio's works and roles as a painter, draftsman, architect, engineer, and antiquarian are still fascinating subjects of research that continue to attract the attention of many scholars from around the world, particularly in recent years. This is due to the growing interest in concepts such as "forgery" and "replica,"⁷³ as well as to the recent restoration of the Casino of Pius IV, Ligorio's architectural masterpiece, and to the ongoing complete edition of his manuscripts (Edizione nazionale delle opere di Pirro Ligorio). That will allow us to investigate many facets of Ligorio's works and life that are still little known.

In any case, what makes Ligorio so unique is not only the extent of his network and its astonishing diversity but the complex and fascinating personality that takes shape little by little from a careful reading of his *Roman Antiquities*, now partly published. In particular, the freedom that Ligorio tried to preserve—as he claims—throughout his whole life may explain his exceptional aptitude for interacting with very different kinds of intellectuals. Ligorio's talent and intelligence to feed on their erudition and use their competence allowed him to elaborate his own knowledge and to widely share it through his *Roman Antiquities*.

II. Conversation around the power point (see attached)