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A MANUSCRIPT DESCRIPTION  
IN KRAKÓW OF THE ‘TRIVULZIO  
MUSEUM’ IN MILAN

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**Abstract:** An early nineteenth-century manuscript is preserved in the Jagiellonian Library in Kraków. This document in Italian, entitled ‘Breve Descrizione del Museo Trivulzio’, describes the contents of a collection of an aristocratic family in Milan, as seen shortly after the death of its builder – Don Carlo Trivulzio (1715-1789). The author compares it to a published text in French by Aubin-Louis Millin, and publishes up-to-date descriptions of the engraved gems evoked in the manuscript. Thanks to various sources, five of those seven cameos and intaglios can also be illustrated together for the first time.

**Keywords:** Trivulzio; Milan; Millin; cameos; intaglios; rings; collecting

This article presents a manuscript entitled *Breve Descrizione del Museo Trivulzio*, preserved in the Biblioteka Jagiellońska in Kraków (ms. Ital. Qu. 25).<sup>1</sup> Stamped ‘*Ex Biblioth. Regia Berolinensi*’, this volume entered the Royal Library in Berlin on 5 October 1849, accession no. 3318. It had been acquired via a certain ‘Franck’, after having been auctioned in Paris by ‘de Buce’ (or de Bull?).<sup>2</sup> It was brought to Silesia during the Second World War and has since remained in Poland.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> With thanks to Anne-Beate Riecke and Monika Jaglarz for their kind assistance, to Alessandra Squizzato and Gabriella Tassinari for their suggestions and advice, and to Paweł Gołyźniak for examining the watermarks on my behalf.

<sup>2</sup> The volume is listed by Lemm (1918, 79), without any precision on the provenance. The 1849 (?) auction could not be identified in Lugt 1953.

<sup>3</sup> The manuscript bears short watermarks on the lower-right part of the pages: the letters

Finely calligraphed, the text covers eight double-sided unnumbered folios in cursive script. As its title suggests, this is a general presentation of the contents of the Trivulzio collections, which can be divided into three principal sections: coins, antiquities, and books. The four initial pages are devoted to the coins, then six and a half pages to the artefacts (such as ivories, niellos and gems), and finally, five pages to the books and manuscripts.

It is my intention to concentrate on the section dedicated to the Trivulzio collection of engraved gems (Rambach 2017), which reads: *'[...] Passiamo ora alle gemme. La principale di esse è un superbo cameo di sorprendente bellezza, ed un vero capo di opera tra le antichità di tal genere. Esso rappresenta la testa di Antonia. Altri due pure rispettabili camei esprimono le teste l'uno di Adriano, l'altro di Commodo. Ricordarsi deve fra i camei la famosa Bolla trovata nel sepolcro di Maria moglie di Onorio quando fu desso scoperto in Roma nel secolo XVI. Altra consimile Bolla ha un'iscrizione greca esprimente un buon augurio per chi la porta. Sono pure cinquanta altri camei che altrove meriterebbero una singolar menzione. Vi si conservano pure quasi duecento scarabei antichi fra quali alcuni egiziani di maggior grandezza e con incisioni al di sotto, eccetto i più grandi che sono lisci. Non debbo qui omettere le due superbe corniole state già ad uso di sigillo segreto di Filippo Maria Visconti Duca di Milano, pubblicate già dal Conte Giulini nell'ultimo tomo delle Memorie di Milano alla pag. 553 ed un anello d'oro avente per gemma un sigillo di zaffiro, che rappresenta la testa di Federico IV detto comunemente III Imperatore col solito suo motto AEIOV. Evvè pure un qualche migliaio di gemme diverse incise in gran parte antiche, comprese alcune poche paste. [...]'*<sup>4</sup>

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HREN on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd pages of the Trivulzio 'description'; the letters ZONEN on the 5th page; and the letters HRE on the 6th page (supposedly HREN). I am grateful to Emanuel Wenger for his help in trying to identify – unfortunately unsuccessfully – these marks, which are not listed in the 'Bernstein – The Memory of Paper' database. In the absence of a definite writing-date (and author), it must be presumed that this manuscript was written in Milan in the 1810s, therefore probably on Austro-Hungarian or on French paper.

<sup>4</sup> Manuscript in Kraków, Biblioteka Jagiellońska in Kraków, folios 5<sup>r</sup>/5<sup>v</sup>. The text of the manuscript in Milan, Fondazione Trivulzio, folio 3<sup>r</sup>, is almost the same with only minor and insignificant variations: *'ed un vero capo di opera'* is spelt instead *'e un vero capo d'opera'*, *'moglie di Onorio'* as *'moglie d'Onorio'*, *'cinquanta'* / *'duecento'* are written *'50.'* / *'200.'*, and *'pag. 553'* is written *'p. 553'*. The text of the manuscript in Milan, Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana, is also almost the same with only minor and insignificant variations: *'ora'* is missing in *'Passiamo alle gemme'*; *'superbo'* is missing in *'un cameo di sorprendente bellezza'*; *'ed un vero capo di opera tra le antichità di tal genere'* reads instead *'è un capo d'opera le antichità di tal genere'*, and this was added in-between two

This translates as: ‘Let us now go to the gems. The most relevant is a superb cameo of surprising beauty, and a real masterpiece among the antiques of its kind. It represents Antonia’s head. There are also two decent cameos which portray Hadrian’s and Commodus’ heads. We must recall among the cameos the famous bulla found in the sepulcher of Maria, Honorius’s wife, when it was discovered in Rome in the XVI century. A similar bulla has got a Greek inscription expressing good wishes for the person who carries it. There are fifty further cameos which would otherwise deserve a specific mention. There are also two hundred ancient scarabs, amongst which are some of the grandest Egyptian ones with engravings underneath, except the largest ones which are smooth. I must not omit the two superb carnelians that were used as a secret seal by Filippo Maria Visconti Duke of Milan, already published by Count Giulini in the last volume of the *Memorie di Milano* on page 553, and a golden ring with a sapphire seal gem, which represents the head of Friedrich IV well known as III Emperor with his usual motto AEIOV. There are also thousands of various engraved gems, for the most part antiques, including a few in paste.’

The similarity of this text with the description published in French in 1817 by Aubin-Louis Millin (1759-1818) is striking. *‘Parmi les pierres gravées, nous ferons remarquer principalement un camée d’une rare beauté, et qui est un véritable chef-d’œuvre parmi les antiques de ce genre. Il représente la tête d’Antonia ; deux autres beaux camées représentent la tête d’Adrien et celle de Commode. Parmi les camées, on doit remarquer la célèbre bulle qui a été trouvée dans le seizième siècle à Rome dans le tombeau de Marie, épouse d’Honorius. Un autre sceau semblable a une inscription grecque qui exprime un bon augure pour celui qui le porte. Il y a en outre cinquante camées qui mériteroient d’être décrits, et environ deux cents scarabées antiques, parmi lesquels il y en a d’égyptiens d’une grandeur extraordinaire, avec des figures gravées dessous ; les autres grands scarabées égyptiens sont lisses. Je ne dois pas oublier de parler des deux superbes cornalines qui servoient de sceau secret à Philippe-Marie Visconti, duc de Milan, et qui ont été publiées par le comte Giulini, dans le dernier tome des Mémoires de Milan, p. 553 [Voyez mon Voyage dans le Milanais, tom. I, pag. 135] ; d’une bague d’or ornée d’un cachet de saphir,*

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lines whilst the following sentence is linked to this one with ‘*che rappresenta...*’; ‘*desso*’ is missing in ‘*quando fu scoperto*’; there is an additional ‘*circa*’ in ‘*Sono pure circa 50. altri camei*’ but ‘*una*’ is missing in ‘*che altrove meriterebbero singolar menzione*’; a shorter version is used for ‘*le due superbe corniole secrete [with a C] di Filippo Maria Visconti*’.

*qui représente la tête de l'empereur Frédéric IV, vulgairement nommé Frédéric III, avec sa devise AEIOV, entourée de pierres gravées, en grande partie antiques.*' (Millin 1817a, 265-266).

In fact, Millin did not have access to the Trivulzio museum, and instead Mazzuchelli supplied him with a manuscript in Italian, also entitled *Breve Descrizione del Museo Trivulzio* (Mazzucchelli P. c. 1816/17), a copy of which is preserved at the Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan (Rovetta 2008, 906). The manuscript elucidates the printed text: for whilst it is clear in the Italian manuscript that the collection contains thousands of other gems, in the French publication Millin seems to suggest that the sapphire ring is surrounded by ancient gems – as if the sapphire was set within other stones. Despite his original intentions, the information was not actually used for Millin's *Voyage en Italie* (1818) but instead in his *Annales encyclopédiques* (1817). Who wrote the manuscript in Kraków, as well as why and when, remains to be established.<sup>5</sup>

It is noteworthy that the text given to Millin was not actually Mazzuchelli's; it was instead his translation of notes – *Cartas Familiares* – made in the summer of 1791 by a Spanish Jesuit, Juan Andrés y Morell (1740-1817), during his visit to Milan.<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to note that Andrés remarked on the Cufic coins amongst the collections of the 'deceased abbot' (Squizzato 2014, 290), something to which few visitors had paid attention. He published his notes (Andrés y Morell 1793, 139-148), indicating that they had been written in Mantua on 6 October 1791, but there is no mention of engraved gems, or of Islamic coins, so the published text cannot be that which Mazzuchelli provided to Millin.

This text refers to seven engraved gems, the first one of which is said to be '*a superb cameo of surprising beauty, and a real masterpiece among the antiques of the kind. It represents Antonia's head*' (Pl. 1: 1) (Millin 1817a, 265-266; Malaguzzi Valeri 1913, 387 (illustrated); Malaguzzi Valeri

<sup>5</sup> The title of the Ambrosiana manuscript contains the word '*esposizione*', crossed and replaced by '*descrizione*'. Whilst the manuscript in Kraków is written in a decorative hand, the manuscript in the Fondazione Trivulzio is rather poorly written, but there are no crossing-outs, so it is apparently not a draft and seems rather to be a quickly made copy. Instead, the manuscript at the Ambrosiana library is obviously a draft, full of corrections, but the two manuscripts in Milan seem to be by the same hand.

<sup>6</sup> Andrés is often described as a Spanish Jesuit, which is exact but misleading: Jesuits had been expelled from Spain in 1767, and he was in Italy since, even becoming Prefect of the Royal Library in Naples (see Ravasi 2000, 410). It is interesting to note that this 1791 visit was not Andrés's last contact with the Trivulzio family; letters survive which he sent to Gian Giacomo Trivulzio in May and June 1807, regarding the purchase of Spanish books (see Fuentes Fos 2015, 199).

1923, 71, fig. 103; Seregni 1927, 23 (quote), 186-187 (description), 216 (Dutens), 223 (Hamilton offer); Squizzato 2014, 284). This cameo was purchased – before 1770 – by Don Carlo Trivulzio (1715-1789) ‘at low price from a peasant whose wife was wearing it at her neck’; it was later passed down within the family, and supposedly sold privately in the 1920s/30s.<sup>7</sup> This piece is now lost, but is known from a 1920s photograph. This two-layered hardstone cameo, carved with the portrait of the right side of a lady, erroneously identified as Antonia *minor* (36 BC-AD 37), wife of Drusus *maior* (38-9 BC), is probably a Roman work of the late 1st century AD. This cameo can be compared with two small gems depicting a similar bust of a Flavian lady: a sardonyx cameo from the Guilhou & Merz collections (28 x 22mm) in the Antikensammlung des Institut für Archäologische Wissenschaften in Bern (Vollenweider 1984, 179-182, no. 301; Megow 1987, 264-265, no. B33; Willers and Raselli-Nydegger 2003, no. 159), and a nicolo intaglio in the National Museum in Copenhagen (inv. nr. K2.162; Vollenweider 1984, 181, fig. 301A). Megow suggested the cameo was from the time of Vespasian (AD 69-79), whilst Vollenweider dated the Guilhou cameo from AD 80-90 (and its gold and emerald ring from either shortly afterwards or from the 3rd/4th century). In June 1776, Alessandro Verri (1741-1816) wrote to his elder brother Pietro (1728-1797): ‘As antiquarians we know each other very well. If Abbot Triulzi is aware of which medals can be sold in Rome, I myself know that he has a beautiful antique cameo representing a Livia but nothing else of the kind. Count Anguissola buys something here and he is perhaps the only one who buys cameos.’<sup>8</sup> And his brother replied: ‘Abbot Triulzi’s cameo does not represent Livia, but Antonia. It is really beautiful, and Pichler saw it and regarded it as precious. It was purchased at low price because it was acquired from a peasant whose wife was wearing it at her neck.’<sup>9</sup> Sir William Hamilton,

<sup>7</sup> His brother’s son Giorgio Teodoro Trivulzio (1728-1802), and by descent: Gian Giacomo Trivulzio (1774-1831), Giorgio Teodoro Trivulzio (1803-1856), Gian Giacomo Trivulzio (1839-1902), Luigi Alberico Trivulzio (1868-1938).

<sup>8</sup> Letter from Alessandro no. XCI-903 (Rome, 15 June, 1776): ‘*Fra noialtri antiquari ci conosciamo molto bene. Se l’abate Triulzi sa le medaglie vendibili in Roma, io so ch’egli ha un bel cammeo antico rappresentante una Livia e di tal genere non ha altro. Il conte Anguissola costì fa qualche acquisto ed è forse l’unico che compri cammei.*’ (Giulini and Seregni 1934, 115).

<sup>9</sup> Letter from Pietro n. XCVI-718 (Milan, 22 June, 1776): ‘*Il cammeo dell’abate Triulzi non rappresenta Livia, ma Antonia. Veramente è bello, e Pichler l’ha veduto e pregiato. Fu comprato a basso prezzo perché si acquistò da un villano che lo faceva portare al collo a sua moglie.*’ (Giulini and Seregni 1934, 120).

who had already admired it on 8 July 1771, saw it again on 25 June 1776 and shortly afterwards offered to give another cameo in exchange for it<sup>10</sup> – which Don Carlo refused on 22 November: ‘*one must believe that his cameo is less attractive than the Antonia, though all know that this knight knows beauty so well.*’<sup>11</sup> Previously, in February 1770, Louis Dutens (1730-1812) had offered to buy it for 300 *zecchini*, which Don Carlo declined (Tassinari 2015, 145-147).

Don Carlo Trivulzio also owned, ‘*deux autres camées représentent la tête d’Adrien et celle de Commode*’ (Millin 1817a, 265-266). Unfortunately, those hardstone cameos, supposedly engraved with the heads of the Roman emperors Hadrian (AD 117-138) and Commodus (AD 180-192), are now lost, and no images are known<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, it is impossible to know whether they were ancient, Renaissance, or neoclassical gems. They were still part of the *Museo Trivulzio* in 1817, because the division of the collection between the two branches of the family had not yet taken place; they may have been inherited by the Trivulzio branch (which was dispersed privately in the 1920s/30s), or by Cristina Trivulzio di Belgioioso (1808-1871) (and apparently dispersed privately in the 1830s).

Much more significant is ‘*the famous bulla found in the sepulchre of Maria, Onorio’s wife when it was discovered in Rome in the XVI century*’ (Pl. 1: 2, 3) (Millin 1817a, 265-266; Mazzucchelli 1819; Barbiera 1902, 255; Montesquiou-Fezensac 1937; Spier 2007, 138, no. 752; Paolucci 2008; Gagetti 2012). It consists of two carnelian cameos, stained white, set in a gold pendant set with emeralds and garnets of about 18 x 13mm. It is inscribed with the names of the family members of Maria, wife of Honorius (AD 384-423), HONORI MARIA STELICHIO SERHNA VIVATIS and STELICHIO SERHNA EYCHERI THERMANTIA VIVATIS, and shows devices in the shape of Christograms. This Byzantine imperial jewel, datable to AD 398-407, was discovered in February 1544 in the chapel of Saint Petronilla in the old Saint Peter’s Basilica (Rome), along with other gems and rings (now dispersed and undocumented). It entered the collection of Filippo Archinto (1495-1558) and was still in Rome when Felice Caronni (1747-

<sup>10</sup> The offer was made through Marcello Oretti (on whom see Perini Folesani, 2013, 457-460), who wrote a letter to Don Carlo on 25 October 1776.

<sup>11</sup> ‘*è ben da credersi che quel suo cammeo sia men bello della detta Antonia, mentre è a tutti noto che quel cavaliere distingue troppo il bello*’.

<sup>12</sup> In the absence of any illustration, we cannot attribute any skill to the author at identifying ancient portraits: these cameos certainly depicted laureate bearded middle-aged men, but this could describe most emperors in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD.

1815) of Milan acquired it. Caronni then sold it to Count Antonio Giuseppe della Torre di Rezzonico (1709-1785), at whose death it was acquired by Don Carlo Trivulzio (1715-1789). Then it descended to his nephew Giorgio Teodoro Trivulzio (1728-1802), whose son Gerolamo Trivulzio (1778-1812) was the father of Cristina Trivulzio di Belgioioso (1808-1871), who likely sold it (after 1845), unless it was sold by her daughter Maria Trotti Bentivoglio, *née* di Belgioioso (1838-1913). It was finally acquired in 1934 by Blaise de Montesquiou-Fezensac from the dealer Maurice Stora, and it was given to the Musée du Louvre in 1951 (inv. no. OA 9523).

Especially close to the heart of Don Carlo – because he especially collected artefacts relating to the history of his hometown – were ‘*the two superb carnelians that were used as a secret seal by Filippo Maria Visconti Duke of Milan*’ (Pl. 2: 1-4) (Giulini 1760-65, 390 (drawing); Millin 1817a, 265-266; Millin 1817b, 135; Motta 1893, 989; Seregni 1927, 207; Squizzato 2014, 298, Fig. 4). Supposedly passed down within the family, and privately sold in the 1920s/30s, these pieces are now lost, but there survives a photograph of their plaster-casts that was taken in the early twentieth century and recently discovered by Alessandra Squizzato in the Fondazione Brivio-Sforza. Both were carnelian intaglios: one depicted a helmeted warrior, a shield with the Visconti viper at his shoulder, with the legend PHI. MA. AGLI.; the other depicted Sol driving a *quadriga*, holding a whip in one hand and a globe in the other, with the legend PHI. MARIE AGLI.<sup>13</sup> If indeed used as secret seals by Filippo Maria Visconti (1392-1447), they date from the 15th century.

One of Don Carlo’s most precious jewels – if genuine – was his ‘*gold ring with a sapphire seal as gem, which represents the head of Friedrich IV well known as III Emperor with his usual motto AEIOV*’ (Pl. 3: 1-3) (Millin 1817a, 265-266; Seregni 1927, 215). The acronym AEIOV, which is the series of all vowels in alphabetical order, is a mysterious device regularly used by the Habsburg Emperor Frederick III (Emperor 1452-1493) to mark his ownership of buildings and objects, the meaning of which was revealed by the emperor himself, shortly before dying: *Alles Erdreich ist Österreich*

<sup>13</sup> I am grateful to the anonymous referee for noticing the abbreviation-signs over the H and the A in the stone’s inscription, which suggest the following meaning: (seal of) PHILIPPI MARIaE AnGLI. The title ANGLVS is already found on a medal by Pisanello for Filippo Maria Visconti, but it seems to have been used even earlier – since Gian Galeazzo Sforza (1351-1402), possibly in 1397 when the German Emperor gave the county of Angleria (Anghiera) to his son, to evoke a claimed ancestry of the Visconti family from the imaginary Anglus, son of Ascanius and grandson of Eneas – son of Venus and ancestor of the Romans.

*untertan* – ‘all the world is subject to Austria’ in German.<sup>14</sup> It is not known when Don Carlo Trivulzio (1715-1789) acquired this ring, but he already owned it on 16 June 1759 when he received a visit by Duke Giovanni de Noya Carafa (1715-1768): although he agreed to exchange various ancient coins with him, he refused even to consider parting with this ring. Supposedly inherited within the family, and privately sold in the 1920s/30s, this piece is now lost, and no image is known.

Finally, it may be noted that the volume in Kraków also contains a single-leaf manuscript letter by Giangiacomo IV Trivulzio (1774-1831), sent from Milan on 14 October 1824.<sup>15</sup> The recipient is an unnamed man in Paris who seems to be a bibliophile, an acquaintance of both Trivulzio’s daughter and of the bibliographer Joseph van Praet (1754-1837). Van Praet, an acquaintance of Alexandre Dumas (Dumas 1842, 4), was the author of the *Catalogue des livres imprimés sur vélin de la Bibliothèque du roi* (Paris 1822, 6 volumes), and of the *Catalogue des livres imprimés sur vélin qui se trouvent dans les bibliothèques tant publiques que particulières* (Paris 1824-1828, 4 volumes). This letter relates to that project, and its content is rather ironic, as the first words are, ‘*Sir, I have the pleasure to send you the note of my vellums; as you see I am truly poor*’,<sup>16</sup> and yet the Trivulzio library was in fact extremely rich, and well-represented in van Praet’s book. The letter and the manuscript are not written by the same hand, and their physical features also differ: whilst the catalogue measures 190 x 150mm and is on plain cream paper, the letter measures 185 x 119mm and is on very thin white paper. Therefore, this letter – although bound at the start of the volume – does not appear to be related to the manuscript. It remains of some interest, however, because of the passage where Giangiacomo expresses his pleasure at being able to help Jean Duchesne (1779-1855), and says that he will immediately have his examples of niello copied. Indeed, Duchesne illustrated twelve pieces from the Trivulzio collection in his 1826 book *Essai sur les nielles, gravures des orfèvres florentins du XVe siècle*, and thanked Giangiacomo for having sent him drawings of his items.

<sup>14</sup> See Meyers 1885-1890, 1. The hypotheses had been proposed that this was the abbreviation of a Latin phrase, either *Austria est imperio optime unita* or *Austria erit in orbe ultima* or *Austriæ est imperare orbi universe*.

<sup>15</sup> The letter is on watermarked paper, but too little of the marks are visible to be able to identify it; it is possibly a coat of arms, with an arrow and letters (?).

<sup>16</sup> ‘*M.<sup>r</sup> J’ai le plaisir de vous envoyer la note de mes vellins; Vous voyez que je suis bien pauvre.*’ This list, to which he refers, is not bound into the volume.

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Pl. 1: 1 – Hardstone cameo depicting a Flavian lady, probably a Roman work of the 1st century AD. Reproduced from Seregni 1927, tav. XIV

Pl. 1: 2-3 – The 'Bulla of Maria' found in the tomb of the wife of Honorius (AD 384-423).

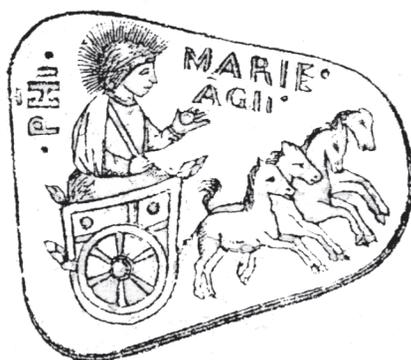
Photo © Musée du Louvre



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Pl. 2: 1-4 – Carnelian intaglios believed to be the secret seals of Filippo Maria Visconti (1392-1447). Reproduced from Giuliani 1760-65, 390 (drawings) and Squizzato 2014, 298 (casts)



Pl. 3: 1-3 – Gold ring set with a sapphire intaglio portrait of Frederick III (1452-1493).  
Reproduced from Giuliani 1760-65, 390 (drawings) and Squizzato 2014, 298 (cast)