

THE GRAND HISTORY OF A SMALL COLLECTION. AMERICAN OBJECTS FROM THE FARNESE AND BORGIA COLLECTIONS AT THE MUSEO E REAL BOSCO DI CAPODIMONTE (NAPLES, ITALY)

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Abstract

The chapter explores the collection history of a small group of American objects, both of pre-Hispanic and colonial date, held in the collection of the Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte (Naples, Italy). The artifacts discussed herein proceed from two outstanding early modern Italian collections, assembled by the Farnese family and by Cardinal Stefano Borgia. Besides synthesizing information on the history of these collections and on how some of their American artifacts ended up in Naples, details on the typology, dating and provenience of the artifacts are provided.

Keywords: Indigenous American artefacts; Colonial American artefacts; Stefano Borgia

Resumen

El capítulo investiga la procedencia de un pequeño grupo de artefactos americanos, tanto de época prehispánica como colonial, hoy preservados en el Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte (Nápoles, Italia). Los objetos aquí discutidos proceden de dos colecciones italianas entre las más relevantes de la primera edad moderna, es decir la colección de la familia Farnese y la del Cardenal Stefano Borgia. Además de sintetizar información sobre la historia de dichas colecciones y sobre las formas en que sus artefactos americanos llegaron en Nápoles, se proporcionan también observaciones sobre tipología, cronología y afiliación cultural de los objetos.

Palabras clave: Artefactos indígenas americanos; Artefactos coloniales americanos; Stefano Borgia

INTRODUCTION

The Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte holds a small collection of pre-Hispanic and colonial American objects which has so far received little scholarly attention by specialists in Indigenous American material culture. Despite its reduced dimensions, however, the collection is the result of the activities of a series of prominent characters in early modern Italian cultural and political landscape, namely the Farnese family and Cardinal Stefano Borgia. An analysis of the processes that led to the formation of the Capodimonte collection allows exploring some relevant dynamics of Italian collecting of American artifacts from the 16th century up to the present.

THE FARNESE

The most important nucleus of the Capodimonte art collection is constituted by the artworks which had been assembled by several members of the Farnese family in various of their Italian residences before 1734–1735, when the collections were moved to Naples (see below). Besides a host of European masterpieces, the Farnese collection included various extra-European objects (Domenici 2022a).

Since this chapter is devoted to the American objects in the Capodimonte collection, it somehow unavoidable to start stressing the contrast between the almost complete absence of pre-Hispanic or early colonial Mesoamerican artifacts in the Farnese collection and the close relationships that one prominent member of the family had with people and objects from the Spanish domains in the Americas. This is the case of Pope Paul III (Alessandro Farnese), who declared the humanity and freedom of Indigenous American people with the bulla *Sublimis Deus* (1537). It was probably as a response to this fact that, in 1539, Diego de Alvarado Huanitzin, nephew of the Aztec emperor Moctezuma II and Nahua governor of Mexico City, commissioned – with the aid of the Franciscan Peter of Gent – the famous featherwork mosaic known as *The Mass of Saint Gregory*. On its margins, indeed, appears the inscription PAULO III PONTIFICI MAXIMA EN MAGNA INDIARU[M] URBE MEXICO CO[M]POSITA D[OMI]NO DIDACO GUBERNATORE CURA FR[ANCIS] PETRI A GANTE MINORITAE A.D. 1539 (“To Paul III, supreme pontiff, in the great Mexico City, in the Indies, it was produced for Don Diego, governor, under the supervision of the Friar Minor Peter of Gent, A.D. 1539”) (Estrada *et al.* 2004; Russo 2013). Such a present was a clear allusion to the discourse on Indigenous ingeniousness, rationality and humanity that was expressed by Bartolomé de las Casas to support the Dominican missional project: feather mosaics with Christian iconography were conceived as proofs that Indigenous’ ingeniousness and crafting skills were being deployed in the production of artworks which testified the successes of conversion (Domenici 2017, 2021). It was precisely to foster such discourse and to ask for the emission of the bulla that in 1536 the Dominican friar Bernardino de Minaya had traveled from Mexico to Rome to meet Paul III. For unknown reasons (maybe related with the activities of French pirates) the feather mosaic never reached Italy and it is today preserved at the Musée des Amériques (Musée des Jacobins) in Auch (France).

A few years after, between 1540 and 1541, Paul III received another gift from Franciscan friars settled in Mexico. According to Francesco da Bologna, the gift included two feather mosaics depicting Christian saints and “three boxes of precious stones, and several stone figures, as well as two beautiful cushions for His Holiness” (Allé 1991: 436). Unfortunately, the whereabouts of these objects are currently unknown.

Notwithstanding these important connections, the only object which, as first noticed by Linda Martino (1995: 121; 1996: 206), could proceed from Mesoamerica is a small (7,8 x 6,5 x 3,5 cm) stone sculpture of a frog (Figure 1), with eyes of a translucent black stone (obsidian?). Martino was able to recognize the frog in a 1566 inventory of the Farnese Palace of Caprarola (Viterbo).¹ From a formal point of view the sculpture could indeed resemble Mixtec or Nahua

¹ *Inventario de le medaglie & altre antichità di Monsignor Illustrissimo Padrone fatto in Caprarola a 28 di luglio 1566 da Annibale Caro* (ASN, *Archivio Farnesiano*, b. 1853/II, vol. VII): “In uno scatolino di legno [...] una ranocchia, et una testudine antichi di pietra cotta”. The frog was then moved to Palazzo Farnese in Rome, as attested by the *Inventario delle Medaglie, Corniole e simili cose antiche che si ritrovano in*



Figure 1. Frog. Photo courtesy of MIC - Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte.

Postclassic Mesoamerican productions, but the marble *breccia* in which it is sculpted is so unusual that it casts some doubts on the Mesoamerican provenience of the sculpture, which must be considered as purely tentative.

Despite the fact that, as far as Amerindian objects are concerned, the activities of the Farnese Pope – and of his namesake nephew Cardinal Alessandro Farnese (1520–1589), a famous art collector – seem to have left scanty material traces in the family collections, the inventories of the several Farnese palaces testify a strong presence of “Indian” objects which, more than pre-Hispanic artifacts, are to be interpreted as example of those exotic goods which in early modern time circulated

on a global scale (Domenici 2022a). Indeed, these objects were not displayed in the main exhibitionary spaces together with paintings and sculptures, but rather they were part of the houses’ furniture, so that more than a specific collecting attitude they witness the transformation of consumption patterns, increasingly marked by the presence of exotic objects. As always happens with early modern inventories, it is often difficult to understand to which “Indies” the entries refer (Keating and Markey 2011), but among the “Indian” vessels, coconut cups, canes and *studioli* which were recorded since the mid of the 16th century it is possible to recognize at least some American productions, recorded together with Peruvian emeralds, Brazilian hammocks, *búcaros de Indias*, tobacco pipes, and various feather mosaics with Christian iconography. Goods of this kind appear in almost every Family inventory, but they were especially common in the 1644 inventory of Palazzo Farnese in Rome (Jestaz 1994) and in those of the *Galleria delle cose rare* which Ranuccio II Farnese assembled in Parma in the second half of the 17th century (Martino 1996). Most of these exotic goods were lost in the following centuries but some of them are still in the Capodimonte collection: it is the case of two *cocos chocolateros* (from New Spain or, less probably, from New Granada) (Figure 2a, b) recorded in the 1644 inventory² and of an engraved coconut, probably first recorded in a 1727 inventory (Figure 3).³

In 1731 Charles of Bourbon, son of Philip V of Spain and of Elisabetta Farnese (last member of the Farnese lineage), assumed the title of Duke of Parma and Piacenza. In 1734, Charles conquered the Kingdom of Naples (which he ruled between 1734 and 1759 as Charles VII) and soon started the transfer of the Farnese collections to the southern capital. Charles’ cultural policy was intense: he initiated the construction of the Royal Palace of

Roma in Palazzo Farnese mandato dal sig.r Bart. Faini Guardarobba adi P^o Giugno 1649 [1644] (ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, b. 1853/II, fasc. VIII; published in Jestaz 1994: 219–300, fol. 8r): “Una tartarucha, et una ranocchia di diverse pietre”.

² *Inventario delli Argenti, Mobili et altro che sono in Roma in Palazzo Farnese mandato dal sig.r Bartolomeo Faini. Guardarobba a di P^o Giugno 1649 [1644]* (ASN, Archivio Farnesiano, b. 1853/II, fasc. IX, published in Jestaz 1994: 25–211): “1473. Due tazzette di radiche di noce d’India con piede alto”. See Martino 1996: 205.

³ *Nota di Robe ch’io Bernardino Lolli mandai a Colorno al serenissimo duca Antonio e da lui chiestemi sino il giorno 12 settembre 1727*: “37. Una noce indiana lavorata, o sia coco”.



Figure 2. a, b. Cocos chocolateros. Photo courtesy of MIC - Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte.



Figure 3. Engraved coconut. Photo courtesy of MIC - Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte.

Capodimonte, specifically conceived to host the art collections, and supported the first archaeological excavations in Herculaneum and Pompeii. The Farnese objects brought from Parma were first displayed in Naples' Royal Palace and then moved to the newly built Capodimonte palace between 1758 and 1759. In 1777, during the kingdom of Charles' son Ferdinand IV, they were moved to the Palazzo degli Studi.⁴ It was in 1816, after the parentheses of the Neapolitan Republic (1799) and of the Napoleonic Kingdom of Naples (1806–1815), that Ferdinand was able to retake the power (now as Ferdinand I, King of the Two Sicilies) and to rechristen Palazzo degli Studi as Real Museo Borbonico (Martino 1996, 2001; Spinosa and Iodice 2005).

⁴ The presence of the abovementioned frog in Palazzo degli Studi is attested by the *Inventario di tutti i Monumenti dell'arte antica che si conservano nella Galleria e nei Musei della Real Fabbrica, 1805* (ASSAPNC; published in Fiorelli 1880: 214): “15. Ranocchia di lumachella con gli occhi di pasta, lunga on. 4”. Since the inventory only lists metals and stones, the *cocos chocolateros* and the engraved coconut were not recorded in it.

THE ACQUISITION OF STEFANO BORGIA'S COLLECTION

During his life, Stefano Borgia (1731–1804) assembled a substantial collection of antiquities, divided among his Roman residence at Palazzo Altemps and his family house in Velletri. As secretary of the *Congregazione di Propaganda Fide* since 1770, and thus in close contact with several missionaries, he was also able to collect many extra-European objects and manuscripts. Thanks to his high-ranking position in Rome (he was made Cardinal in 1789 and then appointed Governor of Rome, a position that forced him to exile during the French invasion of 1798), Stefano Borgia had close relationships with several noble families, being thus able to obtain important pieces for his collection. It is the case, for example, of the famous Mesoamerican pictorial manuscript known today as Codex Borgia, that he got from the Giustiniani family which had possessed it at least since the beginning of the 17th century (Domenici and Laurencich 2014).⁵ Outstanding scholars such as the Austrian Indologist Paulinus a. S. Bartholomaeo, the Danish Egyptologist Georg Zoega and the German orientalist Jakob Georg Christian Adler were admitted to Borgia's Museum in Velletri to study and publish its treasures. As far as Indigenous American objects are concerned, the Mexican Jesuit José Lino Fábrega studied the Mesoamerican codex, writing before 1795 a manuscript commentary which, despite remaining unpublished until 1899 (Fábrega 1899), was known and appreciated by scholars such as Antonio de León y Gama, Georg Zoega and Alexander von Humboldt. Humboldt himself, during his 1805 Italian trip, paid a visit to the Borgia Museum where – since Stefano had died in 1804 – he was received by the Cardinal's nephew Camillo (Humboldt 1810). Stefano Borgia's death initiated a harsh conflict on the ownership of manuscripts and artifacts between Propaganda Fide and Stefano's brother Giovanni Paolo. As a result of this conflict, the manuscripts were split between Naples and Propaganda Fide (afterwards at the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, where Codex Borgia is still preserved today as *Borg. Mess.* 1). The collection of artifacts, on the other hand, was inherited by Giovanni Paolo and then by his son Camillo who, pressed by financial problems, tried to sell it in 1805 to the King of Denmark, an attempt that was stopped by Pope Pius VII. In 1807 Camillo – who had enrolled with the Dragons of the Roman Republic in 1798 and with the French troops in Rome in 1806 – moved to Naples, where he led the troops of Joachim Murat against the Pontifical State. In 1811 he tried again to sell the collection to Napoleon Bonaparte, who was searching objects to enrich the collection of his *Musée Napoleon* (the Louvre), but they did not find an agreement on the price. In 1814 Camillo found a sale agreement with Murat and moved the Museo Borgiano to the building that was going to be renamed in 1816 as Real Museo Borbonico; Murat's defeat stopped the transaction, which was nevertheless confirmed on October 25, 1815, by the new King of Naples Ferdinand I of Bourbon.⁶

During these troubled transactions, in 1814 Camillo Borgia recorded an inventory of the collection, listing the objects that were included in the various sections, or “classes” into which the museum was divided.⁷ The American artifacts were listed (as numbers 68–75) in the “IX Class”, or *Museo Indico*, together with East Indian objects. In the following paragraphs we will discuss them according to the order of the 1814 inventory.

⁵ The Mexican codex is listed as “365. Gran Codice Messicano in Pelle. 300 [scudi]” in the inventory that, in 1806, Gaetano Marini and Filippo Aurelio Visconti recorded of that part of the Borgia collection which had just been transferred from palazzo Altemps to Propaganda Fide.

⁶ On the Borgia collection and its arrival in Naples, see the various contributions in Germano and Nocca 2001; Nocca 2001a.

⁷ *Catalogo del Museo Borgiano* (ASSAPNC, inventari antichi n. 139), published in Fiorelli 1878: 316–317.

Mixtec *penates*

Listed in the 1814 inventory as “68–69. Rarissimi idoli dei Messicani in giada, uno alto on. 4, altro on. 2 scarse” (Fiorelli 1878: 316), the two artifacts (Figure 4) are clearly identifiable as Mixtec greenstone sculptures of the kind known as *penates* in Mesoamericanist jargon, probably representations of ancestors transformed into fertility-bringing entities. They represent two squatting (bundled?) individuals, with bent legs and hands crossed or joined over the chest or abdomen. The largest figure (7.8 x 4.1 cm), sculpted in a white-mottled light greenstone, shows semicircular eyes, Roman nose and finely engraved fingers, toes, and hair. Circular perforations done with a tubular drill represent earflares and belly button. The smaller figure (3.4 x 2 cm), sculpted in a more yellowish greenstone, shows similar eyes and nose, but it is devoid of any circular perforation. The upper edges of the back of the heads of both figures show perforations aimed at wearing the sculptures as pendants.

The two *penates* were recorded in a Capodimonte inventory compiled around 1829⁸ and then described in a long series of museum guides published in French and Italian since 1832, often employing the very same wording seen in the 1814 inventory.⁹ In 1870, the renamed Museo Nazionale di Napoli started a new inventory, assigning new inventory numbers. The two *penates*, described as monstrous amulets, were thus assigned the new inventory numbers 11490 and 11491,¹⁰ which can be observed, painted with red ink, on the sculptures' backs.



Figure 4. Mixtec greenstone figurines. Photo courtesy of MIC - Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte.

We have no hints on how Stefano Borgia came in possession of the two *penates* but it is worth observing that at least two other Mixtec *penates* are known in historic Italian collections, one of them in the Medici collection (Heikamp 1972: 26, pl. 58–59) and another one (now lost) in the collection of Ulisse Aldrovandi, who had it illustrated in his *Musaeum Metallicum*, published posthumous in 1648 (Aldrovandi 1648: 544; Domenici 2022b). The Medici *penate* shows several traits also found in the Borgia ones, namely the circular perforations and the semicircular

⁸ “909. Idolo in figura d’amuleto, di marmo che tende al verde; è di figura mostruosa, ed è accovacciato. Alt. onc. tre e tre quinti. [...] 911. Altro idolo simile, assai piccolo. Alt. onc. una e mezza, *Inventario degli Oggetti de’ Bassi Tempi*. Ca 1829 (ASSAPNC, inv. 19).

⁹ E.g., “909.910. Idoles très-rare du Mexique” (Verde and Pagano 1832: 45). Similar wording is found in Michel 1841: 109; Alvino 1841: 172; Finati 1843: 31 (specifying that they are sculpted “en biscuit verdâtre”); De Lauzière and D’Ambra 1855: 533 (“909 e 910. Due idoli del Messico in argilla verdognola”); Chiarini 1860: 143; Nobile 1863: 685.

¹⁰ “11490. Amuleto di figura mostruosa, accovacciato di marmo che tende al verde. Alt. mill. 75. Inv. cit. n. 947. Marmo. 11491. Altro simile assai più piccolo. Alt. mill. 30, Inv. cit. n. 948. Marmo”, *Inventario generale del Museo Nazionale di Napoli* 1870 (SBASN, Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte).

eyes. Since both the Medici and Aldrovandi collections seem to have obtained their Mixtec objects from the gifts brought to Italy by Dominican friars during the 16th century, it is possible that the two penates of the Borgia collection also share a similar provenance (Domenici and Laurencich 2014; Domenici 2021).

Chimu bottle

The Capodimonte collection includes today a Chimu blackware stirrup-spout bottle from the north coast of Peru (Late Intermediate Period, ca. AD 1100–1500), representing a seating person (Figure 5). It was once part of a couple of Chimu bottles held in the Borgia collection, described in the 1814 inventory as “70. Vaso con una sola boccaglia, e quattro vasetti ovali, che si uniscono con piccola linea da una parte del manico, usato dagli Americani ne’ sacrifici prima della conquista delli Europei: è composto di majolica mista con una parte di piombaggine, in altezza pal. 1 ed on. 1. 71. Vaso della stessa materia e di simil uso con una figura umana sopra la boccaglia, e manico di scimia, alto on. 11,5.” (Fiorelli 1878: 316).¹¹ The first vessel (n. 70) is to be identified with the bottle representing four pepino (*Solanum muricatum*) fruits now at the Museo delle Civiltà di Roma (inv. n. 2994), where it was transferred in 1880 (when the museum was Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico) after that Pigorini purchased it, for five Italian *lire*, from the Countess Alcmena Cumbo Borgia (Cardelli Antinori 2001: 321; Cavatruni 2001; Martino 2001: 164). For unknown reasons, the two bottles must have been separated during the transactions for the collection’s sale to Naples, with one of them (n. 70) being kept in the Borgia family collection until 1880.¹²

After the separation from its “companion”, the Chimu bottle n. 71 was described in the several museum guides published since 1832. As they often did, Francesco Verde and Giovanni Pagano clearly rested on the Borgia inventory for their entry, but they also introduced an erroneous Mexican attribution, describing the bottle as “925. Vase de faïence plombée, dont les Américains fesaient usage dans les sacrifices avant l’arrivée des



Figure 5. Chimu bottle. Photo courtesy of MIC - Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte.

¹¹ The two bottles are then recorded in the *Inventario degli Oggetti de’ Bassi Tempi*. Ca 1829 (ASSAPNC, inv. 19, nr. 925). Due to the transfer of one of the two bottles bottle to Rome, only the other one was recorded in the *Inventario Arte Minore, volume relativo agli oggetti d’arte del Medioevo*, estratto dell’*Inventario generale del Museo Nazionale di Napoli* 1870 (SBASN, Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte), nr. 11560.

¹² C. Cavatruni (2001) wrote that the bottle is recorded as item n. 70 in the Marini-Visconti 1806 inventory of the Borgia collection at Propaganda Fide, but the identification seems erroneous (see Nocca 2001b, Appendix 5: 51).

Européens. Son long cou est orné d'une divinité mexicaine, et l'anse, d'une tête de singe" (Verde and Pagano 1832: 45). The erroneous Mexican attribution was often repeated in later guides (Michel 1837: 109; Finati 1843: 31; Nobile 1863: 685), while on other instances the description was so brief that it did not include any cultural attribution (Quaranta 1846: 103). Other guides simply ignored the Chimú bottle.

The presence of two Chimú bottles in the collection of Stefano Borgia (where they entered at least before his death occurred in 1804) is, as far as I can tell, the earliest occurrence of such Peruvian antiquities in Italy, since other early collections of Chimú objects (like those of Pelagio Palagi in Bologna and of Alessandro Litta Modignani in Milan) can be dated no earlier than the second/third decade of the 19th century. Unfortunately, we have no hints on how Stefano Borgia obtained the bottles.

Kágaba/Kogi wooden sculpture

Of outmost interest is the presence at Capodimonte of an anthropomorphic wooden sculpture proceeding from the Kágaba/Kogi region of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (Colombia), described in the 1814 Borgia inventory as "74. Antichissimo idolo in legno degli Arvacos [i.e. Arawak] nell'America" (Fiorelli 1878: 316).



Figure 6. Kágaba/Kogi wooden sculpture, devoid of its European inscribed base. Photo courtesy of MIC - Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte.

The anthropomorphic sculpture is mounted on a European wooden cylindrical base on which it is inscribed, in red ink, the same phrase "Antichissimo idolo degli Arvacos nell'America" (Martino 2001: 164) (Figure 6).

The wooden sculpture was part of a group of six Kágaba/Kogi wooden sculptures confiscated and brought to Rome in 1691 by the Augustinian friar Francisco Romero, who donated them to Pope Innocent XII in 1693. Five of the six objects passed then to the museum of Propaganda Fide (since 1883 Museo Borgiano di Propaganda Fide) and today they are in the collection of the Vatican Ethnological Museum (Am-2864A, Am-2864B, Am-3232, Am-3233, Am-3241), where they were transferred in 1928 (Console 2001: 317-318; Zanin 2001: 231-234; Brevaglieri 2022).

As witnessed by a lively exchange of letters with the Italian Ministry of Culture, with the Director of the Naples' museum Giulio de Petra and with its custodian Gaetano Macaluso, in 1879 Luigi Pigorini – clearly unaware of its provenance from Romero's gift – tried to obtain the Neapolitan sculpture for the museum he was assembling in Rome. Nevertheless, since the inscribed base had been detached from the sculpture, Macaluso

was unable to locate it in the museum's storerooms, so impeding its transfer to Rome (Cardelli Antinori 2001a; Martino 2001: 164; Romano 2022: 129–131).

In 1885, Angelo Colini published an article describing the ethnographic objects of the Museo Borgiano and erroneously described three of the Kágaba/Kogi wooden sculptures (two masks and one anthropomorphic figure) as Mexican (Colini 1885: 324–325, 914–932, pl. 1–2). Colini was arguably induced in error by a phrase in Paulinus a S. Bartholomaeo's *Vitae synopsis Stephani Borgiae* (1805), where the famous Indologist wrote about “*Multa lignea et testacea idolorum simulacra, forma et figura singulari, ac genti mexicanae propria*” (Paulinus a S. Bartholomaeo 1805: 44; Console 2001: 317). Colini's misattribution made that the two wooden masks of the group were briefly mentioned by Marshall Saville in his work on Mexican turquoise mosaics (Saville 1922: 85) and then again described and illustrated in his later book on Mexican woodcarving (Saville 1925: 86, pl. 50).

It was only in 1972 that Henning Bischof recognized the three wooden objects published by Colini as “Tairona”, also identifying two previously unnoticed zoomorphic ones (Bischof 1974) and thus bringing the number of then known Kágaba/Kogi objects in Rome to five. It was actually Bischof who identified the sculptures in an anonymous engraving preserved at the (then called) Vatican Missional Museum (Am–3300) and published with some modifications by the Colombian historian Joaquín Acosta (1848: pl. 4), in whose work the name of Francisco Romero is mentioned. As Bischof was able to recognize, the engraving proceeded by Francisco Romero's book *Llanto sagrado de la América Meridional...* (Romero 1693). The engraving at the Vatican Missional Museum bears an inscription stating that “*Gli idoli rappresentati in questa Stampa furono riposti in questa Libreria da Monsig. Illmo. Stefano Borgia Segretario di Propaganda nel dì 29 Maggio 1774. Festa dell'Augustissima Triade*” (Bischof 1974: 396).¹³ Thanks to this rich body of documents, Bischof was able to properly identify the original provenience of the five sculptures and their subsequent collection history. Four of the sculptures were then published, together with a reproduction of the engraving, by Gerardo Reichel–Dolmatoff (1990: pl. XLIII–XLVIb) and by Augusto Oyuela–Caycedo and Manuela Fischer (2006) in the most complete and up-to-date article on Kágaba/Kogi ritual paraphernalia.

It is to be argued that the wooden sculpture today at Capodimonte was separated from the rest of the group when they were still in the collection of Propaganda Fide, so that after Stefano Borgia's death the sculpture remained in the possession of Camillo Borgia, who sold it to Naples. The sculpture was mentioned in the 1829 inventory of the Museo Reale Borbonico as “905. Figura di legno, orrorosamente scolpita, mancante delle braccia. Alt. onc. Dieci e tre quinti”.¹⁴ Verde and Pagano mentioned it in their 1832 guide as “905. Idole de bois des *Arvacos* de l'Amérique, ouvrage très-ancien” (Verde and Pagano 1832: 45) and similar phrasing was also employed in later guides (Michel 1837: 108; Finati 1843: 31; De Lauzière and D'Ambra 1855: 533; Chiarini 1860: 143; Nobile 1863: 685).

It was only in 2001 that Linda Martino was able to find the inscribed base and to rejoin it with the sculpture, thus recognizing it as the sixth member of Romero's group.

¹³ As noticed by Bischof (1974: 397) it seems to be a chronological error in the inscription, since Stefano Borgia was appointed Secretary of Propaganda Fide in 1880.

¹⁴ *Inventario degli Oggetti de' Bassi Tempi*. Ca 1829 (ASSAPNC, inv. 19). In the later *Inventario Arte Minore, volume relativo agli oggetti d'arte del Medioevo* (1870) it is recorded as “11486. Figura di legno molto malamente scolpita, mancante delle braccia. Alt. mill. 930. Inv. cit. n. 943. Legno. IC 15839. D.M.” (SBASN, Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte).

The group of Kágaba/Kogi wooden sculptures today split between Rome and Naples is of utmost importance, given the rarity of such artifacts made from perishable materials. Between 1914 and 1915 Konrad Theodor Preuss had the opportunity to see and photograph several similar Kágaba/Kogi masks and he collected two of them, today preserved in the Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (Preuss 1926; Oyuela-Caycedo and Fischer 2006).¹⁵ Similar items were described by J. Alden Mason in 1926 (page 35) and one of them was later illegally collected by Gregory Mason, today at the museum of the University of Pennsylvania (Mason 1938: 175; Oyuela-Caycedo and Fischer 2006: 151–152).¹⁶

According to the AMS radiocarbon dating carried out by Augusto Oyuela-Caycedo and Manuela Fischer on the Berlin's specimens, the masks were created in pre-Hispanic times (calibrated AD 1440 and AD 1470) even if they were still in use in the early 20th century (Oyuela-Caycedo and Fischer 2006: 153–154). It is thus possible that a similar dating should also be attributed to the Neapolitan and Roman specimens, even if they were still in use in the late 17th century when confiscated by Romero.

Calque of a Mexica figure of Huitzilopochtli

The last item to be briefly mentioned here is an intriguing one. It is a gypsum calque (only recently recognized as such by the author) of the famous greenstone figurine representing the Mexica patron god Huitzilopochtli, today preserved at the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris (López Luján and Fauvet–Berthelot 2005). The calque was mentioned in the 1814 Borgia inventory as “75. Idolo messicano chiamato Huitzilopochtli. Specie di smeriglio, acquistato in Verona pel Museo di Parma” (Fiorelli 1878: 317).

Since I am currently devoting a specific study to this object together with Leonardo López Luján, I will not go into details in the present chapter, which is devoted to original pre-Hispanic and colonial American artefacts. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that, due to its mention in the Borgia inventory and to the inscriptions on its base, the collection history of the Capodimonte calque is chronologically deeper than the one of the original sculpture, suggesting that toward the end of the 18th century the latter pertained to the Farnese family (the “Museo di Parma”) and that it had been bought in Verona, maybe in the then flourishing antiquarian market of the city. Further information on the Neapolitan calque and on what it can say about the provenance history of the greenstone original will be provided in a future publication (Domenici and López Luján, in press).

¹⁵ <https://ausstellungen.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/preuss/exhibits/show/kolumbien-preuss/fokus-masken-mythen-kagaba>. The Berlin masks have been the subject of repatriation requests by Kágaba/Kogi indigenous people, as narrated in a 2016 documental titled *Die Indianer kommen* (“The Indians are coming”) directed by Carola Wedel. A copy of the photos taken by Preuss (whose originals were destroyed in Preuss' apartment during WWII) is today preserved at the Världskulturmuseet in Gothenburg (Sweden), since Preuss sold them to Erland Nordenskiöld.

¹⁶ I have been unable to locate the mask in the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania online collection.

EPILOGUE

With the unification of the Kingdom of Italy (1861) the Real Museo Borbonico was renamed as Museo Nazionale and, in 1957 the gallery of paintings and other “modern” objects from the Farnese and Borgia collections were moved to Capodimonte where they are still held today (Martino 1996: 128).

The American collection at Capodimonte remained almost unnoticed until the mid of the 1990’s when Linda Martino – whose research led to the recreation of the “Galleria delle cose rare” at Capodimonte – published two important works (Martino 1995, 1996) where she identified the American objects from the Farnese collection. In 2001, two excellent volumes devoted to the Borgia collection (Germano and Nocca 2001; Nocca 2001a) included several of the studies cited above, among them another work by L. Martino (2001) where she identified the American objects which had been transferred from the Borgia collection to Naples. It is thanks to these works that it has been possible to initiate the investigation that led to the present chapter.

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Symposium CAA
(Corpus Antiquitatum Americanensium. Proyecto 20 de la UAI)
*“Funciones de los Museos europeos con colecciones
americanas – 2021”*

Edited by
Victòria Solanilla Demestre

Kraków 2023

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Chimu bottle (Photo Carmine Romano ©Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte) (D. Domenici, this volume); The Mexican mosaic mask of the Museum of Ethnography, Budapest (Inv. no. 74.2.9, Photograph courtesy of Edit Garai) (J. Gyarmati *et al.*, this volume); Casas Grandes effigy pottery of a seated man. AAM 00851 (Photo and drawing by V. Solanilla Demestre) (V. Solanilla Demestre, this volume)

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