

PAPER

The Accidental Archaeologist: The Unfortunate Case of Antonio Filippello and the Coin Hoard of Castiglione (Catania, Sicily, 1818)

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This paper describes a set of records from the State Archive of Palermo, that detail the experiences of Antonio Filippello, who, in 1818, unintentionally discovered some ancient coins during building renovations on his property in the small town of Castiglione (near Catania) and was unfairly arrested by local authorities. The records help to precisely reconstruct the historical event and to clarify significant aspects of Sicilian archaeology during the early Bourbon period, with regard to the enforcement of laws on archaeological heritage protection, the ambiguous role of the local and state authorities, and their potential abuse of power when dealing with serendipitous discoverers of antiquities. Filippello's experiences can be compared with other contemporary events, to better understand their similarities and differences, and significance.

Introduction

In 1818, Antonio Filippello, an unknown citizen of the small town of Castiglione (near Catania, Sicily), found some ancient coins inside his private house, and was unjustly punished by local Bourbon government authorities for not having reported his discovery properly. Once the *Segreto* of Castiglione had alerted the General Lieutenant of Sicily about Filippello's unfair punishment, on April 9, 1818, the latter ordered the Intendant of Catania to investigate the actions of the local *Prosegreto*. The Intendant replied on May 28, reporting that the coins had been delivered to two local priests for safekeeping. Following Filippello's complaints in June 1818, it seems that authorities castigated the local *Prosegreto* for his behaviour.

Eight records (Appendix: Doc. nos. 1–8) stored at the State Archive of Palermo (*Archivio di Stato di Palermo* (ASPA); see **Figure 1**) and filed in the substantial collections of the Lieutenantcy Internal Ministry (*Ministero Luogotenenziale Interno* (MLI); Burgarella and Fallico 1986: 320–321; Scinaro 2006: 78–79) provide an account of Filippello's discovery of ancient coins at Castiglione. Written on unstamped papers with formal letterheads, the records date from April 9 to June 25, 1818, and are published here, at the end of this paper, and analysed for the first time (ASPA: MLI 2; Burgarella 1971: 71: 'Scoperta di monete antiche a Castiglione').

These documents are worthy of study for a number of reasons. First, they provide new data about the history of the protection and conservation of archaeological

artefacts, and of antiquarianism, in the early nineteenth-century, in Sicily. Second, they report on the discovery of ancient coins, which can be linked to a coin hoard. Third, they provide fascinating insights into the bureaucratic



Fig. 1: The State Archive of Palermo (*Archivio di Stato di Palermo*). Photo: A. Crisà.

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procedures adopted by local and central government authorities when dealing with unintended archaeological discoveries and the preservation of antiquities during this period: in the documents there are details about the 'policing' and reporting of finds, and of processes for placing such finds into state museums.

Finally, the records confirm that the monograph *Siciliae populorum et urbium regum quoque et tyrannorum veteres nummi saracenorum epocham antedecedentes* (Castelli 1781) by the Principe Di Torremuzza, Gabriello Lancellotto Castelli, was used to identify the coins found in Castiglione. This provides additional evidence that this antiquarian monograph was widely used by contemporary collectors, and was the standard 'tool' or reference employed to help to catalogue numismatic finds in nineteenth-century Sicily, as explained below.

The historical context for Filippello's coin find was early nineteenth-century Sicily, when Ferdinand I (1816–1825, see **Figure 2**), Prince of the House of Bourbon, ruled the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. This was during a crucial phase for his government, after his restoration to his throne, and after the defeat of Napoleon I and the Congress of Vienna. Ferdinand I had to subdue popular uprisings against him in Palermo in 1820, when the revolutionaries briefly reinstated the Constitution of Sicily of 1812. Subsequently, Ferdinand was not able to deal with his kingdoms' serious political and economic crises, or promote public works and improve social welfare (Mack Smith 1968: 352–364).

Filippello resided in Castiglione, a small town on the northern side of Mount Etna in the province of Catania, about 50 kilometres from the city of Catania itself. Its historical record is slight, but we know it was besieged by King Frederick III of Aragona in 1282 (Amico 1855–1859, 1: 267–270). It was a compact town of some 4,410 inhabitants in 1860, according to Arturo Zuccagni Orlandini (Zuccagni Orlandini 1861: 388).

The area discussed in this paper (see **Figure 3**), lies mainly to the north of Mt Etna, in the provinces of Catania and Messina, which have significant numbers of archaeological sites. In particular, Francavilla (Messina), which is very close to Castiglione, has the remains of an anonymous Siculan Indigenous centre, where archaeologists have found a number of sacred buildings, dating from the sixth to the fourth centuries BC, and a substantial number of terracotta *pinakes* or votive tablets that are commonly deposited in the sanctuaries or burial chambers of the inhabitants of the ancient colonies and towns of Magna Graecia (Spigo 1989, 2008).

There are more archaeological sites in the area west of Mt Etna. In the town of Adrano, for example, founded by Greek colonists at the end of the fifth century BC, sections of its massive molten rock wall and the remains of Greek houses have been uncovered. At the site of Mendolito, 8 kilometres north-west of Adrano, archaeologists found an unidentified indigenous centre, protected by long walls, an important Siculan inscription, and a substantial hoard of bronze finds dating from the eighth to the seventh centuries BC (Orsi 1915: 227–230; Spigo 1984: 27–38; Coarelli and Torelli 1988: 338–339; Albanese 1989: 643–677; Lamagna 2009).

Further to the north of Adrano, the town of Bronte and its surrounding territory also have extensive archaeological potential. As later surveys and excavations have demonstrated, the area had numbers of sites dating from proto-history to the late Roman period. For instance, in 1904–06 Paolo Orsi found Roman baths and mosaics at Maniace, dating to the AD fourth century (Orsi 1905: 445, 1907: 497; Spigo 1985: 198–200; Consoli 1988–1989: 74–79). Furthermore, we also know that ancient tombs and archaeological materials, dating from early Greek until Roman periods, were found in the town of Giarre (especially in the so-called Contrada Coste) in the twentieth century (Privitera 1990: 121–123).



Fig. 2: Copper coin (10 tornesi, 1819), showing Ferdinand I, King of the Two Sicilies (Photo: *Numismatica Ranieri, Auction 5: 21 April 2013, n. 331*).

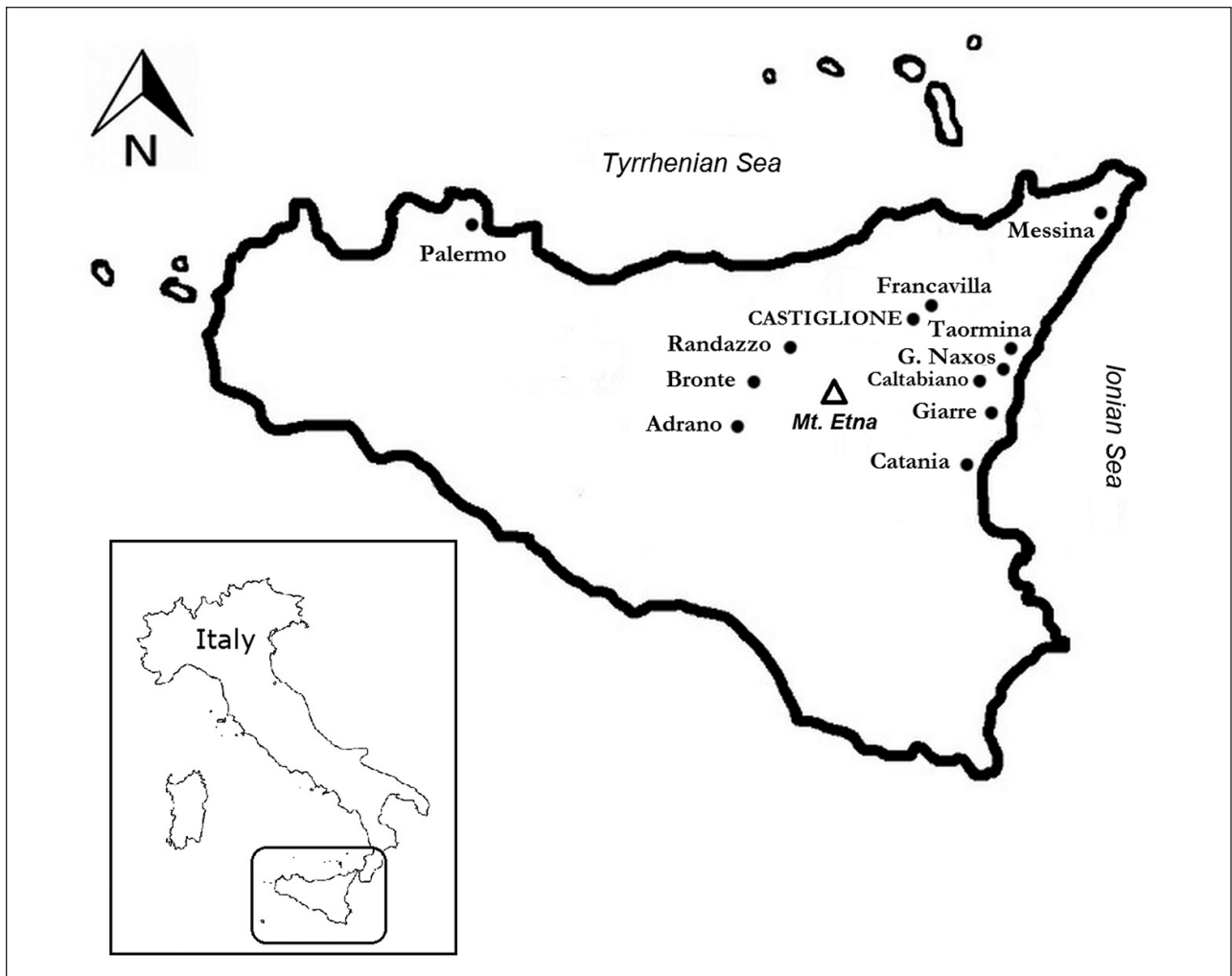


Fig. 3: Map of Sicily, showing the key places mentioned in this paper.

When Filippello found ancient coins in the remains of a wall in his house in Castiglione, the Bourbon government of Ferdinand I had just accomplished one of its few successful and important administrative reforms, namely the Decree of October 11, 1817, enforced on January 1, 1818, in which Sicily was separated into seven valleys (or regions) to be administered by relevant Intendants (*Intendenti*). These were further divided into twenty-three districts to be managed by under-Intendants (*Sottointendenti*), who supervised the conduct of local town authorities. Thus, both Intendants and under-Intendants had specific tasks relating to the local safeguarding of Sicilian antiquities, while the Commission of Public Education (*Commissione di Pubblica Educazione*) provided them with expert advice on archaeological finds and cultural heritage, such as, the evaluation of antiquities (Di Stefano 1956: 352, 357–358; Landi 1977 11: 613–632; Lo Iacono and Marconi 1997: 16–17; Crisà 2012a; 2012b).

Under this new government hierarchy, the Lieutenantcy Internal Ministry (*Ministero Luogotenenziale Interno*) was managed by the General Lieutenant for Sicily (*Luogotenente Generale per la Sicilia*), who had replaced the old office of the Viceroy of Sicily. It is important to note that the General Lieutenant had specific tasks in overseeing and preserving Sicilian antiquities. In fact, as well as

providing excavation licences and authorizing the export of finds, he also had to monitor archaeological and cultural heritage sites with the help of the Commission of Public Education, and subsequently after 1827, with the help of the Commission of Antiquities and Fine Arts in Sicily (*Commissione di Antichità e Belle Arti in Sicilia*; Landi 1977, 1: 429–435; Crisà 2012a: 6–7).

Meanwhile, as a consequence of the donation of his collection of prints and pictures by the once Prince of Belmonte, Giuseppe Ventimiglia, in 1814 the Bourbon government established the Museum of the University of Palermo. In 1823 the Metopes (carved architectural panels) from the sixth century BC Greek temple at Selinunte in southern Sicily, were moved into the new museum (Lo Iacono and Marconi 1997: 34; Moscati and Di Stefano 2006: 15; Crisà 2012a: 10). These metopes were confiscated by the Bourbon government authorities after being illegally excavated by two English architects on tour, Samuel Angell and William Harris, who had planned to take them back to England.

Records on Filippello's story were produced by the Lieutenantcy Internal Ministry (Appendix: Doc. nos. 1, 3–5, 7–8), the Intendency of Catania (*Intendenza di Catania*) (Appendix: Doc. no. 2) and the Head Office of the Segreto of the District of Catania (*Segreteria del Distretto di Catania*)

(Appendix: Doc. no. 6)¹. In particular, we can reasonably attribute some documents (Appendix: Doc. nos. 4–5, 7–8) to the Lieutenancy Internal Ministry (Appendix: Doc. no. 4: 'Antichità / 3.º Ripartimento 2.º Carico'; Doc. no. 5: '3.º Ripartim(en)to 2.º Carico': formal letterheads, referred to internal divisions of the Ministry; Doc. no. 7: report by a ministerial official on an inspection or visit to Catania; Doc. no. 8: on the lack of records, which were sent to Naples on June 10, 1818 and did not return to Palermo – presumably, this note was written by a departmental official or a compiler). These comprise brief reports or notes, which internal employees had probably compiled in 1818. However, it is likely that this set of archival material,

filed in what was labelled as 'Folder 2', has suffered some loss of records, which were not returned to the Ministry (Appendix: Doc. no. 8) – see below. Relevant archival documents have been carefully transcribed and chronologically ordered in this article's Appendix. The text/discussion below is cited fully from these records.

Antonio Filippello and the Discovery of Ancient Coins at His Home

On April 9, 1818, the General Lieutenant of Sicily, Marquis Gioacchino Ferreri, sent a dispatch to the Intendant of Catania. In this, the Lieutenant stated that the Procurator (of the King and Mayor/*Segreto*) of Castiglione had

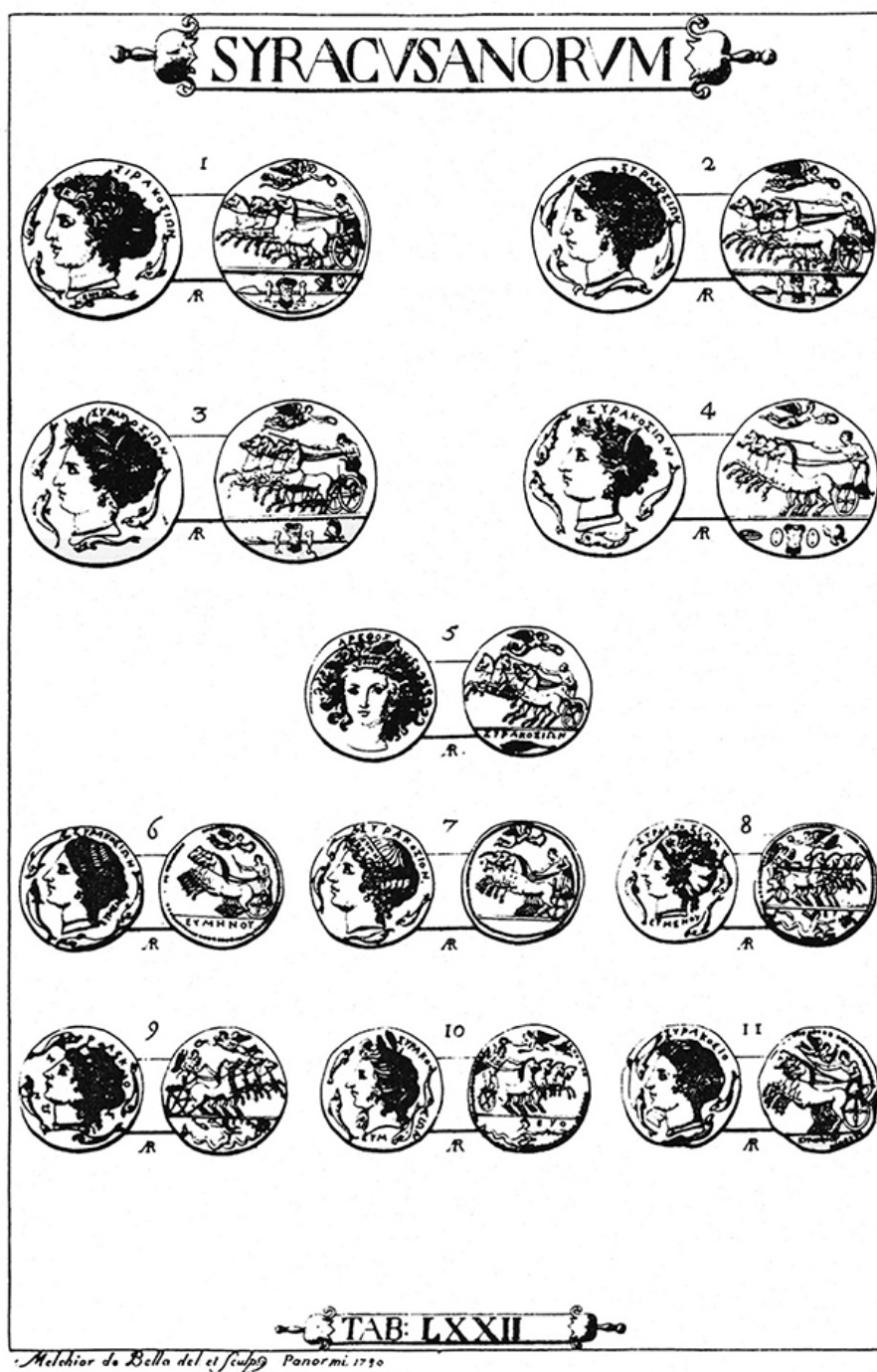


Fig. 4: Plate LXXII (Syracusanorum) from *Siciliae populorum et urbium regum quoque et tyrannorum veteres nummi saracenorum epocham antecedentes* (Castelli 1781: pl. LXXII).

just sent him a report, which described the discovery of ancient coins at Antonio Filippello's house. There is no further information about the discoverer of the coins, except that he lived in Castiglione and owned a private house, in which he had been performing some construction work (Appendix: Doc. no. 1; Sanfilippo 1843: 327: 'Luogotenente generale: [...] 167, Il Ministero di Stato comorante in Sicilia Carlo duca Avarna, e Gioacchino marchese Ferreri, dal 1818 al 1819').

We can infer that this report, which has not been traced from Folder 2, may have been preserved in the State Archive of Catania – future archival research could recover this noteworthy document and it may provide more detailed data about the discovery of the coins. We can also infer that the discovery of the coins was likely to be accidental or unintended: Filippello was probably demolishing a wall during renovation work in his house and performing earthworks at the same time: we are told that the coins were found among building rubble (Appendix: Doc. no. 1: 'alcune monete antiche rinvenute nei rottami di un muro della Casa di Antonio Filippello, del Comune di Castiglione').

As the General Lieutenant stated in his dispatch: the Prosegreto of Castiglione had abused his power in the case of his treatment of Filippello. Thus, the Lieutenant ordered the Intendant of Catania to consider the matter, to obtain information on the value of the coins and their number, and to investigate the Prosegreto of Castiglione's serious injustice towards their discoverer (Appendix: Doc. no. 1: 'Io desidero ch'ella prenda conto di questo affare'; however, the crucial matter of Prosegreto's abuse of power was explained in the following records fully).

The Intendant of Catania, Vincenzo Gagliani², replied to the Marquis Gioacchino Ferreri on May 28, 1818. He had just discovered that the local priests Antonino Sardo and Carlo Calì were keeping the coins in a safe place. Meanwhile, a precise report on the coins was being written. The numismatic cataloguing took advantage of the images in the renowned *Siciliae populorum et urbium regum quoque et tyrannorum veteres nummi saracenorum epocham antecedents*, by the aristocratic antiquarian, Gabriele Lancillotto Castelli (1781), Principe di Torremuzza (see **Figure 4**).

This information is valuable, because it confirms that Castelli's 1781 monograph was the most valued work on Sicilian numismatics used by coin collectors and cataloguers, and clearly an important reference (Crisà 2009b: 522, 2012a: 53–54, 2012b: 385–390). Unfortunately, this report has not been traced in Folder 2; it would have offered valuable data on the ancient coins found at Filippello's house (Appendix: Doc. no. 2: 'ne è fatto per ordine del S(igno)r Intendente, colla relazione alle note Tavole del Torremuzza, un catalogo esatto'; Castelli 1781, 1789; Crisà 2009a: 116–149).

According to the previous order given by the General Lieutenant, the Intendant heard the Segreto of Castiglione on the crucial matter of the abuse of power by the Prosegreto, although neither had yet found the solution to the problem. Meanwhile, the Segreto had planned to



Fig. 5: Commander Giuseppe Saverio Poli (1746–1825) (Morelli di Gregorio and Panvini 1826: *Cav. Giuseppe Sav. Poli*).

seize the coins, which the local priests, Sardo and Calì were looking after, and later, to move them to the Secretariat of the Lieutenantcy Internal Ministry in Palermo.

It is important to note that the Segreto had sought to follow correct bureaucratic procedure. In fact, the General Lieutenant was also responsible for the acquisition, preservation and conveyance of small archaeological finds to the Commission of Public Education, for their antiquarian evaluation. This comprised answering the questions: were the finds worthy of acquisition by the Museum of the University of Palermo? And were the finds considered beneficial for the decorum and cultural heritage of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies? (*Collezione delle leggi e de' decreti reali* 1822: 287: 'indicando quelli che per la loro eccellenza si dovranno riguardare come conducenti alla istruzione ed al decoro della nazione', Royal Decree of May 22, 1822, art. 5). At this point, the General Lieutenant complied with Vincenzo Gagliani's recommendation, as the Note dated June 3, 1818 clearly testifies (Appendix: Doc. no. 2: 'credea a proposito prima di tutto trasferire le monete da potere di due depositarj all'ufficio della Secreteria di V(ostra) E(ccellenza)'; Doc. no. 3: 'diritti di chiunque, al che lo scrivente ha subito aderito').

On June 8, according to archival records the Lieutenantcy Internal Ministry decided to inform Giuseppe Saverio Poli (see **Figure 5**) about the coin discovery at Castiglione. Poli received the above mentioned original report from the Ministry on June 11 (Appendix, Doc. no. 4: 'dopo essersi eseguita questa determinazione, si mandi l'originale rapporto al Comandante per la sua intelligenza. Palermo 8. Giug(n)o 1818'; Doc. no. 5: 'io invio a Lei il rapporto sud(dett)o per sua intelligenza')³.

The Prosegreto of Castiglione and His Abuse of Power

One remarkable record clarifies, in detail, the abuse of power suffered by Antonio Filippello at Castiglione. The document is a letter, written by the Segreto of the District of Catania to the Lieutenant General in Palermo on June 25, 1818. The Segreto had just received a plea from the Lieutenant, originally written by Filippello, who asked him for an exemption from the ruling of Prosegreto of Castiglione, due to the latter's unfitting behaviour. In particular, Filippello reported that the Prosegreto had sequestered the ancient copper coins, which he had just found at his property. And straight after that, he said, the local authority had arrested him (Appendix: Doc. no. 6.).

Consequently, the Segreto of Catania explained why he considered the behaviour of the Prosegreto of Castiglione as improper and punishable, listing three significant reasons.

(1) He had confiscated the ancient coins 'without legally delivering them'. In fact, the Prosegreto had to warn the Segreto of Catania that he had to deliver numismatic finds to the Lieutenant General, who had the specific task of safeguarding antiquities with the help of the Commission of Public of Education. But the Prosegreto kept them, and so did not follow the correct bureaucratic procedure (Appendix: Doc. no. 6: 'il Prosegreto di Castiglione, il quale spogliò que-[2]gli delle monete suddette senza farne legale consegna').

(2) Filippello was arrested unjustly ('without any crime'). This is the key point of the matter. Since Filippello had found the coins on his own property, the Prosegreto did not actually have the right to arrest him, according to the affirmation of the Segreto of Catania (Appendix: Doc. no. 6: 'è quel che è più lo pose in arresto senza delitto, perciocché le monete furono rinvenute nel proprio fondo del Supplicante').

It is useful to compare the Filippello case with a similar event, even if the latter occurred in a slightly later period, when the Commission of Antiquities and Fine Arts (*Commissione di Antichità e Belle Arti in Sicilia*) was already active in Sicily. This case had to do with a local woman, Giuseppa Giammone (or Giammona), who had found ancient coins 'along a public road' in the small town of Giarre and who was arrested before February 1810, and whose coins were seized by Prosegreto of Giarre. From 1815 onwards these coins were kept safe by Pietro Grassi, the Mayor of Giarre. In 1832 Giammone sent a plea to the Intendant of Catania, in which she asked for the return of the coins. In this case, the authorities were able to preserve these finds without any theft or loss, and for a long time. Finally, the coins were valued by the Commission of Antiquities and Fine Arts, and acquired by the Coin Cabinet of the Museum of Palermo (Crisà 2012a: 27–28).

It is evident that both Giammone and Filippello were arrested because of their discovery of ancient coins and their failure to notify local authorities. The most important aspect of, and difference to, their cases was where they discovered their coins: Giammone found them 'along a public road', while Filippello collected them on his

own property. The records do not mention any improper behaviour by the local authorities of Giarre. In contrast, as the Segreto of Catania asserted in his detailed report, the Prosegreto of Castiglione had committed a straight abuse of power by arresting Filippello, because the discovery occurred in his own house, and not in a public space.

(3) The inappropriate action of the Prosegreto caused other serious consequences, namely the loss of many other coins. We infer that after he was arrested and taken away by the local authorities, Filippello's house and the location of the coin discovery remained without any surveillance or control of access. The wall debris of Filippello's house still contained coins, which were clearly removed by others and then dispersed. Alternatively, it was unscrupulous relatives who took advantage of the situation and sold the coins to local collectors and/or dealers. Although it is interesting that the Segreto of the District of Catania stated that the experts in numismatics had purchased the most valuable coins (Appendix: Doc. no. 6: 'Attesa siffatta violenza ne furono disperse non poche, e se ne fece l'acquisto dai Conoscitori delle più preggevoli; giusta le nozioni che ho avute da persone di fiducia').

At this point, the Segreto of Catania affirmed that the residual coins were transferred to his office for safekeeping, and that he was looking forward to the Lieutenant's final verdict – in fact he had to establish their final destination. Meanwhile, the Segreto compensated Filippello financially with 'twenty-five ounces', since he had been wrongly arrested. Subsequently, the General Lieutenant would have to determine if the coins belonged to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies or to Filippello, who could receive a reward corresponding to their value (Appendix: Doc. no. 6: 'feci pagare promodalmente al Ricorrente Filippello oz. venticinque. Se poi tali monete perché antiche debbano appartenere allo Stato, e se all'Inventore spettar debba solamente il valore d'esse resta all'E(ccellenza) V(ostra) il risolverlo').

A brief note produced by the Lieutenancy Internal Ministry on June 25, 1818, summarized the previous record. Fundamentally, the writer (the Lieutenant?) agreed with the Segreto of the District of Catania, with regard to the behaviour of the Prosegreto of Castiglione. It was considered unfair and he was held responsible for the loss of more ancient coins from the site, which had been bought, or dispersed, by locals. Therefore, the General Lieutenant decreed that the Prosegreto of Castiglione had to be punished, due to his inappropriate behaviour and clear abuse of power (Appendix: Doc. no. 7: 'per ciò risulta punibile la condotta del Prosegreto'). Furthermore, the note reported that only His Royal Majesty, Ferdinand I of the Two Sicilies (1816–1825) would be able to decide whether to return the ancient coins to Filippello, who had sent an official plea and expressly asked for this resolution, or whether to keep the coins and reward him with a prize in money, which was equivalent to the value of the finds. Meanwhile, Filippello received '25 ounces' (Appendix: Doc. no. 7: 'resta a S(ua) A(ltezza) R(eale) il risolvere, se debba eseguirsi, oppure debba [fol 3] darsi all'inventore il prezzo delle medesime').

The last record, also preserved in Folder 2, is a short, anonymous, memorandum. It documents that a dispatch written by the Finance Ministry of Naples, dated June 18, 1818, contained the previous documents on the matter. Unfortunately, these were not returned to the archive of the Lieutenant Internal Ministry. Again, this certainly proves that a loss of some records occurred in 1818 (Appendix: Doc. no. 8: 'gli antedec(en)ti sono in un dispaccio delle finanze di Napoli, e sinora, non è stato restituito in Archivio'). Therefore, if these documents still exist they are probably still in Naples.

The Coin Hoard: Some Hypotheses

Unfortunately, there is a lack of specific information about the coins found by Filippello, including information about their exact number, their dating, denominations or issuers. We only know that they were copper coins. Sometimes bureaucratic documents, especially those compiled in the early nineteenth century, omitted these kinds of data. In terms of the actual find spot, since Filippello found the coins during demolition or excavation works in a very limited area (i.e. within his own house) and in a structure (a house wall), it is quite plausible that the coins belonged to a hoard, located as a consequence of Filippello's actions.

We do not know how old Filippello's house was. Nor do we know if this was a security or savings hoard. The noted, but untraced numismatic report, mentioned by the General Secretary of the Intendancy of Catania, does, however, refer to coin catalogue *Siciliae populorum et urbium regum quoque et tyrannorum veteres nummi saracenum epocham antecedentes* (Castelli 1781). Since this late eighteenth-century monograph described only ancient Sicilian gold, silver and bronze coins, it can be deduced that Filippello's coins were all struck by Sicilian mints. Therefore, once again, these records confirm how useful Castelli's catalogue was, and how often it was employed by Sicilian numismatic collectors (such as Tommaso Gandolfo and Enrico Pirajno) and even by counterfeiters (for example Paolo Cataldi), and referred to well into the nineteenth century (Crisà 2009b: 521–532, 2012a: 11–18, 2012b: 385–390). However, these records also certify that government authorities (such as the General Secretary of the Intendancy of Catania) were using Castelli (1781) to identify coins and write technical reports on unintended archaeological discoveries as well.

Some information is available about the distribution of ancient coin hoards in the eastern area of Mt Etna. According to published data, we know that hoards containing archaic coins have been found at Caltabiano (Catania, c.a. 500 BC) and Giardini Naxos (Messina, 490–80 BC). Coin hoards that contain Classical coins were found at Taormina (Messina, 450–45 BC), Randazzo (Catania, 450–45 BC), Giardini Naxos (Messina, 403 BC), and one comprising Republican *denarii* issued by L. RVTILI FLAC at Randazzo (Catania, 76 BC) (Crawford 1969: n. 287; Thompson, Morkholm and Kraay 1973: n. 2061, 2064, 2083, 2097; Arnold–Biucchi 1990; Meadows and Wartenberg 2002: n. 597).

It is also worth mentioning the discovery of the coin hoard of Capo Schisò found at Giardini Naxos (Messina) in 1853, which antiquarians know for its high archaeological potential. The hoard, containing more than 2000 silver coins from Sicilian mints (from Akragas, Gelas, Himera, etc.), was scattered and dispersed. Coins were acquired by antiquarian dealers in Palermo or exported. In addition the Bourbon authorities seized 400 coins (from the landowner of the discovery's site) and moved them to Castoreale (Messina). Giuseppe Grosso Cacopardo (1789–1858), a well-regarded collector from Messina, played a prominent role in this case, and was able to examine a substantial part of the hoard, as contemporary reports clearly prove (Pogwisch 1853a: 154–159, 1853b: 153–154; Henzen 1857: 55–58; Thompson, Morkholm and Kraay 1973: n. 2096; Crisà 2012a: 46–48).

Filippello's coins seem to be lost, although future research may be able to discover their final destination. Two hypotheses can be formulated: perhaps Filippello did get the coins back and decided to sell, or keep them in his home for a while. But sooner or later the finds were scattered. Alternatively, and more plausibly, the Bourbon authorities did not return the coins to Filippello and subsequently, they decided to move them into the Museum of the Royal University of Palermo, which already had a notable Coin Cabinet. This hypothesis reflects the outcome of the Giammone episode: the coins she found were transferred from the town of Giarre to the Museum of Palermo. Unfortunately, since the Coin Cabinet of the Museum of Palermo is not currently accessible to scholars, due to ongoing renovation work (and with no firm reopening date), it has not been possible to verify this hypothesis. It would be good if this could be verified: it would increase this article's interest, and provide an excellent conclusion to the history of the coins.

Conclusion

What then have these archives told us about early nineteenth-century archaeology and the Bourbon state? In Filippello's case, his coins and his arrest are perhaps not in themselves major events that change the face of Sicilian archaeology. But they do help to reconstruct the discovery of some ancient coins and the unfortunate consequences for its discoverer. And, as crucially, this article is more about the source material surrounding the events, about the archives and their potential.

As well as Filippello, the other notable protagonist in this case study is undoubtedly the Prosegreto of Castiglione. When he arrested Filippello, the Prosegreto committed an abuse of power, since the discoverer should not have been imprisoned for having found coins on his own property. In addition, the General Lieutenant of Sicily agreed with the Segreto of Catania, and considered the conduct of the Prosegreto of Castiglione as 'punishable'. This episode of the history of Sicilian archaeology reveals, clearly, how the relationships between local and more senior administrative authorities were often problematic, and how these could have an impact on, and even damage, or endanger, antiquities and the preservation of small finds.

Above all, we know that the rest of the coin hoard, probably left unguarded at Filippello's home after his arrest, was illegally acquired by numismatic experts ('dai Conoscitori delle più preggevoli'), who were probably local antiquarian dealers, or collectors.

As the Prosegreto of Castiglione arrested Filippello unjustly and caused the loss of a great number of ancient coins, by failing to safely preserve them, so the Under-Intendant of the town of Cefalù (near Palermo) also delayed reporting the discovery of some Medieval gold coins, found by a local farmer in the Valley of Cefalù on December 8, 1823. The Under-Intendant sent a letter to the Intendant of Palermo only on February 5, 1824. Subsequently, the Intendant alerted the General Lieutenant about the matter, following the usual bureaucratic procedures. Then, the Judge of District seized only two coins, while the other ones were removed and dispersed by local looters. This demonstrates that the local authorities were sometimes unaware that their conduct, despite their good intentions, could cause the loss of archaeological finds. Clearly, lack of communication and cooperation between junior and senior, lower and upper, and local and central, administrative authorities were detrimental to the adequate and safe protection of Sicilian antiquities (Crisà 2012a: 36–47, 51).

Finally, it is certain that records like these are crucial guides to help us reconstruct more details about the history of Sicilian archaeology during the first half of the nineteenth century. These give important, personal – as well as bureaucratic points of view, clarifying the actions of workers, personalities and issues that might otherwise be ignored. Far more direct archival research and the publication of records are essential to improve and increase our knowledge.

Appendix: Archival Records

Doc. no. 1 | ASPA: MLI, 2 | unstamped paper | 1 side

589. Palermo 9 Aprile 1818

Sig(no)r Intend(en)te del Vallo di Catania

Sig(no)re

Troverà qui annesso un rapporto che mi ha scritto il cotesto Segreto, relativo ad alcune monete antiche rinvenute nei rottami di un muro della Casa di Antonio Filippello, del Comune di Castiglione; Ella vedrà pure l'abuso di potere commesso in questa occasione dal prosegreto del Comune stesso.

Io desidero ch'ella prenda conto di questo affare [...] tutto per ciò che riguarda la qualità delle monete, e la loro quantità, dal padrone della Casa dove le monete si trovano, rimettendone uno dettagliato rapporto; ella pure mi proporrà [...] col Segreto, gli ordini da darsi per l'abuso di potere.

Doc. no. 2 | ASPA: MLI, 2 | headed paper | 2 sides

[1] Catania 28. Maggio 1818.

INTENDENZA DI CATANIA

Amministrazione Civile

N.° 86.

A Sua Eccellenza

Sig(no)r Marchese Ferreri Secretario di Stato

Ministro presso il Luogotenente Generale

Palermo.

Eccellenza

Per ministeriale che porta senza di data di giorno, quella del trascorso di Aprile, V(ostra) E(ccellenza) in proposito della scoperta di alcune antiche monete ne' rottami d'un muro della Casa di Antonio Filippello di Castiglione, incaricò l'Intendenza di prender conto dell'affare e d'informarla sopra tutto per ciò che riguarda la qualità di esse monete, e la loro quantità. Subito fu eseguito l'incarico, e avendole trovate in deposito, d'ordine del Secreto, presso l'Arciprete D(on) Antonino Sardo, e D(on) Carlo Calì, se ne è fatto per ordine del S(igno)r Intendente, colla relazione alle note Tavole del Torremuzza, un catalogo esatto, che esiste in questo officio.

Siccome però la stessa Ministeriale d'Aprile contiene anche l'incarico di proporre d'accordo col Secreto gli ordini da darsi, per gli abusi di potere commessi in tal occorrenza, [2] e il Secreto informato de' fatti si è trovato assente con permesso del Governo, così è stato necessario differire il rapporto. Ieri fu che il Secreto ha manifestato che credea a proposito prima di tutto trasferire le monete da potere di due depositarj all'officio della Secreteria di V(ostra) E(ccellenza), risoluzione che rende sicuri i diritti di chiunque, e cui ho aderito subito. Restando intanto a di lui cura l'esecuzione, io mi riservo a darle conto di tutti i fatti col prossimo corriere, dopocché mi sarò messo d'accordo collo stesso Secreto, in conformità de' di Lei ordini.

Per l'Intendente in congedo

Il Secretario Generale

Vincenzo Gagliani

Doc. no. 3 | ASPA: MLI, 2 | unstamped paper | 2 sides [1] 3.° Ripartimento 2.° Carico

Si attendono gli ulteriori riscontri. Palermo 3. Giugno 1818.

Il Seg(reta)rio Generale dell'Intendenza di Catania nell'assenza dell'Intendente a 28. Mag(gi)o 1818. In esecuzione dell'incarico dato sul proposito della scoperta di alcune monete antiche ne' rottami della Casa di Antonio Filippello di Castiglione rapporta, che per ordine di quel Segreto le sud(dett)e monete trovavansi in deposito presso l'Arciprete, e D(o)n Carlo Calì, e per ordine dell'Intendente se n'è fatto un esatto catalogo, che esiste in quell'Officio.

Per il comando poi di proporre di accordo col Segreto gli ordini, da darsi per gli abusi di potere, commessi in tale occorrenza, si è trovato assente il d(ett)o Segreto con permesso del Governo, e non prima di jeri ha manifestato, che credea a proposito prima di tutto trasferire le monete da potere de' due depositarj, e rimetterle a q(uest)o Ministero, per render sicuri i [2] diritti di chiunque, al che lo scrivente ha subito aderito, restando a di lui cura la esecuzione. Si riserva quindi di dar conto di tutti i fatti col prossimo Corriere, dopo di essersi messo di accordo col Segreto.

Doc. no. 4 | ASPA: MLI, 2 | unstamped paper | 1 side
Antichità

3.° Ripartimento 2.° Carico

Il Seg(reta)rio Gen(era)le dell'Intendenza di Catania in esecuzione degli ordini ricevuti a pr(i)mo Giug(n)o 1818, manifesta distintamente il risultato delle ricerche eseguite sulla qualità, e quantità delle monete rinvenute nella Casa di Filippello da Castiglione.

Resto inteso. Attendo gli ulteriori riscontri. Palermo 6. Giugno 1818.

Dopo essersi eseguita questa determinazione, si mandi l'originale rapporto al Comandante per la sua intelligenza. Palermo 8. Giug(n)o 1818.

Doc. no. 5 | ASPA: MLI, 2 | unstamped paper | 1 side

3.° Ripartim(en)to 2.° Carico Pal(erm)o 11. Giugno 1818. 1488

Sig(no)r Comand(an)te D(on) Princ(i)pe Poli

Sig(no)r Comand(an)te

Il Segretario generale dell'Intendenza di Catania, in esecuzione degli ordini avuti, manifesta distintamente coll'appresso rapporto, il risultato delle ricerche eseguite sulla qualità, e quantità delle monete rinvenute nella Casa di Filippello da Castiglione. Io invio a Lei il rapporto sud(dett)o per sua intelligenza.

Doc. no. 6 | ASPA: MLI, 2 | unstamped paper | 3 sides

[1] Catania 25. Giug(n)o 1818.

SEGREGIA DEL DISTRETTO DI CATANIA

S(ua) E(ccellenza) S(igno)r Marchese Ferreri

Seg(reta)rio di Stato Ministro presso il Luog(oten)te Gen(era)le Palermo

Eccellenza

Con ordine di riferire con quanto mi occorre si è degnata V(ostra) E(ccellenza) rimettermi una Supplica di Antonio Filippello di Castiglione, il quale chiede che fosse esonerato quel Prosegreto per gli abusi di potere commessi a carico del Ricorrente per le monete antiche di rame dallo stesso ritrovate nel proprio fondo; e chiede d'esse la restituzione.

Mi fo a sommettere a V(ostra) E(ccellenza) in adempimento del datomi incarico, che sono fondate le doglianze dell'Inventore Filippello avverso il Prosegreto di Castiglione, il quale spogliò que-[2]gli delle monete suddette senza farne legale consegna, e quel che è più lo pose in arresto senza delitto, perciocché le monete furono rinvenute nel proprio fondo del Supplicante. Attesa siffatta violenza ne furono disperse non poche, e se ne fece l'acquisto dai Conoscitori delle più preggevoli; giusta le nozioni che ho avute da persone di fiducia. Sembra dunque ragionevole che il riferito Prosegreto riporti quel castigo, che gli fa meritare il da lui commesso abuso di potere.

Per quel che riguarda alla restituzione delle monete suddette richiesta dall'Inventore, mi fo a sommetterle, ch'esse tro-[3]vansi trasmesse in deposito costà sino ad ulteriori disposizioni, ed intanto feci pagare promodalmente al Ricorrente Filippello oz. venticinque. Se poi tali monete perché antiche debbano appartenere allo Stato, e se all'Inventore spettar debba solamente il valore d'esse resta all'E(ccellenza) V(ostra) il risolverlo.

Il Segreto

[...] Delgrassi

Doc. no. 7 | ASPA: MLI, 2 | unstamped paper | 3 sides

[1] Catania 25. Giugno 1818.

Si conservi sino a nuov'ordine. Palermo 26. Luglio 1818.

Il Segreto distrettuale.

Fù a lui rimessa per riferire una supplica di Antonio Filippello di Castiglione, il quale si duole di quel Prosegreto per abusi di potere, a di lui carico commessi in circostanza di aver ritrovato in un proprio fondo alcune monete di rame antiche.

Dalle informazioni ricevute ha rilevato il relatore di esser ben fondate le doglianze di Filippello, il quale fù spogliato dal Prose-[2]greto delle d(ett)e monete in un proprio fondo rinvenute, fù posto senza ragione in arresto; ed intanto lo stesso Prosegreto non fece legale consegna delle monete per cui se ne disperser non poche, che furono acquistate da particolari.

Per ciò risulta punibile la condotta del Prosegreto. Riguardo poi alla restituzione delle monete, che ha domandato il Filippello, resta a S(ua) A(ltezza) R(eale) il risolvere, se debba eseguirsi, oppure debba [3] darsi all'inventore il prezzo delle medesime; nella intelligenza che le monete già trovansi presso di lui in deposito, e che ha fatto promodalmente pagare oz. 25. all'inventore Filippello.

Doc. no. 8 | ASPA: MLI, 2 | unstamped paper | 1 side

Gli anted(en)ti sono in un dispaccio delle finanze di Napoli dei 10. Giugno 1818 n.° 11. In d(ett)o dispaccio ci sono tutti gli anted(ent)i, e sinora, non è stato restituito in Archivio.

Notes

¹ The Segregia di Sicilia was a territorial establishment, which collected taxes from the citizens of Sicily. Each municipality had its own office of Segregia. *Statuti dell'amministrazione civile in Sicilia*, 1821: 140: 'Nell'ufficio della Segregia, o della Prosegregia di ogni Comune esiste la nota degli attuali contribuenti della tassa fondiaria, e si sa il luogo del rispettivo domicilio. Questa nota, e queste cognizioni potranno servire di confronto, e di lume al Sottintendente per vedere se le persone da lui conosciute abbiano la rendita stabilita dalla legge, e se vi sieno altri possessori di uguale rendita da lui non conosciuti'.

² Vincenzo Gagliani (Catania, 6 September 1769 – Naples, 7 August 1830) was a jurist; he mainly worked in Catania and became judge of the Civil Great Court of

Palermo (*Giudice della Gran Corte Civile di Palermo*). A very learned person, he was interested in the history of painting and Graeco-Roman architecture. He also had a brilliant career as a politician, because he was General Secretary at the Intendancy of Catania (*Segretario Generale dell'Intendenza di Catania*) and member of the Council of Sicily (*Consulta di Sicilia*) in Naples. Gagliani owned a huge private library, housing books on Greek, Latin and Italian literature, legislation and public law. Gagliani's most significant works were: *Memoria sopra i mezzi di prevenire i delitti* (1788), *Argomenti di storia siciliana divisati in pittura* (1813), *Elogio di Giovanni Agostino De Cosmi* (1813) and *Discorsi sopra lo studio del diritto pubblico di Sicilia* (1817) (Tosto 1834: 41–48; Cordaro Clarenza 1855, III: 71, 205).

³ It is useful to present some biographical information about Giuseppe Poli (Molfetta, 26 October 1746 – Naples, 7 April 1825). He earned a degree in Medicine. Subsequently, he moved to Naples to the Military Academy, where he became commander. Poli was also interested in physics and was the preceptor of Ferdinand I of the Two Sicilies (Morelli Di Gregorio and Panvini 1826: *Cav. Giuseppe Saverio Poli*; Mira 1875–1881, 11: 235). A well-known military officer, Poli was a key figure in the protection of Sicilian antiquities during the 1810s and 1820s. He performed various tasks for the Bourbon government in this field, such as mediator between the collector Tommaso Gandolfo and the authorities for purchasing Gandolfo's substantial ancient coins and medals collection in May 1820: the commander met the collector, signed his numismatic catalogue as a form of guarantee and gave him the relevant sum, which came directly from the funds for Sicilian antiquities (Crisà 2012a: 11–18). Previously, he supervised the renovations of the ancient thermae at Termini Imerese (Palermo) (Ortolani 1819: 69–70: 'savìa ed utile riforma data ai bagni minerali di Termini ch'erano in uno stato orrido [...] e la direzione, e sovrintendenza del Signor Comandante Tenente Colonnello D. Giuseppe Poli').

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