

THE ORIGINS OF A LIBRARY AND AN ART COLLECTION: LETTERS BY ANTOINE MORILLON (AROUND 1520–1556). AND STEPHANUS PIGHIUS (1520–1604) TO ANTOINE PERRENOT DE GRANVELLE IN MADRID

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Altogether the correspondence of Antoine Perrenot, bishop of Arras, Cardinal de Granvelle, minister of Charles V and Philipp II, viceroy of Naples and Sicily is extensive. A large part of it is still kept in Madrid. Here we will focus on just 19 letters written to Perrenot by Antoine Morillon (17) and Stephanus Pighius (2). They are located in the manuscripts II/2253, II/2297, II/2298 of the Real Biblioteca and in 20212 of the Biblioteca Nacional. They provide a sense of Perrenot as a rather young bishop prior to establishing his later well-known library and art collection. In the 16th century Stephanus Pighius was a particularly famous antiquarian scholar of Roman history. His native city Kampen in the Netherlands still celebrates him among its outstanding sons. By contrast his Belgian contemporary, Morillon, born in Leuven, was initially held in high esteem as an archaeologist and classic philologist but fell into obscurity due to his early death and thus absence of publications. He is now only remembered for calling attention to the Codex Argenteus, the Gothic translation of the Gospels by Ulfilas, which he discovered in Werden (today a part of Essen) though it is now kept in Uppsala. Apart from that achievement, he is remembered for several medals, engraved by himself, and by specialists of Greek and Roman epigraphy. Little is known about his life save the 17 letters in his own hand now archived in Madrid. Although they cover a very short time span, they nevertheless offer some insight to his life and work. Pighius and Morillon studied together at the Collegium Trilingue Lovaniense in the early forties of 16th century and became close friends. Perrenot employed Morillon as his librarian and secretary of Latin letters no later than in 1545. In order to create a major library Perrenot sent Morillon to Venice at the end of that year. During that period Venice was the center of book publishing, the book trade and Greek manuscripts. The first Madrid letter from November 1545 states that Morillon had already purchased all accessible printings by the elder Aldo Manutio and in smaller numbers recent editions by his son and Giolito de'Ferrari. He had commissioned the «Fugger binder» (A. Hobson) to bind them in goat skin [FIG. 1]. These and some additional orders took time. Thus only in 1547 did Perrenot receive four chests of these books, all told Aldines and numerous incunabula. In Venice and later in Rome Morillon continued to stay with Diego Hurtado de Mendoza in the imperial embassies. Don Diego, a famous collector of Greek manuscripts, assisted Morillon to hire copyists for 18 manuscripts written by Greek historians and philosophers and to select their titles. Currently most of these manuscripts and books purchased by Morillon are stored in the Bibliothèque d'étude et de conservation in Besançon. By 1546 we know that Morillon had returned to Brussels since in that year he sent copies of Roman epigraphs from Austria and Bavaria to Jean Matal (Metellus). But at the end of that year he probably began his second journey to Italy for a lengthy visit to Rome. Most of his letters were written there between the end of January 1547 and May 1548. He continued to seekout Greek manuscripts. But Morillon's eagerness to buy books waned as time was passing. Instead he began

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gathering an art collection for the bishop who then favored reproductions of ancient sculptures, architecture and high Renaissance masterpiece paintings. Morillon therefore employed an artist during his entire Roman stay to draw precise copies of statues of Morillon hired a sculptor to cast the statues in plaster or to copy them in reduced scale in wax. He also ordered the sculptor to imitate in wax tall state-reliefs of ancient Rome, such as the medallions [FIG. 2] and the battle reliefs from the arch of Constantine. Morillon was thus the first to date the medallions correctly in the time of the emperor Hadrian, which was not repeated in the next 350 years. He also employed another draughtsman to illustrate Roman ruins that allowed Perrenot to visualize the ancient architecture and topography. Being an engraver of medals Morillon himself casted ancient coins, which were in the Roman collection of the Spaniard Alfonso Tavera. Diego Hurtado de Mendoza supported Morillon during all his work. He and Perrenot had become good friends since 1542, and the bishop kept Don Diego's correspondence at court under his custody. Don Diego's connections opened the private collections of ancient sculptures to Morillon and his draughtsman. Looking to give Perrenot a surprise, Mendoza personally employed an artist to copy the entire scroll of reliefs on the Column of Trajan. Guided by Morillon, this reproduction required months and was not completed until May 1548, when Don Diego announced the drawings of a second column to the bishop, surely that of Marcus Aurelius. A reproduction by hand of Renaissance art is only mentioned once. That was for a fresco by Raphael in the *cubiculum pontificis*. At the same time, during 1547/48, Perrenot commissioned copies of Michelangelo's Last Judgement and of works by Giulio Romano in Mantua with the artist Giovan Battista Scultori. Apparently the bishop used different channels for these large orders. The number of engravings that Morillon sent to his patron must have been very impressive. A letter of August 1547 catalogues the subjects of roughly 50 engravings. Most of them consisted of compositions by Raphael (or his school), while Giulio Romano or the school of Fontainebleau occurred less frequently. The prints showed works of excellent contemporary engravers, notably Marco Dente, Marcantonio, Agostino Veneziano and Nicolas Beatrizet. This remarkable letter sheds light on this specialized market and provides a *terminus ante quem* for some undated engravings. We know now, for example, that Giulio Bonasone's copy of Michelangelo's fresco in the Sistine Chapel [FIG. 3] is a bit older than once believed. During the last quarter of 1547 Morillon took an archaeological trip to Naples and Sicily. His intention was to return home around Easter 1548 and to meet Perrenot en route at the Augsburg Reichstag, but an illness kept him in Rome until at least his last letter from May. The following interruption of the correspondence is best explained, if Morillon had realized his plan in summer. In August he may have accompanied his patron and the imperial court from Augsburg to Brussels. In any case his last Madrid letter was sent from Leuven in March 1549. We do not know when he began his third journey to Italy but regardless of the date, it is known that over a two years period Pighius met Morillon daily while in Rome and shared a common interest in antiquities. Since it had to coincide with Pighius' stay at Rome we may date it to the period from 1550 to 1552, presumably ending when Don Diego departed Rome and Italy in June 1552 and Morillon lost his residence in the imperial embassy. It seems likely, that Perrenot commissioned him this time to design an album of Roman sarcophagi and other, mainly mythological, reliefs. Jacopo Strada observed a «libro de'pili» (book of sarcophagi) arranged by Morillon in Johann Jakob Fugger's library as presented by Perrenot, approximately around 1559. Since the Madrid letters fail to mention a single

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sarcophagus or any other relief besides those of architectural application, this commission must have been fulfilled during Morillon's second Roman visit. Some drawings of Roman sarcophagi and mythological reliefs from Morillon's estate are now archived in Stockholm. They are copies after original drawings in the Codex Coburgensis, which is kept in Coburg. More than 170 copies of the Coburgensis drawings showing the same or similar sculptures came from Pighius' estate into the possession of the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin (Codex Pighianus). All these renditions of Roman sarcophagi and reliefs presenting mythological subjects on Italian paper were evidently made to serve the archaeological interests of the friends who daily saw each other in Rome. The original drawings were not owned by them but at their hands. These drawings must have been a part of the «libro de'pili» that Morillon created for Antoine Perrenot and that later became the Codex Coburgensis. The Coburg drawings [FIG. 4] are of rather high artistic quality, famous for their documentary value and form something like the first corpus of Greek and Roman mythological monuments to reconstruct the ancient religion. This codex of drawings which Morillon selected and arranged is perhaps his most important legacy. According to Pighius, the friend parted away when Perrenot called Morillon back to Germany. It is unclear if Morillon and Mendoza left Rome together but we can be sure that the latest Morillon did leave was in autumn of 1552 when Perrenot permanently left Germany. He spent the rest of his life in his patron's service in Brussels. He died relatively young in October 1556. Pighius succeeded Morillon as secretary of Latin letters and librarian in August 1557 as we know from one of his two letters now archived in Madrid. Both letters concern manuscripts of his first antiquarian publications. It also appears that Perrenot took a strong interest in their printing. After Morillon had established the foundation of his library and art collection, the bishop wanted to show off his collection so as to portray himself as an eminent patron of science and art.

FURTHER READING:

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