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Title:

How to document ancient artifacts as historical sources? The forgotten *Accademia de lo studio de l'architettura*, its realized program, and the early beginnings of academic archaeology (Rome c. 1535–1555)

Abstract:

While the beginnings of academic archeology usually are dated to the 18th century (cf. Schnapp et. al.) and earlier attempts are (dis)regarded as sporadic, non-systematic and methodologically non-academic «antiquarianism», the opposite seems to be true: In 1542, the Siennese humanist Claudio Tolomei drafted an astonishingly advanced program to edit, emendate and translate Vitruvius's *De architectura libri decem* and to document *all* ancient artifacts related to architecture (urban traces, buildings, ornaments, reliefs, sculptures, paintings, decorations, vases, coins, inscriptions, tools, machines, and aqueducts). Recent research shows that Tolomei's program was realized almost completely by the forgotten *Accademia de lo Studio de l'architettura*, active in Rome between ca. 1535 and 1555 under the leadership of Marcello Cervini and comprising some 170 persons. Their still by far understudied documentation covers tens of thousands of objects and inscriptions. These material sources are—presumably for the first time—recorded *as they are*, strictly separating between original remains and interpretation, correction or complement. By doing so and following the example of Alciato, and through consequent interdisciplinary workload-sharing in an international network, the academy executed research on a methodological level that was regained not before the late 19th century when many of the documented ancient objects had been damaged, destroyed or disappeared. Therefore, these documentations deserve the attention of modern scholars as most important sources on ancient material culture.

The paper will present selected examples of this methodologically advanced kind of systematic documentation of material sources, their common characteristics, the persons behind the project and some of the most important publications that can now be traced back to this long overlooked common origin.

Note: This is the text of my paper as it was given (spoken) at the conference. The numbers refer to the slides of my presentation which cannot be included here for image copyright restrictions.

1. First of all, I want to thank Damiano for having me in this interesting session giving me the opportunity to meet many scholars whose writings accompanied my research during the recent years and helped to connect many dots.
2. But at the beginning I want to commemorate three scholars to whom I owe even more: architectural historian Christof Thoenes who pointed me to the Berlin *Codex Destailleur D* in 1997, supervised my dissertation and always had an open ear for my hypotheses; romanist Horst Heintze who — together with his wife Edith — helped me with translations and always had important information on Renaissance persons and books; and art historian Andreas Tönnemann who gave me the opportunity to follow some ideas derived from my dissertation in a research project from 2013–2017.
3. As you know, there is a famous letter written by Siennese humanist Claudio Tolomei in 1542 containing a detailed description of a publishing project that was intended to document any theoretical and practical knowledge and sources regarding ancient Roman architecture. Its aim was to «re-awake this noble study» and «to open up the way for many others in the future» who could follow these examples and rules taken from antiquity. The letter was published in 1547 and reprinted some 20×.
4. Of course, the *very* ambitious program of 24 books encompassing new editions and translations, lexica, textbooks etc. derived from Vitruvius's *Ten Books on Architecture* in its first 11 volumes, would have been impressing enough. But this rather theoretical part, though addressing also practical purposes, was to be completed by a reconstruction of Rome's urban history in antiquity (vol. 12), followed by 12 books of annotated documentations of *all* ancient Roman artifacts that were somehow related to architecture: buildings, architectural ornaments and sculptural decorations like reliefs and statues, vases, tools and instruments, inscriptions, paintings, coins, building machines and aqueducts. Only one printed book and two volumes of drawings after reliefs have been associated with Tolomei's program yet, and the program itself is regarded as a largely unfinished, even unfinishable project.
5. Tolomei anticipated these doubts and rejected them by mentioning that the immense workload would be divided among a large number of scholars and practionners — he compares them with «a hundred crafts working at the same time in a city» who would be able to «finish it in less than three years».
6. At the moment, I would regard some 168 persons as members of Tolomei's network, participating as supporters, owners of artifacts, authors, printers, architects, artists,
7. all of them with a certain antiquarian interest. They were supported by
8. more than 40 anonymous draughtsmen working for *this Accademia de lo Studio de l'Architettura*.

9. Therefore, I would regard almost all parts of Tolomei's program as finished: be it as drawings and manuscripts, or as printed books which often very closely follow Tolomei's descriptions.
10. As an architectural historian, let me start my short overview of some of these interrelated sources and their usage with some architectural drawings that may demonstrate the almost incredible accuracy with which the ancient artifacts were documented by Tolomei's network which has often been confused (also by myself) with the *Accademia della Virtù*, the *Accademia dello Sdegno* or even the *Accademia dei Virtuosi al Pantheon*. — This drawing shows one quadrant of the Roman Colosseum. The remarkable thing here is not only that, for the first time, the distances between all pillars are measured, but the draughtsmen also realized that the *radii* starting from certain points at the main axis, did *cross* each other. This should and could not happen in a regular oval or ellipse, and therefore, they must have realized and tried to document that the Colosseum *is not* as regular as all later plans suggest.
11. Today, everyone can realize this fact by simply using a maps program on the internet. But during the Renaissance and for centuries to come this fact was not noticed.
12. The only later plan of the Colosseum that I found and which comes close to this observation from ca. 1545 is the one on the right, and as you may notice: even here the modern draughtsman did not document the crossing *radii*! So: While other plans of the Colosseum started with the assumption of a correct oval or ellipse and *then* added some measurement, the 16th-century draughtsmen obviously tried to document this buildings *as they were*, i.e., without adding their own interpretations.
13. This approach deserves, in my opinion, to be called «archaeological», and much more so than most of the so-called archaeological documentations of ancient architecture up to beginnings of the «Bauforschung» in the late 19th century. This approach can be observed throughout the somewhat 3'500 single drawings on 870 sheets in more than 20 collections (still counting) — and it should be characterized as *methodologically systematic* in a *very* strict sense. And because the creation of these drawings took some 20 years and involved more than 40 participants, it can also be described as very *well-coordinated*. — As far as I know, there is no larger measuring survey campaign in the history of architecture and archaeology producing more results of the same quality.
14. Another example from this vast collection of architectural drawings is this drawing on the right documenting the *Curia Iulia* at the *Forum Romanum* then supposed to be the ancient temple of Saturn. As you can easily observe, the drawing *does not* represent the correct proportions, because this would not be useful in recording as many measurements as possible. Therefore, the mostly French draughtsmen working for the *Accademia* used a method their profession had been familiar with for centuries:

They expanded those parts that needed many measurements and shortened those that didn't. You may see the many measurements taken for the lost *pedestallo* that once used to carry a statue on the top right corner — and you may miss the holes in the front, obviously once supporting the beams of a portico roof.

15. These holes and an ancient coin are the reasons why every modern representation of the building shows a portico in front — even though foundations for the columns or the columns themselves have never been found. In addition, the holes in the façade do not only show a remarkable irregularity, but also do not fit to any thinkable model of at least some congruence between the beams ending here and the supposed supporting columns in front of the building.
16. These and over characteristics must have been the reason for the draughtsmen *not* to record the holes at all, presumably because they realized that no ancient building from the classical period would show such awkward structural inconsistencies: They must have correctly supposed that these holes stem from a medieval addition and, therefore, could be ignored as characteristics of the building that did not originally belong to it. But how could they or their supervisors deviate from the method just described as «record everything *as it is*» and assume that the portico did not exist in antiquity?
17. I am sure they used additional sources: First, cardinal Jean du Bellay, then titular cardinal of Sant'Adriano which occupied the *Curia* for more than a millenium, had excavations executed in front of the façade, as Richard Cooper pointed out. And, like modern archaeologists, du Bellay *did not* find any traces of the columns or their foundations. — And the second, ancient source used for this architectural information must have been this coin from the time of Augustus: While, at the first look, it seems to show a portico, a closer look reveals that this row of columns cannot represent a portico, because they are simply too far away from each other: The *four* columns spread alltogether over a distance *remarkably wider* than the façade itself. *And*, most importantly, they do not carry or support any roof!
18. There is simply no sound architectural possibility to reconstruct a portico
19. like modern archaeology did in all reconstructions that I know!
20. That this interpretation and knowledge was available at the specific time and among the early archaeologists in Rome shortly before and certainly after 1550, cannot only be deduced from the architectural drawing, but also from this drawing after the coin from the workshop of Jacopo Strada who lived in Rome between 1553 and 1555 and took part in the meetings of the *Accademia*. Strada's drawing does not exactly represent the coin — the inscription on top of the façade is missing, for instance —, but unites the available information
– from the architectural drawing: there is no architrave with an inscription,

- from the excavations: no columns attached to the façade or close to it,
- and from the coin and drawing: no roofed portico attached to the façade!

While one may regard Strada's drawing as a deviation from the archaeological method described above, it clearly represents the way in which archaeology still works today: collect information from different sources and combine it to create the best available, consistent representation of the ancient culture under investigation.

21. Strada's drawing is part of his *Magnum ac Novum Opus*, a collection of some 12'000 drawings after ancient coins which is now since 2015 for the first time topic of a research project in Gotha, Germany, executed by Dirk Jacob Jansen and Volker Heenes. Despite the representative functions observable in Strada's *Opus*, I would regard it — at least in part — as closely related to the *Accademia's* project, especially when we take into account that there are two sets of descriptions of these coins in 22 handwritten volumes in Vienna and Prague!
22. At least, it can be established, that Strada's drawing comes closer to the only visual document available from Roman Antiquity than the reconstructions by modern archaeology.
23. Before Strada came to Rome in 1553, he had printed his own chronicle of the Roman emperors and their families, illustrated with their coins, in Lyon in Latin and French. At the time, he already knew about the *Accademia's* project in Rome and moved there immediately after the printing was finished. During his time in Lyon, he had collaborated with Guillaume du Choul, and later he may have helped to establish the connection between the French antiquarian and the Roman circle around Cervini, Tolomei, Agostín, Matal etc.
24. Later, Strada created several hundred drawings showing machines. Unfortunately, none of them have ever been compared to existing machines of Strada's time or descriptions from Antiquity. You will remember that reconstructions of ancient building and other, especially hydraulic machines according to descriptions by Vitruvius and others were part of Tolomei's project. 100 of these drawings were printed by Strada's grandson Ottavio in 1617 and 1623.
25. But Strada left much more interesting material. In Rome and later on he had young artists like Giovannantonio Dosio or Giambattista Armenini working for him. They were involved in creating, among others, a set of 174 drawings after ancient statues, often with an identification of the person or deity depicted, and sometimes, like here, with their damages and from different viewing angles. Again, these drawings plus some 120 drawings after ancient portrait busts in Vienna and about 200 more in Dresden, have not been studied yet...
26. You surely know that there are more precise drawings of ancient sculptures in the codices *Coburgensis* and *Pighianus*, both going back to the Roman circle:

27. Pighius was the secretary of Cervini, and Antoine Morillon, according to archaeologist Henning Wrede probably the draughtsman of the *Coburgensis*, was the secretary and agent of Granvelle, a position taken over by Pighius after Cervini's and later by Lipsius.
28. Pighius also was a close friend of Morillon and made him the protagonist of his *Themis Dea*, dedicated to Granvelle and reporting a talk between Morillon, Pighius, Agustín and Matal in the garden of Cardinal Cesi. Cesi had employed the painter Giambattista Franco to draw a «gran libro delle statue». All these efforts can be related to Tolomei's program.
29. In 1588, Lipsius published the *Inscriptionum Antiquarum . . . Liber*, the *sylloge* of Martin Smet. Besides Morillon, Pighius, Philandrier, Ligorio or even Palladio, Smet had been
30. the most productive contributor to Jean Matal's *sylloge*, still in the Vatican today, which observes, but probably not created — the philological and archaeological method to document ancient inscriptions in their entire appearance. In fact, Matal seems to have taken over this method from his and Agustín's teacher Andrea Alciato. Other students of Alciato were Strada's employer Hans Jacob Fugger and Granvelle, as well as several other leading figures
31. of the Roman *Accademia*. This manuscript in Dresden collects ancient inscriptions from Milan and, according to a later note, was created by Alciato in 1508 — when he was just 16 years old. Obviously, this date has to be corrected. It is remarkable that inscriptions from Milan are exclusively *missing* from Matal's collection entirely. So, we may assume that he did not only know this manuscript but that he had it or a copy of it in his hands. We do not know how it came to Dresden, but either Matal, living in Cologne after he had left Rome in 1555, or Strada, himself a vivid collector of drawings and antiquarian manuscripts, coins, statues, etc. may have owned it, maybe having bought it in Rome for Fugger but not handing it over after Fugger went bankrupt and established the foundations of the Bavarian collections and its State Library by giving his treasures to his friend duke Albrecht V of Bavaria. We know that Strada sent several manuscripts from Vienna to Dresden which are still there, because they were never given back after Strada's death.
32. Coming back to the activities of the *Accademia*: This part of a large series of drawings of the Roman Pantheon documenting every detail with very high precision—as you may expect now—shows a rare example of an inscription *measured* by the French draughtsmen working for the *Accademia*: But the reason to record this special inscription is not the documentation of its wording, but of its dimensions AND the remarkable fact, that the letters are slightly inclined: A fact, that, as far as I know, has never been documented or even recognized since!

33. Just as a comparison: The inscriptions and every non-architectural decoration like reliefs are usually *completely missing* from the architectural drawings: the anonymous French draughtsmen must have known that someone else would record *these* elements more carefully than they as stonemasons and craftsmen ever could. The difference between this drawing of the *Arcus Argentarii* and that from the Pantheon makes it clear why that from the Pantheon was recorded in the architectural drawing at all: The group responsible for sculptural elements, consisting of young artists like Giambattista Armenini or Morillon, or the group of scholars documenting inscriptions with members like Matal or Pighius would *not measure* their objects! Therefore, in this case, this had to be done by the «architectural» group, probably working under the supervision of Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola or, later, the engineer and architect Francesco Paciotti. Interestingly, Tolomei wrote a letter to ask Paciotti if he could measure the entire Baths of Caracalla: not only the plans but also all standing structures with their heights and details — and, one may add, the heating and water supply systems.
34. Of course, the inscription from the *Arcus Argentarii* was documented by Matal and his colleagues. When Theodor Mommsen visited Rome in the 1840s, he realized that Matal's collection was of an incomparable importance with regard to the ancient inscriptions. So, Mommsen's idea for a *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* was influenced if not caused by this observation. In fact, the *CIL* still resembles Matal's collection very closely: It tries to document the visual appearance of the inscriptions with their damages, does not insert modern interpretations, and cites older sources regarding the same inscription only in the typographically different commentary. One could feel tempted to state that Mommsen realized what Matal and his friends tried to achieve some 300 years before him.
35. This is a short overview of the manuscripts (including drawings) that I regard as somehow or surely related to the *Accademia* and its activities according to Tolomei's program. There still may be many more documents, because the network had some 200 members. Most of these sources still await thorough investigation and the reconstruction of their original context.
36. But the members of this network also published a lot of books, many of them regarded today as the foundation stones of the humanities, like archaeology, numismatics and epigraphy, and, most of all: architecture, which to re-awake was the final aim of Tolomei's entire program. — We may count the second or rather third and first *illustrated* edition of Marliano's *Topographia* among these books. It was printed in 1544 by the Dorico brothers, usually known for their innovative music prints, who proudly call themselves here *Accademiae Romanae Impressorum* — 17 years after Leto's *Accademia Romana* had ceased to exist in the *Sacco di Roma*. But because several members of Cervini's network like Giangiorgio Trissino belonged to the first academy's last members, I think the Dorico brothers thought of *this new Accademia*

when they tried to establish themselves as the printshop for its vast program from 1542.

37. Marliano's *Topographia* with its first three «historical» maps could be seen as a first study — but rather not yet as the intended final book number 12 — from Tolomei's list
38. dedicated to the reconstruction of the urban history of ancient Rome.
39. Another book from the *Accademia* and the only one regarded by modern research as a printed result of its work, are Guillaume Philandrier's *Annotationes* to Vitruvius from 1544. An extended edition, united with the entire emendated text of the *De Architectura Libri decem* came out in 1552. The first one was dedicated to François I^{er} to whom Tolomei had sent a (probably printed) version of the program already in 1543.
40. Philandrier's emendated text, surely established in close collaboration with his friends in Rome in sessions mentioned by Tolomei and others, became the textual foundation for the Daniele Barbaro's annotated and illustrated translation of Vitruvius from 1556 and his Latin edition from 1567. The learned patriarch elect of Aquileia, who never had shown an interest in architecture before, collaborated with Andrea Palladio who had been in Rome in the 1540s several times with his mentor and Barbaro's friend Trissino. Palladio and Barbaro visited Rome together in the early 1550s when the *Accademia* regularly met in the Palazzo Farnese.
41. Palladio's own fourth book of his *Quattro Libri dell'Architettura* from 1570 resembles Tolomei's description for book 13
42. because it joins a historical and an architectural description of the ancient buildings with their plans and as many details as needed to comprehend them. It should be mentioned that many of the few early drawings by Palladio documenting his Roman studies find parallels in the drawings of the French draughtsmen working for the *Accademia*—and there are even drawings in Palladio's collection that were made by them. Palladio seems to have been a member of the «architectural survey group» in Rome. But his drawings as well as his woodcut illustrations lack the precision and contain some unfounded additions, so they look like
43. a step back in comparison to Antonio Labacco's *Libro appartenente a l'Architettura* from 1552. It was published as a series of numbered single prints, for the first time in architectural history as copper plate engravings, allowing to represent a much higher precision like the one needed to print the drawings made for the *Accademia*. Labacco was the closest collaborator of Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, until his death in August 1546 the most important architect and surely the person in the city who knew ancient Roman architecture from his own investigations better than anyone else at his time.

44. Another book also was printed with copper plates on the same press in Labacco's house. This book was of an influence on architectural history that hardly could be overestimated, except for Palladio's books and built architecture: Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola's *Regola delli cinque ordini* from 1562. Vignola had «measured all the antiquities in Rome» in the service of the *Accademia*, as Vasari and Egnatio Danti report. These drawings are regarded as lost, but I doubt that they ever existed: One cannot measure buildings alone, but needs helpers taking the measures, making the drawings etc. I am convinced that Vignola was the supervisor of the «architecture group» and did not make the survey drawings himself.
45. By measuring «all the antiquities», Vignola must have realized that there is nothing like a general system of the classical orders in Roman architecture: an idea already reflected in Tolomei's letter. And none of the Roman examples can be seen as an application of the rules given by Vitruvius. Therefore, Vignola created his own system, based on the best examples from antiquity, as he claims, but introducing a new feature: All of his designs can be realized using the same module, and, therefore, could be combined easily in the same building: something which is not even true for the Colosseum.
46. Another book, almost under the same title, came out 2 years after Vignola's: Jean Bullant's *Reigle Generale d'Architecture* from 1564. It compares examples from ancient buildings
47. with each other, at least partly measured by Bullant himself, and with the orders according to Vitruvius. It therefore would fit very well into Tolomei's program. Bullant was in Rome before 1537, but we do not know when exactly this happened or if he had contact with the Cervini circle like his compatriot Philibert de l'Orme who met them in 1537 as he reports in his *Premier tome d'architecture*.
48. Besides these groundbreaking architectural books, there are many others from the *Accademia's* network, like those by Agostín himself or by Panvinio who claimed to be a disciple of Matal.
49. The list of books published by members of the *Accademia* network is already very long.
50. In some cases, they may have been created without any connection to Tolomei's program in mind, but in others they fit so well into his descriptions that it is hardly imaginable
51. that they *did not* respond at least to the ideas of this project. I think we may safely assume that many important publications and very large amounts of understudied materials documenting ancient artifacts in an unprecedented precision like the architectural drawings are related to Tolomei's program and the activities of the *Accademia*

— and that their thorough investigation and publication will, therefore, present us lots of . . .

52. «News from ancient Rome».

DRAFT