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## Collecting the Past

### *Greek Antiquaries and Archaeological Knowledge in the Venetian Empire*

*Anastasia Stouraiti*

In June 1690, the Greek doctor and alchemist Anastasio Janulli promised to send the famous philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz 'inscriptions and other ancient curiosities from the Kingdom of the Morea' (Leibniz 1990: 583). Janulli, a native of the island of Zakynthos and secretary-physician to Prince Karl Philipp of Brunswick-Lüneburg, had met the German philosopher in Venice and later accompanied him to Hanover to assist him in his various intellectual activities.<sup>1</sup> Janulli was not the only Greek agent whose expert knowledge and contacts Leibniz enlisted. The Cretan juriconsult and numismatist Nicolò Bon also figures prominently next to his 'amicus et conterraneus' Janulli in Leibniz's epistolary network (Leibniz 1990: 308). Bon also met the German polymath in Venice in 1689 and thereafter maintained a long and lively intellectual exchange with him on a number of antiquarian matters. 'If anything arrives from Greece which I value to be rare,' Bon wrote to him on 23 December 1690, 'I shall not neglect to inform you' (Leibniz 1990: 325). In another letter to Leibniz on 20 September 1690, Bon presented himself as a well-connected dealer who promised to find his correspondent ancient coins at a good price, while on 20 April 1691 he informed

<sup>1</sup> Robinet (1988: 418–19); Leibniz (1990: XLVII; 2001: 264, 291; 2011: 45, 69, 73, 149, 318–19).

the German philosopher about 'two splendid monuments' that had just arrived from Greece and were for sale (Leibniz 1990: 244–5, 473). On a later occasion, the Cretan scholar sent Leibniz his sale catalogue of ancient medals, the *Indice delle medaglie de' principi et huomini illustri*, which is now kept at the Landesbibliothek of Hanover (Benzoni 1969; Robinet 1988: 397).

This correspondence is a primary indicator of the key role which Greek antiquaries played in Venice and its maritime empire in the second half of the seventeenth century. Most studies of Venetian antiquarian culture have so far focused on major collections of ancient art and the taste for antiquities in Venice and its territories,<sup>2</sup> yet the local antiquaries in the Venetian colonies have been largely overlooked by these historians. Moreover, although several scholars have shed light on the activities of Venetian merchants and officials who plundered and shipped ancient artefacts back home,<sup>3</sup> little attention has been paid to the ways in which native inhabitants, dealers, and informants became involved in the collecting economy. The same is equally true of European antiquarian travellers in the Ottoman empire, whose experiences are described as a more or less heroic narrative of rediscovery of ancient Greece without any serious mention of the local experts who guided and supported them (Constantine 1984; Augustinos 1994; Wunder 2003; Yakovaki 2006). This tendency evidently reflects the well-established view that modern Greeks discovered the ancients thanks to the influence of western European classical scholarship and the rise of nationalism. In other words, though modern Greeks are acknowledged to have begun to appreciate classical monuments during the age of the Enlightenment, it is commonly believed that they had possessed no systematic archaeological awareness of or interest in the physical remains of the past in earlier centuries.

This central hypothesis has not been challenged by the otherwise seminal study of I. Th. Kakridis (1989) on the place of the ancients in nineteenth-century Greek popular imagination. Kakridis's main thesis, recently evoked by Yannis Hamilakis (2007: 64–74), reduces attitudes towards antiquities to myth-making, and totally overlooks

<sup>2</sup> Beschi (1986); Zorzi (1988); Pomian (1987); Brown (1996); Favaretto and Ravagnan (1997); Favaretto (2002); De Paoli (2004); Bodon (2005).

<sup>3</sup> Tsiknakis (1989–90); Arbel and Luttrell (1996); Malliaris (1998); Beschi (1999; 2000); Calvelli (2009).

the existence of important alternative local perceptions of the classical past during the early modern period. For example, Arnold van Gemert (2003) has shown that one of the most popular Greek chapbooks of the sixteenth century, the *Ριμάδα περί Βελισαρίου*, a version of the original late fourteenth-century *History of Belisarius*, contains the remarkable line 'Ελλήνων παῖδες εἴμεθεν, ὡς Ἕλληνες φανώμεν/θανώμεν', in which Byzantine Greeks are called 'sons of Hellenes', and where Belisarius is portrayed as a classical Greek hero. Moreover, both Kakridis and Hamilakis focus on Ottoman Greek folk culture and do not provide any insights into the Venetian-ruled Greek territories. Yet numerous studies have stressed the pivotal role of Greek émigré scholars in the dissemination of Greek letters during the Renaissance, while others have examined the knowledge of the classics in Venetian Crete and the appropriation of Greco-Roman motifs in the visual arts of the Venetian period.<sup>4</sup> However, even in the case of Venetian Greece, research in the reception of the ancient world has rarely encouraged historians to move beyond the history of classical philology to examine how the classical tradition shaped scholarly engagements with the material culture of antiquity. As a result, despite some sporadic contributions (Kaklamanis 2004; Calvelli 2009: 117–39), the place of indigenous antiquarianism in the cultural space of Venice's overseas colonies still remains an understudied area that needs greater exploration and analysis.

What follows is an attempt to examine more closely the activities of Greek antiquaries in seventeenth-century Venice and its empire, and in so doing to illustrate how their work sheds light on the place of the classical past in early modern Greek culture. In the first section of the chapter, the career of Nicolò Bon will provide a valuable insight into how a Cretan immigrant scholar in Venice studied the material culture of antiquity and positioned himself as an expert numismatist at the centre of a wide network of intellectual connections and relationships stretching across Europe. The second part of the chapter shifts the focus of the analysis from the metropolis to the periphery of the empire to trace Bon's antiquarian pursuits back to his social and cultural milieu in his native Crete. Through an investigation of various groups and their attitudes towards antiquities, I also aim to show that Venice's colonial 'periphery' was a vital site of intellectual

<sup>4</sup> Geanakoplos (1962); Alexiou (1985: 32–41); Wilson (1994); Panagiotakis (1988); Holton (2001); Tiepolo and Tonetti (2002).

and archaeological practices, and that local inhabitants played a defining role in imparting information and antique finds to the colonizers and travellers who explored the Greek lands. In this regard, I shall analyse the interactions between travelling antiquaries and indigenous educated elites and between Venetian administrators and native villagers and islanders, who have conventionally been removed from the social history of Venetian antiquarianism. In doing so, I wish to emphasize the links between different modes of engagement with antiquity and the contacts and communication between different classes of people. On a more general level, the chapter seeks to provide an alternative perspective on the intellectual geography of the seventeenth-century Republic of Letters by documenting the active participation of Venice's Greek colonial world in the production and circulation of early modern archaeological knowledge.

#### NICOLÒ BON (1635–1712): A CRETAN ANTIQUARY IN VENICE

In his guidebook to the city of Venice, the official cosmographer of the Republic, Vincenzo Maria Coronelli (1700: 17–18), recommended to those interested in inscriptions the museum of senator Antonio Capello, where one could see a Roman bronze plate 'on which Doctor Niccolò Bon has made his acclaimed annotation'. Moreover, to anyone who wished to visit the city's most conspicuous numismatic collections, Coronelli again recommended Bon as the perfect tour guide. The man in question was none other than the Cretan scholar Nicolò Bon, 'one of the most expert antiquaries' of his time (Anonymous 1712: 423), who deserves more credit for his contribution to late seventeenth-century antiquarian culture than Coronelli would lead us to conclude. Born into a Hellenized Venetian family that had settled in Crete, Bon graduated in law from the University of Padua, but devoted himself primarily to the study of classical antiquity and, in particular, numismatics.<sup>5</sup> This intermingling of legal and antiquarian/historical interests was not an unusual

<sup>5</sup> Anonymous (1712: 422–6); Mazzuchelli (1762: 1674); Cicogna (1830: 401); Benzoni (1969); Panagiotakis (1989: 39–40, 45).

combination for an early modern scholar. From the Renaissance onwards lawyers played a crucial part in defining concepts of evidence as the field of law became inextricably linked to scholarly practices of observation and notions of factual knowledge (Shapiro 2000; Cerutti and Pomata 2001). Such links between the study of law and antiquity were also present in Bon's Crete, where manifestations of legal humanism have been detected in private library catalogues containing numerous legal works along with volumes of classical literature and philosophy (Kitromilides 1993a; Lidaki 2000).

Identifying the scholarly activities of Greek and Venetian-Greek antiquaries in early modern Venice is not an easy task, especially since most of them never published the findings of their researches. In his lifetime Bon only published a Latin epitaph (Cicogna 1853: 808), while two of his letters to the French antiquary Jacob Spon were included in Gronovius' *Thesaurus graecarum antiquitatum* (1735: 257, 267; Benzoni 1969); in the nineteenth century, an anonymous treatise on Roman coins was also attributed to him by the deputy librarian of the Marciana, Anton Giovanni Bonicelli (Cicogna 1830: 251; Cicogna 1847: 693). Unfortunately, however, two of his major projects, an illustrated numismatic history of the kings of Syria and the edition of the works of Jean Foy-Vaillant, antiquary of the king of France, remained unpublished (Anonymous 1712: 425–26; Birago 1730: 622). This lack of visibility in the domain of print is perhaps the reason why, although Bon arranged and reordered private numismatic cabinets like those of senators Pietro Morosini and Girolamo Correr (Noris 1691: 280; Anonymous 1712: 424), his role in shaping patrician collections has yet to be acknowledged by historians of Venetian antiquarian culture. In the case of Morosini's museum, for instance, the French numismatist Charles Patin, professor of medicine at the University of Padua, took all the credit for publishing the *Thesaurus* (1683) of the coins that Morosini bequeathed to the Venetian state, even though it was Bon who had previously ordered and indexed them (Benzoni 1969). However, integrity was not always a prominent characteristic of premodern scholarship. At the same time, fierce critique of other scholars was quite common. Although Patin considered Bon *πολυμαθέστατον*, id est varia ac multiplici eruditione versatus' (Anonymous 1712: 424), Bon expressed a harsh judgement on Patin in a letter to Cardinal Enrico Noris dated 27 April 1685, describing him as better at 'writing than reading medals' (Cicogna 1830: 401).

Frenchmen like Patin and Hellenized Veneto-Cretans like Bon belonged to the same transnational intellectual community, known as the Republic of Letters (Waquet 1989; Goldgar 1995; Bots and Waquet 1997; Grafton 2009: 9–34). Antiquaries stood out as the leading figures in this Republic: by modelling their work on ancient authorities and combining literary and archaeological sources, they transformed the way the past was understood and brought about what has been described as a full revolution in early modern historical research.<sup>6</sup> As several studies have shown, learned correspondence was the main instrument of communication that early modern antiquaries used to collect information and disseminate the results of their research (Bots and Waquet 1994; Berkvens-Stevelinck et al. 2005; Bethencourt and van Egmond 2007). Similarly, in Bon's case, the main sources we have about his antiquarian studies are his epistolary exchanges with contemporary scholars and collectors as well as favourable references to his erudition in their published works.

In an age which held ancient coins and commemorative medals in high regard as solid evidence about the past,<sup>7</sup> Bon's vast numismatic expertise helped him establish a series of social and intellectual contacts which bear witness to a scholar of outstanding international influence. As a native of Crete and descendant of a noble family, who had mastered Greek and Latin, he was ideally positioned to claim authoritative knowledge of classical antiquity and gain access to an extensive network of antiquities dealers stretching from Venice and its Greek colonies to Constantinople and the Ottoman lands. At the same time, Bon's membership of the influential Rosicrucian sect of the *Cavalieri dell'aurea e rosa croce* enabled him to benefit from political and scholarly information networks which connected Venice with the wider European literary and scientific community (Barbierato 2012: 46, 116). Moreover, his participation in various Venetian and Italian academies, in addition to the *Stravaganti* in Candia and the Royal Society in London, enhanced his prestige as one of the leading antiquaries in the lively world of local and foreign scholars in late seventeenth-century Venice. It was Bon, for example, who invited Jacob Spon to speak to the Venetian Academy of the

<sup>6</sup> Momigliano (1950; 1990: 54–79); Grafton (1983–93); Haskell (1993); Schnapp (1993); Miller (2000); Grafton (2001); Miller (2007).

<sup>7</sup> Weiss (1969: ch. 12); Cunnally (1999); Sarmant (2003); Dekesel and Stäcker (2005); Missere Fontana (2009); Stahl (2009).

*Dodonei* when the latter returned from the Levant (Spon 1678: 371). And Spon, in acknowledgment, wrote in his books that 'Nicolaus Bon Cretensis' (1679: 101) was one of his contacts during his antiquarian researches.

Bon's fame, however, extended beyond the local aristocratic and learned circles of Venice. As the *Giornale de' letterati* wrote in its obituary of Bon:

the most famous antiquaries of Italy and from across the Alps either wanted to meet him personally upon their arrival in Venice or sought literary correspondence with him, and he, by communicating to them his views on the most difficult matters relating to inscriptions, medals or other historical and erudite questions, received considerable praises in their books. (Anonymous 1712: 423–4)

The range and extent of Bon's expertise was often acknowledged in the correspondence and works of other seventeenth-century antiquaries. In a letter to Bon in 1696, the Venetian collector Lorenzo Patarol sought his opinion on a medal representing the Paphian Venus in the form of a pyramid (Patarol 1743: 409–11; Cicogna 1842: 115–16), while the Milanese numismatist Francesco Mezzabarba Birago described him in his *Imperatorum Romanorum numismata* as 'Graecis natalibus ornatus' (adorned with Greek origins) and extolled his remarkable knowledge of coins (1730: 622). Similarly, the French antiquary Foy-Vaillant included him in the 'tabula gratulatoria' of his *Numismata aerea* calling him 'celeberrimus antiquarius' (1695: letter to the reader, 262), while Leibniz, who recommended him to others as 'a Greek, well-versed in medals and antiquities', turned to him for information on medallic collections and numismatic material (Robinet 1988: 396–8, 400–401).

Bon's archaeological knowledge is also evident in his extensive correspondence with the Dutch scholar and politician Gisbert Cuper. A number of unpublished letters now kept at the National Library of the Netherlands<sup>8</sup> provide useful clues on the scholarly matters which concerned the two correspondents and, more importantly, on one of Bon's major research projects, his unfinished treatise *De Neocoris*. This was a highly anticipated publication among European numismatists, including Patin, Foy-Vaillant, and the English

<sup>8</sup> Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 72 H 8: Gijsbert Cuper, *Briefwisseling met Nicolas le Bon (1635–1712), letterkundige*. Cf. Cuper (1742: 482, 484–5).

botanist George Wheler, who noted that 'what Neocorus signifies, so often seen in medals and inscriptions, hath much puzzled the antiquaries, and very little satisfaction they yet give'. Wheler also remarked that 'Doctor Bon, a Grecian, now at Venice doth promise the world a book concerning it' (1682: 79). The *neokoroi* (temple wardens) were Greek cities of the eastern Roman empire which received that name for possessing temples of the living emperor. This was a highly honorific title and was usually stamped on the city's coinage and inscriptions (Burrell 2004). In his letters to Cupper, dated between 1675 and 1709, Bon addressed a number of issues relating to this significant aspect of Hellenic civic life during the Roman period, often relying on specimens he had studied in Venetian numismatic collections, such as those owned by Capello, Morosini, Corner, and Tiepolo. For instance, he discussed which cities became *neokoros* and how many times, using, inter alia, coins from the *koinon* of Asia, minted at Ephesus and portraying the goddess Artemis as a huntress, and coins from the *koinon* of Macedonia (20 October 1695). He also examined coins featuring the Roman 'Sacred Senate' (22 February 1707) and others issued during the reign of Severus Alexander (4 December 1675 and 23 December 1704). In so doing, Bon engaged with the works of distinguished classical scholars of his time, from Ezechiel Spanheim and Jean Hardouin to Albert Rubens, the son of the great Flemish painter, who had also written a treatise on the *neokoroi*. Although Bon never published his expected magnum opus, both his correspondence with Cupper and the sources examined earlier give us a valuable insight into some of the key themes with which this major work would have dealt.

#### PERIPHERIES AS CENTRES: LOCAL ANTIQUARIANISM IN THE VENETIAN COLONIES

To contextualize Bon's antiquarian activity, it is important to outline the intellectual and cultural milieu of his early, formative years in Venetian Crete. The recovery of the ancient past on the island appears to have been well under way by the early fifteenth century, when the Florentine humanist Cristoforo Buondelmonti visited the

Venetian nobleman and collector Nicolò Corner, who had adorned the garden of his villa in Lasithi with Greek statues from the nearby ruins of ancient Lyktos (Weiss 1969: 185–6; Beschi 1986: 320, 328; Brown 1996: 80–81). During the sixteenth century, the ubiquitous remains of the classical world became an obvious stimulus to the collection of antiquities, while a culture of scholarly enquiry was formed around the knowledge of classical texts, well-furnished libraries, and active participation in literary academies which provided the setting for the erudite appreciation of ancient art. For instance, the Academy of the *Stravaganti* in Candia (Panagiotakis 1989: 11–50, 64–110; Panagiotakis and Vincent 1989: 112–38) was an institutional focal point for much of Crete's antiquarian activity at that time. Several of its members had strong antiquarian interests after studying in Italy in the tradition of Renaissance humanism with its interest in reviving classical antiquity. The founder of the Academy, the Veneto-Cretan nobleman Andrea Cornaro (1547–1616/17), kept in his study a 'marble head' (Spanakis 1955: 427), while another of its members, the Veneto-Cretan vicar general of the archbishop of Candia Francesco Zeno (1623–80) (Panagiotakis 1989: 95–110), 'delighted in collecting rare spoils of past centuries' and owned 'a museum of medals' and 'some other rarities for a gallery relative to antiquarianism and natural history' (Negri 1816: 25, 436). Zeno also compiled a numismatic study entitled *Trattato di medaglie imperatorie* (Anonymous 1733: 6; Negri 1816: 438), an 'elucidation of forty-seven ancient imperial medals', now kept at the Marciana Library in Venice.<sup>9</sup> Another member of the *Stravaganti*, the Greek Orthodox scholar Ioannis Verghitsis (1540/50–1606), relied on archaeological evidence in writing his history of Crete, using ancient ruins, inscriptions, marble fragments, and Egyptian coins (Panagiotakis 1989: 86; Lidaki 1999: 260). Similarly, the well-known Veneto-Cretan polymath and magus Francesco Barozzi (1537–1604), founder of the Academy of the *Vivi* in Rethymnon, compiled an archaeological and geographical description of Crete based on his readings of ancient geographers, personal *in situ* surveys of the Cretan countryside, and several Greek and Latin inscriptions (Kaklamanis 2004).

As in the rest of early modern Europe, antiquarianism in Crete was a collaborative practice which depended on communicating

<sup>9</sup> Marc. It. XI, 85 (= 7236): Francesco Zeno, arcivescovo di Capodistria, *Spiegazione di quarantasette medaglie imperiali antiche*.

information and ancient finds to other scholars and collectors. Barozzi, for instance, whose social network included many Venetian patricians and Italian intellectuals, promised in 1567 to provide Daniele Barbaro, the patriarch of Aquileia, with 'marbles and medals' (Rose 1977: 162; Kaklamanis 2004: 94, 384, 387), while the Cretan physician Daniel Furlanos (Furlano) (1550–92), a distinguished member of the *Stravaganti* and author of Latin translations and commentaries on the works of Aristotle and Theophrastus (Manoussacas 1974), translated several ancient inscriptions for Onorio Belli, the physician of the Venetian governor of Crete (Beschi 2000: XXIII, 6–7, 56, 65, 70, 103, 178).

Furlanos's case is also interesting insofar as it typifies the role of learned medicine in early modern historical research (Ferrari 1996; MacLean 2002; Pastore and Peruzzi 2006; Siraisi 2007). As the historian Arnaldo Momigliano aptly remarked, '*autopsia* and *historia* were two keywords doctors and historians had in common'. Both groups shared a similar methodology based on direct observation, the empirical gathering of data, and the ordering of events in a linear narrative of individual cases. Momigliano's observation that 'seventeenth-century antiquarians were often doctors' (Momigliano 1987: 13) is exemplified in the case of Meletios Mitrou (1661–1714), bishop of Nafpaktos and later of Athens, who had studied medicine in Padua. Like Furlanos, Janulli, and other contemporary physicians, Meletios combined medicine and antiquarianism following the humanist encyclopedic approach, which blended textual analysis with the study of material evidence. He travelled across Greece to gather first-hand geographical information and used epigraphic records, coins, and antiquities to develop new knowledge about the past (Lambros 1906; Kiriakopoulos 1990). As he emphasized in his *Γεωγραφία παλαιά και νέα*, he examined 'with intense observation stones and slabs, the relics of antiquity, in order to extract the inscriptions which contained the names of the old cities' (Mitrou 1728: letter to the readers).

The study and collecting of antiquities was also a major feature of the material culture of Greek elites on the Ionian Islands. While at Corfu, on their way to Athens, Spon and Wheler had the opportunity to visit the 'cabinet of medals' owned by the Greek nobleman Andrea Marmora, member of the local Academy of the *Assicurati* (Spon 1679: 95; Wheler 1682: 31; Sathas 1868: 356–58). Author of the important *Della historia di Corfù*, which appeared in 1672

(Karapidakis 1997), Marmora used his numismatic collection as material evidence to reconstruct the island's classical past. His concern with ancient artefacts as historical sources is shown over numerous pages in his book, which deal with the iconography of coins and the data they provided. Following an established scholarly tradition that used pictures as vehicles for learned knowledge,<sup>10</sup> Marmora illustrated his work with engraved plates representing the specimens of his collection as useful 'material for the curious' (Marmora 1672: 103). To his mind, the evidence provided by images was so vital that, alongside his cabinet, he judged it important to show his visitors further drawings of medals that he intended to add to a revised edition of his book (Spon 1679: 96, 434). This combination of object, image, and text was a defining aspect of the method Marmora deployed in studying antiquity. Another feature was his reliance on fieldwork and the direct surveying of Corfu's ancient sites.

Writing about Palaiopolis, the ancient city of Corfu, Marmora notes that 'one does not see but the ruins of the city, yet the magnificent residue of temples, arches, theatres, sculptures, buildings, although fallen, lift up the glory of a most illustrious land'. From the physical remains which he personally inspected, he traced the layout of Palaiopolis and presented an idealized reconstruction, with the following commentary:

Temples worked in mosaics and marbles; palaces which adorn the long and straight streets; fountains with statues which turned you into stone out of amazement; sumptuous buildings where the youth exercised either in letters or in arms; baths for the comfort of citizens ordinarily disposed; porticos which surround it in every street so that one never feared the sun or the rain, rendered her so illustrious that Xenophon was right in going overboard with praise. (Marmora 1672: 23–4)

As Leonard Barkan (1999: 207) remarks, landscapes with ruins and broken statues are open to completion, and 'admit the historical imagination as a genuinely collaborative force'. In this fashion, Marmora's textual description was accompanied by a fantastic illustration of Palaiopolis, which imaginatively restored the ancient city and located its public buildings, temples and statues (Fig. 2.1). 'You will see the figure of the ancient city and cry for the miseries of the world which, pretending to become more beautiful through variation, flows

<sup>10</sup> Haskell (1993); Wood (2001); Burke (2003); Papy (2004); Gorini (2005).

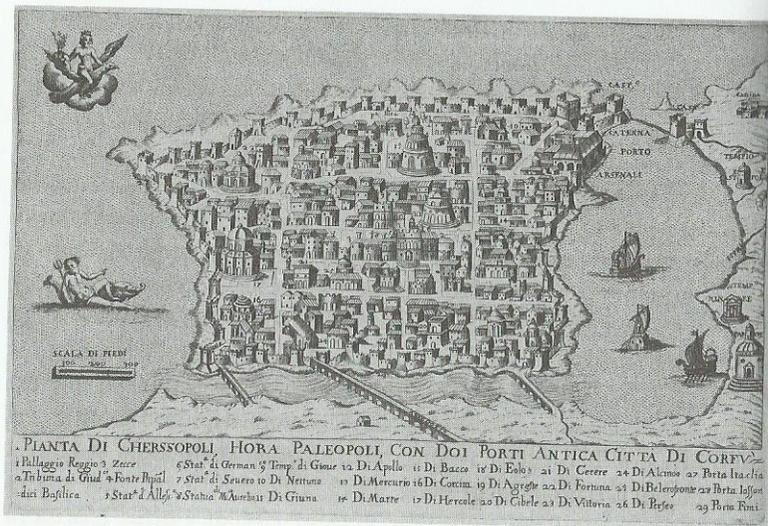


Fig. 2.1. 'Pianta di Cherssopoli, hora Paleopoli, con doi porti antica città di Corfù' (Map of Cherssopolis, now Palaepolis, with two ports—ancient city of Corfu), from Andrea Marmora, *Della Historia di Corfù* (Venice 1672). Gennadius Library, American School of Classical Studies at Athens.

continuously from bad to worse,' Marmora (1672: 24) lamented, dramatizing the destructive force of time but also summing up the close links between early modern 'antiquarianism and nostalgia' (Grafton 2001: 39). In their travelogues both Spon and Wheler refer to Marmora's picture and description of Palaio polis, and acknowledge his assistance in reading an inscription they found on the Byzantine church of Saints Jason and Sosipatros (Marmora 1672: 144–5; Spon 1679: 97–8; Wheler 1682: 33–4).

Marmora was not the only Corfiote interested in the material culture of the past. As he notes, the Cypriot professor of logic at the University of Padua, Giovanni Cicala, had helped him to dissolve 'the darkness of Antiquity', while his compatriot Spiridione Avloniti had given him 'some assistance with medals' (1672: letter to the reader). Avloniti was, in fact, yet another erudite member of the *Assicurati* who impressed Spon and Wheler with his solid knowledge of the classics and deep appreciation of antiquities. According to Wheler, this 'great lover' and collector of antiquity also volunteered to guide them through the ancient sites of Corfu:

I must not forget my good friend signior Spiridiani Arbeniti, who hath also a little collection of very curious medals, a great lover of Antiquity, and a very civil person. He received us with the greatest kindness imaginable, taking the pains to show us all things that are rare in that place. Sometimes he went with us a foot, and at other times, when need required, furnished us with his own and friends' horses, and always favoured us with his good company. (Wheler 1682: 32; cf. Spon 1678: 96, 456; Sathas 1868: 411–12)

Moreover, Avloniti guided the two travellers to the ruins of Palaio polis, where he showed them an 'abundance of foundations of temples, arches, pillars and marble inscriptions [that] have been dug up here and employed to build the new fortifications of the present city'. During that excursion, they also visited the early Christian basilica of Palaio polis and the remarkable library of the abbot of the adjacent monastery, the Cretan scholar Gerasimos Vlachos, who impressed them with his ancient manuscript collection and erudition (Spon 1679: 97; Wheler 1682: 32–3).

All these references to the 'virtuosi' of Corfu (Wheler 1682: 34) show the extent to which the work of early modern travellers in Greece was significantly influenced by their exposure to indigenous antiquarian culture. Greek scholars and educated clerics who used their collections as sites of archaeological knowledge were instrumental in providing foreign antiquaries with the sources they needed. The importance of local contacts in affecting the outcome of the travellers' fieldwork is evident in several other instances where friendships with native inhabitants gave them useful clues in their explorations. During their visit to Venetian-held Cythera, for instance, Spon and Wheler found some grottos which:

one of the island, pretending to be an antiquary, assured us were anciently the baths of Helena; affirming that her palace was not above three or four miles from thence on the hills. We took this antiquary for our guide and went to see what we could find of it. (Wheler 1682: 48)

Although the testimony of trusted gentlemen might have been preferable to popular lore, Spon and Wheler also relied frequently on common people whose credibility could not be easily measured. Ordinary Greeks, though lacking in scholarly training and the respectability of the elite, still possessed practical knowledge and direct familiarity with their surrounding environment, which enabled them to advise and guide foreign archaeological excursions. A cobbler

from Zakynthos, for example, who, according to Wheler, 'advanced himself to be a physician' and whose 'whole library' was 'a book of receipts', together with 'one Belisario Phoca, another quack, but naturally ingenious', accompanied the two travellers to Livadia:

Signior Belisario seeing us search and copy inscriptions carried us to the mosque Omer on a hill on the west side of the town; which was formerly a church dedicated unto St George, where he showed us this inscription upon the minaret, which is a dedication of some public work to Juno and to the city of the Lebadians [. . .]. A Turk, that saw us copying it, told us he would show us two or three more such as that and very civilly brought us to another mosque called Omer at the bottom of the hill, where we found three inscriptions more with the name of the town. (Wheler 1682: 327)

The above passage testifies to the familiarity of the Christian and Muslim inhabitants of Livadia with the employment of *spolia* in contemporary sacred settings. Although an older historiography considered the reuse of ancient remains as a sign of indifference towards antiquity, this practice is no longer seen by scholars today as a simple recycling of building materials. Rather, it is regarded as proof of the continuing authority of the classical past and the aesthetic appreciation of its tangible survivals (Settis 1986; Saradi 1997; Ousterhout 2004; Greenhalgh 2009). The presence of antique fragments in focal points of everyday life, such as churches and mosques, helped ordinary viewers develop a visual sense of the past as well as a perception of its difference from their own time, a cultural theme that was prevalent throughout the early modern period. For instance, when the Turks who wanted to know 'what was written thereon and whether they were very ancient', discovered that one of the inscriptions was 'at least fifteen hundred years old', they said: 'Then it was of the Times of the Hellenes'; by which, Wheler tells us, 'they meant in the time of paganism; for now they use that word most commonly in that sense' (1682: 328). This episode reveals that the locals were aware of the time distance separating them from the ancient past, but also shows that places of worship were key sites of archaeological knowledge, especially when ancient marble ornaments and inscriptions became the subject of conversation with travelling antiquaries.

The social interaction between foreign collectors and local populations also formed an essential part of the story of Venetian antiquarianism in the late seventeenth century. A decade after Spon and

Wheler's voyage to the Levant, the sixth Venetian–Ottoman conflict, the War of the Morea (1684–99), sparked off a new wave of archaeological exploration across the Peloponnese, the city of Athens and the Ionian Islands, which affected not only antiquarian collecting in the Venetian metropolis<sup>11</sup> but also much of the rest of Europe, including German scholars like Leibniz, as we saw earlier. Writing from the battlefield in 1685, the surgeon of the Venetian fleet Alessandro Pini told the professor of anatomy in Venice Jacopo Grandi—a mutual friend of Bon and Leibniz—that some 'ignorant Greeks' from the archipelago had offered his commander, the patrician Alessandro Molin, ancient coins as a 'very big gift, with singular esteem'. Pini then added that other patricians had also bought from the locals 'at a very high price' several coins with images of the Amazons, the temple of Juno at Samos, and the Cayster river at Ephesus, although to his great disappointment he himself had neither the money nor the authority to obtain them (Grandi 1686: 140–41). Although Pini's first remark implies that these particular Greek islanders could not appreciate ancient artefacts, paradoxically it also portrays them as acutely aware of the value that these objects held for Venetian aristocrats. Moreover, his second remark suggests that a fairly wide-ranging market in antiquities existed in Greece at the time, and that many locals were active participants in the archaeological economy. Pini's observations also recall what the Benedictine antiquary Bernard de Montfaucon (1712: v) thought during his stay in Venice a few years later. It was tempting, he said, to sail to the Peloponnese, where 'there are still manuscripts, which may be bought for a small matter of the Greeks now living in misery and ignorance'.

Regardless of whether ordinary Greeks sold antiquities 'at a very high price', as one account suggests, or 'for a small matter', as the other indicates, the recovery of the material past owed a great deal to the finds of the native inhabitants who, albeit 'uneducated', were still considered by Pini as perfectly capable of satisfying 'the curiosity of the finest scholar'. This interaction between learned and popular ways of knowing exemplifies a central dimension of early modern knowledge-making practices<sup>12</sup> and confirms a central thesis of recent

<sup>11</sup> Pavan (1983); Setton (1987); Sacconi (1991); Malliaris (1997; 1998); Beschi (2002).

<sup>12</sup> Findlen (1994: 170–79); Eamon (2006); Gentilcore (2006); Cooper (2007); Smith and Schmidt (2007).

imperial history studies: that the construction of colonial knowledge and science was profoundly influenced by the input of various indigenous informants and assistants.<sup>13</sup> In the case of the Venetian empire, the reliance on local sources of information is particularly revealing of how the high culture of imperial collectors interacted with the oral testimonies of the colonized islanders. In effect, Venetian antique collections were to a large extent an outcome of the wider cultural encounter between colonial officials and local populations, who jointly contributed to the development of Venetian antiquarian culture.

### CONCLUSION

This chapter has sought to reconsider how early modern Greeks actually thought about ideas of antiquity and classical artefacts before the formation of the Greek nation-state. It has argued both that the history of indigenous antiquarianism in the Venetian empire is relevant to classical reception studies and that traditional accounts of premodern Greek perceptions of antiquity are deficient and misleading insofar as they fail to examine this crucial intellectual domain. Indeed, the cases of Bon, Janulli, Marmora, Meletios, and other Greeks of the Venetian empire demonstrate the necessity of rethinking our assumptions about the contribution of early modern Greek scholars not only to the textual but also to the material revival of antiquity. The present analysis has shown that Greek and Venetian-Greek antiquaries used collecting as a valid way of knowing the past, and employed practical knowledge in the writing of local history. More importantly, by recording, preserving, and interpreting the classical past through its material traces, they played an active and often influential role in the making of European antiquarianism: they did not simply gather or supply ancient artefacts, but articulated antiquarian knowledge and joined many intellectual debates in the European Republic of Letters as experts and connoisseurs who enjoyed recognition in the world of early modern scholarship.

While extant documentation allows us to recover an image of the culture of erudition which developed in Venice's Greek dominions,

<sup>13</sup> Dirks (1993); Grove (1995); Bayly (1996); Schiebinger and Swan (2004); Raj (2007).

It is also true that we are much better acquainted with the upper social strata than with those below. Among the aspects of seventeenth-century elite culture which I have emphasized are the growth of historical interest, the awareness of the social functions fulfilled by the possession of antique collections, and the admiration felt for antiquities. For instance, according to the French engineer Rinaldo de la Rue, who witnessed the Venetian bombardment of the Acropolis in 1687, the destruction of the ancient temples caused 'sorrow to the Greek nobility and to the Turks themselves who had greater veneration for those beautiful memories' than the Venetians (Paton 1951: 127–8). Similarly, Marmora was deeply fascinated by the ruins of Corfu because of the tangible link they provided to the ancients. Commenting on his enthusiastic attempt to visualize the past, the *Giornale de' letterati* (Anonymous 1739: 49) wrote that, although he described the ancient city with precision and confidence, in reality he was only 'the fabricator' of the image of Palaiopolis. There are 'certain remains of an antique and magnificent city,' the reviewer remarks, 'but one can distinguish nothing more.' Yet in the early modern era imagination was inextricably linked to antiquarian studies and, as Anthony Grafton notes, 'art, scholarship, and fantasy interacted in these efforts to call the past back to visible life' (2001: 47; cf. Mitchell 1960).

A final remark should be made about this chapter's attempt to question received notions of 'encounters' between European travelers and the inhabitants of the Greek peninsula, who were often considered ignorant of the historical value of ancient monuments. Historians usually describe the former as the producers of archaeological knowledge and the latter as mere suppliers of information and antiquities from which that knowledge was born, and in so doing they diminish the importance of indigenous archaeological practices. As Spon and Wheler's travelogues suggest, however, foreign visitors often simply appropriated indigenous knowledge about classical antiquities. This local archaeological knowledge was produced in a wide range of sites: from private collections and learned academies to public places such as churches and mosques. Moreover, as I have shown, alongside educated aristocrats and clergymen, non-literate people of humble status were also involved in this process. Ancient finds were more than historical objects: they were commodities, items of exchange for colonial subjects seeking to earn a living or receive favourable treatment from their masters. It is therefore essential to

ask whose knowledge is represented in European travel accounts and Venetian reports, and how local transactions influenced archaeological ventures. In this regard, this chapter has underlined the need to acknowledge the importance of indigenous participation in the making of archaeological knowledge in the Venetian empire, and the fact that antiquarianism in the 'periphery' was by no means an unoriginal and minor intellectual practice in the service of the imperial capital.