Armorial Lockplates:
A Story of Success in Renaissance Rome

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The Rijksmuseum holds an example of one of the most widely reproduced designs of Italian Renaissance bronzes: a gilt lockplate that once served as the decorative fastening of a chest (fig. 1).[1] It corresponds to a model that must have been produced in the same basic form in its hundreds. More than seventy examples have survived in museums and private collections, and new ones appear regularly on the fine art market.[2] Hardly any other metalwork from the sixteenth century had a comparable breadth of distribution.

The success of this utilitarian object probably lay on the one hand simply in its appealing design, which unites a variety of late Mannerist decorative elements in a small space. On the other, the motifs also convey a message, albeit one that cannot easily be interpreted in detail. The central figure of the elegant standing woman on the hasp has been convincingly identified as Abundantia. However, rather than carrying a cornucopia in her hands as is customary, the personification of plenty bears a basket of fruit on her head. She is probably derived from Dovizia, a Florentine variant of Abundantia, multiple copies of which were reproduced after a prototype by Donatello, particularly in the Della Robbia workshop, as a kind of 'house goddess' guaranteeing prosperity and fertility (fig. 2).[3]

< Fig. 1
Lockplate of Orazio Ruspoli and Felice de' Cavalieri,
c./after 1594.
Gilt copper,
plate: 18 x 18 cm,
hasp: h. 22.7 cm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum,
inv. no. BK-NM-14348.

The symmetrical arrangement on the lockplate either side of Abundantia/Dovizia – helmets and all'antica armour above a sleeping male and a female
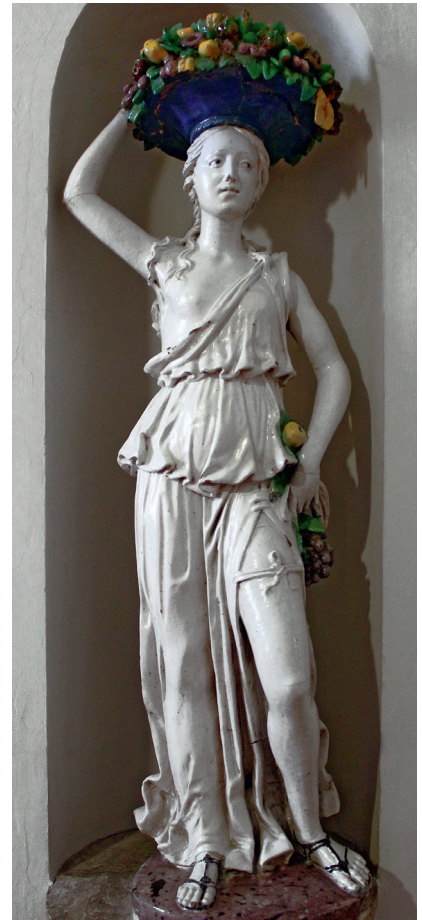

Fig. 2
DELLA ROBBIA
WORKSHOP,
Dovizia, c. 1520.
Enameled terracotta,
h. 78 cm.
Florence, Casa
Buonarroti.

nude – is harder to identify. The armour evidently relates to the recumbent figures, especially as the cuirass above the female figure is shaped to accommodate the female form. There is indeed a tradition in Renaissance art of such pairs of figures lying opposite each other: it recalls the iconography of Venus and Mars, which had been prominently disseminated by Botticelli's depiction of the sleeping warrior disarmed by the goddess of love.[4] In a relief attributed to Antonio Pollaiuolo held in the Victoria and Albert Museum a very closely related juxtaposition of the naked sleeping gods has been preserved (fig. 3).[5] Nonetheless, despite this parallelism the figures on the present lockplate cannot be identified as Venus and Mars, not least since the discarded armour characterizes both figures as warriors. Even if the disarmed female warrior is interpreted not as Venus but Minerva or Bellona, the way it is

here combined with the male counterpart goes beyond the bounds of iconographic traditions.[6]

Nevertheless, in general terms the meaning is not hard to interpret. The warrior couple have discarded their armour to seek rest. Sleep in a state of nakedness symbolizes peace, which overcomes war and violence, thus laying the ground for prosperity as personified by Abuntantia/Dovizia. However, these objects had a further definitive iconographic function, offering potential for social representation. Both on the hasp and in the fields below the flanking vases and masks, these lockplates display cartouches that could be inscribed with coats of arms, and thus personalized.

Hitherto it has proved possible to assign a number of examples of these objects to specific families or concrete individuals on the basis of their armorial bearings. In the following article this group will be considerably expanded through a series of further heraldic identifications, thus providing a basis to re-examine the question of the purpose of this artisanal prestige object and determine the circumstances of its origin. The example in Amsterdam and another in the National Gallery of Art in Washington (see fig. 12) will assume special significance in this connection.

In the older literature, connections were proposed between the manufacture of such lockplates and various artistic centres, including the Netherlands and southern Germany, Fontainebleau, Milan and Rome.[7] The names of Benvenuto Cellini, Jacopo Sansovino, Guglielmo della Porta, Leone and Pompeo Leoni were also brought into play.[8] The piece in the Rijksmuseum is currently attributed to the latter.

Bertrand Bergbauer, on the other hand, came to the conclusion that all these objects are nineteenth-century forgeries.[9] His doubts as to the authenticity of these lockplates are based mainly on the fact that so

Fig. 3
ANTONIO
POLLAIUOLO,
Mirror frame in the form of a Medici ring,
c. 1470-80.
Painted and gilt stucco in a gilt wood frame, h. 64.2 x w. 50.8 x d. 5.5 cm. London, Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. no. 5887-1859.

Fig. 4
Chests with lockplate
and original handles,
c. 1590.
Poplar wood, with
velvet and silk
covering, h. 61 x
w. 135 x d. 46 cm and
h. 60 x w. 134 x d. 45 cm.
Sale, Paris (Etude
Tajan), 17 May 2000,
no. 39 and private
collection (the latter
with later covering).

many examples have survived, while
hardly any of their original supports,
that is to say the chests for which they
are supposed to have been intended,
have.[10] This is indeed a remarkable
circumstance. Nonetheless, a couple
of original sets of chests with their
lockplates have survived, together
with their matching lateral bronze
handles (figs. 4, 5).[11] These examples
reveal the reason why almost all the
locks were detached from the chests
over the course of time. These wooden
chests were relatively simple pieces
of furniture whose construction with
barrel-vaulted lids was widespread for

Fig. 5
Detail showing
the side handle of
the chest (fig. 4).

305

Italian early Renaissance travelling chests, as attested not least by contemporary depictions.[12] The chests were usually covered in velvet and trimmed with braid and decorative studs. The velvet eventually became shabby from use, so it was understandable that the luxurious gilt lockplates were removed from the chests and that they came onto the market as discrete works of applied art in the nineteenth century.

The difference between the precious locks and the plain carcases of the chests might suggest that they were not made as fixed units. On the other hand, the small number of chests preserved in their original state is strikingly homogeneous. Their textile covering displays the same geometrical design of braid and studs. Furthermore, the extant chests – as far as this is recorded – also have the same dimensions of approximately h. 60 x w. 135 x d. 45 cm.[13] From this one could draw the conclusion that the workshop in which the lockplates and handles were cast collaborated with the workshop that made the chests. And perhaps it was precisely this standardized method of production that facilitated the extraordinary success of this product. The part played by the individual who commissioned such an object was limited to personalizing the piece with his or her coat of arms.

The connection with *cassoni* has always suggested itself as the reason for and purpose of these objects. These were ordered in pairs on the occasion of a marriage by the family of the bride (or bridegroom in some cases) and were displayed in a prestigious place, particularly in the bedchamber.[14] Jeremy Warren recently confirmed this functional correlation. He proceeds on the assumption that the chests in question were made in pairs, and served for the symbolic transfer of the bride's dowry into the house of the bridegroom on the occasion of the *transductio*.

Fig. 6
Lockplate of Asdrubale Mattei and Costanza Gonzaga-Novellara, c./after 1595. Gilt brass copper alloy, plate: 17.9 x 17.9 cm. London, The Wallace Collection, inv. no. s471.

In this sense the coats of arms depicted on the hasp and flanks of the lockplates would refer to the marriages as the causal event.[15]

A whole series of lockplates do indeed display arms of alliance, and in individual cases have even survived in duplicate.[16] The lockplates in the Wallace Collection and the Renaissance Museum in Ecouen display on the hasp the matching impaled arms of Asdrubale Mattei, one of the most enthusiastic art collectors in Rome, and his wife Costanza Gonzaga-Novellara (fig. 6). The couple married in 1595.[17] Similarly, arms of alliance are found on the hasps of other examples. Identifying these is not always easy, but it has been possible to assign a number to specific individuals.[18] The earliest of these would seem to be the lockplate of Pirro Frangipani and Flaminia Armentieri (fig. 7). In any event,

Fig. 7a
Lockplate of Pirro
Frangipani and
Flaminia Armentieri,
before 1480.
Gilt bronze, plate:
18 x 18 cm.
Sale, London
(Bonhams),
5 July 2012, no. 1.

Fig. 7b
Detail with coat of
arms (fig. 7a).

Figs. 8a-c
Coats of arms of the
Frangipani, Colonna
and Armentieri, from
Stemmi gentilizi delle
più illustri famiglie
romane, 17th century.
Rome, Biblioteca
Casanatense,
ms. 4006, unpaged,
nos. 303, 121, 824.
Photos: Mario Setter.

it was made before 1580, since it was
in this year that Armentieri married her
second husband, Camillo Palombara.[19]
In this case the hasp displays a com-
bination of three coats of arms belong-
ing to Roman families. Frangipani,
son of Artemisia Colonna, incorpor-
ated the column of the Colonna in
the Frangipani/Armentieri arms of
alliance as a symbol of his ancestry

(figs. 8a-c). Arms of alliance on the
hasp also embellish the lockplate of
Marcantonio III Colonna and Felice
Orsina Peretti (marr. 1589), the great-
niece of Pope Sixtus V and sister of
Cardinal Montalto,[20] also that of
Flaminio Delfini, Roman officer and
later commander of the papal fleet,
and Maria Ridolfi (marr. 1593),[21] and
that of the Roman banker and art

collector Lelio Cevoli and Giulia Mattei (marr. 1596) (fig. 9).[22] The lockplate hitherto regarded as the earliest example, dating from around 1540, and thus determining the dating of the whole group of works, also displays impaled arms on the hasp – those of Gaspare Rivaldi, lawyer of the Camera Apostolica, and Ortenzia Mazziotti. However, the couple in fact married not in 1540 but 1590.[23]

Marital coats of arms are found not only on the hasp but also on the lateral cartouches of the lockplates. There are variants that show the arms of the man on the hasp and those of the wife on the cartouches, as found on the lockplate of the career soldier Celso Celsi and Virginia Delfini (marr. 1572) (see fig. 20), sister of the above-mentioned Flaminio Delfini.[24]

Conversely, the man's arms can appear on the cartouches and those of the woman on the hasp, as in the case of Paolo Emilio Dandini, nephew of Cardinal Girolamo Dandini, and Olimpia Roverella (marr. before 1580) (fig. 10).[25] The variant of the male arms appearing on one of the cartouches and the female arms on the other was also common; this is found on the lock-plate held in the Palazzo Venezia of Clemente Buccelleni, an entrepreneur in the ore-smelting trade who had moved from Brescia to Rome, and Emilia Mellini (marr. 1573) (see fig. 14) – to whom we will return later.[26]

A total of five lockplates can be assigned to the ancient Roman family of the Orsini. At least three of these display a heraldic alliance with the Savelli family, with whom the Orsini frequently contracted marriages.[27] The most eloquent of these displays the alliance in dual form: on the lockplate in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston the impaled arms appear on the hasp, with the arms of the Orsini additionally on the (male) right-hand cartouche, and the arms of the Savelli on the (female) left-hand cartouche (fig. 11). This unique and exceptional case of double arms of alliance evidently points to an alliance between the Orsini and Savelli families over two generations and can duly be assigned unequivocally: in the second half of the sixteenth century there was only one double alliance of this kind: Franciotto Orsini, son of Enrico, Marquese di Stimigliano (fig. 13), from the Orsini-Monterotondo branch of the family, married Camilla Savelli before 1589. His father Enrico Orsini had taken as his second wife Camilla's cousin Diana Savelli. As Franciotto was the result of an earlier (illegit-imate) union of Enrico's, one could assume that the Marquese di Stimigliano gave the lockplate as a gift to his only son and the latter's wife in order to insinuate genealogical continuity and legitimacy via the arms of two generations.[28]

We thus see that marital unions manifest themselves in different ways on these lockplates. But can we justify the conclusion that the chests bearing such ornamental elements had the exclusive purpose of marriage chests? There are good reasons to doubt such a specific definition. On the one hand there are extant examples that dispense completely with heraldic decoration.[29] Others display simple family armorial bearings without any impaled coats of arms. Neither does the circumstance that such lockplates also exist in duplicate support their use as bridal chests;[30] this can probably be explained by the fact that travelling chests were transported on either side of the backs of pack animals and were thus needed in pairs.[31]

Even in the case of those examples that display impaled arms, it would be inadvisable to assume as a matter of course that they belonged to marriage chests, as the above-mentioned Buccelleni/Mellini lockplate in the Palazzo Venezia collection attests (fig. 14). Here it is evident that a copper plate with the Buccelleni coat of arms has been soldered on subsequently, that is, to replace an original coat of arms. We know that Clemente Buccelleni was the second husband of Emilia Mellini. Her first marriage was to Gianfrancesco Passionei in 1569.[32] It seems clear that following her second marriage in 1573 the widow had the arms of her first husband replaced with those of her new spouse. In the case of an object with the ceremonial function of a marriage

Fig. 11
Lockplate with the
coat of arms of
Enrico Orsini and
Diana Savelli on
the cartouches and
impaled arms of
Franciotto Orsini
and Camilla Savelli
on the hasp,
c./after 1589.
Gilt brass and iron,
18 x 17.5 cm.
Boston, Museum
of Fine Arts,
inv. no. 1986.8;
gift of Mr and
Mrs Nereo Fioratti
and H.E. Bolles Fund.

chest, however, any pragmatic secondary use of this kind should be ruled out. Obviously Mellini simply adapted her travelling chest to her altered marital status – just as one might change the label on a suitcase in similar circumstances today. This evidence allows the conclusion that the arms of alliance on these lockplates should by no means necessarily be seen in the context of the marriage ceremony but that they probably had the primary purpose of identifying the owners of these chests.

Similar findings are indicated by the above-mentioned lockplates in Amsterdam and Washington, opening up a new and surprising possibility of interpretation. In both cases the impaled arms are found on the lateral cartouches while the hasp displays a different coat of arms that has no connection to the families in question.

The Rijksmuseum example (figs. 1, 15a, b) displays two identical arms of alliance on the cartouches. These were erroneously identified as being of the Chigi family.[33] In fact, they show a combination of the arms of

Fig. 13
Impaled arms of
Enrico Orsini and
Diana Savelli,
c. 1570. Stimigliano,
Palazzo Orsini,
piano nobile.

Fig. 14a
Lockplate of
Clemente Buccelleni
and Emilia Mellini,
c./after 1569/73.
Gilt bronze, plate:
h. 18.5 x w. 18.3 cm.

Rome, Museo di
Palazzo Venezia,
inv. no. PV 5599.

Fig. 14b
Detail with coat of
arms of Clemente
Buccelleni (fig. 14a).

Figs. 15a, b
Details showing
the cartouche with
impaled arms of
Orazio Ruspoli and
Felice de' Cavalieri
and hasp with
impaled arms of an
unknown individual
and Baschenis (fig. 1).

the Ruspoli and Cavalieri-Orsini
families, and can thus be shown to relate
to Orazio Ruspoli, who was married
to Felice de' Cavalieri, granddaughter
of Tommaso de' Cavalieri, who was
a friend of Michelangelo, and niece
and ward of the composer Emilio de'
Cavalieri (marr. 1594). The Ruspoli, a
Sienese family of bankers, had settled
in Rome a generation previously.
Orazio, born in Rome in 1542, at first
worked in the family bank before
making a career at the Curia and
eventually rising to the top of the
Annona, the papal victualling institu-
tion, in 1589. After marrying, he and
his bride, who was more than thirty
years his junior, converted their house
on Via dei Banchi Vecchi into a stately
palace in 1594. Their arms of alliance,
which match those on the Rijksmuseum
lockplate exactly, still grace the en-
trance portal to the *piano nobile* of
the palace (fig. 16).[34]
However, the hasp of the Rijks-
museum lockplate displays an add-
itional coat of arms that surprisingly
can be assigned neither to the kinship
of the Ruspoli nor to that of the

Fig. 16
Impaled arms of
Orazio Ruspoli and
Felice de' Cavalieri
on the portal to the
piano nobile of the
former house of
Orazio Ruspoli,
c./after 1594.
Rome, 25 Via dei
Banchi Vecchi.

Cavalieri-Orsini. They are also impaled, but unfortunately only the female side can be identified; it belongs to the Lombard family of the Baschenis, the Roman branch of which had been founded by the papal treasurer Antonio Baschenis and his brothers.[35] Interestingly, there is another lockplate with these arms of alliance on the hasp, but without the Ruspoli/Cavalieri coats of arms on the cartouches.[36] How is it possible that the Baschenis family, who were not members of the Roman aristocracy, appear together with the Ruspoli and Cavalieri, with whom they had no ties of kinship? The explanation might simply be that hasp and plate did not originally belong together but were mounted secondarily from two separate examples. This possibility exists. However, there is an extant counterpart displaying a comparable familial incompatibility for which there is a plausible explanation.

The cartouches on the lockplate in the National Gallery of Art in Washington display the same heraldic alliance between the Orsini and the Savelli as the example commissioned by Enrico Orsini now in Boston (see figs. 11, 12). The two pieces also correspond in the other characteristics, confirming that

they were made at the same time.[37] However, the hasp shows a coat of arms that cannot be linked either to the Orsini or the Savelli, the family of Enrico's wife, and which until now had also not been identified (fig. 17).

It can be assigned to a certain Giovanni Caccia from Novara who had settled in Latium in the entourage of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese and had commissioned the building of a palace in Sant'Oreste, forty kilometres north of Rome, which was completed in 1589. The identification is un-equivocal, since Giovanni Caccia's armorial bearings are an individual coat of arms that he created exclusively for himself (fig. 18).[38] It could on the other hand be surmised that the plate and hasp did not originally belong together. However, in this case a con-nection can be established between the individuals behind these coats of arms. Giovanni Caccia was a neigh-bour of Enrico Orsini. Sant'Oreste and Stimigliano, the marquese's principal residence, face each other across the Tiber Valley; there is a direct line of sight between the two palaces. But how is this heraldic alliance between neighbours to be explained? Was the newcomer Caccia hoping to enhance his social stand-ing, in the sense of 'self-fashioning',

Fig. 17
Detail with the coat of arms of Giovanni Caccia on the hasp (fig. 12).

Fig. 18
Coat of arms of Giovanni Caccia, after 1589. Sant'Oreste, Palazzo Caccia, piano nobile.

by adopting the arms of the Orsini and Savelli, the most reputable families of this region to the north of Rome, in order to integrate himself in his new surroundings? Or was it the Orsini who allowed him to adopt their arms in a gesture of neighbourly amity, or – perhaps the most likely explanation – gave him the lockplate as a gift? We shall probably never know the real reasons for this heraldic union between neighbours.

For our purposes, the fact that the function of heraldry on these lockplates was basically so flexible that it offered the possibility of creating connections between individuals unrelated in terms of kinship is significant enough in itself. Perhaps such symbolic unions were not isolated occurrences at all. Since in the case of a whole series of lockplates the hasps with armorial bearings are missing (e.g., figs. 4, 14) one can speculate whether individual examples might have displayed a coat of arms that went beyond the bounds of familial relations.

In any case, the fact that these objects could manifestly symbolize a spectrum of personal connections demolishes any justification for the hypothesis that they had a distinct function within the context of the marriage act. This is not to doubt that chests ornamented with these lockplates were also commissioned on the occasion of marriages – which were in any case the occasion for the acquisition of furnishings of every kind. The symbolism of prosperity and peace displayed on the lockplates is also perfectly appropriate in this context – even if Abundantia does not otherwise occur on marriage chests.[39] Nonetheless, these chests must be clearly distinguished from marriage chests proper.

For even if there was no comparable tradition of *cassoni* in Rome as opposed to Tuscany, a specifically Roman form of ornately carved marriage chest developed in the sixteenth century. Among the most opulent were the chests made for the marriage of Paolo Lancellotti and Giulia Delfini in 1570 (fig. 19).[40] With these we have a pair of

marriage chests in the proper meaning of the term, with separate iconographies that refer to each other, and the coat of arms of the husband on one and that of the wife on the other.

It should be borne in mind that Giulia Delfini was the sister of Virginia and Flaminio Delfini, to both of whom we can assign chests with lockplates (figs. 20, 21a, b).[41] The discrepancy between the siblings' plain travelling chests and their sister's marriage chest could hardly be greater. Even if the later chests belonging to the Delfini siblings were in fact commissioned on the occasion of their marriages (1572 and 1593), it is nevertheless hardly conceivable that these serially-produced objects had an equivalent importance to the splendid pair of

chests with their complex iconography that was conceived precisely for the marriage act.

It is doubtful whether elaborate chests like that for their sister were acquired for Virginia and Flaminio Delfini. Since the Lancellotti/Delfini chests are among the very latest examples of lavishly decorated marriage chests, the discrepancy between the types of chest would seem rather to be a symptom of the general disappearance of these kinds of elaborate matrimonial chest, which in Tuscany had already long lost their role and ceremonial function. The change to the travelling chests that had recently come onto the market was presumably based on a new pragmatism that valued universal utility.

Fig. 20
Lockplate of Celso Celsi and Virginia Delfini, c./after 1572. Gilt bronze, plate: 18 x 18 cm. Sale, Vercelli (Meeting Art), 17 November 2019, no. 200.

Figs. 21a, b
Arms of the Celsi
and Delfini, from
Stemmi gentilizi delle
più illustri famiglie
romane, 17th century.
Rome, Biblioteca
Casanatense,
ms. 4006, unpaged,
nos. 194, 262.
Photos: Mario Setter.

In attempting to come to a synoptic assessment of these lockplates as a historical phenomenon, the hypothesis proposed by Bertrand Bergbauer – that the group as a whole is a product of a nineteenth-century campaign of forgery – must first be rebutted. While there are proven examples of forgeries, these are recognizable as such, as in the case of the series of copies that imitate the lockplate in the Museum of Art in Dallas and consistently display the same coat of arms.[42] However, on the grounds of the complex heraldic connections with specific historical personages that they display, it should be concluded that the majority of the lockplates are without doubt genuine.

The identification of their commissioners clearly points to Rome. The chests fitted with the lockplates were widespread in the families of the Roman aristocracy, among the Orsini, Colonna, Savelli, Mattei and Frangipani as well as the Cevoli, Garzoni, Glorieri, Mellini, Delfini and Celsi, and were adopted by families who had only recently established themselves in the city, such as the Ruspoli, Ridolfi, Dandini, Gabrielli, Peretti, Passionei and Buccelleni, as they were by the families of papal officials like the Rivaldi.

With a certain amount of effort, one could prove multiple connections of kinship or personal relations between the individuals who commissioned these chests, which may, for example, have resulted from their activities in the Camera Capitolina or Roman city government. Thus Orazio Ruspoli, who commissioned the lockplate in the Rijksmuseum (see fig. 1), sat as *caporione* of the Ponte district on the Consiglio Segreto, the inner council of the government, in 1577, while Flaminio Delfini served as *caporione* of Ripa on the same council. In 1596 Ruspoli was again entrusted with the office of *caporione* of Ponte, succeeding Lelio Cevoli (see fig. 9), who had represented Ponte on the council the previous year. In the relevant trimester of 1596, immediately above Orazio Ruspoli in the hierarchy, at the head of the Consiglio Segreto, was Celso Celsi (see fig. 20), who held the office of one of the *conservatori*.[43] This example serves to illustrate the close interconnections between the individuals who commissioned four of the lockplates.[44] However, the distribution of these objects does not require prosopographic network analyses. They were obviously accessories that had become a 'must-have' across the entire elite stratum of Roman society.

The earliest temporal point of reference for the emergence of this success story has hitherto been assumed to be the year 1540, which Pietro Cannata and Charles Avery gave as the year in which Gaspare Rivaldi and Ortenzia Mazziotti married. However, as the couple's wedding did not in fact take place until 1590, as we have seen,[45] it is the marriage of Celso Celsi and Virginia Delfini in 1572 which represents the earliest union attested by the heraldry on a lockplate (see fig. 20).[46] If one also includes the plate in the Palazzo Venezia (see fig. 14), which in its original state presumably displayed the arms of Gianfrancesco Passionei, Emilia Mellini's first husband, their marriage in 1569 yields the earliest date.[47]

As is to be expected with articles of fashion, the boom in chests decorated with these lockplates also had an expiry date. At the end of the sixteenth century their prevalence comes to an abrupt halt. Consequently, their period of production can be limited to the last third of the sixteenth century. This gives a clear temporal and local context which should help to answer the as yet not unanimously clarified question as to the identity of the creator of this such extraordinarily successful model of Mannerist utility art.

Without wanting to preempt a conclusion, it may at least be stated that the latest attempt at stylistic attribution would form a neat fit with this temporal and local context. The stylistic correlation recognized by Charles Avery with a series of bronze pax plaques later led to the identification of Jacopo (c. 1520-1604) and Lodovico del Duca (act. 1551-1601) as the authors.[48] Perhaps their Roman workshop had created a lucrative source of income in the serial production of small-scale bronzes for the Roman elite.

ABSTRACT

This article was prompted by a gilt bronze lockplate in the Rijksmuseum, originally the decorative fastening of a chest and one of a large group of similar objects. Hardly any other metalwork design was more extensively reproduced in Italian Mannerism. Its success was based on the appealing design and the fact this type of lockplate offered the possibility of integrating coats of arms and thus personalizing a chest.

The paper presents new examples not yet listed in Charles Avery's comprehensive overview (2001), identifies a whole series of clients for these lockplates on the basis of heraldic and genealogical analyses and deduces from this an origin in Rome and a dating of the entire group (previously dated 1540) to the last third of the sixteenth century.

It has been generally assumed that the specific function of these objects was to decorate marriage chests. Closer analysis argues against this thesis. The lockplate in the Rijksmuseum is particularly significant in this context. The coats of arms on its lateral cartouches identify the Roman Orazio Ruspoli and his wife Felice Cavalieri (marr. 1594) as the clients for the piece. Surprisingly, however, the crest on the hasp belongs to a family that was not related to this couple. A comparable finding is made for a lockplate in the National Gallery in Washington, which has also been misinterpreted so far. In this case, too, the coats of arms on the plate and on the hasp do not point to a family connection, but to neighbouring and presumably friendly families. The analysis of other examples, such as one in the Palazzo Venezia, confirms that these lockplates and the chests to which they were attached were not exclusively bound to the context of marriage. As travelling chests, which became must-have items for the Roman upper class, they seem to have been open to a variety of functions.

NOTES

1 Acquired 1929 from the Eduard Simon Collection, Berlin, until 1902 in the Stefano Bardini Collection, Florence; cf. note 11.

2 Charles Avery, 'Fontainebleau, Milan, or Rome? A Mannerist Bronze Lockplate and Hasp', *Studies in the History of Art* 22 (1989), pp. 291-305, lists 43 examples. In his extended essay Avery documents 61 examples: Charles Avery, 'Fontainebleau, Milan, or Rome? A Mannerist Bronze Lockplate and

Hasp', in Charles Avery, *Studies in Italian Sculpture*, London 2001, pp. 339-86. Jeremy Warren, *The Wallace Collection: Catalogue of Italian Sculpture*, coll. cat. London (The Wallace Collection) 2016, vol. 1, no. 91, pp. 404-09, mentions seven more lockplates. Eight more are to be added: St Petersburg, Hermitage, inv. no. ф-1573; sale, London (Morton & Eden), 11 June 2008, no. 400; sale, Rome (Colasanti), 1-2 March 2017, no. 197;

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New York (dealer Hill-Stone), London Masterpiece art fair, 27 June-3 July 2019 (courtesy of Jeremy Warren); sale, Vercelli (Meeting Art), 17 November 2019, no. 200 (two lockplates); sale, Genoa (Aste Boetto), 8 June 2021, no. 233. Moreover, the lockplate once in the George L. Mesker Collection in Palm Beach has been overlooked until now: sale, New York (Parke-Bernet), 27-30 October 1943, no. 568; reproduced in *Arts and Decoration* 22 (1925), p. 34.

3 Adrian Randolph, 'Renaissance Household Goddesses: Fertility, Politics, and the Gendering of Spectatorship', in Karen R. Encarnacion and Anne L. McClanan (eds.), *The Material Culture of Sex, Procreation, and Marriage in Premodern Europe*, New York 2002, pp. 163-89.

4 Cf. lately Rebekah Compton, *Venus and the Arts of Love in Renaissance Florence*, Cambridge 2021, pp. 92-111.

5 Patricia Lee Rubin and Alison Wright, *Renaissance Florence: The Art of the 1470s*, London 1999, pp. 320-21.

6 For the iconographies of the disarmed Venus and the disarmed Minerva in Mannerism cf. Liana De Girolami Cheney, 'Lavinia Fontana's Nude Minervas', *Woman's Art Journal* 36 (2015), no. 2, pp. 30-40.

7 Germany: Klaus Pechstein, *Bronzen und Plaketten vom ausgehenden 15. Jahrhundert bis zur Mitte des 17. Jahrhunderts. Kunstgewerbemuseum Berlin*, cat. Berlin (Kunstgewerbemuseum) 1968, no. 178. Fontainebleau: Ranieri Varese (ed.), *Placchette e bronzi nelle Civiche Collezioni*, exh. cat. Ferrara (Palazina di Marfisa d'Este)/Pomposa (Palazzo della Ragione) 1975, p. 49, no. 37; Pietro Cannata, *Rilievi e placchette dal XV al XVIII secolo. Museo di Palazzo Venezia*, exh. cat. Rome (Museo di Palazzo Venezia) 1982, pp. 71-72, nos. 67, 68. Milan: *Die Sammlung Dr. Eduard Simon Berlin*, vol. 1, Berlin 1929, p. 196, no. 114 (Ernst Friedrich Bange); Francesco Rossi, *Musei Civici di Brescia. Placchette secoli XV-XIX*, cat. Vicenza (Musei Civici di Brescia) 1974, p. 128, no. 215. Rome: Avery 1989 (note 2); Avery 2001 (note 2); Warren 2016 (note 2).

8 Cf. the overview on the history of research in Avery 2001 (note 2), pp. 342-69.

9 Bertrand Bergbauer, *La France des fondeurs. Art et usage du bronze aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles*, exh. cat. Ecouen (Musée national de la Renaissance) 2010, p. 102, no. 121. Earlier, Bergbauer had still accepted the lockplate in Ecouen as a sixteenth-century creation: Bertrand Bergbauer and Catherine Chédeau, *Images en relief. La collection de plaquettes du Musée national de la Renaissance*, Paris 2006, pp. 24-25.

10 Bergbauer 2010 (previous note).

11 Original chests with lockplates and side handles were part of the Spiller Collection, Rome (Avery 2001 (note 2), no. 37, figs. 9, 10) and a private collection in New York (Avery 2001 (note 2), no. 59, figs. 31, 32), another formerly in the collection of George L. Mesker, Palm Beach can unfortunately only be judged on the basis of a poor photograph (see note 2). Two chests with lockplates and identical handles were sold in auctions: sale, Paris (Etude Tajan), 17 May 2000, no. 39 (Avery 2001 (note 2), no. 61) and sale, Genoa (Aste Boetto), 8 June 2021 (see note 2). The side handles, which were in the Bardini Collection together with the lockplate in the Rijksmuseum, are not the same shape as these exemplars. A key that supposedly belonged is also documented in the Bardini Collection: *Catalogue des objets d'art antiques, du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance provenant de la collection Bardini de Florence, dont la vente aura lieu à Londres 1902*, Paris 1902, p. 19, no. 100, pl. 6. Warren 2016 (note 2), fig. 91.1. Another probably originally matching key is documented for the lockplate formerly in the Riedinger Collection: sale, Munich (Hugo Helbing), 22 April 1895, *11. Abtheilung des Museums August Riedinger in Augsburg*, no. 232, pl. 3.

12 Avery 1989 (note 2), p. 296; cf. Peter Thornton, *The Italian Renaissance Interior 1400-1600*, New York 1991, p. 193.

13 Cf. sale, Paris (Etude Tajan), 17 May 2000, no. 39 (Avery 2001 (note 2), no. 61) and sale, Genoa (Aste Boetto), 8 June 2021 (see note 2).

14 Paul Schubring, *Cassoni. Truhen und Truhenbilder der italienischen Frührenaissance*, vol. 1, Leipzig 1915; Cristelle L. Baskins et al. (eds.), *The Triumph of Marriage: Painted Cassoni of the Renaissance*, exh. cat. Boston (Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum)/Sarasota (John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art) 2008.

15 Warren 2016 (note 2), p. 407.

16 Like the lockplates in the Wallace Collection and in Ecouen (see note 9), their matching coats of arms mean that the example in the Museo Civico in Turin (Avery 2001 (note 2), no. 21) and the one formerly in the Riedinger Collection (Avery 2001 (note 2), no. 31; see also note 11) are also a pair.

17 Warren 2016 (note 2).

18 The one in New York, L'Antiquaire & The Connoisseur (Avery 2001 (note 2), no. 29)

shows the arms of the Garzoni impaled with Glorieri, but could not yet be assigned to any specific persons. Another, formerly in the Salomon Collection, combines the Orsini coat of arms with an unidentifiable one: *The Notable Collection of the Art of the French Eighteenth Century and the Italian Renaissance, belonging to the Estate of the Late William Salomon, American Art Galleries*, 4-7 April 1923, no. 396 (Avery 2001 (note 2), no. 34). The example formerly in the Collection of Frédéric Spitzer, Paris (Avery 2001 (note 2), no. 38), shows the arms of the Lazzarini di Morrovalle impaled with unidentified arms; the one sale, London (Bonhams), 15 April 2008, no. 1; re-auctioned, sale London (Sotheby's), 12 November 2013, no. 211 (Avery 2001 (note 2), no. 44), shows unidentified arms impaled with those of the Bussi-family from Viterbo. The arms of the example sale, London (Bonhams), 7 July 2010, no. 26, could not be identified. Also unidentified is the matching alliance coats of arms on the example in the Museo Civico in Turin (see note 16) and the one formerly in the Riedinger Collection (see notes 11, 16).

19 Sale, London (Bonhams), 5 July 2012, *Fine European Furniture, Sculpture and Works of Art*, no. 1. The arms were misidentified by Warren 2016 (note 2), p. 407, note 28, as those of the Garsonibus or the Malafede. For the genealogy of Pirro Frangipani: Christoph Weber, *Genealogien zur Papstgeschichte*, 6 vols., Stuttgart 1999-2002, vol. 2, p. 709; vol. 3, p. 552; Jean-Luc Nardone, 'Perché il "manoscritto originale" delle Rime di Galeotto Oddi, Patrizio perugino e cavaliere di Santo Stefano deve essere attribuito al Marchese Oddo Savelli Palombara', *Studi secenteschi* 49 (2008), pp. 405-10, 408.

20 New York, L'Antiquaire & The Connoisseur (Avery 2001 (note 2), no. 27). For genealogy: Weber 1999-2002 (note 19), vol. 2, p. 745; vol. 5, p. 244.

21 New York, private collection (Avery 2001 (note 2), no. 58). For genealogy: Weber 1999-2002 (note 19), vol. 3, p. 357; vol. 4, p. 819.

22 Sale, Hannover (Zietz), 1975, *Alte Kunst, Antiquitäten* 3, no. 72 (Avery 2001 (note 2), no. 43). For genealogy: Weber 1999-2002 (note 19), vol. 2, p. 607; vol. 3, p. 256. Lelio Cevoli, son and heir of the banker Tiberio Cevoli, married the thirteen-year-old Giulia Mattei, daughter of Fabio and Faustina Orsini, in 1596. Vittorio Aldiberti, *Compendio istorico della nobiliss. antichità di casa Cevoli*, Florence 1671, p. 60; Giovanni

Antonazzi (ed.), 'Caterina Paluzzi e la sua autobiografia (1573-1645)', *Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà* 8 (1980), pp. 103-08.

23 Bologna, Museo Civico, inv. no. 1416 (Avery 2001 (note 2), p. 380, no. 4). Although the coats of arms were correctly identified by Pietro Cannata and Charles Avery, they erroneously dated the marriage of Gaspare Rivaldi and Ortenzia Mazziotti to 1540. For the actual historical background of the marriage cf. Ralph-Miklas Dobler, *Die Juristenkapellen Rivaldi, Cerri und Antamoro. Form, Funktion und Intention römischer Familienkapellen im Sei- und Settecento*, Munich 2009, pp. 26-27.

24 Sale, Milan (Christie's), *Mobile ed oggetti d'arte*, 5 December 2005, no. 178; re-auctioned sale, Vercelli (Meeting Art), 17 November 2019, no. 200a. For genealogy: Weber 1999-2002 (note 19), vol. 1, p. 214; vol. 3, p. 357. For Celso Celsi: Giampiero Brunelli, 'Soldati della scuola vecchia di Fiandra. Nobiltà ed esercizio delle armi nello Stato della Chiesa fra Cinque e Seicento', in Antonella Bilotto et al. (eds.), *I Farnese. Corti, guerra e nobiltà in antico regime. Atti del Convegno di studi, Piacenza, 24-26 novembre 1994*, Rome 1997, pp. 419-44.

25 Avery 2001 (note 2), no. 20. For genealogy: Weber 1999-2002 (note 19), vol. 1, p. 293; vol. 4, p. 845. In his second marriage, in 1580, Paolo Emilio Dandini married Emilia, the daughter of Conte Pietro di Carpegna. Giuseppe Lorini (ed.), *Voto a favore della Toscana nella vertenza colla S. Sede sulla sovranità delle antiche Contee di Carpegna e Scavolino*, Florence 1860, p. 183.

26 Rome, Museo di Palazzo Venezia, inv. no. PV 5599 (Avery 2001 (note 2), no. 18). For genealogy: Weber 1999-2002 (note 19), vol. 2, p. 615. For Clemente Buccelleni cf. Eugenio Mariani and Paolo Mazzantini, 'Documenti sul primo forno da ferro nello Stato Pontificio', *Rendiconti dell'Accademia Nazionale delle Scienze detta dei XL* 119 (2001), pp. 67-196. In her first marriage Emilia Mellini had married Gianfrancesco Passionei from Urbino in 1569. For genealogy: Weber 1999-2002 (note 19), vol. 2, p. 732; Gasparo Alveri, *Della Roma in ogni stato*, vol. 2, Rome 1664, p. 53; Alfredo Serrai, *Domenico Passionei e la sua biblioteca*, Milan 2004, pp. 261-62.

27 The Orsini/Savelli arms on the hasp appear on the example in St Petersburg, Hermitage, inv. no. P2671 (Avery 2001 (note 2), no. 9), as well as on the ones in Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. no. 1986.8 (Avery 2001 (note 2), no. 25) and in Washington, National

Gallery of Art, Widener Collection, inv. no. 1942.9.151.a (Avery 2001 (note 2), no. 22). Two other lockplates combine the Orsini arms with another (Savelli?) on the hasp: the one formerly in the George Mesker Collection (cf. note 2) and the one in the William Salomon Collection (cf. note 18).

28 Besides Enrico and Franciotto, two other Orsini were married to Savelli wives during the period in question: Ludovico, who was married to Giulia Savelli was executed in 1585, and Corrado Orsini, son of Vicino Orsini, the 'gardener' of Bomarzo, who married Margherita Savelli, Camilla's sister, in 1580. For genealogy: Pompeo Litta, *Famiglie celebri di Italia*, vol. 5, Milan 1846/48: *Orsini di Roma*, Tav. VIII, IX, XIV. Weber 1999-2002 (note 19), vol. 6, pp. 737, 747. For Enrico and Franciotto Orsini cf. Alberto Comaschi, *Stimigliano nella Storia*, Poggio Mirteto 2000, pp. 44-63.

29 Avery 2001 (note 2), nos. 3, 8, 12, 23, 36; furthermore New York (dealer Hill-Stone), London Masterpiece art fair, 27 June-3 July 2019, and sale, Vercelli (Meeting Art), 17 November 2019, no. 200.

30 The examples formerly in the possession of Peters Oude Kunst, Tilburg (Avery 2001 (note 2), no. 30), and in the collection of Federico Zeri, Rome (Avery 2001 (note 2), no. 41) both show the single Rinuccini arms on the hasp. The coat of arms of a single family is also found on the examples of L'Antiquaire & The Connoisseur, New York (Avery 2001, note 2, no. 55) and sale, New York (Sotheby's), 22 June 1989, no. 94 (Avery 2001 (note 2), no. 56), as well as on a total of six lockplates with matching arms on the hasp: Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, J. Reginald Jones Bequest 1951; Rome, Palazzo Venezia, Collezione Pace, no. 474; Rome, private collection; Dallas, Museum of Art, inv. no. 1985.R.814; Bologna, Collezione Cicognani (Avery 2001 (note 2), nos. 15, 19, 32, 50, 57); furthermore sale, London (Christie's), 30 November 2010, no. 423. Antonella Huber, *Un mondo tra le mani. Bronzi e placchette della Collezione Cicognani*, Bologna 2011, p. 79, no. 54. It would be necessary to examine which of these are to be classified as originals and which as later replicas or forgeries. Avery considers the lockplate in Dallas to be 'perfectly authentic'.

31 Cf. Warren 2016 (note 2), pp. 406-07.

32 See note 26.

33 Onno ter Kuile, *Koper en brons*, cat. Amsterdam (Rijksmuseum) 1986 (*Catalogi*

van de verzameling kunstnijverheid van het Rijksmuseum te Amsterdam*, vol. 1), pp. 239-40, no. 332.

34 Maria Celeste Cola, *I Ruspoli. L'ascesa di una famiglia a Roma e la creazione artistica tra Barocco e Neoclassio*, Rome 2019, pp. 38-45.

35 Christoph Luitpold Frommel, *Der römische Palastbau der Hochrenaissance*, vol. 2, Tübingen 1973, pp. 39-42. The heraldic image of the Baschenis with crossed cudgels or maces connected at the ends by a chain and interspersed with three stars can be documented in various forms. See Ludovico Racheli, 'Osservazioni storico-architettoniche sulle trasformazioni del palazzetto Baschenis Borghese', in *Palazzetto Baschenis Borghese. La nuova sede della Banca del Fucino e la sua storia*, Rome *s.a.*, pp. 31-55, fig. on p. 41. Tarcisio Bottani, *Santa Brigida e l'antica Valle Averara con lo Statuto comunale del 1313*, Santa Brigida 1998, p. 89.

36 Château de Terre Neuve, Fontenay-le-Comte. Warren 2016 (note 2), p. 404. Thanks are due to Emmanuel Lamouche, Université de Nantes, for a photograph of this lockplate.

37 Cf. note 27.

38 Giovanni Caccia inserted a cross, three lilies and a hunting dog into the fesses of the coat of arms of the Caccia family, while his descendants returned to the standard Caccia arms. Giovanni also applied his personal symbols to the façade and the fireplace of his palace. Laura Russo, 'La decorazione pittorica del piano nobile', in *Sant'Oreste e il suo territorio*, Soveria Mannelli 2003, pp. 164-70.

39 Schubring mentions only one Florentine *cassone* from around 1430 which shows Abundantia as a flank figure. Schubring 1915 (note 14), p. 262, no. 96.

40 Ibid., p. 413, nos. 865, 866.

41 Cf. notes 21, 24.

42 Cf. note 29.

43 Claudio De Dominicis, *Membri del Senato della Roma pontificia. Senatori, conservatori, caporioni e loro priori e lista d'oro delle famiglie dirigenti (secc. X-XIX)*, Rome 2009, pp. 46, 89, 95.

44 Cf. notes 21, 22, 24.

45 Cf. note 23.

46 Cf. note 24.

47 Cf. note 26.

48 Avery's suggestion was taken up by Warren 2016 (note 2), p. 408. For the attribution to the Del Duca workshop cf. the catalogue entry sale, London (Bonhams), 15 April 2008, no. 1, and Francesco Rossi, *La collezione Mario Scaglia. Placchette*, vol. 1, Bergamo 2011, pp. 346-47, no. VIII.36.