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### 3 **Giovanni Mariti Between Erudition and Observation**

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**Summary** 3.1 A Rocket. – 3.2 The Mosques, Suddenly. – 3.3 In the Field. – 3.4 A Discovery, a Donation.

Within the framework of the increased interest in antiquities on the island in the eighteenth century, a prominent role, as mentioned, is certainly played by Antonio Mondaini, Giovanni Mariti and Domenico Sestini.

Wider is the wealth of information gleaned from the work of Mariti on Cyprus, which in the years following his return to Italy became a constant point of reference for his work and life experience [fig. 1] (Bombardieri 2013; 2019; Pasta 2021). Having landed in Cyprus in 1760, Mariti initially went on to Acri in Palestine, where he spent the next two years as a procurator and commercial agent for the English company Wasson. He then moved back to the island, settling in the city of Larnaca in the retinue of the English consul Timothy Turner, who also held the post of vice-consul of the Grand Duke of Tuscany at the time. His particularly favourable relations with Consul Turner soon enabled Mariti to take up the post of chancellor of the consulate, replacing Antonio Mondaini from Livorno, as we will mention below in greater details.

It is precisely to the Levantine years that almost all of Mariti's publishing activity can be referred, both his historic books and travel



**Figure 1**

Portrait of Giovanni Mariti.  
Litografia Ridolfi-Gozzini.  
Fondo Mariti.  
Courtesy of Archivio Storico  
dell'Università di Bologna

chronicles (*Viaggi per l'isola di Cipro e per la Soria e Palestina fatti dall'anno 1760 al 1768, Istoria della guerra accesa nella Soria l'anno 1771 by the arms of Aly-Bey of Egypt, Istoria della guerra della Soria proseguita fino alla fine di Aly-Bey of Egypt, Memorie istoriche di Monaco de' Corbizzi fiorentino Patriarca di Gerusalemme, Cronologia de' Re Latini di Gerusalemme, Dissertazione istorico-critica sull'antica città di Citium, Istoria di Faccardino Grand-Emir dei Drusi, Memorie istoriche del Popolo degli Assassini e del Vecchio della Montagna loro capo e signore*), and the scientific essays (*Del Vino di Cipro, Della Robbia*).

Despite the different intentions, it is worth noting that naturalistic and scientific observations are an important part of the travel writings, just as the historic and scientific essays are rich in colourful notes. It is in this balance that the cultured popularisation and flowing style that made Mariti's work so popular at the time is outlined, making his books famous in Italy and throughout Western Europe.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On the peculiar case for the French version of Mariti's *Viaggi* see Pasta 2021, 25-9.

In fact, the suggestiveness of his writings precisely derives from the perception of his normality. Mariti is not a great traveller, court envoy, nor a devout pilgrim. He is a man of culture, a member of the Accademia Etrusca di Cortona, of the Accademia dei Georgofili, but not a scholar by profession, like his cousin Domenico Sestini, as mentioned below. Mariti has wide-ranging interests and a curious and attentive gaze to which we owe the ability to see what escapes the eyes of the traveller, conditioned by rapidity and occasionality, and even more what escapes the eyes of the pilgrim, accustomed to reading the Holy Land in the light of religious stereotypes. On a narrower and more immediate horizon, Mariti's writings can be framed in the reforming climate of Pietro Leopoldo, in line with the Grand Duke's progressive commitment, as is best shown by the scientific treatises that evidently aim to convey to an uneducated public technical notions useful for optimising agricultural and industrial production (Venturi 1998, 106-7).

In a broader context, the fortune of Mariti's work is also indirectly determined by Europe's expansionist policies in the East and its sights on the declining and disintegrating Ottoman Empire. It is well known, in fact, the effort made by European chancelleries in those years to commission, or promote, travel works that could provide detailed information on the topography of still largely unexplored places, but also information on traditions, customs and cults, and of course on local institutions and political balances (Pasta 2008; 2021).

A few pages devoted to individual episodes of his travels give a particular measure of the richness of themes and normality of approach that are worth illustrating.

### 3.1 A Rocket

Under the heading 'Giovanni Mariti ethnographer', for instance, we may list descriptions that shine with acute attention but also with sympathy, in some cases perhaps empathy, aroused in him by chance encounters with the inhabitants of the villages visited.

Women, for example, who hardly ever appear in pilgrimage reports and, when they do, resemble evanescent figures, ghosts that the pilgrims' fantasies or fears tend to relegate to the background, finally appear in Mariti's account. And this appearance, which has nothing striking about it and again has all the appearance of a flat description, is even more important if we consider the disdain for Oriental women that transpires in the commonplace of the decades to follow. A negative image poised between the exotic fantasies of Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* and the rigid image of segregation, stirred up by Lamartine who speaks of the "females of the barbarians" (Lamartine [1835] 2000, 317) and above all by François-René de Chateaubriand,

who again fifty years later in his *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem et de Jérusalem à Paris* gives us a similar portrait:

These beautiful statues are often draped in rags; the air of misery, dirt and suffering debases such pure forms; a copper-coloured complexion hides the regularity of the features; in a word, to see these women as I have just painted them, one must see them from afar, be content with the whole and not go into detail. (Chateaubriand [1811] 1969, 1011-12)

Mariti has the opposite attitude, and his portraits do not entirely correspond to the later stereotype of male despotism: instead, they are described as combative women, like the women of Bethlehem who help the men prepare their weapons, or like the Bedouin women, heirs to a great medical tradition. Lacking doctors among the Arabs, the use of medicine remained only in women, and therefore the sick resorted to them; they knew the virtues of many herbs and applied them with much profit (Mariti 1770, 14).

An episode that takes place near Jaffa in Palestine, features a French friend of Mariti, a real person, but also a character who here takes on the guise of the average Westerner, the figure who in Mariti's eyes cannot understand and therefore cannot adapt. In this case the Frenchman is lured into a trap by a small group of women who, all naked, bathe at a spring. Mariti observes the idyllic scene from the top of the hill and the young Frenchman as he decides to take advantage of the opportunity to find so many women gathered, without men in tow, who at first seem to welcome him, and here is the description of what follows in the words of Mariti:

As soon as they thought they had him in their midst, they closed in on him in a circle, and when he was inside, they jumped on him, some scratching him, some punching him. Good for him that he did not lose heart and therefore managed to escape from their hands, but they accompanied him for a long time by throwing stones at him, the blows of which did not all go to the vote. (282)

What it is quite sadly noted about status and conditions of women in the Levant ("Pure le Donne in Levante provano in generalmente non so che di schiavitù") is explained by Mariti through Montesquieu's words:

in warm climates, women are nubile at eight, nine or ten years of age, so childhood and marriage almost always go hand in hand. They are old by the time they are twenty, so reason never goes hand in hand with beauty. (Mariti 1769, 112)

But, such an explanation is only part of Mariti's picture. In his view Cypriote women get some extra attitude, a power in lightness that seems to always give them a second chance beyond physical beauty. They are smart and wise ("le donne sono generalmente di bell'occhio, ma di brutte fattezze, e poche se ne trovano di rara bellezza"); they live long and stay alive ("vivono molto, e spesso si rimaritano essendo già bisnonne"), and the reason is that they are able to enjoy, even in troubles ("tutti i Greci amano i sollazzi, ma i Cipriotti all'eccesso; nè si perdono d'animo per quanto sieno tiranneggiati dal Governo") (Mariti 1769, 109).

Again, the prolonged stay in the countries he visited, and the freshness of his gaze gave Mariti the opportunity to get to know, the taste for description far removed from the stereotypes to which the traveller is subject. Firstly, the biblical stereotype that was the main filter and would remain so throughout the following century until reappearing unexpectedly again at the turn of the twentieth century, in the pages of Matilde Serao, who at the discount of her sensibility indulges on several occasions in portraits of stiffened figures, who almost give the impression of acting out unconscious sacred scenes.

Ah, one must see them, when they go down to Jerusalem, with the jars of oil on their hips, or with the basket of fruit, walking rhythmically, with their veil thrown up from their beret, in statuesque folds, with their little feet barely touching the ground! They watch and pass by, quietly proud, and yet humble: and in the afternoon, having greeted the Holy Sepulchre, having finished their work with prayer, they return, in groups of four or five, to their gracious country. They do not sing, they do not speak, their beautiful mouths are silent and proud. (Serao [1899] 2005, 142-3)

Here are the women described by Matilde Serao, like the plaster characters of a nativity scene, the same images that photographers still produced and reproduced in the first half of the twentieth century. Few human subjects, posed to recreate the biblical atmosphere (even biblical scenes or episodes, such as the women at the well) [fig. 2] or, shot from a distance, to provide a living yardstick or to give a touch of life to a monument or a landscape. Once again, it is the Holy Land that prevails over the Levant (Rostagno 2009, 108). For Giovanni Mariti, this is not the key, nothing overrides the normality of his simple observation. Even when his gaze encounters art, history and, indeed, archaeology.



**Figure 2** The iconography of women at the well between the sacred and the profane. Left: Cypriot women at the well, as illustrated by Antonio Mondaini (adapted from Namindio 2007, 331). Right: woman figure (Sofie) at the well clad in richly embroidered costume. Bethlehem on the background (photo dated 23 September 1938). Photos adapted from G. Eric and Edith Matson Photograph Collection. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/matpc/>

### 3.2 The Mosques, Suddenly

Giovanni Mariti also turns, with new attention, to Islamic monumental architecture. This different assessment of the great Islamic architectural complexes marks a break with an established norm that denied the very existence of an art and architecture that had evidently left ample evidence throughout the Levant.

In sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sources, it is customary to describe the impressive remains of Christian sacred buildings, mentioning churches transformed into mosques, but never describing them. Jean de Thevenot proceeds to a substantial purge, but even earlier and more forcefully so does Francesco Alcarotti, who in his 1596 *Journey to the Holy Land* even goes so far as to candidly deny it, stating that “there are no factories of any ornament, except churches and other houses made by Christians” (de Thevenot 1665; Alcarotti 1596, 171).

In this vein, Mariti shows a different approach too, as the case for the sacred complex of the Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem demonstrates. This imposing architectural complex stretches over a large open area that is described as the Temple esplanade, or the Temple of Solomon, without further specification. Christians had no access to that area, and therefore anyone who wanted to describe the build-

ings had to describe them from an elevated place that allowed a view. Nevertheless, even descriptions of this kind and with this view were not common until Mariti's time and would not be the norm among later travellers. The description of the "wonderful Islamic Mosque", on the other hand, occupies many pages of *Viaggi* (Mariti 1770, 94-9), which Mariti dedicates not only to historical investigation but also, thanks to the help of a Muslim collaborator, to the description of the interior set-up and furnishings which, as a Christian, he had not been able to observe in person.

Mariti is therefore aware of this sort of conspiracy of silence perpetrated against Islamic architecture and art, as is evident from the clear stance he takes on the attribution of the monumental cistern in Ramallah, the so-called St Helena Cistern.

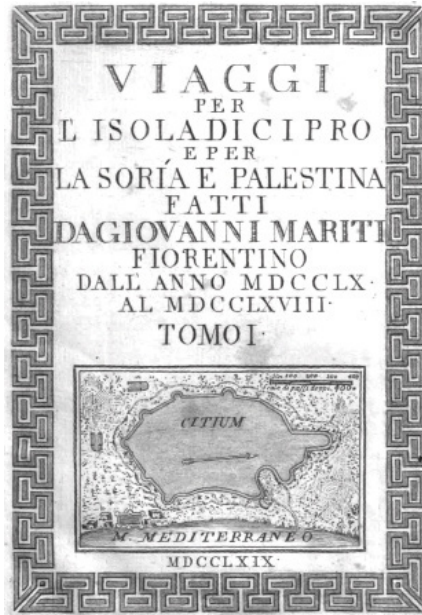
Outside the town of Rama about half a mile one sees a stupendous vaulted cistern supported by twenty-four arches. This work I think could be the work of the Saracens, and I do not know how to attribute it to St Helena as some would have it, much less to the time of the Latin Christians. I do not know why the Saracens have not hitherto been attributed many of the great factories of Palestine. Perhaps under the name, they believed themselves incapable of conceiving them, but they did not lack, according to their taste, genius for majestic buildings. (Mariti 1787a, 41)

Half a century later, it is still René de Chateaubriand who argues with Mariti and himself about the foundation of this building, the construction of which he continues to attribute to Constantine's mother (Chateaubriand [1811] 1969, 975), as does Giulio Ferrario who, while acknowledging the weight of belief in the attribution of the complex to St Helena, does not go so far as to propose any different hypothesis.

Near Rama is a cistern said to be the work of Constantine's mother. [...] If one were to believe local traditions, St Helena would have erected all the monuments of Palestine, which cannot be combined with the advanced age of this princess when she made the Pilgrimage to Jerusalem. But it is certain from the unanimous testimonies of Eusebius, St Jerome and all ecclesiastical historians that Helena contributed greatly to the restoration of the holy places. (Ferrario 1831, 22)

Both were of course destined to be contradicted by developments in research, probably too late for it to carry any weight beyond the confines of the historical and archaeological debate.

In this perspective, the pages devoted to Islamic art and architecture on the island of Cyprus should also be read. Giovanni Mariti visits and carefully describes the mosques that arose from the archi-



**Figure 3**  
Frontispiece  
of the *Viaggi*, Tomo I,  
with the sketch map of ancient Kition  
(from Mariti 1769)

tectural reworking of monumental Gothic complexes dating back to the time of the French Lusignan rule. An architectural phenomenon that is also historically important, to which Mariti is a close witness. In precise detail, he describes the church and sacred area of St Sophia in Nicosia and in Famagusta the church of St Nicholas, built in the early fourteenth century at the behest of the Genoese governor of the city and transformed into a mosque in 1571 with the construction of the minaret in place of one of the side towers on the façade.

The most interesting archaeological pages remain, however, those of the archaeologist Mariti in the field, where one can once again read valuable notes and colourful observations, tuned to the double register of improvisation, on the one hand, and careful participation, on the other.

### 3.3 In the Field

Like most westerners on the island, Mariti resides in Larnaka, the seat of major diplomatic representations and the centre of international trade on the island. During the years of his stay, the area where the ancient settlement was extending, now below the modern city of Larnaka and which regular urban excavations would only reveal two centuries later to correspond to the city of Kition, was outside the in-





**Figure 4** The area of modern Larnaka and ancient Citium with location of specific spots mentioned in the *Dissertazione*. Captions for the Illustration: A. Ancient Citium and its borders; B. The city of Larnaka; C. Borgo delle Saline. 1, 2. Residence of the British Consul, Residence of Imperial and Tuscan Vice-Consul; 3. Residence of the French Consul; 4. Residence of the Venetian Consul and house of Mr. Zambelli; 5. Portion of the ancient closed harbour, currently a small lake with no access to the sea; 6, 7. Ancient burials; 8. Location of an ancient tower, then transformed in a windmill, actually in ruins; 9. Castle on the sea in the Borgo delle Saline; 10. Saint Lazarus church). Offset map (from Mariti 1787). Courtesy of Biblioteca Centrale Nazionale di Firenze

habited areas and constituted an accessible site for supplying building material to be re-used in construction (Nicolaou 1976; Yon 2011).

Mariti's interest does not run out with erudite reconstruction, and the historian's distance is shortened by chance through first-hand participation and translated into practice in the field. Mariti does not actively promote excavations, but invents himself capable of convincing reports for the Ottoman authorities, providing us in his *Viaggi* and then in his *Dissertazione* with a first archaeological map [figs 3-4], decidedly more punctual than the only previous one produced in 1743 by Pococke, with the location of the emergencies he witnessed and which he describes in detail (Bombardieri 2013, 596-9):

In the time of my stay in Cyprus, and more precisely in 1766, many Sarcophagi were found to the north of Larnica, and in an elevated place. These were of a kind of very soft marble, and capable of containing a lying corpse, but without inscriptions, and in some

there were several heads with small terracotta pots filled with tiny bones, which looked like birds.

The land where these were discovered belonged to Signor Zambelli, a Venetian shopkeeper, and the bricklayers came across it when they were laying the foundations of a house, which the said Signor Zambelli had built there.

The Turks claimed that he had disturbed the repose of the dead Muslims, but once it was shown that the human bodies were not arranged there according to their ritual, and that they belonged to very ancient times, everything was calmed down with a few gifts.

Two other repositories, or rather burial chambers, can still be observed outside the enclosure of the ancient wall and moat of Citium. Each one is formed of large, huge stones joined together, which must have been transported there from some hills about ten miles away. The same friend of mine, in order to confirm that Larnica was a burial ground, says that he came down to see many such tombs, among which he esteems remarkable 'one found under the house of a certain Yianni the Watchmaker Cypriot, consisting of a large vaulted chamber supported by two arches, in which were two deposits with a few bones inside, some of which exceeded the ordinary stature of the largest men of our times'. He adds that in the garden of the House of the Three Cypresses' four sepulchral chambers of various sizes had been discovered at the time when the French shopkeeper Monsieur Hermitte lived there, built on the same model as the above-mentioned ones, and others had been found in those surroundings. (Mariti 1787b, 13-14)

As far as Citium itself is concerned, where and how it appears to us, the foundations of many old structures have been found out and, during all the years I stayed in Cyprus, they continued to be unravelled, most of them being large squared dressed stones, then used for the foundations of other buildings currently being constructed across nearby Larnica.

Also, the antiquities found make it certain that a city was placed there. Moreover, having returned in 1783 from his journeys before continuing to travel abroad, Mr. Abbot Sestini, my cousin, who also visited Cyprus, assured me that new ancient evidence had been traced back, and especially some Roman inscriptions, which he is going to publish in his book. He is also of the constant feeling that the ruins of Citium should be sought there and not elsewhere. (22-23)

A few decades before Mariti, the Russian monk Basil Gregorevich Barski, who stayed in Cyprus on several occasions between 1726 and 1736, gives numerous details of the different neighbourhoods

## 3 • Giovanni Mariti Between Erudition and Observation



Figure 5 Sketch maps of ancient Kition and ancient Salamis (adapted from Pococke 1743, Pl. XXXII)

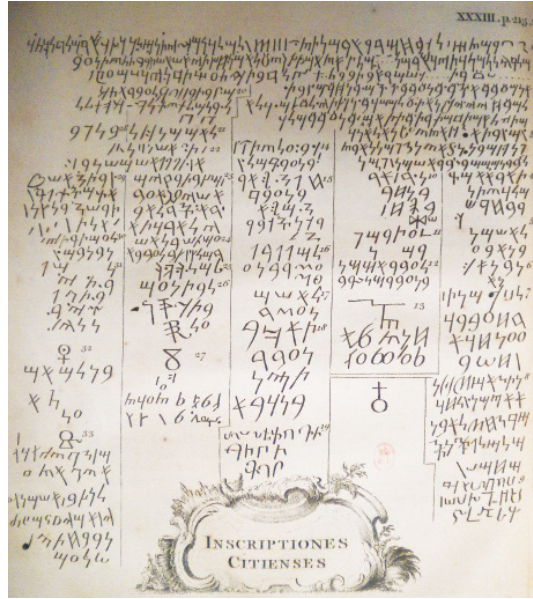
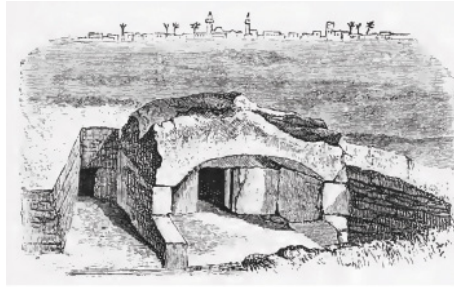


Figure 6 Inscriptions from ancient Kition. Citienses Inscriptions (adapted from Pococke 1743, Pl. XXXIII)

that had developed in Larnaca, indicating their names: 'La Scala', the 'Castro' and 'old Larnaca'. In the schematic drawing of the city he illustrates, the toponym 'Bamboula', site of ancient Kition is also indicated, without, however, mentioning any evident, emerging, or visible archaeological remains (Severis 1999, 9-19; Yon 2011, 34).

It is plausible that the Russian monk was not interested in this evidence, since the fortifications of ancient Kition were visible at the time and clearly identified by the toponym 'Citium' in the map of Larnaca made by Richard Pococke and published in his *Description of the East* in 1743 [fig. 5] (Pococke 1743, Pl. XXXII; Bombardieri 2013, 597 fig. 7).

Pococke is certainly the first witness not only of visible remains, but also of accidental archaeological discoveries, the result of securing material for new building operations. It is worth to mention that he himself copied 33 Phoenician inscriptions inscribed on stone foundation blocks without being able to interpret them, twenty years before Abbot Barthélémy interpreted this writing thanks to the Maltese bilingual [fig. 6] (Pococke 1743, 212, Pl. XXXIII; Barthélémy 1764). Likewise, Pococke also pays special attention to the burial chambers that came to light during excavation works:



**Figure 7**  
Chamber tomb described and located by Mariti in the Phaneromeni vicinity, as later appeared to Luigi Palma di Cesnola (1877, 49) (top) and in *The Illustrated London News* (Suppl. *Illustrated London News*, 5 October 1878, 325) (bottom)

They have discovered a great number of ancient sepulchres in and about the city of Larnaca; I saw some built of hewn stone; in one of them I observed the stones were laid long the top like large beams, and others laid over them like a floor; there is another which ends at top in an angle, and both are of excellent workmanship and finished in the most perfect manner. (Pococke 1743, 213)

Similarly, Drummond admires “the well-dressed stones of a prodigious size” (1754, 153) in the area later referred to by Carsten Niebuhr as “Ayia Phaneromeni” (Niebuhr 1766, fig. 6; see also Niebuhr 1837, 20-33, Pl. III). This area probably corresponds to a part of the southern necropolis and one of the underground chambers described by these travelers in the eighteenth century, of which we have ample evidence in later modern sources [fig. 7] (Nicolaou 1976, 162; see in particular Palma di Cesnola 1877, 49; Unger, Kotschy 1865, 527), is today transformed into a place of worship and can still be seen below the modern church of ‘Panayia Phaneromeni’, thanks to the conservation work of the Cyprus Department of Antiquities (Gunnis 1936, 108; Nicolaou 1976, 160; Yon 2011, 35). In particular, the description given by Mariti plausibly corresponds to two chamber tombs of the Cypro-Archaic period, both located in his 1787 map with the indication “ancient sepulchres”. One of these is

certainly the chamber tomb of ‘Phaneromeni’ mentioned above and the other is probably to be located not far from it in the ‘Sotiros’ district.<sup>2</sup>

In more general terms, the archaeological observations published by Mariti, as well as the reports by Pococke and Niebuhr, who visited Larnaca in 1766,<sup>3</sup> were referred to until recent years, recognising a certain documentary value, however difficult to contextualise, even in the context of the systematic archaeological investigations uninterruptedly conducted in the area of ancient Kition.<sup>4</sup>

### 3.4 A Discovery, a Donation

Within the framework of the archaeological observations conducted by Mariti, all of which are intertwined with the authority of the ancients and the moderns, in the common endeavour to prove the true location of ancient Kition, the narration of a single episode that occurred in 1767 seems to prove particularly significant (Bombardieri 2019).

This is a casual discovery narrated by Mariti in very similar terms, both in the *Viaggi*:

I myself, in the year 1767, came upon an excavation that was being carried out for the purpose of extracting stones, among which the workers found a head of white marble, representing Antoninus Caracalla, and many Greek medals of the Roman Empire, Septimius Severus, Antoninus Caracalla, Julia Domna, with the Greek inscription, and on the reverse side the Temple of Pafos with the legend KOINON KYIPQN, and some with Caracalla on one side, and Geta on the opposite side; and in addition to these, medals of Claudius Caesar Augustus with Latin inscription, and on the reverse a laurel wreath, in the middle of which is written KOINON KYIPQN. The mentioned head passed into the hand of Mr. Timothy Turner,

<sup>2</sup> The first one corresponds to Nicolaou no. 55 (Nicolaou 1976, 200), which is virtually on the route to the southern section of the city walls of Kition; the second one, more uncertainly identified, may correspond to Evangelis tomb Nicolaou no. 25 (182-3).

<sup>3</sup> Carsten Niebuhr, the traveller-land surveyor, visited Cyprus during the Danish expedition to Egypt and Arabia. His visit to Cyprus is of particular significance for the plan of the ancient city of Kition which he prepared during his stay on the island, and which was published by Giovanni Mariti in his *Viaggi* and in his later *Dissertazione* (Mariti 1769; 1787). Mariti personally met Niebuhr in the island, they visited the emerging evidence of ancient Kition during Niebuhr’s visit to Larnaca in July 1766. A letter of Niebuhr dated back to 1772 is kept in the Fondo Mariti, with a note handwritten by Mariti: “Conte Niebuhr. Celebre viaggiatore danese, e celebre specialmente nella Geografia. Questi fu da me conosciuto nel Monte Carmelo e poi in Cipro. Nei miei Libri ho avuto più volte luogo di parlare di egli”.

<sup>4</sup> Nicolaou 1976; Karageorghis 1974-2004; Yon 2006, 15-49; 2011, 35-7; Caubet, Fourrier, Yon 2015, 13.

who was then consul of H.M. Britannica, who then sent it to England, and some of the medals remain with me. (Mariti 1769, 55-6)

and in the *Dissertazione*:

As for the total and final destruction of it [Citium scil.], it must not have happened before the year 210 AD, as can be seen from some medals found in its ruins, I can also add a number of them found later belonging to Septimius, Antoninus Caracalla, and Julia Domna with the Greek inscription, and on the reverse side the Temple of Paphos with the legend KOINON KYIPQN, other coins with the head of Caracalla on one side, and that of Geta on the other. In addition to these, earlier medals were also found, belonging to Claudius Caesar Augustus with the Latin inscription, and on the reverse a laurel wreath, in the middle of which one can similarly read KOINON KYIPQN.

A head representing Antoninus Caracalla was also found there during excavations in 1767, and I was present when it was unearthed. Next to it were also found many of the above-mentioned medals, which together with the head passed into the hands of Mr. Timothy Turner, British Consul in Cyprus, who then sent the said head to England.

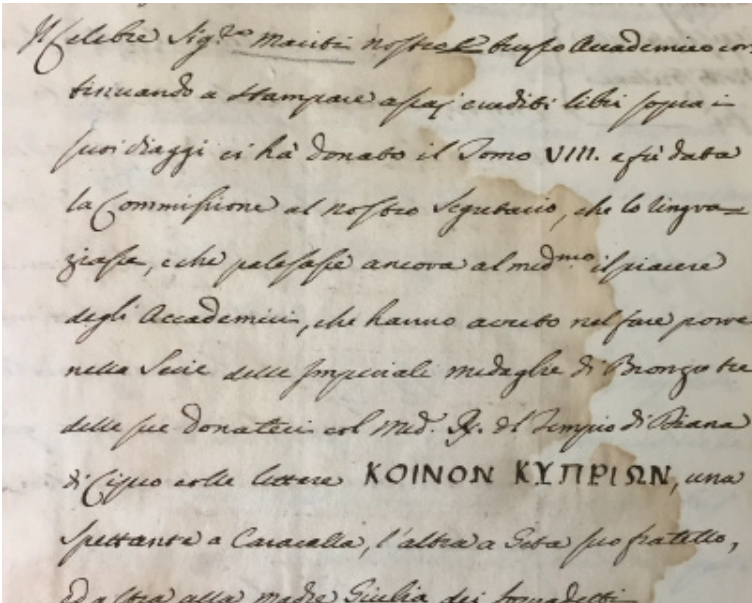
He generously distributed the medals among his friends in Cyprus, and not a few he favoured myself, so that on my return to Tuscany I also made a new distribution, and especially to the Museum of the famous Etruscan Academy in Cortona. (Mariti 1787b, 28-30)

A strong new element is evidently present in this episode, in which the activity of the participating observer is transformed into that of the collector. In this new and unprecedented guise, Mariti becomes the intermediary of a lot of archaeological materials that later constitute, to all intents and purposes, the first documented acquisitions of Cypriot antiquities in Italy.

The comparison between the two passages in the *Viaggi* and in the *Dissertazione* in which the same episode is described appears decisive and allows us to verify that, if the intent remains the same and so are the circumstances and terms in which the episode is described, the mention of the “new distribution” and donation to the Museum of the famous Accademia Etrusca in Cortona is absent in the *Viaggi*, this is reported in the later *Dissertazione*.

Luigi Tondo also refers to this episode, arguing that Sestini had the opportunity to see, at his elder cousin's house, that souvenir from the Levant (Tondo 1990, 55); based on Sestini's interest and well-known expertise as a numismatist, one would be inclined to include him in the number of the unspecified Italian recipients of the mentioned “distribution” of Cypriot coins from Mariti's collection.





**Figure 8** Accademia Etrusca di Cortona. Record of Academic meeting dated back to 12 August 1766 with mention of the participation of Giovanni Mariti and his donation to the Accademia Etrusca (BCAE, MS 449, 62-3). Courtesy of Biblioteca del Comune e dell'Accademia Etrusca, Cortona

Thus, considering the period between Mariti's return to Italy, the publication of the first Volume of his *Viaggi* (1769) and the subsequent publication of the *Dissertazione* (1787), we can ascertain that the donation to the Accademia Etrusca di Cortona took place between the beginning of 1770s and mid-1780s.

We find precise confirmation of this in the minutes of the meetings of the Accademia Etrusca, and more precisely in the minutes of 12 August 1776 [fig. 8], where we read:

The celebrated Signor Mariti, our Etruscan academic, who keeps on publishing many erudite books on his travels, has donated to us his volume VIII. And the commission was given to our Secretary, who thanked him, and also to show him the pleasure of the Academicians, who have had in placing in the Series of Imperial Bronze Medals three of his donations with the same reverse of the temple of Diana of Cyprus with the letters KOINON KYTIPΩN, one belonging to Caracalla, the other to Geta his brother, and the other to the mother Julia of the above-mentioned.

The brief accounts in the minutes of the academic meeting, unlike the more extensive notes prepared for the *Notti Coritane*, are nevertheless of particular importance. In our case, the minutes are decisive in establishing the date of the donation (12 August 1776) and its nature (three coins of Caracalla, Geta and Julia Domna). If we exclude the misunderstanding whereby the editor of the academic report mentions the temple of “Diana” instead of the temple of Aphrodite in Paphos (already mentioned in the *Viaggi* and the *Dissertazione*), the record confirms the congruence and details of the episode as reported by Mariti. The episode of the discovery and the events of the donation are thus clarified.

It is not easy to reconstruct the subsequent traces of this first donation and the three coins that came from Larnaca to Cortona. The two historical inventories of the Museum, currently housed in the Library of the Accademia and drawn up in 1783 and 1838 respectively (the latter records, in later notes, the changes up to 1869; paper codes nos. 467-9), do not offer certain data regarding the identification of this group of coins. It is known, in fact, that already by the end of the eighteenth century, the active policy of acquisitions by the Accademia Etrusca had also involved small collections of Egyptian material, which arrived in Cortona through donations from private collectors mediated by the brothers Marcello, Ridolfino and Filippo Venuti, antiquarians and founders of the Accademia in Cortona (Bruschetti et al. 1988, 7-9; Bettelli, Di Paolo 2004, 65; Gialluca 2011). The first inventory of 1783 provide us with a detailed list of the objects kept in the Museum, including the coins and medals collection; the summary description given, however, does not always allow a certain correspondence with the existing specimens to be established (Pancrazzi, Ronzitti-Orsolini 1974, 5). The subsequent complete inventory, updated up to 1869, does not give a description but records the coins and medals contained in the *plutei*, i.e. in the display cases in the Sala delle Adunanze dei Signori Accademici (Lords of the Academicians’ Meeting Room) (paper code no. 469, folio 90). From this inventory, which allows us to ascertain the increased size of the numismatic collection of the Accademia Etrusca, it is not possible to directly trace the presence of the Cypriot series. It is worth to mention, however, that in an intermediate document drawn up in 1802 and containing “the inventory of everything owned by our Accademia Etrusca” (paper code no. 470), mention is made of the presumably recent sale of “44 bronze pieces in Medallions and other”. Unfortunately, there is no other information on this episode, and it is therefore impossible to establish on what occasion and which coins were sold by the Accademia.

The subsequent rearrangement by Pediani, the first systematic cataloguing by Neppi Modona in 1927, and the complete publication of the *Corpus* by Pancrazzi and Ronzitti Orsolini in 1974, however,





**Figure 9** Roman bronze coin of the Emperor Geta (MAEC inv. 99801).  
Courtesy of Museo dell'Accademia Etrusca di Cortona

revealed that the Cortona numismatic collection includes at least one survivor of Mariti's Cypriot donation.

Among the coins preserved in Cortona and issued under the emperors Septimius Severus, Caracalla and Geta, mentioned by Mariti in his descriptions of the 'medals' found in Larnaca in 1767, is a bronze coin of Cypriot provincial issue [fig. 9].

The coin bears on the obverse the representation of the laureate head of Emperor Geta facing to the right, surmounted by the legend ΑΥΤΟ ΚΑΙΣ [ΠΙ ΣΕΠ]ΤΙΜΙΟC ΓΕΤΑC. On the reverse is a conventional representation of the façade of the Temple of Aphrodite in Paphos, surmounted by ΚΟΙΝΟΝ [ΚΥΠΡΙΩ]Ν (federation of Cypriots) (Pancrazzi, Ronzitti-Orsolini 1974, 216, Table XXI: 866).

It is well known that the indication *Koinon Kyprion* refers to a Cypriot religious institution responsible for the organisation of sacred ceremonies in honour of Aphrodite and, at the same time, the reference for the circulation of bronze coins on the island, at least from the time of Emperor Claudius. In the period of the Flavian dynasty and the Severan dynasty, the reference to this federation is associated with the depiction of Zeus of Salamis or alternatively with the depiction of the temple of Aphrodite in Paphos, in which the central *betyl* depicting the aniconic figure of the Goddess can be seen (Amandry 2015, 2). The coinage of this series referring to the emperor Geta is distinguished by two variants on the obverse, in which either the emperor's bare torso carrying a spear or, as for the Cortona coin, the emperor's laureate head turned to the right can be depicted (Parks 2004, 26; Amandry 2009, 2-3).

There is no doubt, therefore, that the Cortona coin was intended for circulation in Cyprus.

The publication of *Nummi veteres anecdoti* by the Austrian Josephus Hilarius von Eckhel in 1775 testifies that at least one coin of Cypriot provenance had already become part of the Medagliere Mediceo in Florence (Tondo 1990, 42), before the “new distribution” by Mariti.

If we accept that the coin of Geta came from Larnaca to Cortona with the small numismatic lot donated by Mariti in August 1776, we can at this point place it alongside the already well-known collection of Cypriot antiquities in the Museo dell'Accademia Etrusca, formed later thanks to the donation of Monsignor Guido Corbelli, Apostolic Delegate for Arabia and Egypt under the pontificate of Leo XIII (Bettelli, Di Paolo 2004; Bombardieri 2011, 26; 2019). The small collection of the six Cypriot vases is made up of materials found in Egypt, from funerary contexts mainly dating to the Late Bronze Age, part of the extensive collection of antiquities that Monsignor Corbelli brought to Cortona in three successive expeditions between 1891 and 1896, and which included objects purchased on the antiquities market in Alexandria, mainly from el-Kab and Thebes (Schiaparelli 1893, 317-38; Della Cella 1900, 3; Guidotti, Rosati 1986, 75-8).