

The collection of ancient objects organized by Ludovico Podocataro is mentioned by the humanist theologian Pierio Valeriano (Belluno 1477 – Padua 1558) in his work *Hieroglyphica* (Basel, 1567, XXVIII). In this text, the author lists various items collected by the Cypriot cardinal, including statues, bronze, gold, and silver objects, marble reliefs, and coins. This document represents a valuable inventory; however, it is unfortunately impossible to verify it with certainty today due to the lack of precise and consistent references to the collected objects. More specific information can be found in the *Epigrammata Antiquae Urbis* (Rome, 1521) by the Roman writer Jacopo Mazzocchi.

At Palazzo Podocataro on Via Monserrato, numerous ancient fragments and inscriptions are still preserved today, mainly arranged in the inner courtyard. These pieces certainly belong to the “collection of antiquities” mentioned by 16th-century sources as being housed in the palace. Several pieces from the collection were also referenced around the mid-1500s by Ulisse Aldrovandi (Bologna 1522 – Bologna 1605), an Italian naturalist, botanist, and entomologist, in his work *Delle Statue Antiche che per Tutta Roma in Diversi Luoghi e Case si Veggono*. The collection must have been highly regarded, even serving as a gathering place for Raphael’s artistic circle.

A significant portion of the original collection, now housed within the palace, consists of ancient inscriptions, both Greek and Latin. Many of the Greek inscriptions originate from the Via Appia, while the Latin inscriptions are mostly documented in the CIL (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*), allowing us to trace their history, at least until the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Among these inscriptions, there are also some unpublished documents, which offer new insights into epigraphic studies.

The dominant type among the inscriptions is funerary. Notable examples include the inscription of Gurtilius Hermeros, *magister vici ab Cyclopiis* (CIL VI, 2226, no. 15 in the list), who was the head of a vicus likely located on the southern slopes of the Caelian Hill, named after a nymphaeum adorned with a sculptural group of Polyphemus. Another interesting piece is the funerary stele of the equestrian C. Caelius Arventus, which features a figurative relief (CIL VI, 2572, no. 140 in the list); the deceased was a soldier of the V Praetorian Cohort. Also notable is the inscription of Aulus Egnatius Proculus (CIL VI, 1406, no. 14 in the list), a Roman military officer and senator who served as *suffectus consul* in the 2nd–3rd centuries AD. His distinguished career included roles such as *Legatus Augusti pro praetore* in Numidia, *Legatus legionis* of the Legio VIII Augusta in Germania Superior, and curator of several Roman towns.

A curious item is the columbarium plaque referring to the burial of Tholus (CIL VI, 8793, no. 146 in the list), possibly an imperial slave who served as a personal attendant to Emperor Augustus. Another significant piece is the funerary stele of Sex Aufidius Maximus (CIL VI, 12824, no. 90 in the list), which features the portrait of the deceased and dates back to the early 2nd century AD. Other examples include the stele of the young A. Oppius Epigonus (CIL VI, 23512, no. 115 in the list), with a distinctive arched pediment decorated with a bust and a frieze of arms.

One remarkable fragment is the left section of a slab, which features traces of a twisted column and part of the funerary inscription of Titus Flavius Atimetus (CIL VI, 17969, no. 216 in the list). The right side of the inscription was considered a separate artifact in early editions and is now housed in the Vatican Museums. Another interesting inscription is the slab placed by Marcus Valerius Dius for his freedmen (CIL VI, 27988, no. 87 in the list), which documents the symbolic sale of a tomb for a nominal price of one sesterce.

Even though funerary inscriptions dominate, the collection at Palazzo Podocataro also includes some important sacred inscriptions. One significant example is the dedication to Silvanus Dendrophorus (CIL VI, 641, no. 16 in the list), possibly the earliest record of the Dendrophori college in Rome, dating to 97 AD. Another inscription, dedicated to Silvanus and carved on an altar front (CIL VI, 672, no. 91 in the list), features a bas-relief representation of the deity.

The collection also includes numerous fragments of sarcophagi with representations of human life and mythological themes, such as Althea, Meleager, Endymion, and Leda and the Swan. Other sarcophagi fragments display decorative garlands, some associated with initiation scenes.

Noteworthy is also the collection of sculptures housed at Palazzo Podocataro, which includes various reliefs from sarcophagi, particularly of Christian subjects, such as The Good Shepherd, The Arrest of St. Peter, Jonah, the Adoration of the Magi, and scenes from the life of Jesus.

The purpose of this project was to catalog, organize, and describe the Podocataro Collection, now Alvarez de Castro, as a foundation for future studies and research. The project was based on a decree from the Regional Superintendency for Cultural Heritage and Activities of Lazio, dated July 7, 2003. This decree included an inventory of the antiquities at Palazzo Podocataro-Alvarez de Castro, with a detailed description of the archaeological collection compiled by Dr. Daniela Candilio and Dr. Marina Bertinetti, under the supervision of Superintendent Adriano La Regina.

Anatomy of a Restoration: The Roman Column of the Podocataro

Within the small but richly adorned inner courtyard of Palazzo Podocataro, there stands a column crowned with a statue, which has been meticulously restored. This column, approximately 5 meters high, is positioned near the wall next to the main hall, where the staircase leading to the upper floors begins.

At the top of the column, there is a capital, carved rather roughly, and a female statue with a veil standing on a globe. Prior to the restoration, the monument was in a severely degraded state, with algae, black crusts, and accumulated dust. The situation likely worsened due to previous poorly executed restoration attempts.

The greatest issue, however, was the corrosion caused by the iron anchoring brackets used to secure the capital and statue to the wall. Specifically, the iron bracket inside the column had corroded so extensively that it fractured the top of the column into several fragments, compromising the stability of both the capital and the statue.

The restorers undertook several key interventions: they dismantled the statue and capital, removed the corroded iron anchoring elements, fabricated two new stainless-steel brackets, and reassembled the fragments on top of the column using a special resin.

A new holding bracket was also inserted between the column and the wall, secured into the wall with cement and marble dust. The statue was then cleaned and reinstalled, this time without being anchored to the wall but directly attached to the capital via a stainless-steel pin inserted dry between the capital and the statue.

This careful restoration has preserved the integrity of the column and the statue, restoring the monument to its former splendor while ensuring its structural stability. © RIPRODUZIONE RISERVATA